

Japanese Archaeological Association 2016 Conference

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ABSTRACT

This short essay reports the proceedings and some highlights of the Japanese Archaeological Association 2016 Autumn Conference, held between October 15–17, 2016, at Hirosaki University.

KEYWORDS: 2016 Conference, Japanese Archaeological Association

The conference for the fiscal year 2016 was held at Hirosaki University for a period of three days from Saturday 15th to Monday 17th October. The Local Organising Committee was comprised of members from Hirosaki University (President: Kei Sato) and Aomori Prefecture Archaeological Society (Chairman: Shigehiko Narita), while Professor Tatsuhito Sekine (Director of the Association) was the Local Organising Committee Chair. More than 400 people, 212 members and around 200 participants from the general public, including non-member researchers, attended the conference. Chairman Sekine of the Local Organising Committee drew special attention to three massive volumes of the Conference proceedings, totalling 1,700 pages. As advertised, the proceedings was literally the largest ever of its kind. Two special exhibitions, ‘Archaeology at Hirosaki University: Chronicles and Achievements’ and the ‘Great Sotomeyachi Exhibition’ were also held at the venue during the conference, providing further visual attractions for participants.

The opening ceremony and the memorial lectures were held at the Comprehensive Education Building on the first day (15th). The ceremony was chaired by Kazuo Miyamoto, a director of the Association. Association President Akio Tanigawa gave an opening speech, sharing his sentiments about the convention being held in Aomori for the first time in 30 years and mentioning the significance of the venue for this convention, which covered topics that were substantially local. He also issued a ‘statement’ concerning the protection and the restoration of the cultural properties damaged by the Kumamoto Earthquake and described the on-going responses to the earthquake damages organised and undertaken by the Association. A greeting address by the host organisation was also given by Chairman Sekine of the Local Organising

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Category: Report (solicited) Received: 7 January 2017

Committee. University Director Chizuko Kohri (Acting President of the University) and Mayor Noriyuki Kasai of Hirosaki City also offered courteous welcoming addresses.

The memorial lectures were given by two distinguished scholars who have a deep association with Hirosaki University. The first lecture was entitled the ‘Characteristics of the Kamegaoka Culture’ and was given by Professor Kunihiko Fujinuma of the Humanities Department. He argued that the culture was based upon a hunting and gathering subsistence system despite having highly sophisticated functional and ritualistic tools in its material culture assemblage. His presentation was illustrated by numerous slides. Professor Masashi Oguchi of Hosei University took the podium next. He previously taught at Hirosaki University and is also a current member of the Japanese Archaeological Association. The lecture, entitled ‘The Realistic Image of Ezo Society of Kitaoku in the tenth century: Integrating Document-based Historical Approaches and Archaeology,’ described the significance of the defended settlements, expanding on his own theory that the discord between groups involved in trade created a chasm between different settlement communities. Vice Chairman Hideshi Ishikawa gave an address of thanks to close the memorial lectures. The venue was literally full and some people in the audience had to stand during the lectures.

After the memorial lectures, Part 1 of the Session I ‘Jomon Culture of the Tsugaru Strait Zone: Ento, Tokoshinai, Kamegaoka and Sunazawa Cultures’ was held, entitled ‘Technologies and Specializations from the Jomon to the Yayoi Periods, Part 1.’ In this, a keynote speech was given by Nobuhiko Kamijo, followed by interesting presentations on the lacquer craft of the Jomon period, red oxide paint of the Jomon period, and red oxide paint and earthenware salt manufacture of the Yayoi period.

From 18:00, the conference party was held at the Large Meeting Hall on the third floor of the student union. Taro Kataoka of Hirosaki University chaired the proceedings. Although people had already begun toasting because of the nice atmosphere of the venue, an official toast was given by Tomoyuki Fukuda, the chair of the archaeology division of the editorial committee of the history of Aomori prefecture, followed by greeting addresses by the Japanese Archaeological Association President Tanigawa and President Sekine of the Local Organising Committee, at the appropriate timings. The *pièce de résistance* was the musical performance of *shamisen*. The local musical group ‘Mugenkai,’ comprising of six members, performed, which left a strong impression. Finally, Mitsuhiro Kuwahata of the Miyazaki Local Organising Committee of the conference next year, gave a greeting address, followed by a closing toast given by Vice-President Hideo Kondo of the Japanese Archaeological Association, which concluded the gathering.

Starting at 9:00 on the second day, three parallel sessions took place, alongside a poster session and a book exchange session. Session I continued the discussion from the

day before and proceeded with 'Part 2: Specialization' to examine and discuss issues covering the production of stone rods, the production of polished stone axes, cooking methods using earthenware, the production technology of bone and antler tools, as well as earthenware paste, respectively. The second part was entitled the 'Clothing and Ceremonial Tools of the Jomon and Yayoi periods,' and was presented by seven scholars who introduced and discussed the Nishimeyakawaratai site locations No. 1 and 4 as well as the Sotomeyachi site. Session II was entitled the 'Social Changes in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries in the Northern Tohoku Region,' consisting of eight presentations chaired by Noriyasu Ube, who presented the session introduction. The proceedings included four breaks and continued until 16:00. The discussion of changes in social structures in the Northern Tohoku Region during the ninth and tenth centuries included not only Aomori Prefecture, but also the Mabechigawa River Basin, Northern Sanriku Region, Yoneshirogawa River Basin, Omonogawa River Basin, Kitakamigawa River Middle Basin, and Hokkaido. The settlements and burial systems were considered as pivotal factors, and lively discussions ensued. Session III was entitled 'Modern Castles in Northern Japan: From the period of their construction to the Modern Era.' The venue was packed with a large audience, perhaps due in part to the recent topic concerning the moving of the main castle keep of Hirosaki Castle. The topics covered included Sendai Castle, Morioka Castle, Hachinohe Castle and Odate Castle, all of them are quite well known. Discussions focused on the construction, restoration and abandonment of modern castles in Northern Japan, exploring a variety of angles focusing on different historical aspects. Finally, a panel discussion was chaired by Yasutaka Kanamori and Hiroshi Kitano, in which five presenters debated about various issues vigorously.

Three posters were presented by committees of the Japanese Archaeological Association, and another poster on the promotion of the local World Heritage candidate sites was presented by the Local Organising Committee. The Buried Cultural Properties Protection Committee, the Research Environment Committee, and the Social Studies and History Textbooks Committee of the Japanese Archaeological Association presented the outcomes of their on-going activities. In previous years, there had been a tendency for low turnouts and little feedbacks at poster sessions but during this convention there was an unexpectedly large amount of feedback, and we were surprised by the number of responses provided to surveys as well as by the number of orally addressed questions. In addition, an information exchange meeting for the Buried Cultural Property Protection Committee was held in the afternoon of the second day.

Excursion on the third day (17th) visited Omori Katsuyama site, Kamegaoka site, Tosaminato site and Odai Yamamoto sites in the Tsugaru region. All these sites were representative sites of the Tohoku Region, and all of them were discussed in the sessions. The opportunity to tour through these areas, along with experiencing the

nature of the Tsugaru Region, was significant. We were also fortunate with the weather, particularly when we visited the sites in the vicinity of Jusanko Lake, where we visited serene Sannobo site and Hie Shrine, and we also enjoyed the panoramic view of Mount Iwakisan when we visited Togawa Castle. Some of us also enjoyed Shijimi clam ramen noodle at the conclusion of the excursion. Furthermore, we were provided with lots of useful information and comments by the conductors throughout the excursion. I would like to represent the participants and express our gratitude.