

COMMEMORATIVE LECTURE

“Fifty Years with Archaeology”

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Archaeology has recently become very popular. Nowadays, newspapers cover stories on excavation of ruins on a daily basis. However back then when I aspired to study it, archaeology was not as widely acknowledged by society as it is today.

People often ask me why I chose archaeology. In the past, there were what people called “boys of archaeology”. These were primary and junior high students who enjoyed collecting pieces of earthenware in fields and in forests. Some of them went on to become prominent archaeologists. My childhood was different from theirs. I was more interested in playing sports than studying archaeology. I enjoyed playing baseball and tennis when I was young. When I was a child, I never dreamed of becoming an archaeologist. After entering First High School under the old educational system, however, I began to think of engaging myself in simpler activities than sports because of my poor health. All the students at First High School had to live in dormitories. They read various books using candles even after the lights went out. Although I wondered what books they were reading, I wasn't interested much in difficult books such as in philosophy or science. I was first intrigued by “KOJIJUNREI, Pilgrimage to Ancient Temples”, by Watsuji Tetsuro, and gradually developed my interest in ancient arts and crafts. I sometimes visited old temples in Nara. At First High School, there was an association called the Teika-kai which worked towards initiating exchanges with a class of Chinese students. As part of the Teika-kai, I had the opportunity to visit Manchuria (North-east of China) along with other First High students. We went down the Black River along the border of the Soviet Union to the Amur (Heilungchiang River). Since part of the national border ran through the middle of the river, we occasionally passed through the Soviet Union and observed their lifestyle. It was then that I felt the strong impact and presence of a national border. This was an experience I never had before in Japan, an island country surrounded by sea. I began to be attracted to the Asian continent and became interested in books written by Stein, a famous explorer of the Silk Road.

Before entering the university I was not certain of what course I should take. This made me consult Mr. Abe Yoshinari, the well known philosopher and school master of First High. After listening to me, he said, “I don't know much about archaeology but I will introduce you to Mr. Watsuji. Go consult him.” I immediately visited Mr. Watsuji, who I very much admired. I met him at his home in Shimochiai in a room with an exquisite, country style fireplace. He promptly responded to me. “If you want to study archeology, you should enter Kyoto University instead of Tokyo University. Tokyo University doesn't have a course in archaeology but Mr. Hamada, an excellent professor at Kyoto University, did establish a course introducing British archaeology. Mr. Hamada passed away but one of his students, Professor Umehara, teaches there. He's an outstanding professor as well so you should go to Kyoto University.” Thus I decided the course of my future on Mr. Watsuji's advice.

Most of my friends at First High were heading for the school of law or economics at Tokyo University. They all advised me that I would never be able to

make a living by studying literature, especially at the archaeology department. However, I had already made up my mind.

The archaeology department at Kyoto University was really small. Still, I was very fortunate to have such an environment of study because there were three teachers and only two regular students. There were various classes held such as Japanese and Chinese archaeology taught by Professor Umehara and Greek and Roman archaeology which was taught by Professor Murata Kazunosuke. I was also able to attend seminars by Professor Mizuno Seiichi and Professor Nagahiro Toshio at the Institute of Oriental Culture. Moreover, Professor Ogawa Shigeki (who later changed his name to Professor Kaizuka Shigeki), taught us inscriptions on metals, animal bones and tortoise carapaces.

Although I was majoring in archaeology, I did not have any topic for an interest in study. All I did was learn from observing my teachers in research. I accompanied Professor Umehara to Manchuria and Korea and participated in the Lelang Tombs excavation which the Japanese Government-general in Pyongyang carried out. I was engaged in excavating stone framed tombs made of bricks which belonged to the Han Dynasty of China. I also dug out lacquer ware, and papers of the Lelang area from wooden framed tombs. This was my first experience at researching abroad. At the time, I went near Pyongyang and observed murals of the Koguryo mounded tomb, which stimulated my interest in mounded tombs with murals. Eventually, I wrote my graduation thesis on these murals and later carried out research in Kyushu on mounded tombs with murals.

During World War II, I graduated from the university earlier than the other students. I then entered the navy as a reserved naval officer in October of 1943. For two and a half years, I taught mathematics at a military preparatory course.

After the war ended, I immediately returned to the university to aggressively study archaeology. Because Japan lost the war, we were not allowed to carry out research overseas, and so at first, I accepted research which restricted me to within Japan.

By virtue of my experience with observing Koguryo murals, I was able to discover the drawing of the "frog", an ancient symbol of the sun, in a mural of the Mezurashi-zuka mounded tomb in Kyushu when I was copying murals there. I was extremely happy to become the first person to discover such an ancient drawing.

Back then, there were no experts in excavation research employed on a full time basis in and around Kyoto, and for this reason I was summoned to conduct surveys every time an ancient ruin was discovered. When a large number of mirrors were discovered in the Tsubakii-Otsukayama mounded tomb in Minami Yamashiro, I was in charge of the excavation. More than thirty bronze mirrors, triangular-rimmed bronze mirrors with mythical figure and animal designs, were excavated. I had to restore the mirrors to their original form from broken pieces which filled up three buckets. In order to proceed with such restoration work, I had to make a study on all types of ancient mirrors. This triggered my full fledged study on ancient mirrors. Another good experience I had while engaging in such research was the excavation of horse armor at the Otani mounded tomb in Wakayama. It was the very first ancient horse armor excavated in Asia.

Professor Mizuno Seiichi at Kyoto University's Institute of Humanities used to

conduct surveys, mainly overseas. However, he no longer had such opportunities. This was because Japanese scientists were not allowed to go outside of Japan for excavation research after World War II. He, therefore, began to conduct surveys with members of the Toa Archaeology Society (a society jointly established by Beijing University in China, Tokyo University and Kyoto University in Japan with the purpose of carrying out research on China on the continent) in Tsushima and Iki, islands closest to China on the continent. I participated in that survey as a main member of the team. At the time, I worked on the chronological analysis of Sue ware to determine the construction period of the mounded tombs. This was the first analytical study of Sue ware based on chronological factors in Japan.

When Japan and China were without diplomatic relations in 1957, I was invited by the Chinese government as a member of the Japan Archaeological Visit to China Delegation. The team leader was Professor Harada Yoshito of Tokyo University. I was one of the seven archaeologists who joined the tour and who visited Guangzhou, Nanking, An Yang, Xi-an, Si-chuan and Dunhuang. It was a turning point of my life as a researcher. This experience led me to develop the main theme of my studies which cover ancient copperware of the Yin and Zhou Dynasties in China, mirrors of the Han Dynasty, and the Silk Road. If I may say so, the romantic image of the Silk Road had nothing to do with my starting a further study into the subject.

Because very few Japanese had an opportunity to visit Dunhuang since the Otani Expedition, I became the center of attention after the trip to China. At the same time, the trip enhanced my interest in inland Asia.

In 1958, I participated as a member of an excavation team led by Professor Nagao Masato of Kyoto University, a specialist in Buddhist studies. The excavation team was sent to Indian Buddhist remains. As a team member, I was engaged in the excavation survey of Buddh Gaya, a Buddhist sanctuary. There, I was able to learn Indian excavation methods. Back then, India had the most advanced archaeological technology in Asia because British archaeological tradition had been passed on to them.

In 1959, Professor Mizuno began his academic survey in India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to which I was invited as a research team member. For about 20 years until 1979, we carried out surveys in those countries biennially. From 1969, I succeeded Professor Mizuno as the team leader.

During that period, we studied Buddhist ruins on the Silk Road from India to Japan to find out what route was used in introducing Buddhism to East Asia. We excavated remains of Shahbaz Garhi and Thareli in the Gandhara region. We also studied in Kunduz and the Hadda regions of Afghanistan. Our trip to Bamiyan was especially impressive.

Bamiyan is a Buddhist stone temple in the Hindu Kush mountains in Afghanistan, famous for two huge stone Buddhas and numerous mural paintings. Although a French research team had made a survey in the 1930's, it was limited to only a few of the stone cave temples with murals. However, my team conducted extensive excavation research which covered the entire cluster of stone temples. We even numbered every cave temple. We also documented all the stone wall murals with color photographs.

However, the harsh climate of inland Asia has affected these murals to slowly deteriorate to come off the walls. Moreover, the civil war still continues in Afghanistan and as a result, this precious world cultural heritage is constantly being threatened with destruction. Taliban, a Muslim fundamentalist group, has announced that it will blow up the huge stone Buddha of Bamiyan. Although I pray for the preservation of these stone temples, the documentation and photographs we collected in our survey may become the only surviving source of information on these ruins of Bamiyan.

I continued my studies on the Silk Road even after retiring from the university. I gave my cooperation to the NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) Grand Silk Road Project by visiting Ferghana in the Soviet Union in central Asia. On the occasion of the Silk Road Exposition'88 hosted by Nara Prefecture, I organized, as chairman of the Planning Committee, large size exhibitions of artifacts from regions of the Silk Road. This brought the establishment of the Silk Road Research Center of Nara Prefecture. As the director of this center, I first coordinated the excavation research of mounded tombs in Palmyra in Syria. Palmyra is located in the middle of the Syrian Desert. This was a point of strategic importance connecting the Orient, the Mediterranean, Egypt and Central Asia. For this reason, Palmyra was called the crossroad of the western Silk Road. The city became prosperous under the reign of Queen Zenobia, but was attacked and destroyed by Roman Emperor Aurelianus. The ruins of the fortress city and burial mounds still remain. However, the focus of our survey lay in the underground tombs in the southeast cemetery. There were several dozens of human remains laid out in the burial chamber decorated with a colonnade. The abundant sculptures of human figures are said to represent the essence of Palmyra Art and reportedly are related to Buddhist sculptures in Gandhara.

The Silk Road came to attract a larger audience of interest after the television coverage by NHK. People then began to look for Silk Road experts and as a result, came to consult me. Eventually, I was acknowledged by the general public as being an expert on the Silk Road. I wasn't interested much in the Silk Road when I was young. It was not my initial intention to become an expert on the subject. I just followed the instructions of my teachers and joined them in their research. I was interested in many things. Whenever I observed and examined relics and their objects, I felt like I was able to understand something which was not in writing.

Whenever I visit countries which are strange to me, I usually go there without much preliminary knowledge. I just pick up whatever interests me from whatever I encounter during my first trip there. I then begin to study these interesting subjects after returning to Japan. Then I revisit the same country to observe them more carefully.

In other words, I could have chosen any subject for my study. I just had a very fortunate environment to study the Silk Road because I was surrounded by excellent teachers and colleagues. I believe that so far, I have been blessed with a very good life as a researcher.

The remains of Ai-Khanoum in the north of Afghanistan is the only existing ruin of the city of Bactria. The Hellenism movement of introducing Greek culture to the East began after Alexander the Great's eastward expedition. The Kingdom of Bactria was established as the base to the Hellenism movement in the middle of the 3rd century (B. C.) and continued for about 100 years. Yet much of its history

and culture remains a mystery. A French research team excavated the ruins of Ai-Khanoum and discovered it to be one of the cities of Bactria. They excavated a Greek style palace, a Colosseum, a theater, a temple and many other artifacts. To me, the most impressive artifact to be discovered was a Greek epitaph, found in a mausoleum of KINEAS, which reads as follows:

The Wise Man's Life

A wise man learns to exercise moderation in his childhood.

A wise man learns to control his own emotion in his youth.

A wise man learns justice in his middle age.

A wise man learns to be a good advisor when he is old.

A wise man dies without regret.

This epitaph tells us this is the most wonderful life for a human being. Since learning about it, I have made it an article of my creed.