



EDITORIAL



AS AN AREA FOR archaeological study, Asia has significance that far outweighs the attention it has received from Western scholars. It was occupied by humans (and their predecessors) for many millennia; through time Asia gave rise to a variety of highly distinctive societies and cultures whose history has been illuminated by archaeological research. In many parts of Asia, we are still discovering the range and diversity of archaeological remains that occur. As a rule, our traditional descriptions of Asian prehistory (e.g., lack of technological innovation, recurrent waves of population migration) have proved to be inadequate to account for new archaeological finds from the area. Today, there are many more opportunities for archaeologists to contribute new understandings about the prehistory of Asia in both culture history and method and theory.

However, to achieve these kinds of goals Western archaeologists must also acknowledge that archaeological knowledge is viewed and pursued somewhat differently in Asia. Archaeology there occupies a privileged position with respect to history. Archaeological findings are widely disseminated to the public in many Asian countries and are often rapidly integrated into local and state histories. In this way archaeology counts because it is directly relevant to national history. This assimilation of knowledge proceeds differently than in the West: within most countries there is less emphasis on discontinuity between regions and time periods. Similarly, there is far less skepticism about the conclusions derived from archaeological research. Finally, Asian archaeologists have an important stake in interpreting their country's prehistory, often in books and periodicals published in their native language.

Rather than competing with these contributions, *Asian Perspectives* is designed to complement and enhance the archaeology of Asia. One way we do this is by making the results of archaeological research in Asia more widely available to Western archaeologists who may not otherwise follow its achievements. We hope to improve our record in this area by fostering the presentation of archaeological investigations by Asian archaeologists. To that end, I encourage my Asian colleagues to consider *Asian Perspectives* as a venue for reporting their research. It is also important that we recognize how the practice and interpretation of Asian archaeology may differ from Western models. Thus, not only may there be language barriers to the successful communication of archaeological research, but there may be substantial differences between regional archaeological conceptual frameworks, and these may affect the exchange of information. At *Asian Perspectives* we acknowledge our Western scholastic heritage in archaeology, and yet we refuse to use this heritage as a basis to categorically exclude other approaches to interpret the past. Instead, we choose to learn about such differences, and to share these with our readers. I believe this will improve the quality and effectiveness of debate, not hinder it.

Keeping pace with technology is just one of the ways we continue to learn, and this is as true for publishing in archaeology as it is for the entire discipline. This issue of *Asian Perspectives* is the first that has been substantially prepared on disk. All of the articles (with one exception), all of the book reviews, and even this editorial were entered onto disk and electronically typeset. This change in the way we produce the journal suggests that additional innovations are in store for the future. It is just one more example of the impact computers and word processing software now have on our professional lives. Presumably, such technological alterations will also make the process of communication more efficient and will provide all of us with more time to read and assess the recent finds and newly interpreted results of Asian archaeology as they are presented in *Asian Perspectives*.

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