

Exploring the Political Organization of Kofun Period Japan



Danielle Forsyth

Honors Thesis in the Department of Anthropology
and The Museum of Anthropology
University of Michigan
April 2009

Acknowledgements

Writing an honors thesis, while probably one of my most difficult academic challenges, has also been one of the most rewarding experiences I've had at this university. However, this would not be the case without all of those who helped me to the completion of this project. I would first like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Carla Sinopoli for guiding me through the entire process and for helping me through the complex issues of state formation and standardization. I would also like to thank Dr. Lisa Young for assisting in improving the structure of this paper and for pointing me in productive directions. I am extremely grateful to Tsuguhito Tanaka, who patiently helped me through all of my translation work and helped me attack the technical Japanese that we encountered. Thank you to Dr. Gina Barnes, who took the time out of her short trip to Ann Arbor to meet with me and discuss the Niike collection. Thanks to Dr. William Wayne Farris for his encouragement and taking the time to correspond with me over email. Additionally, I want to thank my friends and family, who supported me through this process and always had a word of encouragement in moments of frustration. And to my fellow honors students, thank you for helping me with my revisions, offering support, and teaching me how to use software that has helped to enhance this thesis.

Abstract

Scholars of Japanese archaeology have proposed a broad spectrum of political organizations for the Kofun period (250-645 CE), from a fully unified government to decentralized tribal confederacies. To examine this question of political unification, many researchers tend to focus on a narrow scope of data, often using only one line of evidence, mainly patterns occurring in the largest keyhole shaped tombs.

Taking into consideration the influence of China and Korea on Japanese state formation and the *kofun* tradition, this research takes a broader perspective and examines not only the spatial distribution of the mounds, but also the objects found within these tombs. Instead of focusing on the keyhole shaped *kofun* only, this study analyzes patterning within square and circular shaped mounds as well. Standardization in ceramic form is used to examine the organization of production, which in turn has implications for political structure.

Table of Contents

Introduction	6
<i>The Definition of a State</i>	8
<i>Introduction to the Practice of Mounded Tomb Building in Japan</i>	10
Previous Research in State Formation	11
<i>Traditional Methods for Identifying a State in the Archaeological Record</i>	11
<i>Alternative Methods for State Identification</i>	13
Japanese State Formation	15
<i>Arguments for Pre Kofun Unification</i>	15
<i>Arguments for Middle Kofun Period Unification</i>	17
<i>Arguments for Late Kofun Period Unification</i>	18
<i>Summary</i>	20
Introduction to Kofun Data Analysis	21
<i>The Challenges of Mortuary Analysis</i>	21
<i>Japanese Kofun in a Broader East Asian Context</i>	23
<i>Common Kofun Period Burial Artifacts</i>	24
<i>Ceramics—Hajiki and Sueki</i>	24
<i>Iron and Bronze Objects</i>	26
<i>Haniwa</i>	27
<i>Magatama</i>	29
Introduction to the Kofun Used in this Study	30
<i>The Niike Kofun</i>	31
<i>Shintoku Kofun-gun</i>	34
Standardization Analysis of Objects in <i>Kofun</i>	38
<i>Implications of Standardization</i>	39
<i>Limiting Factors on the Data</i>	40
<i>Lidded Bowl Comparison and Analysis</i>	42
Kofun Distribution Maps	46
Discussion	52
<i>Future Directions for Understanding Kofun Political Structure</i>	53
<i>Contributions to Anthropology</i>	54
Appendix	56
References Cited	57

List of Tables

Table 1: Contents of Niike <i>Kofun</i>	31
Table 2: Contents of Shintoku 1 <i>Kofun</i>	37
Table 3: Contents of Shintoku 2 <i>Kofun</i>	38
Table 4: Standardization Calculations for Diameter	43
Table 5: Standardization Calculations for Height	44

List of Figures

Figure 1a: Satellite Image of Daisen Kofun	9
Figure 1b: Satellite Image of Michigan Stadium	9
Figure 2a: 5th Century <i>Sue</i> Ware Bowl	25
Figure 2b: Basic Shapes of <i>Haji</i> Ware	25
Figure 3a: Bronze Mirror Interred in Kofun Period Tomb	27
Figure 3b: Niike <i>kofun</i> Iron Tool	27
Figure 4a: <i>Haniwa</i> Figure of Man in Armor	28
Figure 4b: <i>Haniwa</i> Fragments from Niike Tomb	28
Figure 5: <i>Magatama</i> Beads	29
Figure 6: Site Map of Niike and Shintoku Kofun-gun	30
Figure 7a: Jar with Hole Near Bottom from Niike <i>kofun</i>	33
Figure 7b: Pedestalled Bowl with Triangular slits from Niike <i>kofun</i>	33
Figure 7c: Barrel Shaped Jar with Flat End from Niike <i>kofun</i>	33
Figure 8: Corrosion of Iron Objects in Niike <i>kofun</i>	34
Figure 9: Site Map of Shintoku 1 and 2	36
Figure 10: Evidence for Warping of Lidded Bowls	45
Figure 11: Kidder <i>Kofun</i> Distribution Map	47
Figure 12: Imamura <i>Kofun</i> Distribution Map	49

Introduction

In 712 CE and once again in 720 CE, the oral history of Japan was first recorded as a written document, bringing Japan into the historical era (Mizoguchi 2002). These two documents, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*, have had an enormous influence upon how Japanese people have seen their history both in the past and today. According to these records, Japan became a unified nation beginning in 660 BCE (Isobe 1955). However little, if any, supporting evidence that Jomon period Japan was under the control of a state has been found in the archaeological record. Since these documents were written in order to legitimize the reign of the 8th century CE Imperial Family, many Japanese scholars agree that certain aspects, such as the timing and extent of political unification, are exaggerated (Mizoguchi 2002). However, despite the recognition of the potential for biases in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, the claims these documents make for the early unification of Japan continues to influence interpretations of Japanese prehistory.

The far-reaching influence of Japan's first historical records has had a powerful impact on the study of the political unity of Japan, and is part of the reason why the political unity of Japan during the Kofun period (250 CE to 645 CE) is an issue that archaeologists still passionately debate today (Farris 1998). The drastic changes that took place in the preceding Yayoi period (300 BCE to 250 CE) and into the Kofun period are

often interpreted by archaeologists as the development of a state that united the country under a single political system¹ (Mizoguchi 2001, Pearson 1990). Social hierarchy was already apparent in Yayoi graveyards where some individuals were buried in graves containing few artifacts while others were buried in separate “compound-type cemeteries” where the central individual in the graveyard was interred with rich cache of artifacts (Mizoguchi 2001). By the end of the Yayoi period, wet rice farming was also established, allowing for agricultural intensification and dramatic population growth (Imamura 1996). Starting in the Kofun period, large cooperative projects were common, requiring community members to construct enormous mounded tombs, which were as large as several hundred meters in length and width (Kidder 1959). These mounds, called 古墳、 or *kofun*, date back to the beginning of the eponymous Kofun period. The word refers to every style of mounded burial tomb, regardless of shape and size, and is also a reference to the practice itself (Yoshiro 1986). Okauchi (1986) argues that only a unified central government could organize such labor-intensive projects, and therefore used the *kofun* as a source for his argument in favor of early political unification of Japan.

In this paper, I also use Kofun period burial evidence to investigate the political organization of Japan during this time period in order to explore whether or not Japan was politically unified as historical documents claim. Making inferences about the political structure of Japan during this period has important implications for the origins of the Japanese state and on the interpretation of Japanese texts. Specifically, this study compares information from published excavated tombs with information from a collection in the Asian Division of the Museum of Anthropology at the University of

¹ The ancient Japanese state was slightly different from the modern day state in terms of geographical area since the islands of Okinawa and Hokkaido did not become a part of the country until historical times (Imamura 1996).

Michigan. Instead of focusing on large keyhole shaped tombs only, this study includes the full range of *kofun* from the Middle to Late Kofun periods and examines data from within individual tombs, including ceramics, iron and bronze objects, *haniwa*², and *magatama*³. By examining changes occurring in the overall distribution of the *kofun*, and standardization of ceramics in individual tombs, this research examines patterns in the archaeological record that could indicate a shift to a nation with a single political identity.

Introduction to the Mounded Tomb Building Practice in Japan

In order to analyze later arguments based on *kofun* burial evidence, the nature and background of the mounded tomb building practice in Japan should first be explained. As previously mentioned, these tombs have a broad range of sizes and shapes, and each type of mounded burial tomb has its own name based on these characteristics. The best known style, called the *zenpoken kofun*, or 前方後円墳, is the large keyhole type often associated with the Kofun period (Vargo 1982). Some of these keyhole shaped tombs were enormous in size. The largest according to Kidder (1959) is the supposed tomb of emperor Nintoku, which stretched 485 m in length and 286 m in width (see *Figure 1a & b*). However, less pronounced square and circular shaped mounds are also referred to as *kofun*. Collectively, these round, square, and keyhole shaped mounds are source of the name for the Kofun period, since they are such a prominent feature of the time.

² Ceramic figurines that were typically placed on top of *kofun* (Kidder 1959)

³ Curved beads associated with religious significance (Kidder 1959)

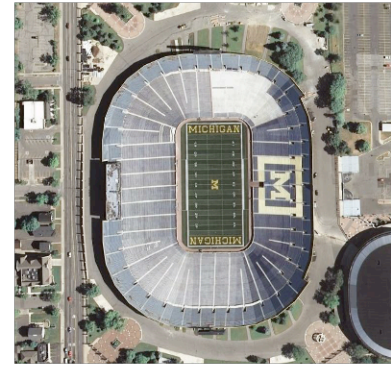


Figure 1a (left)—Emperor Nintkou's Tomb, also called Daisen Kofun (Google Earth 2009)

Figure 1b (right)—University of Michigan's Michigan Stadium on the same scale (Google Earth 2009)

The prototype for *kofun*, called the *funkyubu*, or 墳丘部, actually appeared in the archaeological record late in the Yayoi period and was likely an imitation of its Chinese and Korean counterparts (Imamura 1996). These first *kofun* were relatively small, circular mounds and contained only a fraction of the usual assortment of Kofun period grave goods. In Japan, *kofun* remained relatively small and basic in design until the 4th century, when the large keyhole shape appears suddenly (Barnes 1999). These large *kofun* have been associated with emperors from the *Kojiki* or the *Nihon Shoki*, but these associations are not completely reliable, again due to the questionable dates in the two historical documents (Mizoguchi 2002).

The Definition of a State

In order to evaluate whether Kofun period Japan was a state society, we must first define what we mean by state. For the purpose of this study, I have decided to use the more traditional definitions of a state and political unity. The phrase “political unity” could imply a number of systems, ranging from a confederacy of individual entities that nonetheless share a cohesive political system, to a monarchy where a leader exerts absolute control. However, for this study, political unity is used to describe the political structure of a state, with the term state defined as “a society with (minimally) two-class endogamous strata (a professional ruling class and a commoner class) and a government that was both highly centralized and internally specialized” (Feinman and Marcus 1998:4-5). In general, ancient states had more power than previous ranked societies and were able to enforce taxation, organize an army, regulate workers, and control information (Feinman and Marcus 1998).

Additionally, there has also been a distinction made between primary and secondary states. Primary states are those that develop on their own, without influences from extant states to act as models or social networks (Barnes 1999). Secondary states are those that “arise in situations of contact with already extant and operating states” (Barnes 1999:241). Therefore, secondary states can rely on already existing states for models of government organization and those in charge are able to forge relationships with members of foreign courts, thereby solidifying their own position in the elite sphere (Barnes 1999). Before turning to Japan as a case of secondary state formation, I provide some general definitions of states below.

Previous Research on State Formation

V. Gordon Childe (1950) is among those who argued that a state may be identified by a list of characteristics ranging from taxation to dense populations.⁴ However, this can be problematic since not every state has every characteristic on the list of requirements. One way of detecting a state in the archaeological record, Henry Wright (1977) argues, is to examine the internal and external specialization, as a way to detect political organization in the form of a state, while Flannery (1998) argues that trait lists can still be used with caution. When it comes to the study of Japanese political organization, many scholars have relied on both traditional trait list approaches (Imamura 1990), while others tend to lean towards less traditional ways of defining a state (Barnes 1999).

Traditional Methods for Identifying a State in the Archaeological Record

For many who study political organization in the past, Childe's (1950) article, *The Urban Revolution*, has been a crucial resource for determining whether or not a certain area was in fact a state. Childe explained that the concept of state is "notoriously hard to define" (1950:12). He argues that the way to define a state is by whether or not the area has certain characteristics that can be condensed into a ten-item list (Childe 1950):

⁴ The work of the researchers in this section focuses on identifying primary states in the archaeological record but can also be applied to identifying secondary states since states, once formed, will leave the same archaeological footprint. However, the process of secondary state formation is different from primary state formation and tends to be much faster since secondary states already have models for political structure and can establish connections with elites in extant states (Barnes 1999).

1. Large, dense population
2. Two separate social ranks, peasants and elites
3. Surplus was paid as tax to state
4. Monumental public works and a king as a leader
5. Ruling class consumes surplus and does not participate in physical labor
6. A system of writing as a method of recording
7. Calendrical and mathematical sciences
8. Full time artists who use sophisticated styles
9. Regulation of long distance trade
10. Social organization based not on kinship ties, but on residence

Childe's framework contains many features that most scholars would recognize as essential features of state societies. However, the problem with this approach lies in the fact that not every state has all ten of these characteristics, and categorizing an area that is missing just one or two characteristics can be challenging (Sinopoli, Personal Conversation). Furthermore, it may be extremely difficult to determine whether or not a certain area in fact did display a specific characteristic. In the case of early Japan, the area was missing at least one of Childe's characteristics since it did not have its own system of writing. While there are Chinese inscriptions on swords, it seems that these were gifts from Chinese powers and additional evidence of a writing system is quite scarce (Anazawa and Manome 1986). Considering these issues, some like Wright (1977) have suggested alternative ways of identifying a state other than relying on a list of requirements and others like Flannery (1998) have pushed for a different interpretation of trait lists.

Alternative Methods for State Identification

In 1977 Henry Wright suggested that the study of the early state should move away from trait lists, and instead develop methods of state identification that focus on alternative ways of assessing whether or not an area was operating under a state government. For Wright, the main differentiation between states and previous chiefdoms involves internal and external specialization of decision-making structures (1977). Chiefdoms tend to be externally specialized such that “central decision-making activity is differentiated from, though it ultimately regulates, decision-making regarding local production and local social processes” (Wright 1977:381) Therefore, in a chiefdom, local decision makers have the ability to act on their own, though do not necessarily do so.

In contrast, states have both internal and external specialization, with a “centralized decision-making process which is both externally specialized in that the central process is divisible into separate activities which can be performed in different places at different times” (Wright 1977:383). In other words, the organization of the state is highly segmented and has many levels of hierarchy that information must pass through in order for decisions to be made, creating a system of checks and balances that renders independent action increasingly more difficult. Of course, the best evidence for this hierarchy would be found in some form of record keeping, evidence Wright located in his own research on Greater Mesopotamia in the form of clay tablets (1977:386). Additionally, shifts in hierarchy could also be detected in changing patterns for redistribution of goods, collapsing chiefdoms, or changing regulation on various goods (Wright 1977).

However, as Flannery's (1998) work with settlement patterns suggests, research in the years after Childe published *The Urban Revolution* has not completely voided his efforts. Flannery, like Childe, also looks for characteristics in the archaeological record, suggesting that there is a "need for a set of clues by which archaic states can be identified on the basis of archaeological data" (1998:15). Though he disagrees with Childe on exactly what that list should be, Flannery suggests that these characteristics could be used more as "clues" than as rules for assessing state level societies (Flannery 1997). Therefore, this idea could also be applied to Childe's work as well, suggesting that these characteristics be used more as general guidelines than absolutes.

The purpose of this section is not to provide an exhaustive overview of all methods of state identification, but instead is meant to introduce some ways in which states have previously been identified. While Flannery (1998) suggests that trait lists can still be helpful, he warns that they should be viewed more as potential signs of state level societies. This is relevant to the study of Kofun political organization, since some like Imamura (1996) use traits from Childe's list to imply the existence of a state. While these traits can be used to imply states, the existence of particular traits does not guarantee a state level society and conversely, the lack of traits from a list do not necessarily mean that a state was not in operation. Therefore additional lines of evidence should be used in order to assess the political organization of both the Japanese state and any other state.

Japanese State Formation

Many scholars, both Japanese and non-Japanese, have researched and written about the political unity of Japan during the Kofun period (Imamura 1996; Tsuide 1990; Barnes 1999; Karoku 1990; Kondo and Yoshida, as described in Tsuide 1990; Okauchi 1986). Much of the evidence for these arguments focus on the size, shape, and distribution of the *kofun*, especially the larger keyhole shaped tombs. There is a wide range of hypotheses, but most arguments can be grouped into three basic categories:

1. Japan was politically unified by the end of the Yayoi period, just before the beginning of the Kofun period and was a united political entity throughout the Kofun period (Imamura 1996; Tsuide 1990).
2. Political unification occurred in the Middle Kofun, which corresponds to the 5th century CE (Barnes 1999; Karoku 1990).
3. Japan did not achieve political unity until the Late Kofun, in the 6th or 7th centuries CE, or was a tribal confederacy for most of the period (Okauchi 1986; Kondo and Yoshida, as described in Tsuide 1990).

Arguments for Pre Kofun Unification

Tsuide (1990), like others who argue for the early political unification of Japan, supports his claim through the analysis of *kofun* shape and spatial distribution data. Tsuide postulated that a central court was placing regulations on mound construction so that only chiefs with the closest political ties to the central authority could be buried in the prestigious keyhole style *kofun* (1990). His main evidence came from a pattern he noted at a number of sites in the Kyoto Prefecture and a few other sites in the Tokyo Prefecture (Tsuide 1990). Specifically, he observed that different *kofun* clusters within a

site exclusively used the keyhole shaped tomb for certain periods of time. He concluded that when the exclusive keyhole shaped tomb switched from one *kofun* cluster to another one in the site, there was a change in leadership at the state level and that the family closest to those in power were granted the exclusive right to use the keyhole shaped *kofun* (Tsuide 1990:928-929). However, like other archaeologists who argue for early unification, Tsuide likely used dates for changes in leadership from Japanese historical records, where timing was often exaggerated (Tsuide 1990). In addition, Tsuide also did not show how far reaching this “widespread phenomenon” actually was (Tsuide 1990:928). The pattern only occurred in sites in a single prefecture and some sites near Tokyo that Tsuide specifically noted because they displayed the same pattern (1990). However, If Japan had really been politically unified at the time, then there should be a great number of widely dispersed sites that showed a similar pattern, not just a few sites in the same area and one Tsuide specifically chose because it displayed a similar patterning.

Other archaeologists who argue for early political unification look beyond the *kofun* for data to support their claims. For example, Imamura (1996) focused on changes taking place during the Yayoi time period, emphasizing that these changes were usually associated with the formation of a state. For example, he indicated that the trade networks established by late Yayoi could only have been founded by a “strong and super-ordinate power” (Imamura 1996:185). Imamura brought up an important point, considering that the control of trade has been viewed as an important factor in state formation (Arnason 1996; Childe 1950). However, this does not necessarily mean that Japan was politically unified at the time, since contemporary Chinese records claim that ancient Japan, or *Wa*,

was still divided into 100 nations, and it is possible that various tribes established independent trade relations with China and Korea (Imamura 1996:185). Imamura also listed the “invasion” that Japan carried out in the 4th century on Korea among impressive feats that would normally be carried out under a central government (Imamura 1996:187). However, like other archaeologists who argue for early unification, Imamura mostly cited evidence from the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*. Even his other line of evidence is questionable since it came from a monument erected in Korea, which most believe was fraudulent (Farris 1998). If Japan was really politically unified by the beginning of the Kofun, then archaeologists should be able to cite considerable evidence in the archaeological record of developments, such as settlement hierarchy, administrative artifacts, and the standardization of objects and redistribution of goods.

Arguments for Middle Kofun Unification

In contrast to the early model of unification, a second group of scholars argue that Japan was united as a single political entity in the Middle Kofun period (Barnes 1999; Karoku 1990). Gina Barnes (1999) argued for middle Kofun political unification of Japan, citing evidence from Japan’s archaeological record and reinforcing these ideas with references from written records from China and Korea. Barnes argued that Yamato state power did not develop until the 5th century and even then, was probably only limited to areas surrounding the capital at first, explaining that the practice of building mounds should not be seen as an index of the power of a unified state, but rather of a “cultural phenomenon” (Barnes 1999:245). This would mean that if, the Yamato began a limited rule in the 5th century, then sites within the Nara prefecture should reflect unification,

while sites further away from Nara prefecture likely remained independent of the burgeoning Yamato state.

Other authors made subtle statements that suggested middle Kofun unification while analyzing specific aspects of the Kofun period. Miwa Karoku (1990) implicitly argued for the middle unification of Japan, even though the purpose of her article was to describe Kofun period ceramics. When Karoku described the manufacturing techniques of one of the ceramic wares in the Kofun period, she stated that Korean craftsmen who immigrated to Japan to produce these ceramics in the 5th century were subjected to the “international policy of the Yamato polity” and that their trade was tightly regimented by the “state” (1990:53). However, while standardization can be a strong indication of a state level government, standardization itself does not necessarily imply the existence of a state (Sinopoli 1991).

Arguments for Late Kofun Period Unification

A third group of scholars argue that Japan was actually not unified until the Late Kofun period. Yoshida and Kondo (as described in Tsuide 1990:934) support a less traditional view of the political unification of Japan, arguing that Japan was actually a tribal confederacy, or *bunzoku rengou*, throughout most of the Kofun period and was not unified until late in the period. They claim that the changes in the distribution of *kofun* among local lineages throughout time was due to rotations in “chiefly authority” among the chiefs in the tribal alliance (Yoshida and Kondo as described in Tsuide 1990: 924). This would mean that changes in the main location of keyhole shaped tombs would represent a shift in power from one chief in the alliance to the next. If the organization

was actually a tribal confederacy, however, then there should not be an identifiable imprint of a state among various lines of evidence outside of the shape and distribution of large keyhole shaped *kofun*.

Wada (1986) also made a strong case for the late unification of Japan, although somewhat inadvertently. He analyzed the distribution and type of stone coffins and found that after the 6th century, the distribution of Southern Yamato type coffins spread throughout much of Japan and the coffins themselves became increasingly standardized (Wada 1986). However, he claimed that Japan was unified throughout the period and the changes reflected the Taika Reform in 645 CE described in Japan's first written records, where house shaped coffins became the "official" shape permitted by the government (Wada 1986:363). While this trend could actually reflect a change in the law of the state, a sudden shift toward standardization would seem to strongly indicate that a state is taking power. If the state had actually declared that coffin shapes needed to conform to a new state law, then coffins throughout Japan should reflect this trend. If such a state was in place before this "reform" then earlier coffins should also reflect some regimentation by the state as well.

While Mitsuzane Okauchi (1986) argued for early political unification by comparing Kofun period Japan with the mounded tomb-building periods of China and Korea, his argument actually made a more persuasive claim for Late Kofun unification. The enormous tombs of the late 4th entire 5th century CE, the author argued, "expressed the burial concepts of a society that had first reached a peak of development after political unification" (Okauchi 1986:145). In his analysis of other mounded tomb practices in East Asia, Okauchi stated that mounds became larger in China during the

period of the Warring States and quickly declined in an ancient subdivision of Korea called Silla after political unification (1986:128-141). This relationship between political organization and the practice of using mounded tombs would suggest that mounds were used during times of conflict to establish or display power, and not used by those who already had despotic power, as Okauchi claimed (1986).

Summary

All of these viewpoints illustrate that making inferences about the political structure of Japan during the Kofun period is a complicated undertaking. The fact that each scholar tends to have a slightly different hypothesis concerning the political structure illustrates that the structure itself could have fallen under a wide spectrum of classifications, further complicating the issue. One thing, however is certain: in order to make a convincing argument, a hypothesis on the political unification of Japan must be backed up by multiple lines of evidence. It is not enough, to argue, as Wada (1986) did, that the types of coffins alone can determine whether or not Japan was a unified country. An approach that combines an analysis on trends taking place in specific sites, such as the study on Kofun distribution done by Tsuide (1990), and Wada's (1986) study that examines the trends taking place throughout Japan, would be ideal. It is also not convincing enough to argue for unification from traits from Childe's list as Imamura (1996) did; these arguments should include actual evidence from the archaeological record as well. As Barnes (1999) suggested, it may also be useful to examine trends taking place in China and Korea during before and during the time period, since Japan

did not develop in a cultural seal and imported many ideas and practices from its two closest neighbors.

Introduction to *Kofun* Data Analysis

For my research, I have decided to include multiple lines of evidence that compare trends occurring in single graves and examine more general patterns occurring throughout Japan. However, before I launch into this investigation, a background to the challenges of mortuary data will be presented, and some general information on the types of *kofun* and their associated artifacts so that the reader can become more familiar with the challenges involved with utilizing mortuary data and also become familiar with other factors that are important in this analysis.

The Challenges of Mortuary Analysis

In this study, data was compared from various burial mounds in order to examine the political structure of Kofun period Japan. However, it should be acknowledged that drawing meaning from burials can be a somewhat controversial undertaking (e.g. Harke 1997; Drennan 2001; O'Shea 1984). The issue stems not from whether burial data contains social meaning, but on what kind of social meaning this type of data actually contains and how to interpret that from the archaeological record (Harke 1997). Since burial data is often purposely modified, rigorous interpretation can present a challenge for archaeologists, who have to determine the relationship between what is left in the

archaeological record, the actions that produced it, and the implications for the drawing conclusions about the deceased individual (Harke 1997).

Archaeologists therefore have proposed different methods for deriving meaning from burial data in the archaeological record. Christlein (as described in Harke 1997) hypothesized that burial data could only accurately reflect the economic status of the deceased or his or her family, but this method would still assume that burial goods are a direct reflection of the past in some way. In contrast, Harke suggested that grave goods don't necessarily reflect the social status of the individual, but instead inform on the claims that the people who buried the dead made concerning that individual's belongings or status (1997). Thus, he argued that the burial data archaeologists work with are more accurately reflect social ties between the deceased and those who buried this individual. However, compounding this issue is the fact that those who bury the dead may modify burial offerings and contexts in ways that may make the burial reflect a higher or lower ranking than the individual actually held (Allard 2001:2-3). In addition, religious beliefs and practices can also heavily influence the kinds of materials left in burials (Allard 2001).

Burial data, which for the purpose of this study includes grave goods and inhumations, is just like any other archaeological data—fragmentary and partial in nature (Harke, 1997). Archaeologists cannot assume that preserved burials are necessarily representative of the full range of mortuary or social variability from a certain time period or area. However, if sizeable samples are taken from a large number of areas, archaeologists are more likely to have a more representative sample of the major trends in a specific area during a specific time (Drennan 2001). Furthermore, Drennan stressed the

importance of comparative studies, stating that “comparison of several sorts certainly form the basis of using burial evidence to make social reconstructions for prehistoric or protohistoric periods” (2001:221). Therefore, it is crucial that any study on burial data includes a comparison between multiple sets of data in order to get the best sample possible and for this reason several burials from different areas are compared in this analysis.

Japanese Kofun in a Broader East Asian Context

Similar to the formation of the Japanese state, mounded tomb building in Japan did not develop in cultural isolation; in fact, the practice of mounded tomb construction in East Asia originated in China, spread to Korea, and then from Korea diffused to Japan (Okauchi 1986). Evidence for this influence can be found in various aspects of the *kofun* tradition. First, the timing of the introduction of *kofun* in Japan points to interactions with Korea since the various kingdoms in Korea also had mounded tomb building periods that were almost contemporary to the Japanese Kofun period (Okauchi 1986). Second, construction techniques of the *kofun* in Japan and Korea are also similar, with the best example being the stone corridor style tomb that appeared in Japan shortly after it was first used in Korea (Wada 1987). Finally, the ceramics interred in the graves, especially after the 5th century in Japan, are also very similar. In particular, the ceramics are strikingly similar in shape and material, likely due to the fact that one of the major burial ceramic wares in Japan was borrowed from Korea (Karoku 1990). Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that Chinese and Korean traditions influenced the practice of *kofun* construction in Japan. This is not to say that the political or cultural implications

for the *kofun* in Japan were the same as in Korea or China since cultures often adapt a new practice to best fit their own system. However, when examining the *kofun* tradition in Japan, it is important to note that the tradition is not native to Japan, but is a reflection of Korean and Chinese influence.

Common Kofun Period Burial Artifacts

In this section, I summarize the main types of artifacts found in Kofun period tombs, from ceramics to jewelry to iron objects. This is not meant as an exhaustive list of all possible artifacts that can be found in *kofun*; instead its purpose is to introduce readers to the artifacts recovered from the *kofun* in this study and to give readers an idea of what types of artifacts are frequently found in Kofun period tombs.

Ceramics—Hajiki and Sueki

During the Kofun period, two major ceramic wares were included in burial assemblages. Jenyns (1971) describes the first of the two wares is called *Haji* ware, or 土師器、which is considered to be a continuation of earlier Yayoi earthenware (see *Figure 2b*). *Haji* ware generally appears in simple shapes without decoration, with occasional scratching on the surface (Jenyns 1971). This pottery was made by a coiling technique and is highly friable, and is usually red or orange in color. *Haji* ware seems to have been used mostly for everyday purposes like cooking, but Jenyns (1971:39) suggests that *Haji* ware may have also been occasionally used for ceremonial purposes, due to the discovery of a *Haji* ware vase in the shape of a human head. *Haji* ware appears in graves alongside *Sue* ware in a large number of mounded tombs, and remained popular until around the 8th century (Jenyns 1971).

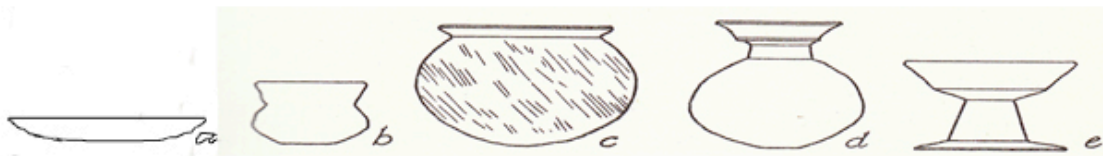


Figure 2a—(Top) Sue stoneware, 5th century at top (Personal Photograph)

Figure 2b—(Bottom) Basic Haji ware shapes at bottom (Kidder 1959:189)

The second prominent Kofun ceramic ware was a stoneware called *Sue* ware, or 須恵器、 and is believed to have been introduced to Japan in the early 5th century by Korean immigrants (Karoku 1990). Kidder (1991) writes that *Sue* ware has a characteristic blue grey or grey color and was fired at much higher temperatures than the *Haji* wares (*Figure 2a*). The introduction of this ware also marks the introduction of wheel made pottery, but many vessels, such as large bowls and urns, continued to be constructed by either coiling and paddle or anvil techniques (Karoku 1991). Smaller less intricate items like bowls were much more efficient to make using wheel technology and were therefore mostly manufactured on a wheel (Karoku 1991:53). *Sue* ware was made in a variety of shapes and sizes, but most fall into three main categories (Karoku 1991:54-55):

- 1.) Solid food vessels, including bowls, plates, and pedestalled bowls
- 2.) Liquid containers such as bottles, small jars, and wine servers
- 3.) Pots and jars used for storing water or wine.

The original production and distribution center of *Sue* ware was located in Suemura (lit. *Sue* ware village), located in Osaka city, which had over 600 kilns and continued to be the center of production for *Sue* ware until the eleventh century (Kidder 1991:41-42).

Iron and Bronze Objects

Bronze and iron objects were introduced to Japan at roughly the same time, along with wet rice farming, in the early Yayoi period, although each metal played a different role in ancient Japan (Imamura 1996). Imamura (1996:168) states that iron was mainly used to make agricultural tools and completely replaced stone tools by the end of the Yayoi⁵ (see *Figure 3b*). Iron was a resource that was wholly imported from the mainland, a claim that is well supported since no domestic smelting sites have ever been found in Japan (Imamura 1996:169). This metal was mostly associated with practical items, such as weapons and agricultural tools, and did not necessarily have a religious significance by itself; however it was used to construct important goods such as swords and was highly valued by Japanese people, who utilized iron as a form of currency (Imamura 1996:168-169).

⁵ This occurred everywhere but the northern Tohoku and Hokkaido regions, where a cold climate did not allow for wet rice farming, and hunting and gathering remained the main food procurement system (Imamura 1996).



Figure 3a (left)— Bronze mirror (Kidder 1964:3)

Figure 3b (right)—Iron tool from Niike tomb, at right (Personal Photograph)

Bronze played slightly a different role in prehistoric Japan, as it was mainly a religious item and prestige good, and was not used for everyday purposes like iron (Imamura 1996). Instead, bronze became important for religious objects when it was introduced in the Yayoi period, since it was used to make *dotaku*, large bronze bells that became cult objects (Imamura 1996:171-172). Bronze continued to be an important prestige good in the Kofun period, when Han dynasty mirrors that had been handed down for generations were buried inside *kofun* (Figure 3a). There is evidence that Japanese craftsmen were able to work bronze, and were making bronze objects beginning in the Yayoi period, a claim supported by evidence for molds of large *dotaku* (Imamura 1996:173-174).

Haniwa

Haniwa are ceramic figures that were often placed on top of the mounded tombs. There were a wide variety of sizes and shapes, ranging from tall cylinders to miniaturized models of houses, people, and animals (Kidder 1991). According to the *Nihon Shoki*,

prior to *haniwa*, actual human sacrifices were buried up to their necks along the edges of the mound and left to die (Kidder 1991). However this practice was discontinued after the death of one of the emperor's brothers. In this case, the human sacrifices buried around the edges of the brother's tomb suffered an especially long and gruesome death, causing citizens a great deal of discomfort and resulted in a change in policy that replaced human sacrifices with clay figures (Kidder 1991:44). However, skeletal evidence for human sacrifice in *kofun* is almost nonexistent, and thus archaeologists mainly believe the practice actually evolved from earlier traditions of placing ceramics vessels on top of clay cylinders (Kidder 1991:44). Kidder (1991) states that when the tradition first appeared, the objects were fired in *Haji* ware kilns, but after *Sue* ware was brought to Japan, some *haniwa* were fired in *Sue* ware kilns, and as a result, tended to more closely resemble the blue grey *Sue* ware colors (Figure 4a & b).



Figure 4a (left)—*Sue* ware *Haniwa* figure of a man wearing armor, Gumma Prefecture (Kidder1964: 35)

Figure 4b (right)—*Haji* ware *haniwa* fragments from the Niike grave (Personal Photograph).

Magatama

Magatama, or crescent shaped beads, are mentioned in both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki* as one of the three sacred symbols of Japan, along with swords and bronze mirrors (Kidder 1959:181). *Magatama* had been in use in Japan since the Jomon period and were significant since they are considered to have “an important role in the protection of the descendants of the Sun Goddess⁶” (Kidder 1959:181). Therefore, it is likely that these objects have either a religious significance, are important symbols of power, or both. These beads have a curved shape and are sometimes referred to as comma-shaped beads (Beardsley 1951:12). Kidder (1959) writes that *Magatama* came in slightly different styles and were made from a variety of different stones including jade, but were also made of glass (*Figure 5a*).

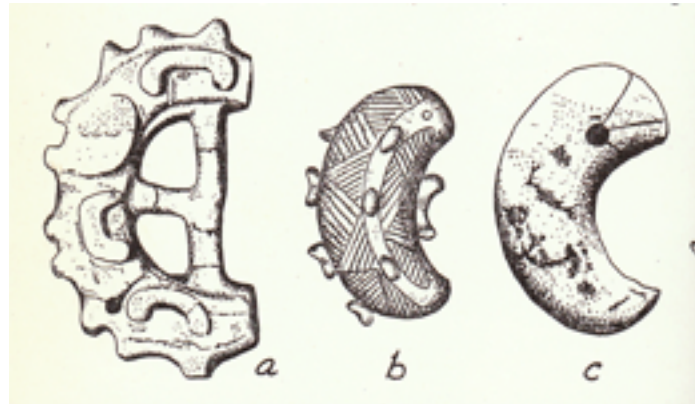


Figure 5—Various *magatama* beads (Kidder 1959:180)

⁶ In the *Kojiki*, descendants of the Sun Goddess were credited with reasserting the dominance of the Gods and restoring order to Japan, and therefore have important rights to power (Kidder 1959:132-133).

Introduction to the Kofun Used in this Study

For the purpose of this study, I decided to analyze artifacts from three different *kofun* in order to compare the types and frequency of artifacts and to look for evidence of standardization. The following is an introduction to the Niike and Shintoku sites, which include a total of three *kofun*. These sites were selected for their distance from one another and because they were roughly contemporaneous, and this distance can be seen in *Figure 6*.



Figure 6—Map of Japan with the sites used in this study, Niike and Shintoku Kofun-gun (Adapted from Habu 2004:6)

The Niike Kofun

The first *kofun* considered was a Kofun period collection stored in the University of Michigan’s Museum of Anthropology, a location that allowed for access to the artifacts for measurements and other study. This collection included data from a burial excavated by Dr. Richard Beardsley in the 1950s in a small village in Niike, Japan (Beardsley 1951). The site is located in the Okayama prefecture, a prefecture positioned on the main island on Honshu, bounded by the Tottori Prefecture to the north, the Hyogo Prefecture to the east, the North Pacific Sea the south, and Hiroshima Prefecture to the west. The *kofun* was part of a larger *kofun-gun*, or *kofun* cluster, which included mounded tombs of various sizes, including a *zenpoko* *kofun* stretching across the top of a large hill (Beardsley 1951). In his publication on the site, Beardsley originally proposed the possible date range of 400-600 CE for the site, implying that it could belong to either the middle or late Kofun, but Barnes was able to narrow the date to the early 5th century, corresponding to the Middle Kofun (Beardsley 1951; Gina Barnes, personal conversation 2008). Beardsley also postulated that the 11-foot long rectangular shaped *kofun* was likely intended for a single individual, who was a “warrior of not very high rank,” (1951:16).

Artifact Type	Quantity
Lidded Bowl	8
Jug	1
Jar with Hole	1
Pedestalled Bowl	1
<i>Sue</i> Shards	91
Other Shards	8
<i>Haniwa</i> Fragments	11
Smooth Stones	2
Iron Objects	8
<i>Magatama</i> Beads	2

Table 1—Contents of the Niike Tomb (My Data)

The contents of the tomb included iron objects, ceramic vessels and other objects (summarized in *Table 1*). Ceramics were the most plentiful materials in the tomb, with most made of the newly introduced *Sue* ware. The majority of the *Sue* ware ceramics consisted of seven lidded bowls used as food offerings for the dead. Other *Sue* ware found in the tomb include a small jar with a hole on one side and a wide flaring neck, a pedestalled bowl with triangular slits along the sides of the base, and a large barrel shaped jar with one flat end (*Figure 7a, b, & c*). Also in the report were ceramic shards that Beardsley identified as *Haji* ware, but the majority of these were later reclassified as *haniwa* fragments by Gina Barnes (Gina Barnes, personal conversation 2009). I have decided to use Barnes' classification for most of the sherds previously classified as *Haji* ware since Beardsley explained that the fragments were in disturbed soil and due to the changes that have likely taken place in Japanese archaeology in the sixty years since the report was written (1951:12).



Figure 7a (top left)—Small jar with hole and flaring neck (Personal Photograph)

Figure 7b (top right)—Pedestalled bowl with triangular slits (Personal Photograph)

Figure 7c (bottom)—Large barrel shaped jar with flat end (Personal Photograph)

In addition to the various ceramic objects, there were also iron objects in the tomb that Beardsley (1951:12) identified as “a simple shaft-hole ax, a simple socketed celt, a single-edge sword tip, the base of a fragment of a scabbard, and iron ring, and fragmentary iron rods” (Beardsley 1951:12). However, most of the objects have been so badly corroded, and as *Figure 8* shows, it is nearly impossible to determine their original shape so therefore I have classified these various artifacts simply as “iron objects.” Two

magatama beads were found in the disturbed fill above the floor of the tomb and one on the undisturbed floor, but these objects were not logged into the museum catalogue and are not present in the collection, so it is likely that they were never added to the university collection (Beardsley 1951). Despite their absence, I have decided to include the beads in my data tables because of the effect they could have on such a small sample size. As a final aside, it is important to note that the tomb was heavily disturbed, likely by both grave robbers and agricultural processes. The skeleton of the individual was missing altogether, which Beardsley attributed to grave robbers, suggesting that the full extent of the grave goods were not recovered (Beardsley 1951:12).



Figure 8—Highly corroded and unidentifiable iron object from the Niike collection (Personal Photograph)

Shintoku Kofun-gun

The site I selected for comparison with the *kofun* from Niike was the Shintoku Kofun-gun, published by the Nara Prefecture Archaeological Research Center in 1990. Shintoku Kofun-gun is located in the Nara Prefecture, which is bordered by the Kyoto

and Shiga Prefectures to the North, Mie Prefecture to the east, Wakayame Prefecture to the south, and Osaka Prefecture to the west. Nara is also situated on the main island of Honshu and is the location of the first official capital of Japan (Farris 1998). Originally, archaeologists thought the mounds were actually one grave since the two *kofun* are very close to one another and intersect slightly (Nara Prefecture Archaeological Research Center 1990). However, as displayed in *Figure 9*, when excavators removed the top layers of the mound, they discovered that there were two *kofun* instead of just one, and began to excavate each respective mound, which they named Shintoku 1 and Shintoku 2 (Nara Prefecture Archaeological Research Center 1990)

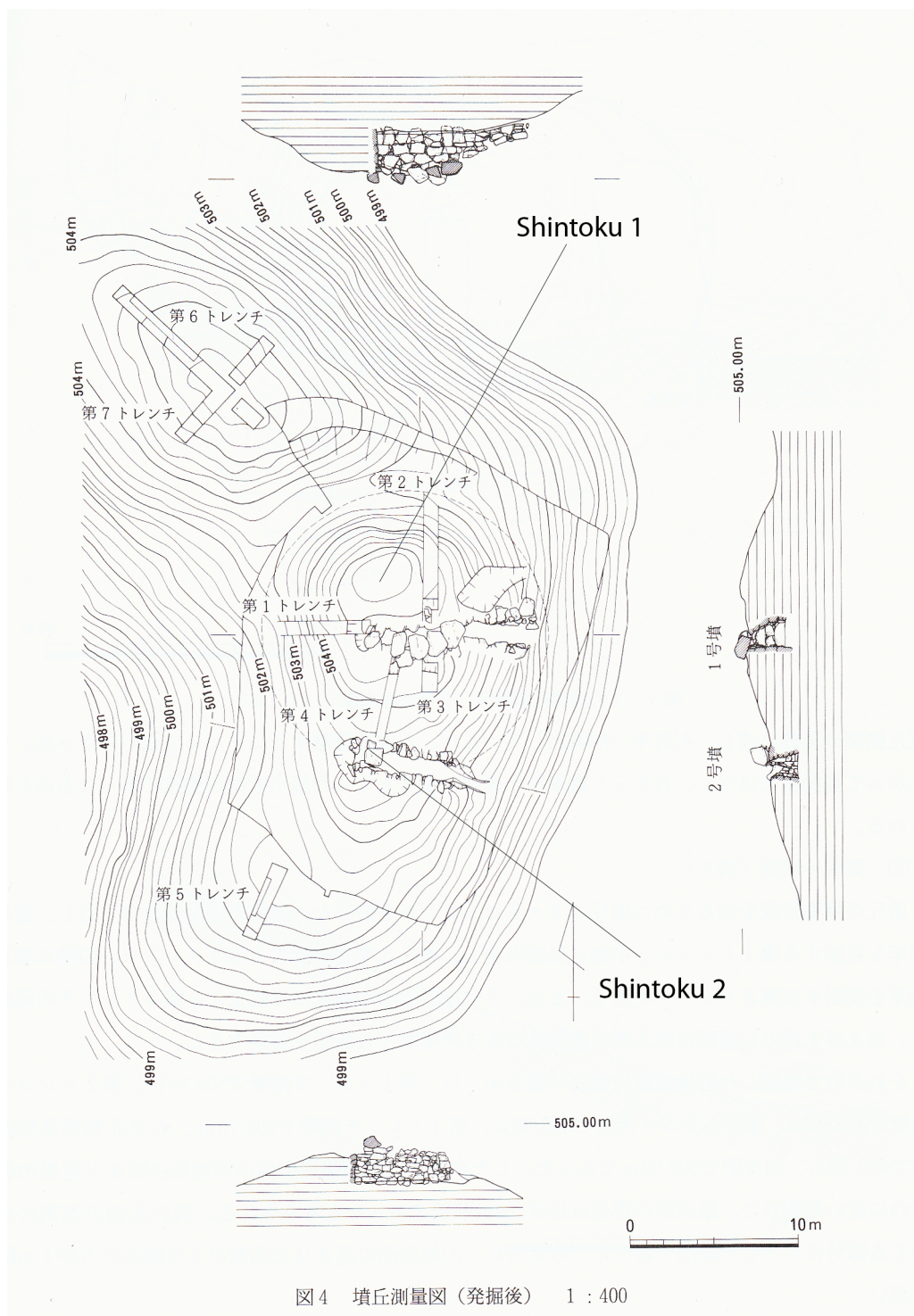


Figure 9—Site map of Shintoku 1 and 2, note how the two corridor style tombs intersect (Adapted from Nara Prefecture Archaeological Research Center 1990:13)

Shintoku 1 *kofun* dates to the 6th century, the first half of the Late Kofun period, and has a larger number of burial goods than either assemblage represented in the Niike or Shintoku 2 sites (see *Table 2* for a list of the contents in the tomb). The *kofun* was constructed about 100 years before Shintoku 2, and is an almost perfectly circular mound, rising 3.5 m tall, and spanning 17 m in diameter (Nara Prefecture Archaeological Research Center 1990). *Haji and Sue* wares make up the bulk of the assemblage, and include lidded bowls, jars with handles, a barrel, bowls, long necked jars, and pedestalled bowls (see appendix for photos of lidded bowls and other artifacts). Among the ceramics, non-lidded bowls make up the highest proportion of artifacts. In addition to the ceramics, the tomb's artifacts also include a sword fragment, a spear tip, an earring, and a whetstone (Nara Prefecture Archaeological Research Center 1990).

Artifact Type	Number
Lidded Bowls	2.5
Pedestalled Bowl	2
Jug with handles	2
Bowls	22
Barrel	1
Long Necked Jar	3
Jar	1
Copper Earring	1
Whetstone	1
Sword Fragment	1

Table 2—Contents of Shintoku 1 (Adapted from Nara Prefecture Archaeological Research Center 1990)

The other mounded tomb in the Shintoku *kofun-gun* (Shintoku 2) was constructed in the 7th century, which corresponds to the latter half of the Late Kofun period (Nara Prefecture Archaeological Research Center 1990). Unlike Shintoku 1, Shintoku 2 is more oval than circular, running 8 meters north to south and 11 meters from east to west. Its

height is 3 m, close to that of Shintoku 1 (Nara Prefecture Archaeological Research Center 1990). In comparison to Shintoku 1, this grave has a smaller number of burial goods, but interestingly a higher number and proportion of pedestalled bowls, lidded bowls, and earrings (see *Table 3* for a list of contents in Shintoku 2). The bulk of this assemblage also consists of *Haji* and *Sue* wares, which include lidded bowls, pedestalled bowls, and a long necked jar (Nara Prefecture Archaeological Research Center 1990). However, there were no iron objects in this tomb and the only artifacts that were not ceramics were two earrings.

Artifact Type	Number
Lidded Bowl	4
Pedestalled Bowl with Triangle slits	1
Pedestalled Bowls	6
Long necked Jar	1
Earrings	2

Table 3—Contents of Shintoku 2 (Adapted from Nara Prefecture Archaeological Research Center 1990)

Standardization Analysis of Objects in the Kofun

For my study, I decided to examine the standardization of ceramics from the Niike, Shintoku 1, and Shintoku 2 tombs. Certain features of ceramics have been used to consider the scale and organization of production, and its links to state societies, in particular increases in the scale of production, resulting in increased standardization that is within a “few millimeters for wall thickness and a few centimeters for diameter or height,” (Sinopoli 1991:145). An increase in the scale of production usually leads to increases in standardization as craft workers spend less time on each piece and decorations decrease or become more similar due to decreased competition (Sinopoli

1991). This means that the data from all three *kofun* should have measurements within a range of a few centimeters for height and diameter and a few millimeters for wall thickness, if there was large-scale standardization undertaken during the Kofun period. Also, if sites from different areas have ceramics with similar styles and measurements, this could mean that the ceramics were being mass produced in a single center or at least that the people in different areas had the same idea of what pottery in general and in burial offerings should look like (Sinopoli 1991). This is why a sampling from various areas throughout Honshu can provide a useful additional source of information for assessing whether central government was controlling the island.

Implications of Standardization

A trend towards greater standardization often is indicative of centrally controlled production and state organization since operating such a system tends to require a highly organized political entity, but as previously mentioned, standardization itself does not necessarily mean that a state level society is in place (Sinopoli 1991). However, some scholars have researched standardization in areas that were known to be states, and discovered that standardization of various categories of material culture is commonly associated with state societies (Sinopoli 1988; Blackman et al 1993). In her research, Sinopoli studied craft production in the capital of the historic empire of Vijayanagara, South India (1988). Standardization at Vijayanagara occurred in different ways, both through centralized and noncentralized production⁷. Centralized production, characterized by “large-scale and spatially segregated production by specialists” was

⁷ Centralized and noncentralized production are two of the means of production that can be associated with a state level society but also there can be administered production, where the workshops tend to be isolated and linked to facilities controlled by administration (Sinopoli 1988:581).

associated with textiles, an elite good (Sinopoli 1988:581). In contrast, ceramics were associated with noncentralized production, a system of production that “takes place on a smaller scale and in more dispersed locations than in either the administered or centralized situation” (Sinopoli 1988:582). With regards to the textiles, the state worked to enforce strict control over these goods, since they were in high demand both by elites and for trade (Sinopoli 1988). In contrast, ceramics were not associated with such high levels of prestige or profitability were left for local communities to control (though of course with supervision by the state) (Sinopoli 1988).

It is interesting that high levels of standardization are seen in elite goods Sinopoli’s study, since elites have access to resources to acquire for non standardized items that would not be as easy or efficient to make. It would seem, then that the Vijayanagara state worked to control items that were most profitable to control and/or had the greatest social or political significance. This may be applicable to ceramic standardization in the case of Japan, since *Sue* ware ceramics were a prestige good associated with elites, and yet tended to be subjected to standardization (Karoku 1991). The existence of Suemura, furthermore, hints at a more centralized form of standardization since it was the main producer of *Sue* ware in Japan until the 11th century (Kidder 1991). There may have been economic and other reasons then, for the state to control production and distribution of these highly sought prestige goods.

Limiting Factors of the Data

Before I discuss the results of the analysis, I would like to outline some complications with the type of data available that made this analysis somewhat

convoluted. To begin with, I was unable to find a single site report written in English. This meant that I had to utilize site reports written in Japanese, a limiting factor since this project did not allocate enough time to translate a large number of reports. This resulted in a relatively small sample size despite my recognition that a larger number and scope of sites are desirable in order to make more definitive statements about the political organization of all of Japan during the Kofun period. Despite this relatively small sample size, I believe that the data from the *kofun* are still useful for the study of Kofun political organization. Although the data from the three *kofun* alone does not allow me to definitively determine whether or not the Yamato state had fully developed and unified all of ancient Japan, I will provide more insights into the extent of blossoming political power in Nara and use these data in conjunction with patterns from *kofun* distribution maps in order to make a more convincing statement about Kofun political organization. Since Shintoku 1 and 2 are located in the Nara prefecture and Niike is located three prefectures to the east, artifacts from the area where the early state began and data from a site located further away from this location could support Barnes' idea of a "limited central authority" where an emerging central authority wielded power only over surrounding areas (Barnes 1999:245).

Another problem with the sites was that each burial dated to a different century—Niike representing the 5th century, Shintoku 1 representing the 6th century, and Shintoku 2 representing the 7th century—where sets of sites from each century would have been more desirable to examine political unity throughout the Kofun period. However, these differences in timing do not necessarily make the comparisons invalid or undesirable. In fact, a comparison of the three sites from the middle and late Kofun could give some

understanding as to whether or not the Yamato state was in existence by the middle Kofun and continuing through the late Kofun. This comparison will likely not have many implications for early Kofun, since no early Kofun period site was included in the data set. However, if the analysis indicates that political unification had been achieved by the Middle Kofun period, then this would mean that the possibility of Early Kofun unification cannot be totally ruled out.

Lidded Bowl Comparison and Analysis

In this analysis, ceramics are compared from each of the burials to examine the degree of standardization at each respective site, and the degree of standardization among all of the sites combined. Since lidded bowls were represented in each data set, and smaller, less intricate ceramics such as bowls are most likely to be standardized (Karoku 1991), I chose this ceramic type to analyze for standardization. These bowls were used as food offerings for the dead, a practice which was borrowed from Korean burial traditions (Karoku 1991). Besides the lidded bowls, the other ceramics in the burials were likely made by molding and paddle and anvil techniques, and were likely subjected to regional variations, making them too different in style to compare for standardization (Karoku 1986; Barnes 1999). To examine the ceramics based on criteria previously mentioned from Sinopoli (1991), I decided to measure the diameter, height, and thickness of the lidded bowls from each *kofun*. However, since the thickness was not available from the Shintoku site reports, I could only compare the diameter and height of the Niike and Shintoku *kofun* (See *Appendix A1* for these measurements). Additionally, the bowls

from the Niike sites were highly warped during firing and therefore I decided to take averages of heights and diameters to so as not to skew my results.

In order to compare the lidded bowls from all of the sites, the mean, standard deviation, and range of the diameters and heights were calculated for each site (as summarized in *Table 4*). Then these measurements were calculated for Shintoku 1 and 2 as a group and then all of the data from every site was combined. For each set of calculations, Shintoku 1 and 2 tended to be closer in terms of averages and had slightly smaller standard deviations than the Niike assemblage. The Niike bowls, on average were slightly larger in both height and diameter than the bowls from Shintoku 1 and 2. When the data from Shintoku 1 and 2 were combined, the averages stayed relatively similar, but when all of the data from the sites were combined, standard deviation, average, and range all increased. Even with the increases, the results showed that the data was fairly similar and the averages and standard deviations for height and diameter were within a few centimeters of one another, well within the guidelines for standardization.

Assemblage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Niike	14.4	1.04	3.4
Shintoku 1	13	1.03	3
Shintoku 2	12.3	0.84	3
Shintoku 1 and 2	12.8	1.02	3
All Sites	13.6	1.33	5

Table 4—Calculations assessing standardization in terms of diameter, in cm (Nara Archaeological Research Center 1990; My Data)

Assemblage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Niike	4.8	3.8	1.3
Shintoku 1	3.9	0.12	0.3
Shintoku 2	3.8	0.32	1.1
Shintoku 1 and 2	3.8	0.27	1.1
All Sites	4.3	0.6	1.8

Table 5—Standardization calculations for height, in cm (Nara Archaeological Research Center; My Data)

Interestingly, the bowls from the Niike site were consistently larger on average than the bowls at both Shintoku sites individually and combined. This difference in size could be accounted for due to the time differences between the Niike site and the Shintoku sites since the first Shintoku kofun was constructed 100 years after the Niike kofun. As Blackman (1993) stated, ceramic styles change through time and drastic changes can take place over a period of 100 years. However, Shintoku 2 was also constructed 100 years after Shintoku 1, but the bowls in these two assemblages are closer in size than the Niike bowls are to Shintoku 1. One variable that may account for this is the fact that Shintoku 1 and Shintoku 2 were located on the same site. Perhaps the lidded bowls came from the same workshop, or represent a slight regional variation in sizes. It could be the case that the lidded bowls from Shintoku 1 and 2 represent a movement towards a higher degree of standardization in the 6th and 7th centuries.

From this information, it is clear that people who buried their dead at the two sites shared a similar idea of what the lidded bowls should look like, one important aspect of standardization. Additionally, wheel marks can be seen on the bottom of bowls, suggesting that they had been cut while the wheel was still spinning (Sinopoli 1988). This is an indication of mass production, which also commonly results in high standardization. Blackman (1993) states that craft specialists usually work to standardize every step of the

production process, including the firing process, and work to eliminate differences between bowls. This is interesting because as *Figure 10* shows, bowls from every site of show evidence of warping. However, this may have something to do with the main use of the bowls: they functioned as containers for food offerings to the dead and therefore did not need to be perfectly shaped (Gina Barnes, Personal Conversation).



Figure 10—Warped bowl from Niike Collection (Personal Photograph)

The standardization found in the lidded bowls seems to indicate that a state power could have been in place controlling the production of these ceramics. However, since this analysis only includes data from two areas in Japan, it cannot be conclusively stated that all of Japan was subjected to a fully formed state power by the Middle Kofun. The evidence does indicate, however, that Barnes' (1999) idea of a limited central authority is plausible and it seems likely that the standardization found in the Niike *kofun* represents the control of an expanding early state.

Kofun Distribution Maps

For this analysis, the general distribution pattern of *kofun* construction through spatial distribution maps was examined in order to determine the overall trends taking place across the country, which allowed for an analysis of archaeological evidence from a more general, higher level perspective. Since I have already examined political organization from a lower level investigation that examined implications of burial goods from specific sites, here I also draw on another line of evidence that examines the political structure of Japan by examining the distribution of *kofun* throughout the entire Kofun period.

If the size and shape of the *kofun* reflect the distribution of power, and all of ancient Japan was in fact under the control of a centralized state during the Kofun period, then the major center for *kofun* construction should be located in one area of Japan, likely the Nara Prefecture where the first capitol of Japan was situated (Imamura 1996). Accordingly, large keyhole shaped *kofun* should be densely located in this area, and noticeably larger *kofun* should be located in this area as well. A state would have been the most powerful entity this region and as such, would have likely displayed power by constructing the largest kofun and the densest cluster of keyhole shaped kofun.

Many distribution maps, such as the one displayed below in *Figure 11*, display the density of *kofun* throughout the Kofun period as a whole, plotting every major mounded tomb in Japan on one map (Kidder 1959:147). However, these types of maps only show the total distribution of *kofun*, compressing the full span of the Kofun period into a single map, and making it difficult to see the patterning throughout time.

Furthermore, many of these maps only record the largest keyhole shaped tombs, or may not specify what type of *kofun* were represented. Looking at *Figure 11*, it appears that there is no overwhelming center of *kofun* construction, but examining the trends taking place through time would help decipher the changes throughout the Kofun period, in order to pinpoint, if possible, the likely timing of political unification.

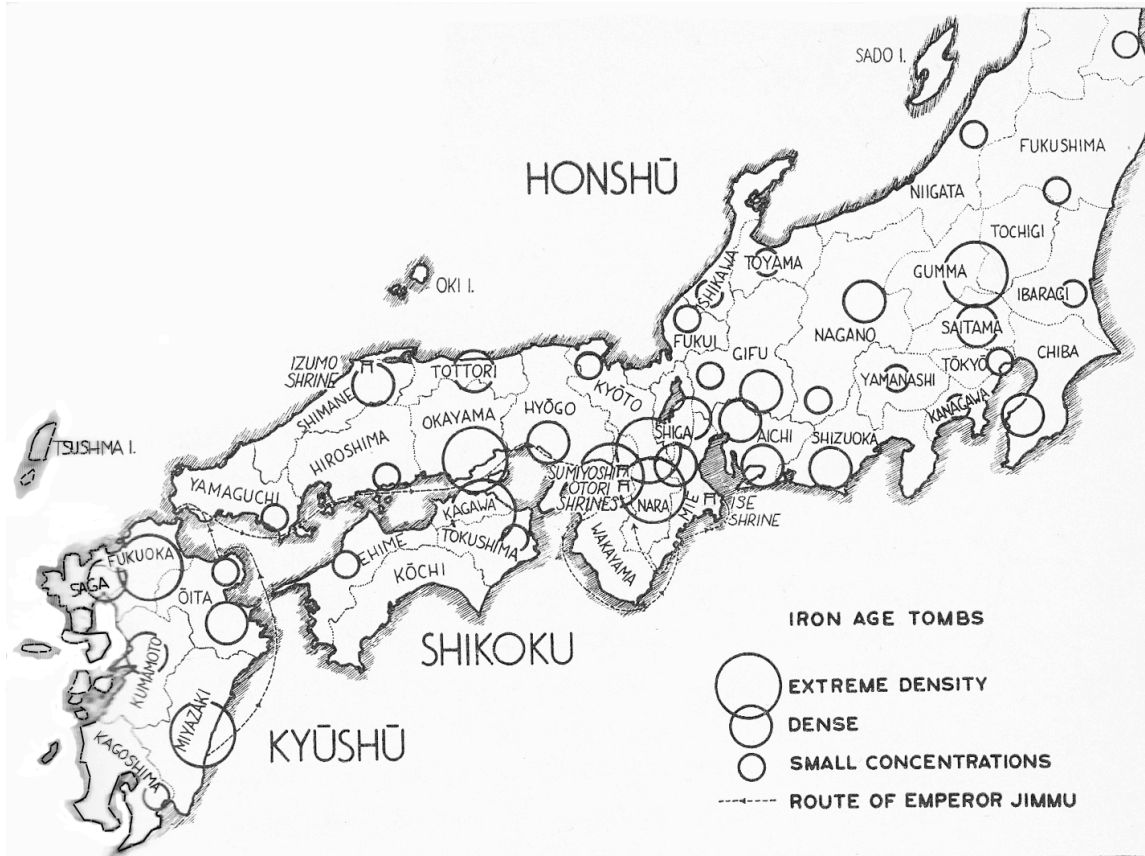


Figure 11—Distribution map of major kofun in Japan (Kidder 1959:147)

Imamura (1998) attempts to separate the tombs into distinct categories based on time, (as seen in *Figure 12*). This figure divides keyhole shaped *kofun* into Early, Middle, and Late Kofun periods, separating each period into distinct distribution maps. Unfortunately, this map does not show the full range of *kofun* constructed during each time period, but it does allow for the examination of major trends taking place in

construction and location of the prominent keyhole shaped tombs. The map in *Figure 12* depicts keyhole shaped *kofun* in the early Kofun as having fairly even distribution throughout the country, with some larger tombs appearing in the Kansai region. By middle Kofun, a higher concentration of *kofun* were constructed near the Nara Basin in the Kansai region, but there were a few large *kofun* found in the Kanto region area near Tokyo, and one noticeably large *kofun* located west of the Kansai region in the Chugoku region. In the following late Kofun, the size declined and there were only three large *kofun* constructed, with all of them located in the Kansai region.

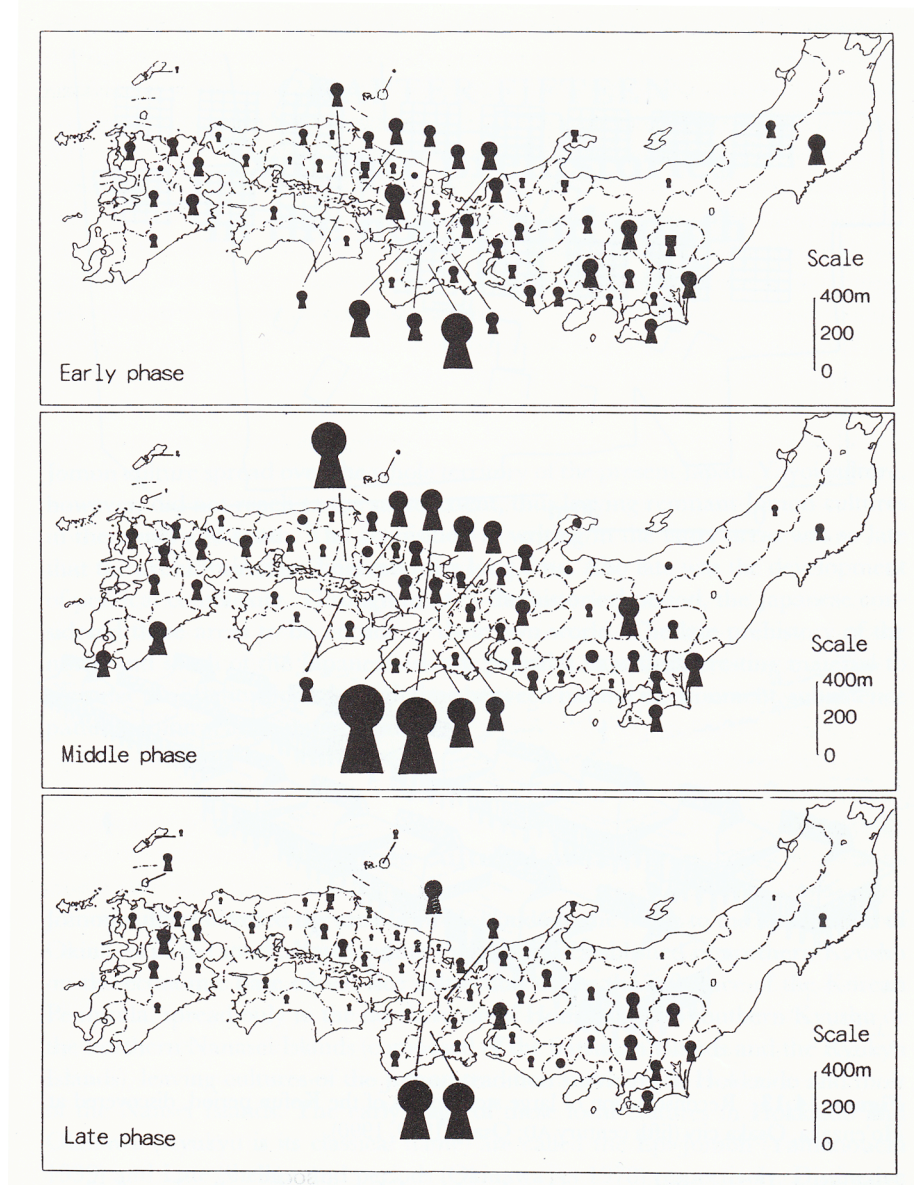


Figure 12—Distribution map of keyhole shaped kofun, separated into Early, Middle, and Late Kofun phase
(Imamura 1996:195).

Imamura, among others, claims that the, “sizes and locations [of the mounded tombs] are thought to reflect distribution of political power,” (Imamura 1998:194). Therefore, if a central political power were located in Nara, then largest *kofun* and highest density should be found in that area. In the early Kofun, the largest keyhole shaped *kofun* is indeed located in Nara prefecture. However, there does not seem to be a particularly

high concentration of large *zenpoukoen kofun* in the prefecture; instead relatively similar sized *kofun* were constructed throughout most of Honshu. Furthermore, the map of the Middle Kofun complicates the picture further since more large keyhole shaped *kofun* were constructed throughout the main island than in the previous Early Kofun period. In particular, one large *kofun* was constructed in a prefecture far to the east of Nara, and other moderately large *kofun* were scattered throughout central Honshu. By the Late Kofun, there was a noticeable reduction in the size of *kofun* outside of the Nara Basin, and there are two large *kofun* that are distinctly greater in size than the other *kofun* constructed in this time period.

Some (Tsuide 1990; Kidder 1959), have argued that this pattern can be accounted for by evidence from the *Nihon Shoki* and *Kojiki*, from passages that claim the central authority in Nara allowed local leaders who shared close political ties with the central government to construct their own keyhole shaped tombs (of course on a smaller scale than the *kofun* of the state leaders). This explanation could account for the variability in *kofun* size and location throughout Japan, but it is still problematic. Since the large keyhole shaped *kofun* tended to be associated with power, authors of these documents would have to explain the presence of keyhole shaped *kofun* outside of the Nara Basin. The authors could have done this by explaining that the central authority allowed its closest supporters to also construct the *kofun* and therefore, evidence outside of early historical documents is needed in order to make Tsuide and Kidder's argument stronger. Additionally, if there was in fact a unified government at the time, archaeologists should not only be examining *kofun* patterning across Japan, but should also find other forms of

evidence in the archaeological record indicating a central authority, such as standardization, settlement patterns, or evidence of bureaucracy.

While it is possible that a state did regulate *kofun* construction, this issue is further complicated by the idea that *kofun* may not have been a direct reflection of political power. Barnes (1999:245) argues that these *kofun* were actually a “cultural phenomenon” and therefore were not associated with political power. However, since the large keyhole shaped *kofun* require considerable manpower to construct, it is likely that there was some sort of political aspect to their construction. While mound building has been associated with many different political systems, it is interesting that the practice in East Asia has also been linked to times of warfare (Okauchi 1986). Furthermore, the mounded tomb cultures of East Asia began with the emergence of mounded tombs and ended with “the unification of ancient states,” suggesting that these tombs may have been linked to processes contributing to the rise of states, but are not representative of fully unified states (Okauchi 1986:128). Thus, by the time these cultures in East Asia had formed a cohesive central government, it seems that the practice declined (Okauchi 1986). It is possible then that these tombs have a different meaning—one that represent a struggle for and claims of power during times when power was contested. Specific examples can be found in China and Korea, where mounds became noticeably larger during the period of the Warring States in China, and in Silla, where the practice quickly declined soon after the unification (Okauchi 1986).

While it is true that the mounded tomb tradition in Japan may not have been analogous or even similar to practices in China and Korea, evidence in Chinese records implies that the practice may have been served a similar purpose. These documents

mention Japan as a nation with over 100 kingdoms during the Yayoi period (Imamura 1996:185). All of these leaders would likely not have been eager to give up power easily and simply accept the rule of a claimant to central authority. Thus, for the emerging state, defeating dozens of rulers would probably have been a long and tedious process and could have even been further complicated by local chiefdoms forming alliances against the expanding Yamato power. When applying this information to the *kofun* in the archaeological record, and considering the meaning that mounded tombs held in China and Korea, a plausible explanation could be that the *kofun* tradition actually reflected a power struggle among the Japanese chiefdoms that intensified during a period of social upheaval and social competition.

Discussion

Given all of the evidence previously discussed concerning grave goods and kofun distribution as well as previous archaeological studies in the region, it appears as though Japan was likely unified by the Late Kofun period, but the data in this study does not conclusively suggest unification by the Early or Middle Kofun periods. Standardization of artifacts and burial assemblages from the Niike and Shintoku sites suggest that a new Yamato polity may have been exercising some power by the 5th century, at least in the surrounding areas, but the data in this section alone cannot convincingly determine whether or not all of ancient Japan was unified at that time. When considered with the evidence found in the *kofun* distribution maps, it seems even more likely that the polity in the Nara basin did not have complete control over the area during the Middle Kofun, since many large *kofun* were constructed outside of the Nara basin area. As the

distribution maps show, the general practice was declining in the 6th and 7th centuries, and at the time that some categories of objects were becoming increasingly more standardized. Thus, considering the increased standardization in *Sue* ware lidded bowls and the decline of *kofun* building practices in the Late Kofun, it seems as though a new state had been established throughout all of ancient Japan by this period, eliminating the competition for power between various polities in Japan and increasing control on ceramic production.

Future Directions for Understanding Kofun Political Structure

Since this study could not conclusively determine the extent of political power of the burgeoning Yamato state in the Middle Kofun, future researchers may be able to address this issue by examining information from other published site reports where scholars have excavated *kofun* from the 5th century. These studies should include *kofun* of different sizes and shapes to create a clear understanding of the trends taking place during the period and not just among the most powerful elite. Additionally, other distribution maps could be created that show the full range of all *kofun*, since in some areas, the large keyhole shaped *kofun* were never adopted (Kidder 1959).

Finally, due to the financial and time restraints of this project, I was unable to utilize any expensive technology that could have aided in the interpretation of the data from the Niike and Shintoku *kofun*. In particular, sourcing studies would be especially interesting in order to determine if the clay from the ceramics came from the same source, which may imply that they were manufactured in the same workshop (Blackman et al 1993). Also, x-ray studies on the iron objects may be useful in order to determine

what objects remain underneath the corrosion, possibly allowing for comparison between the Shintoku site and other published reports (Gina Barnes, Personal Conversation 2008).

Contributions to Anthropology

Even though this issue is one that has been well researched by other scholars, my research has worked to incorporate multiple lines of evidence from both a higher and lower level perspective—something that is not a component of many works that analyze Kofun period political structure. This thesis includes data from artifact analysis and distribution maps while keeping in mind the fact that the tradition developed under influences from both China and Korea, but is a uniquely Japanese style of mounded tomb building. Thus, this research gives a more comprehensive viewpoint on the time period rather than focusing on one type of data set to make claims about political unity.

This research contributes to the interpretation of Japanese texts since it is not clear to what extent these texts can be used in the formation of archaeological hypothesis and arguments. Mizoguchi (2002) has advocated the reexamination of these documents to assess whether or not they have any potential use for archaeologists, but warns that aspects like timing have been exaggerated. This paper also suggests that timing in historical documents was heavily embellished, since the evidence has shown that cohesive political unification did not likely occur until the Late Kofun, hundreds of years after the documents claim. Despite the discrepancies in timing, it may still be the case that people and events mentioned in these records were based off real situations, but this cannot be determined from the data studied here and further research is necessary in order to interpret the ways in which these documents might be utilized.

Finally, while my research has focused on the origins of the Japanese state, it may also have implications on state formation in other areas of the world. Many states in the world also developed in situations of cultural contact with extant and forming states, and this research suggests that recognizing this fact is important for studies of political organization. In addition, this paper has also shown that multiple lines of evidence, including higher and lower level studies, are crucial in order to determine whether or not an area was likely a state. Trait lists are very helpful, and indeed can be useful when examining political organization, but this thesis shows that traits alone will not conclusively indicate a state level society.

Appendix:**A1: Measurements used for standardization calculations****Niike Lidded Bowls**

Catalogue Number	Type	Diameter	Height
37250	Lidded Bowl	15.5	4.6
37250	Lidded Bowl	15.2	4.5
37251	Lidded Bowl	16.2	5
37251	Lidded Bowl	15.6	5
37252	Lidded Bowl	15.5	4.8
37252	Lidded Bowl	14.8	4.7
37253	Lidded Bowl	15.5	5.2
37253	Lidded Bowl	15.2	3.8
37254	Lidded Bowl	16	5.3
37254	Lidded Bowl	15	5
37255	Lidded Bowl	16	4.9
37256	Lidded Bowl	15	4.5
37257	Lidded Bowl	14.5	5.1

(My Data)

Shintoku 1 Lidded Bowls

Number	Ware	Type	Diameter	Height
1	Sue	Lidded Bowl (Lid)	12.9	3.8
2	Sue	Lidded Bowl (Lid)	13.3	3.7
3	Sue	Lidded Bowl (Lid)		
4	Sue	Lidded Bowl (Bottom)	11.3	4
5	Sue	Lidded Bowl (Bottom)	11.6	4

(Adapted from Nara Prefecture Archaeological Research Center 1990:31)

Shintoku 2 Lidded Bowls

Number	Ware	Type	Diameter	Height
1	Sue	Lidded Bowl (Lid)	14	3.5
2	Sue	Lidded Bowl (Lid)	13.4	3.7
3	Sue	Lidded Bowl (Lid)	14.1	3.7
4	Sue	Lidded Bowl (Lid)	14	3.9
5	Sue	Lidded Bowl (Bottom)	12.2	3.8
6	Sue	Lidded Bowl (Bottom)	12.3	3.9
7	Sue	Lidded Bowl (Bottom)	12.6	3.5
8	Sue	Lidded Bowl (Bottom)	11	4.6

(Adapted from Nara Prefecture Archaeological Research Center 1990:47)

References Cited (SAA)

- Allard, Francis
2001 Mortuary Ceramics and Social Organization in the Dawenkou and Majiayao Cultures. *Journal of East Asian Archaeology* 3:1-22.
- Anazawa, Wakou and Jun'ichi Manome
1987 Two Inscribed Swords, In *Windows on the Japanese Past*, Edited by Richard J. Pearson, Gina Lee Barnes, and Karl L. Hutter, pp. 127-148. Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- Arnason, Arnar
1996 State Formation in Japan and the West [in Special Section on Japanese Culture and Society], *Theory, Culture, and Society* 13:53-75.
- Barnes, Gina Lee
1999 *The Rise of Civilization in East Asia: The Archaeology of China, Korea, and Japan*. Thames and Hudson, London.
- Beardsley, Richard K.
1951 Pottery of Two Traditions from an Iron Age Tomb in Okayama Prefecture, Japan. *Far Eastern Ceramic Bulletin* 3: 10-19.
- Blackman, James et al.
1993 The Standardization Hypothesis and Ceramic Mass Production: Technological, Compositional, and Metric Indexes of Craft Specialization at Tell Leilan, Syria, *American Antiquity* 58:60-80.
- Chavarria, Joquim
1992 *The Big Book of Ceramics*. Watson-Guptill Publications, New York.
- Childe, V. Gordon
1950 The Urban Revolution. *The Town Planning Review* 21:3-17.
- Farris, William Wayne
1998 *Sacred Texts and Buried Treasures: Issues in the Historical Archaeology of Japan*. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, Hawaii.
- Flannery, Kent V.
1998 In *Archaic States*, edited by Joyce Marcus and Gary M. Feinman, pp. 15-58. School of American Research, Santa Fe, New Mexico.
- Fischer, Christopher T., Helen P. Pollard, and Charles Frederick
1999 Intensive agriculture and socio-political development in the Lake Patzcuaro Basin, Michoacan, Mexico. *Antiquity* 73: 642-649.

- Habu, Junko
2004 *Ancient Jomon of Japan*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom.
- Harke
1997 The Nature of Burial Data In *Burial and Society: The Chronological and Social Analysis of Archaeological Burial Data*, edited by Claus Kjeld Jensen and Karen Koilund Nielsen, Aarhus University Press, pp.17-28.
- Imamura, Keiji
1996 *Prehistoric Japan—New Perspectives on Insular East Asia*. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, Hawai'i.
- Isobe, Yaichiro
1955 *Tales From the Kojiki*. San Kaku Sha, Tokyo, Japan.
- Jenyns, Soame
1971 *Japanese Pottery*. Faber and Faber Limited, London.
- Kamei, Masamichi, Iwa Ouba
1951 A Report of Excavation of Futagozuka, Burial Mound at Anegasaki, Chiba Prefecture. *Kokogaku Zasshi* 37: 36-45.
- Karoku, Miwa
1991 Sue Ware. In *The Rise of a Great Tradition*, edited by Erica H. Weeder, pp. 53-55. Japan Society, New York
- Kidder, Jonathan Edwards
1964 *Early Japanese Art*. D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc, New Jersey.
- Kidder, Jonathan Edwards
1959 *Japan Before Buddhism*. Fredrick A Praeger, New York.
- Kidder, Jonathan Edward Jr.
1991 Ceramics of the Burial Mounds (Kofun) (A.D. 258-646). In *The Rise of a Great Tradition*, edited by Erica H. Weeder, pp. 40-52. Japan Society, New York.
- Miyakoji, Hiroshihiro
1966 Report on the Excavation of Sutra Mound at Mizugame-yama, Fukuoka Prefecture. *Kokogaku Zasshi* 52: 30-42.
- Mizoguchi, Koji
2002 *An Archaeological History of Japan 30,000 BC to AD 700*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia

Mizoguchi, Koji

2001 Time and Genealogical Consciousness in the Mortuary Practices of the Yayoi Period, Japan. *Journal of East Asian Archaeology* 3:173-197.

Nara Prefecture Archaeological Research Center

1990 Shintoku Kofungun, Japan.

Okauchi, Mitsuzane

1986 Mounded Tombs in East Asia from 3rd centuries to 7th centuries A.D. In *Windows on the Japanese Past*, Edited by Richard J. Pearson, Gina Lee Barnes, and Karl L. Hutter, pp. 127-148. Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

O'Shea

1984 *Mortuary Variability: An Archaeological Investigation*. Academic Press, Orlando/New York

Pearson, Richard

1990 Chiefly exchange between Kyushu and Okinawa, Japan, in the Yayoi period. *Antiquity* 64:912-922.

Renfrew, Colin, John F. Cherry

1986 *Polity Interaction and Socio-Political Change*. Press Syndicate of University of Cambridge, New York.

Simpson, Penny. Kanji Sodeoka, and Lucy Kitto

1979 *The Japanese Pottery Handbook*. Kodansha International, Tokyo, Japan.

Sinopoli, Carla M.

1991 *Approaches to Archaeological Ceramics*. Plenum Press, New York.

Tsude, Hiroshi

1990 Chiefly lineages in Kofun-period Japan: political relations between centre and region. *Antiquity* 64:923-929.

Vargo, Lars

1982 *Social and Economic Conditions for the Formation of the Early Japanese State*. Stockholm University, Institute of Oriental Languages, Stockholm, Sweden.

Wada, Seigo

1986 Political Interpretations of Stone Coffin Production in Protohistoric Japan. *Windows on the Japanese Past* 349-374.

Wright, Henry T.

1977 Recent Research on the Origin of the State. *Annual Review Anthropology*
6:379-97

Yoshida, Shoichiro, Kenichiro Ichikawa

1966 A Report on Excavation of Ukon-Zuka, Burial Mound at Kazumura,
Chiisagata-gun Nagano Prefecture. *Kokogaku Zasshi* 36: 30-42.