

*A Note from the Editors*

Only 'Ivory Tower' specialists would be naïve enough to ignore the correlation between the rapid growth in Japan studies and the more pecuniary based success that Japan has enjoyed over its period of rapid growth. The race to fathom the 'miracles' of the Japanese economy was pushed along by business, itself, with its donations of funds to tertiary institutions and its demand for Japan literate students who would give them access to this success. The pressure of business on government also instigated government level talks which has, in turn, spurned the role of the Japan Foundation in its catering to the many requests for help in establishing and maintaining the necessary basics for the study of Japan.

This edition of *Japan Studies in the World* attests to the force of the influence of economics behind the recent rapid growth in Japan studies. The two papers from neighbouring Malaysia and Singapore both begin by explaining how a call from governmental heights instigated the establishment of the Japan Centre, ISIS, in Malaysia and the Japan Studies Department at the National University of Singapore. Malaysia's Japan studies has its beginnings in the 'Look East Policy' whereas Singapore was boosted by the 'Learn from Japan' movement.

Professor Leong, in a paper he presented at Nichibunken, traces the establishment of the Japan Centre and its emphasis on *Japan* studies, that is, studies concerned with obtaining knowledge associated with understanding Japanese success. However, he also shows how *Japanese* studies, a term he uses to refer to the study of the cultural and aesthetic side of Japan, is also finding a niche in the study of Japan in Malaysia as a natural follow-on from the attempts to tackle Japan in a comprehensive manner.

Professor Meow follows much the same storyline in outlining the trials and tribulations associated with establishing a comprehensive programme in Japan studies within the framework of a university. The common threads between the Malaysian and Singapore stories are obvious but there are, of course, unique problems that each have to contend with, such as the need for materials in Bahasa Malaysia for Malay students and the need for a recognition of the similarities between Chinese and Japanese in order to facilitate the teaching of Japanese to Chinese-speaking students.

Although both papers begin by explaining the influence of economics behind the establishment of their centres, both conclude with visions for widely expanded places of learning that incorporate a comprehensive and open approach to the study of Japan: a vision which is quietly but steadily being achieved.

The other paper in this edition is interesting as much for its discussion on Japan studies as it is on the changing scene in academia in Russia. Professor Syomin tells of the boost to Japan studies due to the economic successes of Japan but his story begins well beforehand, in 1705, reminding us that although for many countries the study of Japan is a relatively new subject, in Russia it enjoys quite a lengthy history which seems only fitting in a country which has such a long and colourful history of its own. It would seem that Russia boasts a wealth of information on Japan that has accumulated over the many years but has not enjoyed the exposure it perhaps deserves. With the drastic change in the political climate, however, not only can this material be now used more openly, but approaches to the research involving such materials, and indeed research in general, can now be chosen freely. In this sense, the paper on Russia talks of a renaissance in Japan studies and like the other

papers talks of expansion and adventure in the future pursuit of the study of Japan.

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Nichibunken, in its efforts to promote an understanding of the present status of Japan studies around the world is willing to publish reports outlining the establishment of departments, the progress of centres, the status of Japan studies on a national base, or in the case of more established centres, reports on more specific topics within the area of Japan studies. The aim is to share knowledge about different centres around the world; knowledge which may lead to the promotion of interaction and networking between countries and departments alike. If you would like to submit a report on your part of the world and the status of Japan studies there, contact Nichibunken and we shall be happy to consider it for publication.

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