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978-0-521-88490-7 - Cambridge World Archaeology: The Archaeology of Japan: From the Earliest Rice Farming Villages to the Rise of the State

Koji Mizoguchi

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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.

Dr. Koji Mizoguchi is Professor of Social Archaeology, Graduate School of Social and Cultural Studies, Kyushu University, Japan. He is the author of *An Archaeological History of Japan: 30,000 BC to AD 700* (2002) and *Archaeology, Society and Identity in Modern Japan* (2006). Dr. Mizoguchi is regarded as a leading Japanese archaeologist, particularly in the study of the Yayoi period and mortuary archaeology. His many contributions to scholarly journals focus on the postcolonial archaeologies of East Asia with special emphasis on Japan, the relationship between modernisation and the disciplinisation of archaeology, mortuary practices and the constitution of social identities, and the study of the centralisation and hierarchisation of social relations by using formal network analysis methods. He was elected the sixth president of the World Archaeological Congress in January 2013.

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for Hiromi,

and

everyone and every thing I loved/love

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CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures</i>	page xi	
<i>List of Tables</i>	xv	
<i>Preface and Acknowledgements</i>	xvii	
PART I FRAMEWORKS		
1. Introduction: The Beginning of Everything?	3	
2. A Tale of Co-transformation: The History of Modern Japan and the Archaeology of the Yayoi and Kofun Periods	9	
3. Frameworks	26	
PART II TRAJECTORIES		
4. Environment and the East Asian Context	43	
5. Beginnings: From the Incipient Yayoi (900/600 BC) to the Late Yayoi I Periods (400/200 BC)	53	
6. An Archaeology of Growth: From the Final Yayoi I (400/200 BC) to the End of the Yayoi IV (AD 1/50)	104	
7. An Archaeology of Hierarchisation: From the Final Yayoi IV to the Yayoi V Periods (AD 1/50–200)	183	
8. An Archaeology of Networks: The Yayoi–Kofun Transition (the Shonai [庄内] Pottery Style and the Earliest Furu [布留] Pottery Style Phase, AD 200–250/275)	214	
9. An Archaeology of Monuments: The Early Kofun (AD 275–400) and Middle Kofun Periods (AD 400–500)	241	
10. An Archaeology of Bureaucracy: The Later Kofun Period (AD 500–600)	297	
11. An Archaeology of Governance: The Establishment of the <i>Ten'no</i> Emperor (AD 600–700)	318	
12. Conclusion	326	
<i>References</i>		335
<i>Index</i>		357

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Koji Mizoguchi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

FIGURES

1.1	The first-ever “Yayoi” pottery excavated and so recognised.	<i>page 5</i>	5.14	Polished stone daggers and polished leaf-shaped arrowheads: peninsula originals and adopted specimens in the archipelago.	95
1.2	The Haji-Nisanzai tumulus, Sakai City, Osaka prefecture.	7	5.15	The Etsuji (Fukuoka) and Shimotsukiguma (Fukuoka) cemeteries.	97
3.1	Regional divisions and names.	31	5.16	The Higashi-Muko cemetery (Hyogo prefecture) composed of rectangular ditch-enclosed burial compounds.	101
3.2	Marxist thesis of the structure of social totality, compared with the social systemic model adopted in the present volume.	37	6.1	The middle Yayoi horizons: A schematized pottery typo-chronological phasing of the Kyushu, the Western, and the Eastern “horizons”.	106
4.1	Calibration curve, plateaus, and cold spells.	46	6.2	Examples of the extraordinarily large building of the Middle Yayoi period in northern Kyushu and western Japan: the Ubihon’mura (Saga prefecture) and the Ikegami-Sone (Osaka prefecture).	108
5.1	The Etsuji village, Fukuoka prefecture.	56	6.3	Transformation(/indigenization) of the Mumun pottery into the indigenous Yayoi Jonokoshi style through the process of hybridization.	111
5.2	The Nishida village, Iwate prefecture.	57	6.4	The distribution of jar burials with grave goods including Chinese bronze mirrors and other Chinese imports and/or iron weapons.	112
5.3	The Shinmachi cemetery, Fukuoka prefecture.	60	6.5	The spatial variation of globular jars across the central Seto Inland Sea and Kinki regions in the form of gradual changes of traits drawing a geographical cline.	116
5.4	The globular jar originated from the Mumun pottery tradition and shallow bowl originated from the indigenous pottery tradition.	61	6.6	A schematised model for the formation of villages as comprised of residential groupings (hamlets) that have budded off from preexisting settlements, with the plan of the Takaradai settlement (Yayoi III and IV), Fukuoka prefecture, and a schematised model	
5.5	The variations of the cooking jar shape-type of the period.	67			
5.6	Examples of hybrid globular jars on the eastern periphery of the “cordoned-and-carinated-cooking-jar horizon” (CCH).	71			
5.7	Tree-felling axes of the beginning of the Yayoi period.	75			
5.8	The Jizoden site, Akita prefecture.	80			
5.9	House types at the beginning of the Yayoi period in the peninsula and the archipelago.	81			
5.10	Ditch-enclosed villages of the Incipient and Early Yayoi.	85			
5.11	Initial Yayoi paddy fields of the Itazuke, Fukuoka prefecture.	91			
5.12	“Dolmens” and related burial facilities in Japan and Korea.	93			
5.13	The emergence of adult burial jars.	94			

	for the development of large central-place-type settlements and allied facilities attached to them, with the plan of the northern burial mound (Yayoi III) of the Yoshinogari settlement.	121	6.25 Shamanistic figures taking an identical gesture and holding identical implements from Kyushu and Kinki.	171
6.7	The Sugu site as a cluster of a large number of residential groups (hamlets).	127	6.26 <i>Dotaku</i> bronze bells with sequential pictorial depictions.	174
6.8	The distribution and the network of regional centre-type settlements in the southern Kinki region.	128	6.27 Analysis of the pictorial depictions (1).	175
6.9	The Kuma-Nishioda loc. 2 and 3 cemeteries, Fukuoka prefecture.	129	6.28 Analysis of the pictorial depictions (2).	176
6.10	Wooden ritual implements from the Minamikata site, Okayama prefecture.	133	6.29 Analysis of the pictorial depictions (3).	177
6.11	Imayama hill, the distribution of the jar burial custom and that of the Imayama axe.	137	7.1 A triangular-sectioned dam of the Late Yayoi period: Naka-Kunryu site, Fukuoka prefecture.	187
6.12	Iron forging hearth of the Nioute, the Sugu site, Fukuoka prefecture.	143	7.2 Paddy fields excavated at Hyakkengawa site, Okayama prefecture.	188
6.13	Classification of jar burial cemeteries according to the spatio-temporal formation process.	145	7.3 Complex canal system excavated at the Hyakkengawa-Haraojima site, Okayama prefecture.	189
6.14	Nagaoka cemetery, Fukuoka prefecture: general plan and formation process.	147	7.4 Four ritual horizons emerged in the Late Yayoi period.	191
6.15	Infant burial jars inserted to the adult grave, the Nagaoka cemetery.	148	7.5 Temporal change of the <i>Dotaku</i> bronze bell and the <i>Dohoko</i> bronze spearhead.	193
6.16	Burial sequential clusters (Kuriyama Location C, an example of burial compound type II).	151	7.6 Regional variations of flanged forged iron axes.	197
6.17	Spatio-temporal formation process of burial compounds during the Yayoi II and III: Burial compound type I, the northern burial mound of the Yoshinogari, Saga prefecture.	152	7.7 Ups and downs of the number of imported mirrors through Hidenori Okamura's seven-phase chronological periods and their distribution period by period.	203
6.18	The probable square burial compound of the Yoshitake-Takagi (Fukuoka prefecture) and the grave goods.	153	7.8 Sendoyama site (Saga prefecture) and its residential segments.	204
6.19	Network of rich jar burials of the Yayoi IV.	157	7.9 Yoshinogari settlement (Saga prefecture) in the Yayoi V.	205
6.20	The Mikumo-Minamishoji, Fukuoka prefecture.	159	7.10 Some examples of the rectangular tumulus with four rectangular features sticking out of the four corners (<i>Yosumi-tosshutsu-fun</i>).	208
6.21	An example of the clusters of rectangular ditch-enclosed burial compounds: the Ama site, Osaka prefecture.	161	7.11 Cemeteries of the Yayoi V.	209
6.22	Oki cemetery (Gunma prefecture) and the spatial segmentation reconstructed by Harunari and Shitara.	163	7.12 Possible relationships between burial compound type III clusters, settlements, and kin/communal groupings.	211
6.23	The Izuruhara cemetery, Tochigi prefecture.	165	8.1 Potteries of non-local stylistic characteristics and origins excavated from a port-of-trade-type settlement, the Nishijinmachi, Fukuoka prefecture.	217
6.24	The horizons of the bronze ritual implements of the Middle Yayoi.	169	8.2 The distribution of typical port-of-trade-type settlements of western Japan indicated by the distributional nodes of the so-called Kibi-style cooking jar.	221
			8.3 Hashihaka (Hashinakayama) tumulus.	222
			8.4 Type 1 and Type 2 early keyhole tumuli.	223

List of Figures

xiii

8.5	Size differences and distribution of the early keyhole tumuli and the Initial Kofun Package (IKP) horizon.	224	9.11	Examples of the <i>Haniwa</i> vessels of the Earlier Kofun period and their configuration on top of the round rear mound of the keyhole tumulus: the Kanakurayama tumulus, Okayama prefecture.	267
8.6	The location of Japanese archipelago in East Asia and ancient provinces as “nodes” relevant to the investigation.	225	9.12	The largest and second-largest tumuli in each phase by mound length, and the difference between them plotted phase by phase.	275
8.7	The nodes and the edges.	227	9.13	Major tumuli clusters of the KCR (Kinki-core region): distribution.	276
9.1	Mound shape-types of the Kofun period.	245	9.14	Five major tumuli clusters: detail.	277
9.2	The construction process of a typical cist: the Ikeda Chausuyama, Osaka prefecture.	251	9.15	Mitsudera site of Gun’ma prefecture.	295
9.3	An example of the <i>Nendo-kaku</i> clay-packed coffins: the Shiramizu Hisagozuka tumulus, Hyogo prefecture.	252	10.1	Size differences between the largest tumuli of individual regions across the archipelago: the Early, Middle, and Late Kofun periods.	298
9.4	An example of the cist with compartments for grave goods: Myokenzan tumulus, Kyoto prefecture.	254	10.2	An example of the packed tumuli clusters (PTC): the Teraguchi-Oshimi, Nara prefecture.	299
9.5	The placement of different categories of artefacts with distinct symbolic meanings: the Yukinoyama tumulus, Shiga prefecture.	255	10.3	The Kinai-type gallery mortuary chamber: Ichio-Hakayama, Nara prefecture.	301
9.6	The cist-like chamber (no. 3 chamber) with a rectangular pit-like entrance of the Roji tumulus, Fukuoka prefecture.	257	10.4	The structure and formation process of the packed tumuli clusters: Location Hiraishitanigawa, Teraguchi-Oshimi, Nara prefecture.	302
9.7	The placement of the <i>Sankakuen-shinju-kyo</i> mirrors in the cist: the Kurozuka tumulus, Nara prefecture.	259	10.5	“Rich” grave good in the “ordinary” assemblages from the PTC: No. 3 of Loc. Hiraishitanigawa, the Teraguchi-Oshimi (Nara prefecture).	305
9.8	An example of the deposition of a large number of iron armors and other weapons without the body: the Nonaka Ariyama, Osaka prefecture.	261	10.6	Late Kofun hilted iron swords: No. 8 tumulus of the Kuwabara-Ishigamoto tumuli cluster, Fukuoka prefecture.	310
9.9	Some proto-types of the <i>Haniwa</i> cylindrical vessel.	264	10.7	The Imashirozuka tumulus, Osaka prefecture.	311
9.10	The stone artefact inferred to have been excavated from the Tatetsuki tumulus (Okayama prefecture) of the Late Yayoi V period.	266	10.8	Late Kofun settlements: Hachioji-Nakata and Kuroimine.	315
			10.9	Movements of <i>Haniwa</i> vessels in the Kanto region in the Late Kofun period.	317
			11.1	The Fujiwara palace and the capital.	323

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Koji Mizoguchi

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

TABLES

3.1	Relative chronological chart	<i>page</i> 34	8.3	Bonacich centrality scores of the edges	229
6.1	Degree centrality scores of the jar burial cemeteries with grave goods	156	8.4	Closeness centrality scores of the edges	230
6.2	Bonacich centrality scores of the jar burial cemeteries with grave goods	156	8.5	Reach centrality scores of the edges	230
6.3	Closeness centrality scores of the jar burial cemeteries with grave goods	156	8.6	Eigenvector centrality scores of the edges	230
6.4	Reach centrality scores of the jar burial cemeteries with grave goods	157	8.7	Betweenness centrality scores of the edges	230
6.5	Eigenvector centrality scores of the jar burial cemeteries with grave goods	157	8.8	Matrix indicating the presence and absence of the edges between the nodes in the Initial Kofun period	232
6.6	Betweenness (flow betweenness) centrality scores of the jar burial cemeteries with grave goods	158	8.9	Degree centrality scores of the edges	232
8.1	Matrix indicating the presence and absence of edges between the nodes in the late Yayoi V	229	8.10	Bonacich centrality scores of the edges	233
8.2	Degree centrality scores of the edges	229	8.11	Closeness centrality scores of the edges	233
			8.12	Reach centrality scores of the edges	233
			8.13	Eigenvector centrality scores of the edges	233
			8.14	Betweenness centrality scores of the edges	234

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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 Japaneseness.

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 Japaneseness 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 communica-

tion 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 about 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 see that archaeology is done in this country, chronically oscillate, at times violently. That, 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, Yoshiyuki 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.

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xix

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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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