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Japanese Colonial Archaeology in Korea (1905-1940): From the Premises to the Large-Scale Excavation Programs in Pyöngyang and Kyöngju

*By Arnaud Nanta**

Transformed into a Japanese protectorate in 1905 after the victory in the war against Russia (1904-1905), Korea was annexed to Japan in 1910. The period of the protectorate (1905-1910) was central in setting the framework for the investigations and work that took place in colonial Korea until the end of the 1930s. Among these, archaeology came to the fore, just as everywhere in a colonial context, in the Mediterranean territories or in East Asia. Indeed, archaeology is a fundamental source of knowledge about conquered territories; moreover, the stakes involved in controlling the past were increased in the case of countries such as Korea or Cambodia, which were former ancient States. This paper will provide an overview of the genesis and organs of Japanese archaeology and colonial museums in Korea during the first half of the 20th century, based on primary sources as well as Japanese and South Korean historiography. We will first discuss an initial period - dating back to pre-colonial times - of intellectual construction of the Japanese gaze upon the peninsula, a period that also saw the emergence of a Japanese fascination with the peninsula's past, as well as the formation of a discourse legitimizing the annexation of Korea in the name of the past. Secondly, we will describe the elaboration of colonial institutions: the Museum of the Japanese Government-General of Korea and the regional museums, the Commission for the Study of the Ancient Remains of Korea, which was the equivalent in colonial Korea of EFEO in French Indochina. Then, we will describe the realization of major five-year excavation programs and their focus on the two sites of Lelang (near Pyöngyang) in the north, and Kyöngju in the south. Finally, we'll look at some of the best-known publications, both in books and scientific journals, and question their legacy after decolonization in 1945 and the foundation of North and South Korea in 1948.

Introduction

Transformed into a Japanese protectorate in 1905, the Empire of Korea – the Kingdom took the name of empire in 1897 – was annexed to Japan in 1910, to form the jewel in the crown of the Japanese colonial empire, built up from the end of the 19th century and which included Taiwan, Korea, Sakhalin (Karafuto), Liaodong in northeastern China and the Micronesian islands.¹ Colonial territories were the scene of numerous investigations in humanities and social sciences. Among these,

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1. R. Myers, and M. Peattie, *The Japanese Colonial Empire 1894-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); P. Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword: The Japanese Penetration of Korea (1895-1910)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

imperial Japan was fascinated with the ancient history of Korea from the end of the 19th century, then throughout the colonial period.² Japanese archaeological and historical works also profoundly modified the traditional writing of Ancient History in Korea, during the colonial period.

The history of archaeology, a discipline established in the 19th century, needs to be approached differently depending on whether we are considering national or colonial research. Archaeology was central to the development of national identities within the new Nation-States. But it also made its mark in colonial context, particularly in the Mediterranean area or in East Asia, in which cases it was fundamental to grasp the conquered territories. The challenges of controlling the past were exacerbated in the case of countries that were former States with deep roots, such as Cambodia or Korea, and where the question of national identity was bound to resurface because of colonial archaeology, as the case of the *École française d'Extrême-Orient* has shown with Angkor.³

The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the genesis and development of Japanese archaeology and colonial museums in Korea during the first half of the 20th century. While archaeological work was a scientific enterprise, it was also an activity carried out by a foreign power, in a dominated country, through ad hoc institutions created by the colonial power and from which nationals were excluded. The colonial context of Korean archaeology determined its practice, and for this reason, the legacy of this archaeology is still debated today as a problem in the two Koreas founded in 1948 in the north and south of the peninsula. We will also briefly evoke the post-colonial issues, and the controversies surrounding the demands for restitution of Korean heritage.

The protectorate period (1905-1910) was central in building the framework for the investigations and work that took place in colonial Korea until the end of the 1930s. The question of archaeology in colonized Korea concerns not only the history of knowledge or the understanding of ancient Korea, but also the history of power and of the specific context in which this archaeology was carried out before 1940.

This contribution will be based on primary documentation as well as Japanese and South Korean historiography. The relationship between modern humanities and colonization is one of the long-standing issues in Japanese research, and the same is true in South Korea, where Japanese colonial knowledge is an important topic within the historiographical research on colonization. The history of the archaeological discipline in the Korean peninsula was first described by the colonial power and the colonial researchers themselves, before and after 1945,

2. S. Tanaka, *Japan's Orient* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1993); H. I. Pai, *Constructing "Korean" Origins* (Harvard: Harvard University Press & Hallym, 2000); A. Nanta, "Colonial Historiography in Taiwan and Korea under Japanese Rule. 1890s–1940s", in *Politika* (2020).

3. P. Singaravélou, *L'École française d'Extrême-Orient ou l'institution des marges (1898-1956)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000).

notably by Fujita Ryōsaku,⁴ who was for a long time in charge of the colonial Museum of the Government-General of Korea (see part 3 below), or Umehara Sueji⁵ from the Imperial University of Kyōto. This history did not become the subject of critical historical research until the 1960s, with the development of Japanese academic research on Japan's colonial past, notably with the pioneering work of Nishikawa Hiroshi⁶ in the pages of the *Bulletin of the Japanese Society for the History of Korea* (founded in 1959), alongside the works led by Korean historians in Japan,⁷ and those published by a number of Japanese archaeologists⁸ – Japanese archaeology publishes continuously on its own history. On the South Korean side, there was a shift from publications praising the 'Japanese colonial major achievements' in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Choi)⁹ to more clearly critical works after the country's democratization in 1987, in particular the major synthesis by the historian Yi Sunja.¹⁰ These two bodies of research, Japanese and South Korean, need to be completed by a number of North American works, actually centered around

4. R. Fujita 藤田亮策, "Chōsen koseki chōsa" 朝鮮古蹟調査 (A study of Korean remains), Compiled in Fujita R (1963) *Chōsengaku ronkō* 朝鮮學論考 (Selected Papers in Korean Studies) (Tōkyō: Fujita sensei kinen jigyō kai, 1963 [1953]): 67-88. The family name precedes the first name in all East-Asian countries (China, Japan, South and North Korea, Taiwan, Viet Nam).

5. S. Umehara 梅原末治, *Kōkogaku rokujū nen* 考古学六十年 (Sixty years of archaeology) (Tōkyō: Heibonsha, 1973).

6. H. Nishikawa 西川宏, "Nihon teikoku shugi ka ni okeru Chōsen kōkogaku no keisei 日本帝国主義下における朝鮮考古学の形成 (The formation of the archaeology of Korea under Japanese imperialism), in *Chōsenshi kenkyūkai ronbunshū* 朝鮮史研究会論文集 7 (1970): 94-116.

7. S. Lee 李成市, A. Nanta (Organizers), *The Research on Ancient History in Colonial Korea under Japanese Rule. Archaeology, History and Heritage Policies in East Asian Modern History*, International Conference, Waseda University & Maison Franco-Japonaise, Tōkyō, April 22-23, 2016; Lee, *Tōsō no ba to shite no kodai shi – Higashi Ajia shi no yukue* 闘争の場としての古代史 – 東アジア史のゆくえ (Ancient History as a Battleground – The destiny of East Asia History) (Tōkyō: Iwanami, 2018).

8. M. Saotome 早乙女雅博, "Shiragi no kōkogaku chōsa hyaku nen no kenkyū" 新羅の考古学調査 100年の研究 (A hundred years of archaeological studies of Silla), in *Chōsenshi kenkyūkai ronbunshū* 39 (2001): 53-106; *Kōkogaku jānaru* 考古学ジャーナル (The Archaeological Journal) (2010). Special issue about the history of archaeology in Korea (*Chōsen kōkogaku shi* 朝鮮考古学史), 2; H. Yoshii 吉井秀夫, "Chōsen koseki chōsa jigyō to Nihon" kōkogaku" 朝鮮古蹟調査事業と「日本」考古学, in *Kōkogaku kenkyū* 考古学研究 239 (2013): 17-27.

9. K. Choi, "Compilation and Publication of Korean Historical Materials under Japanese Rule (1910-1945)", in *The Developing Economies* 7, n° 3 (1969): 380-391.

10. S. J. Yi 이순자, *Il'che kangjōm-gi kojōk chosa saōp yōngu* 일제강점기 고적조사사업 연구 (Seoul: Kyōng'in munhwa-sa, 2009).

Korean researchers based in the United States, in particular Pai Hyung-Il,¹¹ who has highlighted the links between identity construction and archaeology in present-day South Korea, or the project on Early Korean history led by Mark Byington,¹² or by a few European publications.¹³

In the following pages, colonial archaeology in Korea will be examined in four parts. First, we'll briefly present the themes and issues at stake. This will be followed by an overview of the first period of research, up to 1915, including the colonial research institutions. Thirdly, we will address the excavation programs and their locations. Finally, we will briefly present a few prominent publications and results of this research.

The Shift of the Ancient History Paradigm on Korea

Unlike other Japanese colonial territories, the ancient past of the Korean peninsula fascinated Japanese scholars, especially sinologists such as Shiratori Kurakichi 白鳥庫吉 (1865-1942) from the Imperial University of Tōkyō (founded in 1877) and Naitō Konan 内藤湖南 (1866-1934) from the Imperial University of Kyōto (founded in 1897). Such fascination was rare in a colonial context. As written above, we can evoke the Mediterranean area for the Greco-Roman past, or the Indochinese peninsula under French colonization (1887-1954) with the archaeological studies conducted by the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO). In the Korean case, archaeology was an auxiliary science to historiography, similar to the Mediterranean research such as in the case, for example, of Schliemann's excavations. This means the ancient history of Korea was known before all through ancient texts: the Japanese 8th century histories, the Chinese histories, the Korean texts of *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (12th century) or *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (13th century). The ancient history of Korea corresponds to two major periods: the time of the Han colonization in the north of the peninsula with the Chinese commanderies, especially Lelang 樂浪郡 (Nangnang 낙랑군) (-108 to 313); then the Three Kingdoms of Korea period (in Korean: *Samguk sidae* 삼국시대 三國時代), which are Koguryō 高句麗 (37 BC to 668), Paekche 百濟 (-18 to 660) and Silla 新羅 (-57 to 935), from the 1st century BCE to the 10th century.¹⁴

11. H. I. Pai, *Constructing "Korean" Origins* (Harvard: Harvard University Press & Hallym, 2000); H. I. Pai, *Heritage Management in Korea and Japan: The Politics of Antiquity and Identity* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2013).

12. M. E. Byington (Ed.), *The Han Commanderies in Early Korean History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

13. A. Nanta, "L'archéologie japonaise en Corée coloniale. Trajectoires, terrains et représentations", in *Hespéris Tamuda* 101 (2022): 555-584.

14. K. B. Yi 李基白, and K. D. Yi, 李基東, *Kodae p'yōn* 古代篇 (The Ancient Times), *Hanguk sa kangjwa* 韓國史講座 (Courses in Korean History), Volume 1 (Seoul: Iljogak, 1982);

The “problem of ancient history” emerged in Japan at a time of Japanese nation-building. For this reason, the discovery of the stele of King Kwanggaet’o of Koguryō Kingdom (Kwanggaet’o wang nŭng-bi 廣開土王陵碑) at the border between Korea and Manchuria in 1884, by a gendarme of the Japanese diplomatic contingent, provoked a great fervor in Japan.¹⁵ For commentators of the time, the inscription on this stele from Koguryō, built during the 4th century to record the war against the “Wa”, seemed to demonstrate the historical reality of the “Japanese” military victories of the legendary empress Jingū 神功皇后 (r. 201-269) reported in the Japanese historical text *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720). It is no coincidence that these topics resurfaced in a context of tensions surrounding Korea in the 1880s and 1890s, notably during the Sino-Japanese war (1894-1895), nor that Japan highlighted the empress Jingū, who became a true icon of the new Japanese State in the Meiji era (1868-1912). The links between these visions of the ancient past and the aspirations of the new Japanese State were eminently political. As historian Stefan Tanaka wrote, about the representations of Korea developed in Japan during the 1890’s,

“According to Shiratori, Japan’s activities [in the peninsula] were not imperialistic, for the past shows that Korea ‘has returned to our protection’ [...] History provided the precedent for this return: protohistoric Japan, after all, had been asked for aid from the ancient Korean kingdoms of Paekche, Kaya and Silla in their fight against Koguryō. [...] Moreover, he expressed no doubt that he considered the Sei-Kan [conquer Korea] movement of the early Meiji period to ‘open Korea’ and impose Japanese ‘aid’ during the twentieth century in a similar vein.”¹⁶

At the same time, Japan was developing its national history, following the book *Kokushigan* 國史眼 (A Look at National History) published in 1890, through the creation in 1895 of the Historiographical Institute – which took its actual name *Shiryō hensanjo* 史料編纂所 in 1929 – within the Imperial University of Tōkyō.¹⁷ When we speak of national history, it means a continuous history of a single “people” (*Volk* in German) in a single territory, a people defined by blood or by “race” (ethnicist view). At the same time, the first national history of Korea was published in 1892 with the work *Chōsen tsūshi* 朝鮮通史 (Complete History of Korea) by the Japanese sinologist Hayashi Taisuke 林泰輔 (1854-1922), professor at the Tōkyō

M.E. Byington, *The Han Commanderies in Early Korean History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); M. Shin, *Korean History in Maps: From Prehistory to the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

15. A. Saeki 佐伯有清, *Kōkaido ō hi to sanbō honbu* 公開土王碑と参謀本部 (The Japanese Military Staff and the issue of Kwanggaet’o King’s stele) (Tōkyō: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1976); A. Schmid, *Korea between empires, 1895-1919* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002): 1-22. A life-size reproduction of this 6.3-meter-high stele stands at the entrance to the War Memorial of Korea, in Seoul.

16. S. Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1993): 244.

17. W. G. Beasley, and E. G. Pulleyblank (Eds.), *Historians of China and Japan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971): 264-287.

Normal School. In this book, Hayashi described the history of the peninsula from its origins, calling with only one name (Chōsen 朝鮮) all the States that had existed within the peninsula.¹⁸ In other words, the history of the peninsula was, for the first time, seen as the history of a single country from its origins to the present day.

Japanese archaeology in Korea was to focus on Han (Chinese) sites, and Korean ancient sites i.e. the period of the Three Kingdoms of Korea. Of the latter, the Koguryō Kingdom, which occupied the north of the peninsula and the southern half of “Greater Manchuria”, and the Silla Kingdom which occupied the south of the peninsula – notably its capital city Kyōngju 慶州 – were particularly studied in detail, including the period when Silla politically unified the peninsula between 676 and 935. This was ancient archaeology in the broadest sense, and not prehistoric archaeology. The Korean founding myth of the original ruler Tan’gun 檀君, meanwhile, was to be deconstructed, while the Han presence in the north of the peninsula was asserted as a historical period in its very own right, and even as “the beginning of the history” of Korea, according to an alter-referential vision typical of colonialist discourse.

Precolonial Research and the Japanese Institutions in Charge of Colonial Archaeology

The first period of Japanese research in Korea took place between 1902 and 1915. Researchers from the Imperial University of Tōkyō played there a leading role. In particular the art historian Sekino Tadashi 關野貞 (1867-1935), the anthropologist and archaeologist Torii Ryūzō 鳥居龍藏 (1870-1953), as well as the anthropologist and archaeologist Yagi Shōzaburō 八木奘三郎 (1866-1942), and the historian and archaeologist Imanishi Ryū 今西龍 (1875-1932), future professor at the Imperial Universities of Kyōto and Keijō (the colonial name of Seoul). This first period, which began before the formal colonization of Korea, was characterized by global field surveys, that aimed at charting and mapping the remains of the peninsula’s various historical periods.

At the same time, independent Japanese researchers living in Hansōng (the precolonial name of Seoul) or in the harbour town of Inch’ōn played an important

18. T. Hayashi 林泰輔, *Chōsen tsūshi – zen* 朝鮮通史 全 (Complete History of Korea – Final Edition) (Tōkyō: Toyama-bō 富山房, 1912); H. Hakoishi, 箱石大, “Kindai Nihon shiryōgaku to Chōsen sōtoku-fu no Chōsen-shi hensan jigyō” 近代日本史科学と朝鮮総督府の朝鮮史編纂事業 (Archivistical works in modern Japan and the colonial program of compilation of Korean history), in M. Satō 佐藤信 *et alii* (Ed.), *Zen-kindai Nihon rettō to Chōsen hantō* 前近代日本列島と朝鮮半島 (The Japanese archipelago and the Korean peninsula during the pre/modern era) (Tōkyō: Yamakawa shuppan-sha, 2007): 241-263; A. Nanta, “Colonial Historiography in Taiwan and Korea under Japanese Rule. 1890s–1940s”, in *Politika* (2020).

role in mobilizing Korean historical sources dating from the Koryŏ 高麗 (935-1392) and Chosŏn 朝鮮 (1392-1897) periods.¹⁹ In 1903, these researchers founded the Kankoku kenkyūkai 韓國研究會 (Korean Research Group) in Inch'ŏn, a private society that published dozens of 17th- and 18th-centuries Korean documents within a few years, and produced a working edition of the 12th-century *Samguk sagi*, the Koryŏ official history of the Three Kingdoms period.

Sekino began studying Korean architectural heritage in 1902, which he referred to in particular as *ko-kenchikubutsu* 古建築物 (ancient buildings). He focused heavily on data from the medieval Koryŏ period, which led him straight to the palatial sites.²⁰ Palatial sites, which are the best documented by philology, were later to be favored by colonial archaeology to the prejudice of a broader research on the traces of the past in the peninsula. Sekino published a *Survey Report on the Architecture of Korea* in 1904, followed by his book *Studies in the Arts of Korea* in 1910.²¹ Although Sekino played a central role in building the definition of Korean heritage, the terminology was slow to settle.²²

Torii, for his part, adopted a more paradoxical approach to his fieldwork. Benefiting from the active collaboration of the army in colonial lands and occupied territories, and as he was a personal acquaintance of governor Terauchi Masatake 寺内正毅 (1852-1919), and also because he defended the colonial regime after the March First, 1919, Korean national movement, Torii was the only person to carry out a vast field survey of the peninsula's prehistoric sites. Of course, prehistoric archaeology did not concern the time of the Three Kingdoms. Although Torii visited Korea six times between 1911 and 1916, his work on the peninsula had no posterity.²³

19. K. Choi, "Compilation and Publication of Korean Historical Materials under Japanese Rule (1910-1945)", in *The Developing Economies* 7, n° 3 (1969): 380-391; A. Nanta, "Colonial Historiography in Taiwan and Korea under Japanese Rule. 1890s–1940s", in *Politika* (2020).

20. H. Nishikawa 西川宏, "Nihon teikoku shugi ka ni okeru Chōsen kōkogaku no Keisei" 日本帝国主義下における朝鮮考古学の形成 (The formation of the archaeology of Korea under Japanese imperialism), in *Chōsenshi kenkyūkai ronbunshū* 朝鮮史研究会論文集 7 (1970): 98-99.

21. T. Sekino 關野貞, *Chōsen geijutsu no kenkyū* 朝鮮藝術之研究. (Studies in the Arts of Korea) (Keijō: Chōsen sōtokufu, 1910); A. Nanta, "L'archéologie japonaise en Corée coloniale. Trajectoires, terrains et représentations", in *Hespéris Tamuda* 101 (2022): 555-584.

22. Sekino did not use a unified concept to designate cultural heritage, but instead spoke of "Korean culture" (*Chōsen bunka* 朝鮮文化), which could be divided into "objects" (*ibutsu* 遺物) and "historical remains" (*shiseki* 史蹟). With regard to archaeological sites, Sekino first referred to the "ancient architecture" (*ko-kenchiku* 古建築物) of Korea in 1910, then to the "sites" (*iseki* 遺蹟) of Korea in 1911, and finally to the "ancient remains" (*koseki* 古蹟) of Korea in 1914. The expression "cultural property" (*bunkazai* 文化財), which comes from American English, appears in Fujita Ryōsaku's works. But a more precise semantic analysis would be necessary.

23. T. Sakano 坂野徹, *Teikoku Nihon to jinruigakusha* 帝国日本と人類学者 (The Anthropologists of Imperial Japan) (Tōkyō: Keisō shobō, 2005); A. Nanta, "Torii Ryūzō :

Colonial research institutions were established between 1915 and 1924. This process was possible because of all these earlier works in architectural history and philology, then archaeology, but also because the Japanese colonial power had gathered the Korean historical documents. By 1907, the colonial authorities had taken control of the archives of the Kyujanggak 奎章閣 Royal Library. In 1915, the Museum of the Government-General of Korea – a Museum of history and archaeology – was established. Then, in 1916, the Commission for the Study of the Ancient Remains of Korea (Chōsen koseki chōsa iinkai 朝鮮古蹟調査委員會, transformed into Chōsen koseki kenkyūkai 朝鮮古蹟研究會 in 1931, see below part 3) was created.²⁴

Also in 1916, “Regulations for the Conservation of Ancient Relics and Artifacts” in Korea (Koseki oyobi ibutsu hozon kisoku 古蹟及遺物保存規則), revised in 1933, were promulgated. This regulation preceded mainland Japan law of 1919²⁵ and in this sense, it has a particular importance within the Japanese history of heritage protection, beyond its colonial context. Its Article 2 stipulated an obligation for the colonial authorities to register objects and sites discovered, while Article 3 created an obligation for discoverers to notify a police station within three days, while categorically prohibiting any modification whatsoever to the condition of the site or objects discovered. Article 5 established a conservation mission, and prohibited any modification of the site or objects once they have been registered with the Government-General authorities. Article 8 specified the penalties for offenders of Articles 3 and 5.²⁶

terrains et discours d’un anthropologue et archéologue japonais du début du XXe siècle”, in *Bulletin et Mémoires de la Société d’Anthropologie de Paris* 22 (2010): 24-37.

24. Chōsen sōtokufu 朝鮮總督府 (Ed.), *Shisei sanjū nen shi* 施政三十年史 (A 30-years History of our administration) (Keijō: Chōsen Sōtokufu, 1940); H. Nishikawa, 西川宏, “Nihon teikoku shugi ka ni okeru Chōsen kōkogaku no keisei” 日本帝国主義下における朝鮮考古学の形成, in *Chōsenshi kenkyūkai ronbunshū* 朝鮮史研究会論文集 7 (1970): 94-116; H. I. Pai, *Constructing “Korean” Origins* (Harvard: Harvard University Press & Hallym, 2000); S. J. Yi, 이순자, *Il’che kangjōm-gi kojōk chosa saōp yōngu* 일제강점기 고적조사사업 연구 (Seoul: Kyōng’in munhwa-sa, 2009): 90-98; S. Lee 李成市, *Tōsō no ba to shite no kodai shi – Higashi Ajia shi no yukue* 闘争の場としての古代史—東アジア史のゆくえ (Ancient History as a Battleground – The destiny of East Asia History) (Tōkyō: Iwanami, 2018): 181-204; A. Nanta, “L’archéologie japonaise en Corée coloniale. Trajectoires, terrains et représentations”, in *Hespéris Tamuda* 101 (2022): 555-584.

25. T. Inada 稲田孝, *Nihon to Furansu no iseki hogo. Kōkogaku to hō, gyōsei, shimin undō* 日本とフランスの移籍保護 考古学と法、行政、市民運動 (The protection of ancient remains in France and Japan. Archaeology, law, administration, public movements) (Tōkyō: Iwanami, 2014).

26. On the limits of these Regulations, see G. Y. Yi 李龜烈, *Nihon shinryaku-ka no Kankoku bunkazai hiwa* 日本侵略下の韓国文化財秘話 (Secret History of the Korean Cultural Properties during the Japanese Invasion) (Tōkyō: Shinsensha, 1993 [1973]); S. Arai 荒井信一, *Koroniarizumu to bunkazai. Kindai Nihon to Chōsen kara kangaeru* コロニアリズムと文化財

Finally, the Imperial University of Keijō (Keijō teikoku daigaku 京城帝國大學), the name of colonial Seoul, was established in 1924; its faculties opened in 1926. A parallel commission in Korean history was set up at the same time, in 1922, reformed in 1925.²⁷

The 1916 archaeological commission brought together many of Japan's leading academics. Let's mention Sekino, Imanishi, Torii, as well as the famous Hamada Kōsaku 濱田耕作 (1881-1938) and his colleague Umehara Sueji 梅原末治 (1893-1983) from the archaeology laboratory at Imperial University of Kyōto, which was also active in China.²⁸ Or the famous historian Kuroita Katsumi 黑板勝美 (1874-1946) from the Historiographical Institute in Tōkyō,²⁹ and the archaeologist Fujita Ryōsaku 藤田亮策 (1892-1960). Fujita headed the Museum in Keijō from 1922 until 1941; he was also professor on one of the two Korean history chairs at the university from 1932, where he taught Korean archaeology, and he published numerous articles and books alongside the publications of the two commissions.³⁰

近代日本と朝鮮から考える (Colonization and Cultural Properties: from the case of modern Japan and Colonial Korea) (Tōkyō: Iwanami, 2012).

27. S. Kim 김성민, "Chosŏn-sa p'yŏnsuhoe ūi sosik kwa unyong" 朝鮮史編修會의 組織과 運用 (The Institute for the compilation of Korean history: organization and works), in *Hanguk minjok undongsa yŏngu* 한국민족 운동사 연구 3 (1989): 121-164; H. Hakoishi, 箱石大, "Kindai Nihon shiryōgaku to Chōsen sōtoku-fu no Chōsen-shi hensan jigyō" 近代日本史料学と朝鮮総督府の朝鮮史編纂事業 (Archivistical works in modern Japan and the colonial program of compilation of Korean history), in M. Satō 佐藤信 *et alii* (Ed.) *Zen-kindai Nihon rettō to Chōsen hantō* 前近代日本列島と朝鮮半島 (The Japanese archipelago and the Korean peninsula during the pre/modern era) (Tōkyō: Yamakawa shuppan-sha, 2007), 241-263; A. Nanta, "Colonial Historiography in Taiwan and Korea under Japanese Rule. 1890s–1940s", in *Politika*, 2020.

28. The archaeological research network of the Imperial University of Kyōto also conducted surveys in China and Manchuria, via the East-Asian Archaeological Society (Tōa kōko gakkai 東亜考古學會).

29. L. Yoshikawa, *Making History Matter. Kuroita Katsumi and the Construction of Imperial Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017).

30. R. Fujita 藤田亮作, "Chōsen koseki chōsa" 朝鮮古蹟調査 (A study of Korean remains), compiled in Fujita R (1963) *Chōsengaku ronkō* 朝鮮學論考 (Selected Papers in Korean Studies) (Tōkyō: Fujita sensei kinen jigyō kai, 1963 [1953]): 67-88.

Programmed Excavations and Regional Museums

Five-year excavation programs were carried out from 1916 onwards, as soon as the archaeological commission was set up, with successive objectives focused on a given region or period. Most of the excavations carried out in Korea were programmed excavations. The topics, sites and results were presented in sixteen excavation reports of varying size, published almost annually between 1917 (for year 1916) and 1940 (for year 1938). Another series of seven special reports was published in parallel with the normal series and concerned specific excavations, which saw a concentration of efforts and teams on a particular site or vestige.³¹

The first program continued Sekino's unfinished work on architecture, and focused under his co-direction on the four Han Chinese commanderies. These are known in Chinese as Han si jun 漢四郡, a term referring to the Chinese presence in the north of the Korean peninsula and in southern Manchuria during the Han dynasty (202 BC to 9 AD, 25-220 AD). Of these four commanderies, that of Lelang (located near Pyöngyang) was repeatedly studied under Sekino's monitoring. It was given a central importance as the "beginning of the history of the peninsula". In all, Lelang was the subject of three waves of excavations, under Sekino in the 1910s, then in the 1920s, finally under Fujita in the 1930s.

The Kyöngju region (in southeastern Korea) was also repeatedly excavated. Beyond the fortress remains, the masonry mounds in particular (initially thought to exist only in the north of the peninsula) were studied by Hamada, Umehara and Koizumi Akio 小泉顯夫 (1897-1993) in 1922 and in 1924, following a striking discovery due to construction work conducted by Japanese settlers (see below). These same sites were then studied by Arimitsu Kyöichi 有光教一 (1907-2011) in 1931, followed by Kayamoto Kamejirö 榎本龜治郎 (1901-1970) in 1932 and Saitö Tadashi 齋藤忠 (1908-2013) in 1934.

From the earliest research programs, the objects discovered during the excavations were handed over to five specially-created museums at central and local levels. The Museum of the Government-General of Korea was originally created to house the objects collected by Sekino and Torii. In addition to exhibitions, "the [Government-General] Museum was also responsible for excavating and investigating the remains, carrying out restoration work on them and recording them, while classifying buried objects [*maizöbutsu* 埋藏物]; it was thus the central body concerning ancient cultural

31. Chösen Sötokufu 朝鮮總督府 (Government-General of Korea) (Ed.) *Koseki chösa hökoku* 古蹟調査報告 & *Koseki tokubetsu chösa hökoku* 古蹟特別調査報告 (Excavation Reports and Special Excavation Reports, years 1916 to 1938), 2 series, 23 volumes (Keijö: Chösen Sötokufu, 1917-1940); R. Torii 鳥居龍藏, "Heian Nandö, Kökaidö koseki chösa hökokusho 平安南道黃海道古蹟調査報告書" (Research Report about the ancient sites in Pyöng'an Namdo and Hwanghaedo), in Chösen Sötoku-fu (Ed.), *Taishö go nendo koseki chösa hökoku* 大正五年度古蹟調査報告 (Reports on Ancients Remains, Taishö year 5 [1916]) (Keijö, Chösen Sötokufu, 1917): 767-859.

properties [*ko-bunkazai* 古文化財]" in Korea, Fujita explained in 1953.³² The Central Museum was housed in the grounds of the Kyōngbok Palace, in the north of Seoul, alongside the Palace of the Government-General. It was the successor to the Korean Imperial Museum (Chesil pangmungwan 帝室博物館, established in 1908), an art museum built in the tradition of 19th-century European, American or Japanese museums before Japan's annexation of Korea. The collection of the Museum of the Government-General of Korea, built up after 1915, numbered 8,400 items in 1921, 12,329 in 1930, then 14,157 in 1938.³³

The Museum of the Government-General was joined by the Pyōngyang Museum located in the former capital city of the Kingdom of Koguryō and also near Lelang's sites, and also by the Museum of Kaesōng, the former capital city of the Kingdom of Koryō. Two branches of the Museum of the Government-General were also founded in Puyō and Kyōngju. The Kyōngju branch (1926) in particular was the centerpiece of the colonial museums network for the southeast of the peninsula; this branch housed the gold crowns discovered during the excavations conducted in 1922 and 1924 by Umehara at the eponymous mounds (the Golden Crowns Mounds: Kinkan-zuka / Kūmgwan-ch'ong 金冠塚). The excavation of these mounds was also the scene of serious clashes between the archaeologists and the Japanese settlers, who discovered these sites and who seriously damaged them. The current Korean Kyōngju National Museum (Kungrip Kyōngju pangmungwan 국립경주박물관 國立慶州博物館) has its origins in this museum.

The direction of the commission's work was transferred in August 1931 to the newly created Institute for Research on Ancient Remains in Korea (Chōsen koseki kenkyūkai 朝鮮古蹟研究會), while in 1933 the Government-General set up a structure dedicated to the protection of heritage.³⁴ These two decisions seem to have been motivated by budgetary reasons. Another explanation may lie in the Government-General's doubts about the usefulness of archaeological work for its

32. R. Fujita 藤田亮作, "Chōsen koseki chōsa" 朝鮮古蹟調査 (A study of Korean remains), compiled in Fujita R (1963) *Chōsengaku ronkō* 朝鮮學論考 (Selected Papers in Korean Studies) (Tōkyō: Fujita sensei kinen jigyō kai, 1963 [1953]): 67-88; S. Ōide 大出尚子 "Nihon no kyū shokuminchi ni okeru rekishi, kōkogaku kei hakubutsukan no motsu seijisei" 日本の旧植民地における歴史・考古学系博物館の持つ政治性", in *Tōyō bunka kenkyū* 東洋文化研究 14 (2012): 1-28.

33. S. J. Yi, 이순자. *Il'che kangjōm-gi kojōk chosa saōp yōngu* 일제강점기 고적조사사업 연구 (The studies on Korean sites during the occupation by the Empire of Japan) (Seoul: Kyōng'in munhwa-sa, 2009): 321-351.

34. Chōsen sōtokufu 朝鮮總督府 (Ed.), *Chōsen sōtoku-fu kampo* 朝鮮總督府官報 (Federal Register of the Government-General of Korea), August 9th (Keijō: Chōsen Sōtoku-fu, 1933), 1-2. The August 9, 1933 revision of the 1916 regulations established an Institute of the Government-General of Korea for the Protection of Treasures, Ancient Relics, Famous and Picturesque Places or Monuments (Chōsen sōtokufu hōmotsu koseki meishō tennen kinen-butsumo hozon-kai 朝鮮總督府寶物古蹟名勝天然記念物保存會).

policy. Article 2 of the August 1931 regulation setting up this Institute delimited narrowly the sites and regions that research should target. Henceforth, only the regions of Pyöngyang (Lelang) and Kyöngju (Silla) were concerned, because they were then considered sufficient in order to “shed light on the process of development of the Korean culture.” This new Institute was funded to a greater extent by both imperial universities of Tökyö and Kyöto, which in return were able to expand their own collections; by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (*Nihon gakujutsu shinkökai* 日本學術振興會) from 1933, and then from December 1938 via its Korea Committee (*Chösen iinkai* 朝鮮委員會); by the Japanese Ministry of the Imperial Palace, i.e. the emperor; and finally by the (collaborating) Korean royal family. It was in this context that the Yi Royal Family Art Museum was established in 1938. This reorganization finally saw the development of a pyramid structure comprising three regional research centers integrated within the museums, while the Institute’s offices were located inside the Museum of the Government-General of Korea in Keijö.³⁵

The Rewriting of the Past

Official publications consist of several series. These include the excavation reports already mentioned, the large work *Chösen koseki zufu* 朝鮮古蹟圖譜 (Illustrated Compilation on the Ancient Remains of Korea),³⁶ which presents museums collections and private collections, or the work *Chösen-shi* 朝鮮史 (History of Korea) which is the magnum opus of the Historical Commission (see part 2).

The *Chösen koseki zufu* was published in Japanese and English between 1915 and 1935, in a luxurious edition featuring numerous photographs. This book does not, however, present any historical questions, but was an art history in a form reminiscent of a heritage inventory. This publication was part of a logic of highlighting Korea’s national past, which served to reinforce the colonizer’s position. It may come as a surprise to learn that, although at the time of its publication, almost no actual field excavations had yet taken place, this book was later emphasized as a “great colonial archaeological work”. Of the fifteen volumes in this series, the five dealing with Lelang and the Three Kingdoms period were published between 1915 and 1917, in other words before the completion of the first field research five-year program.

Given the timeline of publication of this famous book series, it is clear that its presentation of Korea’s archaeological and architectural heritage has little to do

35. R. Fujita 藤田亮作, “Chösen koseki chösa” 朝鮮古蹟調査 (A study of Korean remains), compiled in Fujita R (1963) *Chösen gaku ronkō* 朝鮮學論考 (Selected Papers in Korean Studies) (Tökyö: Fujita sensei kinen jigyö kai, 1963 [1953]): 82-84.

36. Chösen sötokufu 朝鮮總督府 (Ed.), *Chösen koseki zufu* 朝鮮古蹟圖譜 (Ösaka: Sögakusha, 1981 [1915]).

with scientific research. The composition of the book once again demonstrates Japan's keen interest in Korean ancient history, the weight of architectural history and art history, as well as the predominance of a predefined 'vision' of the ancient history of Korea, which had been developed since the 1890s, even before the time of the protectorate.

Chōsen koseki zufu was given to a number of Western and Japanese institutions (including the Guimet Museum in France), and had a strong influence on them. In 1961, this book was still quoted as an essential source of information alongside Andreas Eckardt's *History of Korean Art*³⁷ in the History of Art volume on the "non-Christian world" in the famous French collection La Pléiade. All the Korean terms and place names were mentioned there, in Jean Buhot's chapter, with their Japanese readings, a fact which underlines the "unavoidable" dimension of Japanese mediation up to the 1960's.³⁸

In parallel, between 1932 and 1938, the aforementioned 1922/1925 Colonial Historical Commission published the *Chōsen-shi* 朝鮮史 (History of Korea) series, in thirty-five volumes for a total of 24,000 pages.³⁹ In this work, protohistory and the Chinese commanderies of Lelang and Daifang on the one hand, the period of the Three Kingdoms of Korea on the other, are presented in three large volumes detailing the ancient written documentation on these periods. But this *History of Korea* series - a chronicle that was in fact written in a monarchical, State-centered style - took as its real starting point the unification of the peninsula by Silla, during the reign of King Munmu in the 7th century. In fact, we can consider this series not as a historical study of the peninsula, but rather as a work designed to end Korea's reign as an independent State, with the rule of the Japanese colonizer.

Mention should also be made here of the bibliographies and documentary surveys produced for the Government-General. For ancient history, in particular: the major bibliographies compiled by the philologist and historian of the Silla Kingdom Suematsu Yasukazu 末松保和 (1904-1992), who was professor at the colonial Imperial University of Keijō, where he held one of the two chairs of Korean history.

37. A. Eckardt, *A History of Korean Art / Geschichte der Koreanischen Kunst* (London: Goldstone. Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1929).

38. J. Buhot, "L'art de la Corée", in *Histoire de l'art 1. Le Monde non-chrétien* (Ed.) P. Devambez (Paris: Gallimard, 1961): 1442-1458.

39. H. Hakoishi, 箱石大, "Kindai Nihon shiryōgaku to Chōsen sōtoku-fu no Chōsen-shi hensan jigyo" 近代日本史料学と朝鮮総督府の朝鮮史編纂事業 (Archivistical works in modern Japan and the colonial program of compilation of Korean history), in M. Satō 佐藤信 et alii (Ed.), *Zen-kindai Nihon rettō to Chōsen hantō* 前近代日本列島と朝鮮半島 (The Japanese archipelago and the Korean peninsula during the pre/modern era) (Tōkyō: Yamakawa shuppan-sha, 2007): 241-263; A. Nanta, "Colonial Historiography in Taiwan and Korea under Japanese Rule. 1890s–1940s", in *Politika* (2020).

And also, of mainland Japan publications. In 1933, the Japanese publisher Iwanami, still one of the country's most prestigious academic companies, published the first edition of its *History of Japan* (*Nihon rekishi Iwanami kōza* 日本歴史岩波講座) series. Numerous versions of this series have been published up to the latest in 2015. The first edition contains seven chapters dealing with Korea (then part of Japan) or with Japanese-Korean relations over time, out of a total of 130 chapters. Among these, Fujita wrote a chapter on "Ancient Korean Culture", demonstrating the place of Japanese archaeology of Korea within the mainland publications.⁴⁰

The *Archaeological Journal* (*Kōkōgaku zasshi* 考古學雜誌), published by the Japanese national Archaeological Society (established in 1895),⁴¹ always opened its pages to work carried out in colonial territories. It was in the *Archaeological Journal*, in Tōkyō, and not in Korea, that Hamada published in 1924 a synthesis on "The ancient mounds of Korea".⁴² In the aftermath of the March First, 1919, Korean national movement, he also published in the journal *Minzoku to rekishi* 民族と歴史 (Peoples & History), founded and edited by historian Kita Sadakichi 喜田貞吉 (1871-1939). Kita was one of the forerunners of social history in Japan, and also a powerful supporter of the annexationist ideology of imperial Japan at the time. In 1921, his journal published a thematic issue on "Korean-Manchu studies" (Senman kenkyū 鮮満研究), in which Hamada presented the results of archaeological surveys carried out inside the Korean peninsula. Hamada considered there Korea to be "our country's Irish question". And he set out his views on Japanese archaeological research in colonized Korea as follows.

"Japan has been led to take over the administration of Korea, a country that in the past possessed a culture worthy of respect, and [the study of its ancient remains] is a duty that we must fulfil as a civilized nation. Our country has never failed in this duty. Even if Korea were to manage itself on its own in the future, or gain independence, or become the territory of another country, there is no doubt that Japan would receive eternal thanks from the whole world and from the people of Korea for fulfilling its duty as a civilized nation."⁴³

This discourse on Japan's 'civilizing role' in Korea was a constant feature of the discourse of the archaeologists (or other scientists) who worked there; it is also

40. R. Fujita 藤田亮作, "Chōsen kodai bunka" 朝鮮古代文化 (The Culture of Ancient Korea), in Kokushi kenkyūkai 國史研究會 (Society for National History) (Ed.), *Iwanami kōza Nihon rekishi* 岩波講座日本歴史 (Iwanami courses in Japanese history), fasc. 12 (Tōkyō: Iwanami, 1934).

41. The Japanese Archaeological Society (which official English name is The Archaeological Society of Nippon) is the most ancient research Society in archaeology in Japan, and still exists today, alongside the Japanese Archaeological Association established in 1948 and which federates all regional associations or societies.

42. K. Hamada 濱田耕作, "Chōsen no kofun" 朝鮮の古墳, in *Kōkōgaku zasshi* 考古學雜誌 XIV-15, n° 302 (1924): 1-18.

43. K. Hamada, 濱田耕作, "Chōsen no koseki chōsa" 朝鮮の古蹟と調査 (Research on the ancient remains of Korea), in *Minzoku to rekishi* 民族と歴史 6-1 (1921): 70.

echoed by Fujita, the director of the Museum. After the Korean War (1950-1953), this stance was one of the reasons why negotiations to normalize diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea were so difficult to conclude.

Concluding Remarks

As the first attempt to modernize knowledge in Korea, at the time of king Kojong 高宗 (r. 1862-1907) and of the movement of reformist patriots at the end of the 19th century, unfortunately failed, Japanese archaeology was the first to systematically investigate Korea's ancient past throughout the Korean peninsula. Japan thus laid the scientific foundations for this knowledge in Korea. However, its limitations were many: like European archaeology of the same period, ancient Japanese archaeology was guided by philology, i.e., by ancient Korean, Chinese and Japanese texts. And this archaeology was essentially limited to the study of "already known" sites, notably at Lelang and Kyōngju.

In this contribution, we have seen how the paradigm of history writing about Korean past was transformed at the end of the 19th century, when Japanese historians and sinologists grasped for the first time the history of the Korean peninsula as that of a single country, from its origins to present day. Secondly, we have described the transition from pre-colonial times to the institutions established by the Government-General in the 1910s and 1920s. We then presented the main orientations of the excavation programs during the three decades (1910, 1920, 1930) they were carried out. Finally, we have briefly touched on some particularly important publications.

As far as publications are concerned, those issued by Korean resisters such as Sin Ch'aeho 申采浩 (1880-1936) should also be discussed. In his *History of Korea High Antiquity*.⁴⁴ Sin attempted a response to the Japanese researchers, in which he argued, despite archaeological evidence, that Han commanderies had never been located inside the Korean peninsula, which had never been "colonized" by "the Chinese" in the past. This theory, which held that the Han commanderies had in fact been located in China's Liaodong peninsula, had no scientific basis. However, it can be said that Sin tried to project onto these ancient archaeological sites the Korean national feeling of the colonial period, when the country had lost its sovereignty. The same can be said about Korean historian Ch'oe Namsŏn 崔南善

44. C. H. Sin 申采浩, *Chosŏn sanggo-sa* 朝鮮上古史 (A History of Korea High Antiquity), in *Tanjae Sin Ch'aeho chŏnjip* 丹齋申采浩全集 (Completes Works by Tanjae alias Sin Ch'aeho) (Seoul: Hyŏngsŏl ch'ulp'ansa, 1972), 4 volumes, vol. 1 (1931): 8-346; K. B. Yi 李基白 (Ed.), *Kŭndae Hanguk sa nonsŏn* 近代韓國史論選 (A Selection of historical articles from modern Korea) (Seoul: Samsŏng munhwa chaedan, 1973); H. H. Em, "Minjok as a Modern and Democratic Construct: Sin Ch'aeho's Historiography," in G. W. Shin, and M. Robinson (Eds.), *Colonial Modernity in Korea* (Cambridge Ma: Harvard University Press, 1999).

(1890-1917)'s Purham culture theory, which was an attempt to define an ancient Korean culture dominating East Asia before the ancient Han empire.⁴⁵

And, at last, remains the question of the legacy of this Japanese archaeology in North and South Korea, which is an important, still unresolved, topic.⁴⁶ While the knowledge produced remains, Japanese archaeologists did not train Korean students – unlike Japanese professors in the Faculty of Medicine for example. Thus, Japanese archaeologists were replaced by Koreans trained in Austria or Germany during the 1930s and 1940s, notably To Yuho 都宥浩 (1905-1982) who then become professor in North Korea, or Kim Ch'aewon 金載元 (1909-1990), who replaced Fujita in 1946 as director of the Museum in Seoul. Then another generation, trained in the United States, appeared around the 1970s (Pai 2000). In addition, the problem of the restitution of stolen goods was complicated by the creation of two competing States in the north and in the south in 1948, while Japan normalized its relations with South Korea alone in 1965.⁴⁷

Japanese archaeology in colonized Korea was both a scholarly and a colonial enterprise. It served both as an attempt to understand ancient Korea and to legitimate the Japanese presence within the peninsula, while at the same time nourishing the nationalist discourses of the Korean resistance. This eminently hybrid and complex legacy was never resolved after Korea's independence in 1945, mainly because of the partition of the peninsula, but also because Japan never attempted to settle an issue that it considered to be part of Japan's 'positive achievements' in Korea.

The history of the legacy of this colonial archaeology is, to a large extent, that of the fate of Korean heritage, scattered abroad and in Japan, between public and private collections.

In 1965, as Japan and the Republic of Korea (South) normalized their relations, parallel treaties concerning Korean heritage were also signed. Japan recognized South Korea as the sole holder of Korean sovereignty over the entire peninsula, and

45. N. S. Ch'oe 崔南善, "Fukan bunka-ron" 不咸文化論, in *Chōsen oyobi Chōsen minzoku* 朝鮮及朝鮮民族 1 (1927): 1-58.

46. A. Nanta, "The postcolonial rewriting of the past in North and South Korea following independence (1950s-1960s)," in S. Gorshenina, P. Bonnet, M. Fuchs, and C. Rapin (Eds.), *Masters and Natives. Digging the Others' Past* (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2019): 307-321.

47. Munhwajae kwalliguk 문화재관리국 (National Office of Korea for the Administration of Cultural Properties) (Ed.), *Hae'oe sojae Hanguk munhwajae mongnok* 해외 소재 한국 문화재 목록 (Seoul: Munhwajae kwalliguk, 1986); G. Y. Yi 李龜烈, *Nihon shinryaku-ka no Kankoku bunkazai hiwa* 日本侵略下の韓国文化財秘話 (Secret History of the Korean Cultural Properties during the Japanese Invasion) (Tōkyō: Shinsensha, 1993 [1973]); L. Flutsch, and D. Fontennaz, *Le pillage du patrimoine archéologique. Des razzias coloniales au marché de l'art, un désastre culturel* (Paris: Favre, 2010); S. Arai, 荒井信一, *Koroniarizumu to bunkazai. Kindai Nihon to Chōsen kara kangaeru* コロニアリズムと文化財 近代日本と朝鮮から考える (Tōkyō: Iwanami, 2012).

as the sole rightful owner of the entire peninsula's cultural heritage. At the same time, the expelled North Koreans denied that the Lelang sites (located near Pyöngyang) were on Korean territory, echoing Sin Ch'aeho's 1931 theory. Here, the dozens of precise excavation reports produced before 1940 are the only scientific sources available today, that allow us to approach the sites of the Han commandery of Lelang, as shown by the recent work directed by Mark Byington, as these sites were extensively damaged after the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the North.

In other regions, such as the Mediterranean area, collaborations emerged. However, the continuing Cold War in East Asia is also a factor blocking the development of new peaceful relations.

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