

## Editorial

2016 is going to be a major year for Japanese archaeological engagement with the rest of the world. In the late summer, the 8<sup>th</sup> World Archaeological Congress (WAC) will be held in Kyoto, providing an unprecedented opportunity to place issues of concern to Japanese archaeology in a truly global context. WAC-8 is supported by the Japanese Archaeological Association, the organisation behind the publication of the Japanese Journal of Archaeology, and represents some 7000 professional archaeologists active in Japan. The World Archaeological Congress is a fascinating phenomenon in its own right: born of concerns around academic freedom and the crisis in the discipline that arose from the ban on scholars from South Africa attending an archaeological congress in 1986 (see Peter Ucko, *Academic Freedom and Apartheid*, Duckworth: 1987). WAC is now the flagship for inclusive diversity in all areas of archaeological activity, and provides a forum *par excellence* for discussing the nature and significance of archaeological enquiry. This major event falls hard on the heels of the INQUA Congress in Nagoya in August 2015, where many sessions addressed what are more usually regarded as the scientific advances in understanding earlier (Quaternary) prehistory. Such congresses provide opportunities for many people, who might not otherwise think of visiting Japan, to experience the vibrancy of Japanese academic discourse first hand, and offers chances to foster new networks from which fresh collaborations and new knowledge may spring.

Archaeology is one of the few disciplines that cross-cut the traditional divide between humanities and sciences. Many readers may be aware of the controversy that blew up in late 2015 around comments from the Japanese Ministry of Education that led many commentators to believe that the Japanese government would no longer support arts and humanities at Japanese national universities. While the original comments were subsequently redacted, the global context for the humanities remains perilous. Archaeology in Japan is traditionally taught in Faculties of Humanities (or Letters as the ‘Bungakubu’ in Japanese is often translated), and so usually sits aside such disciplines as history and languages, and it is a challenge for those charged with equipping new generations of archaeologists with the skills they need to critically assess the plethora of new techniques being employed to analyse archaeological material – from AMS dating to DNA research – which derive from developments in the natural sciences. The Humanities at their best foster a critical appreciation of all that it means to be human, and of the methods needed to study that, and archaeology is well-placed to be at the heart of such an endeavour. This debate is not new, and the divisions within academia,

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while they are open to exploitation for deleterious ends, can also provide fertile ground for energising discussion about the significance of what we do (see Jerome Kagan's reappraisal of C.P. Snow's influential formulation of this debate, in *The Three Cultures: natural sciences, social sciences and the humanities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, Cambridge University Press: 2009).

The original article in this issue arises from a long-term project designed to bring some of the very significant findings of Medieval archaeology in Japan to a broader audience. Richard Pearson has over a long career published extensively on Japanese archaeology in academic journals, and brought the first major exhibition of Japanese archaeology to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC in 1992, accompanied by a fine catalogue, *Ancient Japan*. His co-edited volume on *Windows on the Japanese Past* (University of Michigan: 1986) introduced many of the key debates in Japanese archaeology through the translated voices of a multitude of Japanese specialists, and continues to be a very important text. Medieval studies in Japan have for long (too long?) been the preserve of historians, although a new generation of studies are incorporating much more archaeological evidence, and there is also now available an English-language translation of AMINO Yoshihiko's seminal work which makes much of the Medieval archaeological record as providing an alternative view to written accounts of the period, *Nihon no rekishi o yominaosu*, published as *Rethinking Japanese History* (translated by Alan Christy, University of Michigan: 2012). We are delighted to bring this paper to our readers, acknowledging the contribution that our distinguished senior colleagues in the field continue to make, while also offering a taster of the scholarship in an area of Japanese archaeology that has not much featured in western-language materials, more of which is shortly to be available in forthcoming publications.

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