

Overview: Japanese Archaeological Research Trends 2009¹

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The 2009 Fiscal Year (FY) may be called the first year in the postwar era to see a change in the ruling party. As great transformations in the Japanese political scene are thought to bring about social reform, the change in government was met by the citizens with tremendous hope and anxiety. And with no definite points of change indicated for educational and cultural policies, the situation held both hope and anxiety for the academic world of archaeology as well.

In the midst of these developments, the budgetary screening of government projects to reduce waste emerged as a major policy point of the new administration. Based on this, a variety of projects were reevaluated, extending also to cultural projects and educational policies, so the Japanese Archaeological Association issued a “Board of Directors’ Statement Calling for Fiscal Support for Advancing Academic Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences” to relevant government agencies, and linking up with related academic societies, took a clear stance as an academic organization.

In the end, there was no great change for archaeology or cultural properties, and it appears the policies regarding them are being carried on within the same general framework as before. Which is to say that as positive developments are also lacking, severe conditions for archaeology and cultural properties have continued under the prolonged economic downturn, and the pressure of structural reforms for which it serves as backdrop.

Under these conditions, the Japanese Archaeological Association changed from the legal status of limited liability intermediary corporation to general corporation. While some Association members may have felt uneasy with this, since the switch to intermediary corporation itself was made only recently, it was a step made because of legal revisions which eliminated that status. Changes to the articles of

¹ [*Trends in Japanese Archaeological Research, 2009*, is a partial translation of “Nihon kōkogaku kenkyū no dōkō” 日本考古学研究の動向, in *Nihon kōkogaku nenpō 62 (2009 nendoban)* 日本考古学年報 62(2009年度版) (*Archaeologia Japonica* 62 [2009 Fiscal Year Issue]) (Nihon Kōkogaku Kyōkai, 2011), pp. 1-57. This essay appears on pp. 1-3, under the Japanese title “Sōsetsu” 総説. It was translated by Walter Edwards, and published by the Japanese Archaeological Association (Nihon Kōkogaku Kyōkai 日本考古学協会) online in 2011. To streamline the text, characters for Japanese names and terms, and bibliographic information have been placed in footnotes. When an English translation of the name of an organization or publication (or symposium, etc.) is supplied by the party responsible, this is used with minimum changes in capitalization etc. to conform to the style followed by *Trends in Japanese Archaeological Research*. Romanized names of individuals are given with the surname followed by the personal name.]

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incorporation and the structure of the Board of Directors were necessitated by the switch to a general corporation, but it goes without saying that the Association's goals stated therein of "promoting archaeology," "holding and supporting research meetings, public lectures, and symposia," and "protecting and utilizing cultural properties" remain essentially as before.

With goals such as these, the Association addressed its tasks in 2009. One of these was dealing with the deteriorating social conditions surrounding archaeology. Based on a report made in March 2008 by the Agency for Cultural Affairs,³ impetus was given to the commissioning of archaeological investigations to the private sector, and with the establishment of a system for licensing investigators by the Japan Association for Preservation of Cultural Properties⁴ and Waseda University, plus the conversion of Buried Cultural Properties Centers which had been operated by regional governments into Public Interest Corporations, and the weakening of provisions of the Museum Act,⁵ the social environment for archaeology is greatly worsening. Naturally, this is also a critical development for the university and graduate school programs which train personnel to serve in the field. With regard to this problem, the Association continued its considerations through its Research Conditions Investigative Committee,⁶ and in the 2009 FY held a symposium in Sendai focusing on the research environment as a whole,⁷ plus a symposium on the licensing system at its General Meeting and at another venue in Kansai,⁸ with a poster session at its Autumn Meeting reporting on the two symposia and the results of a questionnaire.⁹ The problems taken up in these activities have emerged from changes in social conditions regarding archaeology and cultural properties, and we archaeologists must surely find the proper approach through sincere discussion of how to engage with archaeology and cultural properties in the future.

Intimately related to the research environment is the protection of cultural properties. Ever since the Association established the Committee on Policy for the

³ Maizō Bunkazai Hakkutsu Chōsa Taiseitō no Seibi Jūjitsu ni Kansuru Chōsa Kenkyū Iinkai 埋蔵文化財発掘調査体制等の整備充実に関する調査研究委員会 (Committee for Investigations Bearing on the Provision and Enrichment of Organizations for Excavating Buried Cultural Properties), *Kongō no maizō bunkazai hogo taisei no arikata ni tsuite* 今後の埋蔵文化財保護体制のあり方について (On the Future System for the Protection of Buried Cultural Properties) (Bunkachō, 2008).

⁴ Nihon Bunkazai Hogo Kyōkai 日本文化財保護協会

⁵ Hakubutsukanhō 博物館法

⁶ Kenkyū Kankyō Kentō Iinkai 研究環境検討委員会

⁷ "Kibishisa o masu kenkyū kankyō o kangaeru" 厳しさを増す研究環境を考える (Examining the Increasingly Critical Research Environment), Tōhoku Shinpojiumu 東北シンポジウム (Tōhoku Symposium) (Japanese Archaeological Association, Tōhoku Gakuin Daigaku, 3 March 2010).

⁸ "Maizō bunkazai no shikaku seido o kangaeru" 埋蔵文化財の資格制度を考える (Examining the System for Licensing Buried Cultural Properties Investigators), a symposium held in conjunction with the Nihon Kōkogaku Kyōkai 2009 Nendo Sōkai 日本考古学協会 2009 年度総会 (Japanese Archaeological Association 2009 General Meeting) (Waseda Daigaku, 31 May 2009), and as the Kansai Shinpojiumu 関西シンポジウム (Kansai Symposium) (Kansai Daigaku, 4 July 2009).

⁹ "Maizō bunkazai no shikaku seido o kangaeru shinpojiumu no gaiyō to ankēto kekka" 埋蔵文化財の資格制度を考えるシンポジウムの概要とアンケート結果 (Synopsis of Symposia on Examining the System for Licensing Buried Cultural Properties Investigators and Questionnaire Results), poster presented at the Nihon Kōkogaku Kyōkai 2009 Shūki Taikai 日本考古学協会 2009 年度秋季大会 (Japanese Archaeological Association 2009 Autumn Meeting) (Tōhoku Geijutsu Kōka Daigaku, 17 October 2009).

Preservation of Buried Cultural Properties¹⁰ as its first standing committee, it has continued to act by issuing demands, requests, and declarations concerning cultural properties protection to relevant agencies. In addition, during the current Fiscal Year the Committee presented a poster on the issue of protection at the Association's Autumn Meeting.¹¹ Also, with regard to the incident of improperly discarding artifacts, which occurred in Kashiba city, Nara prefecture, the Association's attitude was clearly indicated through the issuing of a "Board of Directors' Declaration Calling for Proper Management of Buried Cultural Properties" addressed to the relevant agencies, beginning with the city of Kashiba itself.

This year was the thirtieth anniversary of limited open exhibits of sites designated as imperial tombs. As the lead organization among the sixteen participating academic societies, the Association held research meetings in Kyoto and in Tokyo on the subject,¹² giving an overview of the movement to gain access to imperial tombs to date, and the prospects for the future. It may be said that access has greatly advanced in comparison with the past. These tombs are traditionally regarded as ancestral shrines of the imperial household, and while consideration must be given to their actually being treated in this manner from a certain point in time, it is also true that they include the highest rank of *kofun*, ancient mounded tombs. Though it may be said that progress has been made regarding access, the tombs nevertheless remain as an obstacle blocking research on the formative process of our nation's state. The movement will surely continue until the day when access to the imperial tombs proceeds to the point where they can be utilized as archaeological data.

Examination regarding the disposal of the Association's library began in December 2007, and at the 2009 General Meeting the Committee for Investigating Measures for the Association Library submitted a proposal titled "Outline for Recruiting Recipients for Donation of the Association Library," which passed after partial revision. When a public advertisement based on this was made, only the Sainsbury Institute of Japanese Arts came forward, and as it was judged a qualified recipient after strict examination in light of the stipulations of the Outline, the selection was approved by the Board of Directors. That only a single response was received, and moreover from overseas, reflects the straitened circumstances of research institutes and libraries within Japan.

¹⁰ Maizō Bunkazai Hogo Taisaku Iinkai 埋蔵文化財保護対策委員会

¹¹ Maizō Bunkazai Hogo Taisaku Iinkai, "Maizō bunkazai wa dare no sekinin de mamorareru ka" 埋蔵文化財は誰の責任で護られるか (Under Whose Responsibility Can Buried Cultural Properties Be Saved?), poster presented at the Nihon Kōkogaku Kyōkai 2009 Shūki Taikai (Tōhoku Geijutsu Kōka Daigaku, 18 October 2009).

¹² "Ryōbo kōkai undō no 30 nen: Saki Misasagi-yama kofun/Fushimijō no hōkoku to tomo ni" 陵墓公開運動の30年: 佐紀陵山古墳・伏見城の報告とともに (The Thirty Years of the Movement to Open Imperial Tombs: Together with Reports on the Saki Misasagi-yama Tomb and Fushimi Castle) (Kyoto, 17 May 2009); "Ryōbo kōkai undō 30 nen no sōkatsu to tenbō" 陵墓公開運動30年の総括と展望 (Synopsis and Outlook from Thirty Years of the Movement to Open Imperial Tombs) (Komazawa Daigaku, 23 November 2009).

This Fiscal Year also saw positive movement to create awards from the Japanese Archaeological Association. After examining already existing awards and methods of citation for merit as reference, it was decided to create three awards, a “Grand Award,” “Monetary Award,” and “Special Award.” The rules were presented in issue No. 168 of the Association’s Bulletin¹³ and opinions solicited, and after subsequent finalization by the Board of Directors, the measure was to be proposed at the 2010 General Meeting. Afterward, the Association’s awards are scheduled to start with the 2011 General Meeting, based on achievements from the 2009 calendar year.

Among the issues the Association has been grappling with is the problem of history and social studies textbooks. At the 2009 General Meeting the Committee to Investigate Social Studies and History Texts organized a special panel with proposals for reform of grade school textbooks,¹⁴ and at the Autumn Meeting presented a poster on the same topic.¹⁵ The contents did not stop with questions such as simply whether or not to include the Jōmon period, but made recommendations on the urgent problem of textbook reform by pointing out concrete problems in the descriptions.

Textbooks are not the only problem concerning elementary and middle school education. In recent years, a decreasing trend in the numbers of students majoring in archaeology has been pointed out. While there may be differences depending on the university, it is surely evident that the momentum of former days is lacking. Uncertainty about the prospects of employment after graduation is understandable as one of the causes. But is that really all? How is archaeology being talked about in middle and high schools to begin with? Are the recognition and understanding of archaeology held by teachers, who greatly influence the students’ future careers, as favorable as in the past?

As a matter of fact, at the author’s home institution, Kyushu University, a seminar is held every year for high school teachers and faculty in history and related fields. At a post-seminar get-together it was related that “Some teachers advise students who want to major in archaeology that it appears to be a sloppy discipline so they should give up on it.” Clearly archaeology is viewed with suspicion, which was surely triggered by the Paleolithic Hoax. At that time, the Association conducted the most thorough investigation possible.¹⁶ But the process

¹³ *Nihon Kōkōgaku Kyōkai kaihō* 日本考古学協会会報 (Bulletin of the Japanese Archaeological Association)

¹⁴ Shakaika/Rekishi Kyōkashotō Kentō Iinkai 社会科・歴史教科書等検討委員会 Committee to Investigate Social Studies and History Texts, “Shōgakkō 6 gakunen shakaika (rekishi) kyōkasho o kangaeru: Kyōkasho kaitei e no teigen” 小学校6学年社会科(歴史)教科書を考える: 教科書改訂への提言 (Considering Sixth Year Grade School Social Studies [History] Texts: Proposals for Textbook Reform), panel organized at the Nihon Kōkōgaku Kyōkai 2009 Nendo Sōkai (Waseda Daigaku, 31 May 2009).

¹⁵ Shakaika/Rekishi Kyōkashotō Kentō Iinkai, “Shōgakkō 6 gakunen shakaika (rekishi) kyōkasho o kangaeru: Kyōkasho kaitei e no teigen,” poster presentation at the Nihon Kōkōgaku Kyōkai 2009 Shūki Taikai (Tōhoku Geijutsu Kōka Daigaku, 17 October 2009).

¹⁶ [Translator’s note: The Paleolithic Hoax (Kyūsekki Netsuzō Jiken 旧石器捏造事件) was publicly exposed in November 2000, and the investigation report, *Zenki/chūki kyūsekki mondai no kenshō*

of that enormous task and its result have not been conveyed in detail to society at large, and we have consequently reached the present day unable to wipe away the feeling of distrust. In order to eradicate these publicly held misgivings, the true nature of archaeology must be recognized especially by teachers participating directly in elementary and middle school education. For this reason, it is essential that we conduct our day-to-day investigations and research with sincerity, and secure a bounty of results.

The 2009 General Meeting was held at the Nishiwaseda campus of Waseda University. The public lectures by Manome Jun'ichi and Inada Takashi were a great success,¹⁷ and research reports were made at five separate meeting rooms where earnest presentations and discussion were held. The Autumn Meeting, held at Tohoku University of Art and Design, saw great activity as well, with public lectures by Taguchi Hiromi and Jacques Pelegrin,¹⁸ and research reports given in three meeting rooms plus a poster session. The results contained in these research reports are likely to be published in various journals in the field, beginning with the Association's own *Nihon kōkōgaku* (Journal of the Japanese Archaeological Association).¹⁹

Trends for 2009 in every period and region are given in detail in the sections of this volume that follow,²⁰ and I ask the reader to examine these while noting that in terms of variety and quantity, Japanese archaeological research is regarded as outstanding on a worldwide basis. Unfortunately, however, there are hardly any English language journals for the Association or anywhere else in the field. Accordingly, even with the numbers of investigation reports and research articles that are published, internationally the genre of "Japanese archaeology" has yet to be established. The choice of whether Japanese archaeology will remain buried in international academics within the category "East Asian archaeology," centered on China, or be established as its own genre, is a question which the Association may have to address in the near future.

The year 2009 also saw the publication of the report on "Promoting the Humanities and Social Sciences" from the Council for Science and Technology.²¹ It

前・中期旧石器問題の検証 (Inspection of the Early and Middle Paleolithic Problem in Japan), was published by the Association in May 2003.]

¹⁷ Manome Jun'ichi 馬目順一, "Shokuri no sekai" 飾履の世界 (The World of Gilt-Bronze Shoes), and Inada Takashi 稲田孝司, "Kyūsekki jidai kenkyū no kadai" 旧石器時代研究の課題 (Tasks for Paleolithic Research), public lectures held in conjunction with the Nihon Kōkōgaku Kyōkai 2009 Nendo Sōkai (Waseda Daigaku, 30 May 2009).

¹⁸ Taguchi Hiromi 田口洋美, "Gijutsu kōdōkei kenkyū to minzoku kōkōgaku" 技術行動系研究と民族考古学 (Technological Behavior Research and Ethnoarchaeology), and Jacques Pelegrin, "Yōroppa ni okeru sekijin hakuri" ヨーロッパにおける石刃剥離 (Microblade Flaking in Europe), public lectures held in conjunction with the Nihon Kōkōgaku Kyōkai 2009 Shūki Taikai (Tōhoku Geijutsu Kōka Daigaku, 17 October 2009).

¹⁹ *Nihon kōkōgaku* 日本考古学 (Journal of the Japanese Archaeological Association)

²⁰ [Translator's note: The reference here is to summaries, by period and region, of research trends contained in *Nihon kōkōgaku nenpō*, the same volume as this introductory overview.]

²¹ Kagaku Gijutsu/Gakujutsu Shingikai 科学技術・学術審議会 (Council for Science and Technology), *Jinbungaku oyobi shakai kagaku no shikō ni tsuite (hōkoku)* 人文学及び社会科学の振興について (報告) (Promoting the Humanities and Social Sciences [Report]) (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports,

seems that similar statements are put out repeatedly every few years, holding in common the point that contemporary fields of scholarship have become fiercely subdivided, with calls for the necessity of reintegration. Archaeology can hardly be regarded as an exception, and it most likely must deal with keywords such as “international,” “interdisciplinary,” and “integrated sciences.” In that regard, as will be detailed later in this volume, academic exchanges with foreign countries beginning with Asia are becoming more and more active each year, and advances are being made in joint research with related fields, and the development of new areas. With these things in mind, the 2009 Fiscal Year maybe regarded as one of fulfillment even in the midst of severity.