Let's Learn Together about Torii Ryuzo!

Tokushima Prefectural Torii Ryuzo Memorial Museum
Introduction

Torii Ryuzo (1870-1953) was a distinguished researcher in anthropology, ethnology and archeology, who was born and brought up in Tokushima in Japan. He conducted extensive surveys on physical attributes, languages, techniques, old tales, lifestyles and cultures of various ethnic groups by personally visiting various places of Tokushima and other parts of Japan, as well as wide areas of East Asia. He was also vigorous in carrying out excavations of archaeological sites. Torii then compiled his research findings in many books and papers.

Through these research activities, Torii aimed to clarify the origins of Japanese people and the Japanese culture. While making research expeditions to various parts of East Asia, he always compared what he found there with the equivalents of Japan and, along with his research in Japan, tried to understand where Japan stood within Asia. His research approaches and unremitting energy cannot be easily imitated and are highly admirable. We are proud to say that Torii Ryuzo is a great predecessor hailing from Tokushima, our beloved hometown.

This booklet presents Torii’s biography in the form of questions and answers. We hope that this booklet will serve as a textbook useful for all readers to learn together about him.
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Note:
This booklet includes names of a number of schools and geographical places in Japan and other countries from the Meiji Period to the present age. Please be advised that, basically, these names appearing in this booklet are the ones currently in use, in order to facilitate readers’ understanding.
1. Tokushima — Hometown of Torii Ryuzo —

Torii Ryuzo was born and brought up in Tokushima. This section introduces his childhood and the places that are remembered in connection with Torii.

**Childhood**

**Q1: Where was he born?**
A1: Torii was born on April 4, 1870, in what is now 1-chome, Higashisemba-cho, Tokushima City, located near the Shinmachi Bridge at the urban center of the city.

Torii’s family ran a tobacco wholesale store, which dated back to the Edo Period. It is said to have had many employees.

**Q2: What was Torii like as a child?**
A2: In 1876 when he became six years old, he was enrolled at Kanzen Elementary School (now Shinmachi Elementary School). However, being unable to adapt to school life, he always ran back home.

Despite this situation, Torii remembered that he was impressed by the sentence “There are five races in the world,” that he read in a school textbook. Probably this was the starting point for his later career as a researcher, during which he traveled around various Asian regions.

Eventually, Torii came to pursue self-education without attending school. He studied history, literature, English, German, mathematics and other academic subjects by reading books that he bought, and by being tutored by teachers of what are now called junior and senior high schools.
Let’s stroll around the places associated with Torii

1. Site of the house where Torii was born
2. Monument
3. Stone pillar at Takiyakushi Temple
4. Jochiji Temple (site of Kanzen Elementary School)
5. Kosenji Temple graveyard (Torii family’s grave)
6. Shiroyama Shell Mound and Torii’s monument

The greatest achievement that Torii made in Tokushima was the excavation of the Shiroyama Shell Mound, archeological remains from the Jomon Period (c. 10,500-300 B.C). A shell mound, or midden, is a heap of domestic refuse, such as shells, discarded by humans, marking a site of prehistoric settlement. Such refuse also includes animal and fish bones, as well as earthenware, stoneware, and bone and horn implements.

The Shiroyama Shell Mound is located within Tokushima Central Park, which is at the foot of Mt. Shiroyama on the north side of Tokushima Station. In April 1922, after hearing the information that clam shells were unearthed from the mountain foot, Torii excavated the site so as to discover a shell mound, where he found fragments of clam shells and earthenware under a large rock. He continued to survey the surrounding area, and discovered two additional shell mounds in a cave and behind a rock. He named these sites Shell Mound No.1, No. 2, and No.3, in the order of discovery. Torii also discovered Archaeological Site No. 4 (this is so called because it is not a shell mound).

Among findings from the Shiroyama Shell Mounds were the shells of sea clams, including hamaguri, asari and haigai, as well as oyster shells. From Shell Mound No.2, three sets of human bones were unearthed, showing a trace of ancient human lifestyle, so the site attracted much attention.
Monument of Torii Ryuzo (② on the map)
The house where Torii was born (① on the map) is located on the east side across the road.

Stone pillar at Takiyakushi Temple (③ on the map)
The pillar was donated by the grandfather of Torii.

Jochiji Temple (④ on the map)
When Torii was a child, the site of Jochiji Temple of today was the precincts of Genkokuji Temple, where Kanzen Elementary School, which Torii attended, was situated.

Torii family’s grave at Kosenji Temple (⑤ on the map)
The tallest gravestone in the photograph is his mother’s.

Shiroyama Shell Mound No. 3 and monument of Torii Ryuzo (⑥ on the map)
2. Doctoral Degree Obtained through Hard Work

While continuing to study by himself, Torii encountered anthropology, an academic discipline. He then moved to Tokyo, where he finally earned a doctoral degree. Let’s trace his progress.

**Encounter with anthropology**

**Q1: What is anthropology?**
A1: In the narrow sense, anthropology refers to the study of physical attributes and constitutions of human beings. However, during the time of Torii, the scope of anthropology was considered to include the study of cultures, such as languages, techniques and old tales (ethnology and cultural anthropology) and the clarification of ancient societies and cultures through excavations of archaeological sites (archeology). In this context, Torii pursued studies that covered a very broad range of subjects.

**Q2: How did Torii come to study anthropology?**
A2: In 1886 at the age of 16, upon hearing that an anthropological society had been founded in Tokyo, Torii joined the society. There, he met with its leader, Tsuboi Shogoro, a young scholar with whom Torii later started to exchange letters, through which he was given instructions from Tsuboi. In 1888, Tsuboi visited the house of Torii in order to invite him to study in Tokyo.

**Q3: Were there any friends with whom Torii studied together?**
A3: When Tsuboi visited Tokushima, he held a lecture at a temple located in Teramachi in Tokushima City. This lecture inspired Torii to form a study club, inviting those who were interested in studying anthropology in Tokushima. The club activities must have given a great pleasure to Torii, who had studied on his own until then, as it was the first experience to study together with kindred spirits.

**To the University of Tokyo**

**Q4: Did he move to Tokyo?**
A4: In 1890, Torii went to Tokyo alone. Soon after arriving at the capital, he visited Tsuboi, who was unfortunately away from home since he was studying in Europe. Torii therefore asked for help from a senior researcher hailing from Tokushima, enabling him to study at the Tokyo National Museum, and other places.

It was 1892 when Torii met again with Tsuboi. Then he came to frequent the anthropology department of the University of Tokyo. In the same year, Torii’s family also moved to Tokyo to live with him there.

**Q5: What did Torii do at the university?**
A5: In 1893, Torii found work as sample organizer in the anthropology department of the University of Tokyo, so as to formally become a member of the department. Under the instruction of Tsuboi, he surveyed shell mounds and burial mounds, while also travelling around Tochigi, Saitama, Nagano, Hyogo and Tokushima prefectures to investigate the local customs and old tales.
Afterward, Torii became famous for his research outcomes regarding various Asian regions, and was appointed as an assistant professor of the University of Tokyo. Even after achieving such fame and status, he continued to attend courses offered at the university and took language classes at a night school, while learning with younger students.

**Q6: When did he earn a PhD degree?**

**A6:** In 1921, the University of Tokyo awarded a PhD in literature to Torii for his dissertation entitled *Man-Mo no Yushi Izen* (On the Prehistoric Age in Manchuria and Mongolia), compiled based on his surveys conducted on the Asian Continent. "Man-Mo" means the area corresponding to today’s northeastern China, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, and Mongolia. The doctoral degree represented the high regard for the research achievements of Torii, who had started from self-education and continued tireless efforts despite hardships.

Before accomplishing this feat, he was supported not only by Tsuboi, who instructed him, but also his family, who moved to Tokyo to be with him, and his wife Kimiko, whom he married in 1901.
Throughout his life as a researcher, he traveled around various parts of Asia to survey diverse ethnic groups. This section explains how his research expeditions were made.

This map roughly illustrates the areas that Torii visited (shown in light blue). The areas cover a wide range of East Asia, including Taiwan, China (the southwestern and northeastern parts, and Inner Mongolia), the Korean Peninsula, Siberia, Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands. You can well understand how great his power of action was.
First overseas fieldwork

Q1: When was Torii's first overseas visit?
A1: In 1895 when he was 25 years old, Torii was sent by the Tokyo Anthropological Society to the Liaodong Peninsula, where he carried out his first overseas fieldwork. It was also the first survey of the Asian Continent conducted by a Japanese anthropologist.

Q2: What did he survey?
A2: During a five-month survey he did on foot, he collected stoneware in various regions, and discovered a number of dolmens (a type of megalithic tomb, usually consisting of a large ceiling and several stones supporting the ceiling). He was the first to identify remains of the Stone Age in northeastern China, which had not been known until then.

Q3: Why did he go to Taiwan?
A3: As a result of the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), Taiwan came under the control of Japan. It was therefore necessary for Japan to conduct detailed research on the people living in this new territory. In 1896, the University of Tokyo dispatched Torii to Taiwan to conduct the first survey there. From that year to 1911, he made a total of five research expeditions to Taiwan.

Q4: Was a camera a rare item at that time?
A4: In those days, it was still unusual to use cameras, unlike now when everyone uses cameras easily. Under such a situation, Torii became the first Japanese to use a camera for fieldwork during his surveys of Taiwan. The use of a camera enabled him to keep accurate records in the form of photographs.

Q5: What did he survey?
A5: In Taiwan, indigenous tribes have lived there since olden days. In an attempt to understand from where they had lived prior to their arrival in Taiwan, Torii studied their physical attributes, languages, techniques, and manners and customs. He also conducted a survey on the Yami people living on Orchid Island (Lan-yu), also known as Red Head Island (Hongtouryu). This work proved to be a valuable achievement.
Torii’s surveys were characterized by the introduction of the newest devices at that time. Famous among them were a camera and a wax-cylinder phonograph, which Torii used for the first time in fieldwork as a Japanese researcher. The use of such devices well represents his spirit of innovation.

He used a camera which reproduced object images on a glass dry plate (a glass plate with chemical agents applied on its surface, and each plate was postcard-sized and weighed approximately 100 g), corresponding to film used in present-day cameras. The weight of the camera was between three and four kg. The camera was quite different from convenient digital cameras we use today. The photographs that Torii took during his lifelong research career have been preserved as valuable records at the University of Tokyo and our museum.

He also employed a wax-cylinder phonograph for his study of Okinawa in 1904. The phonograph is well known as an invention by Thomas Edison. The phonograph used by Torii was a device that recorded sounds on a waxed cylinder. For present-day research activities, we may use a compact IC recorder. It is said that Torii recorded folk songs of Yaeyama, but none of his phonograph recordings remain now.
Q6: Why did Torii go to southwestern China?
A6: Torii made a research expedition to southeastern China in 1902, since he thought that the indigenous tribes he studied in Taiwan might have something to do with the Miao people living there.

Southwestern China here is defined as the region located around the source of the Yangtze River, which is the longest river in the country. Much of the region is occupied by steep mountains. Southwestern China is also home to many minority people.

Q7: Did he suffer great difficulty in conducting research?
A7: Torii surveyed mountainous areas, which involved great difficulty due to traffic inconvenience. Poor security in the region made matters worse. Sometimes he conducted surveys even in the disguise of a Chinese official for the sake of his own safety. He also had to carry a heavy load with him, including 500-600 glass dry plates (whose weight was 50-60 kg) which were used for taking photographs.

Q8: What did he survey?
A8: Torii made body measurements of the Miao and other various ethnic groups, and studied their languages, old tales, clothing, food and houses. For his surveys, Torii made effective use of the records on minority peoples compiled in China. This approach made his work particularly outstanding among Southwestern China studies carried out at that time.

Torii also made comparisons between the region’s culture and the Japanese culture, adding another feature to this research.
Q9: Are the Ainu people who are still living in Hokkaido different from the Kurile Ainu?
A9: Before the 20th century, the Ainu people were divided into three tribes, each of which had its distinctive characteristics: the Hokkaido Ainu living in Hokkaido and in the Kurile Islands to the south of Iturup Island; the Sakhalin Ainu living in southern Sakhalin; and the Kurile Ainu living in the northern part of the Kurile Islands. Although they were all Ainu, these respective tribes had different languages and cultures.

Q10: How many people of the Kurile Ainu are there now?
A10: In 1899, Torii was dispatched by the University of Tokyo to the Kurile Islands to survey the Ainu living there. At that time, the entire Kurile island chain was a territory of Japan. The Japanese government ordered the Kurile Ainu people to move to Shikotan Island. At that time, their population had already declined to a little more than 60 people. At present, there are very few people who are descendants of the Kurile Ainu.
Q11: What did Torii survey?
A11: He went to Shumshu Island situated in the extreme northern part of the Kurile Islands in order to investigate archaeological sites. He focused his attention on the Ainu, considering that they might be the indigenous people of Japan. Torii also conducted field interviews with elderly persons living on Shikotan Island about their myths, old tales and lifestyles, and had the Ainu people create items used in their everyday life. The research results he accumulated in this manner have served as a valuable record of the Kurile Ainu.

Q12: Why did Torii go to the Korean Peninsula?
A12: In 1910, the Korean Peninsula came under the control of Japan, which established the Government-General of Korea to rule the territory. Torii carried out research expeditions on the Korean Peninsula under a commission from the Government-General. Following a preliminary investigation in 1910, he conducted a total of six research expeditions from 1911 to 1916. The area he surveyed covered the entire Korean Peninsula.

Q13: What did he survey?
A13: He carried out studies primarily on remains of the Stone Age. His research achievements included the excavation of the Gimhae Shell Mound and the discoveries of dolmens in various parts of the Korean Peninsula.

In addition, he conducted surveys on manners and customs, as well as religious beliefs in each region on the peninsula, and took many photographs that have been maintained to date. His reports and photographs have proved to be important records that tell us the lifestyles of people living on the Korean Peninsula at that time.
4. Torii’s Research Activities Supported by His Family

Characteristically, Torii carried out surveys and studies together with his wife and other family members. After resigning from the University of Tokyo, he undertook this research style in earnest. Here, let’s trace the footprints of the Torii family’s research activities.

First research expedition for the Torii family

Q1: When was the Torii family’s first survey conducted?
A1: In 1906, his wife Kimiko was invited by the Karachin Royal Family of Inner Mongolia to work as a teacher there. Torii followed her and became a teacher in Karachin, too. Thereafter, Torii and Kimiko continued a long research expedition until the end of 1908, although they sometimes came back to Japan only temporarily. This marked the first survey carried out by the Torii family.

Q2: What did the Torii family study?
A2: Torii and his wife were in charge of different tasks in their surveys; Kimiko studied the culture, manners and customs, whereas Torii investigated archeological sites and artifacts. For Torii, these field surveys were significant as a starting point for his studies on archeological sites and artifacts of Liao (a dynasty founded by the Khitan, centered in Inner Mongolia in China, and which lasted from 916 to 1125), which later became his lifework.

Torii and his wife Kimiko standing in front of the white pagoda of Qingzhou in Inner Mongolia
Q3: What was the Torii Anthropological Research Institute?
A3: In 1924, Torii stepped down from his post as a faculty member at the University of Tokyo. He then established the Torii Anthropological Research Institute at his home, where he started research activities as a “scholar of the town,” together with his family members.

Q4: What was the Torii family’s research like?
A4: Torii made frequent research expeditions to Northeastern China and Inner Mongolia, mostly accompanied by his family. His wife Kimiko worked as his manager, his daughter made sketches, and his son took photographs. In this manner, Torii’s research activities were supported by his family members.

However, no family members felt bothered about playing their roles in Torii’s research. The whole family always enjoyed talking about their studies. It can be said that his family members were bonded together by enthusiasm for learning.

Q5: What did they study?
A5: In 1930, the Torii family surveyed the Qingling Tomb (an ancient imperial mausoleum) of the Liao dynasty. It was the greatest scale excavation throughout Torii’s life as a researcher. Torii further pursued studies on Liao history and culture, and published many books on these themes. Kimiko’s research work was also highly evaluated.
Activities in Japan

Q6: Didn’t Torii conduct archeological research also in Japan?
A6: Yes. Of course, he pursued matters in Japan. He did so while he worked at the University of Tokyo. After leaving the university, he was invited by various institutes to study local histories, and provided cooperation in human resource development in respective regions.

Q7: What did he do?
A7: Torii placed emphasis on the establishment and management of the Musashino Society, a history study group in the Musashino district, Tokyo, where he lived. He also focused on research into the histories of Nagano and Miyazaki prefectures.

In addition, he offered support to younger researchers hailing from Tokushima, his hometown. For instance, he supervised the compilation of Kawauchi Son Shi (History of Kawauchi Village). Kawauchi Village is present-day Kawauchi-cho, Tokushima City.

Q8: We know that the war between Japan and China became intensified at that time. Even under such circumstances, did his family continue surveys of Inner Mongolia and other regions?
A8: Following the Manchurian Incident, which started in 1931, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, also known as the Lugouqiao Incident, occurred in 1937, triggering the second Sino-Japanese war (1937-45). Even under these circumstances, the Torii family continued research activities. In 1939, he was scouted by the Harvard-Yenching Institute located in Beijing, China, and the entire Torii family moved to Beijing. It is said that this enabled them to visit various parts of China to continue research activities.

Q9: Didn’t they come back to Japan?
A9: In 1941, the Pacific War broke out, in which Japan confronted the United States, the United Kingdom and their allies. Then the Harvard-Yenching Institute, which was a U.S. affiliated organization, was closed. As a result, the Torii family was hard-pressed. However, his children found employment and supported the livelihood of the family, which remained in Beijing.

Q10: After the war, how was their life?
A10: After World War II came to an end in 1945, the Harvard-Yenching Institute resumed. Since Torii had a deep understanding of China, the institute invited him again, and so he was able to work on research there. It was in 1951 when he returned to Japan. It seems because he wanted to complete his research on the Liao culture in his home country.

However, after coming back to Japan, the Torii family was badly off, and many people offered financial assistance. Two years later after returning home, on January 14, 1953, Torii died at the age of 82 with his family at his side in Tokyo.
Profile of Torii Ryuzo

(Historical events are marked with an asterisk.)

1870  Born in what is now Higashisemba-cho, Tokushima City (April 4).
1876  Enrolled at Kanzen Elementary School (now Shinmachi Elementary School).
1886  Joined the Tokyo Anthropological Society.
1888  Tsuboi Shogoro visited the house of the Torii family.
1890  Went to Tokyo to study.
1892  The entire Torii family moved to Tokyo.
1893  Found work as sample organizer in the anthropology department of the University of Tokyo.
1895  Conducted his first overseas fieldwork (on the Liaodong Peninsula, China).


1896  Made the first research expedition to Taiwan (using a camera for the first time). On his way back home, Torii visited Okinawa for research.
1898  Became Assistant at the University of Tokyo.
1899  Conducted a survey of the Kurile Islands.
1901  Married Ichihara Kimi (who always called herself “Kimiko”).
     Surveyed Kito Village in Tokushima Prefecture.
1902  Surveyed southwestern China (until March 1903).
1904  Surveyed Okinawa (using a wax-cylinder phonograph for the first time).

*Russo-Japanese War broke out.

1905  Appointed as a Lecturer of the University of Tokyo.

1906  Kimiko and Torii became teachers of schools in Inner Mongolia.
1910  Conducted preliminary survey on the Korean Peninsula.

*Japanese Annexation of Korea took place.
1920  Honored with the Ordre des Palmes académiques (Order of Academic Palms) by the Institut de France (French Institute).
1921  Offered a PhD degree in literature by the University of Tokyo.
1922  Appointed an Assistant Professor at the University of Tokyo.
     Conducted survey of the Shiroyama Shell Mound in Tokushima City.
1924  Resigned from the University of Tokyo, and established the Torii Anthropological Research Institute.
1939  Scouted by the Harvard-Yenching Institute in Beijing, China.
1941  Harvard-Yenching Institute closed.

*Pacific War broke out.
1945  Torii returned to work at the Harvard-Yenching Institute.

*Japan surrendered to the Allied Powers.
1951  Retired from the Harvard-Yenching Institute and returned to Japan.
1953  Died at the age of 82 in Tokyo (January 14).
1959  Kimiko died at the age 79 in Tokyo (August 19).
Tokushima Prefectural Torii Ryuzo Memorial Museum

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● Hours 9:30am-5:00pm
● Closed
  Mondays (except national holidays), 29 Dec -4 Jan
  When a national holiday falls on Monday, the Museum is closed the following day.
● Admission Fees
  Permanent exhibition
    Adult 200yen *160yen
    Student (college & senior high school)
      100yen *80yen
    Pupil (junior high & elementary school)
      50yen *40yen
  * for group above 20 persons
  Handicapped and senior citizens (65 and older) are free.
  Pupils and Students are free on Saturdays, Sundays, holidays, and their school days off.
  All visitors are free on national holidays.

Special exhibitions
  Different fees are applied for special exhibitions.

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