

PREFACE

The Concept of "Literature" in Japan, expanded to include my most recent research, was originally published as *Nihon no "bungaku" gainen* (Sakuhinsha, 1998; second edition with corrections and minor additions, 1999). I am delighted now to see the book appear as a volume in the International Research Center for Japanese Studies Monograph Series. I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have made this possible, and particularly to Professor Royall Tyler, who was kind enough to undertake the English translation.

The initial edition of *Nihon no "bungaku" gainen* received the gratifying approval of North American, European, Australian, Chinese, Korean, and other colleagues long concerned with Japanese literature, and in 2001 it was published in Korean, in a translation by Professor Kim Su-chae of Korea University. In Japan itself, I hear it is already required reading in a dozen graduate programs and has taken its place among basic works to be read by anyone aiming to engage in serious study of Japanese literature. It is often quoted, and I am told that it has fired some young scholars with the ambition to pursue new research. Nothing could give its author greater pleasure.

After completing the first version of *Nihon no "bungaku" gainen*, I undertook to consider certain elements that demand recognition in any discussion of the modern restructuring of the concept of "literature." Foremost among my resulting projects have been a fundamental study of the modernization of the written language; an inquiry into the changing critical standards applied to the classics; and an examination of the modern restructuring of the view of "history" within literature in a broad sense.

I have incorporated the conclusions derived from this work into the English edition, and likewise the major results of the latest research into the literary art (*bungei* 文芸) of ancient and medieval times. In the Nara to mid-Heian period there existed the notion of what might be called "Japanese literature" (*wabungaku* 和文学), in contradistinction to the Chinese term *bungaku* (*wenxue*); and this notion led to the appearance of multiple layers of legitimating historical narrative, as power shifted from group to group in society. A discussion of this topic has been added in Chapter 3 (3.1.2.1). In Chapter 5 ("The Concept and Its Supporting Structure") I have added Section 3, on literacy and conceptions of the "national language" (*kokugo* 国語), in order to outline the Meiji-period debate over the written language. Furthermore, in Chapter 8 (The Acceptance and Evolution of Modern "Literature"), I have added Section 3 on the concept of "Japanese literature" and the changing assessment of the classics. This section considers the way the *Man'yōshū*, *Genji monogatari*, and the haikai of Bashō came to be recognized as the representative masterpieces of Japanese literature as a whole. These additions relate the history of ideas to views of language and to their practical application in reception history. They form a part of my life work, which is to rewrite the history of modern and contemporary Japanese literature, and they elucidate my strategy for approaching this goal.

These are the most obvious changes, but to some extent I have also modified the beginning of the Introduction written toward the end of the last century; redone certain passages of the main text; added details to the notes; and revised and augmented figures and graphs intended to assist the

reader. I consider this the definitive version of my book.

A closing word of thanks is due Iwai Shigeki 岩井茂樹, of the Department of Japanese Studies, School of Cultural and Social Studies, Graduate University for Advanced Studies (Sōkendai 総研大), who painstakingly checked the readings of all the Japanese names in the English edition and looked up most of the birth and death dates given in the index of names.