

Northeast Asia

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This article is an overview of research by Japanese scholars in northeast Asia (Mongolia and Russia east of Siberia) since 2008. International joint research by Japanese scholars in this area began in full scale in the 1990's due to political change. In the past, the number of researchers engaged in local research was rather limited, but now the number has been increasing remarkably. Corresponding to the number of researchers, the area being researched also has been increasing.

On Paleolithic study, studies on transition from Paleanthropine to Neanthropine are being conducted in the Transbaikal and Mongolian regions. Excavations from the Bronze Age and Khitan in Mongolia tend to be conducted with research results in China in mind. It is natural since history and archaeological events around the two countries do not necessarily match with the current border. There are many studies on Khabarovsk and Sakhalin that attach importance to the relationship with Japan. The Russian Far East region and northern Japanese Islands (Hokkaido) begun having a clear relationship in the Paleolithic, Early Jomon, or Okhotsk culture, and there are many excavation examples of the latter two. Due to continuous study on the Neolithic, the chronological organization of the Neolithic has progressed, and the distribution range of each culture is gradually being understood. Especially, various cultures that involve blade arrowhead tools are a field that has been drawing attention since they had influence on Hokkaido. Discussion is being developed between two divided views: one hypothesis that a group with blade arrowhead tools migrated from the continent, and the other looks for lineages from local stone tools. Conflict between two extreme views, migration from the continent and locally inherited development, was also seen in Okhotsk culture study. The leading view on that matter is that continental characteristics of the culture were a result of strong and extensive influence from formation of Mohe people. When Mohe people controlled the whole region of the Far East, it gave a strong influence on the area that resulted in copying of their pottery and wide distribution of products, which seem like uniform aspects at a glance, but different peoples' lifestyle details were a continuation from the previous regional culture. Perhaps the extensive development of blade arrowhead tools

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TRENDS IN JAPANESE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES ABROAD

was a similar type of event, although with a different cause. Aspects of Okhotsk culture are still a hypothesis drawn from examination of limited research results. Continuation of excavation research is the only way to understand the relationship between the continent and northern half of the Japanese Islands, so accumulation of data and examination will continue to be significant in the future.

Also it should be noted that research results on the Kamchatka Peninsula to Kuril Islands have been submitted in the past five years. As new knowledge has been accumulated on the distribution range of Jomon pottery and epi-Jomon pottery, the validity of the past prediction that distribution will expand to the epi-Jomon cultural phase is being confirmed. Study on the Ainu culture phase is outstanding among research on the Kamchatka Peninsula and northern Kuril Islands. Although it is only at the stage of accumulating fundamental data, important results are being gained in order to consider formation and development of Kuril Ainu.