

Preface

This first issue of *Inter Faculty* presents the results of some of the study and research activities carried out over the past three years under the IFERI (Inter Faculty Education Research Initiative) programme *New fields of academic research in the Humanities and Social Sciences and Inter Faculty Education* set up in the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Tsukuba.

Sponsored by the JSPS project for enhancing systematic education in graduate schools, IFERI was established with two principal objectives in mind. Firstly, to create a new framework for research both in respect of the existing institution and its faculty, and in respect of the students; and secondly, it was to enable and provide effective support for doctoral students in undertaking such new approaches to research.

The ensuing research studies carried out were highly varied and complex. This was in part due to the research subjects themselves and in part to the nature of this new approach to research. Put differently, the fusion of different disciplines basically implies a consideration of diverse aspects of the given research theme from multiple perspectives. In analyzing a given author (his life and his work), for example, a discussion of the relation of that author to literature as well as to his society, history, political environment, language, cultural identity and so on, will reveal a reality, a depth, to that particular author's mode of existence, and in turn to his society, his history and culture. Or again, in a study of a nation and its dominions, considerations of relations between the nation-state and dependent territories, democratic tradition, economic development, ethnic minorities and of drastic changes in the environment on a global scale are inevitable.

Such an approach to research can only be undertaken within a collaborative framework, comprising student, research director, specialist advisors. IFERI provides support for the 'research units'; the student sets up the proposed project, organizes study groups, workshops, and attends or actively participates in student forums, inter-university seminars and international conferences; faculty counsel the students, put them in touch with professors from other laboratories and graduate schools, other universities. Thus, quite naturally, while respecting the integrity of each field of research, the notion of inter-faculty grew within our graduate school. *Inter Faculty*, our electronic journal, is a forum to present and discuss these activities which reach across the boundaries of a single discipline.

In the present issue, the articles of the first section discuss a wide range of themes touching on considerations of governance and society from the differing points of view of political science, religious and anthropological study, philosophy and language. The authors draw on a variety of approaches from linguistic (e.g. Tsunoda, Matsueda, Muradova) to historical (e.g. Tsujinaka, Tsunoda), they discuss flexibility and accountability (e.g. Takahashi, Tsujinaka, Lee), cultural representation (e.g. Hasegawa, Lee, Muradova), problems confronting modern society (e.g. Matsueda, Imai, Lee) and modern forms of governance and regulation (e.g. Tsujinaka, Takahashi, Tsunoda, Lee, Matsueda).

The second section presents the discussions of the two student forums *Living with Diversity* as reported in the proceedings of 2008 and 2009. Here again the aim of these forums was to provide an opportunity for young researchers and graduate students to come together and discuss problems and issues across the boundaries of their different specialized fields of expertise. And finally, in the third section, two tanka anthologies with a very modern perspective on contemporary society are reviewed.

For such a variety of studies that *a priori* seem completely unrelated to be presented together, IFERI has, all through these past three years, held weekly work sessions with colleagues, professors and students. In discussing and sharing academic problems, an understanding has grown between us that every issue and every problem is related and that there is nothing that is without interest.

I sincerely hope that as you read through this edition of IF, you too will be able to share in this understanding.

Saburo AOKI
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