

## **Report:**

### **RECENT JAPAN-NORTHWEST COAST WET SITE EXCHANGES**

By Dale Croes, South Puget Sound Community College and Amy Homan, Katzie Development Corporation and Simon Fraser University with contributions by Jason Channel, SPSCC, Eva Marie Fuschillo, SPSCC & TESC, Kathleen Hawes, TESC, and Olivia Ness, TESC.

Wet site preservation of basketry and acorn pits on both sides of the Pacific Rim has recently expanded a mutual interest and exchange between Japanese and Northwest Coast Archaeologists. When Dr. Dale Croes' South Puget Sound Community College (SPSCC) and Dr. John Fagan's Archeological Investigation Northwest (AINW) crews found numerous acorn leaching pits, some with baskets in them, at the Sunken Village Wet Site (35MU4) on Sauvie Island, Portland Oregon in 2006, Dr. Croes e-mailed pictures to wet site archaeologist and WARP Pacific Representative Dr. Akira Matsui, Director, Center for Archaeological Operations, Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, National Institutes for Cultural Heritage. Dr. Matsui had been helping to direct the excavation of the 7000 BP+ Higashimyo Jomon wet site, revealing hundreds of acorn storage pits with preserved baskets often in them, on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu. He offered to assist and sponsor further investigations of Sunken Village with SPSCC and AINW through an international grant, bringing 4 colleagues to help with a detailed mapping of over a hundred acorn leaching pits in the fall of 2007. The Sunken Village research synthesis is now reported in the *Journal of Wetland Archaeology (JWA)* as a special volume 9 (Croes, Fagan and Zehendner 2009—see announced under *Publications*; web site for order:

<http://www.oxbowbooks.com/bookinfo.cfm/ID/86051//Location/DBBC>).

To expand exchanges and visits to wet site collections and sites on both sides of the Pacific, mutual visits occurred in the Spring of 2009 by Japanese archaeologists to NW museums and collections in Washington and Canada, followed by visit by US and Canadian researchers to museums, collections and wet sites in Japan.

In late February/early March 2009 Dr. Akira Matsui and two researchers, Dr. Naoto Yamamoto, Professor, Department of Archaeology, Graduate School of Letters, Nagoya University and Dr. Tomonori Kanno, Tohoku University Archaeologist joined Dr. Croes to visit Northwest museums and research sites particularly to see wet site basketry and Northwest Coast harpoons. They were hosted by (1) the U.W. Burke Museum (thanks to Megan Noble; and met with Adam Rosabaugh concerning his MA Thesis research on NW Coast harpoons at W.W.U.), (2) the Royal British Columbia Museum (thanks to Grant Keddie; Figure 1), (3) University of Victoria Zooarchaeology Laboratory (thanks to Rebecca Wigen), (4) Simon Fraser University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology (thanks to Barbara Winter), and (5) the Katzie First Nation archaeology laboratory in Pitt Meadows to see their wet site artifacts and macroflora, especially ancient wapato, recently recovered from archaeological site DhRp 52 (thanks to Amy Homan and Katzie First Nation).



*Figure 1. Japanese wet site archaeologists visiting Royal British Columbia Museum on a Saturday through the kind generosity of Grant Keddie, Curator of Archaeology. From left to right, Dr. Akira Matsui, Grant, Dr. Tomonori Kanno and Dr. Naoto Yamamoto. We are observing the ancient Katete River basketry hat found in Tlingit territory.*

In late March/early April 2009 the SPSCC Anthropology Club students and researchers, after two years of fund raising, joined by researcher Amy Homan from S.F.U. and Katzie Development Corporation, traveled in exchange to Japan. Dale Croes and student researchers flew together to Osaka. Amy flew on her own to Tokyo, Narita airport straight from the Vancouver International Airport. Traveling alone, her journey was a bit more challenging and scary, especially when she had to find her way through the Shinjigawa Station in Tokyo, Japan's largest rail station, without understanding a word of Japanese. (The 4 students traveling with Dale Croes (DC also knew no Japanese) had all had Japanese language classes). Amy only got on one wrong train, but luckily it was heading to Nara!

From March 26-28, 2009, Kathleen Hawes, Olivia Ness, Jason Channel, Eva Marie Fuschillo, Amy Homan and Dale Croes were hosted by Dr. Akira Matsui at the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, National Institutes for Cultural Heritage, where they toured their well-equipped wet site laboratories, including huge stainless steel heated polyethylene glycol tanks and a freeze dryer that you could literally walk into (Figure 2). This large research laboratory also specialized in well-equipped and state-of-the-art dendrochronology research, chemical element analysis, radiography—x-ray film/digital based, 3-D imagery analysis, and other archaeological analyses. Dr. Takayuki Okochi gave us an eye-opener demonstration of his non-intrusive, non-destructive, laser beam equipment for recording and digitally imaging tree rings inside an object—that he helped design. We also visited many museums and temples in the area.



*Figure 2. Group pose in front of walk-in freeze dryer used to finish conservation of waterlogged wood and fiber artifacts at the Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties.*

On March 29<sup>th</sup> we traveled over the Japanese Alps to the Sea of Japan, Kanazawa City, by bullet trains (traveling up to 200 mph) where we were hosted by Dr. Naoto Yamamoto, Professor, Department of Archaeology, Graduate School of Letters, Nagoya University, with our lodging and local transportation supported by his international exchange grant from Mitsubishi Corporation. Our first visit was the Kanazawa Archaeology Center where we recorded 3-4,000 BP Jomon basketry and an amazing child's cherry bark shoe (Figure 3). We visited Jomon Wood Circle reconstructions, a wooden version of a Stone Henge calendar structure, and saw the actual wooden post remains at the Shinpohomachi Archaeological Storage Facility. We then road a bus to the White Mountain Folklore Museum, where we saw numerous diamond plaited mats, a bag, and frame looms for making diamond-plaited mats. This was of interest to us since a distinct diamond-plaited soft-bag was found in 2007 at the Sunken Village site. This kind of diamond plaited soft weave on two-strand string warps has been recorded for up to 9000 years in caves in the Great Basin through to examples in Klamath, Puget Sound Salish and Bella Coola museum collections, and for 3-4 millennia in Japanese wet sites (see Croes, Fagan and Zehendner 2009 for discussions of this potential cultural sharing of basketry techniques across the Pacific).



*Figure 3. Approximately 3,000 year old Jomon cherry bark child's shoe at the Kanazawa Archaeology Center.*

The next day we drove by bus outside of Kanazawa to the impressive Sakuramachi Site Jomon Park excavated material exhibition and storage facility. This 3-4,000 BP Jomon wet site has an impressive array of basketry, mostly open twined and twill plaited work, as well as red lacquer-ware combs and wooden bowls. This project resulted from rescue archaeology involving road construction (Figures 4-5).



*Figure 4. Common 3-4,000 BP Jomon open twined basketry from the Sakuramachi Site.*



*Figure 5. 3-4,000 BP Jomon red laquer-ware comb from the Sakuramachi Site*

On April 1st we went to the rail depot for a long bullet train trip through Osaka to Saga on Kyushu Island, southern Japan. We passed through Hiroshima City; viewing this beautiful city that had experienced the first U.S. atomic bomb during WWII, which was sobering. We arrived in Saga City in southern Japan and took cabs to visit the location of the 7,000 years BP+ Higashimyo Jomon wet site rescue excavations— which is now filled by a large reservoir. Over 700 baskets and basketry fragments as well as many wooden artifacts were found in acorn storage pits in this large shell midden site.

The next morning we visited the Higashimyo research and processing laboratory located in a converted middle school facility. We were amazed by the size and number of recovered large acorn baskets that had been used to pack acorns in numerous acorn storage pits; evidently the acorns were placed in basket loads into the ancient pits. When the acorns were recovered in ancient times, many of the baskets were too soggy to reuse and left in the pits. The 7,000 BP baskets were in very fragile condition and removed on a pedestal of soil after being encased in injected and hardened foam, to be opened and cleaned in the laboratory, then sent to conservation where they were hardened on the matrix to stabilize them (Figures 6-9). Many associated wooden artifacts included combs and bowls, as well as dot incised bone decorated artifacts and jomon pottery. Certainly one of the most spectacular Jomon wet sites in Japan and the world, we were fortunate to see and photographically record this huge perishable artifact collection.



*Figure 6. Wet site basketry specialist, Olivia Ness, photographs the very large 7,000 BP Higashimyo Jomon wet site acorn storage basket.*



*Figure 7. 7,000 BP acorn storage basket from the Higashimyo Jomon wet site. Note acorns around basket and also the decorative color contrast around the rim. Scale in cm.*



*Figure 8. Examples of decorative basket weave of twill (left) and combination twined and checker plaiting from the 7,000 year BP Higashimyo Jomon wet site.*



*Figure 9. 7,000 BP wooden comb found at the Higashimyo Jomon wet site.*

April 3<sup>rd</sup> we returned by bullet train to the Nara Research Center, including a stop in Kyoto to visit the Kiyomizu Temple. We prepared to present a ½ day mini-conference the next day on our Sunken Village and Katzie First Nation's wapato site research. The presentations were held in the Nara Research Center Conference Room for their research staff and Kyoto University students. We presented each of our ½

hour PowerPoint talks which were then summarized by a Nara researcher into Japanese following each talk. All papers were enthusiastically discussed and well received—providing an excellent format for exchange (Figure 10). At 4:30 pm we all went to the lobby where the students had prepared a wonderful dinner party (it was pouring rain out so we decided to stay at the Center). We celebrated a great visit and exchange as a perfect conclusion for our visit (Figure 11). Dr. Matsui told us that we were the first foreigners invited to visit these Japanese wet site sites and collections, and we began planning/discussing additional wet site exchanges across the Pacific.



*Figure 10. Group picture following mini-conference presented by Northwest Coast wet site researchers on Sunken Village (35MU4; which we excavated jointly with the Nara research team) and the Katzie First Nation's wapato wet site research presented by Amy Homan. Our host, Dr. Akira Matsui is in upper left, and his research staff and graduate students from Kyoto University are on upper right and lower row. Northwest Coast wet site researchers, to right of Dr. Matsui, are Olivia Ness, Amy Homan, Eva Marie Fuschillo, Kathleen Hawes, Jason Channel and Dr. Dale Croes.*





*Figure 11. Kyoto University graduate students and Nara center research staff prepare a dinner following the conference to celebrate our successful and expanding exchanges in wet site and other archaeology.*

In late July/early August 2009 Dr. Naoto Yamamoto, Professor, Department of Archaeology, Graduate School of Letters, Nagoya University and Dr. Tomonori Kanno, Tohoku University Archaeologist brought two graduate students to visit Dr. Croes' SPSCC field school excavations at the Qwu?gwes wet site on Mud Bay in Olympia, Washington, USA (Figure 12). It was the 11<sup>th</sup> field school conducted with the Squaxin Island Tribe, Shelton, Washington, USA. (<http://www.squaxinland.org/>).

Dr. Yamamoto's graduate student, Hotaru Mizuno, and Dr. Akira Matsui's graduate student from Kyoto University, Yumiko Kanahara, worked with the Qwu?gwes students to experience a wet site excavation on the Northwest Coast of North America. The group also got to join our field trip to attend the annual and 20<sup>th</sup> Canoe Journey arrival at the Suquamish Tribe, People of Chief Seattle, Reservation, where almost 200 canoes from throughout the Northwest came in for their annual celebration (Figure 13).

Dr. Yamamoto, Dr. Kanno, and their students also were able to help us expose and record a split cedar limb basket containing steaming rocks while at Qwu?gwes (Figure 14). This basket was a new twill weave style not found before at Qwu?gwes.



Figure 12 (left). Dr. Naoto Yamamoto (upper right) and Dr. Dr. Tomonori Kanno (upper left) with graduate students Hotaru Mizuno (lower left) and Yumiko Kanahara (lower right) while visiting Qwu?gwes excavations; Figure 13 (right) Approximately 100 Native America canoes arrive at Suquamish during annual Canoe Journey.



Figure 14. (l to r) Dr. Yamamoto, Hotaru Mizuno, Yumiko Kanahara, and Dr. Kanno observing ancient basket with steaming stones found at the Qwu?gwes wet site and shell midden, 2009.

## Reference

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