

4. A Guide to the Archæology of Japan

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This paper was specially written to serve as a guide to students who though knowing no Japanese wish to do research work in Japanese prehistory, a subject of considerable importance due to the position which the Japanese islands occupy in the northern part of the Pacific, lying off the Asian mainland and close to the New World in the region of the Aleutian Islands and Bering Straits.

PERIODS

Japanese archæologists recognize five major periods in the culture history of Japan. These cultural divisions, schematized below, will be frequently referred to in the following pages:

<i>Periods</i>	<i>Major Features</i>	<i>Approximate Dates</i>
Historic	Written history	A.D. 700–Present
Tomb	Organized states; huge mounds	A.D. 300–A.D. 700
Yayoi 彌生	Rice cultivation	300 B.C.–A.D. 300
Jōmon 縄紋	Pottery and ground stone tools	7,000 B.C.–300 B.C.
Preceramic	Chipped stone tools	? –7,000 B.C.

WORKING TOOLS

General

The study of Japan's prehistory is best begun with a general view. For this, the most up-to-date and convenient survey is Kidder's *Japan before Buddhism*, 1959. Beardsley's paper (1955) is a much more compressed presentation. Munro's *Prehistoric Japan*, 1911, though similarly a survey work, cannot be recommended to a beginner since it is greatly out of date and is likely to confuse and lead astray.

Readily accessible surveys of individual periods are available for the preceramic (Befu and Chard 1960; Serizawa and Ikawa 1960) and the Jōmon (Groot 1951; Kidder 1957; Kraus 1953) but not for the Yayoi or the Tomb period. Befu's thesis (1959) on the Yayoi culture is filed at the University of Michigan.

The above works should be sufficient for a broad outline. While they all have more or less adequate lists of source materials, the following bibliographies will be of further assistance in doing research beyond the survey level.

Bibliographies

Asian Perspectives and the COWA (Council for Old World Archæology) *Bibliography* both list sources by areas, Japan with a section of its own. Although most of the items are in Japanese, they are often annotated and give an idea of their contents beyond the mere translation of these titles. Information relating to their illustrations—photographs, plates, line drawings and maps—is helpful; the more so that for the convenience of Western scholars, the plates often have captions in English or some other Western language.

The annotated listing in *Asian Perspectives* is considerably shorter than that in the COWA *Bibliography*, but it is supplemented by translated tables of contents for major Japanese archæological journals. Discussions of the recent developments in Japanese archæology in *Asian Perspectives* should serve as a useful guide to problem-oriented research. Four volumes of *Asian Perspectives* have so far been published: Vol. I in 1957, Vol. II in 1958, Vol. III in 1960 and Vol. IV in 1961. The only Far Eastern section (Area 17) of the COWA *Bibliography* to come out so far was in 1959. Another is due to appear shortly.

A third bibliographic source is the annual bibliographic issue of the *Journal of Asian Studies*, formerly known as the *Far Eastern Quarterly*. It provides lists by areas and by subjects but without annotation; this omission is not too great a deterrent since the listing is confined to items in, or having summaries in, some Western language. It should be noted that archæological sources are as apt to be found under the heading of *History* or *Anthropology* as *Art and Archaeology*.

Bibliographies and reports of current work also appear regularly in *Arctic Anthropology* (Department of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin). Further, an extensive series of English translations of Japanese archæological reports, not mentioned in any of the above sources, has been appearing since 1960 in *Archives of Archaeology*, the microcard publication of the Society of American Archæology and the University of Wisconsin Press.

Journals

Archæological journals published in Japan with summaries of articles in some Western language—usually in English—are of great help to those without the command of Japanese; they are regrettably few, however. *Kōkogaku Zasshi* (Journal of the Archæological Society of Nippon), the leading archæological journal comparable, perhaps, to *American Antiquity*, has been printing English summaries of original articles since 1949. *Sekki Jidai* (Stone Age), a post-war journal with articles of excellent quality, has been giving English summaries for most of its papers beginning with its first issue in 1955. *Jinruigaku Zasshi* (Journal of the Anthropological Society of Nippon) more and more limits its scope to physical anthropology as the publication of journals in archæology increases. Formerly it contained many papers of archæological interest and still carries some. Printing of English summaries for feature articles in this journal began soon after the last war. *Minzokugaku Kenkyū* (Japanese Journal of Ethnology) occasionally has articles of archæological nature, with English summaries since 1951.

Journals with only tables of contents in a Western language may not be as useful as those with English summaries cited above, but they should be consulted. The first two in the following list have German tables of contents; in the others they are in English.

Shizengaku Zasshi (Zeitschrift für Præhistorie), 1929–40.

Kōkogaku Ronsō (Quartalschrift für Altertumswissenschaft), 1936–40

Nihon Kōkogaku (Japanese Archæology), 1948–49

Kodai (Journal of the Archæological Society of Waseda University), 1951–59

Jodai Bunka (Japanese Ancient Culture), 1952–

Kodaigaku (Palæologia), 1949–

There are numerous other archæological journals with varying standards, which I do not mention because they are exclusively in Japanese. Journals in the related fields of geography, geology and history occasionally publish papers of archæological interest. Many, too numerous to list here, have résumés or tables of contents in a Western language.

While most archæological publications are illustrated, the following survey works have copious and from good to excellent illustrations, both in line drawing and half-tone.

Zusetsu Nihon Bunkashi Taikei (Illustrated Culture History of Japan), Tokyo, Seibundo Shinkosha, 1938 (first ed.); Tokyo, Shogakkan, 1956 (second rev. ed.) Vol I: Primitive Culture. Both editions are organized roughly in the same manner, covering in the first volume racial origins, language, mythology and archæology. The post-war edition which has been completely rewritten and brought up to date includes many valuable illustrations not found in the pre-war work.

Zusetsu Sekai Bunkashi Taikei (Illustrated Culture History of the World), Tokyo, Kadokawa Shoten, 1960. Vol. XX: Japan (Part 1) covers the culture history of Japan to the end of the Tomb period and is profusely illustrated, mostly with photographs.

Sekai Kōkōgaku Taikēi (Archæology of the World), Tokyo, Heibonsha, 1960 Vol. I: Japan (Pre-ceramic and Jōmon); Vol. II: Japan (Yayoi); Vol. III: Japan (Tomb); Vol. IV (Historic, i.e., Nara and Heian). This very detailed survey work is authoritative as well as up-to-date; it is abundantly supplied with plates and figures.

Nihon Kōkōgaku Zukan (Illustrated Archæology of Japan), T. Saito editor; Tokyo, Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1955. Covers all prehistoric periods in a single volume; plates appear on every other page, with explanatory notes on the facing page.

Nihon Noko Bunka no Seisei (The Origin and Growth of the Farming Community in Japan), Japanese Archæologists' Association, Tōkyōdo, Tokyo 1960. Two volumes. The first volume contains a comprehensive study of the Yayoi culture; the second volume consists entirely of supplementary plates.

The number of libraries in the U.S. holding the Japanese sources given here or in the aforementioned bibliographies is unfortunately severely limited. Only the Library of Congress, Harvard and Columbia Universities and the University of California (Berkeley) may be expected to have most of the standard sources. The small, local journals and other publications are practically unavailable in the U.S.A. Students far from these institutions may get access to these materials through the interlibrary loan service.

FIELD WORK AND PROGRAMME

Anyone undertaking research in Japanese archæology should be interested in the archæological research and training programme done in Japan, and what he may expect if he plans also to do research there.

Research institutions in Japan, as elsewhere, may be divided into museums and universities. Many museums in Japan, both in larger and smaller cities, are active in archæological research. To mention a few: the Tokyo National Museum is the home of the Archæological Society of Nippon and houses many valuable archæological specimens with perhaps an inclination for the artistic. The Musashino Historical Museum, war-time residence of the Crown Prince, in the suburb of Tokyo, has a regular archæological staff. In its collection are reconstructed dwellings of the Jōmon, Yayoi and Tomb cultures. The Kurashiki Archæological Museum, located in the Inland Sea region, is a private institution which specializes in the prehistory of that region. The Hakodate Municipal Museum, one of the best in Hokkaido, has a number of archæologists on the staff and is responsible for numerous excavations and for publications of considerable importance.

A radiocarbon laboratory was established in Tokyo a few years ago, but thus far it has not been very active. All radiocarbon dates of Japanese sites have been made available through various laboratories in the West.

At the university level, independent departments of archæology are as hard to come by as in the U.S.A.—Tokyo, Kyoto, Meiji and only a few other universities have them. Japanese archæologists, unless they are lucky enough to be affiliated with one of these few full-fledged departments, must belong to departments of allied disciplines—geology, history, anthropology or even such a remote one as anatomy. It may be mentioned in passing that departments of anthropology in Japan are equally rare. Though they lack archæological training, a fair number of specialists in the sister disciplines engage in archæological research. There are also many semi-professional and non-professional enthusiasts throughout Japan. If the quality of their work does not come up to scientific standards, in numbers at any rate these people certainly constitute a significant portion of the archæologists in Japan.

The specialization of each professional archæologist is directed, generally speaking, into two channels: first, by region, and second, by period. Archæologists on the whole stay within a well-defined region, each carrying out most of his activities there. This provincialism is most strongly felt in locales far away from the large urban centres—Tokyo, Osaka or Kyoto, for instance. The archæologists in these centres, while concerned mainly with their own regions, will often go beyond regional boundaries: for example, as when a problem arises in some remote area which requires competence beyond what is available locally. In contrast to the regional approach, specialization by period is more marked in the urban centres where a large corps of archæologists is concentrated. In such places, archæologists may specialize even in some segment of the five major cultural periods or in some aspect of that segment, such as pottery or stone tools. In remote areas where archæologists are few, the investigator cannot afford to specialize and tends to become a general researcher.

Japanese students wishing to major in archæology must enrol in one of the universities which has professional archæologists on the staff, since museums in Japan do not offer training programmes. The number and kind of courses offered are very limited at most of these institutions: students must therefore rely heavily on their own initiative and on private guidance from professors. Meiji University is fortunate enough to have an independent department of archæology, a museum, and an exceptionally large number (more than 100) of undergraduate majors. It is thus able to offer over a dozen courses at undergraduate and graduate levels, including courses in illustration and field techniques. A dissertation is required at the B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. levels.

The quality of work, both in excavation and publication, varies. Field work which is conducted by qualified specialists from established institutions is comparable to the best carried out elsewhere in the world. But the efforts of amateur enthusiasts can and often do succeed in ruining valuable sites. Between these extremes comes most of the excavation work done.

Publication reflects the uneven character of the work in the field. Semi-professionals and amateurs writing in small, local, frequently mimeographed journals tend to produce articles of less than satisfactory quality. A great many articles are extremely brief, often to the degree of omitting points essential to the argument. However there do occur excellent reports of carefully excavated sites and long articles with careful documentation. A number of syntheses and survey works have been published in recent years which are of admirable quality.

In order to provide a quick general view of research activities for a one-year period, the following figures were extracted from Vol. VIII (1955) of *Archæologia Japonica* (Annual Report of the Japanese Archæologists' Association). In 1955, 142 sites were newly discovered and reported to the government, and 216 sites were excavated. A great many belong to the category of salvage archæology, and were conducted in anticipation of the construction of motor roads and hydro-electric dams. Some 57 whole volumes and 363 journal articles on archæology were published in this same year. The national government granted subsidies amounting roughly to ¥7,800,000 (approximately US\$21,500) for special research projects and provided additional subsidies for publication of 14 journals and 7 whole

volume works related to archæology. In this year, 107 papers of archæological nature were read at meetings of various learned societies such as the Japanese Archæologists' Association and the Archæological Society of Nippon.

This brief presentation of research activities in a single year gives a fair idea of the quantity, if not the quality, of archæological work done in Japan. When the size of Japan is considered—no larger than the state of California—the amount of work is indeed considerable.

Let us glance at some of the current research subjects of major significance in Japanese archæology without attempting to survey all of them—a small number of sample topics will suffice. There are first several general problems of perennial nature which apply to all of the five major cultural periods. The most obvious one is cultural sequence. Though the succession from preceramic through Jōmon, Yayoi, and Tomb to the historic period is established now, wide disagreement prevails regarding the sequence within each period, which require minute lithic or ceramic discriminations and fine stratigraphic analysis, together with regional correlation.

An important problem area lies in the origin of the major cultural traditions. Broadly put, the problem is one of how much was brought in from where and how much was indigenous to Japan in a given period. The questions asked would be: Were microlithic industries of Japan independent of those of neighbouring areas? Which elements of the Yayoi culture were brought in from outside and which elements were inherited from the preceding Jōmon period?

A closely related problem concerns the nature of transition from one major period to another. The transition from the terminal preceramic industries to the Jōmon culture remains today in almost complete darkness. The gap between the Jōmon and the Yayoi has in recent years been slowly filled but it is not completely closed. A similar lack of knowledge, though not as great, characterizes the Yayoi-Tomb and the Tomb-Historic transitions.

A few areas of inquiry limited to a particular period of Japanese prehistory are also worthy of review. We are beginning to know something of the nature of the Palæolithic man in Japan through discovery of human fossils in indubitably Pleistocene deposits. While microblades have been known in Japan for many years now, discovery in the past two years of purportedly 'geometric' microliths both in southern and northern Japan has raised questions regarding their relationship, if any, to similar implements found in southern and southeastern Asia.

The primary emphasis in the Jōmon archæology is still on ceramic analysis, with nearly 300 styles now being recognized. Attempts to establish a limited number of broad categories, are being made in order to save the Jōmon ceramics from near chaos. Non-ceramic aspects of the Jōmon culture are also beginning to receive greater attention; for example, the possibility of root-crop cultivation during the Jōmon has been considered. The whole implication of a series of extremely old radiocarbon dates for Jōmon pottery are yet to be explored.

That the use of iron implements for utilitarian purposes was wide spread during the Yayoi is now becoming an accepted view primarily on the basis of inferential reasoning. But direct evidence for this thesis is still meagre. Whether the potter's wheel was used by the Yayoi people is not known. Although the prevailing opinion is overwhelmingly against such a possibility, dissenting views are not lacking.

The tie-up of archæology with early historical accounts, both Japanese and Chinese, is a crucial problem of the Tomb period. While Yayoi specialists are primarily concerned with down-to-earth 'mass culture', workers in the Tomb culture have tended to concentrate their attention on tomb complexes—remains left by the nobility, while neglecting the life of the populace. Research in the latter aspect is of critical importance to clarify the nature of the transition from the Yayoi to the Tomb at the level of the commoners and also to assess the general configuration of the Tomb culture.

Hokkaido did not experience the Yayoi and the Tomb periods which the more southerly islands did. Instead, the Jōmon culture was followed there by the post-Jōmon, Satsumon and Ainu cultures. The last, curiously, dropped the use of pottery, a case of cultural loss which certainly deserves close attention. Hokkaido's close affinities to the adjacent Arctic and subarctic areas are exemplified in the Okhotsk culture with its maritime hunting economy which occupied the northeast coast of Hokkaido.

VISITORS

Visitors to Japan with an archæological interest may prepare themselves profitably by consulting Beardsley's *Field Guide to Japan*, 1959, for general orientation. It is of help whether they intend casual visits to museums or to conduct personally some excavation. Many museums have displays of a selected number of archæological specimens. Not far from Tokyo, the whole site of Toro of the Yayoi period has been converted into a museum since its excavation. With the bone, stone, wooden and ceramic remains unearthed from this site, visitors will find also excavated and preserved rice paddies, almost 2,000 years old, and reconstructed dwellings and granaries, complete with rat guards. More often than one might expect, department stores in Japan display archæological collections, which change frequently every other week.

Collections not on display are available in museums, universities, other public institutions such as grade schools and village offices, and finally in private homes. To see them special permission is of course necessary.

Excavations are being carried out all year round in Japan. Local archæologists can give information on the particular institution conducting an excavation and on the nature of the site, whereby visitors can decide on the project they desire to participate in. Permission is always necessary to carry out an excavation. Application should be submitted to the Ministry of Education through the local board of education and must give the names of qualified archæologists who will be responsible for the excavation.

The serious scholar must establish cordial relations with a Japanese archæologist, preferably of established name, though not necessarily one in the field in which the visitor is interested. The importance of personal contact through formal introduction cannot be exaggerated; without it in Japan, one cannot expect to accomplish serious work. The native will introduce the foreign visitor to the appropriate specialist in the visitor's field of interest and will direct him to the appropriate institutions or private collectors. He more than anyone else can help a visitor, who wishes to participate in or conduct an excavation, to achieve the

desired end. It is essential to consult and rely on Japanese colleagues for every important matter.

In this connection, *Japanese Studies on Japan and the Far East*, a short biographical and bibliographical introduction, prepared by Teng Ssu-yü (1961), will be found useful, as it gives the names and works of some of the leading Japanese archæologists and the Universities where they lecture.

Unfortunately Japanese archæologists fluent in foreign languages are very few, particularly in areas outside the large urban centres. Some command of the Japanese language is therefore highly desirable, if serious work is contemplated by a visitor. The Japanese are on the whole obliging and even delighted to go out of their way to aid a foreigner and the visitor who makes no gross blunder in personal relations, may expect to have a successful tour.

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