

EGYPTOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE IN JAPAN: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE¹

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Introduction

Egyptology in Japan is relatively unknown to the rest of the world, although recently more Japanese scholars have been involved with Egyptological projects, including archaeological excavations, conservation, philological studies and cooperation with the construction of the Grand Egyptian Museum. In this paper, I would like to present an overview of Japanese Egyptology from its beginning to the present, and look to its future.²

The Beginning

Unlike the long history of Egyptology in the West, Japanese Egyptology began relatively recently, when in 1862 Japanese visited Egypt for the first time, as part of the first Japanese ambassadorial mission to Europe, at the direction of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Subsequently, the second Japanese mission to Europe visited Giza in 1863, and was memorialized by a famous photograph taken by Antonio Beato,³ showing samurai warriors in front of the Great Sphinx (Fig. 1). From that moment on, ancient Egyptian civilization became known to the Japanese people through drawings, paintings, photographs and descriptions in books, especially translations of books from the West.

In 1888, the Medical School of the Tokyo Imperial University (now the University of Tokyo) received an Egyptian mummy and coffins from the Yokohama consulate of the French Embassy in Japan, as specimen for anatomy. Later, the mummy was identified as a certain Penhenutjiuu, dating to the Third Intermediate Period. This is the only Egyptian mummy with a set of two coffins in Japan.

The scientific study of ancient Egypt in Japan, however, began in the twentieth century. Katsumi Kuroita (1874–1946), a professor and historian at the University of Tokyo, visited Egypt for three weeks, from December 1909 to January 1910, on his way back to Japan from Europe. At Thebes, he stayed at the house of the Omda (headman) of Qurna. He met a number of British Egyptologists in Egypt, including Eric Peet at Abydos, Harold Jones at Thebes, and Henry Hall in

¹ This paper is the revised version of the paper presented at the CIPEG Post-Conference Workshop in Bologna in July 10, 2016. I am grateful to Dr. Gabriele Pieke and Dr. Tine Bagh for inviting me to contribute it to the *CIPEG Journal*.

² For the Egyptological publications in Japan down to 2000, see J. Kondo and S. Uchida, 'Egyptology: The Land of Pharaohs from a Japanese Viewpoint,' *Orient: Journal of the Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan*, vol. 36 (2001), 57–77.

³ For Antonio Beato, see A. Ferri, *Il fotografo dei faraoni. Antonio Beato in Egitto 1860-1900. Catalogo della mostra*, Pendragon, (2008).

Cairo. After his return to Japan, he wrote some articles on Egyptian archaeology in the most respected archaeological periodical in Japan, *Koukougaku-Zattshi*.⁴



Fig. 1: A group of Samurai, the second Japanese mission to Europe, in Giza photographed by Antonio Beato in 1863.

Shougorou Tsuboi (1863–1913), the pioneer of anthropology in Japan and a professor at Tokyo Imperial University, studied in the UK from 1889 to 1892, and visited Egypt in 1911 on his way back to Japan, studying and purchasing for the university some Egyptian antiquities such as Predynastic stone implements, fragments of sculpture, mummies and funerary boats at the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. In the British Egyptological periodical, *Ancient Egypt*, edited by Flinders Petrie, Tsuboi's pupil Kosaku Hamada, who had studied with Petrie, marked him out the first Japanese scholar to properly study Egyptology.⁵ Tsuboi also wrote several articles on Egyptian mummies and funerary archaeology in Japanese anthropological journals, including one discussing a model boat of the Twelfth Dynasty from Asyut, which he purchased at the Egyptian Museum.⁶ He was expected to study further and introduce Egyptology in Japan, but suddenly died while attending the International Congress of Royal Academies in Moscow, without having

⁴ A detailed description of Katsumi Kuroita's trip to Egyptian archaeological sites can be found in J. Kondo, *Current Egyptology: Reviving the Valley of the Kings* (Tokyo, 2007) (in Japanese).

⁵ K. Hamada and T. Chiba, 'The late Professor Tsuboi and Egyptology in Japan,' *Ancient Egypt* (1914), pp. 59-60.

⁶ S. Tsuboi, 'A model boat discovered in an Ancient Egyptian Tomb,' *Jinruigaku-Zattshi, The Anthropological Society of Nippon*, vol. 28-6 (1912), pp. 307-14. (in Japanese)

had time to publish the result of his studies. His work seems to have been influenced by cultural diffusionism, which was a popular theory among anthropologists even in Japan. Some contemporary academic articles even argued that the Japanese language originated from Ancient Egyptian.

Kosaku Hamada (1881–1938) studied with Shogoro Tsuboi at Tokyo Imperial University for his undergraduate degree; he became a lecturer at Kyoto Imperial University in 1909. From 1910 onwards, Hamada acquired considerable experience in archaeological research in Japan as well as East Asia and subsequently studied archaeology in London under Flinders Petrie from 1913 to 1916. He had been sent to Europe to learn about European approaches to archaeology because Kyoto Imperial University (now Kyoto University) was planning the creation of the first archaeology department in Japan. In 1912, British Assyriologist Archibald Henry Sayce (1845–1933) had come to Japan and met Hamada, suggesting that Hamada study with Petrie in London. Hamada was responsible for plates 30–31 of Petrie's *Stone and Metal Vases*, 1937.⁷ After he returned to Japan in 1916, he was named the first Professor of Archaeology at Kyoto Imperial University, a position from which he promoted what became the main tradition in Japanese archaeology for the next generation of Japanese scholars. That tradition was heavily informed by Petrie's approach to archaeology, which emphasized rigorous typological classifications and systematic field work. In 1922, Hamada published the first textbook of archaeology in Japan, *Tsuron Koko-gaku* ('An Introduction to Archaeology'), based on Petrie's *Methods and Aims in Archaeology* (1904). In 1938, Hamada was appointed president of Kyoto Imperial University. He and Petrie kept in touch, and Petrie expressed admiration of Hamada's work in Japanese archaeology and introduced it in the journal *Ancient Egypt*. Some of Hamada's students travelled to England to study archaeology in London: Sueji Umehada, Hamada's successor, studied with Petrie as well and participated in his excavation in Palestine in 1927.

Through Hamada's efforts, Kyoto Imperial University financially supported Petrie's excavations in Egypt and, in return, some of the finds were donated to the university, where they are now known as the Hamada Collection.⁸ Petrie provided Egyptian objects that he regarded as typical of the style of each period. The Egyptian collection at Kyoto Imperial University helped promote the study of Ancient Egypt among its students, such as Seitaro Okajima, regarded as the founder of Japanese Egyptology, who studied Egyptian hieroglyphs through the inscriptions on these artefacts. Petrie's division, however, split up assemblages recovered from the same tomb, resulting in associated objects being kept in museums on opposite sides of the globe.⁹ The collection includes the finds from a tomb found near the funerary enclosure of King Djed at Abydos: three copper implements from Tomb 387 bearing the name of King Djed remain in London, but the tomb owner's skull is in Kyoto.¹⁰ Hamada also introduced the sequence dating method developed by Petrie to Japanese excavations, and published in 1922 the first Japanese

⁷ M. Bierbrier., *Who Was Who in Egyptology*, 4th Edition (London, 2012), 39.

⁸ T. Nakano, et al., *Egyptian Antiquities of Kyoto University: Entrusted Dreams from Petrie to Hamada: Two Giants of archaeology*, (Kyoto, 2011) (in Japanese); Kyoto University Museum (ed.), *Catalogue of the Egyptian Collection in the Kyoto University Museum*, (Kyoto, 2016).

⁹ A. Stevenson (ed.), *The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology: Characters and Collections* (London, 2015). I would like to thank Prof. Tomoaki Nakano of Chubu University for this information.

¹⁰ A. Stevenson (ed.), *The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology: Characters and Collection*, 91.

textbook on archaeology, *General Concepts of Archaeology*—demonstrating that Egyptian archaeology, as practiced by Petrie, had an impact around the globe.

The first ‘genuine’ Japanese Egyptologist was Seitaro Okajima (1895–1948), who introduced the discipline of Egyptology as practiced in the West to Japan. He was the son of a businessman, and studied in London when he was a secondary school student. Okajima became interested in Egyptology during that time, but later attended Kyoto University where he was taught by Prof. Kosaku Hamada. A genius at languages, mastering English, German, French, Greek, Latin, Chinese, Arabic, Coptic, and ancient Egyptian, Okajima was appointed professor at Nara Women’s High Normal School following his graduation. In 1931, he started teaching Egyptology at Kyoto University and wrote the first Japanese general history of ancient Egypt, *History of Egypt*, in 1940. He also published books on ancient Egyptian language, including *Concise Egyptian Grammar* (1940) and *Concise Coptic Grammar* (1942). Altogether, he published seven books and more than thirty articles on Egyptology. Okajima was also the first person to introduce the western academic framework for the study of Egyptology to Japan, including history, language, culture, and papyrology.

A number of Japanese artists working in Western style painting and collectors visited Egypt before the Second World War. They included Kotaro Takamura (1883–1956), Rokuzan Hagiwara (1879–1901), and Torajiro Kojima (1881–1929). The latter, a famous Japanese painter, collected a number of antiquities in Egypt on his way to France in 1922, and on the way back to Japan in 1923. There, they became a part of the major collection at Ohara Museum of Art and Nariwa Museum in Okayama Prefecture. A Japanese entrepreneur, Genichi Toyama (1890–1972), the founder of Nikko Securities, was a major collector of antiquities from all over the world. He collected several Egyptian antiquities, which are now part of the collection of Toyama Memorial Museum and Tokyo National Museum.

After World War II

After 1945, Professor Isamu Sugi of Tokyo University of Education (now the University of Tsukuba) began a programme in Assyriology and Egyptology and several of his students became the core scholars in Ancient Near Eastern studies in Japan. He contributed significantly to the development of this field in Japan and wrote a number of popular books in Egyptology and Assyriology.

In 1954, the first academic society for Near Eastern studies was established as the Society for the Near Eastern Studies in Japan by H.I.H. Prince Takahito Mikasa, a brother of the Emperor Hirohito, which has greatly contributed to the development of Egyptology in Japan since then. Prince Takahito Mikasa and Prof. Isamu Sugi edited the first Japanese-language corpus of key texts from the ancient near east in 1978.¹¹ His publications include *The Gods of Ancient Egypt*, a popular account of ancient Egyptian religion.¹²

Although Ancient Near Eastern studies began as a new academic field in Japan after the Second World War, it has been categorized as a part of ‘Western History’ in Japanese curricula, while the history of the same region during the Islamic period is categorized as a part of ‘Oriental

¹¹ I. Sugi and T. Mikasa, (eds.), *The Literary Works of Ancient Near East* (Tokyo, 1978) (in Japanese).

¹² T. Mikasa, *The gods of Ancient Egypt* (Tokyo, 1988).

History'. This bizarre system in Japan has created the problem that the whole history of Western Asia and North Africa cannot be understood within a single coherent framework. Also, while Japanese scholars had in the past made significant efforts to adopt academic innovations in the field from Europe and North America, it was difficult for them to produce original research results in their field due to the lack of a system for learning ancient languages such as Ancient Egyptian and Coptic within the university system.

A graduate of Kyoto University, Ichiro Kato (1921–2009) of Kansai University was one of the pioneers of Japanese Egyptology after the Second World War. He studied Egyptology through books left in the library at Kyoto University by the late Seitaro Okajima when he was an undergraduate student there. Later, Kato was granted a Fulbright scholarship to the United States in 1952, where he studied Egyptology at the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, under the guidance of Professor William F. Edgerton; Professor Edward F. Wente at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago was Kato's classmate. After his return to Japan in 1956, Kato was appointed a full-time lecturer at Kansai University and later became Professor of Egyptology there. He taught the Ancient Egyptian language to several students and published an introductory book on Egyptian hieroglyphs. He was succeeded in this position by Prof. Hiroshi Suita.

Hachishi Suzuki (1926–2010) studied Egyptology at Cairo University from 1958 to 1960 (after studying at the University of Tokyo), and remained in Cairo, working at the Japanese Embassy. While in Cairo, he participated in the UNESCO salvage campaign in Nubia, and upon returning to Japan in 1968, became Professor of Egyptology at Tokai University. He published a number of books and articles on diverse subjects, notably the history of ancient Nubia— influenced by his participation in the UNESCO salvage campaign for the monuments in Nubia before the construction of the Aswan High Dam.

Teisuke Yakata was a student of Prof. Isamu Sugi at Tokyo University of Education, and went to the University of Tokyo for his graduate studies, also studying at Cairo University. He specialised in the Amarna Period and wrote his MA thesis on the priests of the Aten at Amarna, before shifting to ancient Egyptian kingship, administration during the Eighteenth Dynasty, and study of the Abusir papyri. Following his appointment to the staff of Tokyo University of Education, he continued teaching Egyptian hieroglyphs to a number of students, which ultimately yielded new generations of young Egyptologists in Japan. He also published many books on ancient Egypt and his translation of ancient Egyptian texts into Japanese was an outstanding contribution to Japanese Egyptology. This work was part of the corpus of the texts from the ancient Near East edited by Isamu Sugi published in 1978 and his translation of Ancient Egyptian texts such as the Pyramid Texts, several works of literature, and myths have been often referenced ever since.

In 1965, an exhibition of the treasures of Tutankhamun held in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Fukuoka fostered interest in Egyptology among the wider Japanese population, with a number of Egyptian exhibitions subsequently being held in the country. The exhibition was seen by 2,930,000 visitors, the top attendance record in the history of museums in Japan. The popularity of the Tutankhamun exhibition brought about a fever for all things ancient Egyptian, triggering an Egyptomania in Japan. Together with TV documentary films, Egyptian exhibitions have continued to be very popular in Japan where, unlike most western countries, there are few Egyptian

antiquities exhibited in museums. Numerous books on ancient Egypt have been published and many English-language books on Egyptology have been translated into Japanese since the pioneering Tutankhamun exhibition. In particular, Denroku Sakai, a writer and former journalist on the *Asahi Shinbun*, played an important role in the publication of popular books. He also published a comprehensive biography of Wallis Budge, the only full-length biography ever written of him.¹³ These memorable occasions and publications for the public have inspired new generations of Japanese Egyptologists.

Japanese archaeological fieldwork in Egypt

The first Japanese archaeological project in Egypt was begun by Prof. Kiichi Kawamura and Sakuji Yoshimura of Waseda University in 1966, when they conducted a general survey of archaeological sites along the Nile valley. Yoshimura remained in Egypt, studying Egyptology at Cairo University, and made earnest efforts towards obtaining an archaeological concession for Waseda University. Ultimately, the site of Malqata South in Western Thebes was chosen for investigation, with the goal to study the origins of ancient Egyptian civilization. As with other Japanese archaeological projects in West Asia, the preferred focus of Japanese scholars was on prehistory because they believed that they could make great contributions through the application of meticulous Japanese archaeological methods and techniques.

During the winter of 1971/72, the first Japanese archaeological excavation in Egypt was thus carried out in Malqata South under the direction of Kawamura. Although the team from Waseda University intended to excavate a Predynastic site at Malqata South, also known as Deir el-Shalwit, they actually uncovered an extensive stratum of Roman settlement. In 1974, they uncovered a staircase painted with the images of foreign captives at a mound known as Kom el-Samak, about 240 metres to the north of the Isis temple of Deir el-Shalwit. Excavations at this mound yielded thousands of fragments of mural paintings, which had once decorated the walls of a building, identified by stamps on its mud-bricks as having been constructed for the *Sed*-festival of Amenhotep III. Following this discovery, it was realised that a comparative study of mural paintings was necessary to understand the character of the monument. Thus, the team began conducting a comparative study of mural paintings from the reign of Amenhotep III in the palace of Malqata and in Theban tomb-chapels. Soon after the discovery of the building at Kom el-Samak in 1978, Kawamura, director of the mission, passed away at the age of 48. His death was a great loss to the Waseda University team, but his colleagues and students, especially Prof. Sakuji Yoshimura and Prof. Jiro Kondo, who had followed his dream of establishing Egyptian archaeology in Japan, continued their fieldwork in Egypt.

From 1985 onward, the Waseda team has worked at Western Thebes, while in 1987 Yoshimura undertook geophysical work at Giza, and from 1992 Japanese efforts worked towards extracting Khufu's 'second' boat at Giza.¹⁴ From 1991, the Waseda team also worked on the summit of a prominent limestone outcrop between Abusir and Saqqara. In 1996, a joint project of Waseda and Tokai universities identified and excavated a New Kingdom cemetery at Dahshur North. In 2007, Jiro Kondo, now Professor of Egyptology at Waseda University, began working at

¹³ D. Sakai, *Wallis Budge: A story of Excavations*, (Tokyo: Libro-port, 1987).

¹⁴ Cf. S. Yoshimura and T. Nakagawa, *Waseda University Preliminary Survey of the Second Boat Pit of Khufu at Giza, Egypt*, (Tokyo, 2002) (in Japanese).

the private tombs in the Khokha area in the Theban Necropolis, a logical continuation of the research project focusing on the reign of Amenhotep III.

These vigorous fieldwork projects have enhanced the popularity of Egyptology in Japan, with work often being filmed by the media and books concerning ongoing archaeological excavations in Egypt being published. Prof. Sakuji Yoshimura founded the Institute of Egyptology at Waseda University in 2000, which annually publishes a periodical solely devoted to Egyptology in Japan, *Journal of Egyptian Studies*,¹⁵ curated the 2006–8 touring exhibition commemorating four decades of excavation by the university¹⁶ as well as an exhibition that was held at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.¹⁷

Apart from Waseda, the *Kodaigaku Kyokai* (the Palaeological Association of Japan) in Kyoto began an archaeological project in Akoris in Middle Egypt in 1981. The mission began excavating the city area to investigate the provincial city in Roman Egypt. The project was subsequently taken over in 1995 by the University of Tsukuba, led by Prof. Hiroyuki Kawanishi.¹⁸ Since then, the team has extensively excavated the area on the northern edge of the city as well as the southern slope of the conspicuous rock consisting of the settlement and tombs of the Third Intermediate and the Late Periods. The team has also investigated a large limestone quarry of the Ptolemaic period at New Minya.¹⁹

At Kharga Oasis, a mission from the Tokyo Institute of Technology began working at el-Zayyan in 2003.²⁰ They conducted an interdisciplinary investigation, including geophysical survey, environment analyses, archaeological excavation, and epigraphic documentation at the Greco-Roman temple at el-Zayyan and its vicinity.

Kansai University has been working wall paintings at the tomb of Idut at Saqqara since 2005.²¹ This is a joint project with the Faculty of Archaeology at Cairo University.

Egyptian collections in Japan

As previously mentioned, the Egyptian collections in Japan were formed mainly by acquisitions from the West before World War II, the first Egyptian mummy and coffins being provided by the Consulate of the French Embassy in Japan. They joined the collections of the University Museum at the University of Tokyo. The Hamada collection at Kyoto University, which consists of nearly 1,500 Egyptian artefacts, was donated by Flinders Petrie in return for the financial support to his excavations in Egypt by Kyoto Imperial University. Tokyo National Museum possesses several

¹⁵ As for the Institute of Egyptology at Waseda University, see <http://www.egyptpro.sci.waseda.ac.jp/index-e.html>

¹⁶ S. Yoshimura (ed.), *Sakuji Yoshimura's Excavating in Egypt for 40 years: Waseda University Expedition 1966-2006*, (Tokyo, 2006) (in Japanese).

¹⁷ S. Yoshimura, (ed.), *Excavating in Egypt for 40 years: Waseda University Expedition 1966-2006* (Tokyo, 2008).

¹⁸ Palaeological Association of Japan, *Akoris: Report of the Excavations at Akoris in Middle Egypt 1981-1992* (Kyoto, 1995).

¹⁹ For the Akoris Project, see <http://akoris.jp/index.html>

²⁰ H. Kamei and K. Kogawa, *El-Zayyan 2003-2006*, (Tokyo, 2007); H. Kamei and T. Nakano, *El-Zayyan 2007-2010*, (Tokyo, 2010).

²¹ H. Suita, A. Akarish, T. Nishiura, A. Shoaib, and F. Yoneda, 'The Restoration Project of the Burial Chamber of the Tomb of Idout at Saqqara', in J.C. Goyon and C. Cardin (eds), *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Egyptologists - Actes du Neuvième Congrès International des Égyptologues: Grenoble, 6-12 Septembre 2004* (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 1741–48.

Egyptian antiquities, including a mummy of Pasherientah gifted in 1904 by Gaston Maspero, Director of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, as well as some objects from Petrie's excavation originally given to the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania in exchange for Japanese artefacts. Other collections were formed through the purchase of artefacts in Egypt by entrepreneurs, traders, scholars, travellers, and painters.

Although the number of Egyptian antiquities in Japan is relatively minor compared to those in Europe and the USA, the Miho Museum has an outstanding Egyptian collection and some items have been lent to international exhibitions.²² The collection was acquired by the Shumei Family, a religious organisation based in Japan, which has collected antiquities for several years. It includes a silver statue of a falcon god, a blue glass head of Amenhotep III, a life-size statue of Queen Arsinoe II, and Middle Kingdom private statues.²³ The Ancient Egyptian Museum Shibuya Tokyo was founded in Tokyo in 2003,²⁴ consisting of the private collection of Takeshi Kikugawa and provides yet another opportunity for the public to become familiar with ancient Egyptian artefacts in the centre of Tokyo. The museum possesses nearly 1,000 artefacts, including a Predynastic palette with the sign of Scorpion, a head of Amenhotep III, and a column with the name of Ptolemy II. In 2010, Tokai University received a bequest of Egyptian antiquities owned by Hachishi Suzuki, numbering nearly 6,000 artefacts—the largest Egyptian collection in Japan. He collected these artefacts while living in Egypt between 1958 and 1968. This collection has now been utilised for archaeological and conservation studies by Prof. Kyoko Yamahana, Prof. Suzuki's successor.²⁵ It is hoped that the Egyptian collections in Japan will become more accessible to the researchers in the rest of the world.

Conclusion

The academic discipline of Egyptology was introduced in the early twentieth century in Japan, accomplished mainly through the translation of books from the West. Although an Egyptian collection was acquired through Petrie by Kyoto University, it was never used for educational purposes due to the lack of expertise in Egyptian archaeology before the World War II. The situation changed after the Second World War when Japanese scholars began to excavate at several archaeological sites in Egypt and produce successful results. New generations of scholars have become interested and involved in Egyptological research; however, there are no university programmes in Japan focused entirely on Egyptology. The discipline is taught either as part of an archaeology or a western history curriculum. Thus, there are few universities where students can study Egyptology: these include Waseda, Tokai, Kansai, Kinki, Chubu, Komazawa, and Kanazawa universities.

²² Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Ancient Art from Shumei Family Collection* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996).

²³ For the website of the Miho Museum, see <http://www.miho.or.jp/english/index.htm>

²⁴ J. Kondo, M. Oshiro, M and T. Kikugawa, *The Gateway to Ancient Egypt through Kikugawa Egyptian Collection in Japan* (Tokyo, 2004) (in Japanese). For the website of the Ancient Egyptian Museum Shibuya Tokyo, <http://www.egyptian.jp/greeting.html>

²⁵ K. Yamahana (ed.), *Eternal Nile: Pharaohs and People of Ancient Egypt. Tokai University Collection*, (Tokyo: Tokai University Press, 2015); R. Jasnow, J.G. Manning, K. Yamahana, and M. Krutzsch, *The Demotic and Hieratic Papyri in the Suzuki Collection of Tokai University, Japan* (Atlanta, 2016). For the website of their Papyrus project, see <http://papyrus.pr.tokai.ac.jp/english.html>

There are also some scholars working in Japanese Egyptology who have a background in architectural history, art history, and linguistics. Owing to the lack of resources in Japan, many students or junior scholars study abroad, some at Cairo University, others in Europe and North America. Japanese scholars have made earnest efforts to absorb research results from these foreign institutions and it is now expected that Japanese Egyptologists should contribute more of their own research to the world. Not only should these contributions be the results obtained from fieldwork conducted by Japanese archaeological missions, but also the presentation of ideas and scholarship developed from a specifically Japanese point of view, based on their own philosophy and religion, thus producing something different from the western approaches ultimately based on the Judeo-Christian world-view.