Archaeology, Society and Identity in Modern Japan

This bold and illuminating study examines the role of archaeology in the formation of the modern Japanese nation and explores the processes by which archaeological practice is shaped by national social and intellectual discourse. Leading Japanese archaeologist Koji Mizoguchi argues that an understanding of the past is a central component in the creation of national identities and modern nation-states and that, since its emergence as a distinct academic discipline in the modern era, archaeology has played an important role in shaping that understanding. By examining in parallel the uniquely intense process of modernisation experienced by Japan and the history of Japanese archaeology, Mizoguchi explores the close interrelationship between archaeology, society and modernity, helping to explain why we do archaeology in the way that we do. This book is essential reading for anybody with an interest in the history and theory of archaeology or modern Japan.

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To Hiromi

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PREFACE

This volume is as much about applied social theory as about archaeology, because its ultimate objective is to consider the nature and character of the particular field of social practice/communication that is called archaeology by investigating how it has been and is situated in society as a whole.

To be more concrete, the volume attempts to critically portray the constitutive elements and characteristics of contemporary archaeological practice and the problems which they generate. The contention to be put forward is that they derive from a specific form of generating and maintaining sociality and social institutions, called modernity, which is fundamentally different from its predecessors, i.e., pre-modern social formations. The difference between modernity and pre-modern social formations is multi-faceted, and hence demands a multi-faceted approach. However, according to the late German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, it can be tackled most effectively by investigating the intrinsic nature of human communication and the difference between the way in which human communication is made possible in modernity compared with pre-modern social formations. The way in which human communication is made possible has evolved through the history of the human being as the size of the basic unit of social integration and its complexity has increased, but it was not until the coming of modernity that the human being entered the stage in which every communication was bound to be critically and reflexively commented upon by other communications and effectively relativised; before that moment, communications could be determined/fixed in their values/meanings by referring to something *outside* the realm of human communication, such as the divine and god-given order (of social hierarchy, for instance). This change has had far-reaching effects upon the existential base of the human being and human relations. This change, as this volume will illustrate, was connected to the emergence of the nation-state, which still functions as the basic institutional, cognitive and physical framework and which, to a significant extent, determines our life-course today.

The change transformed the way we identify ourselves and the way we connect ourselves to the world. This change, after all, resulted in the emergence and disciplinisation of most modern scientific disciplines, including archaeology, which began examining both the world and the way human beings related themselves to, and made sense of, the world. That means that the project to be undertaken in this volume cannot confine itself within the disciplinary boundaries of archaeology. Rather, the author will draw heavily upon the fruit of sociological investigations into the characteristics and consequences of modernity. Sociology, in a way, is the epitome of

modernity; it attempts not only to make sense of the contemporary world but also to comprehend how we make sense of the contemporary world. In other words, sociology is the epitome of reflexivity; sociology not only comments upon the contemporary world but also comments upon the way in which the commentary upon the contemporary world is made. By sociologising archaeology, the author hopes not only to problematise and relativise the taken-for-granteds in doing archaeology in modernity but also to contribute to the general social-theoretical endeavour to better capture the realities of social life, i.e., the ways in which we cope with socially generated difficulties in the contemporary world. In this sense, the volume is written for social scientists in general as much as for archaeologists and those who are interested in the way archaeology is situated in contemporary society.

It is widely felt nowadays that modernity is experiencing a fundamental transformation. For some, modernity has already come to an end and we are now living in post-modernity. Either way, effects of the transformation of modernity have become strongly felt in archaeology, and the atmosphere can be captured by some buzz words in the literature: fluidity, fragmentation, globalisation, multivocality, identity, and so on. Each of them can be connected to the sense of crisis and new opportunity in a distinct manner; they evoke a sense of indeterminacy, which contradicts the essence of the conventional definition of science as the pursuit of *Truth*, but they also raise hope for the beginning of new types of science more relevant to what is going on in the contemporary world. The ambivalence and confusion are also acutely felt in archaeology, and they are felt the world over, as 'globalisation', a significant consequence of the maturation of modernity, is taking its hold. At the same time, the sense of indeterminacy, the very source of the ambivalence and confusion, should also be taken as a source of hope for archaeology; it is this investigation into how to cope with it that will push the discipline forward.

I have been talking so far about the scope of the volume. Now let me touch upon its objectives. This volume is not an attempt to solve once and for all the above-mentioned problems. Rather, it suggests a way to cope with the difficulties by *avoiding* some of the predictable dangers that the problems lead to. Many of these dangers have already become quite visible and apparent to careful eyes, but their harmful implications have not been fully contextualised and appreciated, in archaeology in particular. A contention to be put forward will be that we have to live with the dangers and problems; first of all, the dangers are the consequences of the maturation of modernity which we cannot possibly discard altogether, and secondly, we need to be able to anchor and fix our identities in the past in various ways, in this world of indeterminacy and fluidity, but *relying upon* the past inevitably comes with some risk, that leads to the drawing and deepening of various sorts of social divisions. The task of archaeologists is to carry on communicating about those dangers which derive from the use of the past at the same time as continuing to produce images of the past; we cannot stop doing archaeology altogether, even if doing it implies innate dangers deriving from its unique relationship to modernity.

The investigation and argumentation of this volume will be undertaken by studying what has been and is going on in Japan and Japanese archaeology. Japan is

the only country that has managed to 'modernise' and 'industrialise' itself without experiencing colonisation, and that has made the Japanese experience, particularly concerning archaeology, unique the world over. The investigation and argumentation will go back and forth in a cyclic manner between the intrinsic nature of (a) communication, (b) modernity, (c) archaeological communication/discourse, and (d) the unique ways in which communication is reproduced that are connected to the constitutive characteristics of modernity. Each chapter will tackle this 'quadrangle' and the problems generated from this tight and fundamental network from a different perspective. In that sense, each chapter can be read as an independent piece. However, the volume follows the following logical flow. Chapters 1 through 3 are designed to sketch the phenomena to be tackled, outlining the theoretical framework and the procedure of investigation and argumentation. Chapter 4 covers the phase from the modernisation of Japan to the 1970s when the transformation of modernity became tangible, and Chapter 5 covers the period spanning from the 1970s to the present, during which the phenomena variously described as late-, high-, or post-modern have become widespread and the problems and possibilities deriving from them have emerged and become widely felt. Chapter 6 will summarise and conclude the volume.

In all, I should like to reiterate, the volume is designed to portray and elucidate the core nature of the difficulties anyone interested in and working on contemporary social issues related to the formation and maintenance of social boundaries of various sorts is faced with, and in that sense it should be read not only by archaeologists and those who are interested in the relationship between society and archaeology, but also by sociologists and social scientists in general.

I began formally writing the volume back in 2001, but the (sometimes unintentional) preparations began much earlier, possibly as far back as 1998 when I wrote a short article on Anthony Giddens and Niklas Luhmann. The works of these two giants in the sociological exploration of modernity are heavily cited in the present volume, together with some implications of their views on sociality and social reproduction for archaeology. Since then, I have written a number of tentative pieces, some of which I have presented orally at a number of conferences and small gatherings, both in Japan and in Europe, where many individuals have given me invaluable comments, advice, and encouragement. Among them, I would specifically like to thank the following.

Cornelius Holtorf provided me with the initial motivation to write this volume by inviting me to the session entitled 'Philosophy and Archaeology' which he and Harkan Karlsson organised for the Fifth Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists held at the University of Gothenburg, to give a paper entitled 'Anthony Giddens and Niklas Luhmann'. Back then, I was utterly unsure about what to do with what I had learnt from my five-year-and-four-months-long study at Cambridge, when I became able to detach myself from the taken-for-granteds in doing archaeology in my own country, Japan. Returning to Japan in 1994, I suddenly realised that the environment in which I had to survive as an academic felt strange and alienating. In other words, I had become different from my former self, and I

had to renegotiate my position in my own country. By 1997, I had become mentally exhausted and felt I could not carry on any longer. Giving that theoretical paper, which, back then, had no chance of being taken seriously in Japan, to a like-minded and supportive audience helped me accept that I had to find a way to feel comfortable with what I had become.

Ian Hodder, Julian Thomas, Stephanie Korner, and Colin Renfrew gave me inspiration and moral support throughout the germination and the writing of the volume in various ways. Ian Hodder and Colin Renfrew read early versions of the manuscript and gave me useful advice. Stephanie Korner invited me to a number of sessions she had organised and encouraged me to develop some core ideas for the current volume. Julian Thomas criticised my conference papers in a characteristically constructive and helpful manner, thus helping me prepare the theoritical framework for the current volume.

Conversations with Nobiru Notomi and Ikuko Toyonaga were vital in consolidating core ideas in this volume during the initial stage of the planning. Discussions with Tada'aki Shichida of the Saga Prefectural Board of Education about his experiences at the Yoshinogari site, where all the problems and challenges which contemporary Japanese archaeologists face come together, were most valuable. I would also like to thank wholeheartedly my colleagues at Kyushu University ('Kyu-dai'): Yoshiyuki Tanaka, Shozo Iwanaga, Kazuo Miyamoto, Takahiro Nakahashi, Ren'ya Sato, Jyun'ichiro Tsujita, and Takeshi Ishikawa, and my present and former students for having priovided me with a supportive and stimulating environment.

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Finally, my wife, Hiromi, has always been on my side. She believed in what I was doing when I myself was not sure if it was worthwhile, and supported me when I felt that the whole world was hostile to what I was doing. She even took the trouble to read Luhmann and Giddens herself to understand what I was talking about. For that reason, I dedicate this book to her.

Fukuoka, May 2005