

SEIICHI IZUMI, 1915-1970



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PROFESSOR SEIICHI IZUMI was born in Tokyo in 1915. He died in the same city in 1970 after a lifetime during which he made a significant contribution to Japanese studies in Andean archaeology and the prehistoric cultures of Japan and northeastern Asia.

During young Izumi's sixth year of primary school, his father, the late professor Akira Izumi, was transferred to a new post at Keijō Imperial University (now Seoul University) where he remained with his family for the next 20 yr.

While at secondary school, and as a university student, Seiichi Izumi was an enthusiastic alpinist and was perhaps one of the first enthusiasts in Korea.

He started as a field worker during his time as a student at the Keijō Imperial University. During that period he made several social surveys on the island of Chejudo. Later, he became interested in the Mongolian culture of Manchuria, and started to make social surveys of the primitive Olochon tribe living in the

Hsing-An-Ling Mountains. He made general surveys in the basin of the Sungari River, and in Manchuria, and studied the Goldi fishing tribes which, like the Olochon, belong to the Tungus ethnic group.

In March 1938, Professor Izumi graduated from the Keijō Imperial University and thereafter devoted his time to surveys of Inner Mongolia until December of the same year when he was drafted into the army. He was a member of the first scientific expedition of Keijō University. The results of the work of this expedition were published by the Kokin Shoin Editorial of Japan.

In 1941, he received his discharge from the army; 1942 saw him journeying to occidental New Guinea as a member of the Navy's New Guinea Resources Survey Team. He dedicated this time to surveys of the inhabitants of Geelvink Bay, the Jamur Isthmus, the Schauten Islands, and their primitive rural cultures.

In 1945, he joined Keijō Imperial University's Institute of Scientific Studies of the Asian Continent for a series of surveys of the natural resources of the Mongkiang region. Two years later he was back in Japan, at Meiji University, studying his own country's rural cultures.

In 1952, he was appointed professor at the University of Tokyo where he undertook a study for the UNESCO Committee on Social Stresses, paying particular attention to the conditions of life of Japanese immigrants in Brazil.

As part of this work, he traveled to southern Brazil to interview more than 500 families in the Japanese colony in the Amazon Basin. He amassed a great deal of information on many topics. The trip to the Amazon Basin and the contacts he made there aroused in him a permanent interest in Latin American Cultures.

In 1955, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs entrusted him with the task of a field study of problems concerning Brazil. During that time, he went to Peru where he made his first contact with elements of the pre-Inca and Inca cultures. The visit to Peru made a deep impression on him, and he began to make plans for excavations in the Andes.

He obtained a basic knowledge of the Andean cultures during 1956 and 1957 at Harvard University and upon his return to Peru took part in excavations in the Chancay Valley.

In 1958, he set himself the task of organizing Tokyo University's first scientific expedition to the Andes. The leader of the expedition was the late Professor Eiichiro Ishida, professor of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Tokyo. Professor Izumi was second in command. During that expedition he made a general survey of various sites in the Andes. Up to this time, his most academic interest had been confined to social surveys in anthropology and ethnology, but the expedition in the Andes gave him his first chance to work on the spot as an archaeologist.

Tokyo University's second scientific expedition to the Higuera Basin, on the outskirts of Huánuco City, set out in 1960 under the leadership of Professor Izumi. There he directed excavations of the Kotosh sites and discovered, under a Chavín Horizon, the famous Temple of the Crossed Hands, dating back to the preceramic period.

In the years 1963-1969, he headed the third, fourth, and fifth expeditions to the Andes, followed by the excavations of the Kotosh ruins in the Huallaga River basin, and other important sites on the Peruvian Coast. Simultaneously, at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo, he investigated living conditions of the Japanese colony in Peru. In 1970, he was appointed Director of the Institute of Oriental Culture, the University of Tokyo.

As already explained, Professor Seiichi Izumi dedicated the first half of his life to ethnological studies in the Pacific, northeastern Asia, Manchuria, and Korea. The rest of his life was given to archaeological researches in Andean culture and the prehistoric cultures of Japan. In recognition of his meritorious work, the Government of Peru awarded Professor Izumi the Orden del Sol in 1964. He also received the distinction of Honorary Mayor of the City of Huánuco.

In addition to his important scientific expeditions in the Andes, Professor Izumi's activities were indefatigable in various other fields, for example in his ethnological work among the Ainu community in Hokkaidō, the northernmost island of the Japanese archipelago. He also made a survey of the Okhotsk culture, studied problems relating to the incipient agriculture in the Jōmon era in Kyūshū and worked on the archaeological sites of villages in the Kofun (Tumulus) period, when the Yamato court was established, thereby demonstrating his deep interest in the ancient cultures of Japan.

Unlike other Japanese scholars who worked at their desks and made ancient records and documents the basis of their theories, Professor Izumi always worked in the field with the idea of personally gathering data to support his theories. He was an empiricist in the true sense of the word, who worked from the basis of fact.

He also wrote many books of interest to the general public, based upon the copious notes taken during his scientific journeys. Among these were "Ancestors of the Incas", honored in 1963 with the Mainichi Editorial Prize, and "Field Notes" which was awarded the Essayist Club Prize of 1968.

At the top of his list of hobbies, Professor Izumi placed photography and gastronomy. As a young man, he displayed near-professional skill in his photography. The majority of pictures of the various digging sites in his works were taken by him, as were the plates showing utensils and textiles in "A catalogue of rare pre-Inca treasures."

In private life, Professor Izumi was an excellent cook and a lover of good food. He showed great skill in the preparation of the most delicious dishes. During expeditions in the Andes, when the party had to live under canvas, the Professor was more concerned than anyone else with the quality of the food to be served. On numerous occasions he prepared beef stews that are still talked about.

In his many-sided personality, Professor Izumi displayed 2 or 3 times the activity of an average man. Maybe that was the secret of the intense life he led—a life filled with constant effort quite unknown to many of his colleagues. I once heard that in the 10 yr before his death, Professor Izumi slept only 3 hr a day.

In the city of Huánuco, where the Kotosh ruins were found, there is a street named after Seiichi Izumi, and the local government has plans to erect a monument to his memory. We feel that the name of Professor Seiichi Izumi will live long in the remote Andes of Peru which were so dear to his heart.

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