

# Post-WWII Japanese Archaeology and the Founding of the Japanese Archaeological Association in 1948

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper describes the historical context in which the foundation of the Japanese Archaeological Association took place and considers some implications of the event that influenced the trajectory of the subsequent development of Japanese archaeology.*

**KEYWORDS:** Japanese archaeological association, Toro site, history of archaeology, World War 2

\*Throughout this paper, Japanese names are given according to the Japanese system; i.e. family name first, given name second.

## 1. Introduction

In this paper, I discuss the contributions of this Association to the field of Japanese archaeology soon after the Second World War ended and the background to the founding of this Association in 1948.

The Japanese Archaeological Association is a learned society that represents the field of archaeology in Japan. Joining the association requires scholarly qualification. At present, the membership exceeds 4,000. The Association accepts and has accumulated results of research conducted by members, publicizes the results in collaboration with three other learned societies dedicated to Asian archaeology, takes actions to preserve important archaeological sites that have been investigated, and supports various activities to rescue and protect cultural heritages that have been damaged by earthquake disasters.

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## **2. Founding the Japanese Archaeological Association and Promoting Collaborative Researches**

### **a. Purpose of the founding (Fujita 1948)**

The Japanese Archaeological Association was founded on April 2, 1948. Two thousand eighteen will mark the seventieth anniversary. The constitution of the Association was also enacted on the same day. Article 2 of the Association constitution states its aim as follows: “Archaeologists in Japan should collaborate in archaeological research.”

Prior to the WWII, there were a few archaeologists who were members of research institutions, such as universities. Most of archaeological investigations and researches were carried out by individual scholars and a few institutions. Learned societies at that time included the Anthropological Society of Nippon, Archaeological Society of Nippon, and Tokyo Archaeological Society. While the former two societies maintained their headquarters in the Anthropology Dept. of the Tokyo Imperial University and the Tokyo Imperial Museum respectively, the Tokyo Archaeological Society was purely private. With the notable exception of the Tokyo Archaeological Society that solicited collaborative researches of its members, members of the learned societies at that time basically joined the societies to read journals.

### **b. Archaeological investigations at the Toro site (Japanese Archaeological Association 1949, 1954)**

The move toward the founding of the Japanese Archaeological Association was triggered by the archaeological excavations at the Toro Yayoi Period settlement and rice paddy site. In 1947, *Ad Hoc* Committee for the Toro Site Investigations was organized, and large scale, interdisciplinary investigations took place.

The committee was headed by the authority in archaeology, and the authorities in history and ethnology served as advisors to the committee. The committee members consisted of archaeologists from the Tokyo National Museum, the National Ministry of Education and Culture, and six universities in Tokyo, namely the University of Tokyo, Meiji University, Kokugakuin University, Waseda University, and Tokyo Women’s University. In order to investigate an agricultural community located in low, wetland, the committee members also included specialists in history, sociology, geology, architecture, zoology, botany, and conservation science, all of whom participated in fieldwork. Furthermore, administrative officers of the national, prefectural, and municipal governments were also members.

Fieldwork at the Toro site for the first year in 1947 was mainly supported by a grant-in-aid for scientific research that Professor Gotō Shuichi<sup>i</sup> received from the National Ministry of Education and Culture. Gotō was an archaeologist and at that

time an adjunct professor of the Meiji University. At that time, however, the Minister of Education and Culture pointed out that it should be inappropriate to spend government's fund for a voluntary group, such as *Ad Hoc* Committee for the Toro Site Investigations, and a recipient should be an appropriate learned society. This led to the founding the Japanese Archaeological Association in April, 1948. From the second year of the Toro site investigations, the fieldwork was conducted by an *ad hoc* committee of the Japanese Archaeological Association.

The excavations of the Toro site revealed various aspects of a community subsisting on wet rice cultivation during the Yayoi Period. Newspapers and radio news repeatedly reported on-going results of the fieldwork. This considerably raised the national interest in ancient history of Japan, and Japanese people still maintain this high interest in ancient history.

### **c. Collaborative research and investigations**

The excavations at the Toro site ended in 1950, four years since 1947. In 1951, *Ad Hoc* Committee of Integrated Research into the Yayoi Culture was organized within the Association. Twenty-one Yayoi Period sites from Kyushu in the west to Aichi Prefecture in central Japan were excavated in the following eight years. Archaeologists from all over Japan cooperated with each other and participated in these excavations (Sugihara 1960, 1961).

In the 1950's, ten such *ad hoc* committees were organized within the Association. These committees were dedicated to research and investigations into archaeological sites of the Jomon Period, Yayoi Period, Kofun Period, and early historic period, as well as surveying the status quo of Japanese archaeology, adopting rules related to archaeological studies, and compiling a dictionary of archaeology. I must admit that all these committees did not achieve the goals initially stated, but all of them were collaborative projects.

Indeed, founding the Japanese Archaeological Association made it possible for local archaeologists to collaborate in research and excavations with other archaeologists. It was not simply a matter of membership, but the Association succeeded in bringing in archaeologists from all over Japan. I consider this as the most important achievement of the Association. This style of collaborative research was also adopted by the national government.

### **d. Enacting the Law of the Protection of Cultural Properties and archaeological investigations conducted by the national government**

A serious accident occurred in 1949, soon after the Japanese Archaeological Association became active. The Image Hall and the mural paintings of the Hōryūji Buddhist Temple

burned down. Hōryūji is famous for the oldest surviving wooden architecture in the world. This serious accident encouraged the national legislature to adopt the Law of Protection of Cultural Properties in 1950. Under this law, rules related to archaeological excavations were codified. Prior to 1950, anybody could excavate archaeological sites. Once the law was adopted, people must file a petition for an excavation with the national government. If considered inappropriate, the national government can deny the petition or stop the excavation.

It was also codified that the national government could also conduct archaeological excavations, if necessary. Under this code, the Commission for the Cultural Properties Protection was organized as an extra-ministerial board. The commission conducted excavations of the Yoshigo Jomon Shell Midden site in Aichi Prefecture, Ōyu Jomon stone circle site in Akita Prefecture of northeastern Japan, and Muryōkōin Heian Period Buddhist temple site in Iwate Prefecture of northeastern Japan. These projects are called “national excavations” (Tsuboi 2009).

The commission, however, did not maintain staff to conduct excavations, and therefore, as in the case of *ad hoc* committees of the association, archaeologists from all over Japan collaborated in fieldwork. In 1952, the national government established an institution to systematically and continuously conduct archaeological excavations and investigations. The institution is the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties. The founding of the Japanese Archaeological Association and its system dedicated to archaeological investigations eventually led to the establishment of systems that organized archaeological investigations all over Japan.

### **3. Background to the founding of this Association**

#### **a. Involvement of the Ministry of Education and Culture**

At present, the Japanese Archaeological Association is an incorporated, non-governmental organization. Does this mean that archaeologists in the late 1940's organized the JAA on their own initiative? I notice some facts that suggest that the founding was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

A move toward the founding of JAA started on August 28, 1946. On this day, Inumaru Hideo, the head of the Scientific Research Dept. Bureau of Education of the Ministry met Harada Yoshito, the President of the Archaeological Society of Nippon [Japan] and Gotō Shuichi, the Representative of the Japan Society for Ancient Culture and also an adjunct professor of the Meiji University, and discussed a proposal for the establishment of the National Institute for Empirical History. In November, 1946, young archaeologists gathered in the Ministry of Education and Culture building, and exchanged their ideas about “nature of learned societies in the future Japan.”

At this gathering, however, the participants formulated a plan to investigate the Toro site, more than discussing the nature of learned societies. They decided that Gotō would apply for a Grant-in-aid for Scientific Research to the Ministry in March, 1947, and that they would organize an *ad hoc* committee for the Toro site investigations. In the summer, 1947, an archaeological excavation of the Toro site took place.

It is very important to note that during the excavation the Minister of Education and Culture, Morito Tatsuo, made a request that a nation-wide research organization in archaeology be organized in order to continue the Toro site investigations on the Grant-in-aid for Scientific Research for the following years. From December, 1947 on, discussion on the establishment of the JAA became more and more active. During this time, Umehara Sueji, professor of archaeology at the Kyoto University, joined this group of discussion. It was Hideo Inumaru, then the head of the Humanities Research Dept. of the Ministry who always led the discussion. In April, 1948, the Japanese Archaeological Association was finally established (Sugihara 1948).

#### **b. Re-organization of pre-World War II learned societies**

Those who participated in discussion on the founding of the Japanese Archaeological Association were very influential archaeologists, most of whom had been members of learned societies before the Second World War. For example, Harada Yoshito, Umehara Sueji, and Ikeuchi Hiroshi were leading members of the Far Eastern Archaeological Society that systematically conducted archaeological investigations in the northeastern part of China before the Second World War. As aforementioned, Gotō Shuichi who represented the Japan Society for Ancient Culture that had been directed by the national government to unite three non-governmental archaeological societies before the Second World War. Finally, Ishida Mosaku who had been a curator of the national museum since the pre-World War II era. I would suggest that in a sense the Japanese Archaeological Association was a result of re-organizing and uniting learned societies that had been active before the Second World War.

It is also noteworthy that the first president of the Japanese Archaeological Association was Fujita Ryōsaku who had been a professor of archaeology at the Seoul Imperial University under Japanese occupation. Fujita at that time only held part-time teaching appointment at two universities and did not hold a permanent professorship. At the time of nominating the president, those who participated in discussion on the founding of the Japanese Archaeological Association could not agree whether a professor at the University of Tokyo or the Kyoto University should be the president. Accordingly, a scholar of a neutral position was elected. That was Fujita.

## 4. Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, the founding of the Japanese Archaeological Association in 1948 made it possible for archaeologists to collaborate with one another. This was a marked distinction from the pre-Second World War era when archaeological researches and investigations were conducted individually. This is indeed the most important contribution of the Association in the post-Second World War period. The Association has also played the major role in formulating rules that govern archaeological excavations and the protection and preservation of archaeological sites.

In this paper, I have introduced my insights that the Ministry of Education and Culture initiated the establishment of the Association and that learned societies prior to the Second World War were re-organized into the Association. Very few of us pay attention to these aspects. However, I consider it very important to recognize these facts in contemporary history. Based on these recognitions, we as members of an independent scholarly association should promote activities that are relevant to the contemporary society.

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\*In the original publication data as a part of its English summary, the authors are listed as: Special Committee on Research of Toro sites