

# *The Nature of Japanese Archaeology*



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A GROUP OF DISTINGUISHED archaeologists and scientists scan the screen of a giant video monitor as a minute camera inserted through a tiny hole in the lid brings images from the inside of a vermilion-painted stone coffin closed 1200 years ago. The coffin sits in an open underground chamber in which were placed grave offerings (Kidder 1987, 1990; Nara Kenritsu Kashihara Kokogaku Kenkyujo 1990a). Computer-enhanced fiber optics are being used to examine the inside of this undisturbed burial. Later, after creating an exact copy of the stone coffin, to find out if the lid will hold together while it is lifted, the top of the coffin is removed. The inside is found to be filled with water, on which are floating tiny fragments of exquisite silk textiles. The water is siphoned off, to be tested for the remains of ancient plant pollens, which will give clues to the ancient environment. Fifteen thousand glass beads, a gilded crown, five great swords, and dozens of other precious objects are removed after weeks of careful preparation and recording (Kidder 1989, Nara Kenritsu Kashihara Kokogaku Kenkyujo 1990b). Who was buried in this tomb? A powerful clan chief of the Mononobe, locked in a struggle with the Soga clan, for the ultimate power in the country? An assassinated emperor? Archaeologists discover that two skeletons lie in the sarcophagus, confirming suspicions aroused when two pairs of oversize gilt bronze shoes were noted. Are the individuals Emperor Sushun and his consort? Is the second person a devoted retainer? The excavation of tombs of the so-called ancestors of the imperial line is prohibited. Have archaeologists unexpectedly uncovered an imperial ancestor (Mori and Ishino 1989)?

The great Fujinoki burial tomb was discovered in 1985 at a site adjacent to the Horyuji Temple in Nara Prefecture and its sarcophagus was opened in 1988. It catches the imagination of the Japanese public, typifying the fascination for information about the past. The present is a product of the past, and the past is a product of the present. Archaeology in Japan is high-tech, high profile, big business, and big budget. It is based on a high rate of consumption of cultural resources. How is this huge enterprise organized? How can the study of the moldering past inform us about modern Japanese society? What particular mix of national values, political economy, and history has led to the creation of modern Japanese archaeology?

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## THE ORGANIZATION OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN MODERN JAPAN

In 1987, 21,755 excavations took place in Japan at a cost of about \$400 million U.S., according to the *Center for Archaeological Operations News (CAO News)* (Japanese title *Maizo Bunkazai Senta Niusu* (see Nara Kokuritsu Bunkazai Kenkyujo in References) (No. 66:1,2). The same journal (No. 64:1) reported that in 1985, 1910 separate government archaeological reports were published. Japanese archaeology is one of the most vigorous fields of its kind in the world. Not only is there an enormous amount of excavation and publication within Japan, but Japanese specialists have conducted excavations in the Near East, Afghanistan, Peru, and other countries, and have contributed substantially to international restoration projects in Afghanistan, Indonesia, and China. Lavish series are published regularly by commercial presses, which also publish lighter versions for commuter reading. Archaeological journals abound, including several monthlies published by commercial presses. The monthly journal *Gekkan Bunkazai Hakkutsu Shutsudo Joho (Monthly Report on Excavated Cultural Properties)* (Serizawa, ed., 1984 to present), devoted solely to reproducing articles on Japanese archaeological and historical matters, contained 200 newspaper articles in its December 1991 issue. (This journal also summarizes foreign archaeological discoveries, local Japanese archaeological museum exhibitions, and site publications.)

Japanese archaeology is also a vigorous academic field, with about ten degree programs in archaeology available at national universities, and another fifteen degree programs at forty large private universities (Barnes 1990a:191).

The major organizing force in Japanese archaeology is the national government, through the Agency for Cultural Affairs (Bunka cho), which is attached to the Ministry of Education. (It is significant that archaeology is located in the Ministry of Education; in North America, it is often placed under departments of natural resources, parks, or the environment.) Each of the 47 prefectures maintains an archaeological division within its Department of Education. Archaeologists are also employed at the local level of city and township. In 1988 these archaeologists, who administer and supervise excavations, but usually hire skilled professional excavators for actual digging, numbered 3649.

The Agency's Cultural Properties Protection Department supervises the protection of archaeological sites and the registration of important artifacts. New discoveries are evaluated annually and are considered for designation to a series of ranked statuses, such as National Treasure or Important Cultural Property. Designation involves protection and regulation by the government. The Cultural Properties Protection Department also initiates and coordinates archaeological exhibitions. The Agency for Cultural Affairs is connected to several affiliated institutions, including the National Museums; the National Research Institute of Cultural Properties, which is devoted to the restoration of cultural objects in practice and research; and the Nara National Cultural Properties Research Institute.

This last institute is of pivotal importance in the functioning of a national archaeology program. It maintains several divisions, including research centers at the Heijo and Asuka-Fujiwara palace sites. In addition it maintains a Center for Archaeological Operations, which trains excavators in a series of seminars for prefectural and local governments, offers advanced seminars, supervises rescue operations by its own staff, and develops new techniques for the excavation and preser-

vation of artifacts and sites. It collects and distributes information concerning archaeological excavations, receiving local site reports and holding them in a central repository. It prepares bibliographies, sets up data bases, provides statistics, and sums up trends in rescue archaeology in the bimonthly Japanese publication mentioned above, *CAO News* (Tanaka 1984). The highly centralized pattern of training, and the importance of clear-cut administrative policies to facilitate cooperation between government agencies, leads to a strong consensus on the goals of archaeology and the nature of archaeological facts. Among recent projects of this center are the Japanese-English dictionary of terms (Yamamoto and Matsui 1988) and the establishment of a dendrochronology master sequence (Nara Kokuritsu Bunkazai Kenkyujo 1990).

The Japanese government in 1950 reiterated its long-standing commitment to site preservation with new legislation, which forms the basis for present-day work (Barnes 1990a; see also Fawcett 1990:83–123). Of critical importance is the connection of archaeological remains to legislation regarding lost property. Archaeological remains on private land are considered as lost property and must be reported to the authorities; because original owners usually cannot be found, the objects are placed in the custody of the government, which may reimburse the owner and discoverer and take possession or may transfer the object to the owner/discoverer (Barnes 1990a:187). Sites and archaeological features that are inalienable from the land must be reported to the government, which decides whether they should be preserved or investigated before destruction by site development takes place.

When sites on private or public land are threatened by any kind of disturbance, the government must be notified, and it assumes the role of monitor. Extremely important sites may be completely preserved, usually being bought by the government. These amounted to 1163 sites, or less than one-half percent of all registered sites, by 1982, with an addition of 20 to 30 new sites per year (Tanaka 1984:83). If the sites cannot be saved, they must be investigated, with funding from several sources. It is possible for the Agency for Cultural Affairs to assume 50 percent of the cost, with the remaining 50 percent coming from the prefectural or local government. This happens in only about 10 percent of all cases, usually for exploratory or assessment projects. Usually the cost is met by the developer. However, Tanaka shows that in Japan, by and large the developers are local public corporations. Less than 20 percent of the funding in 1980, for instance, came from private companies.

The large volume of recent archaeological discoveries has created an enormous number of detailed preliminary reports as well as the need for storage and maintenance of vast collections. In principle it has not been considered appropriate to sample sites that are threatened; instead the goal has been to investigate them in their entirety (Tsuboi 1986). However, in fact, most excavations have been partial (Nihon Kokogaku Kyokai 1981:242). During periods of intensive development, as in the extension of the Bullet Train lines to Kyushu, or the construction of major highways from Tokyo to the Japan Sea or the Tohoku region (Nihon Kokogaku Kyokai 1981), the burden of administration of archaeological research on small government offices of education was heavy. The solution was to establish Buried Cultural Properties Centers, nonprofit foundations, to undertake the huge amounts of excavation, processing, and reporting, with the government underwriting shortfalls in funding (Kobayashi 1986). As the work has peaked in some cases, these centers are now in the red (Barnes 1990a). The Buried Cultural Properties Centers contain exhibition

facilities for temporary exhibitions of recent finds, in addition to vast storage areas and laboratories.

All archaeologists consider archaeological sites to be nonrenewable resources, and excavation to be destruction. When sites are excavated, artifacts and data are recovered, but portions of the original site are destroyed and cannot yield new information. Although reexamination of excavated material is often possible, it is a sad fact that certain research questions can only be answered by data collected in specific ways, which require "new" archaeological sites. One can see that at the present rate of excavations, the entire list of registered sites that are not designated for preservation will be gone in one or two generations, even assuming that some excavations are repeat projects at the same site and that not all excavations devour total sites. The pace of development of housing areas, roads, and new farm lands may slow down in Japan, but it will not cease. Japanese archaeologists acknowledge that in future, site conservation will need more emphasis. It has been found that all of downtown Tokyo is an archaeological site of the Edo period. How much can be saved or excavated?

The government is the major agent of economic development, yet at the same time it monitors its own impact on archaeological resources. This creates a contradiction. At various times academics and public groups outside the government have been critical of its efforts, but their numbers remain quite small. As with other countries, it is not easy for academics who might be members of government projects, or who may be training students for prospective government work, to be critical of the degree of commitment to preservation. However, some have taken this risk. Concern for the adequacy and quality of site preservation has been regularly voiced in the journal *Kokogaku Kenkyu* (*The Study of Archaeology*). For example, the movement to save the Ikegami site, Osaka, from destruction by road building, was described by Fujinami (1989), and a copy of a letter to the Agency for Cultural Affairs, urging the preservation of the site, was included in the article. This letter was signed by the representatives of 13 national archaeological and historical associations and a large number of regional archaeological societies. These groups provide an external system of monitoring and exerting pressure on the government and the companies, public or private, whose development projects threaten archaeological sites. A number of cogent examples of site preservation movements spanning several decades are presented by Fawcett (1990).

New discoveries are featured in newspaper articles and in brief summaries in archaeological journals, and in the series of illustrated surveys of ancient history regularly published in Japan. However, analytical, comparative, exhaustive studies of whole classes of artifacts, from groups of sites, are difficult to write under the present circumstances, and this kind of scholarly study is relatively rare. Huge descriptive reports, with every feature and artifact illustrated and listed, but totally lacking in general conclusions, make up the bulk of archaeological reporting at this time. These reports follow a uniform format, including such details as scales of maps and descriptive categories of artifacts. They are government publications, which are not available in local bookstores or many public libraries.

The unique features of the system are the following:

1. A strong commitment by the government to coordinate rescue archaeology and a centralized bureaucratic structure.

2. An efficient system of rapid processing of archaeological information and basic descriptive reporting in a uniform format.
3. Prominence of archaeology in the media and national consciousness.
4. An overwhelming emphasis on public archaeology within the profession.
5. Great attention to individual finds.

#### JAPANESE ARCHAEOLOGY IN ENGLISH

Although Japanese archaeology has a reputation of being difficult to pursue in English, a number of recent publications provide a wealth of information for the Western reader. These include a *Japanese-English Dictionary of Japanese Archaeology* (Yamamoto and Matsui 1988); the *Cultural Atlas of Japan* (Collcutt et al. 1988); the publication *Hoabinhian, Jomon, Yayoi, Early Korean States* (Barnes 1990b); and the exhibition catalogs *The Rise of a Great Tradition: Japanese Archaeological Ceramics from the Jomon through Heian Periods (10,500 BC-AD 1185)* (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan, and Japan Society, New York 1990) and *Ancient Japan* (Pearson 1992). Many entries concerning specific archaeological topics can be found in the *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* (Kodansha Publishing Company 1983).

#### CONCEPTUAL STRUCTURE AND INTELLECTUAL GOALS

As in most parts of the world, archaeology in Japan is a peculiar blend of physical science, social science, and humanities. An indigenous antiquarianism, closely related to natural history, flourished from the eighteenth century (Bleed 1986). In the nineteenth century, two basic traditions developed. One tradition, the study of prehistoric archaeology as part of human natural history, stems from the Science Faculty of Tokyo University. It stresses scientific methods and technical analyses. The first scientific excavations, undertaken at the Omori site, Tokyo, in 1877, were carried out by E. Morse, a visiting professor in natural science. Already in the nineteenth century, Morse commented that there were more people interested in archaeology in Japan than anywhere else in the world (Ikawa-Smith 1982:298). The second tradition, of archaeology as a historical discipline, has close links with the indigenous antiquarian tradition. In most universities, archaeology is taught in the history department. A strong distinction is made in archaeology, as in many other fields, between Japanese and foreign topics.

In North America, in the early stages of the discipline, archaeologists were usually non-Indian, and archaeology was viewed as a comparative anthropological endeavor rather than the study of national history. Prehistoric archaeology still has very close ties with cultural anthropology. In Japan, there is almost no such division between archaeologists and their subjects/objects, except for certain cultural or social minorities. Cultural anthropology has been separated from archaeology and archaeology has become a reflexive historical study rather than the comparative study of diverse peoples (Ikawa-Smith 1982:305). For a significant portion of the twentieth century, Japan was isolated from the rest of the world; in addition, Japan's colonial experience was relatively short. These conditions seem to have had an effect on the comparative side of Japanese archaeology and ethnology.

All archaeologists rely on analogies to interpret archaeological artifacts. In West-

ern prehistoric archaeology the analogy may be drawn from a living tribe that uses an object of similar shape today or did in the recent past. In Japan it is more common to treat archaeology as long-term history, searching up and down the strands of history for suitable analogies. For example, in attempting to find an interpretation for the use of Jomon clay figurines Japanese archaeologists have looked at the use of dolls or human figures from later periods of Japanese prehistory, including the present, for parallels, rather than at figurines of other primitive cultures for clues to their use. The interpretations of these figurines, written in Japanese, leave out several steps of the argument because most Japanese share a participant's knowledge of later Japanese culture. When the interpretation is translated into English, it is not clear to the Western reader how archaeologists came to the conclusion that these figurines were used in curing rituals.

The methods of archaeological excavation, recording, analysis, and publication are highly standardized in Japan, reflecting consensus on the questions that are asked. In general, the interest is in pursuing changes in types of artifacts, and in describing, in a nonstatistical manner, stylistic types found in different classes of artifacts. Abundant illustration, to show different styles of objects, is usually included. Although Palaeolithic archaeology, which developed in the late 1940s and 1950s, is somewhat different in its use of quantitative methods, it can still be said that the emphasis is on "typical" examples rather than variability, and that variability is often seen as temporal. The approach is truly normative.

Although no archaeologists operate without models of prehistoric behavior, in Japan these models are often highly implicit, and evidence used to test a particular explanation may be loosely organized. Models may come from Chinese historical sources, as in the case of Yayoi culture, or from later Japanese texts, such as the *Nihon Shoki* (Aston 1956). (This document, prepared between A.D. 714 and 720, provides a history of the royal lineage of the Yamato state, up to the close of the seventh century A.D. Accounts covering the period from the end of the fifth century A.D. are considered to be reliable.) In short, the goals of Japanese archaeology are to elucidate the history of the Japanese rather than to learn about human behavior in general.

In general, Japanese archaeologists have not been interested in the hypothetico-deductive approach to test hypotheses drawn from independent sources such as models based on living cultures. Their interest has been much more inductive, in gathering vast amounts of data, weaving them into a narrative summary, and illustrating the summary with one or two recent excavations. Because there are so many publications, some of which have limited circulation, it is very difficult to marshal all the evidence on any one topic or to have any confidence in the statistical reliability of any sample, without a huge amount of background research (Tanaka 1984:88).

Although all archaeologists must face the same problems of research design, execution, and reporting, the final shape of the archaeological enterprise is affected by local social and cultural conditions. All forms of knowledge are embedded in their native cultures in different ways, and archaeology is no exception. Japanese archaeologists have been described as intensely interested in typological description and minute classification, for its own sake. In particular, stylistic ceramic typologies have been devoted to the establishment of chronologies. Because of the huge emphasis on government-administered excavation programs, there is a pronounced standardization of methods of data collection and description, even to the scales of

maps and drawings, and emphasis on tabulation of a standardized set of characteristics. There is a high reliance on the use of analytical techniques taken from the natural sciences. In particular, papers presented at international symposia emphasize the application of high-tech analyses, perhaps because it is easier to communicate the results of the hard sciences, but also, I believe, because this is seen as the future direction of archaeology. Many contributors to the growing body of scientific analyses have been affiliated with the Anthropological Institute, Faculty of Science, of the University of Tokyo. They interact as members of the international community of researchers, keeping up with the Western-language literature. Many of the social aspects of archaeological reconstruction have not yet been developed in Japan. This reflects the separation of archaeology from the social sciences.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE PUBLIC

What is the role of archaeology in shaping Japanese self-concepts through education? Many archaeologists are frantically busy with rescue archaeology, and devote themselves to specialized archaeological recovery and reporting. However, more than in any other country, publishers are continually producing large multivolume compendia for popular consumption. These are team efforts with short sections by many writers. They provide a good indication of the interface between archaeology and the public, highlighting its extreme popularity. Recent multivolume series include the 15-volume series *Nihon no Kodai (Ancient Japan)* (Shimanaka 1985–1988) released by the publisher, Chuokoronsha, to mark its one-hundredth anniversary; the ten-volume series *Kodaishi no Fukugen (Reconstruction of Ancient History)* (Kato 1988–); and the six-volume series *Zusetsu Nihon no Kodai (Ancient Japan Illustrated)* (Mori 1989–). In addition, the more scholarly seven-volume series *Zusetsu Hakkutsu ga Kataru Nihonshi (Illustrated Japanese History Told by Archaeology)* (Tsuboi 1985–1986) is packed with information on recent excavations. These books display some of the latest discoveries in Japanese archaeology, introducing scientific techniques, ancient history, and selected comparative information from the Asian mainland. They focus on the origins and development of Japanese culture, but they also emphasize the role of migration from Korea and China and the assimilation of foreign culture. They tackle the difficult job of evaluating Japanese texts in terms of historical fact and legendary accounts. They tend to focus on the Japanese people as a homogeneous entity in the past (Fawcett 1986; Ikawa-Smith 1990). They introduce new finds from Hokkaido and Okinawa, and acknowledge the persistence of continental customs in immigrant populations, but convey the image that these finds are all part of the same homogeneous culture. There is a tendency to conceptualize Japan in the past as a territorial entity with the same borders as today, particularly in relation to Korea, but also in reference to the Soviet Maritime region, whereas ethnic and political boundaries were obviously more fluid. Nevertheless these series offer a counterbalance to pre-university history textbooks that are tightly controlled by the government, and are not as liberal, but are obviously read by more people. The texts have shown important ideological shifts in the past few decades (Fawcett and Habu 1990). Before the Second World War Japanese mythological-historical texts such as the *Kojiki* (Chamberlain 1982; Philippi 1968), a compilation of genealogies, myths, and legends completed in A.D. 712, and the *Nihon Shoki* (Aston 1956) were the primary means of understanding Japanese prehistory and protohistory. A number of scholars

did take political risks in suggesting that portions of these documents were mythological, and that they had been compiled to legitimize the authority of the Yamato court (Sakamoto 1991). Since 1945, archaeology has become a strong element in understanding the past. In the immediate postwar period, historical materialism was of key significance, but its ascendance was short. With the trend toward a more conservative atmosphere in the late 1950s, tighter control was placed on the use of archaeological materials in the history texts. In more recent years, prehistoric social history has been set aside in favor of a reduced treatment of prehistory altogether, which simply outlines the different periods. In 1992, added emphasis will be placed on the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* and their interpretation. Many decry this situation as a reversion to right-wing nationalism, but I believe that, although the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* are not "pure fact," they are cultural texts and there are valuable ways of using them to understand ancient society. They should not, however, be seen as a replacement for archaeology.

#### THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF JAPANESE ARCHAEOLOGY

Japanese archaeology may be viewed as a field of discourse, the structure of which varies temporally and culturally. It contains much of the vocabulary of archaeology in other lands but is constructed in ways related to other fields of Japanese knowledge. It is always ideological, always linked to political economy and culture. A full study of the context of the field is beyond the scope of this paper. However, understanding Japanese archaeology in cultural terms provides an answer to the puzzle of why any nation should be so committed to archaeological research.

As in many parts of the world, ancient cultural assets are important as legitimizers of authority. They validate political and social status. In the eighteenth century, the Tokugawa rulers were anxious to legitimize their rule of Japan and their suppression of the imperial line. Scholars involved in the Kokugaku (National Learning) Movement matched the occupants of certain tombs in the Nara Basin with the emperors mentioned in the *Kojiki*, *Nihon Shoki*, and *Engi Shiki* (a tenth-century document that outlined court ritual and ceremonies) on the basis of the dimensions of the tombs and their locations. From the *Nihon Shoki* and *Kojiki*, 123 emperors are listed up to Emperor Taisho; three rulers ascended the throne twice, so the adjusted total is 120. The *Nihon Shoki* listed 33 rulers and gave locations for 29 of their tombs, and the *Kojiki* listed 41, giving locations for 38 of their tombs (Horita 1987). The records seem to give accurate descriptions for later tombs such as that of Temmu, but the designations of earlier tombs appear to be a collage of fact and legend. Because there is no certainty in these identifications, some archaeologists refer to these tombs by site name, not by the official name supported by the Imperial Household Agency. In both the Tokugawa and Meiji periods, repairs to the royal tumuli were undertaken to gain validity for the political regimes and also to protect the tombs from agricultural development by peasants who were suffering from economic difficulty. The repairs often changed the outer configurations of the tombs. In some cases the mounds were made higher, new moats were excavated, tombs were combined to form keyhole-shaped mounds.

The postulated tomb of the founding ancestor of the imperial lineage, Jimmu Tenno, was most likely not originally a burial tumulus. Survey in the nineteenth century yielded Yayoi pottery. One widely accepted opinion is that an old temple

foundation (possibly the Kokugenji) was used for its base. In the mid-nineteenth century seven months' work and one-third of all funds for maintaining the imperial tombs were spent on building up the mound into a keyhole tumulus. Further improvements were made after the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese war (Harunari 1975; Horita 1974; Anazawa Wakou, personal communication, 1989).

In the nineteenth century the National Learning Movement was devoted to protecting Japanese native culture from the powerful influence and prestige of the Other, the culture of China. More recently the Other has become the West, whose influence threatened to destroy Japanese folk culture. Harootunian postulates that this nativistic discourse was transformed into Japanese ethnology (*minzokugaku*) in the early twentieth century (1988:411). The folklorists and ethnologists aimed to "combat a story line that increasingly upheld the march of modernization led by the bureaucratic rationality serving the state" (1988:413). The late twentieth century nativistic discourse includes not only ethnology but also archaeology. It is interwoven with the *Nihonjinron* (discussion about Japan), which emphasizes the uniqueness of Japanese culture. Harootunian describes the *Nihonjinron* as a "national subjectivity which has functioned as an equivalent to the unity of the good citizen, the depoliticized, achievement oriented Japanese whose reward is the prospect of even greater consumption" (1988:437). Although one cannot overlook the fact that the actual techniques of excavation were introduced by the American malacologist Edward Morse, it is important to see the way in which archaeology has become an important part of Japanese national historical nativistic discourse despite its employment of some kinds of scientific analyses in recent decades. Much of this linkage is not obvious to international archaeologists, whose *lingua franca* with Japanese archaeologists is confined to the technical aspects of archaeology.

Modern patterns of spending on archaeological projects stem from a number of factors. They cannot be explained simply as an inevitable consequence of national wealth. Archaeology feeds the new nationalism, providing an alternative to the imperial ideology of the 1930s and 1940s. Pyle (1988) notes that the excesses of Japanese nationalism in the 1930s were partly the result of a failure to resolve the dilemma of reconciling cultural borrowing with the need for national pride. Recent surveys have shown that younger Japanese are indifferent to imperial ideology. Murakami (1987:66) points out that in the 1950s the average Japanese felt a deep-seated disillusionment with the prewar version of traditionalism, with its heavy nationalistic overlay. Thus a new form of nationalism is needed to fill the void. Archaeology provides an acceptable focus for national pride and a feeling of uniqueness. Certain classes of artifacts, such as Jomon pottery and Kofun-period *haniwa* tomb figures, which have no close counterparts on the Asian mainland, are particularly significant. Archaeology reinforces the feeling of homogeneity and cultural connectedness.

Japan's form of government-directed archaeology follows the pattern of *gyosei shido*, government guidance, which is established in other aspects of economic development. The disbursement of funds from the central government to local units, which include excavators and skilled technicians who process artifacts and prepare reports, supports the aims of a centralized cultural policy and Japanese patterns of political reciprocity. With a move to increasing conservatism, the radical approach to Japanese archaeology, which functioned as an important check in monitoring government efforts for site conservation, in maintaining pressure for access to information regarding the royal tombs, and in assessing the content of history text-

books, may be co-opted; 90 percent of Japanese now view themselves as middle class. Pyle noted that affluence has undermined the appeal of socialism and that progressive intellectuals have failed to provide values consonant with the real conditions of economic growth (1988:461).

Contemporary Japan is termed an information society, the next stage after industrialization in a universal social evolution. The wide exposure of archaeology in the media, including the flood of pictorial images of recent discoveries, is highly compatible with the mandates of this society. At the same time, the mixture of science and history serves the needs of the new nationalism well, for science will play a guiding role in the phase that Japan is now entering, defining a new place for herself in the world order, as a leader with an unconventional nonmilitary power base. The structure of the Japanese publishing industry, part of the new information society, must also be taken into account, for it is dominated by compilers and editors who process the new information. As Pyle notes, "The traditional intellectual influences have been replaced by 'middle class intellectuals,' editorial writers, columnists in the media, bureaucrats and businessmen, who lack the depth and background of academic intellectuals but are more in tune with middle class values" (1988:461).

Although archaeology purveys a sense of tradition and science, it is also locally based social history. A sense of place, long important in Japanese society, is enhanced through local archaeological activity. The decision to house new discoveries in local, rather than central, museums is compatible not only with the pattern of the central government providing cultural facilities, but also in acknowledging the strong sense of place that local museums reinforce.

The particular focus on description and typological refinement in Japanese archaeology has been attributed to government interference in the 1930s and 1940s, when archaeologists were forbidden to question the origin myth of the imperial line, which is said to have begun in 660 B.C. (Ikawa-Smith 1982:304). If this were the case, we would expect that only archaeology and similar historical disciplines would be so affected, but the situation is much more general. Here we must turn not to political economy but to studies of the Japanese mind.

It would be easy to attribute the particularism of Japanese archaeology either to the pressure of rescue excavation created by rapid economic development or government regulations, or to some kind of time lag, in which it could be said that Japanese archaeology is like North American archaeology several decades ago. To do so would be to miss an important point that a good deal of Japanese scholarly endeavor shares the archaeological penchant for minute description without explanation of the variability that has been presented. The Nobel Prize winner Yukawa Hideki points out that Japanese thought is concerned mainly with "the local and temporary order inherited in space and time" (1967:56). Nakamura states that it is common in different fields of Japanese intellectual life to mention individual cases emphatically and in detail and to place more emphasis on empirical facts that should be mentioned individually. He refers to the "traditional empiricistic attitude" of the Japanese (1967:194). From a different perspective Robert Smith notes that Japanese consider people who endlessly search for general principles or underlying causality to be "reason freaks," a negative characteristic (1983:58). He also refers to several Western scholars who have noted the Japanese reluctance to impose conceptual frameworks.

To point out that Japanese thought and culture have different organizing principles, based on my experience in one representative domain of Japanese intellectual endeavor, may seem to be seeking refuge in the “myth of Japanese uniqueness” (see Dale 1986:35). However, I can find no better explanation for the great differences I discern between Japanese and North American archaeology, and which have been pointed out in other fields by the authors stated above. In conflating these findings of different emphases in ways of thinking with the *Nihonjinron*, the assertion of Japanese uniqueness, Dale (1986) has done us a great disservice.

The richness of Japanese archaeological materials can thus be seen as Japanese archaeology’s great strength and weakness. Perhaps the ultimate success will be achieved when Western models of social transformation and adaptation are linked to the rich data bases of Japan. More likely, as increased internationalization occurs, there will be several versions of Japanese archaeology and several different kinds of explanations of archaeological facts, depending on the cultural situation.

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## ABSTRACT

Despite some superficial organizational similarities with the study of archaeology in the West, Japanese archaeology is conducted in a manner that exemplifies aspects of Japanese culture, history, and political economy. Archaeological research is strongly centralized in Japan and guided by national policies, and can be indirectly linked to the National Learning Movement of the nineteenth century. Nationalistic interests are served by prehistoric investigations that emphasize continuity of historical links across time and space. Attention to description and compilation is shared with other disciplines. KEYWORDS: Japanese archaeology, history of archaeology, archaeological interpretation.