

Report on 2017 Autumn Conference of the Japanese Archaeological Association

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ABSTRACT

This short essay reports the proceedings and some highlights of the Japanese Archaeological Association 2017 Autumn Conference, held between October 21–23, 2017, at Miyazaki Municipal University.

KEYWORDS: 2017 Conference, Japanese Archaeological Association

The 2017 Miyazaki Conference was held between Saturday, 21st and Monday, 23rd October at Miyazaki Municipal University, Miyazaki Prefecture. Unfortunately, the Typhoon No. 21 of the year brought gusty wind and substantial rain. However, it did not weaken the resolve of the local organising committee (the LOC) to make it a success, because a Japanese Archaeological Association (JAA) conference was to be held for the first time in Miyazaki prefecture. Without any university archaeology department in the prefecture, the Miyazaki conference was meticulously organised by the LOC, headed by Kazuo Yanagisawa, the Emeritus Professor of Miyazaki University, and primarily comprising association members residing in Miyazaki Prefecture. The conference was extremely successful for a JAA regional conference, with 240 people participating, despite the approaching typhoon.

On the afternoon of October 21st, following an address from JAA President Akio Tanigawa, Miyazaki Municipal University President Shinsaku Arima and Professor Yanagisawa, the LOC chair, addressed to the participants. Two commemorative lectures followed. JAA Member Takeshi Noto (formerly on the Gunma Prefecture Board of Education) gave a lecture entitled ‘Methods and the development of disaster archaeology’ focusing on the Kuroimine site of Gun’ma Prefecture, where a Kofun period village buried by volcanic ash was excavated. Noto described how communities dealt with and overcame disasters. In the second lecture, the LOC chair Professor Yanagisawa gave a talk entitled ‘The Yokoana-bo-type tunnel tombs of Korea and Kyushu.’ He gave an overview of this tomb type primarily distributed at certain regions across the Japanese

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archipelago and discovered recently in the Baekje region of Korea, and investigated its origin. Referring to an entry in the *Nihon-shoki* imperial chronicle describing ‘500 soldiers from Tsukushi were dispatched to send back a Baekje prince,’ he concluded that the Yokoana-bo-type tunnel tombs excavated in the Baekje region were the graves of soldiers from the ancient province of Hyuga who were sent to Baekje via the Tsukushi province.

Three sessions on topics of especial relevance to the ancient Hyuga province, present-day Miyazaki Prefecture and the Kyushu region were organised. Session I, ‘New developments in volcanic ash archaeology,’ organised and co-ordinated by JAA member Mitsuhiro Kuwahata, showcased some latest achievements of volcanic ash archaeology by examining the outcomes of the excavations of sites devastated by volcanic eruptions and events ignited by them. Session II, ‘The variability, regionality, and hierarchy of the chambered and tunnel tomb types in the Middle and Late Kofun Periods,’ was organised and coordinated by Professor Yanagisawa. By making comparisons between chambered tomb and tunnel tomb types, including a distinct underground tunnel tomb type called ‘Chika-shiki yokoana (underground tunnel tomb type)’ uniquely distributed in southern Kyushu, one of the objectives of the session was to clarify the uniqueness and commonality of these tomb types. These sessions examined distinctive archaeological materials in southern Kyushu.

After the closing of day’s proceedings, a conference party was held. Following a welcome speech from President Tanigawa, Miyazaki Prefecture Archaeological Society advisor Shigeru Tanaka gave an address, and the party began with a toast from LOC chair Professor Yanagisawa. The atmosphere was friendly and lively, and a mid-party speech from Professor Hideshi Ishikawa of Meiji University announced the 84th Annual General Meeting to be held at Meiji University, and another speech from Shohachi Uematsu announced JAA 2019 Autumn Conference to be held at Shizuoka city. The party was closed with an speech from JAA Vice President Hideo Kondo.

On October 22nd, when the typhoon came closest to Miyazaki, Sessions I and II continued, and Session III commenced, entitled ‘the Ritsuryo-era society in southern Kyushu,’ organised and coordinated by JAA member Masanori Yoshimoto. Session I, ‘New developments in volcanic ash archaeology,’ further presented cases of the practice of volcanic ash archaeology from across the country, many of which involve interdisciplinary collaborations, reconstructing damages caused by volcanic activity and eruption-related events in detail. At the discussion part toward the end, Takeshi Noto, who had given the opening commemorative lecture the previous day, commented that there should be more problem-oriented micro-analyses including the reconstruction of seasonality and minute spatial differences in disaster damage. Noto argued that to do so would provide clearly focussed research topics for the future development of disaster

archaeology.

Session II further summarised the developments of the study of the chambered and tunnel tomb types with an especial focus on southern Kyushu. Session III tried to elucidate the distinctiveness and regionality of Ritsuryo-era southern Kyushu. The session tackled various issues concerning settlements and temple construction in southern Kyushu during the Ritsuryo era by referring to historical documents and other written materials.

In addition to the sessions, three posters were presented by committees of the JAA. They were ‘The state of training for the next generation of archaeological researchers III: summary and outlook’ by the Research Environment Investigation Committee, ‘How should archaeological materials from the Middle Ages onward be treated in current elementary and middle school textbooks’ by the Social Sciences and History Textbook Investigation Committee, and ‘The state of research on buried cultural properties rescue-excavated in Great Tohoku Earthquake Reconstruction Projects (V)’ by the Buried Cultural Property Preservation Committee.

An excursion was held on October 23. The typhoon had passed, and the weather was beautiful. Although two tours had been planned, one was cancelled owing to the number of participants. The tour to Miyakonojo City offered a wide variety of visits, including the sites of ancient Hyuga Provincial office, the Saitobaru tumuli cluster, the Oshima Hatakeda site, and the Iwayoshigoshō site. With the help of the members of the LOC, the tour went smoothly. At 8:30 a.m., 25 people gathered at the east entrance of Miyazaki Station and set off, led by the LOC member Masanori Yoshimoto. The first stop was at the ancient Hyuga Provincial office site, where Daisuke Tsumagari from Saito City, the LOC member, who toured around the site which was situated on a low terrace. Next, the group visited the Miyazaki Prefectural Saitobaru Archaeological Museum at 9:45 a.m. In addition to a remarkable display of artefacts excavated from the Saitobaru tumuli cluster and information concerning this great site, the display covered a remarkable range of topics including the famous and important Aira caldera eruption and the world of the Hayato people. The museum also had a mock archaeology laboratory corner, where visitors could have hands-on experience of basic archaeological research methods and skills. Besides, it was fortunate that the group could enjoy the special international exchange exhibition ‘The best of Taiwanese Iron Age cultures’ which was on at the museum. Afterward, the group visited the Osahozuka and Mesahozuka tumuli, and explored the burial mound and stone burial chamber of the Oni-no-Iwaya, the only tumulus in this remarkable tumuli cluster with a tunnel-style stone chamber as the burial facility. A group photo was taken there. Then the group moved to Miyakonojo City. At 12:15 p.m., the group had lunch at Kirishima Factory Garden, which offered local sake and shochu tasting. Some of the participants took full advantage of it while others filled

water bottles with spring water from the Kirishima rock aquifer. The group departed at 1 p.m. and travelled to the Ooshima Hatakeda site, where a detailed description was given by the LOC members Mitsuhiro Kuwahata and Jun'ichi Kaga, both from Miyakonojo Municipal Board of Education. The traces of 9th to 10th-century provincial office buildings and ponds could be seen there, and it was clear that the scale of the building complex had once been grand. The vista of the Kirishima mountain range from the site was spectacular, suggesting the importance of the view in choosing the location. The group visited the Iwayoshigoshi site at 2 p.m. and also visited the Hakusanbaru site, which was under excavation. Thanks to detailed explanations from Eiko Hara, in charge of the excavation, the participants were able to experience at first hand the dense Akahoya volcanic ash layer and unique remains of pit traps. Finally, Dr. Kuwahata gave an on-site lecture about volcanic ash layers and their relationship with local site distributions, his area of specialization. The excursion was very satisfying.

Due to the typhoon that was sweeping across the Japanese archipelago at the time, flights on October 22nd and 23rd were cancelled or rescheduled one after another, and the majority of participants from outside Kyushu needed to stay another day, giving them some extra time at the end of this successful conference in Miyazaki.