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国立民族学博物館学術情報リポジトリ  National Museum of Ethnology Repository
Preface

This volume is a report on an international symposium held in March 1986 on the theme “Japanese Civilization in the Modern World: Comparative Studies of Economic Institutions.” The symposium was co-sponsored by the Japanese National Museum of Ethnology and the Senri Foundation, with the generous support of the Taniguchi Foundation. It was the fourth in a continuing series of symposia. The first symposium was held in March 1983 under the theme “Japanese Civilization in the Modern World: Life and Society,” with a view to establish new theories in civilization studies and determine the significance of the Japanese civilization in the modern world. The second symposium was held the next year under the theme “Japanese Civilization in the Modern World: The City and Urbanization in Comparative Perspective.” The reports on these symposia have already been published. The third symposium was held in March 1985 under the theme “Japanese Civilization in the Modern World: Comparative Studies of Administrative Organizations.”

This volume comprises 11 papers presented at the symposium and two commentaries. The report begins with the Keynote Address of Dr. Tadao Umesao, Director-General of the National Museum of Ethnology, who is the promoter and virtual organizer of this series of symposia and a co-editor of this volume. As Dr. Umesao could not attend the symposium due to unexpected illness, Mr. Nobuyuki Hata, Assistant Professor of the National Museum of Ethnology acted as chairman of the executive committee for the symposium, and read the script for the Keynote Address. Subsequently, some portions of the script were rewritten by the author for publication. The other 10 papers are arranged in the order of presentation at the symposium. This volume is concluded by general comments from Professor Harumi Befu of Stanford University and Professor Josef Kreiner of University of Bonn, regular participants since the first symposium. As in previous reports, discussions at the symposium on the papers and comments are not included in the volume.

At this symposium, a great variety of information on the Japan’s economic structure, or systems and social institutions related to economy, was provided by participants for discussion. As mentioned by Dr. Umesao in his Keynote Address, this procedure was essential for the theorization of comparative civilization studies. Results of the symposium suggested that comparison of the Japanese economic institution with its counterpart in Korea or China will lead to new approaches in the study. One example was a fruitful discussion at the symposium on the concept of “zaibatsu,” or plutocracy, in Japan. Though it is regrettable that many thought-provoking discussions are not published in this volume, the editors hope that readers will draw suggestions themselves from the papers and, in particular, the two general commentaries.
Professor Kreiner pointed out that this symposium did not achieve significant results in the theorization of civilization studies, as participants were occupied with the interesting task of confirming and studying individual facts. The theorization will be pursued further as a goal of this series of symposia.

This report appears later than originally planned due to various circumstances. With publication now at hand, we express our heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Toyosaburo Taniguchi, the originator of the Taniguchi Foundation, who accorded us both material and moral support in carrying out this symposium. The dinner party with Mr. Taniguchi afforded us a most pleasing memory. As well, we are deeply grateful to our colleagues who participated in the symposium. Though we caused them much trouble in the form of the inspection and proofreading of the manuscript over a prolonged period, due to the delay of publication, we never wavered in our determination to record the results of our active exchanges over those seven days in book form.

We owe a word of deep appreciation to the staffs of the Senri Foundation and the National Museum of Ethnology, who were responsible for the impeccable planning and execution of the symposium. Without such support, neither the symposium nor this publication would have been possible.

As well, we are preparing for the publication of the Japanese version of this report. We hope for the interest of many individuals in this Japanese version, in which discussions on reports and general comments not published in this volume will be included.

The Editors

Senri, Osaka
November 1989