

## CHAPTER ONE

# Japanese Beginnings

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Japan has one of the oldest and most active traditions of archaeological research in the world. This chapter uses evidence from archaeology and related fields to provide a thematic overview of the history of the Japanese islands from the first human settlement through to the Nara period of the eighth century AD. It must be stressed that given the frantic pace of archaeological excavation in Japan today, many of the conclusions presented here may soon be changed by new discoveries. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to summarize the main themes and areas of debate in ancient Japan rather than to attempt an exhaustive discussion of specific aspects of the archaeological record.

### Periodization

The Paleolithic period starts with the first human occupation of Japan, which was perhaps as late as 35,000 years ago. The Paleolithic was followed by the Jōmon period, which most archaeologists begin with the first appearance of pottery around 16,500 years ago. The Jōmon is usually divided into six subphases termed Incipient, Initial, Early, Middle, Late, and Final; a seventh phase, the Epi-Jōmon, is found only in Hokkaidō. Considering the very long duration of the Jōmon period and the ecological diversity of the Japanese archipelago, it is not surprising that there is great cultural variation within the Jōmon tradition. Rather than a single “Jōmon culture” it is more appropriate to speak of plural Jōmon *cultures*, but specialists continue to debate how we should classify the Jōmon phenomenon. Jōmon populations from Kyūshū expanded south into the Ryūkyūs from about 7,000 years ago, developing there into a quite different culture that is termed “Early Shellmound” by Okinawan archaeologists. Jōmon sites are found as far north as Rebun Island, but Sakhalin appears to have been outside the area of regular Jōmon settlement.

The arrival of full-scale agriculture in Japan around 400 BC marks the beginning of the Yayoi period.<sup>1</sup> The following Kofun period then commences with the construction of large, keyhole-shaped burial mounds around AD 300 – or perhaps half a century earlier if one assumes that the “great mound . . . more than a hundred paces in diameter” in which, according to the *Wei zhi*, Queen Himiko was buried shortly after 247 was a keyhole-shaped tomb.<sup>2</sup> Although large tomb mounds were no

longer built by the late seventh century, archaeologically the Kofun period is usually continued through to the beginning of the Nara period (710–94), thus overlapping with the Asuka era (552–710). The Yayoi and Kofun cultures did not spread to the Ryūkyūs or Hokkaidō. In the central and northern Ryūkyūs, a poorly understood Late Shellmound phase began about 300 BC and continued until the beginning of the Gusuku period in the twelfth century.<sup>3</sup> In Hokkaidō, the Epi-Jōmon (c.100 BC–AD 650) was followed by the Satsumon (c.650–1200) and Ainu periods (c.1200–1868). The coastlines of northern and eastern Hokkaidō also saw an incursion by the people of the Okhotsk culture (c.550–1200).<sup>4</sup>

### History of Research

Archaeology and anthropology were introduced into Japan from Europe and North America in the late nineteenth century, but both of these fields built upon native traditions of historical inquiry.<sup>5</sup> In the Tokugawa period, both “national learning” (*kokugaku*) and Neo-Confucian scholars developed a strong interest in the earliest history of Japan. Despite differences in philosophical outlook – which mainly revolved around the influence of China on ancient Japan – both schools relied primarily on the semi-mythological texts of the eighth century, the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*. It was not until after American biologist Edward Morse (1838–1925) dug at Ōmori in Tokyo in 1877 that a concept of an archaeological record outside written texts gradually began to develop in Japan.

Japanese archaeology developed in the European tradition of “archaeology as history” rather than in the American tradition of “archaeology as anthropology.” Archaeology in Japan can also be classified as “national archaeology,” which is defined by Bruce Trigger as a “culture-historical approach, with [an] emphasis on the prehistory of specific peoples.”<sup>6</sup> In the postwar era, Japan has developed one of the most active traditions of archaeological research anywhere in the world. After the defeat of fascism in 1945, archaeology came to be seen as a way of reconstructing the history of ordinary Japanese people rather than that of the emperor and aristocracy. Economic growth associated with the so-called “Construction State” also led to a phenomenal increase in salvage archaeology from the 1960s. The amount of archaeological information that has been recovered from Japan over the past forty years is unparalleled – but so also is the ensuing destruction of archaeological resources.<sup>7</sup>

### Humans and the Environment

Changes in the physical, chemical, and biological environment form the background to the human settlement and history of Japan. Japan is a rugged, mountainous land with significant climatic and biotic diversity from north to south. Although for much of its earlier geological history the Japanese landmass was not an island chain, Japan is now a series of islands that form the eastern edge of north Eurasia.<sup>8</sup> Land bridges with Korea developed at least twice during the Middle Pleistocene but there was no such land bridge in the Late Pleistocene, even at the coldest stage of the last glacial

maximum (LGM) about 18,000 years ago. The main islands of Honshū, Kyūshū, and Shikoku were connected in the Late Pleistocene, with the Inland Sea forming a large plain. Hokkaidō was separated from Honshū by the Tsugaru Strait, though connected in the north to Sakhalin and the Asian mainland. The current form of the Japanese archipelago began to take shape after 15,000 years ago.<sup>9</sup>

During the LGM, mean annual temperatures were 7–8°C colder than present and the vegetation of Japan was very different to that of today.<sup>10</sup> Tundra and shrub tundra was found across much of Hokkaidō and a boreal coniferous forest extended through northern Honshū into the highlands of western Japan. Temperate conifers and mixed broadleaf trees were distributed in coastal areas of the Kantō and in western Japan. Warm broadleaf evergreen forest was found only in a refugium at the southernmost tip of Kyūshū.

Climatic warming after the LGM was followed by a sudden return to very cold conditions during the Younger Dryas, a global climatic stage that is dated to about 13,000 to 11,600 years ago on Greenland ice core data. The precise effects of the Younger Dryas in East Asia remain poorly understood, but it has been argued that the rapid changes in stone tools and other cultural traits in the Incipient Jōmon are due to this stage of climatic instability.<sup>11</sup> Following the Younger Dryas, the climate gradually became warmer, reaching a peak in the “Holocene Optimum” around 7,000–6,000 years ago when sea levels were some two to six meters higher than present.

In addition to climatic change, the prehistory of Japan cannot be considered without reference to the frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions that affected the archipelago. The two largest volcanic eruptions in Japanese prehistory were those of the Aira and Kikai calderas, both in southern Kyūshū and dated to about 22,000 and 7,300 years ago, respectively. The Kikai eruption and associated earthquakes and tsunami was probably so devastating that Kyūshū was abandoned by Jōmon populations for several centuries.<sup>12</sup>

## Population History

The earliest human fossils from Japan belong to a juvenile from Yamashita-chō Cave, Okinawa dating to about 32,000 years ago and the question of who was the first human to settle the archipelago remains controversial.<sup>13</sup> The first Paleolithic site in Japan was dug in 1949 at Iwajuku, Gunma prefecture. Later research has identified some 5,000 Paleolithic sites in Japan but all secure dates are later than 35,000 years ago. A series of proposed Early Paleolithic sites dug in the 1960s and 1970s remains controversial.<sup>14</sup> Other work centered on Miyagi prefecture in the late 1970s to late 1990s reported a number of Early Paleolithic localities dating back as early as 600,000 years ago, but all of these sites were later found to have been faked by amateur archaeologist Fujimura Shin’ichi.<sup>15</sup>

Southeast Asia and southern China were settled by *Homo erectus* from soon after two million years ago. In north China, the famous “Peking Man” site of Zhoukoudian near Beijing dates to after 460,000 years ago, but *Homo erectus* tools dated earlier than 730,000 years have been found in the Nihewan Basin in Hebei.<sup>16</sup> *Homo erectus* adapted to many different environments in Asia and it is not clear why Japan was apparently not settled prior to the appearance of modern humans. However,

the sudden expansion of sites in Japan after 35,000 years ago is consistent with the worldwide trend toward the occupation of new, previously uninhabited environments after the appearance of *Homo sapiens*.

At the end of the Pleistocene, it is likely that new groups reached Japan bringing microblades and other technologies. With so few human skeletal remains dating to the Paleolithic and the first half of the Jōmon, however, it is unclear to what extent the peoples of the Jōmon tradition derived from Paleolithic ancestors in Japan or else represented a new population influx at the Paleolithic–Jōmon transition. Much clearer evidence for immigration comes in the Yayoi period when continental migrants brought farming into the Japanese islands. A range of biological data has been used to argue that the modern Japanese derive primarily from these Yayoi era immigrants and their descendants, though some admixture with native Jōmon populations certainly occurred in many areas.<sup>17</sup> This Yayoi immigration model does not necessarily require a huge number of initial migrants: if population growth was high amongst the Yayoi farmers then their numbers would have rapidly increased at the expense of Jōmon hunter-gatherers.<sup>18</sup> Archaeological evidence suggests the source of these agricultural immigrants was the Korean peninsula, but the scarcity of skeletal remains from this period in Korea has precluded extensive comparisons of human biological remains.

It seems most likely that the agricultural immigrants of the Yayoi period also brought the Japanese language from the Korean peninsula. In the past, Japanese was often seen as forming part of an Altaic language family, but recently many linguists have come to see the structural similarities between the “Altaic” languages as due to areal diffusion.<sup>19</sup> Certainly, the archaeological record offers no support for the speculative models of Altaic expansions proposed by some linguists.<sup>20</sup> Most linguists and archaeologists also continue to be highly skeptical about proposed links between Japanese and the Austronesian and Austroasiatic families of Southeast Asia and the Pacific.<sup>21</sup> Japonic – the Japanese language family that contains Japanese, Ryūkyūan, and their various historical dialects – appears to be related most closely to Old Koguryo and thus its roots can be initially placed on the Korean peninsula; attempts to determine the earlier roots of Japonic at present remain controversial.<sup>22</sup>

As noted, Jōmon populations from Kyūshū expanded south into the Ryūkyūs as far as Okinawa Island. However, the southern Ryūkyūs (Miyako to Yonaguni) were not settled from Japan at this stage. The prehistory of these Sakishima Islands is characterized by an early ceramic Shimotabaru phase that probably began in the second millennium BC. This was followed, after an apparent hiatus, by an aceramic culture with shell adzes that perhaps began in the late first millennium BC.<sup>23</sup> The precise origin of both of these cultures is unknown but is possibly to be found in the Philippines or neighboring areas of island Southeast Asia. After 1300, the Sakishima Islands were gradually incorporated into the Chūzan kingdom of Okinawa Island.<sup>24</sup>

From the early days of Japanese anthropology it had been assumed that the Ainu of Hokkaidō and the Okinawans of the Ryūkyū Islands derive primarily from Jōmon ancestors rather than the mainland Yayoi Japanese.<sup>25</sup> Work over the last decade or so, however, has shown that the modern Okinawans are biologically much closer to the Japanese than to the Ainu or prehistoric Jōmon people.<sup>26</sup> These recent results suggest significant gene flow into the Ryūkyūs from Japan by at least the Gusuku period, although there is little archaeological evidence for such immigration and the historical

context of this population movement remains unclear. The Ryūkyūan languages are closely related to Japanese and must have replaced earlier languages in the Okinawan Islands. Although proto-Ryūkyūan must have split from the Nara dialects before the eighth century, recent research suggests its spread into Okinawa may have been rather later, perhaps around AD 900.<sup>27</sup> A deeper understanding of the population history of the Ryūkyū Islands will be an important focus of research over the next decade or so.

In the north, research continues to affirm close biological similarities between the historic Ainu and Jōmon populations. Here, however, the situation is complicated by linguistic and archaeological evidence that suggests the Ainu may be derived from Jōmon populations of the Tōhoku region rather than Hokkaidō. Based on ancient borrowings from Japanese and the low dialect diversity of Ainu, linguist Juha Janhunen has proposed that the Ainu language spread from northern Honshū into Hokkaidō in the Satsumon period (c.650–1200).<sup>28</sup> Archaeologically, the large differences between the cultures of the Epi-Jōmon and Satsumon periods could support population influx from the Tōhoku into Hokkaidō in the seventh century AD. This is also an area on which further research is warranted. Although the Ainu nation today may oppose any suggestion that their ancestors arrived in Hokkaidō as recently as the seventh century, this Tōhoku origin model does not contradict the long, indigenous history of the Ainu in Japan.

## Technology

As elsewhere, stone tools are the main archaeological evidence for the Paleolithic period in Japan. The reduction of risk in obtaining food and other resources appears to be one of the main determinants of stone tool variability.<sup>29</sup> The early stages of the Late Paleolithic in Japan are marked by “knife-shaped tools” made on parallel-sided blades.<sup>30</sup> Knife-shaped tools appear to have been used for a variety of purposes and are characterized by relatively few task-specialized shapes.<sup>31</sup> A more specialist tool type of the Late Paleolithic is an edge-ground axe that may have been used for woodworking.<sup>32</sup> The last stage of the Paleolithic in Japan is characterized by microblades – small stone tools that were hafted to organic armatures to make composite spears and other weapons. In Japan, microblades appear first at the Kashiwada I site in Hokkaidō at about 20,000 years ago; sites in the rest of the archipelago follow several thousand years later. Analysis of the technology of Japanese microblades has suggested that Late Pleistocene hunters in northern Japan operated under more environmental constraints and risks than those in the south of the country.<sup>33</sup>

Recent calibrated radiocarbon dates place the earliest pottery in Japan, at the Ōdai Yamamoto I site in Aomori prefecture, at about 16,500 years ago.<sup>34</sup> This pottery is the oldest from anywhere in the world but similar final Pleistocene dates have been reported for pottery from China and the Amur Basin and it is not yet clear if Jōmon ceramics developed in isolation or as part of a wider East Asian ceramic technology. Ceramic vessels provided a convenient method of cooking large quantities of ecologically low-ranked foods such as plants and shellfish, as well as a means of food storage in a seasonal, temperate environment.

Although some non-sedentary foragers are known to have used pottery, the large quantity of ceramics found in many Jōmon sites suggests a relatively high level of sedentism in that tradition – though few, if any, Jōmon groups were fully sedentary.<sup>35</sup> The semi-subterranean pit house was the basic dwelling of the Jōmon period but ethnographic parallels suggest these buildings would have only been used in the winter months. A raised-floor structure is also commonly found at Jōmon sites; these are usually interpreted as store-houses. Most Jōmon sites are small clusters of a few pit buildings but many very large sites are also known, especially from the Early and Middle phases. Sannai Maruyama in Aomori, the largest Jōmon site discovered so far, has produced over 600 pit buildings, but it is not clear how many of these were occupied simultaneously.<sup>36</sup>

There is no evidence for the use of coastal resources in Paleolithic Japan, although any Late Pleistocene coastal sites would have been flooded by later rises in sea level. That Paleolithic people had the ability to cross water is clear from finds of obsidian from Kozushima Island which was brought to the Kantō region as early as 30,000 years ago.<sup>37</sup> The discovery of over a hundred dugout canoes from Jōmon sites suggests that these vessels were the main method of water transportation. That the Jōmon people were not confined to rivers and coasts, however, is shown by Early Jōmon remains from Hachijō Island, some 200 kilometers from Honshū. Jōmon fishing was conducted with hooks and harpoons, both of which first appear in the Initial phase. The use of nets is assumed from probable net-sinkers and an actual fish weir was found in a Late Jōmon context at Shindanai, Iwate prefecture.<sup>38</sup>

Various new technologies, including lacquerware, basketry, and textiles, were adopted over the long history of the Jōmon period.<sup>39</sup> Many of these technologies served to increase the productive efficiency of the Jōmon economy, but this does not mean that the Jōmon economy as a whole was gradually evolving toward a radically different socioeconomic system. Jōmon society remained “conservative” in many respects; despite knowledge of rice and other crops there seems to have been no attempt by Jōmon populations to adopt full-scale farming. This “conservatism” ended dramatically in the Yayoi period when new technologies of food production enabled a qualitative expansion of the economy. The introduction of metals into Japan in the Yayoi also had profound effects on technology and production, as well as on the reproduction of political power. Bronze working was widespread in China by the early second millennium BC but was slow to spread to the Japanese archipelago. Iron, in contrast, spread almost immediately and the introduction of iron tools on the continent from the fifth century BC has been suggested as an important causal factor in the diffusion of farming to Japan.<sup>40</sup>

In Japan, iron was mainly used for agricultural and other tools whereas ritual artifacts were mainly made of bronze. Some casting of bronze and iron began in Japan by about 100 BC, but the raw materials for both metals were initially introduced from Korea and China. In the Yayoi, bronze weapons and bells evolved from practical tools to ornate, ceremonial artifacts. In northern Kyūshū, bronze weapons are found as grave goods in elite burials at sites such as Yoshinogari, but elsewhere weapons and bells are usually discovered as hoards buried away from settlements. At Kojindani in Shimane prefecture, six bells, sixteen spearheads, and 358 swords were found on an isolated hillside. Such hoards are often interpreted as resulting from community-based agricultural rituals.

The Kofun period saw a massive “technology transfer” from the Korean peninsula to the Japanese islands that included ironworking, agricultural technology, wheel-thrown stoneware, architectural techniques, and technologies of administration.<sup>41</sup> Several scholars have argued that the uneven diffusion of this technology hampered agricultural growth in many regions.<sup>42</sup> At first, the Yamato state tried to monopolize new technologies, which could be an important source of political power.<sup>43</sup> The increasing need for the Nara state to be based on non-staple wealth finance, however, led to the spread of various technologies to the provinces and resulted in geographically uneven but extensive economic growth across Japan.<sup>44</sup>

### Subsistence and Economy

Traditional Japanese civilization was based on agriculture, but Japan also has one of the longest histories of hunter-gatherer societies in East Asia. In the main islands, farming was introduced in the Yayoi period, but in the Ryūkyūs hunter-gathering continued until at least the eighth century and in Hokkaidō until the late nineteenth century.

Few faunal remains are available from Paleolithic sites in Japan and discussions of Paleolithic subsistence rely more on informed guesswork than actual data. Plant foods would have been limited in the dense boreal forests of the late glacial maximum (LGM).<sup>45</sup> The hunting of large animals is suggested by remains of *Palaeoloxodon naumanni* (Naumann’s elephant) and *Sinomegaceros yabei* (Yabe’s giant deer) at the Lake Nojiri and Hanaizumi sites, but some recent research has concluded that large migratory mammals were rare in Pleistocene Japan.<sup>46</sup> The early adoption of pottery in Japan in turn suggests that plant foods quickly became a very important resource once the climate began to warm up after the LGM. Pleistocene megafauna became extinct in Japan between 15,000 and 10,000 years ago, leaving the medium- and small-sized mammals found in the archipelago today.

Humans could have attempted to adapt to the difficult conditions in Late Pleistocene Japan by increased storage, evidenced archaeologically by sedentism, mass capture and preservation techniques, and the exchange of prestige items as “social storage.”<sup>47</sup> Little evidence of these adaptations is to be found in Paleolithic Japan, however. Sedentism and storage did not become important until the Jōmon. Pit-traps for hunting are known from almost 30,000 years ago at the Hatsunegahara A site in Shizuoka Prefecture, but they did not become widespread until the Initial Jōmon phase.<sup>48</sup>

The Jōmon diet included a broad range of plant, animal, and marine foods. Remains of salmon bones from the Maeda Kochi site in Tokyo show that this fish was exploited from as early as the Incipient phase. Shell middens are known from the Initial phase and more than 3,000 Jōmon shell middens have been identified. These middens have produced a variety of shellfish as well as the remains of sea mammals and inshore and offshore fish. Deer and wild boar were the main terrestrial animal species exploited. The domesticated dog is present from the Initial phase and was probably used in hunting. Nuts, roots, and berries are thought to have been the main wild plant foods exploited by Jōmon peoples. There is also increasing evidence that a number of plants were cultivated. These plants include hemp (*Cannabis sativa*), perilla (Japanese *shiso/egoma*), burdock (*Arctium lappa*), bottle gourd (*Lagenaria*

*siceraria*), barnyard millet (*Echinochloa utilis*), adzuki and mung beans (*Vigna angularis* and *V. radiatus*), and the lacquer tree (*Rhus vernicifera*).<sup>49</sup> Rice, barley, and broomcorn and foxtail millet were also present in some Jōmon sites by the end of that period.<sup>50</sup> The yam *Dioscorea japonica* has been proposed as an important resource in the Middle Jōmon of central Honshū but direct evidence is lacking. Disturbance of forests around Jōmon villages probably encouraged the growth of chestnut and walnut trees.<sup>51</sup> DNA analysis of chestnuts (*Castanea crenata*) from Jōmon sites has shown that some samples have a low genetic diversity, which suggests management practices by Jōmon populations, particularly at Sannai Maruyama.<sup>52</sup>

These plant cultivation and management practices had little influence on the overall organization of Jōmon society. In contrast, the full-scale farming of the Yayoi period marked a very different intensive and expansionary economic system. In addition to the traditional emphasis on cultivation and domestication, archaeologists have recently stressed the *social* aspects of farming as a threshold involving the creation of artificial agro-ecosystems.<sup>53</sup> When possessing a nutritionally complementary range of domesticated plants and animals, agriculture can be seen as a social system that is *expansionary, exploitative*, and based on principles of social *exclusion*. In Japan, this agricultural system was initially associated with immigration from the Korean peninsula. Population growth amongst early Yayoi farmers then led to the rapid expansion of Yayoi culture as far as northern Honshū.

The expansion of Yayoi culture is known from the excavation of over 100 rice paddy field sites dating to that period. Without doubt rice was an important crop during the Yayoi but barley, millet, and other cultivated and wild plants were also consumed in large quantities. Domesticated pigs and, more rarely, chickens are known from Yayoi contexts but it is not clear how important these animals were as food sources. The hunting of deer and wild boar certainly continued through the Yayoi and Kofun periods, as did river and ocean fishing. After the introduction of Buddhism into Japan in the late sixth century, it is often argued that religious prohibitions meant that fish and shellfish became the main sources of animal protein. Archaeological evidence, however, has clearly shown that a range of mammals continued to be utilized for food and other resources through to the Tokugawa period.<sup>54</sup>

### Sociopolitical Change

Anthropologists have long been interested in how the small-scale societies characteristic of hunter-gatherers developed into stratified, organizationally complex chiefdoms and states. The rise of class divisions and the state has been a major topic of research for Japanese archaeologists since World War II; research on the evolution of Paleolithic and Jōmon societies has, in contrast, been slower to develop. In Japan, the study of Paleolithic society has largely been approached through work on settlement patterns. Possible remains of tents have been found at Kashiwada 1 in Hokkaidō dating to about 20,000 years ago but, from the fact that dwellings and hearths are rare in the knife-shaped tool cultures of Honshū south, Inada Takashi has argued that society at that time was rather unstable, with nuclear families usually not forming independent residential units.<sup>55</sup> The view that, amongst hunter-gatherers, nuclear families had not yet separated out from band-wide households goes back to



Engels and is part of a broader debate on the social organization of foragers.<sup>56</sup> Archaeologically, however, such arguments from the *absence* of preserved features are difficult.

A landmark volume on hunter-gatherers published in 1968 made two basic assumptions about foragers, that “(1) they live in small groups and (2) they move around a lot.”<sup>57</sup> Archaeological research in the 1970s and 1980s, however, soon demonstrated that many prehistoric hunter-gatherers lived in quite sedentary villages with large populations. Within this research, the Japanese evidence figured prominently in a 1981 book called *Affluent Foragers*, but following this publication only a few archaeologists retained an interest in the comparative study of Jōmon hunter-gatherers.<sup>58</sup> The Jōmon is perhaps the most materially affluent hunter-gatherer culture known through archaeology. It is presently unclear, though, whether that material affluence was matched by the type of complex social organization known ethnographically for some hunter-gathering societies where social differentiation was hereditary and leaders controlled non-kin labor.<sup>59</sup>

A great variety of ritual artifacts is known from the Jōmon, including clay figurines and masks, phallic stone rods, and highly ornate lacquer and ceramic vessels. Stone and wooden circles are also present; the two stone circles at Ōyu in Akita Prefecture have diameters of 45 and 40 meters.<sup>60</sup> The prominence of these artifacts and sites has led to the Jōmon being widely interpreted as a “magico-ritual” society within Japanese archaeology.<sup>61</sup> Other influential studies of Jōmon social organization have focused on settlement duality and reconstructions of postmarital residence.<sup>62</sup>

Although written records are unknown in Japan itself until the eighth century, Chinese dynastic histories make some mention of the land of the “Wa,” who are thought to be the Yayoi Japanese. The *Wei zhi*, compiled in 280, contains a short description of the economy and society of the Wa people and of the diplomatic relations between the Wei and the Wa polity of Yamatai and its Queen Himiko. The location of Yamatai is unclear from the text; northern Kyūshū and the Kinai region have been suggested as the two main possible locations. The *Wei zhi* suggests Yamatai controlled most of western Japan in the third century, but the archaeological record does not support such a degree of political unification until much later.

Archaeologists have proposed the existence of several chiefdom-type polities in western Japan in the Yayoi. These were regional polities based on a large, central settlement with populations of perhaps several thousand people. Such polities may correspond to the “countries” (Chinese *guo*) described in the *Wei zhi* but their political control did not extend beyond their particular basin or river valley. The site of Yoshinogari in Saga Prefecture was probably the center of one of these chiefdoms: defensive ditches with watchtowers enclose an area of 25 hectares; the rulers of this settlement lived in a central residential precinct and were buried in a 40 by 26 meter mound. Many Yayoi chiefdoms in western Japan were engaged in conflicts with neighboring groups to gain access to water and other resources and to extend their power. Such conflicts are mentioned in the *Wei zhi* and are evidenced archaeologically by defended settlements, the widespread presence of weapons, and discoveries of human skeletons with war-related injuries. Over 150 Yayoi period skeletons are known with embedded arrowheads, cut marks, or decapitated skulls. Through warfare, trade and alliance-building, the chiefdoms of the Kinai region had considerably extended their power by the third century AD. By around AD 250, the

mound burials of the Yayoi had developed into the huge standardized keyhole-shaped tombs of the Kofun period; in the fourth century these Kofun tombs quickly spread around the Inland Sea and beyond.

An archaic state is a large-scale society structured on a hierarchy of class rather than kinship and which has extensive powers in warfare and administrative control. Archaeologically, archaic states can be identified by royal palaces, temples and priestly residences, royal tombs, a settlement hierarchy with at least four levels (cities, towns, and large and small villages), and evidence of a bureaucracy.<sup>63</sup> In Japan, although royal tombs can be said to make their appearance with the keyhole-shaped mounds of the late third century AD, the other features only appear in the seventh to eighth centuries. The territorial state of the Nara period marks the emergence of a fully fledged archaic state organized on Chinese models of government known in Japanese as the *ritsuruyō* system.<sup>64</sup>

The ritual hierarchy of the keyhole tombs gives the impression of a centralized society, but administrative power in the Kofun period seems to have been diffuse and *heterarchical*, that is having different, non-hierarchical functions within the same system. Several archaeologists have explained Kofun society through the concept of a chiefly alliance or confederacy.<sup>65</sup> Critics of the chiefly alliance theories have discussed the ways in which the strongest polity of the Kinai region attempted to increase its power through trade, tribute, and technology.<sup>66</sup> Control over access to iron and trade with the Asian continent appear to have been major factors in the growth of class stratification in Japan. Archaeologically, this is evidenced by changes at the end of the Yayoi period.<sup>67</sup> In the Middle Yayoi, power was negotiated through bronze bells and weapons that served as “inalienable goods” that were not widely exchanged or circulated but were used in ceremonies of authentication and commemoration.<sup>68</sup> From the end of the Middle Yayoi, however, these bronzes began to be deposited in hoards and the growing trade in iron fueled a “prestige goods” economy using Chinese mirrors and other objects.<sup>69</sup> Complex societies can be financed by “staple finance” or “wealth finance”: the former involves obligatory payments of agricultural surplus by commoners whereas the latter is the use of special objects (prestige goods or money) as “political currencies.”<sup>70</sup> The basic tension in premodern Japanese history between these two forms of state finance dates back to the Yayoi period when the economic basis of wet-rice farming was both expanded and contested by prestige goods such as bronze mirrors. When the state was strong it could control access to wealth finance in Japan by supporting the local production of previously imported goods or by controlling the means of transportation or trade routes.<sup>71</sup> The Kofun period shift to locally produced stone imitations of shell bracelets previously made on tropical shells imported from the Ryūkyūs is a good example of the former, and the *sakoku* trade restrictions of the Tokugawa attest to the enormous importance of wealth finance in the medieval era in Japan.

In recent years historians have produced a number of sophisticated analyses of the nature of state power in Japan, especially in the Tokugawa period.<sup>72</sup> Much less comparable work has been conducted by anthropologists on the archaic state in the archipelago. Given the many outward continuities in premodern Japanese politics (most prominently the emperor) there is a tendency to overemphasize the stability of the state in Japanese history. Like many other archaic states, however, the state in Japan appears to have been inherently unstable and went through clear “peaks and

valleys” of consolidation and weakness. Although anthropological research on the state in Japan has so far emphasized state formation, anthropological theory holds considerable potential for understanding the operation and structure of states, as well as their origins.<sup>73</sup>

### Conclusions

This chapter has presented some brief glimpses into the kaleidoscope of anthropological and archaeological research on ancient Japan. One American archaeologist has recently written that, “To say that Japan is the most thoroughly understood prehistoric area in the world does not begin to present the detailed information that is available on ancient life in Japan. Japanese archaeologists have established an incredibly active research tradition and exposed a record of prehistoric events in the Japanese archipelago that is simply amazing.”<sup>74</sup> This archaeological record is increasingly being incorporated into the Japanese literature on the history of Japan, but in the West, historians have been much slower to use the results of archaeological research.<sup>75</sup> Western archaeologists working on Japan have, in turn, largely been interested in anthropological rather than historical questions. Although this chapter has covered only the periods up to the eighth century, archaeological evidence continues right through to the Tokugawa and Meiji periods – or in some cases even later, as with the work on World War II sites in Okinawa. The different traditions of the “two cultures” of history and anthropological archaeology continue to make dialog difficult, but the challenge and adventure of Japanese archaeology in the early twenty-first century is to use the wealth of archaeological evidence from Japan to contribute to anthropological theory in general whilst, at the same time, using archaeology to further our understanding of Japanese history.

### NOTES

- 1 Recent radiocarbon dates from the National Museum of Japanese History place the beginning of the Yayoi period at about 1000 BC. The researchers involved in this work have published a book (Harunari and Imamura, *Yayoi jidai no jitsunendai*) but their results have not yet appeared in a refereed journal and debate over these dates look set to continue for some time.
- 2 The *Wei zhi* is a late third-century Chinese dynastic history which represents the first historical description of Japan. For an English translation of the section on Japan, see Tsunoda and Goodrich, *Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories*.
- 3 For details of the Ryūkyū sequence, see Pearson, “The Place of Okinawa in Japanese Historical Identity.”
- 4 For the later prehistory of Hokkaidō, see Imamura, *Prehistoric Japan*, pp. 199–204, and Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, pp. 206–32.
- 5 Bleed, “Almost Archaeology.”
- 6 Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought*, p. 174.
- 7 On postwar Japanese archaeology, see Pearson, “The Nature of Japanese Archaeology,” and Mizoguchi, “The Reproduction of Archaeological Discourse.”
- 8 On the early geological history of Japan, see Barnes, “Origins of the Japanese Islands.”

- 9 This environmental research is summarized by Keally, "Environment and the Distribution of Sites in the Japanese Palaeolithic," p. 25.
- 10 For climate reconstructions, see Tsukada, "Vegetation in Prehistoric Japan," and Yasuda, *Prehistoric Environment in Japan*.
- 11 Teshigawara, *Jōmon bunka*, pp. 52–7.
- 12 Machida, "The Impact of the Kikai Eruptions on Prehistoric Japan."
- 13 Matsu'ura, "A Chronological Review of Pleistocene Human Remains from the Japanese Archipelago," p. 186.
- 14 Ikawa-Smith, ed., *Early Paleolithic in South and East Asia*.
- 15 Japanese Archaeological Association, ed., *Zen, chūki kyūsekki mondai no kenshō*; Hudson, "For the People, By the People."
- 16 See the summary by Olsen, "China's Earliest Inhabitants."
- 17 This question of Yayoi immigration has a long history of research which is summarized by Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*. The basic model supported by many Japanese anthropologists is described in Hanihara, "Dual Structure Model for the Population History of the Japanese."
- 18 Nakahashi and Iizuka, "Anthropological Study of the Transition from the Jōmon to the Yayoi"; and Aoki and Tuljapurkar, "Hanihara's Conundrum Revisited."
- 19 For a theoretical discussion of areal contact, see Dixon, *The Rise and Fall of Languages*, esp. p. 32 on Altaic.
- 20 Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, pp. 86–7.
- 21 On Austronesian, see Hudson, "Japanese and Austronesian."
- 22 For an up-to-date collection of papers on this question, see Osada and Vovin, eds., *Perspectives on the Origins of the Japanese Language*.
- 23 The precise chronology of both of these cultures is uncertain. See Ohama, *Yayama no kōkogaku*.
- 24 Pearson, "Excavations at Sumiya and Other Sakishima Sites."
- 25 See Hanihara, "Dual Structure Model for the Population History of the Japanese."
- 26 Dodo et al., "Ainu and Ryūkyūan Cranial Nonmetric Variation"; Hatta et al., "HLA Genes and Haplotypes Suggest Recent Gene Flow to the Okinawa Islands"; and Pietruszewsky, "A Multivariate Craniometric Study of the Inhabitants of the Ryūkyū Islands."
- 27 Serafim, "When and from Where did the Japonic Language Enter the Ryūkyūs?"
- 28 Janhunen, "A Framework for the Study of Japanese Language Origins," p. 481.
- 29 Torrence, "Hunter-Gatherer Technology."
- 30 For more details on Late Paleolithic tool types, see Keally, "Environment and the Distribution of Sites in the Japanese Palaeolithic."
- 31 Sato, *Nihon kyūsekki bunka no kōzō to shinka*, p. 295.
- 32 Ikawa-Smith, ed., "Late Pleistocene and Early Holocene Technologies," p. 204.
- 33 Bleed, "Cheap, Regular, and Reliable," p. 101.
- 34 Habu, *Ancient Jōmon of Japan*, pp. 28–30.
- 35 For pottery use by non-sedentary groups, see Rice, "On the Origins of Pottery," p. 29.
- 36 For the settlement archaeology of Sannai Maruyama, see Habu, *Ancient Jōmon of Japan*, pp. 108–32.
- 37 Keally, "Environment and the Distribution of Sites in the Japanese Palaeolithic," p. 24.
- 38 For a summary of fishing technology, see Imamura, *Prehistoric Japan*, pp. 73–7.
- 39 On these Jōmon technologies, see Habu, *Ancient Jōmon of Japan*, pp. 214–21.
- 40 Imamura, *Prehistoric Japan*, pp. 217–18.
- 41 This transfer of technology is discussed by Farris, *Sacred Texts and Buried Treasures*, pp. 68–105.

- 42 See Terasawa, “Commentary on the Productive Capacity of Early Japanese Rice Farming,” and Farris, *Population, Disease, and Land in Early Japan, 645–900*.
- 43 On irrigation technology, see Wakasa, “Water Rights, Water Rituals, Chiefly Compounds, and *Haniwa*.”
- 44 For an archaeological study of this process, see Uno, *Ritsuryō shakai no kōkogakuteki kenkyū*. The concept of wealth finance is discussed in the section on “Sociopolitical Change.”
- 45 Keally, “Environment and the Distribution of Sites in the Japanese Palaeolithic,” pp. 26–7.
- 46 See discussion in Mizoguchi, *An Archaeological History of Japan*, p. 61.
- 47 Rowley-Conwy and Zvelebil, “Saving It for Later.”
- 48 For a discussion of Jōmon pit-traps, see Imamura, *Prehistoric Japan*, pp. 79–88.
- 49 Crawford, “Prehistoric Plant Domestication in East Asia.”
- 50 These finds are summarized by Hudson, *Ruins of Identity*, pp. 106–15.
- 51 Nishida, “The Emergence of Food Production in Neolithic Japan.”
- 52 Sato et al., “Evidence for Jōmon Plant Cultivation Based on DNA Analysis of Chestnut Remains.”
- 53 For a theoretical discussion of this issue, see Spriggs, “Early Agriculture and What Went Before in Island Melanesia.”
- 54 See, for example, Uchiyama, “San’ei-chō and Meat-eating in Buddhist Edo.”
- 55 Inada, “Subsistence and the Beginnings of Settled Life in Japan,” p. 21.
- 56 For a summary of this debate, see Ingold, “On the Social Relations of the Hunter-Gatherer Band,” p. 401.
- 57 Lee and DeVore, “Problems in the Study of Hunters and Gatherers,” p. 11.
- 58 Koyama and Thomas, eds., *Affluent Foragers*.
- 59 This definition of complex hunter-gatherers follows Arnold, “The Archaeology of Complex Hunter-Gatherers,” p. 78.
- 60 For an overview of this material, see Habu, *Ancient Jōmon of Japan*, ch. 5.
- 61 This view has recently been criticized by Kosugi, “Jōmon bunka ni sensō wa sonzai shita no ka?”
- 62 These studies are summarized by Habu, *Ancient Jōmon of Japan*, pp. 138–41.
- 63 Flannery, “The Ground Plans of Archaic States.”
- 64 For introductory accounts of the Nara state, see Brown, ed., *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 1, and Tsuboi and Tanaka, *The Historic City of Nara*.
- 65 Kondo, *Zenpokoensfun no jidai*.
- 66 Tsude, “The Kofun Period and State Formation.”
- 67 Fukunaga, “Social Changes from the Yayoi to the Kofun Periods.”
- 68 For a recent archaeological discussion of “inalienable goods,” see Mills, “The Establishment and Defeat of Hierarchy.”
- 69 Tsude, “The Kofun Period and State Formation,” pp. 81–2.
- 70 Earle, *How Chiefs Come to Power*, pp. 70–4.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 72 See Roberts, *Mercantilism in a Japanese Domain*, and Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, pp. 17–47.
- 73 See, for example, Marcus’s discussion of “The Peaks and Valleys of Ancient States.”
- 74 Bleed, “Cheap, Regular, and Reliable,” p. 95.
- 75 Notable exceptions include Farris, *Sacred Texts and Buried Treasures*, and Piggott, *The Emergence of Japanese Kingship*. European archaeologists are also often more comfortable with combining archaeological and historical data, as for example with Seyock, *Auf den Spuren der Ostbarbaren*.

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#### FURTHER READING

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