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**AN OBJECTIVE VIEW OF JAPANESE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS IN KOREA**

**by Dr. Kyoichi Arimitsu**

The first scholars to investigate the ancient cultures of the Korean peninsula through the medium of archaeological research methods were Japanese, starting about 1900. During the subsequent half century, many Japanese devoted them-selves to a variety of research subjects. Among these, the contributions of Sekino Tadashi were of particular importance, for they established a firm foundation for archaeological studies in Korea, and had a great influence on other Japanese archaeologists. Sekino approached archeologi-cal research from the standpoint of architectural history, his specialty, which he taught at Tokyo Imperial University. In addition to careful research and recording on topics in his own field, Dr. Sekino also investigated a broad range of related subjects such as city walls, tombs, sculpture, painting, metal work and ceramics. As for archaeological research works, it is worth mentioning that Dr. Sekino’s way of recording has been followed by later archaeologists, not only in Korea but also in Japan. His technique of excavation is still held in high regard by the present archaeologists. It was, to a large degree, through his studies, which were published in systematically organized, well documented, accurate reports that the importance of the ancient cultural heritage of the Korean peninsula was first realized in scholarly circles in other parts of the world. Dr. Sekino, as the pioneer of Korean archaeology, published many books on arts and monuments of Korea. One of his achievements was the compilation of the Chosen Koseki Zufu (朝鮮古蹟圖譜). It took 15 years and consists of 15 volumes. It is an honor that the French government conferred a decoration, Stanilas Julian, upon him in 1917.

Archaeological activities gained momentum after the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910. In 1916, the Govern-ment General of Chosen set up regulations for the protection of art and monuments in Korea, and defined the policies and [page 76**]** procedures which were to be followed in excavating burial mounds, sites of Buddhist temples, palaces, and other archaeological sites. Important art works and monuments were registered by the government, and only duly qualified scholars with government approval were allowed to investigate them. In addition, changes or modifications of any of the registered art works and monuments was prohibited.

In the next five years a program for the investigation of ancient arts and monuments, including burial mounds and temple sites, was formulated and reports dealing with various periods, regions and sites throughout the peninsula were published, ranging from prehistory to the Yi dynasty.

Historians and archaeologists from Japanese universities, mainly Tokyo and Kyoto, were particularly active in this research. In addition to Dr. Sekino, the names of Torii Ryuzo (鳥居龍藏), Kuroita Katsumi (黑板勝美), Harata Yoshito (原田淑人), Hamada Kosaku (濱田耕作), Umehara Sueji (梅源末治) are of great importance, because of their outstanding contributions.

Dr. Torii (鳥居) from the Department of Anthropology of Tokyo Imperial University visited Korea annually from 1916-1921 exploring and locating prehistoric sites throughout the peninsula. He was the first scholar who divided the neolithic cultures of the Korean peninsula into two groups on the basis of characteristic pottery types. This division, claimed in 1923, has now come to be generally accepted among students of Korean prehistory.

However, after Dr. Torii’s exploration, scientific research upon prehistoric sites was suspended until the excavation at Unggi, in Hamgyong Pukto at intermittent periods between 1929 and 1931. This work, conducted by Professor Fujita from Keijo Imperial University, revealed shell-mounds and layers of stone-age relics.

As for the shell-mounds, the Kimhae shell-mound located near Pusan is the most important because of the [page 77**]** finding of a coin minted in China in the 1st century AD. Together with this, knives of iron (hafted in deer-horn) and carbonized rice grains as well as stone implements and a number of potsherds were unearthed. Dr. Hamata (濱田) and Umehara (梅源), who conducted this excavation in 1920 promptly published their technical report, which is still a valuable document in studying the dawn of metal culture and rice cultivation among the Korean people.

Not a few articles and books on the study of early metal culture in Korea by Dr. Umehara and Professor Fujita were published. Among them “Han Dynasty Remains in Southern Korea” and “Proto-Lo-lang” are basic studies on this topic. Umehara and Fujita were co-editors of these books and for the first time they described trappings and vehicle fittings which are mostly made of bronze. These categories of relics undoubtedly belong to the advanced invaders as compared with native neolithic farmers.

Dr. Sekino and his cohorts were busy in the excavation of tombs of the Lo-lang district near Pyongyang during the five-year project.

Dr. Sekino’s party was successful in careful digging and in accurate documentation of characteristic Chinese relics of the Han dynasty. Such items as ritual bronzes, lacquer wares, weapons and other furnishings came to light in the process of their excavation. Through their excavations, Japanese archaeologists promoted and advanced the techniques of digging. Delicate patterns on the lacquered bowls and wine cups and inscriptions on perishable wooden seals were unearthed intact. These were often useful in dating these tombs as well as in identifying the inhumed bodies.

Besides Dr. Sekino, Dr. Harada, Dr. Umehara, Professor Fujita and others were also active in excavating the Lolang tombs. Dr. Harada excavated the tomb of Wang Hsu (王盰) in 1925 and published a gorgeous book titled “Lo-lang.” Mr. Kozumi excavated another tomb in 1931 which unexpectedly revealed the most wonderful remains, with a [page78**]** painted basket, etc, in its perfectly preserved wooden chambers. You may appreciate these findings in Kozumi’s fine book, “The Painted Basket Tomb at Lo-lang.” Mr. Oba’s excavation in 1932 was also interesting as the wooden chamber of the tomb was in a very good state of preservation and because of the wooden seals found, according to which the tomb is that of one Wang Kuang and his wife. There were many other important funeral objects besides these seals. Mr. Oba’s report on this excavation was published in 1935, entitled “Tomb of Wang Kuang” and his accurate documentation is still praised by present- day scholars.

In 1929 rich treasures were accidentally unearthed from a mound of one of the gigantic tombs grouped in the vicinity of Kyongju City. Drs. Hamada and Umehara devoted themselves to classifying and reconstructing the original situation of these disordered findings. They were finally successful in publication of their research works.

Handsome personal ornaments, including a crown, bracelets, rings, sashes, all made of gold, and thousands of delicate beads were beautifully illustrated. At the same time reasonable interpretations of these findings were given in their publication. In the succeeding two years the 2nd and 3rd golden crowns were unearthed by archaeologists, one from the Lucky Phoenix Tomb excavated by Kozumi and one from the Golden Bell Tomb excavated by Umehara.

About 1930, however, government funds for the investigation of ancient sites in Korea were curtailed, a melancholy sign of the political conditions of the times, and research efforts were greatly hindered. In due time, however, funds were gathered from various public and private groups and the Chosen Koseki Kenkyu Kai (Society for Study of Korean Antiquities) was formed, and the excavation and study of archaeological sites was continued. Research Insititutes were established at Pyongyang, the center of the Lo-lang colony and the Koguryo Kingdom, and at [page 79**]** Kyongju, the Silla capital, in 1931, and later at Puyo, the last of the three Paekche capitals. Graves, palace sites and temple remains, and other monuments were systematically investigated and the results were published in a yearly journal, or in the case of excavations of exceptional importance, such as Rakuro Saikyosuka (The Tomb of the Painted Basket at Lo-lang) or Rakuro Okobo (The Tomb of Wang Kuang at Lo-lang), special volumes were prepared.

All archaeological work in Korea was discontinued with Japan’s entry into World War II in 1941 and the mobilization effort. None of the projected excavations took place, and worse yet, the reports giving the details and results of the numerous excavations which had either been completed or were currently going on at the time were never published since printing conditions were in such a bad state. Archaeological research on the peninsula passed into the hands of Korean scholars after the Japanese withdrawal following the end of the war. Their activities have gradually gained momentum and interest in archaeological studies is now widespread. The quality of their work is consistently high, and has gradually surpassed that of the prewar Japanese scholars in a number of areas.