

Archaeology and Public Education in Japan from the perspective of an archaeological illustrator

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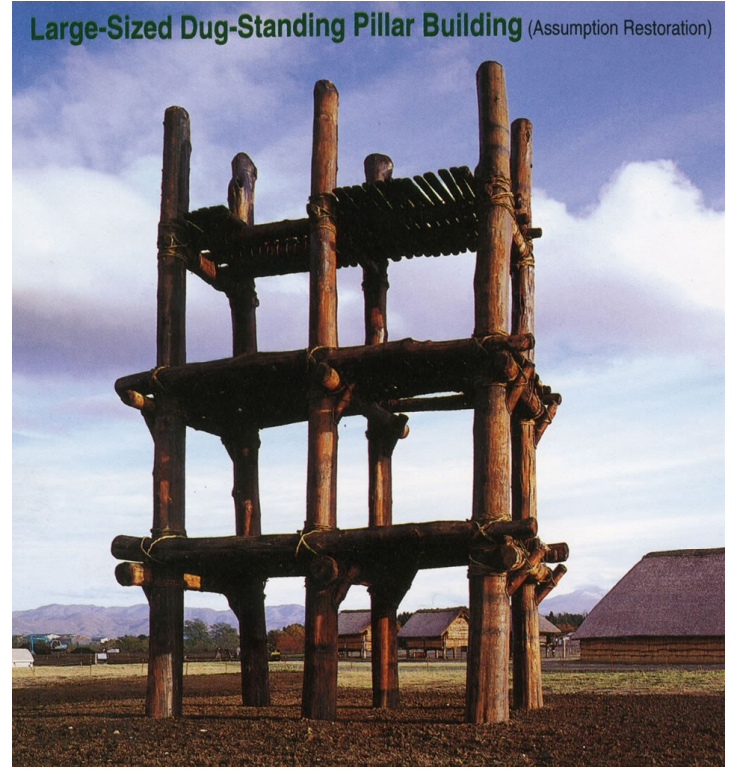
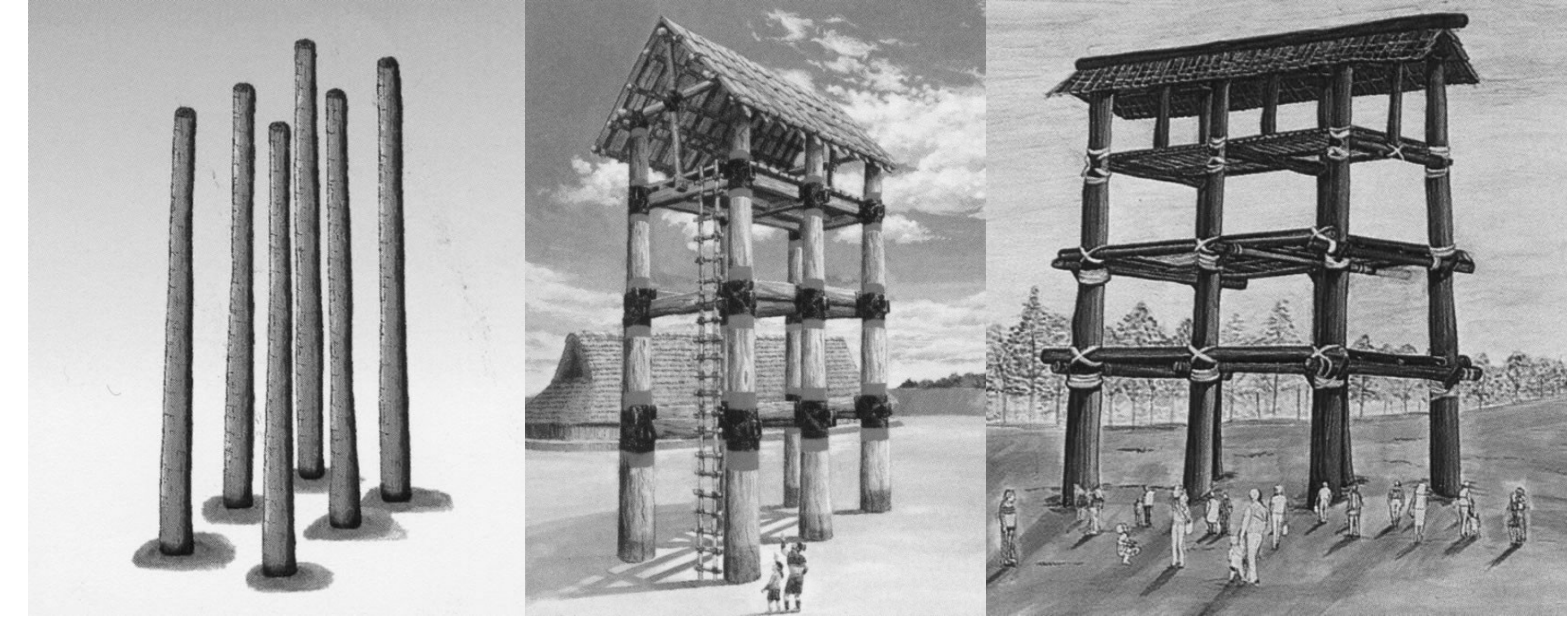
Illustrators do not wish to make lifeless images—I would like researchers to consider more how to work with us, to give people richer images based on archaeology

Different images of Sannai Maruyama

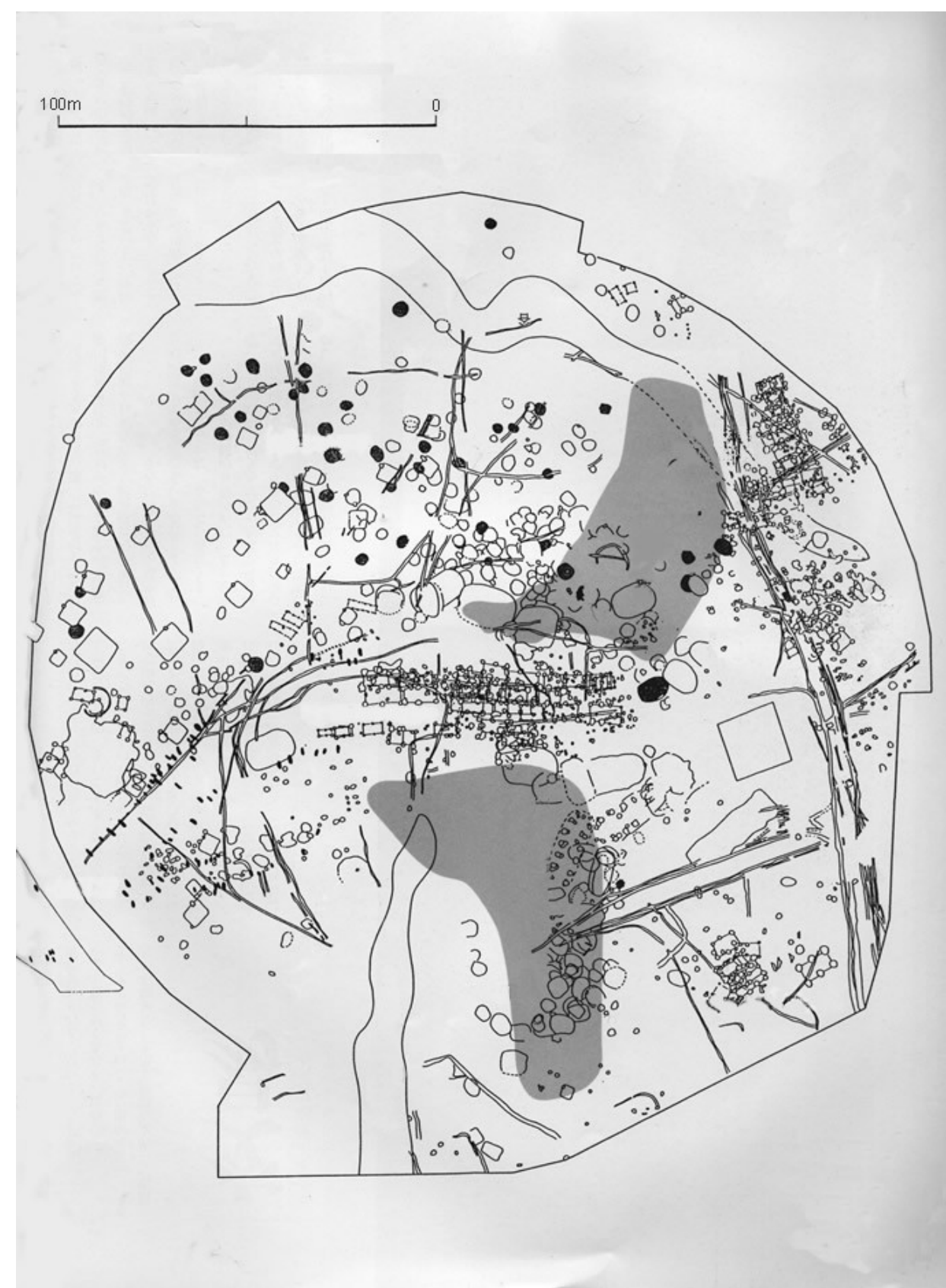
The huge Jomon-period site Sannai Maruyama was discovered in Aomori City, northern Japan, in 1992. When the exhibition ***Jomon World '96*** was held to introduce the sensational excavations, I was asked to make a painting of the whole village including a six-post tower that was causing heated debate among researchers. With the exhibition opening getting close, the tower had to be redrawn several times. Arguments over its function and superstructure continued until the last minute.



Post holes containing the waterlogged remains of 1m-diameter walnut posts and some interpretations



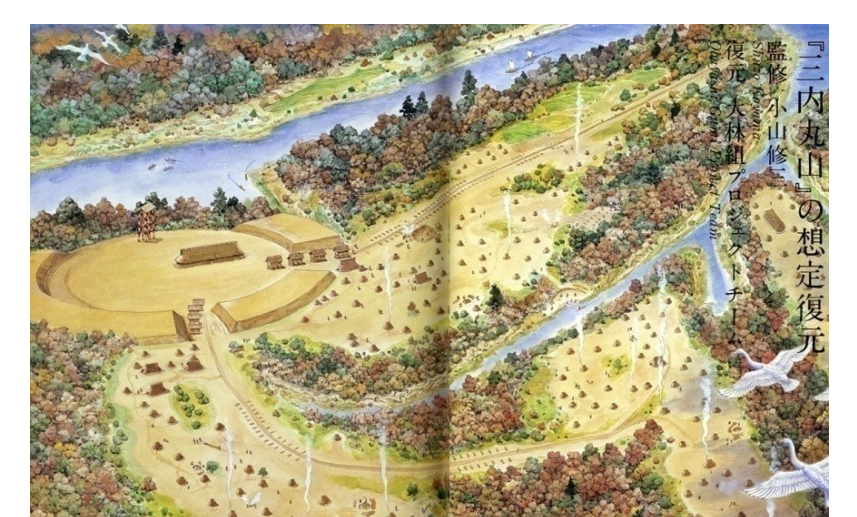
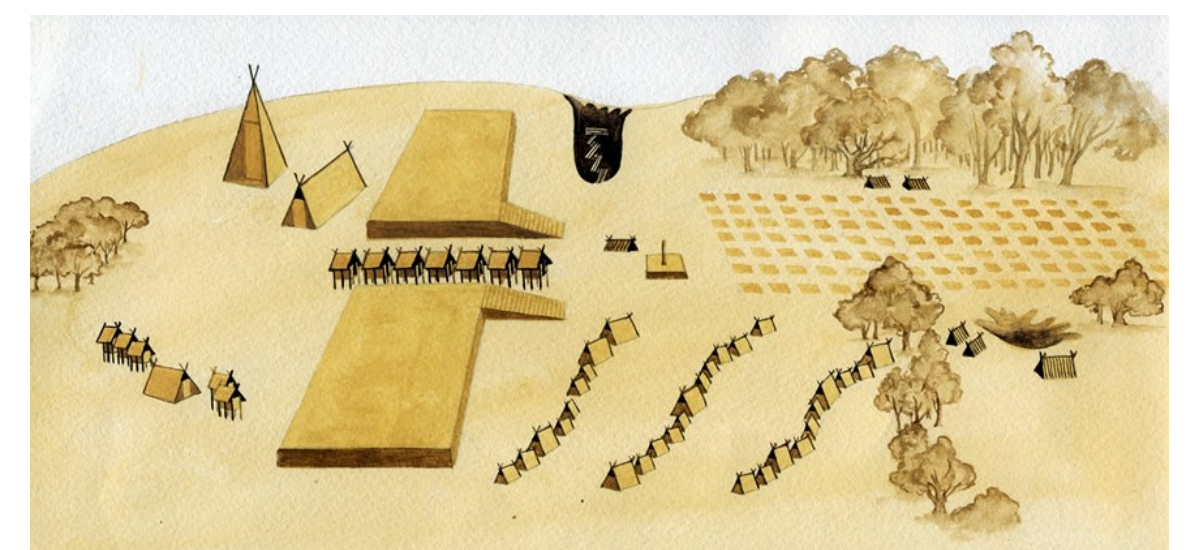
The reconstruction on the site



Archaeological site map



Sannai Maruyama circa 4,500 BP
Official reconstruction for ***Jomon World '96*** (Executive Committee/Sahoko Aki)



The village shown in popular media,
all images based on the same set of official reports

Comparing media

Illustrations for TV have only momentary use for the general audience. Sound effects, camera movements and narration affect the impressions made. Encouraging public curiosity is the main purpose of this medium.

In school textbooks, illustrations reflect a balance between official education policies and independent publishing principles. In Japan, publishers and the Ministry of Education often oppose each other when textbooks are vetted for use in schools.



Jomon Family Life (1987)
created a sensation with its
concrete reconstructions



'Jomon Man' before (anon.)



The ethno-archaeological family gained clothing in the 2003 edition.
(*Asahi Encyclopedia of Japanese History* Shuzo Koyama/ Sahoko Aki)

Places for imagination

The public has a right to enjoy the fruits of academic research presented with imaginative appeal. However illustrators face problems creating complete images from incomplete information. Researchers divided by their specializations, struggle to reconstruct ancient life as a whole. How can we put the pieces together?

(1) A team and workshop to reconstruct Jomon clothing

Shuzo Koyama was an archeologist and ethnologist who worked at the National Museum of Ethnology Osaka. He teamed up a tribal costume researcher, dress making students, an anthropologist, and a costume designer/illustrator. We all worked together to somehow reproduce Jomon costumes and accessories. While carving rings and cutting leather, we could pick up some pieces of reality that were not picked up by excavation alone.



Costumes made by the team : patterns were taken from Jomon figurines, tribal costumes, and the natural shape of animal skins. *Bottom right* Exhibition poster showing influence of the project (National Science Museum, Tokyo 2005)

(2) A traditional festival

Together with Koyama and his colleagues, I joined a large festival in a mountain town (see photo at left). This has been held once every seven years since the 8th century. The extraordinary experiences of hearing, smelling, and touching in a mass of excited people created powerful impressions that still inspire me.

(3) The archaeological fold

If archeologists can share more time in the field with - for example - architects, craft workers, folklorists, there will be more to harvest for a total imaginative vision. Please let the illustrators join you too. It will help us help you to bring the ancient world to life.

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Living festival : huge logs,
pulled from the mountains, are
raised at a shrine



Image of a Jomon festival



A 1996 ceremony to raise logs for
the tower at Sannai Maruyama