Comparative and Global Perspectives on Japanese Archaeology

Burial Mounds in Europe and Japan

Comparative and Contextual Perspectives

edited by

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(Figures edited by Werner Steinhaus)

Cover illustrations: Mori-shōgunzuka mounded tomb located in Chikuma-shi in Nagano prefecture, Japan, by Werner Steinhaus (above)
Magdalenenberg burial mound at Villingen-Schwenningen, Germany, by Thomas Knopf (below)

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Burial Mounds in Europe and Japan: An Introduction

Werner Steinhaus and Thomas Knopf

When Europe meets Japan: The Occasion

This book originates from an international workshop held at Tuebingen in Germany between 4th and 6th of November 2015.[1] The workshop gathered together for the first time specialists of the European Bronze and Iron Age, and Japanese archaeologists of the Yayoi and Kofun periods to discuss burial mounds as a phenomenon in both parts of the world. The workshop developed out of a growing partnership between German and Japanese archaeology, initiated in part through the development of an exhibition in Mannheim and Berlin organized and directed by Werner Steinhaus in 2004/05 (Wieczorek/Steinhaus/Sahara 2004). The exhibition, entitled '*Die Zeit der Morgenröte*' (The time of Dawn), displayed the rich archaeology of the Japanese archipelago to a German audience for the first time. It also brought together the editors of this book (Knopf and Steinhaus). Since then, visits, lectures and meetings have taken place between the two countries in order to strengthen the knowledge of Japanese archaeology in Germany and Europe, and vice versa.

Both archeologies share a lot of commonalities. This applies to research history, methods and theories but especially similar phenomena like burial mound building. One could easily add more like certain settlement types (huge fortified structures or smaller rectangular fortifications, in German called *Viereckschanzen*/*Herrenhöfe*) and even the interpretations of social structures, trade etc.

The workshop in Tuebingen was structured around bringing together specialists investigating similar aspects of burial mound research so that they could present and discuss current approaches and ideas. This approach took the form of one German/European archaeologist talking about, for example, the research history of burial mound excavation, with the same topic then being highlighted by a Japanese archaeologist. Unlike many workshops and conferences, a good amount of time was given for questions and discussion. This led to a very fruitful exchange and an opportunity to get to know different archeologies. Discussions also brought to the fore the ways in which the archaeology, features, methods and theories pertaining to burial mounds and their study, overlapped or diverged between the two areas.

Several topics were chosen as relevant for discussion:

1. Excavating burial mounds: This topic brings together not only the origins of burial mound research and excavation techniques, but also the (more or less explicit) theoretical approaches to the subject.
2. Origins and development of burial mounds: This topic explores when and why burial mound building started (e.g. because of social differentiation) and what typifies its main features across the two areas, taking into consideration that European mound building starts in the Neolithic and has several periods of discontinuity (Knopf 2015), whereas Japanese mounded tombs have a continuous history of around 1000 years.
3. Burial mounds and social stratification: 'Big mound = big boss' is an oversimplification, but this topic explores how, in Europe as well as in Japan, social ranking systems are inferred from the size of mounds and the grave goods within the burial itself.
4. Burial mounds and landscape: Every burial mound, or group of burial mounds, is situated within its landscape, and simultaneously shapes its landscape. This topic explores how the ambivalent relationship between burial mounds and their landscapes can be analyzed in Europe as well as in Japan.
5. Burial mounds and settlements: This topic explores the relationship between burial mounds and settlements, recognizing that mounds are usually part of a cemetery belonging to the inhabitants of a nearby settlement. The proximity of a burial mound to its settlement can express a specific attitude towards death and ritual.
6. Burial mounds and iron: Objects of iron are regularly found in burial mounds, especially within rich graves. Weapons, armor and (agricultural) tools are common grave goods in both parts of the world and this topic explores the question of the importance of this resource.
7. Burial mounds as monuments of power and ritual: Burial mounds are visible monuments that transport social, religious or political messages to others and their own community. The Japanese examples with their sheer scale, seem to be especially demonstrative in this context.

As the reader might note, authors differ inevitably in considering their specific topics. Some authors approach

[1] See the comment of Chris Scarre on 'Kofun, Kaffee and Kuchen' in his editorial of Antiquity, volume 90, issue 349: 1–8.

their topic from a global perspective, others from a more theoretical view, and others take a more survey-based approach to the subject. Each author was asked to provide a short introduction to their work, along with a review of the most discussed points within their fields. We think that each approach has its own benefit and the discussion profits from stressing different aspects.

Perception of Japanese archeology outside of Japan

Outside of the Japanese islands Japanese archeology has not yet been noticed and recognized in all its complexity and in spite of its wealth of features and finds. Its potential and its importance for archeology of East Asia according to its institutional strength, a refined excavation technology and research is more or less only known to archeologists who are involved in that part of the world. This workshop focusing mainly on the archeology of the Kofun period demonstrated the potential for comparative research and new perspectives in terms of a deeper exploration of this region and its archaeological landscape. Within East Asia it can be said with complete justification that Japanese archeology has been setting the standard until now.

For the above-mentioned lack of perception one can state the following reasons:

1. While the Japanese archaeological community in the past and to this day perceives trends within the archaeological English-language research outside of Japan – especially in the last 30 years –, however, it doesn't sufficiently proceed in the reverse direction. Nevertheless monographs and articles on the different periods of Ancient Japan are increasingly published in other languages (Pearson 1992; Wieczorek/Steinhaus/Forschungsinstitut für Kulturgüter 2004; MIZOGUCHI 2013; KAIFU 2014).
2. This lack of output may be caused by two factors: One is connected with a language barrier, since these kind of publications are required in English in most cases. But apart from a few exceptions, the main focus is obviously on matters concerning the own region and being occupied with large-scale excavation projects that have been fueled by the unstoppable economic development of the postwar era. Therefore a lot of energy was devoted to deal with documentation and analysis of an incredible large amount of material, which has led to concentrate on the Japanese islands and the surrounding regions of East Asia, in particular the Korean peninsula and China (OKAMURA 2004; OKAMURA 2011; Steinhaus 2016: 324–325). At the same time the opinion is voiced that this self-imposed restriction is completely adequate and more than sufficient because of domestic commitments and the uniqueness of the Japanese material.

A turning point for the reception of Japanese research was the first major English publication 'Windows on the Japanese Past' (Pearson 1986), which made available a wide range of essays on Japanese archeology. At the height of the Japanese so-called bubble economy an exhibition in the United States took place in 1992, where a first attempt was undertaken to present across the board a summary of recent research results and the Japanese Pre- and Early History from its beginnings to the eighth century AD to a wider audience outside of the Japanese islands. The concept of this project was based on North American cultural anthropology (Pearson 1992).

By contrast the 2004/2005 large-scale cultural historical exhibition in Germany (Mannheim/Berlin) spanning over the same time frame was carried out with the intention to give exclusively voice to (over 100) Japanese archaeologists. In addition to the objects, a broad-based presentation of the state of research until about the turn of the millennium was undertaken. The focus was less on the finds, but on the interpretation and presentation of the features. Above all the creation of a textbook, an introduction to the Japanese archeology and giving the provision of insights into research strategies of the Japanese archaeology were the main goals (Wieczorek/Steinhaus 2004).

Shifting paradigms in Japanese archaeology

The phase of large industrial infrastructure development projects in Japan can be regarded as over. The country has become a classic post-industrial society, which also has consequences in regard to the orientation of archeology. One of the world's most important archaeological institutionalized research is providing employment for sometimes up to 7,000 archeologists. But the time of large excavations and countless other smaller ones is probably gone for good (NAKAKUBO, this volume: Figure 5). With the entry into the 21st century the evaluation of the results achieved so far has become the major task. Simultaneously with dwindling financial resources and the emphasis on a paradigm led by excavations gone, new directions and strategies are evolving. Like everywhere else by now, the preservation and protection of the remaining sites enjoys top priority (NAKAGAWA 2010: 233–235; INADA 2014; OKAMURA 2011: 77-86; Steinhaus 2016: 324-325).

At the same time, it is essential that such above mentioned exhibition projects continue to be undertaken in order to make a wider audience beyond the Japanese islands more familiar with and aware of its early history respectively culture and not just leave this to the research communities. It also forces the Japanese archaeologists to engage more actively in presenting their own research to foreign audiences. The task for the future will be to develop further exhibitions of the Kofun period with cultural-historical concepts. It is important to be able to get rid of presentation concepts which are specific for exhibitions in Japan and to try to put the Kofun period and its predecessor within

the framework and in comparison with cultures that have also constructed burial mounds. During spring 2018 the National Museum of Japanese History (Sakura, Chiba prefecture) hold a special exhibition titled 'Kofun Culture through the Eyes of the World' (Kokuritsu rekishi minzoku hakubutsukan 2018), which aimed in that direction.

Furthermore Japanese archeology should also abandon the sometimes self-chosen isolation, go beyond monolithic presentations of its research (such as exhibitions) and enter and engage in a more intensive long ranging dialogue with the international research community. For example, as for the Kofun period, the knowledge gained in vast examinations of mounded tombs deserves to be integrated in a larger context outside of the Japanese islands in order to enrich the phenomenon of burial mounds in all its complexity and add new facets to a greater understanding of mortuary archeology. This should also go beyond fitting the phenomena of Kofun period into established frameworks of social archeology concerning state formation or ranking models. In addition, the dialogue with scientists beyond the Anglo-American language area must also be sought, as it was achieved here.

Visualizations and presentations of Japanese archeology through exhibitions and scientific exchange can be enhanced by efforts to achieve world heritage status for some of the sites. This can be another important step to reach out to an international larger audience. Thus the nomination of the archaeological site of 'Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region' in 2017 is an important step to make known ritual archaeology of the Kofun period in an international framework. Beside the problems associated with the application, the impulses for a broader recognition of the Kofun period are of great importance (https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1535/documents/). Without question, through a world heritage nomination a large impact can be achieved. For example, the application documentations assembled in English, are nowadays large volumes of information which are freely available on the internet. The sites are placed in the context of other outstanding nominations. In addition, the status also encourages to visit and to engage with such archaeological sites, which furthermore adds to a worldwide reception. The nomination of the Mozu-Furuichi mounded tomb groups in 2018 as future candidate by the Japanese state for world heritage recognition, will probably be a milestone in propelling the Kofun period with its outstanding earthen burial mounds into the consciousness of a worldwide audience and in the focus of world archeology (see Ryan and FUKUNAGA, this volume). Therefore, these world heritage nominations offer a wide range of opportunities to create an awareness of the Kofun period culture. Furthermore, one can establish a research framework as outlined and demonstrated for Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites, which can also benefit international research cooperations and recognition and above all, vastly enhancing archaeological knowledge (Darvill 2007; Leivers 2016). In doing so, one should stay away from focusing on economic benefits like tourism and acknowledge its potential to initialize a dialogue about the Kofun period in the worldwide research framework. Furthermore, in this context one should refrain from one-dimensional explanatory patterns or images. Rather, one should create a wide-spread interest in the archeology of the Kofun period beyond Asia.

Burial mound – mounded tomb – *kofun*

In the context of the world heritage applications the usage of the term *kofun* (lit.: old mound, ancient tomb; 'old tomb of mounded earth'; for further explanation: FUKUNAGA, NAKAKUBO, this volume) might be established and recognized by research, media and other audiences in the long term and be associated with burial mounds unique to the Japanese islands. The degree of recognition of such wording enables one to evaluate the extent to which the knowledge of an archaeological culture has prevailed. For example, the Russian term *kurgan* (a loanword from East Slavic languages) or *Kurgán* respectively Kurgan culture is the standard term for structures – created by heaping earth and stones over a burial chamber – in the context of Eastern European and Central Asian archaeology and has become generally accepted since the fifties of the 20th century (Hansen 2011: 311–312; Kipfer 2000: 291). It was introduced by Marija Gimbutas in 1956 as a broader term (Gimbutas 1970: 156). This can not be said for terms like *Kofun period* or *kofun*, which obviously exemplifies the fragmentary knowledge about the archeology of the Kofun period. On the other hand, it is very interesting that the terms *haniwa* (ceramic clay figures placed on the surface of mounded tombs) or *dogū* (clay figurines) for example in the fields of art history are recognized in a more wider framework (Maison de la culture du Japon à Paris 2001; Kaner 2009).

In contrast to Europe, it can be assumed that the Japanese island chain is a clearly defined geographical and cultural space and, moreover, is politically unified as a state. Although there are large geographic, geological and natural differences in the Japanese archipelago, which also affect the formation of archaeological cultures, periods or phases, the insular situation leads one to want to recognize a closed cultural entity with a supposed autochthonous or unique development. Of course, this view is to be understood from the perspective of the present and is often ideological. This significant factor – the understanding of a politically and socially closed space – with a great identity-creating potential has also largely influenced the view of the archaeological periods (Barnes 2010; Steinhaus 2014). Therefore, one can assign the term *kofun* without doubt to and within this distinct geographic area.

This leads on to issues of terminology and should be taken as an opportunity to make some comments on the term 'burial mound' and its related conceptual differences. In

German-speaking regions the equivalent term *Grabhügel* or *Hügelgrab* are generic terms, which can be applied in a wide framework and in nearly all periods (Capelle 2000). In the English-speaking environment we are already getting into trouble due to the usage of different terms depending on region, tradition and linguistic heritage. Concerning the publication of this essay collection, the question inevitably arose, which English terms should be used in general. In the following, the different definitions which have inevitably emerged in the course of time due to the scientific pursuit of the phenomenon of burial mounds, will be discussed.

Starting with 'burial mound', the special feature of this term is its universal applicability regarding different time periods respectively geographic spaces and can be used almost without restriction. This is already evident from lexical standard works. "*burial mound: A large artificial hill of earth and stones built or placed over the remains of the dead at the time of burial. In England, the equivalent term is barrow; in Scotland, cairn; and in Europe and elsewhere, tumulus*." (Kipfer 2000: 84). Even in the definition given here, the synonyms are very clearly defined and narrowed down to regional traditions. For example, 'barrow' has become standard expression in British archeology and in the British islands. At the same time, it is hardly ever applied in a Central European context or elsewhere.

Tumulus, a loanword from Latin, is a slightly different story. A major symposium held in Istanbul in 2009 titled '*Tumulus as sema*' illustrates impressively the usage (Henry 2016). Here, one can observe that even in the wider European and non-European areas this term is utilized in many respects for actually mainly *round* burial mounds. "*tumulus: A mound of earth or stones built over a burial— most often a large, circular tomb*." (Kipfer 2000: 578) If one takes a closer look at the term, there is a very important limitation that is particularly related to the structure (more or less round) and connected to its origins in Latin respectively Indo-European (Miller 2006: 198; Watkins 2000: 92). The primarily round burial mounds, which, somewhat exaggerated, appear as a kind of artificial (round) swelling in the landscape. Concerning *tumulus*, the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Archaeology immediately refers to *round barrow* without any further explanation (Darvill 2008: 471)

> "*round barrow [MC] Probably the most widespread and numerous class of archaeological monument in Europe, and found in other parts of the world too. At the most basic a round barrow is simply a roughly hemispherical mound of soil, stone, and redeposited bedrock heaped over a central burial* (Darvill 2008: 393)."
> "*barrow [MC] General term used to describe a mound of earth and stone heaped up to cover one or more burials. Burial beneath a barrow is one of the most enduring traditions of burial practice in Europe, and is also found in many other parts of the world. Many different kinds of barrow can be recognized on the basis of shape, construction detail, date, position, and relationships to other things. Round, long, oval, and square forms are the most common styles found. Round barrows in England are often called tumuli* (Darvill 2008: 41)."

Its usage is very pronounced especially in a Mediterranean context (Alcock 2016). These features and limitations have led the editors to suggest in principle to utilize the term 'burial mound' in the essays. However, some authors considered it appropriate to use *tumulus*, which will not be called into question.

The situation is different for the Japanese archipelago or the East Asian region, where the term 'mounded tomb' has more or less gained acceptance. Even laymen are able to understand outside a context that one is dealing with a grave possessing a mound. "*mounded tomb: A type of elite burial used in east Asia, built with monumental earthen or stone-piled mounds that contained burial facilities. The burials ranged from wooden chambers, clay enclosures, to brick or stone megalithic chambers. There were round and square mounds, and Japan's were keyhole-shaped*" (Kipfer 2000: 370; see also YAMAMOTO 2001). But even here, bowing to European research traditions and its long history, some authors have nonetheless used the term *tumulus* in the context of the Japanese Kofun period (MIZOGUCHI 2013). One could regard this as an Eurocentric focus or the obsessive placement into categories or phenomena outside the Japanese islands. This does not seem appropriate, because the phenomenon of burial mounds on the Japanese islands is characterized by an extraordinarily wide range of shapes, which is highlighted by the contributions of the Japanese colleagues. The mounds range from rectangular ones with corner projections, round, keyhole-shaped ones etc. Therefore, the term *tumulus*, which in the broader sense rather points to a round mound, is rather inappropriate. 'Keyhole tumuli', as introduced by Alcock (2016: 3), seems like another infelicitous wording compared to the self-explanatory expression 'keyhole-shaped mounded tomb'.

Concerning the term 'burial mound' in the Japanese history of research, two phenomena can be observed: the Yayoi-period graves with burial mound (*Yayoi jidai funkyū bo*) (see NOJIMA, this volume: Figure 10; HABUTA 2013: 112–113; TANAKA 2002: 778) and the Kofun-period mounded tombs called *kofun* (HABUTA 2013: 120–127). The former is commonly used only until the appearance of the the first standardized keyhole-shaped mounded tombs, on the other hand, the latter (mounded tomb = *kofun)* refers exclusively to phenomena from that time on. In Japanese, the term *funkyū* is more or less a synonym for 'mound' and can be applied as a technical expression to both periods (ŌTSUKA 1996: 295). To ensure a better understanding of the archaeology of the Japanese islands, this is a very crucial issue and is outlined in the contributions of FUKUNAGA, NAKAKUBO and SASAKI.

In post-war Japan linguistically speaking, a line was drawn to set apart the Yayoi and the Kofun periods due to conceptually different mound building, which are connected with theoretical concepts and ideas described in detail in the essays of the Japanese colleagues (see FUKUNAGA, NOJIMA, this volume; TANAKA 2002: 778). However, one shouldn't ignore that this seemingly clear distinction and separation of the two periods, especially in the transitional phase (a kind of gray area), is actually controversially discussed depending on the point of view of the respective archaeologist. While the Japanese authors of this volume regard the arrival of the standardized keyhole-shaped mounded tombs as a turning point which is also reflected in the terminology, others disagree. Especially concerning the so-called Makimuku-type graves with keyhole-shaped mound (*makimukugata zenpō koen fun*) of the phase preluding the standardized keyhole-shaped tombs in the Nara Basin, different views are expressed, whether they should be counted already to the Kofun period or rather not (HABUTA 2013: 152–153; KISHIMOTO 2011). Perhaps in the future the introduction of the phase *Initial Kofun period* will provide an appropriate solution (ICHINOSE 2011: ii; FUKUNAGA 2011: 2; KISHIMOTO 2011: 37). In accordance with M. Eggert, periodization is usually rooted in cultural historical or evolutionary principles (Eggert 2012), which is clearly the case here.

The significance of burial mounds in the Japanese islands

The advent of standardized keyhole-shaped mounded tombs in conjunction with a new social structure ushered in the Kofun period. On the one hand, a new burial custom concludes the Yayoi period which came alone with the diffusion of wet field rice farming and the use of metals. On the other hand, a new cultural technique – from hunter-gatherer to farmer marked the beginning of the Yayoi period. Although there was no change in the basic subsistence, the new specific burial mound shape conspicuously conquered the space and furthermore, started to dominate the landscape and spread widely. It left its imprint to a large extent until today (FUJIO 2013; Steinhaus 2014).

The phenomenon of burial mounds on the Japanese archipelago can be observed from its small beginnings, as outlined here by the recent eye-catching research of Hiroshima University spearheaded by Professor NOJIMA (see this volume), peaking in the construction of the giant burial mounds in the Middle Kofun period, to the decline and end of burial mound construction due to the emergence and consolidation of a unified, autocratic state based on the Chinese model. These phenomena are nowadays understood in a very detailed fashion, rarely observed elsewhere. Largely unknown is that in Japan more than 160,000 mounded tombs exist, including the largest of its kind in the world (Figure 1). Not only dimensions and size are remarkable features but also the great diversity of the mounded tombs over a period of almost 350 years. The sacral and archaeological landscape of the Kofun period is more or less unparalleled. At the center of this period are the earthen mounds, being remarkable well preserved, not only in rural areas but also in cityscapes (see Figure 1). This contrasts with Europe where at many places the mounds are almost completely leveled by agriculture or development.

The beginning of the Kofun period in the third century AD is generally associated with the advent of so-called keyhole-shaped mounded tombs (a total of about 5200) accompanied by an abrupt increase in mound size and construction effort. The most prominent example is the Hashihaka mounded tomb (280m long, 30m high) in the Nara plain in the 3rd century AD. This mounded tomb type is considered to be the earliest example of the so-called standardized form. In the Kofun period almost everywhere throughout the Japanese islands mounded tombs are built (except Hokkaidō and Okinawa). However in the Late Kofun period, in the 6th century AD, groups with massive concentrations – often several hundred – of small mounded tombs explosively came up, become widespread and are also visible until today in many cases. The largest keyhole-shaped mounded tomb of Japan is the so called Daisen mounded tomb (also known as the grave of Emperor Nintoku, 5th century AD). With a length of 486 m, a width of up to 300m and a height of 35m, it surpasses with its area both the Kheops Pyramid and the grave of the first emperor of China. In addition, it has as most of keyhole-shaped mounded tombs one or more circumferential moats. In total there are in Japan seven mounded tombs with a length of more than 300m. More than 40 mounds are about 200m long and about 300 belong to the class of more than 100m (HABUTA 2013; HIROSE 2009: 35). On the Korean peninsula, although numerous mounded tombs were erected, they do not reach these dimensions and the largest, the Hwangnamdaechong mounded tomb (a double grave) in Gyeongju in the Kingdom of Silla measures 120m in length and 80m in width (Nelson 2017). More than 200 mounded tombs in Japan exceed this size.

Alone the few examples mentioned here impressively illustrate what kind of scale and dimension the construction of mounded tombs had reached on the Japanese islands over a period of approximately 350 years. The Japanese burial mounds developed continuously from a 'pile of dirt' (Alcock 2016: 1) in the Yayoi period to giant elaborate monuments, whose evolution, evolvement and decline is archaeologically very accurately documented. The different shapes of burial mounds, the changing nature throughout the Yayoi and Kofun periods, the placement in the landscape and moreover, the process of the emergence of mound building in the first phase as well as the disappearance of the mound building, offer numerous starting points for comparative studies.

Figure 1. Daisen mounded tomb (Daisen kofun; Nintoku-tennō-ryō, also known as the grave of Emperor Nintoku), 486 m; mid/2nd half 5th century AD, Ōsaka prefecture (photo: Werner Steinhaus)

Why Comparative Archaeology?

Pre- and Protohistoric Archaeology cannot work without the methodological principles of comparison and analogy. If one starts analyzing archaeological material, be it potsherds or burial mounds, comparing examples is a basic form of enquiry needed to explore the function and meaning of things. Comparison is necessary to understand the material record; one cannot identify or understand an object never seen before without comparing it to a known object (Smith and Peregrine 2012: 4). If archaeologists look at cultural variation and change, comparative methods must be included. As Peregrine (2004: 281) points out: "One cannot identify or investigate variation unless one has examples spanning a range of variation; one cannot examine change unless one has examples spanning a range of time. And one cannot simultaneously examine a set of examples if one does not employ comparative methods". And as Veit (2000: 559; see also Schweizer 2008: 403) has stated, every interpretation of archaeological data presumes, necessarily, the existence of cultural rules and generalizable causalities. To find out structural commonalities and differences, a comparative examination of various specifications in regions as distant from each other as possible is essential. The main point is not that comparing has always been done, but that every historical conception, every ideal type and exemplary generalization results from a comparison (Schweizer 2008: 406).

The research history concerning comparison in archaeology has been described by, for example, Peregrine (2004), Trigger (2007) and Smith and Peregrine (2012). They demonstrated the omnipresence of comparisons from the earliest beginnings of archaeology until today. One of the oldest approaches in the United States concerned burial mounds (Smith and Peregrine 2012: 5). In 1896 Cyrus Thomas compared earthen mounds with each other and with historic accounts of mound building, and identified distinct mound building traditions (Peregrine 2004: 287). Many archaeologists have applied comparative methods since this work was undertaken. One of the most famous was Gordon Childe in his 1951 book on 'Social Evolution', where he used diachronic comparisons. A special chapter of comparative approaches was introduced by the neo-evolutionist's attempts at identifying normative societal types such as bands and tribes. They concentrated on generalized similarities and tended to compress variation (Drennan *et al.* 2012: 2). Some comparative analyses concentrate on cross-cultural similarities in order to explain the emergence, function or change of, for example,

certain types of societies such as early states. Peregrine (2004) has described several examples, including the archaeology of rank, the evolution of urban society or case studies of 21 early states. Some of these authors also use the HRAF (Human Relation Area Files), a systematic collection of ethnographic and (in a separate file) archaeological data of worldwide cultures, which is today useable by an online-version (see http://ehrafworldcultures.yale.edu/ehrafe/).

There are many different types and methods of comparison discussed in the literature, which can't be presented in detail here. One important aspect in any comparative analyses is sample size. This can range from the statistical analysis of large samples to rich contextual comparisons of a few case studies, meaning there are systematic as well as intensive comparisons Drennan *et al.* 2012, 2). Differences also exist between contextualization, the scale (single phenomena or whole societies), primary or secondary data, archaeological or historical data, synchronic or diachronic comparison or the spatial and temporal domain (regional or global) (Smith and Peregrine 2012: 9–10). A comparison can also concentrate on societal attributes like houses or ceramics or on societal types, like chiefdoms or state (Peregrine 2004: 286). Within both, variation and change can be explored. Research often concentrates more on function with a synchronic approach and more on process with a diachronic approach (Chrisomalis 2006: 42).

Sabloff (2012: xvii) as well as Drennan *et al.* (2012: 1) have noted that the last two decades have seen a decline in comparative research. On the one hand they hold postmodern influences responsible; here the utility or legitimacy of large-scale comparison is not accepted as each case is seen as unique. On the other hand there was a concentration of on site-specific empirical research respectively on contextual descriptions of individual cases. Nevertheless, comparative research (case-studies and methodological considerations) never disappeared. Bruce Trigger, a most influential archaeologist, has presented substantial comparative studies on urbanization, political inequality or monumental architecture (Trigger 2007; see also Chrisomalis 2006: 37). With globalization there might even be a 'comeback' of comparative views, such as recent work undertaken on paleoclimatology (Baldia/Perttula/Frinck 2013); this book's goal is to understand humanity's ability to adjust to climate fluctuations in different societies.

To summarize, the general benefit of comparative approaches in archaeology (Drennan *et al.* 2012: 2–3) state that comparative research produces surprising findings and identifies commonly held notions that may be incorrect or misleading. It can lead to a re-evaluation of conventional categories and create new insights into the process of complex cultural developments (Sabloff 2012: xviii). And only by comparative analysis, can regularities in human behavior as well as unique features be identified (Smith and Peregrine 2012: 4). More often than universal regularities, comparisons are able to produce structural characteristics, like those pertaining to early states (Peregrine 2004: 289 with reference to a study of Claessen and Skalník from 1978).

In a way, opposite to the Anglophone research in comparative studies, the German tradition (within archaeology) has not been focused on comparisons between far-off examples. It is all the more remarkable that two of the most renowned German archaeologists of the older generation (born 1909 and 1923) used a kind of comparative approach for interpreting rich burials. While Georg Kossack (1974) referred to European examples of *Prunkgräber* (lavish burials) to evaluate commonalities, Joachim Werner (1988) took an example from Korea as a comparator with an early medieval burial from Southwest-Germany in order to analyze conceptions of the afterlife before the introduction of Christianity and Buddhism. Krausse (1996: 95–230), following the approach of Kossack, compared drinking horns in prehistoric Europe in order to contextualize the finds from the rich Hallstatt grave of Hochdorf. A more general approach was used by Kümmel (2009) in his work on prehistoric grave robbing. He took the HRAF files to create a cross-cultural comparison and to infer circumstantial evidence for the features and the reasons for grave robbing.

In the layout of his comparative research on princely graves' (*Fürstengräber*) of the Hallstatt-period, similar graves from Etruria and from the Magna Graecia (Southern Italy), Beat Schweizer (2008) has given an overview of historical comparisons. In his research he draws on work undertaken in the comparative historical sciences (see Haupt/Kocka 1996; Kaelble 1999; Schweizer 1999; Haupt 2001; Siegrist 2003; Osterhammel 2004). The same discussions were taken up by Knopf (2017) in his recently published work on resource use and environmental behavior of prehistoric farmers, where he used a world-wide collection of ethnographic data to explain prehistoric features.

Schweizer (2008: 401) noted that the rich graves of respective cultures had a similar material evidence, but were nevertheless interpreted differently; on the basis of rich graves, diverse conceptions of societal structure were developed. A comparison would be able to find out structural commonalities and differences. Therefore, a historical comparison needs similarities of phenomena, and at the same time, heterogeneities of the social environment (Schweizer 2008: 407 with reference to the French historian Marc Bloch). A comparison thus aims, by description of similarities and differences, to understand and explain the general and particular form, meaning and function of a phenomenon in time and space. This provides the opportunity to identify questions and problems that would not have been detected without comparison. By considering a phenomenon in more than one civilization, cultural comparison can also contribute to a less provincialism in research.

For a historical comparison, the researched phenomena have to be questioned with regard to the local specifics and their embeddedness in the social, cultural and natural environment, as well as to their universality. By considering the individual phenomena to more abstract or basic forms, such as (that means their patterns of function and meaning) suggestions and insights for the compared examples as well as the basic questions are to be expected (Siegrist 2003). In principle to compare does not mean to equate the compared things (Haupt/Kocka 1996: 9; 24). Comparing apples with oranges is, of course, allowed if you do not discuss the advantages of different kinds of apples but if you compare it under the category of fruit.

A historical comparison of societies or 'cultures' with regard to their similarities and differences acts on the assumption, that there are universal human capabilities, needs and basic forms of acting. They are structured or transformed by the respective society, culture or history. The social and cultural-scientific comparison refers the individual phenomena to more abstract basic forms, patterns of function and meaning, and asks for the presuppositions, forms and consequences of the general and the particular in space and time (Siegrist 2003: 306).

In addition to describing similarities, most comparisons would have the purpose of discovering causal connections in the sphere of human culture and society, thus explaining why certain cultural practices and conceptions occur and how they are relate to other cultural phenomena and environmental conditions (Schweizer 1999: 95).

If we now look at the phenomenon of burial mounds in Europe and Japan from a comparative perspective, there are several important points to note. First, it is not the complete societies which are being compared, it is an archaeological feature, a special form of burial marked by its monumental character. It is also not really a two-case comparison; on the European side not only are the burial mounds of the Central European Iron Age (Hallstatt-/Early La Tène) concerned, but also ones from the Bronze Age or even Early Medieval times. The comparison does not aim at cross-cultural generalizations (although there might be some). The attention focuses more, to modify a statement of Peter Ucko (1989: xi–xii), on the reasons why and the mechanisms by which the respective 'cultures' built burial mounds and what their function was within sociopolitical systems. This book wants to smooth the way for future comparative work on burial mounds, taking the impressive evidence of the Japanese examples. It presents the context, the embeddedness in the respective pre- and protohistory and shows thereby similarities and differences as a first step of comparison.

Burial mounds in Europe: An Overview

It is well known that burial mounds are not restricted to Europe. They are a true global feature with examples on the American continent, all over Europe and parts of Asia (Scarre, this volume; Alcock 2016). The first noteworthy burial mounds in Europe were built in the Neolithic in the 5th millennium BC, with more constructed during the 4th and 3rd millennium BC. They are, from their inception, quite big monuments covering megalithic stones. Often they were used as family or clan burials, and seemingly reopened over several hundreds of years. They span generations, and potentially create and hold group traditions and memory; they demonstrate an identification with place and community (Müller 2011: 148).

Smaller, clustered burial mounds, some starting even in the Corded Ware Culture of the Late Neolithic or Copper Age, but belonging largely to the Bronze and Iron Age, change in meaning and shape. They are still 'monumental', but are often associated with several, sometimes dozens or even hundreds of other mounds, round shaped earthen 'bumps on the ground' (Alcock 2016). Some of them have low stone walls or shallow ditches at their foot. They may contain one central grave or several successive interments. Their grouping together, sometimes with distinct smaller groups within a whole cemetery, has its meaning probably in social groups, be it families, clans or other units (male/female, rich/poor, old/young etc.). A very traditional interpretation of burial mounds equates the size of the mound with the social position of the interred (see e.g. Childe 1951), i.e. the bigger the mound the more important the buried person. This means if a group of people differentiate each other in death through different sized burial mounds, one can infer a stratified society. Although this oversimplifies the connection between material evidence and actual meaning, most archaeologists would agree at least in general with that interpretation.

For Colin Renfrew (1973) burial mounds were not only social indicators, they were also markers of a tribal territory. They demonstrate a claim over the control of resources in an area and strengthen social cohesion of the community. More recent analyses has focused on the 'placing of the dead' (Parker-Pearson 1999), where monumental burial mounds are seen as 'stages of ritual activity' and material expression of a cultural memory. The construction of burial mounds is at the same time a staging for the self-assurance of the identity of the burying community (see Veit 2008: 65; Kienlin 2008: 182; 199).

Maybe most attention, at least in Central Europe, has been drawn on the burial mounds of the Iron Age, namely those of the Hallstatt- and Early La Tène Period. In no other 'culture' and time of that region so many mounds were erected. The size of mounds ranges from a few meters to more than 100m in diameter, from single monuments to groups of hundreds of mounds, and from simple grave goods like everyday ceramics to special imported luxury items in big stone chambers equipped with chariots and horse-gear. Since the first definition of the 'princely graves' and 'princely seats', a vivid discussion about the social

structure of society at that time has taken place (see Schier, this volume). But with the thousands of burial mounds, the 'lower class' are also a subject of consideration. The contributions of this volume give evidence of all the debates ranging from research history (Müller-Scheeßel, this volume), the relationships between mounds and settlements (Balzer, this volume) and the social position of the 'princes' (Schier, this volume).

The layout of burial mounds stays, in general, the same. They usually start with a central grave dug at varying depths into the soil, whether it be for a 'princely' stone or wooden chamber, a wooden coffin, or just a simple hole for depositing the deceased person with grave goods. The grave itself is covered with soil; sometimes stones are an essential part of the mound. Some examples, like Hochdorf or the Magdalenenberg, show that mounds were sometimes filled in parts or sections (Kurz 1998). We don't know much about how a mound originally looked. It was probably not covered with stones, except for those defining the base. Flowers, bushes and trees might have been existent, but there is no evidence. Very few examples of stone stelae are preserved and it is probable that not many ever existed (Baitinger and Pinsker 2002). They are obviously a very special feature for special circumstances. Wooden poles or carved wooden objects, if they were ever placed on burial mounds, couldn't survive on the surface exposed to rain and sun. All in all, burial mounds seem to be monuments that are more or less plain and of simple appearance, with some examples becoming impressive by their dimensions, such as Hohmichele near the Heuneburg with a diameter of 85m and a height of up to 13.5m.

As mentioned indirectly the conservation of mounds is, in most cases, quite poor. Seen as burials of the 'pagans' after the Christianization in early medieval times, they were sometimes deliberately destroyed, or at least plowed down if situated in fields. In this way an unknown number of burial mounds (of all periods) have been destroyed completely, or at least had their mounds removed. The remains of graves, as cut in the earth, have often survived and can be documented through excavation even when the mounds have gone. Where forests have covered mounds there is better preservation, but modern heavy wood harvesters still contribute to their destruction.

With the beginning La Tène period, the custom of erecting burial mounds becomes less common (even in late Hallstatt people used more and more existing mounds for their burials). Few burial mounds, among them some 'princely' examples such as the Glauberg mound (Baitinger and Pinsker 2002) or the 'Kleinaspergle' (Kimmig 1988) were built in Early La Tène, but flat graves became the norm for burials. Some extraordinary rich graves of Late La Tène were again covered by mounds like Clemency or Goeblingen-Nospelt in the vicinity of the oppidum Titelberg in Luxembourg (Metzler *et al.* 1991). Traditionally the Romans used simple pits with urns for their cremated deceased or flat graves for their inhumations. Regionally, such as in the part of the Roman province of Gallia Belgica (western part of Germany), and in England, burial mounds still were built by Romanized indigenous people, mostly in addition to the normal graves (Abegg 2006). Also successive burials in existing older mounds of the Iron-Age can be observed in parts of the Roman Empire.

The traditional cemetery of early medieval times on the European continent consisted of flat graves arranged in rows. Nevertheless some burial mounds of this date are known (Steuer 2015). They are seen as the grave monuments of a social elite. Some very big mounds (*Großgrabhügel*) of this later date are found, such as the one of King Childerich (5th century AD), or the 7th century AD burial mounds at Sutton Hoo in England (Pollington 2008). The tradition continues in non-Christianized Northern Europe into the Viking Age, such as in the settlement of Haithabu (northern Germany) from the 9th century AD. With the final change to Christianity the burial mounds disappear definitely.

All in all burial mounds in Europe come and go through time. They cover a long time span in the Neolithic (up to 2000 years), shorter parts of 300–400 years during the Bronze and Iron Age and – with regional differences – shorter phases of 100–200 years in Roman and Medieval times. This also means that mounds as monuments were not important all the time. Social or religious status were expressed in different ways and not necessarily by mounds. However we know rich graves of the Bronze Age or La Tène, which were not covered by a mound (maybe beside the smaller amount of earth from the grave-pit).

It seems also noteworthy that even in times of intensive mound-building, not all people were buried in burial mounds. During the Hallstatt-period, with its tens of thousands of mounds alone in southern Germany, probably only a small part of the population was given a monument. Mostly this is seen as the elite, although very poor successive graves, including those comprising simple cremation burials in small pits with very few grave-goods such as pottery and simple bronze or iron rings, can be found in mounds.

More recent research on burial-mounds

Burial-mounds (like flat-graves) serve as part of an 'archaeology of burial' (*Gräberarchäologie*). Within this field of research, two objectives have traditionally been pursued. Early Scandinavian archaeologists of the 19th century, like Thomsen, Worsaae and Montelius, used burial mounds and their associated material for building chronologies (Eggers 1986: 79–82; Eggert 2012: 36–38). The relative vertical position in the mound, sometimes with overlapping features, and the character of graves as 'closed finds' were (and still are) most important for this purpose. In addition, since the beginning of archaeological

research, archaeologists have tried to reconstruct the social structure of past societies; graves, with their different 'wealth' have been considered as a 'mirror of the life' of a past living society (see Schier, this volume). Last but not least, the difficult field of religion and cult can potentially be approached by looking at rites which could be inferred from archaeological remains. Conceptions of the afterlife, such as those suggested by the *symposion* of Celtic princes, with alcoholic beverages, drinking dishes etc. in graves are still developed by exploring these kinds of archaeological sources (Hansen 2016).

The role of burial mounds as monuments has seemed clear for a long time, particularly when considering the extraordinary size of Bronze and Iron Age princely mounds. Sometimes, where the archaeological record allows, the connection between burial mounds (or the mound cemetery) and settlements has been investigated. But, it was the innovation of landscape archaeology that drew attention to the role or function of burial mounds in their social and natural environment. Their conscious placing within certain topographies, their grouping together etc. were explored in different regions and times. A great many pieces of research have been published within the last ten years or so. Some monographs focus on landscape-related questions, some conference books collect different approaches, most of them at least influenced by landscape archaeology. Burial mounds in a landscape produce places of memory, places of ancestors, places of gathering or places of cult and religious practice, or all of these functions. The idea is that people created not only a landscape of economic use (by agriculture, settlements etc.), but also created a burial mound-landscape that in some way reflected their cosmology. Burial mounds are places of memory, where people engage with their ancestors and their role in living society. As such, burial mounds are a full part of scientific landscape research, being analyzed not only for their topographical setting and their form/size (e.g. with modern digital methods like airborne laser-scanning or drones), but also for their 'content' and relationships among each other, to the natural environment and to the development of their respective societies. Of course well researched examples as Stonehenge and its burial mounds (Bowden 2015), Sutton Hoo (Williamson 2008) or the recently researched Celtic 'princely seat' of the Heuneburg (Arnold 2002; 2010; Krausse *et al.* 2016) offer the best situations for such questions. But research on smaller sites and other regions with their mounds and landscapes has played a part in developing our understanding of these monuments (e.g. Last 2007; Borgna and Müller Celka 2011; for the USA see e.g. Pauketat and Alt 2003). A recently published conference (Henry and Kelp 2016) demonstrates this diversity in recent approaches, with contributions exploring burial mounds as 'political statements', 'displays of power' and 'representations of status', through to questions of social landscape, mortuary landscape, memory and ritual action.

The 'Ancestral Mounds Project' at the University of Leiden started in 2008 and followed a more 'holistic' approach in analyzing groups of Bronze and Iron Age burial mounds in the Netherlands. It is stated that 'barrows' of the 3rd and 2nd millennium BC were highly important ritual places to prehistoric communities. This was inferred not only by grave goods but by the fact that whole 'barrow landscapes' emerged through time. The members of this project think that the complex ritualized contexts express specific cultural values and identities, rather than power and wealth. Therefore the aim is, "to make sense of the role of barrows in the landscape, and to understand the often remarkable spatial order of barrow groups as well as how barrows were embedded in the wider cultural landscape".[2] A couple of publications have already resulted from this project, presenting not only the results of excavation, but also ideas and theories regarding burial mounds and their complex social role within the landscape (see e.g. Fontijn 2010; Fontijn, Bourgeois and Louwen 2012; Bourgeois 2013; Doorenbosch 2013; Fontijn 2013 *et al.* 2013; Fontijn, van der Vaart and Jansen 2013). The Leiden archaeologist Harry Fokkens (2012) has outlined some ideas on the "meaning of continuity and discontinuity in the use of barrow 'cemeteries'". He states that every burial mound is an ancestral monument, and even if the direct memories fade away, the barrow stays a place of ritual (for the ancestors). If people create a new mound in an already existing ancestral landscape they (as descendants) make a specific statement. They claim a relationship for new ancestors with their old and distant ancestors. This may happen even if the meaning of the rituals do not stay the same over hundreds of years. A burial mound cemetery may be subject to a continued use, which means that people have a direct relationship with earlier buried people. Thus they give their ancestors a durable, visible location (and a kind of 'eternity'). The second possibility is a renewed use. After a break of decades or centuries there only exist collective memories of an ancestral place. No perception of kin or concrete remembering is possible but the ancestral places experience a conscious appropriation. If people were referencing their ancestors they tried to enhance the claims to power and the access to their imaginary origins.

Altogether, modern approaches to burial mounds seem to be characterized by traditional methods of excavating and antiquarian analysis, by more recent approaches of digital documenting or non-invasive methods like (geo-radar etc.) and last but not least by theorizing and modeling the entangled relationships of people, landscape, mound-building and meaning of this monuments.

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[2] See https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/research/research-projects/archaeology/ancestral-mounds, requested 18.05.2017.

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