Foreword

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In May 2013, the Asian Law Center (ALC) celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. That makes the Center one of the oldest and most fruitful programs in Asian legal studies in the United States, as Professor John O. Haley indicated in his chapter, “The First Decades, 1961–2000.” Between 2012 and 2013, we held a series of events, not only to commemorate the past, but, more importantly, to envision the future of the field. Distinguished alumni, former faculty colleagues, and former students who are now law professors were invited back to Seattle for conferences, presentations, and workshops. In Tokyo, our events coincided with Professor John O. Haley’s award of the prestigious decoration the Order of the Rising Sun conferred by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan. The chapters in this volume were originally papers presented in these events or are further reflections as a result of these events, and have been masterfully put together by Professors John Haley and Toshiko Takenaka.

Confucius says, at age thirty, a person establishes himself; at forty, he gains wisdom; at fifty, a person knows his destiny. At the Asian Law Center, we are experiencing all of the above at the same time. The Center is reinvigorated. At the same time as this volume is being published John Haley is coming back to the ALC; Daniel Foote is going to split his time between the University of Tokyo and ALC; Michael Young, the distinguished Japanese law specialist, has become the President of the University of Washington; Thomas Schoenbaum, who has extensive experience in both Europe and Japan, is joining us from George Washington University. Thanks to the past leadership of Veronica Taylor, we also have expanded our horizon: Professor Clark Lombardi, an Islamic law specialist, joined our faculty in 2004 and contributed his chapter in this volume. Between 2006 and 2012, Professor Jonathan Kang contributed to our understanding of Korean law as an ALC faculty member. I came to the ALC in 2006 to fill in the vacuum left by Don Clarke, one of the most distinguished Chinese law specialists of his generation.
Fifty years is a long time: Asia has changed enormously, so has the United States. While it is always a risky business to predict the future, one thing is quite certain – the need for the Asian Law Center to continue its objective of promoting mutual understanding will not go away. In 1985, nearly thirty years ago, at a conference hosted by ALC under Professor Dan Henderson, William P. Alford, then a young scholar on Chinese law, called for an “obligation to be vigilant” against unwarranted assumptions. To fulfill that obligation is the long-term mission of the ALC. This book is another effort in that direction.