

Foreword

The 11th International Symposium of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) was held on September 25-28, 1996, under the title "Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Origins of the Japanese". The main objective of the symposium was to draw attention of the scholars from abroad to the problem of the origins of the Japanese peoples and cultures.

This topic was the major concern of one of the Nichibunken's Term Research Projects, "Regionality of the Japanese and Japanese Culture", which was carried out from 1994 to 1996. As in many research projects of Nichibunken, it had typically interdisciplinary nature, that is, scholars from widely different research fields of natural and social sciences as well as humanities gathered together, with the common aim of understanding better the histories of Japanese peoples and cultures. Since the project approached the end after its three years term, we wished to hold an international symposium and discuss the matter with scholars from abroad.

As is seen in the list of participants and the programme, we were able to cover the diverse research fields such as molecular and physical anthropology, dealing both with human populations of present and past, archaeology and pre-history, dealing not only with stone tools, pottery, and other remains but also with biological remains and evaluation of diet, as well as dating, and linguistics.

We devoted two full days for scientific discussions (Session 1 through 7), one day for public lectures, and another day for a specific session (Session 8) on the Jomon Culture held in the Fukui Prefectural Museum, Obama City, near the site of Torihama Shell Mounds.

This volume compiles full papers presented in the symposium. While we failed to receive manuscripts from a few participants, I believe the readers will find here the important issues at present concerning the origins of Japanese peoples and cultures raised from different disciplines. My further hope is that this volume will become an important basis for further integrated researches of Japan, which is one of the aims of Nichibunken.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Michael Pietrusewsky of the University of Hawaii at Manoa and to Mrs. Takao Kimura, who have helped me in editing this proceeding. Professor Pietrusewsky has stayed in the Nichibunken as a visiting professor from July 1997 to June 1998, during which he has taken great pain to read all of the manuscripts and gave me valuable advices. But for his help, the preparation of this publication would have taken much longer.

OMOTO Keiichi, Convener of the Symposium