

# HANIWA : A Handy Guide to the Exhibition



**Wed 18th Feb - Sun 19th Apr 2015 (The Kyoto University Museum)**

## ***Haniwa* in the campus**

Numerous fragmented pieces of *haniwa*, ceramic funerary sculptures from the protohistoric period (3rd - 6th centuries CE), were excavated within the Yoshida-South campus of Kyoto University. The place where *haniwa* appeared is now known as the International Service Office. The excavation, directed by the Centre for Cultural Heritage Studies of Kyoto University, was carried out in 2011.

The Centre, previously named the Centre for Archaeological Operations, has excavated many locations within Kyoto University to date, and most of these digs have been conducted as rescue/salvage excavations in order to save buried cultural properties and their context in advance of building construction. This collection of *haniwa* can be recognised as one of the most striking among all the archaeological finds from the whole campus of Kyoto University.



Excavation: removing soil from around the fragments of *haniwa*.

## **Haniwa on the burial mound**

*Haniwa* were produced as funerary sculptures to decorate specific burial mounds in the Kofun period, at the time the first Japanese state was being formed, from the 3rd to 6th centuries AD. The term *haniwa* is composed of two words; ‘hani’ and ‘wa’. ‘Hani’ means yellow-reddish clay for ceramics, and ‘wa’ means circle. You can see tubular/cylindrical yellow-reddish ceramics of this type in the showcase. The term *kofun* also consists of two words: ‘ko’ and ‘fun’. ‘Ko’ means ancient, and ‘fun’ means burial mound.

During the Kofun period, burial mounds were constructed in many regions and huge mounds, also known as tumuli, appeared in some parts of Japan. The most magnificent tumuli were constructed in the area now comprising Osaka and Nara prefectures, although others are also known in the Kanto region, Kyushu and other parts of western and central Japan.

Along with the vogue for constructing *kofun* in most parts of protohistoric Japan, considerable numbers of *haniwa* were also manufactured in many regions.

*Haniwa* were often lined up along the terraced sides of *kofun*. The most popular type of *haniwa* was cylindrical, while *haniwa* with representational forms, including human beings, horse, house, sun-shade, were fewer in number and were basically used for more important *kofun*. In Kyoto, however, the number of *kofun* which has been recognised as associated with *haniwa* is rather low. Thus, the collection exhibited here is representative of the *haniwa* assemblage of the Kofun period in Kyoto.

The Yoshida-Nihonmatsu area, where the Yoshida-South campus is located, seems to have been a rural part of the Kyoto basin about 1,500 years ago. Kyoto is famous for its long history as the ancient capital of Japan, but it seems to have been rather a backwater in regard to the trajectory of Japanese state formation, 300 years before the establishment of the ancient capital. There is no evidence of keyhole-shaped *kofun* or settlement of the Kofun period in Yoshida district.

So far, nine *kofun* tombs are known in the Yoshida-Nihonmatsu area, including the one from which this *haniwa* assemblage was unearthed. They are all square in plan, and are so-called ‘buried



*kofun*', as their existence can only be evidenced through excavation because the mounds were truncated as a result of various activities over the 1,500 years since their construction, and only the delimiting ditch survived. The burial field of the Yoshida-Nihonmatsu area is on a thick deposition of granitic debris flowing from the drainage of the Shira River dating to about 2,500 years ago. The friable nature of the granitic deposition would have been the main reason for the collapse of the mounds, resulting in the filling up of the ditch.



Excavation: removing layers of soil covering Burial No.8 of the Yoshida-Nihonmatsu burial cluster, viewed from the east.

In the Yoshida-Nihonmatsu burial cluster, only Burial No. 8 has *haniwa*. *Haniwa* appeared in the fill of the eastern and southern ditches, and must have stood in line on the terrace of the respective slopes of the mound when they were in their original position. In both ditches, normal cylindrical *haniwa* and cylindrical *haniwa* with open tops were found. Representational *haniwa*, however, only appeared in the southern ditch. The other two ditches, to the north and west, were not excavated because they were outside the trench.



*Haniwa* fragments in the fill of the southern ditch of Burial No.8, viewed from the east.

## ***Haniwa* for the visitor: from the people's perspective**

One interesting strategy for looking at *haniwa* in an exhibition such as this, is to try and share the feelings of people dominated in the past, because *haniwa* were produced for the funeral of a dominant local leader. So, why not look at the *haniwa* from a lower angle?

Imagine you are a farmer in the Kofun period, you might not be allowed to stand upright when you came across the patrol of the leader of the area, to whom you are subservient, on the back of his precious horse. You might have to kneel on the ground behind or at the side. Otherwise the guard escorting the mounted leader would glare fiercely at you and snap: “Stand back! Bow to the lord”.

But at the same time you also had to be careful of the horse in case it kicked out with its hind legs.



Close-up of the anthropomorphic type of *haniwa*.



Horse-shaped *haniwa* viewed from below.

And then, after the leader's death..... When you look up to the burial mound of the deceased leader from outside the square burial precinct demarcated by a ditch, you must be impressed with the lines of *haniwa* standing on the terraces of the mound. You might be tricked into thinking that horse-shaped *haniwa* and human-shaped *haniwa* were actually larger than they really were, because they were accompanied by rather small cylindrical ones elsewhere in the line, from a distance creating an effective visual illusion. Such a small type of cylindrical *haniwa* was only set up in association with the representational *haniwa* of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic type.

The *haniwa* sculpture of the man on guard possibly originally faced not towards the people outside the *kofun*, but rather towards the mound, towards the leader. This is suggested from the analysis of



the pattern of distribution of the fragments of both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic types of *haniwa*. While fragments of the two sculptures were distributed mainly within the same cluster of scatters in the southern ditch, some pieces of the horse-shaped *haniwa*, found somewhat to the east of these, a little removed from the main cluster, and away from any fragments of anthropomorphic *haniwa*, are mainly from the lower left legs. Additionally, some pieces of the anthropomorphic *haniwa*, found a little to the west of the main cluster, and away from any fragments of horse *haniwa*, are all from the left side of his body.



A collection of representational *haniwa*.

## ***Haniwa* for the archaeologist**

In order to conduct this kind of forensic analysis of fragmented pieces, it is necessary to have accurate information about the provenience for each piece (where each fragment was found in the excavation), and to have this information marked on the surface of each fragment. Because of these markings, some archaeological objects look slightly ugly from the viewpoint of aesthetics. However, these unearthed cultural properties are not only for appreciation of the past plastic/pictorial art and of the past technology, but also for rigorous archaeological studies of various kinds to expand and deepen our insight into the human past.

If the refitting of an object goes well, an archaeologist will often be able to obtain the evidence of the way in which the object was broken. Moreover, she/he is sometimes able to infer the past person's commitment to the breakage or deposition from the information about provenience attached to its once fragmented pieces.

Let us conclude with the house-shaped *haniwa* from Burial No.8. It is very likely that this *haniwa*, which was found in the southern

ditch, had been dropped or lightly thrown upturned north-eastwards into the fill of the ditch from the outside of the ditch, at the same time as numerous fragments of many other types of *haniwa* were deposited. A large piece of the far left part of one long side wall of the house-shaped *haniwa* projected slightly north-eastwards, and was turned inside out from its original position. Many of the pieces which had originally been situated in the short side wall adjacent to the large piece before breakage were small in size compared with ones from other side walls, and were scattered to the west.



Remains of a house-shaped *haniwa*, *in situ* in the fill of the southern ditch, viewed from the north.

We might now ask by whom and why was this house-shaped *haniwa* discarded in the fill of the ditch from the outside of the burial mound? We have already approached the next stage of archaeological reasoning. The more precisely an analysis is carried out based on the information about the archaeological context, the more new questions are raised.



A selection of cylindrical *haniwa*.