

## Preface

This small volume is a collection of presentations made between October 1999 and May 2000 at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken). The original presentations were offered in meetings of the Evening Seminar, an English-language forum that has met periodically for many years at this Center. Running parallel to the Mokuyo Zemi series in Japanese, the Evening Seminar gives scholars who expect to publish their work in English—especially visiting scholars, but also permanent members of the Nichibunken faculty—an opportunity to talk about their interests and to get others' advice and criticisms in the language in which they are writing. Quite a few of the people who make presentations to the Evening Seminar also speak at the Mokuyo Zemi, but some visitors to Nichibunken who are not specialists in Japanese studies (who come to do comparative work, for example) appear only in the Evening Seminar and tell us they appreciate the chance to share ideas in English.

Last year, we decided to use a number of Evening Seminar sessions for exchange of information about Japanese studies in various countries around the world. This represented a departure from past routine. Most often, over the years, presentations to the Evening Seminar have been about speakers' own current research. But as we were about to enter a new millennium, we realized that the structure of Nichibunken's visiting scholars program created an opportunity for us to give consideration to a variety of traditions of Japanese studies, large and small, long established and newly emergent. There are regularly fifteen visiting scholars from overseas resident at Nichibunken for terms extending from three to twelve months, and those visitors come from many different nations. We moved to organize a series of meetings on a common theme, Japanese studies around the world.

The prime mover behind the series scheme was our Nichibunken colleague Kimura Hiroshi, who has been the principal organizer of the Evening Seminar for much of his tenure here, which began in 1991. A political scientist whose specialization is Russian policy and diplomacy and who also has an intimate knowledge of the U.S.A., Prof. Kimura was aware that we would not be able to cover the entire globe comprehensively over the course of several seminar sessions. Others at Nichibunken quickly

came to appreciate that, as well. We proceeded anyway, thinking there would be value in reflecting on the state of studies of Japan in several places today. Prof. Kimura did most of the work of recruiting speakers.

None of the presentations in this book was originally prepared with publication in mind. In fact, when speakers were invited to appear, it was understood that getting ready for this seminar should not take a great deal of time away from the academic research that was their main purpose when they came to this Center. They could speak informally, they were instructed, in an atmosphere that is relaxed while still being serious.

After the fact—after the May 2000 meeting when we talked about Australia, Canada, and Egypt—some people suggested that it would be interesting to put all the presentations in this mini-series together in written form. Of course there are more than a few large gaps in coverage that result from publishing these Evening Seminar pieces as they are and not soliciting other essays. Several nations where much important work in Japanese studies has been done are omitted, for no better reason than that between the autumn of 1999 and the spring of 2000, no one from those countries happened to be visiting Nichibunken at the right time of a month in which an Evening Seminar had not already been scheduled. Apart from gaps, this collection retains much of the flavor of oral presentations. Many of the speakers in our series did not have finished manuscripts in hand when they appeared, but talked from notes. Their pieces in this volume were transcribed from audiotapes, and the transcripts were then sent to the speakers for editing.

This modest collection makes absolutely no claim to be the final word on the state of Japanese studies today, but we hope it will stimulate further reflection on various academic traditions and on the kinds of work currently being conducted in different countries.

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