

Introduction

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The title of this collection of papers, *Observing Japan from Within*, was the theme of a symposium held at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies from September 25 through 27, 2003. To this meeting, the organizers invited twenty-four non-Japanese scholars who reside and work in Japan, whose specialized research focuses on Japan, who often or usually present the results of their research in English.¹ This was the fifth conference of this sort convened at Nichibunken since 2000—the fifth time we have gathered a group comprised mostly of foreign scholars resident in Japan to discuss various issues in the field of Japanese studies. In March 2000 we brought together people, mostly Westerners, who work in English; in February 2001 we gave primacy to scholars with Korean nationality who reside and work in Japan; in January 2002 we invited Chinese researchers resident in Japan and also some guests from China; and in September 2002 we once again brought together a group made up mostly of Korean-background scholars.²

¹ In addition to the twenty-four participants invited from outside Nichibunken, eleven scholars from this Center (six of them non-Japanese) were involved as discussants or chairpersons, and a number of visitors attended various sessions. Nichibunken's Office of Research Exchange (*kaigai kenkyū kōryū shitsu* 海外研究交流室) takes responsibility for organizing these symposia for non-Japanese scholars who live in Japan.

² The theme of the first conference was “Japanese Studies after the Bursting of the Economic Bubble”; this was a one-day meeting and there was no related publication. Papers from the second symposium for foreign scholars resident in Japan were published under the title *Sekai no Nihon kenkyū 2001: Korīa ni okeru Nihon kenkyū no genzai* 世界の日本研究 2001 : コリアにおける日本研究の現在 (International Research Center for Japanese Studies, 2002). The theme of the third symposium was “Nitchū kankei no nijusseiki o furikaeru” 日中関係の二十世紀をふりかえる, and papers from the meeting were later published in the journal *Ajia yūgaku* アジア遊学, no. 41 (June 2002) and no. 44 (September 2002). The fourth conference in this series,