

Preface

Tokai University, founded in 1942 during World War II, is a relatively young Japanese university. In 1959, the Institute of Civilization Research was set up so that essential research, realizing the University's Founding Spirit of "building a balanced civilizational society," could be carried out. The aim of this spirit was and is to achieve a balanced society under the harmony of spiritual culture and material civilization. It sought, in other words, a synergy between liberal arts and scientific technology. The journal *Civilization* is the institute's main publication. In 2001, the institute was renewed by integrating the Institute of Civilization Research with the Institute of Social Behaviors and the Institute of Arts. Based on this integration of a variety of research fields, the new institute aims to promote comprehensive research into human activities and the civilizations in which these activities take place.

International collaboration is indispensable to the realization of such civilization studies and to the development of dialogue between different cultures and civilizations. Thus, this special issue (No. 24) is devoted to the international symposium, "The Fourth Dialogue between Civilizations," held in March 2019 at the Tokai University European Center in Denmark. Since November 2015, this symposium has been held annually. The first two symposia took place under the title "Civilization Dialogue between Europe and Japan." The third symposium extended the field of study by changing the name to "Dialogues between Civilizations," to which a new subject area, the Environment Problem, was added.

Today, there is a global trend toward the theme of "national priority." However, humans face many serious problems, such as global warming and plastic pollution, which cannot be resolved nationally. To resolve such problems, international measures must be demanded, based on mutual understandings between countries. Although the symposium is but a small step, it signifies a steady effort to enlarge international relationships and contribute to creating global harmony among our civilized societies.

Finally, in transmitting thanks to the symposium staff, as well as to the editors of the issue, the institute hopes that the symposium will continue to sustain and even develop human civilized society.

Kazushige YAMAMOTO
Director, Institute of Civilization Research