Preface

This issue of Senri Ethnological Studies (SES) contains papers presented at the Taniguchi International Symposium held at the National Museum of Ethnology, Suita, Osaka, Japan from 16 to 23 March, 1992. The symposium, “Comparative Studies of Technology”, was tenth in a series “Japanese Civilization in the Modern World”, initiated in 1983. This symposium was co-sponsored by the National Museum of Ethnology and the Senri Foundation with generous support from the Taniguchi Foundation. We wish especially to express our heartfelt gratitude to the late Toyosaburo Taniguchi, an Executive Director of the Taniguchi Foundation when our symposium was held.

In this issue only papers presented at the symposium are included. Comments by Harumi Befu and Josef Kreiner will be included in the Japanese version of this report, which is to be published in the near future. In 1992, Befu, now a Professor of Kyoto Bunkyo University, was a Professor of Stanford University. Kreiner, now Director of the Japanology Seminar at University of Bonn, was a director of Deutsches Institute fur Japanstudien in Tokyo. Both have been regular presenters, discussants and commentators in the Taniguchi Symposium series since its beginning.

Umesao, then Director of the National Museum of Ethnology raised several challenging questions at our symposium: (i) Is Japanese civilization a copy? (ii) Did Japan’s modern technology begin with the Meiji restoration? (iii) How does technology relate to social structure? (iv) Is Japanese society group-based? (v) Is technology always transferrable? (vi) What forces sustain modern technology? (vii) What is the informationalization of technology? (viii) Will technology become separate from nationality? Some views expressed here are considerably different from traditional views of Japanese society and technology. We hope that readers of this issue will reconsider historical facts and their significance for present society and technology.

Publication of this symposium report, the tenth was delayed and comes after the eleventh report which was published as No. 40 of SES. Finally, we thank Junko Miyazaki who assisted with proof reading and bibliographies.

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The Editors