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INTERVIEW

A conversation with Koji Mizoguchi. On globalization, Japanese archaeology and archaeological theory today

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Abstract
On the occasion of a short research trip to Japan, I had the opportunity to sit down with Professor Koji Mizoguchi in Kyushu University, Fukuoka, to discuss several topics, which you will find transcribed below. I was curious as to his thoughts that he – as the President of the World Archaeological Congress, a non-governmental and non-profit organization that promotes the exchange of archaeological results, training at a global scale and the empowerment of Indigenous and minority groups, a Professor of Social Archaeology, and one of the few archaeologists writing archaeological theory in the far East – had on the state of the art of archaeology today. Furthermore, since I grew up in Europe but nevertheless feel a deep connection with my own Asian ancestry, I was very interested in Mizoguchi's own experience and contributions to archaeology in Japan and the world.

Keywords: Japanese archaeology; Archaeological theory; Globalization; Niklas Luhmann; Future

Artur Ribeiro (AR): Koji Mizoguchi is known today as one of the main voices in archaeological theory and the president of the World Archaeological Congress (Fig. 1). So, early in your career, did you believe you would witness archaeology performed at the global scale on which it is performed today?

Koji Mizoguchi (KM): I did not. To be more precise, I could not anticipate the world to become globalized in the way and to the extent that we are experiencing today. When I was exposed to archaeological theoretical packages for the first time, other than the traditional Marxist one, which was still very influential in Japan in the early 1980s, for instance, *the* theoretical packages were those of the symbolic and structural archaeology of Ian Hodder and the New Archaeology of Lewis Binford. Those were archaeologies that were made in the United States and the United Kingdom, and I took them to represent *global* trends, albeit they were mutually debating and competing. This needs explaining: I took it for granted that the archaeology performed in the United States and the United Kingdom represented the forefront of the discipline because I was so embedded in the Cold War structure of the world, and I took it for granted. By the Cold War structure, I mean that almost all the sociopolitical, economic and even to some extent cultural matters of the world were constituted by the rivalry between the United States and the then

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Figure 1. Koji Mizoguchi is interviewed in his office at Kyushu University. Photo by Mikishiro Matsuo.

USSR. That [structure] kept a stable equilibrium in the way the world worked, so to speak. So, if you lost your girlfriend, you could blame the USSR [*laughs*]. If the weather was bad for harvest, you could blame the USSR, or something like that. That was the mentality we were living in back then . . . but I'm not quite sure you would believe it or not!

And as citizen living in a Western bloc country representing capitalism and 'free society', I took it for granted that not every, but the majority of, scientific innovations came out of the United States and the richer Western European countries, which comprised the core of the 'Western', Capitalist bloc. Saying this might sound like oversimplification, but things looked and felt that way to an undergraduate student at the time. Naturally, it felt as though the flow and distribution of knowledge and resources, both allocative and symbolic, were regulated by those core countries of the Western world, and I guess it was widely accepted that we, on the receiving side of such hegemonic influences, had to maximize the amount of what we could receive by emulating their way of doing things. So, retrospectively, it was in that mental landscape that I decided to go to Cambridge to study one of the then forefronts of archaeology, which was symbolic and structural archaeology. As this personal memory shows, the flow of many things, including knowledge, high technology and so on, were perceived in this way. New forms of knowledge and movements that were organized to oppose and counter those dominant trends could also not escape from the prison cage of the Cold War structure of the world; to criticize knowledge, ideas and socio-cultural trends that were emerging from the West, you felt obliged to align yourself with the East, and by that I mean the USSR. Something like that might sound shocking to you, but it was a matter of fact in the world in which I lived back then, in many ways.

However, in 1988 when I went to Cambridge, in retrospect, I noticed that changes had already begun happening. As the initial excitement of

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the symbolic and structural critique of the traditional New Archaeology subsided, the trend of chronically trying to set up new miniature paradigms had already begun. Some of those new miniature paradigms were already linked to indigenous and minority voices, such as those related to feminism and gender. Back then the LGBTQ movement and their empowerment didn't quite take off, right? But mutual differentiation of positions and criticisms, some aligned with post-structuralism and others with various social movements, had already begun within the broad post-processual camp, which I personally experienced at Cambridge. The hegemonic discourse formation based upon the Cold War structure was being rapidly replaced by the *flat* landscape of a globalized discursive horizon. In this new landscape, archaeological miniature paradigms became increasingly linked to micro-life politics. All of these mini-paradigms began to mutually influence, compete and relativize one another. Now we live in a globalized world in which we feel we can choose from this large pool of miniature paradigms, ones which are fit for our purposes, and which can operate without too much influence from where you live. That is a very important element of globalization: it doesn't matter where you live, and it doesn't matter where you feel you belong to. That is a liberating element of globalization.

I must say, however, that actually where you live and how you live your life does significantly influence the way you do archaeology, in a much more complex and complicated manner than in the 1980s, and I hope I will come back to this point later in this conversation. In any case, it is such a difference from the discursive landscape in which I started doing archaeology back in the 1980s. It's really shocking. As a person living that transformation, I have actually mixed feelings about what has happened as well.

As part of my experience back in my Cambridge days, during the period between, say 1990 and 1993, I noticed that the atmosphere changed from a heated locus of ongoing everyday debate to a more quiet, polite exchange of ideas between increasingly distinct camps of thought. Within the broad camp of being critical about the New Archaeology, some of the archaeologists started to be called 'post-processual'. However, the change was deeper than just some archaeologists consciously adopting positions that were called 'post-processual'. It was a coming of a new epistemic–ontological formation. In retrospect, we witnessed the shift from an overly simplistic hegemonic structure to a more multipolar world in which minority voices and/or dissidents' voices began to gain influence, which chronically relativizes ones' positions. At Cambridge, one of the centres of the post-processual movements, we felt that happening, but without us noticing.

AR: So, let's think about a little bit about the future. Based on your own experience, how far do you think globalization can affect archaeology? What is the future of global archaeology?

KM: It is always difficult to predict what the future holds, but some answers always come from or inevitably rely on our past experiences, so let me share with you my assessment of the process of globalization so far. The effect that globalization will have upon the way archaeology, or indeed, *archaeologies* are conducted and practiced will be what [globalization]

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has already brought to us: the ever-increasing speed and spread of information flow and the fact that vast amounts of this information are now in written form, such as tweeting and entries on Facebook. This allows us to repeatedly interpret what a piece of information means for whom, and that effectively relativizes the value of information. So, before globalization we started by taking information, often a single piece or a small number of that, as it was and then tried to do something with that information in a very straightforward manner. But now we have to deal with considerably more pieces of information simultaneously. We critique one piece of information through other pieces of information, so everything is constantly networked and re-networked and then relativized, and that makes it very difficult to take firm stands or positions. This then leads, on one hand, to the democratization of these massive spaces, including archaeological discursive space. This has brought the disappearance of dominant theoretical discursive frameworks; simply because once these are established, they are destined to be relativized. This trend is democratizing the archaeological discursive space. On the other hand, globalization destabilized the foundation of the ontological security of ourselves, to borrow Anthony Giddens's terminology (1991). This led to the tendency quite opposite to the above. That has been the unintended path of globalization – certain methodological packages, those that can generate straightforward quantifiable outcomes, appear to be increasingly being welcomed because we now share a desire of making sense of things in the simplest terms possible whereby to cope with relentless and endless relativization of perspectives, and quantification is one obvious way to achieve that. However, we also know that so much is left behind when we quantify things, including our archaeological materials and findings, and some of us feel that what is left behind, quite often factors relating to subjective judgements and values, is often much more important than quantifiable factors when it comes to making sense of why things came about that way. If the quantifying camp is always preferred and triumphant, and the camp advocating qualitative subjective analyses is systematically undermined in the socially induced atmosphere of preferring and prioritizing the former, that would make the archaeological discursive space undemocratic and covertly superficial; by that I mean we are avoiding confronting the true complexity of what we are trying to make sense of. The current situation makes me feel strongly that way.

Many other unintended consequences have begun to result from globalization, and some of them have been negative. For instance, large and sophisticated isotope and archaeogenetic analysis research programmes, made popular partially but significantly thanks to the spreading desire to quantify and objectify our archaeological findings – that I talked about before – will generate unequal access to resources and opportunities, and that also makes things unwittingly undemocratic, as I said. This same process of globalization will also lead to the attitude of avoiding theoretical argumentation. Ironically, it is vigorous theoretical discussion concerning how to choose the way we do archaeology that can minimize the risk of unintentional enhancement of unequal access to and distribution of social capital and resources. Theoretical discussion is increasingly needed and necessary

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to respond to negative consequences of globalization, such as I described before. We shall have to come back to this specific point later on.

One very significant consequence of the emergence of global archaeology or a global archaeological discursive space is, as I already said, the feeling that we can choose any of the miniature paradigm-packaged archaeologies, each of which comprises a distinct theory and methodology. This means that there are now theories, methodologies and goals from an increasingly larger pool of such paradigmatic packages, which can be chosen independently of where you live. It is truly liberating to say the least. However, it is also a heavy, stressful world. You are always driven to make decisions and choices when doing archaeology since archaeology has become fragmented into multiple *archaeologies*, into an increasing number of archaeological miniature paradigms, as I emphasized before. The experience of such decision-making and choices makes you realize that your decisions and choices are inevitably made according to your own perspective, which is to say, constructed through your unique life experiences. Because of that, your perspective is different from that of others, and you recognize that by reading and writing posts on social media such as Facebook and Twitter and by reading very unexpected comments. In short, the globalization of archaeology is a genuinely double-edged sword phenomenon. It is our reality today, and we have to live with it. I personally believe that one way to better live with the situation is to institutionalize mutual respect in a fairly loose manner. In doing archaeologies and setting up discursive spaces, to share some fun while performing archaeology does reduce not only the kind of stress which I mentioned but also stress-induced aggression. For me, a key concept for the future of global archaeology is mutual respect. I fear that an aspect of doing archaeology in the future that has grown is stressful discursive environments – these environments make you feel deservedly aggressive on one hand, whilst on the other, justify parochialism.

So, I might sound a bit too negative, but without predicting the future, even if it's negative, we can't really prepare ourselves for the coming future. I must say, though, that fun is very important and going to be increasingly important for the future of archaeology.

AR: It's very interesting that you mentioned fun because this conversation will probably be published alongside another paper about fun in archaeology.

KM: But then that coincidence is, I think, an inevitable one because we have come to realize that something is forcing us to be aggressive, to a point that we hate. Indeed, we are driven towards this aggression. Furthermore, we tend to realize the uncontrollable nature of what we are doing nowadays, and it's not necessarily the realization of a situation similar to that of the world in George Orwell's *1984*, because it is a situation not imposed by anyone else, any agency, any group of people or anything else – it is just the *atmosphere* in which we are doing archaeology today. Part of that atmosphere we know is constituted by social media and the social-media-driven perpetual relativization of what we say and do. At the same time, we feel that there is something more, that there is something *systemic*, about the way our lifeworlds are structured,

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that forces us to do things in a way we hate. So, one way to counter the toxic atmosphere, which we cannot really make sense of nor control, is to emphasize fun elements and actually think about how to make what you're doing fun, thus reducing tension and allowing oneself to be more gentle and respectful and respect others.

AR: I agree. I get the impression that many archaeologists went to archaeology because they thought it was fun and enjoyable – and I think you've said that in some of your answers – but it seems like that [archaeology] is becoming very stressful. We are removing the fun element out of archaeology and making everything more corporate and formal – similar to the jobs that archaeologists were trying to avoid in the first place. So, that's a really interesting viewpoint. I'm really glad you mentioned fun.

One of the interesting things about globalization is that it benefits the archaeological sciences because of the uniformitarian laws of science and the universal validity of the scientific method. So, it has become easier for scientific specialists in archaeology, such as those studying isotope analysis or archaeogenetics, to travel the world and participate in large-scale international projects. As you have mentioned before (Mizoguchi and Smith 2019), archaeological theory has become less important in such a world. Could you elaborate a little bit more on that topic? What would be a global way of thinking about archaeological theory?

KM: Yes. Let me begin by emphasizing that we need theory a lot more than before, and we need to theorize our social practices a lot more proactively and systematically, too. The reason is because archaeology has become a ground for uncontrollable hyper-capitalistic practices that force us to adopt a slash-and-burn mentality. By this I mean we take it for granted that we do archaeology to gain outcomes that are simple enough to be accepted and that it can be performed as quickly as possible without regarding the effect that it would have upon the extant scholarship on the topics we work on. By not fully recognizing or accepting that archaeology is meant to do something good for society, we have ignored the negative consequences of how archaeology is practiced today and have prioritized gaining outcomes as quickly as possible, which brings us some social capital in the form of scholastic prestige and research financial security.

I think that addressing the specific topic of the extremely rapid proliferation of isotope archaeology and archaeogenetics also requires me to talk a little bit about the constitutive characteristics of the contemporary discursive formation. The extremely rapid spread of isotope archaeology and archaeogenetics cannot be fully explained without considering reasons other than their scientific, technical and methodological rigour, merits and advantages. These ways of doing archaeology, to be honest with you, do have tremendous advantages, not only in their power of bringing kinds of information that we even could not dream of 30 years ago, such as where this early bronze age person was born and how far she moved during her life-course before her passing and burial, but also in their power of analysing a large amount of data in such a relatively short time, although, of course, a large number of people have to be involved in conducting data preparation and processing. However,

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although new isotope and genetic techniques offer unprecedented, rapid and accurate results with a minimum disruption/destruction of the remains, their predecessors also had merits and advantages, albeit more inaccessible, less accurate and more time-consuming. Archaeological scientific techniques have existed for a long time, and efforts were made to utilize these techniques to shed new light on certain elements of past human lives. We have a long-established tradition of scientific archaeology, and we have a tradition of making use of our natural science schooling. So, the rapid popularization of archaeogenetics and isotope archaeology nowadays requires further explanation because this popularization relies on more than their merits and advantages. That suggests to me that the current boom/bonanza in isotope archaeology and archaeogenetics has more to do with the proliferation of hyper-capitalistic tendencies in archaeology and with the destabilization of the foundation of our ontological security, as we already talked a bit about. We seek 'massiveness' and 'velocity' in our research activities and in producing results. At the same time, we seek a sense of security by making the narratives that our study is creating simpler and as widely shareable as possible, whereby we feel understood and embraced by the many. The Beaker folk indeed came in large numbers to replace, albeit genetically, the indigenous population; no explanation other than that is necessary. Bronze age individuals moved across large areas of the present-day European Union territory like we are doing now. Submitting ourselves to those types of simplification is certainly simpler than trying to explain complex processes and causes behind those phenomena. Aiming to achieve 'massiveness' and 'velocity', and making matters ever simpler in order to be accepted by the many, are two sides of the coin of hyper-capitalism.

Professor Kristian Kristiansen said that we are experiencing the third scientific revolution in archaeology. I agree. However, I think we have to realize that we are in the hyper-capitalist phase in the history of archaeology, as well. In such circumstances, we need archaeological theories more than before, and we need good archaeological theorization of the present as well as of the past – a lot more, not less. Such theories need to work towards the sensitization of the way we self-reflect on why we come to prefer doing archaeology the way we do now. Such theories also need to give us a shareable framework with which we can mutually examine how coherent and varied one's explanations and/or interpretations are and whether the way those interpretations are obtained is acceptable, ethically as well as scientifically. This form of theorization needs to feel as if it is doing something good for contemporary society. That is what is increasingly lacking from our total submission to the proliferation of isotopic and genetic research in archaeology. One way to check if a theory fulfils those aims is to check if you can compare your thoughts, your experiences and their consequences in contemporary society with what you are trying to reveal by studying the past and considering whether you can obtain good suggestions as to how to make them – I mean your thoughts, your experiences, and their consequences – *better* by the study you are conducting. So, I would like to emphasize the importance of learning from the past for the present and for the future, which we tend to forget

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when following a purely scientific discourse. If your theorization does not give you anything for the betterment of you and your communities and societies, it means that something is quite wrong and some of us are coming to realize that something is wrong with the direction archaeology is headed, when driven by the proliferation of isotopic archaeology and archaeogenetics. That is because they are not necessarily conducted for the betterment of contemporary society – this might come across a little bit discourteous to the practitioners, but from my point of view, it seems undeniable.

AR: I remember that, in the paper you wrote, 'A future of archaeology' (2015), you mentioned that sometimes people think of theory as very elitist. Is there a way to make theory more approachable, more palatable or more friendly to the wider public?

KM: There are probably many ways to answer your question and to actually put it in practice. One is to explain that the way we live our lives itself concerns the theorization of the past, the present and the future. One's life is a sequence of choices, and many of the important choices derive from your past experiences, and when we refer to one's past experiences, we choose which bits of your experience to be referred to and those of others. So, life is about informed choices, and that *informed* element is exactly the same as the way we theorize our approach to the past. If our life is theoretical in that way, doing archaeology as a part of our life is always chronic *theorization*. And I think we can perhaps persuade ourselves to think of theorization in that way a lot more than before. As you mentioned in our conversation over lunch, metaphysics in archaeological theorization is actually not good, since it is based upon our own, often parochial sense of 'being real'. Theory should not be like that. Theory should be like a good work of art: To see a good painting helps you to see surroundings from a *different* perspective, one that is enjoyable to you and where you feel your life is being enriched. Archaeological theory should be like that – I suggest that we need to connect our theory to our *concrete* life experiences a lot more.

We experience justice, injustice, uneven distribution of power and resources, etc., almost every day. Also, we do not necessarily discuss each of those experiences, but we experience them nonetheless and sometimes those experiences make us feel happy, sometimes sad, and sometimes angry. That is a moment when we also perhaps have to think seriously about how to make amends/changes and how to solve issues, and that is the time when theory needs to be referred to. That is also the moment, if you have the time and energy, to connect that experience to your archaeological theorization. I do not have any doubt whatsoever that good archaeological theories, derived from advanced social theories, are actually helpful to live your life better, besides helping you in archaeology. Yes, so I think that is our way forward to make theory not only approachable but also to make people realize theorization is not only inevitable but is a part of life.

AR: That's very interesting because some months ago I was talking to David Wengrow, and he mentioned something very interesting. He said that

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part of what made David Graeber (who co-authored the book *The Dawn of Everything* with Wengrow (2021)) very popular was that his work was very personal. Graeber always made a lot of his work very political and personal. This is an idea that I've heard here and there. I also heard a film director mentioning that, the more personal a movie, the better it usually is. I was wondering what your thoughts are about the idea of archaeology as something personal or something that you experience rather than something that you're detached from, that you're not part of and you observe and explain as purely in a scientific and formal manner.

KM: The current circumstances in which we live our lives make us realize the uniqueness of *all* our experiences. At the same time, we are forced to make those experiences shareable or acceptable by many for the sake of obtaining and sustaining a sense of ontological security as I said before, and this is significantly driven by our social media access, where we nowadays gain our self-confidence and identities. We do this to gain approval, for example, through likes, shares, or retweets on Facebook or Twitter. And, nowadays, open-access original articles on the official website of respective journals increasingly look like Facebook or Twitter entries in that their first page indicates how many people read it and how many times the article is mentioned on Twitter, as well as how many times your article is cited.

The reason why I am addressing this is because being personal comes with our desire to be more common – to be more like others, in the way they prefer. That is the double-edged-sword type of phenomenon of the contemporary, globalized, fragmented world and social reality in which we live today. So, when we make our narratives personal, we unwittingly construct that narrative to be acceptable to many. I do not have any proper terminology to put it in a word, but Niklas Luhmann, the German sociologist, conceptualizes such a state of being oneself with the concept which can be translated like 'homo copy' elsewhere (1995a). We are not sapient but copy things to be ourselves. To be personal in this world is very complicated, and that is a reality we have to accept. If being personal is driven by the need to make yourself acceptable to larger audiences, that attitude can easily lead to the exclusion of others, and a rejection of other value systems, as well. So, I would be a little cautious [about being personal]. When your personal story is accepted in an unexpected way, you have to carefully reflect on why it is so widely accepted.

That may also be related to the popularity of grand narratives packaged in personal narrative styles. Yuval Noah Harari submits himself to that style (Harari 2015), and I think Graeber does so as well. Personal grand narratives, which sounds contradictory, seem to be what is most popular now. I very much respect and admire Graeber and Wengrow's book and the effect it has had, but it being that popular should make us wonder – what is behind that popularity? That is something very interesting to me, something that I would like to dig into.

AR: It has been claimed that globalization has helped overcome the modern conception of the nation-state. Maybe it has; maybe it hasn't. Here your work on the *kofun* and their use in nation-building discourse has been

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very important (Mizoguchi 2006; 2013; Mizoguchi and Smith 2019). So, where do you think the nation-state fits as an entity in the future of archaeology? Will it just disappear? Or will it become stronger?

KM: That's another interesting and very difficult topic to discuss in any straightforward manner, so allow me to be complicated [laughs]. The historical trajectories which different nation-states have been through, particularly during the modernization phases, still influence the ways in which archaeological practices are conducted in different countries, I believe. Those influences derive from the matrix of variables in factors such as the difference between the colonizer and the colonized. That's an obvious influence – what policies were adopted by the colonizers in governing the colonized, for instance. The present-day socio-political, cultural and economic formations are influenced by the legacies of colonizing or colonized, and so on. The specific combination of the variables constitutes the way the citizens of a nation-state differentiate themselves, categorize themselves and identify themselves. It is still quite surprising to realize how much we are still influenced by the way the colonized past influenced the way we judge others and we categorize the others and how we end up discriminating against minorities. Archaeologists, as citizens, share with their fellow citizens how they would like to identify themselves, and although it does not necessarily determine, it does nonetheless significantly influence just what kind of past they would like to know, what they would like to know from and about the past, and what they would like to obtain from studying the past. So, in that sense, we are very much in the prison cage of nation-states, even if we feel liberated from it when we do certain things which are less situated within that cage. Nevertheless, there still are many elements of our lives which are in that cage, and the choices made about those factors are different between the individuals. And we individuals categorize ourselves to identify ourselves and communicate with one another and are categorized by the others in multi-layered ways. And this mode of categorization is still significantly influenced by the country you are born in, where you grew up and/or the country you live in. Which country you were born and live in now constitutes your ontological state and status; therefore, we cannot ignore nor forget nation-states. Rather, we should investigate the way we are coupled with nation-states and how that constitutes who we are and how we think and behave in various loci of our lifeworlds and life-courses. I wrote about this in my *Antiquity* article titled 'A future of archaeology' (2015).

We cannot ignore the nation-state as one of the powerful agents that influence the way we live and do archaeologies. The fact is the nation state is where we belong – that moulds our biography very significantly, particularly in the early days of our lives, and actually lays the foundation of our ontological security. The nation-state remains one of the dominant forces to have significant control over the ways we think, feel and do things. For instance, the largest keyhole-shaped tumulus of the Japanese archipelago, the so-called mausoleum of the emperor Nintoku, is taught to primary school students, often with the remark that it is the world's largest burial ground for the individual. When they are taught about it, although they are given information that

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Figure 2. The entrance of the *kofun* known as the mausoleum of the Emperor Nintoku, in Sakai City, south Osaka. Photo by Artur Ribeiro.

the actual person buried there may not be the emperor himself, they are nonetheless told that that gigantic structure is called the 'mausoleum of Emperor *Nintoku*'. Furthermore, Emperor Nintoku is also commonly mentioned in public discourse to be one of the most kind and able ancient emperors, even though this information is only recorded in the earliest chronicles of the imperial line, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki*, whose fictitious elements have been well-critiqued academically. There is always caution given to critically relativize that knowledge, but the knowledge is nonetheless there to be shared. In the formative period of your life, and even after you've a grown up, you still have some nostalgic attachment to the fact that you are taught that that gigantic structure, filled with trees, in the middle of the urban sprawl of Osaka Prefecture, is designated by the Imperial Household Agency to be the mausoleum of Emperor Nintoku (Fig. 2). This becomes a part of you and, like it or not, you refer it to be a part of yourself.

So, that shows how the nation-state is still a part of us, archaeologists included, of course, and even in this globalized world, the nation-state remains one of the most significant referential points – to identify ourselves and in the way it shapes our choices. In this globalized world, when we are told to forget about the nation-state, we should recall how influential it actually is.

AR: It's very interesting that you mentioned this and that you think of the nation-state in this manner because I remember I was reading your 'Archaeology of Japan', and you mentioned in the beginning of that book (2013: 10) that postmodernism, for instance, didn't replace modernism. And it seems like globalization hasn't replaced nation-states. Also, hyper-capitalist economics or late-stage capitalist

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economics haven't replaced traditional capitalist economics. This has also been mentioned by a lot of Marxist authors (e.g. Callinicos 1989; Eagleton 1996; Mandel 1975). There's always this attachment to the past – even though things are changing, they don't actually change because the foundation is still the same; everything still works with the same foundation.

KM: Let me just address Graeber and Wengrow (2021) here: one of the most refreshing contributions of their book, I think, is to make us realize that we had already been *capitalistic* in a way back in the Palaeolithic, when Paleolithic individuals tried to gain something out of cunning negotiations with others by utilizing differential access to rare stone sources or particular plants/animals. Back then we had already been able to be 'futuristic' or 'domineering' by utilizing spatio-temporal differences in accessing and keeping resources between ourselves – I mean, Palaeolithic individuals – and making the sense of indebtedness of your exchange partner accumulated and maximized. That means that, in the Neolithic, for instance, a feudalistic mode of production would have been possible as long as the conditions that stimulate the idea and imagination to behave in those ways, i.e. production and exchange or circulation of products are guaranteed by the protection by the few who exclusively owned or controlled the means of violence, existed. That means that all the evolutionary stages that we believed came step by step might and probably would have existed since the beginning of human history, but they existed with different bases from what we initially assumed. Therefore, perhaps we have to reformulate those stages as *modes* of existence, or modes of social formation, which coexist all the time throughout human history and then recognize which mode became dominant under different historically contingent conditions, and how that domination affected the way the other modes operated. So, one must not necessarily deny evolutionary thought. In certain periods of history some modes came after each other one by one, following an evolutionary sequence, but then, at other times, they followed a completely opposite sequence or occurred in tandem. Perhaps, we can be and have to be open-minded, not just about the past but also the present. Maybe we have to see that our way of thinking and doing things, in light of the Paleolithic or Neolithic way of doing things, can be completely different from time to time, and we shall imagine and try to accommodate many other modes of thinking and doing things than the hyper-capitalistic mode within our social existence and its reality. I may be a little bit too optimistic when it comes to our ability to switch between those modes of existence, but the fact is that the realization that those modes of existence can coexist with one another, because they actually coexisted in the past, is quite encouraging for us, to be more strategic in thinking and doing things today.

AR: Interestingly, part of the reason why I'm in Japan is to learn a bit more about [Kojin] Karatani, and he also mentioned certain ideas that parallel yours. He talks about modes of exchange (Karatani 2003; 2014), and he argues that it is better to understand the past in terms of exchange rather than modes of production. The Marxist conception of modes of production is not an ideal way of understanding the entire past – the slavery mode is a bit too crude as is what Marx called the 'Asiatic mode'. So,

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speaking of thinkers like Karatani, I was wondering if you have any thoughts about him or other Japanese thinkers and what they can contribute to archaeology.

KM: Yes. Let me start with my opinion on Karatani's work. He never lost his respect and interest in what Marx and Engels had to say concerning not only the circumstances of the beginning of capitalist modernization but also the trajectories of human history. And what differentiates him from most of his contemporary Western thinkers, I think, is that he focuses on the *potential* of Marx and Engel's thoughts rather than the actual consequences of the application (or partial application or misapplication) of Marxism, which resulted in the rise and fall of the Soviet Russian empire or the experiments of Eurocommunism, etc. Instead of examining how Marxism worked, he focuses on what we can do with the potential and potentiality of what Marx and Engels thought for the future. Karatani focuses on the synergy generated by the way in which Marx and Engels integrated pre-existing thoughts on society and sociality, ranging from Greek philosophy through the thoughts of Hegel to Lewis Henry Morgan and his *Ancient society*, and has reached a thought-provoking conclusion that the core potentiality of the thoughts of Marx and Engels lies not with their theorization of history as driven by the changing modes of production but with their discovery that money and capitalism were both based upon *fetishism*. Then Karatani investigated how the fetishization of labour products, and money, became possible or inevitable and argued that it was exchange and its various modes that led to the fetishization of labour and products in various manners. What allowed him to do so is his philosophical background of situating not only Marx and Engels's thought but also the teachings of the founding fathers of modern social theorization, ranging from Sigmund Freud through Max Weber to Georg Simmel, etc., in the history of Western social philosophy. When dealing with the entire perception of the world, past and present, he realized that almost everything had already been said by the Greek philosophers. This finding led him to becoming interested in the modes of exchange and interaction because one way to make sense of what happened in Greek city states, the cradle of Greek philosophy, is by understanding their historically contingent unique position – the geopolitics of that particular time. During the first millennium B.C.E., present-day mainland Greece, the Aegean islands and the Ionian coasts became a thriving hub of networks through which, increasingly, an amazingly wide range of things, thoughts, people and goods roamed into the emerging cities and city-states. So, Karatani, I think, was predestined to be interested in the way people reacted to that kind of circumstance, a period when they had to deal with increasingly complex networks of exchange, interaction and communication and the challenges they generated. Karatani argues that the Greeks developed monetary economy and their uniquely sophisticated decision-making systems because of their remaining kin-based social organizations and tribal social formations, which had long been destroyed in the cores of the Asian ancient states and empires. So, Karatani argues, the Greeks fetishized labour and money earlier and quicker than their Asian neighbours for coping with increasingly complex communication networks with less

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sophisticated, or 'primitive', social organizations. From this interpretation, he predicts that what will replace the capitalist mode of exchange would be a mode which has many elements of the tribal-communal mode of exchange but is embedded in the capitalist mode. He drew this prediction by referring to his finding that the Greek social formation was a chimera of the tribal/communal and Asiatic modes of exchange (Karatani 2022).

The reason why a thinker like Karatani emerged in Japan is itself a matter concerning historical contingency and deserves to be looked into carefully. One thing I can say is that the geopolitical position of Japan, being on the periphery of Western colonial expansion, and Japan itself, which once had the aim of becoming a colonizing empire (and failed), puts it in the position in which it critically reflects upon its process of modernization. Doing so requires a complex task of investigating what we learnt from the West, how what we learnt from the West was modified by our traditional/extant way of thinking and doing things, and how what we learnt from the West influenced our way of thinking and doing things all at the same time. Besides, we in Japan are used to seeing what we are doing from the 'Western' perspective, which itself is, obviously and ironically, our own construction. Those factors enabled scholars such as Karatani to focus on the potentiality of the thoughts of Marx and Engels by de-coupling them from their consequences and re-coupling them with wider philosophical and social traditions.

There are multiple other thinkers, whose works are not translated into Western languages, who enjoy that unintentional privilege, that of being connected to the West – within arms-length with what is going on in the West – but living in the historically contingent trajectory Japan has been through. I also suspect it partially but significantly derives from the language problem. Japanese, together with Korean, are grammatically and syntactically quite different from any other language groups across the world, with the exception of the Basque language, interestingly. That puts the Korean and the Japanese person in a uniquely difficult position of becoming comfortable users of Western languages, let alone English. So, we feel always pressured to be good English users, but at the same time, we have a feeling of resentment against Western language users. So, from my point of view, Karatani may have had sort of mixed feelings about the way Marx has been treated by Western scholars as if Marxism is a natural topic of Western scholarship, and that might have motivated him to do his work quite differently and come up with different ideas and perspectives. And this is also why Japan is potentially a unique place to generate hybrid thinking, producing chimera outcomes in philosophy and other social and human sciences, including archaeology, of course.

AR: I really like that answer, and it's interesting because Karatani has a lot of specializations – besides philosophy, he also has training in economics, and he also does literary criticism. For example, he analyses Japanese 20th century society through the Japanese literature of the same period (Karatani 2012).

Going back to the topic of the dominance of Western discourse, one of the interesting things about archaeological theory is that there is a bit

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of a dominance of thinkers from the West. We already mentioned Marx multiple times today. There are all the French thinkers that have been very popular in archaeology, like Michel Foucault, and more recently Bruno Latour and Gilles Deleuze. There are also some Germans, like Martin Heidegger, and of course there is Niklas Luhmann, who has been a big influence in your work. But Luhmann is not as well-known as some of the other names I just mentioned. Like Karatani, it seems Luhmann has been more marginal. I was wondering what drove you to Luhmann? What do you believe sets him apart from other thinkers that are more popular in archaeological theory?

KM: Yes. Let me begin by mentioning a very interesting fact: Italy, Germany and Japan are the countries where Luhmann's thoughts and works are most influential, their theoretical implications deeply investigated and their analytical powers extensively tested through case studies. Even some political parties, notably in Germany, have allegedly tried to ally themselves with Luhmann's highly theoretical grasp of contemporary social formation and try to actually put his theory into practice. That has made me wonder if there is something fundamentally different in him, something that differentiates him from such thinkers as Giddens, Bourdieu, Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze and Guattari, whose theories are enthusiastically adopted or picked up by Western scholars, from countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom or elsewhere. It may sound a bit far-fetched, but Germany, Italy and Japan were latecomers to colonial imperialism, and colonialism-imperialism-based social formation. In those three countries, this process actually came about in spite of very established feudal systems with stubbornly embedded, semi-independent regional feudal domains. This made their modernization occur much later, and much quicker, than in the United States, the United Kingdom, France and other countries, which happened to be in the Allied nations, and which were victorious during World War II. Consequently, the modernities/modern social formations of those countries, i.e. Germany, Italy and Japan, came to preserve remnants of the feudal mode of social formation and before, and that makes it impossible to take the 'modernized self', which is the basis of the theories of those scholars popular in the allied nations, for granted. In other words, scholars in Germany, Italy and Japan cannot prioritize, regardless of this being positively or negatively, the self and agency in explaining the generation, sustenance and transformation of society in the manner that scholars in the United States, the United Kingdom, France and other countries adopt.

I do not have any specific and verifiable answer as to why there is an uneven distribution of the popularity of Luhmann. But one thing I can say about Luhmann is that, throughout his career, his work focused on entities that were based not purely on their perceptional or discursive existence but on their substantial and concrete existence. He tried to observe the way these entities – i.e. mind, communication, communities, organizations and societies – operated, behaved and transformed. Admittedly, Luhmann was a theorist of differences, much like Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze. But for instance, Derrida focuses on the way differences are generated out of the *differentiation/recognition* of differences; that is the core of his approach to deconstruction. By that I mean

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Derrida viewed the process of differentiation as something that happens in one's perception rather than in the concrete and phenomenal world. So, deconstruction is a great strategic and suggestive device for us, but it cannot be used to understand any substantial and concrete entities and their behaviour. When Derrida talks about ongoing differentiation and deconstruction, we wonder who is doing this differentiation? What is happening in concrete terms? Luhmann, like Derrida, starts from the remark that, without difference, nothing exists, but he goes further by saying that things which sustain themselves can only exist by networking differences in a patterned way, and that patterned way can only be possible with the presence of its environment and with irritations from the environment.

Luhmann puts the existence of everything to be the unity of an entity and its environment, and he describes such an entity as a system. He also says that the system reproduces itself by utilizing its difference from its environment. He then puts forward a key concept – that of the system–environment boundary (Luhmann 1995b). The boundary works like the membrane of a cell, which allows a system to selectively react to what is going on in its environment, whereby it maintains its self-autonomy as it reproduces itself in a self-referential manner. By self-referential reproduction, it is meant that the system sustains itself by networking certain differences in a manner which is constituted by the experience/memory of such previous networkings, and the differences are generated by irritation/stimulation coming from the environment. There are communication systems, organizational systems and the whole social system, as the examples of societal systems, and a communication system reproduces itself by utilizing its boundary for separating it from its environment and for differentiating what is relevant and necessary for reproducing itself from what is not. Such boundary comprises certain gestures, words and material items as well as meanings. And such material items leave various types of archaeological material evidence.

This theorization is the result of the observation of concrete *material* processes, in contrast to Derrida and Foucault. The environments of systems include other systems, as well as social and natural phenomena, which means that, if you shift your point of observation from a given system to the systems in the environment of that system, the position between the system/environment is reversed; so you can shift your point of observation, whereby you shift your perspective. So, it doesn't impose the choice in the dichotomic division between the subject and the object because these are mutually constitutive, and if you locate your point of observation on the environmental side, that becomes your subject and the system your object. So, Luhmann not only makes it possible to make observations in concrete terms, but he also allows you to overcome the subject–object divide/dichotomy, the divide between dominant and subordinate, and the divide between domination and resistance, and so on and so forth.

In that sense, Luhmann's work allows you to be very flexible when coming up with more balanced and systematic but, at the same time, more *realistic* views of the way things happen in the world. For instance, the self-referential reproduction of a system can be described as

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'desiring-production', as discussed by Deleuze and Guattari (1983). However, desiring-production is better understood according to Luhmann's framework, because why desire even exists in the first place is explained in terms of mutual but self-referential constitution between the desiring machine and its environment, the latter comprising other machines and various social and natural elements and entities. That is what Deleuze and Guattari fail to do – they just describe that there are desires and then that desire is made available by connecting machines together, but the existence of machines itself doesn't explain why desire is there. In the case of Luhmann, you can not only describe where you are focusing on but also explain why a particular element and/or entity in the world works in the way it does.

Perhaps the focus on making substantive remarks on substantive phenomena is unique in those thinkers such as Luhmann and Karatani that are popular in countries that were latecomers of modernity, which, thanks to their historical contingency, are not so, if I may say so, *contaminated* by the desire of relativization, or deconstruction, which is so typical of Western thought. I may be a little bit too fundamentalist or sort of mysticist [laughs], but that may be the reason why Luhmann is attractive to Japanese audiences, just like he is to Italian and German scholars.

AR: One of the most popular areas of research in the institution that represents me, the University of Kiel, in Germany, is climate change. In 2021, the University of Kiel put out a statement on Social Archaeology and Climate Change,[1] and I noticed that you were part of that endeavour.

KM: Indeed, yes, I was a signatory.

AR: So, what are your thoughts about archaeology, globalization and climate change?

KM: If I may say so, in the discussion leading up to the adoption of that statement, I tried to play the role of a 'trickster'. By that I mean that I deliberately tried to emphasize the disunified and disunifying element of climate change in our archaeological discursive formation. Of course, climate change is an important component of global change, and it being global means that it unifies people across the world, including archaeologists, because we are suffering from an incredibly wide range of problems that are caused by a single factor, which is human activity jeopardizing the ecological equilibrium of the globe. At the same time, our way of articulating what is causing our sufferings and our way of defining or considering how to react to it varies significantly from region to region, country to country, group to group and community to community, at both macro and micro scales. Since those differences are linked, almost inevitably, to the relentless drive towards fragmentation and relativization, which have been made inevitable by globalization, then those differences can easily be translated into a sense of injustice by us, and others, etc. There is a strong chance that what seems like a unifying force ends up being a destructive and fragmenting force. Again, we need to realize the double-edged-sword potential of climate change, and we need to be aware of those dangers and reflect them in our archaeological discourse formation of climate change.

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We should also always be aware and mindful of the perceptions of our minority colleagues on the issue because climate change demands increasingly sophisticated technology and method-driven approaches in archaeology, in the form of highly sophisticated environmental reconstruction techniques and devices. These are necessary to carry out the study of climate change, but these technologies are very expensive – they are not available in poorer countries and to our colleagues in the Global South. On one hand, climate change archaeological discourse has become very sophisticated, but that has alienated those who do not have access to the techniques and gadgets to conduct research. Additionally, this situation has the potential to further upset those without access to new technologies to study climate change, since it bars them from contributing and deciding the way climate change is discussed. Ironically, those who want to contribute to climate change studies and debates most because of the threats they are facing – I mean our indigenous colleagues and communities in many coastal and island regions of the world – can be those who cannot afford those sophisticated and expensive research tools and are alienated from the studies and debates. It is very difficult to solve this problem, but what I emphasized throughout my involvement in the discussion was to proactively listen to those minority colleagues and colleagues from disadvantaged backgrounds in accessing those sophisticated devices and technologies, at least to prevent the accumulation of resentments. This prevented the discussion from becoming toxic, and it helped good calls to move forward, and of course, the fellow colleagues in this statement were quite accommodating and agreed to two or three items to advance. I think this emphasized the importance of not only consultation with our indigenous and minority colleagues but also their proactive involvement in the process.

AR: A lot of our conversation revolved around how Europe and the United States, the rich countries of the Western world, still hold a very hegemonic position, especially in archaeological theory. What is it that Japanese society, and Japanese archaeology (Fig. 3), contributes to world archaeology, to global archaeology and to archaeological theory? What can it contribute?

KM: That's another difficult question that has no straightforward answer, simply because each and every country has a unique set of qualitative traits that influence their way of thinking about things and doing things, including archaeology. The reason why the United States and certain Western countries enjoy their unique position now is because of the way, the historically contingent way, in which the world became modernized. No doubt there are various ways to talk about the unique contribution of Japanese archaeology. However, one thing for sure is that that contribution can be derived from the traits of Japanese archaeology which were nurtured by its unique trajectory of modernization quite different from that which many Western countries went through, and two different types of contribution, one the sociology of the history of archaeology type and the other deriving from the long-term geopolitical positionality of the Japanese archipelago, would be possible.

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Figure 3. Koji Mizoguchi takes me on a tour of the new campus of Kyushu University, Fukuoka.

Before Japanese modernization began, the Edo feudal period witnessed the development of manufacture and a primitive capitalist mode of economy, which in turn led to the emergence of some kind of encyclopaedic attitude of classifying everything. That included collecting mysterious-looking objects, including both artefacts and natural objects and classifying them to produce the catalogue of everything, so to speak. This dedication to classifying things, which was also shared by the traditional Chinese philosophical scholarship, served as some sort of common foundation that Asian countries became obsessed with, and eventually gave rise to archaeological classification and typochronology. This served as the fundamental basis of the famous Japanese culture-historical approaches, which comprised the chronic sophistication of culture-historical unit creation and differentiation. This led to a number of unintended consequences, one of which is the tremendously detailed pottery typochronology of almost all the archaeological periods of the archipelago. If properly used for the long-term reconstruction of the trajectory of change of various elements of society, we can produce an extremely detailed description of social, cultural, economic and political changes, and identify the potential causes of various scales and characters for these changes. Ironically, that obsession with pottery typochronology was enhanced by the fact that, prior to World War II, when the imperial ideology was imposed by the militaristic regime, the *Jomon* period, the cradle of the development of the Japanese typochronolgical methodology, was exempted from restrictions and sanctions simply because the *Yayoi* period, coming after the *Jomon* and defined by the beginning of rice farming, was officially as well as commonly regarded to mark the beginning of the *Japanese* people and the Imperial household. Thus, everything before the *Yayo*i period was recognized as the aboriginal pre-history and irrelevant to genuine Japanese history. Because the *Jomon* period was excluded from *authentic* Japanese

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history, the *Jomon* could be studied freely and extensively, as long as it didn't jeopardize the purity of the Imperial Japanese narrative. So, many scholars chose to focus solely on the sophistication of pottery typochronology [of the *Jomon* period] to escape political persecution (Mizoguchi 2006: 55–81). So, the uniquely Japanese obsession with pottery classification is itself a historically contingent phenomenon, quite unique to Japan, which ironically, but interestingly, is what Japanese archaeology can offer the world. Collaboration between the fiendishly detailed typochronology and Bayesian estimation-based Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) dating would give us the opportunity to investigate, in an unprecedented detail, the correlation between events and episodes of various types such as that of settlement evidence, that of production, that of ritual and so on, probably leading to the detailed and feasible investigation of the causes of social changes of various scales and characters, of course including that of the changes of communication systems, psychic systems, organizational systems and social systems in the sense of the theory of Luhmann.

Another aspect of interest is that Japan is on the periphery of the China-centered world system. There are many interesting phenomena that are rarely seen outside of Japan, such as the emergence of gigantic tumuli called *kofun* –*Ko* means 'ancient', and *Fun* means 'tumuli' – like that which is said to be the mausoleum of Emperor *Nintoku* we mentioned before, without developing sophisticated bureaucratic systems, institutions of coercion and other constitutive attributes of ancient states (Mizoguchi 2013: 241–296). So, when properly connected to what Graeber and Wengrow had to say, for instance, it would strongly suggest that human beings had the *potential* to build something excessively large scale, and make their world liveable, from their (past peoples') point of view, without the kind of social systems we usually take for granted to have existed or needed for such undertakings. Göbekli Tepe, after all, would not be so surprising! Anyway, the idea of constructing large tumuli as the resting place of the elite might have been enhanced by being exposed to information as to what was going on in China, where the emperors were buried in large tumuli, though many of them not as large as the largest Japanese equivalents. The social organization in which *kofun* tumuli were constructed was what would be characterized as 'complex chiefdom', whereas the Chinese equivalents were constructed by the fully established ancient states and empires. I have no time to go into detail, but the flow of ideas as well as goods from and to China, without being under direct rule by it, made the responses by communities and polities occupying the Japanese archipelago unique, many of which cannot be accommodated in social evolutionary models.

In any case, the emergence of the *kofun* tumuli was a historical event, and in that sense a contingent event. Similarly, that we have a sort of unique Japanese point of view is a contingent occurrence, and that strongly suggests that many other points of view are possible. And as long as we stick to the scientific protocol and procedure, the more we propose hypotheses or models, the better chance we have to advance our knowledge and understanding of the past. One idea is to invite overseas colleagues so that they can provide quite outlandish interpretations

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> (from a Japanese common-sensical perspective). And we Japanese scholars should do the same on archaeological evidence abroad. This could stimulate debate and consequently generate some interesting, productive and new ways to make sense of things archaeologically.

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Note

1 The statement can be seen here: sacc-statement-2021.pdf (uni-kiel.de).

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