The political economy of Japanese archaeology: reflective thoughts on current organisational dynamics

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ABSTRACT
The aim of this paper is to present the author's current research in Japan on the relationship between the archaeological profession and the presently dominant neoliberal political economy. It was intend to better understand the difficulties which may arise from these relations, and to explore other avenues of reflection on the practice of archaeology in Japan in general and more specifically with regards to the impact on the Japanese people. This research was designed not only to be beneficial to Japanese archaeologists and heritage management, but also to support a more global reflection on the best ways to manage archaeology. The study directly parallels Ikawa-Smith's publication: "Practice of Archaeology in Contemporary Japan" (2011), but it was intended to introduce a new qualitative dimension in considering the interviews that have been conducted, which constitutes the key distinctive and innovative aspect of this research.

KEYWORDS: political economy, privatisation, governmental archaeology, public archaeology, Japan

Development of the research project

Since 2008, the main focus of my research has been the political-economy of commercial archaeology (also called 'contract archaeology'). This topic is closely related to 'rescue archaeology', which is itself deeply intrinsic to development across the 'more developed countries' (USA, Europe, Japan, South Korea, Canada, Australia and New-Zealand). My interest has mainly been directed at the expansion of this new form of archaeology that appeared simultaneously with the ideological and economic changes of the 1970s and 1980s, namely: neoliberalism or late capitalism. In the course of this period, neoliberalism was often perceived as the sole viable means to guarantee growth and future prosperity to nations through a 'free' competitive market, such as for example in Britain with the implementation of Thatcher's neoliberal agenda in 1979 (Harvey 2005, pp. 21-22).

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However, it was also defined by certain sociologists, such as Bourdieu, as: “a program for destroying collective structures which may impede the pure market logic [and a program implemented through] reducing labour costs, reducing public expenditure and making work more flexible”, leading eventually to a drastic rise in social inequality (Bourdieu 1998 - See alternative definitions in: Bix 2013; Harvey 2005: 68; Chomsky & Schoeffel 2002, p. 58).

My previous research projects tested the compatibility of this economic system, which has dominated the ideological agenda since the 1980s, with the practice of modern archaeology. Furthermore, I also tested the practice against the definition and goals as given by archaeologists themselves. A critical analysis was supported by two main case-studies conducted in Canada (Zorzin 2010, 2011, in press) and Australia (Zorzin 2012), between 2008 and 2012, and based on 80 interviews with archaeologists. The results of my investigations demonstrated a progressive disconnection of archaeologists from their work. This occurred notably through their subordination to developers’ interests, namely: the obligation to create economic growth, and also because of the absence of appropriately coercive legal protection (Zorzin 2012, in press).

Consequently, in 2012 my interest was drawn to Japan because the country, despite having engaged in a process of privatisation of most its institutions since the 1980s, had not converted its archaeological organisational system, which remained predominantly subject to governmental prerogatives. Japanese archaeology had been partially privatised in certain areas of the country to variable degrees, becoming a rather unique case of cultural heritage management in the world, positioned as it was ‘between’ two different political-economic models. This atypical and non-standardized archaeological system needs to be further understood to be compared with other organisational models around the globe.

Learning from an international comparative approach

Firstly, in Quebec (Canada), where about 75% of archaeological activities are conducted by private units (Zorzin 2010, p. 7), the results of my research demonstrated that many archaeologists, though passionately committed to the practice of the best archaeology possible, proved to have become estranged from the outcomes of their work. In previous publications (Zorzin 2011, 2012, in press) I argued that this ‘alienation’ (cf. Marx’s definitions of ‘alienation’: Marx 1844, pp. 30-33) had essentially been caused by the transformation of the purpose of the profession from a public duty to a business model, creating a divergent shift that led archaeologists to mistrust their own activities, be sceptical about their outcomes, and sometimes fall into apathy, disillusionment and discontentment. Archaeology, now commodified, appeared to be forced by economic constraints to serve the interests of the clients/developers (Zorzin in press), disallowing the direct relations archaeologists could have had with modern living communities. As such, archaeology's outcomes had no socio-political and educational significance and were instead transformed into neutral and commercial products, seen purely as technical devices dedicated to rescuing or preserving the remains of the past, which were ultimately collected for the hypothetical use of material and data in an indeterminable future.

Secondly, in Victoria (Australia), a similar change happened to governmental structures (Zorzin 2012, p. 76) in the 1980s, with questionable results, as demonstrated by one of my interviewees:

> **Karl** [in his 30s – Senior Archaeologist in a Private Archaeology Unit]: "*Archaeologists are not happy! Look at it… We did it to ourselves! Really! What happened to the idealistic days of rescue archaeology, and even later, I suppose, public archaeology? How that has become corrupted into a situation where we archaeologists have no say in the process at all? On the surface, it looks like we are being paid a lot as professionals, and it looks like: 'why complain?' They* [Victoria State Government] *have got these wonderful laws that say we must do these investigations. But, in actual fact, it is kind of a 'white elephant'* [an endeavour that proves to be a conspicuous failure]*, I suppose*."

The change in Victorian archaeological organisation started in the 1980s and consisted mostly of restructuring the costly, unproductive, and uncompetitive sector by:

1) downsizing existing structures, notably by removing government archaeological services (*Victoria Archaeological Survey*), at the beginning of the 1990s.
2) externalising most archaeological activities towards the private sector since the 1990s, by repositioning archaeology as a service-provider for various clients (developers, extractive industries, private land owners, and the government itself, notably for the constructions of infrastructures), thus repositioning archaeology as a commodified product within the construction industry.
3) neutralizing or depoliticizing the archaeological 'product', limiting most relations to corporate ones. This was first practised between archaeologists and developers when dealing with aboriginal remains of the past; and secondly (especially since the new legislation was introduced in 2006) between the two previous corporate actors, but more directly with the Aboriginal groups themselves.

Finally, and by comparison, the present research into the organisation of Japanese archaeology should form the basis for a self-reflexive process, aiming to understand and grasp:

1) What are the unique characteristics of Japanese archaeology?

2) What are the strengths and weakness of the governmental system compared to countries where privatisation or semi-privatisation of the industry was chosen as the most efficient model of development?

The political-economic model for Japanese archaeology is indeed not perfect, but despite the presence of issues and legitimate criticism of current practices, this was a quality system. Through the oral testimonies I have collected, I will attempt in future publications to present the current situation from different points of views, experiences, and comprehension of the archaeological network, with all their contradictions, paradoxes and tensions. Finally, comparison with the two previous cases will allow an evaluation of the degree of transformation that occurred in Japan as governmental archaeology became more privatised, and will permit us to draw some conclusions on the future tendencies of the development of archaeological activities.

Aim of the research in Japan

The economic transformation incurred by the neoliberal agenda did not necessarily affect Japan in the same way and at the same pace as it did North-America or Europe. Some economists like Richard Katz (1998) suggested that the Japanese economy of the 1980s was not really 'mature' (in a neoliberal sense of the term) because the government still "protected the losers instead of promoting the winners" (Vogel 2006, p. 30). From a capitalist point of view, such behaviour undermined the competitive system. Yet, it is precisely in the 1980s that the American pressure on the reorganisation of the economy based on the neoliberal model was finally successful in Japan, when a wave of privatisation was completed for transport: railways, airlines, and most bus services, and in telecommunications (as for example Nippon Telegraph & Telephone Public Corporation (Kagami 1999, pp.6-9)). Surprisingly enough, from a foreign perspective, the archaeological activities in Japan appeared not to be structurally affected by these changes, this having occurred only very recently (Ikawa-Smith 2011, p. 694). Governmental structure was in fact functionally maintained within a three level organisation: 1) National (Bunka-chō 文化庁: Agency of Cultural Affairs), 2) prefectural and 3) municipal institutions. Despite the apparent stability of the Japanese archaeological network, a series of general questions should be now formulated. In articulating these questions it is also my intention to stimulate debate among archaeologists and let them speak openly about these important current topics and issues:

1) How long can the current resistance of governmental archaeology to market forces be sustained throughout an enduring period of economic stagnation and bleak future prospects? Can the archaeological governmental structure be maintained as it is today? It has already lost 17% of its active population since 2000 (Bunka-chō 2013, p. 1), and

seems to lack means, time, and clear, shared general objectives (apart from digging) to accomplish its mission fully and satisfactorily (Ikawa-Smith 2011, pp. 692-3; Okamura 2000, pp. 58-62; Pearson 1992, p. 118; Sahara 2008, p.293; Tsude 1995, p. 293). Ultimately, what are the present strengths of the governmental services and what are the main challenges faced by governmental archaeology?

2) Is privatisation a valid alternative and what is the evolution of the situation in Japan regarding this matter? Is this economical/managerial switch desirable and can this transformation take place without harming archaeological goals and methods? Is the position, often shared today by Japanese archaeologists, of an 'in between', or 'cross-roads' (Ikawa-Smith 2011, p. 694) between privatised, governmental and public archaeology, sustainable and appropriate in the long term (Ikawa-Smith 2011, p. 697)? To what extent can compromises towards the market be made by archaeologists without alienation from their work? How is the privatisation of archaeology perceived by Japanese archaeologists today according to their individual experiences and positions within the archaeological network?

3) Finally, can another model emerge from the current system, based on a closer collaboration with, and a stronger involvement of populations in direct contact with the remains of 'their' past? Is it time for the advent of a new wave of Japanese 'public archaeology', as defined by Okamura & Matsuda (2011, pp. 1-4) as: "a subject that examines the relationship between archaeology and the public, and then seeks to improve it. […] Public archaeology is conceived here as a dynamic endeavour, which consists of an ever evolving two-stage cycle comprising both research and action" (2011, p. 4). Could this approach echo the 1950s 'people's history or democratic movement' (Fawcett: 1995, p. 235; Okamura 2000, p. 56) illustrated by the Okayama project of Kondo Yoshiro (Tsukinowa Tumulus), which involved up to 10 000 individuals in the archaeological process, and an involvement not only based on a working/financial relationship, but one that is cultural, collaborative and mutually beneficial (Almansa Sánchez 2001, pp. 87-88)? In the current economic stagnation, and after the devastating tsunami followed by the Fukushima Power Plant nuclear disaster, could archaeology play a positive role in the process of reconstruction from a social perspective, and not necessarily only from an economic one?

Methodology and methodological issues

To obtain an understandable portrait of the current organisation and dynamics of archaeology in Japan, I collected an original set of data based on the interviews of 38 individuals. This corpus was based on a qualitative data collection using the common tools of 'semi-directed' interviews defined as: "a guide for determining interview topics without the use of rigid questions” (Patton 1990). The interviews were conducted between March and July 2013, with 45% in Japanese and 55% in English. The language barrier could have constituted a problem for the completion of this research, but this difficulty was managed using the assistance of competent interpreters and translators, and made easier by the efforts of many archaeologists to answer in English. The interviews were digitally recorded, accumulating about 80 hours of discussions, and transcribed both in English and Japanese for extended analyses.

Size of the sample and representativeness

Given that the Japanese archaeological community is one of the most dynamic in the world (Ikawa-Smith 2011, pp. 691-2) – numbering, in 2012, 5868 individuals in government branches (Bunka-chō 2013, p. 1) and about 1000 more in academia, research institutes and museums (Ikawa-Smith 2011, p. 693), totalling about 6900 individuals – it is indeed a difficult task to assemble a perfectly representative sample of this significant community. I do not pretend to have assembled such a sample, but I have strived to do so to the best of my ability given the limitations of time and means. For optimal efficiency I actively consulted various scholars and professional Japanese archaeologists to target the most representative individuals across the country, while also selecting some individuals myself, and attempted to balance the sample appropriately in terms of gender, age, type of activities and geographical locations (Figures 1 and 2; Table 1).

A visual synthesis of my research in Japan is illustrated in Figure 1. It locates where my interviewees were active at the beginning of 2013, and defines in which type of professional framework/background they were embedded in the last years. Interlocutors were predominantly located in Kansai (50 %), but efforts were made to gather interviews from many different regions of Japan, including Kantō (15.5%), Tōhoku (10.5%), Hokkaidō (10.5%), Kyūshū (10.5%) and Chūbu (3%).

In terms of age and gender (Tab.1), almost one quarter of practising archaeologists in my sample are male and in their forties. This seems representative of the present situation of male domination and of individuals born between 1945 and 1965, (also referred to as ‘boomers'), aged between 40 and 60 years old. However, to have a more accurate representation of the profession in 2013, I decided to include in the illustration of the population (Figure 2) the post-graduate student population of one specific archaeological department in a Japanese university. I believe that this conveyed the future face of the archaeological Japanese community, which was not accounted for in my limited sample of interviewees. Through this modified sample, the general patterns observed in the UK and Quebec (Zorzin in press*,* Figure 2 and 3) seem also to be visible in Japan, and are characterised by a major switch from male domination of the discipline towards a feminisation for the generations born in the 1980s and onwards. This assessment will have to be confirmed in the coming years by a quantification of the gender of all post-graduate students in Japan, but it seems to correspond to changes lately observed around the globe.

Table 1: Sample of archaeologists in Japan, by generation and gender

	Sample - March-July 2013					**TOTAL**
Born in (years)	1993-1983	1983-1973	1973-1963	1963-1953	before 1953	
Age (y/o)	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s &+	
Male	1	7	9	7	4	**28**
Female	2	4	2	1	1	**10**
Total in Sample	3	11	11	8	5	**38**

As such, even if my sample only represents 0.5% of the total population of active archaeologists, the range of individuals selected seems to adequately cover the diversity of age, gender, location and professions within the archaeological community. Nevertheless, it is crucial that this interview process be extended to obtain a more precise image. Such a study will gain in significance by being based on a diachronic vision instead of the present synchronic one. A total of 100 interviews (adding 62 more interviews to the actual corpus), focusing on regions that have not been sufficiently investigated such as: Kantō (with further investigations with private archaeological companies around Tokyo and Yokohama), Chūgoku, Shikoku and Okinawa, and focusing also on archaeologists involved in municipal archaeology, should provide a complete and highly detailed portrait of the profession in Japan, through the voices of the members it constitutes.

Preliminary analysis

During my first encounter with the Japanese archaeological community, I noticed an important contrast with my previous experiences in Canada and Australia. Some frustrations were similarly noted in archaeologists' discourses, but no extended disillusion and nor cynical attitudes were perceptible with my interlocutors. Passion and enjoyment were still noticeable within the members of the community I had the chance to encounter (despite a generally spread exhaustion due to the volume of work, especially in the last decade). Yet, general enthusiasm was tainted by doubts and fears for the perenniality of archaeology as it exists today.

–Japanese archaeology is presently evolving, and the organisational shape it will adopt in the coming decade is still not clearly defined: will it remain dominantly governmental, be entirely privatised, remain ‘in between’ (semi-governmental: decisional/regulation, and semi-private: executional), or will it become NPO based? At a political level, according to some of my interviewees, the current Abe neo-nationalist government’s general policies, even if fundamentally neoliberal (Bix 2013), does not seem to threaten the existence of the archaeological public services, but rather the opposite. The reason for not converting archaeology might be that archaeology has always been closely connected to Japanese history, as it is to the Japanese identity (Fawcett 1995; Habu and Fawcett 1999, p. 589), which still renders it popular among the people (Ikawa-Smith 2011, pp. 678-680).

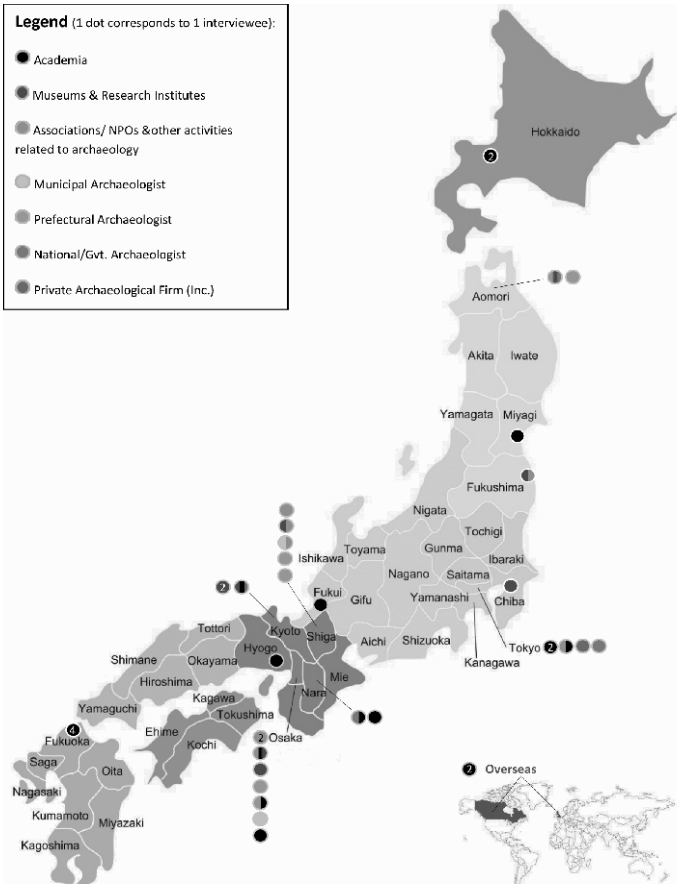

Figure 1 Location, number and main activities of interviewees in March to July 2013

Since the 1990s, though the privatisation of archaeology has been avoided, it has not stopped an internal reform in act which continuously pressurises the public archaeology services to adjust to the corporate construction industry, and most importantly, to adopt business model behaviour. Archaeologists in the field explained that tough realities currently require them to focus on cutting costs and time, at the risk of losing the fruitful components of an expected archaeological process (literature review, theoretical rooting, methodological adjustment, research questions, analyses, interpretations, publications, dissemination of knowledge and debating results) in order to reduce quality and minimalize operations: surveys, excavations and the archiving of data and artefacts (reports and physical storage). As such, governmental archaeology already seems to have

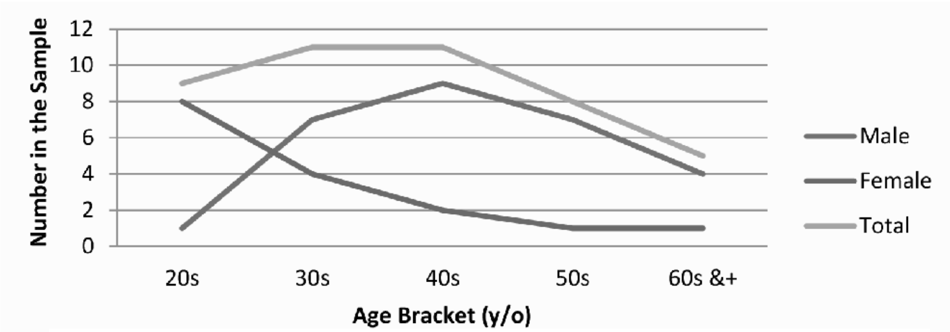

Figure 2. Samples of 44 individuals involved in Japanese archaeology 2013

taken an ‘in between’ stance to the political-economy, which is not necessarily comfortable for archaeologists.

As an overview, I would like to present the main themes that emerged from the recorded discussions. In the present state of the research, these ideas do not constitute any conclusions but only observe tendencies based on the testimonies collected during the last months of fieldwork.

Questioning the basic concept of ‘Rescue Archaeology’

Since the post-war period, and in a context of fast development, Japanese archaeology has been progressively professionalized within a governmental structure (Barnes 1999, pp. 35-36; Edwards 2005, p. 46; Mizoguchi 2006, p. 137) while deepening its dependency on the construction industry (Fawcett 1995, p.237; Tsude 1995, p. 293). Salvage archaeology became dominant in the mid-1970s (Kobayashi 1986; Tsuboi 1987) and today represents about 97% of excavations conducted in Japan every year (Ikawa-Smith 2011, p. 690). This transformation of an academic-based archaeology has resulted in the application of new methodological concepts to comply with the exigencies of the developers, be they governmental or corporate. These concepts have been notably characterised by the term: ‘Rescue archaeology’. Importantly, even if it seems today generally accepted as an irrefutable component of modern archaeology, many Japanese archaeologists among my interviewees are aware of the numerous problems generated by imposing a framework on an archaeology based mostly on economic efficiency, and such problems have already been highlighted by some scholars in the last two decades (Fawcett 1995, p.244-246; Habu 1989, pp. 39-41; Ikawa-Smith 2011, pp. 689-699; Pearson 1992, p. 118; Sahara 2008, p. 13; Tsude 1995, p. 293).

In fact, the relevance of ‘Rescue Archaeology’ had been heavily criticized by the vast majority of Japanese archaeological community at its initial implementation in the 1970s (Fawcett 1995, pp. 237-8). It was feared at that time that ‘Rescue Archaeology’ would be too much of a compromising collaboration with capitalism, thus making it socially meaningless, and that it might put the profession at risk of developing perennially unethical and destructive practices. A little over thirty years later, the *status-quo* reached in Japan needs to be questioned, because its systematic application may not be as logical as it had appeared to be in the 1970s. As suggested by many interviewees, the very purpose of 'Rescue archaeology' should be re-thought urgently, and the following question needs to be reconsidered: what is archaeology's fundamental purpose?

Furthermore, following the logic linked to the development industry, the concepts of 'preservation by record' as well as 'total excavation of sites' are often perceived as problematic. Frustrations were often expressed about the systematic excavations when archaeologists would have favoured preservation (through negotiation with developers for re-location or through modifications of the construction plans). However, as described by archaeologists in Japan, some late tendencies were perceived as leaning toward an increasing collaboration and better understanding with developers, avoiding systematic destruction through a more standard use of 'preservation in situ'.

The governmental archaeological model: current challenges

From the 1970s to 2000, the conduction of excavations by the state (by prefectural and municipal archaeological units) guaranteed excavations of high quality in a growing and prosperous community (Fawcett 1995, p. 239-240; Ikawa-Smith 2011, p. 692). Prefecture and town archaeology have the major advantage*s* of offering a real continuity and a strong network, with staff that acquires a depth of knowledge of their region and of specific periods of Japanese history. Since its emergence in 1970, governmental archaeology has not only been the guarantor of quality of practice with highly qualified and experienced specialists in the field, but has moreover ensured archaeologists' independence, allowing them autonomous evaluation as to whether the work accomplished had been ethically achieved and to determine what else should be done without being subjected to external economic pressures.

In today's national economic struggle, the situation may have changed. The immense majority of what Ikawa-Smith (2011, pp. 692-3) calls: 'the administrative archaeologists' are now directly involved in what is termed around the world as: 'Cultural Heritage Management'. Through these managerial devices, archaeologists have had to adapt to more and more demanding restrictions on time and access to financial resources, with the aim of reducing costs and to avoid restraining development. In doing so, archaeologists have had to adjust to these obligations and, as a consequence of this, adopt the culture of the developer/corporate sector.

By applying extremely high and demanding standards of excavations and reports, the outcome of this type of archaeology was and still is one of the most impressive in the world (Barnes & Okita 1999, p. 378). Yet, even with the publications and spread of about 3000 high-quality reports per year, archaeology in Japan remains predominantly empirical, descriptive and politically neutral (Habu 1989, p. 38; Fawcett 1995, pp. 234-6; Habu & Fawcett 1999, p.589).

Nowadays, according to Ikawa-Smith (2011, p. 693), synthetic and reflexive works should be made using these reports in order for Japanese archaeology to avoid becoming, as Fawcett warned us in the mid-1990s, a very technical and bureaucratic activity (Fawcett 1995, p. 246). The absence of time and lack of funding for the analysis and interpretation of data collected during excavations has contributed greatly to this situation, increasing the number of unpublished sites and aggravating the absence of syntheses (Okamura 2000, p. 61). Yet, some reflexive and innovative reports have been produced in Japan, such as for example, the one made by the Board of Education Secretariat City of Kobe in 2006 (神戸市教育委員会 2006) which offers detailed information about how Goshikizuka Kofun was interpreted in the Edo period (神戸市教育委員会 2006, pp. 13-32), what process archaeologists went through in deciding to reconstruct the original appearance of the Goshikizuka Kofun in 1965-1975 (神戸市教育委員会 2006, pp. 301-332), and what lessons they learned from that drawn-out and somehow frustrating process (神戸市教育委員会 2006, pp. 333-353). From my point of view, this last section of the report is the most innovative and enriching one, presenting a transcribed discussion between two archaeologists about the processes involved during the site restoration. This type of report adds a precious and straightforward insight into the archaeological work conducted. However, the process could have gone even further by including a dialogue with local populations, aiming, for example, to preserve the memories and beliefs attributed to the Kofun mount before its restoration, thus bringing us closer to 'Public archaeology'.

Furthermore, and according to my interviewees, governmental archaeology is now facing many other challenges: one of the main corresponding downsides of governmental archaeology's strength is that it also suffers from localism, which means that too great an emphasis has been placed on local matters while regional or even global archaeological problematic and comparative approaches have been overlooked, lending to what has sometimes been referred to as a 'narrow-sighted' form of archaeology. The reports are indeed numerous and detailed documents, but despite their large diffusion within the prefectural network, they have remained technical. This accumulation of raw data therefore implies that someday, someone will have to process them to produce valid contributions. Otherwise, this production fails to accomplish anything but the recording of processes that lead to site obliterations. After approximately forty years of intense accumulation, it seems urgent that a clear strategy of how to use this data significantly in the future be defined. Coordination, inter-prefectural communication, digitalisation and standardisation of data-bases are generally seen as ways to deal with this major issue.

However, concomitantly to the reconstruction process following the Tsunami of 2011, it seems that this process has been largely initiated, Tohoku being an example, and may be able to offer promising results.

Another phenomenon that occurred in archaeology, more so following the latent economic downturn of 2000, is the fragmentation of archaeological activities. This phenomenon is typical of a neoliberal managerial strategy which entails the disempowering of individuals from their work by fragmenting the practice and redistributing micro-tasks to diverse actors, making global understanding of the archaeological process (including socio-political outcomes) impossible to grasp (Shanks & McGuire 1996, p. 77). In doing so, a process of neutralisation or self-censorship is achieved successfully without archaeologists having even the possibility to perceive it as such due to the gradual pace of its implementation.

Finally, it was repeatedly mentioned during my interviews that the professionalization that featured in the post-1960s period has privileged archaeologists and others specialists to take control of the past. It has had the effect of side-lining 'normal' people, marking an end to an enduring tradition of amateur and school teachers' practising and teaching of archaeology all around Japan.

The trend of 'outsourcing' or the rampant privatisation of Japanese archaeology

So far, no obvious measures have been taken to disband archaeological governmental services. However, private units have appeared around the country, in the Kanto region (Tokyo & Yokohama cities) in particular. Important regional distinctions have appeared in Japan with regards to this, and this key aspect of the evolution of the profession will be fully developed in further publications.

Nowadays, according to some of my interviewees, the advantages of this shift toward privatisation is that archaeologists are able to conduct more advanced specialised and costly analyses (dating, palynology, dendrochronology, zoo-archaeology, chemical analyses, etc.) while prefectural or municipal archaeologists fundamentally lack the time and the means to conduct such operations, or sometimes simply lack the motivation for developing new methodologies other than those already in use.

In contrast, my interviewees expressed a largely shared fear of a full conversion to privatization because of the following expected consequences: 1) a decrease in financial investment by developers due to the shift from a government/developer relationship towards that of a service provider/developer; 2) the withdrawal of state control from archaeological operations, putting archaeologists at risk by placing them in positions of potential conflicts of interest, supporting corrupt and unethical behaviours to fulfil client requirements: more pressure on archaeological practice without the protection of an external and neutral body; 3) that archaeology would no longer be routed locally, thus discontinuing the accumulation of knowledge in a specific area.

New orientations and hopes for the future in Japanese archaeology

Since 2000, archaeological economic security has eroded. This is perhaps best demonstrated in Japan (Bunka-chō 2013, p. 1), but is also evident in other national archaeological systems such as that of Ireland (Eogan 2010, pp. 19-23), and is related to the fact that it became closely index-linked to building industry activities. In Ireland's case, this relationship has demonstrated that if building activities decreased and the economy was in some state of recession, archaeology was hit hard. As mentioned before, one thousand prefectural archaeologist positions were lost in the last decade in Japan and some private archaeological units have been bankrupted in recent years. However, while the situation in Japan could be judged as stable and not as dramatic as that of Ireland, it may well continue to appear that, should the profession wish to maintain its activities and produce the best possible outcomes as suggested by my interviewees, that a certain number of general orientations might be explored. As such, Japanese archaeology has, as demonstrated in a non-exhaustive list, been expressedly desired to be:

a) more global in terms of research, therefore less nationally-centred and even less so regionally, with concerns and perspectives incorporating broader East-Asian historical dynamics and even further studies of human behaviours at large.
b) more local/social in archaeological scope (though not in a manner contradictory to the previous statement), i.e. based on a more immediate and engaged inclusion of local people and cultures, and the development of both a deeper knowledge of local history and improved relations with the relevant local communities.
c) more anthropological, i.e. involving more interpretational risks by using multi-disciplinary approaches, opening up to new ideas deriving most notably from environmental sciences, and ethnology, and allowing better connections with the present.
d) a more advanced focus on education instead of excavation.
e) a need to make archaeology relevant to society through 'public archaeology' and possibly through the return of a form of amateurism based on the local initiatives of non-professionals.
f) a re-introduction of the idea of love and respect for the past as much as a respect for current cultures as the core of archaeological endeavours.
g) a complex but increased awareness of the difficulty of many archaeologists' goals, particularly of the juxtapositioning of multivocality, cultural relativism and the global spread of knowledge, with the neo-nationalistic aspirations of some Japanese people.

The questions that remain now are: How can we implement such measures? In what type of structure could such measures be realised? By what type of financial means would these be sustained? Could local communities take a definitive lead in the matter by creating their own NPO dedicated to heritage, or is the public system condemned to slowly decay so as to let the private sector take the lead in Japanese archaeology?

Prospects

This paper is an outline of my research project and does not therefore present any definitive results, but focuses instead on presenting the framework of the project's construction and some of the main subjects that will be developed in future publications. Most importantly, my wish is that this research will inspire other scholars among the Japanese archaeological community to further this research project, and to continue the invaluable process of interviews in the coming years.

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