

# EASTERN JAPANESE POTTERY DURING THE JOMON-YAYOI TRANSITION: A STUDY IN FORAGER-FARMER INTERACTION

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## ABSTRACT

*In the Japanese archipelago, the transition from foraging to farming occurred at about 500 BC. From this time, there was intensive interaction between foragers and farmers and cultural elements from both groups became intertwined in complex social exchanges. This interaction is suggested archaeologically by the elaborate pottery which was manufactured in eastern Japan as a type of luxury item. This paper discusses the cross-dating of ceramics from eastern and western Japan during the Jomon-Yayoi transition, the meaning or meanings of discoveries of pottery from eastern Japan found in the western archipelago, and the role of pottery from eastern Japan in the formation of Yayoi culture. It is argued that Yayoi culture was formed through a complex process of widespread interaction which included the Jomon cultures of the eastern archipelago.*

The transition from hunter-gathering to farming occurred in the Japanese archipelago at about 500 BC. Explanations of this transition have so far been based on a rather simplistic paradigm of the diffusion of Yayoi culture from western to eastern Japan. From the beginning of the transition, however, there was intensive interaction between foragers and farmers and cultural elements from both groups became intertwined in complex social exchanges. This interaction is suggested archaeologically by what I shall term "luxury" artefacts which were manufactured using elaborate, time-consuming techniques. These artefacts include highly refined earthenware vessels, lacquer products and jade ornaments. The Kamegaoka type pottery of eastern Japan is an example of these luxury artifacts. This elaborately refined earthenware was produced in the Final Jomon and can be dated and sourced on the basis of shape and design. As will be shown in this paper, Kamegaoka pottery and its

derivations are particularly useful for understanding interaction between east and west Japan during the Jomon-Yayoi transition.

During the transition from Jomon to Yayoi, pottery from eastern Japan is found all over the western archipelago but clear differences in distribution are visible in each sub-phase of the transition. The close connections between east and west that had existed prior to the Initial Yayoi were suddenly interrupted in the Initial phase when wet rice cultivation began in Japan. Those connections were renewed, however, in the following Early Yayoi phase when the first Yayoi pottery was produced in northern Kyushu. During this stage the level of interaction was such that pottery from eastern Japan had a strong influence on the structure of ceramic styles in western Japan. This shows that the formation of Yayoi culture was not a simple process based only in the western archipelago but was a complex phenomenon, the result of interaction across a wide area which included the Jomon cultures of the east. In other words, the rapid establishment of Yayoi culture in the west resulted from the presence of an open system of cultural interaction.

The transition from foraging to farming in Japan was accomplished with the participation of groups from the Korean Peninsula and surrounding regions who brought agricultural technology and a whole system of group labour for the construction of paddy fields, irrigation channels and farming implements. In practice, however, this transition was not a complete transformation from the Jomon system. Jomon groups were the main actors in the transition and the Yayoi was a composite culture reached through the "fusion" of the old culture and the new culture. High regional variation further complicated the process of change. Yayoi culture is mainly composed of elements of continental type, but an element of Jomon culture remains in the foundation, reflected in pottery and various other traits. It was not until after the end of the Early Yayoi that Yayoi culture was able to make a clear break with Jomon culture.

## EASTERN AND WESTERN ZONES

This section provides a brief overview of the main pottery types produced in mainland Japan during the Jomon-Yayoi transition. Further details of these ceramics can be found in English in Kobayashi (1992), Kenrick (1995) and Hudson (1999:118).

Based on the distribution of pottery styles, the Japanese Islands (excluding Hokkaido and the Ryukyus) can be divided into two zones during the Jomon-Yayoi transition: an eastern zone with Jomon-type culture and a western zone with Yayoi-type culture. The border between these zones ran from the central Hokuiku to the Tokai district (Figure 1). This border corresponds to the eastern limit of the Yayoi farming frontier.

In the eastern zone, the representative Jomon pottery type was the Kamegaoka and areas around the periphery of this zone were influenced by the original Kamegaoka type. The style sequence of Kamegaoka pottery was divided into six successive style phases (Obora B, BC, C1, C2, A and A') by Sugao Yamanouchi in the 1930s (Yamanouchi 1934). Of the forms of pottery which developed across a wide area of northern Honshu, a fine shallow bowl was the most common; water jars, boat-shaped bowls and other shapes were rarer. A H-shaped motif treated with relief or incised lines is a common design pattern on Kamegaoka ceramics (Figure 2).

Kamegaoka type pottery was found in northern and central Tohoku, a part of southern Tohoku, and some areas of northern Hokuiku. The pottery types south of this distribution were centered in the southern Kanto region: the Angyo and Maeyama types of the early to mid Final Jomon and the Fusenmon (appliqué net) types of the late Final Jomon. These Kanto types were found in the Kanto and Chubu and in parts of the southern Tohoku and Hokuiku regions. Fusenmon type pottery has polished relief band decoration. There are many kinds of decorative motifs, but an appliqué net mesh pattern is used the most. Regional variants of Fusenmon pottery include the Kori type in the Chubu, the Chiami type in the north Kanto and the Arami type in the south Kanto. Much Kori type pottery was imported to the Kinki district after Kamegaoka pottery. The type sequence of Fusenmon pottery has been divided into five successive type phases (Metobagawa, Hanareyama, Kori 1-1, Kori 1-2 and Kori 1-3) by Kobayashi (1998) (Figure 3).

In the Hokuiku district, Shimono and Nagatake type pottery were distributed in the Final Jomon. Hokuiku ceramics were greatly influenced by the Kamegaoka and Fusenmon types. Incised short lines in square or lozenge patterns are common in this region.

The west Japan burnished type was distributed throughout the western archipelago at the end of the Final Jomon. This was followed, in the Initial Yayoi phase, by *tottaimon*

appliqué ridge pottery which was also widely distributed in western Japan. The decoration of these western types was very simple compared with eastern pottery types dating to the Jomon-Yayoi transition. There were many regional variations of *tottaimon* pottery including the Yu'usu type in north Kyushu, the Tsushima Campus and Sawada types in the Chugoku region, and the Kuchisakai, Funabashi and Nagahara types in the Kinki region. *Tottaimon* wares were the last Jomon ceramics in the west, but in the Early Yayoi they coexisted with the Ongagawa pottery that was distributed across all of western Japan. Ongagawa wares were influenced by the Plain Pottery of the Korean Peninsula and comprised a basic set of a storage jar (*tsubo*), a cooking pot (*kame*) and a serving bowl (*hachi*). The *tsubo* jars were painted red to show their symbolic significance in the new Yayoi culture.

The complexity of the fine divisions of Final Jomon and Early and Initial Yayoi ceramics will be apparent from even this brief summary. Behind this complexity, however, we can say that the whole structure of the ceramic complex differed between east and west Japan, a difference which originated in the contrast between agricultural and foraging subsistence patterns in those respective geographical zones.

Finds of eastern Japanese pottery in the west of the archipelago dating to the Jomon-Yayoi transition have recently been published by Kobayashi (1999). Fiftytwo such find sites were identified stretching from Kyushu to the Kinki region. Most of these finds are of single vessels or sherds. Based on changes in the distribution of this pottery, the following six stages can be recognized:

Stage 1: This stage covers the Obora BC to C1 phases of the early to mid Final Jomon. Close relations existed between east and west Japan and there were also some instances of very long distance interaction.

Stage 2: Obora C2 phase. Agriculture began in western Japan during this stage, but east-west ceramic interactions died out suddenly.

Stage 3: Early Obora A phase. East-west interaction was activated again during this stage when Early Yayoi pottery was formed in northern Kyushu. Also in this stage, eastern pottery affected the ceramic style structure of western Japan.

Stage 4: Late Obora A phase. Compared to the previous stage, there was an increase in finds of eastern Japan pottery in the western archipelago. Contacts with Ongagawa groups began at this time.

Stage 5: Obora A' phase. East-west contacts were basically the same as in Stage 4.

Stage 6: The phase immediately following Obora A'. Finds of eastern Japan pottery disappear from western Japan.

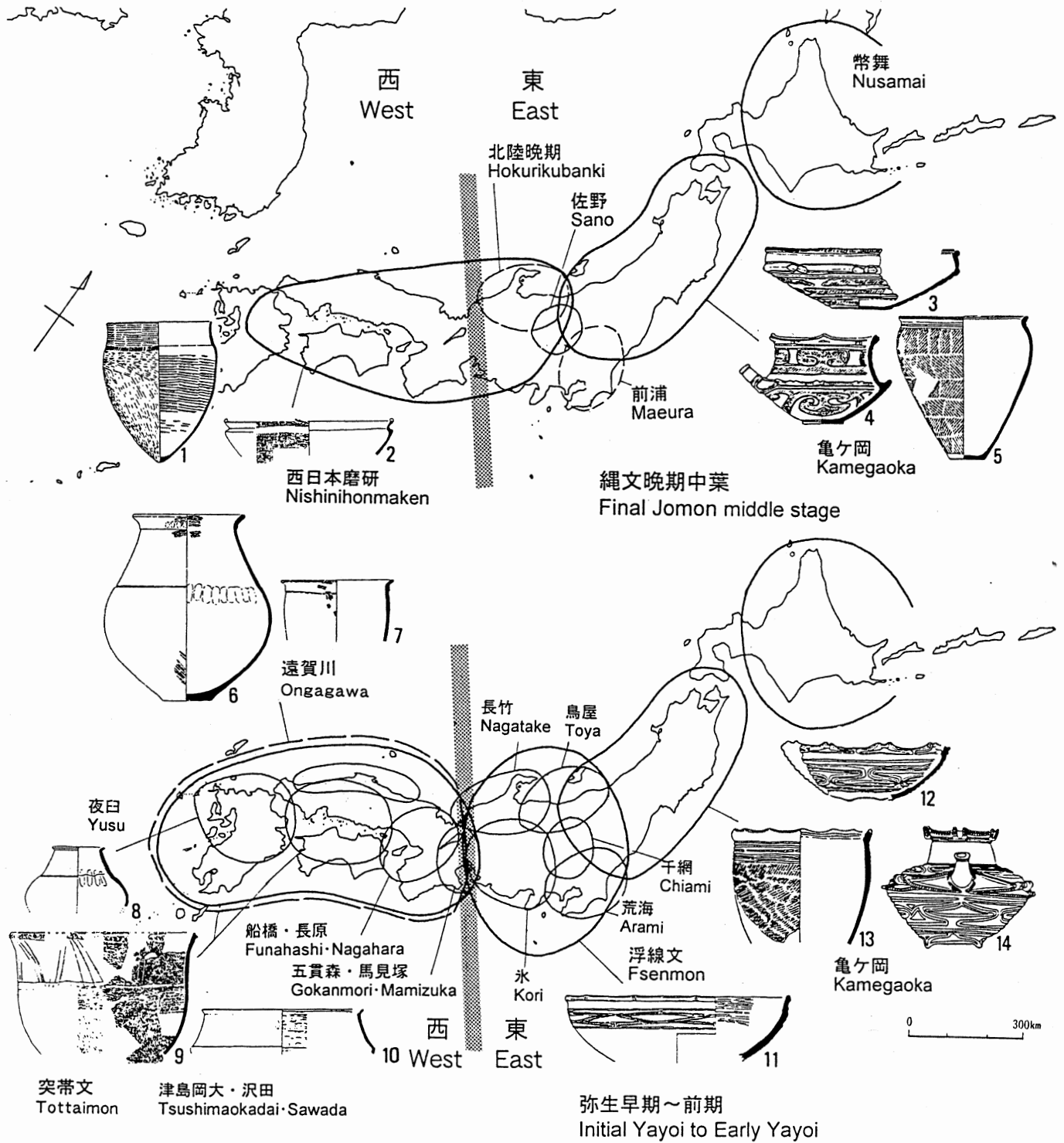


Figure 1: Pottery types of the Jomon-Yayoi transition period.

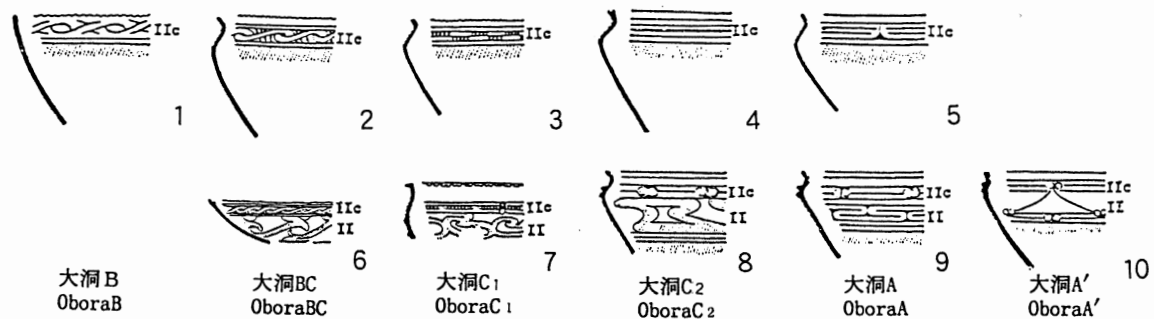


Figure 2: Sequence of Kamegaoka type pottery (1) after Yamanouchi.

The development of these stages can be summarized in the following way. Firstly, in Stage 2 there was a sudden decline in the close east-west relations that had existed in the middle of the Final Jomon. The intimacy of relations in the mid Final Jomon is shown by the presence of sites in west Japan with large numbers of clay figurines in the Obora C1 phase, but these contacts almost completely died out in Stage 2.

In Stage 3, east-west contacts once again became very close. The following Stage 4, when interaction with Ongagawa groups began, also seems to have been an important phase based on the quantity of eastern Jomon ceramics found in the west. As seen from east Japan, however, this stage differs from the mutual exchanges of the previous phases, with only pottery from the Tokai region appearing rarely in eastern Honshu. Pottery seems to have lost its value as an exchange commodity.

In Stage 6, eastern Japan pottery is no longer found in the west, but Ongagawa wares start to be distributed across all of eastern Honshu. Pottery from the Tokai region also had a major influence on eastern Japan in this stage.

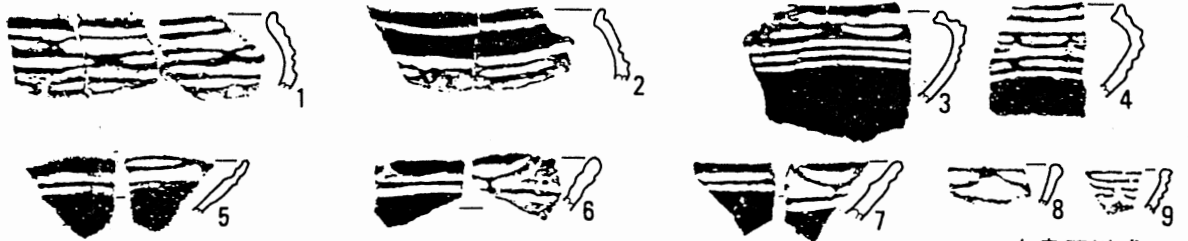
#### DISCUSSION: INTERPRETING THE INTERACTION

The six stages in the development of ceramic exchange between east and west Japan outlined in the previous section are important because they seem to reflect social changes associated with the Jomon-Yayoi transition and the expansion of Yayoi culture. Hamada (1997) has argued that Kamegaoka pottery was imported into western Japan as exchange goods. He has also suggested that it is likely that Kamegaoka potters actually emigrated to western Japan (Hamada 1997). In Jomon society, a circular system of interdependence was of great importance (Kosugi 1985). This system included ritual behaviour and was reproduced through the exchange of high quality ceramics such as Kamegaoka type pottery. The temporary decline in the exchange of eastern Japanese ceramics in the Initial Yayoi phase can be explained as a discontinuity in the cycle of

symbolic interdependence between the western and eastern parts of Japan at this time. This may have been caused by an attempt to suppress social conflict unrest in groups which had contact between the different cultural systems.

By the beginning of the Early Yayoi, however, this cultural conflict seems to have disappeared and east-west relations became active once again. As can be seen from the discovery of a Kamegaoka-type boat-shaped bowl from Wasadaichi, Oita City, Kyushu, those relations were not only dynamic and wide-ranging, but also seem to have continued the symbolic functions possessed by exchanged ceramics in the mid Final Jomon. The value of eastern ceramics as exchange commodities during the Early Yayoi may have been due to their ornate designs at a time when surface decoration had all but disappeared in western Japan. In this context, eastern ceramics may have influenced the *tsubo* jars of the Early Yayoi which were decorated with red painting and incised lines, continuing the symbolic role of the Jomon shallow bowl. The actual decorative styles used were almost all traditional Jomon ones which were resurrected after several generations. New techniques such as red painting were introduced from eastern Japan at this time.

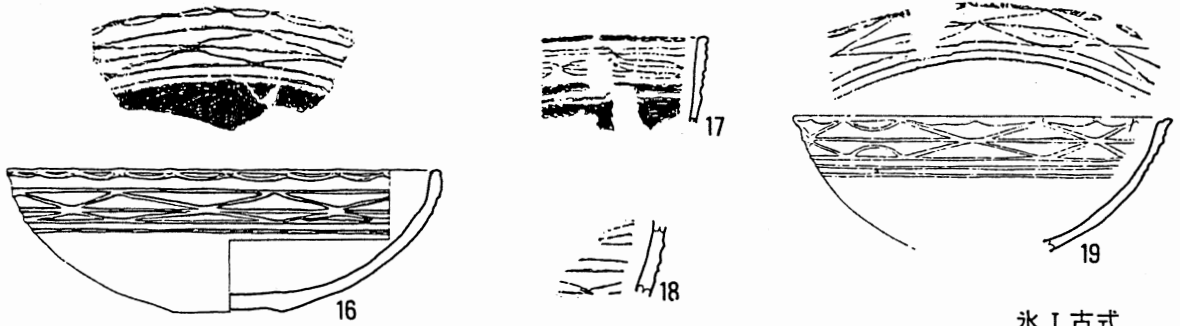
As well as pottery, luxury craft goods which indicate interaction between Jomon and Yayoi include lacquer and jade products. These items were newly brought to west Japan in the Yayoi period and many were used as prestige goods, deposited in the graves of Yayoi chiefs. An open trading system was established in western Japan in order for the Yayoi people to obtain these elaborate or rare commodities from Jomon hunter-gatherers. It was against this background that elements of Jomon pottery affected the decoration system of Yayoi pottery. The production of Yayoi pottery was the result of widespread interaction with Jomon cultures, including those in the eastern parts of Japan, and if there had been no contact with Jomon potters, Yayoi pottery would not have come into existence. This hybrid nature of Yayoi culture was by no means confined to ceramics and it is



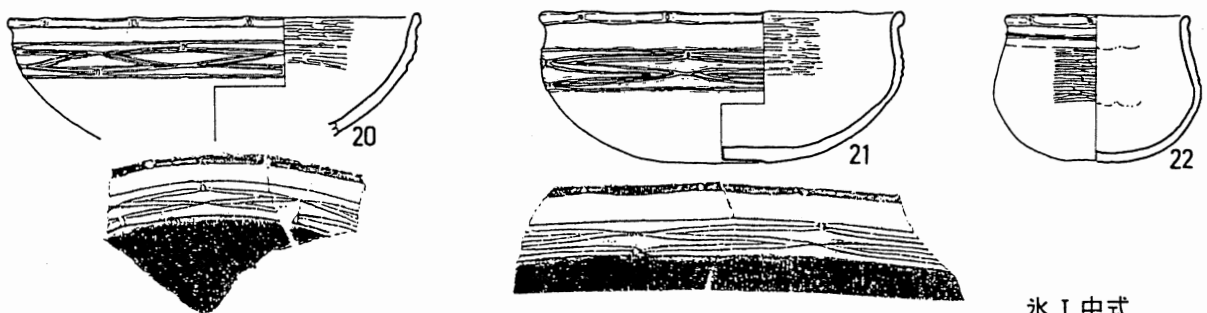
女鳥羽川式  
Metobagawa type



離山式  
Hanareyama type



氷 I 古式  
Kori I-1 type



氷 I 中式  
Kori I-2 type

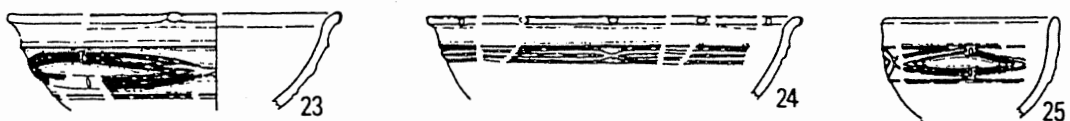


Figure 3: Sequence of Fusenmon type pottery.

suggested here that it was the social relations based on an open system which made possible the formation of Yayoi culture in western Japan in such a surprisingly short time.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank Mark Hudson for his help in preparing the English version of this paper.

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