THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF JAPAN

This is the first book-length study of the Yayoi and Kofun periods of Japan (c. 600 BC–AD 700), in which the introduction of rice paddy field farming from the Korean peninsula ignited the rapid development of social complexity and hierarchy that culminated with the formation of the ancient Japanese state. The author traces the historical trajectory of the Yayoi and Kofun periods by employing cutting-edge sociological, anthropological, and archaeological theories and methods. The book reveals a fascinating process through which sophisticated hunting-gathering communities in an archipelago on the eastern fringe of the Eurasian continent were transformed materially and symbolically into a state.

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The Cambridge World Archaeology series is addressed to students and professional archaeologists, and to academics in related disciplines. Most volumes present a survey of the archaeology of a region of the world, providing an up-to-date account of research and integrating recent findings with new concerns of interpretation. While the focus is on a specific region, broader cultural trends are discussed and the implications of regional findings for cross-cultural interpretations considered. The authors also bring anthropological and historical expertise to bear on archaeological problems and show how both new data and changing intellectual trends in archaeology shape inferences about the past. More recently, the series has expanded to include thematic volumes.
THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF JAPAN: FROM THE EARLIEST RICE FARMING VILLAGES TO THE RISE OF THE STATE

KOJI MIZOGUCHI
for Hiromi,

and

everyone and every thing I loved/love
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Writing about what was going on in a temporal segment of the past of a modern nation-state is an impossible task. Or one might say that it is only made possible by accepting artificiality and arbitrariness creeping in. A modern nation-state is a created entity, and its boundaries have been drawn, redrawn, taken for granted, and disputed in order to hold those who live within them together, or at times to split them apart. The boundaries work as filters to choose who and what can come inside, and they are there to be referred to when those who dwell inside the nation-state identify who they are and who they are not. And writing about what has been going on in the inside, in any manner and intension, is bound to "reproduce" the boundaries; if one accepts them as taken for granted, so it would; and if one tries to dispute their validity, authenticity, significance, and so on, still so it would, because it would evoke claims for and against, and as a result reinforce their presence in the mind of those who become aware of the problems concerning them.

However, such history still has to be written, or so I believe, because we all were born into a nation-state, fully ‘functioning’ or otherwise, which is meant to protect and further our rights, and constitute and determine, to a significant degree, how we live, die, and are remembered/forgotten. Therefore, the nation-state matters a great deal, thinking about it matters a great deal, imagining how it can be otherwise matters a great deal, and therefore, to think about how ‘it’ has come about, despite this ‘it’ being an artificial, arbitrary, and specific-value-committed entity, matters a great deal to us.

In that sense, books like this have to be written in the manner which illustrates the range of ways in which a nation-state’s history has been investigated and written, and which explicitly reveals how the author thinks about it, engages with it, and imagines how it can be otherwise. That is the intension which I have been keeping with myself throughout my writing of this book about the supposed ‘critical phases’ of the history of Japan: the Yayoi and Kofun periods.

The Yayoi period witnessed the introduction and establishment of rice paddy field agriculture, and the Kofun period saw the construction of a large number of keyhole- and variously shaped tumuli, some of which are truly gigantic. Naturally, the periods have attracted significant scholastic interest and evoked popular imagination concerning how the ancient Japanese ‘state’ emerged. The mythological origin of the imperial family, depicted in the two oldest imperial chronicles, namely, the Kojiki and the Nihonshoki, is ‘regarded’ by many Japanese people, albeit ambiguously but firmly, to have marked not only the origin of the Japanese ‘race’ but also the beginning of the basic traits of the uniquely Japanese lifeways and customs, and, those constitutive components of ‘Japaneseness’ are regarded to be traced back to those periods.

As we will see later in the volume in detail, the legal status of the emperor in the current constitution, that is, the Constitution of Japan, is the symbol of the integration of the nation, and in the previous one, that is, the Constitution of the Empire of Japan, was a sort of absolute sovereign. It is well known that the emperor’s legal status was abused during World War II and the Asian-Pacific War, which brought immense devastation and suffering to the neighbouring countries such as China and Korea as well as Japan itself. Because of that, the basic elements of the ‘Japaneseness’, both
positive and negative, are also regarded to have their origins traced back to those periods. That implies that the origins and sources of the failures and successes of the Japanese nation can be found in those periods, and, accordingly, the study of the periods has been the arena of both scholastic and popular debates concerning the (good and bad) origin(s) of the Japaneseeseness.

Naturally, the study of the periods has confined itself to the investigation of such issues, and has not necessarily been aware of or had its wider potential recognised, such as the possibility of making contributions to the deepening of the study of the emergence and development of social complexity and state formation. Consequently, the periods have not attracted as much international interest as the Jomon period, the era of ‘affluent foragers’, does.

This volume is meant to change the situation by illustrating for the international audience the potential and excitement of the study of the Yayoi and Kofun periods. I shall not pretend to be thorough in the coverage of the available evidence, the topics previously covered, and the models and interpretations previously proposed; the richness of the scholarship and the amount of the evidence accumulated are simply staggering. I also admit that the evidence analysed is considerably biased to western Japan, where a larger number of the phenomena that are related to causes of the changes took place. (I have to admit that it is also significantly due to my familiarity with the data from western Japan.) Admitting these shortcomings, I shall focus on being as explicit as possible about the framework with which I choose the evidence, the methods to analyse them, and the theory to make sense of/interpret the outcomes. I shall also avoid reproducing established Japaneseeseness narratives by focussing on the unique contextuality in which the individual was situated when she or he was engaged in communications with the others and the contingency generated by it. By drawing upon the theory of social systems and communication proposed by the late Niklas Luhmann, the German sociologist, I shall recognise communication as the basic unit of social phenomena and the basic arena in which sociality is reproduced, and I shall try to describe the historical trajectory of the periods as the trajectory through which the material media and structure of communication were transformed in order to react to changes generated within and outside a given field of communication/a communication system. By doing so, I shall ensure that the picture I present can be compared with preexisting general models on the emergence and development of social complexity and state formation and with cases from various parts of the world.

I learnt archaeology in Japan and the United Kingdom, and I have been made to see what I am doing as a form of ‘mimicry’: in order to communicate and do archaeology with my colleagues in Japan, I tacitly but strongly feel that I have to conform to the expectations my colleagues have of me; and the same happens with my colleagues abroad. This makes my attitude to Japan, and the ways in which I think, is a cause of my being obsessed with theorisation, which at least allows me to pin down the framework through which I observe how I oscillate.

I have been extremely fortunate to have many colleagues and friends, in Japan and abroad, who have tolerated my oscillation and obsession, and who have provided me with various kinds of support when I felt lost. I would particularly like to thank my colleagues in Kyushu University, Yosihyuki Tanaka, Shozo Iwanaga, Kazuo Miyamoto, Jun’ichiro Tsujita, Takahiro Nakahashi, Ren’ya Sato, Yoshinori Tajiri, and Kyoko Funahashi for providing me with an excellent research and teaching environment; Sander van der Leeuw, Gina Barnes, Ian Hodder, Colin Renfrew, Simon Kaner, and Julian Thomas for their academic and personal mentorship and friendship; and Norman Yoffee for understanding, supporting, and encouraging me throughout the process of the writing of this volume and being extremely patient. My wife, Hiromi, has always been with me and shared with me all good and bad times.

For various influences on the way I do archaeology and stimulations to the way in which I wrote the volume, I would like to thank the late Koichi Yokoyama, the late Takato Kojima, the late Takashi Okazaki, the late Yoshio Kondo, the late Peter Ucko, the late Bruce Trigger, the late Yukio Matsunaga, Tadashi Nishitani, Hitoshi Fujita, Fujio Oda, Nobuyuki Shimojo, Hiroaki...
Preface and Acknowledgements


Last but not least, I would also like to thank everyone who excavated and published the traces of human lives from the periods that this volume covers; without their toil, the past cannot materially prove its existence.

Parts of Chapter 8 were based upon my article ‘Nodes and edges: A network approach to hierarchisation and state formation in Japan’ Journal of Anthropological Archaeology, 28(1) 1:14–26.

What I feel with particular poignancy now is that what you are is what you have loved, that is, people, their works, and their ways to live their lives, and all sorts of things, smells, touches, goods, buildings, landscapes, and so on. This work is composed of what I have loved, and particularly of the memories I have of them. I dedicate the book to those who have been and things and matters that have been with me and dwelled and/or been etched in my ever-changing and, in a way, growing, memory, that enabled me to endure and finish writing this book.

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