

Sea routes in Japan-Korea negotiations during the Kofun period: Focusing on analysis of ancient Japanese materials from the south and west coast regions of the Korean Peninsula

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Introduction

Having first conducted rituals on Okinoshima for safety of navigation, how did the people of ancient Japan (Wa) set out for the Korean Peninsula? Fig. 1 displays the ancient routes that were taken, emanating out from Okinoshima. Recent archaeological studies, particularly those focused on the western and southern coastal regions of the Korean Peninsula have uncovered in extremely specific detail just how those ancient people of Wa lived. It is the outcomes of these recent studies that are introduced in this paper.

Fig. 2 shows the regional networks that linked the Japanese archipelago in ancient times. It bears noting that the route from Okinoshima to the Korean Peninsula was not exclusively one way in nature, and that there were mutual visits, with visitors from the Korean Peninsula crossing the sea to ancient Japan.

This paper introduces four main topics. First is a Wa-

style burial mound (kofun) that fully adopts the style of Wa tombs of the Kofun period, and of which a number have recently been confirmed along the western and southern coastal regions of the Korean Peninsula. Second is archaeological sites relating to ports that once operated along the western and southern coasts. Third relates to the Buan Jungmak-dong ritual site, and who the people were who engaged in rituals at the site. Finally, the paper covers the status of use of steatite objects of Wa-style ritual implements as used by Wa people on the Korean Peninsula, a practice that has been gradually confirmed in recent years.

I . Wa-style burial mounds in the western and southern coastal regions of the Korean Peninsula

From the 5th to 6th centuries, governance of the Korean Peninsula was split among various political entities. It was along the western and southern coastal regions that

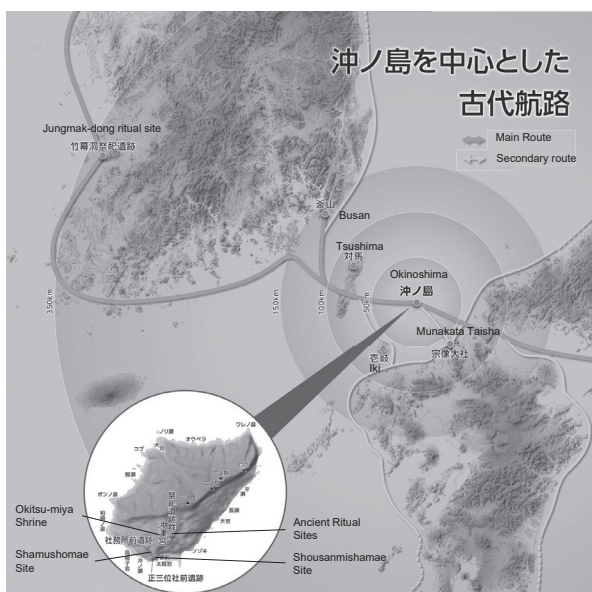


Fig. 1 : Ancient maritime routes focused around Okinoshima.

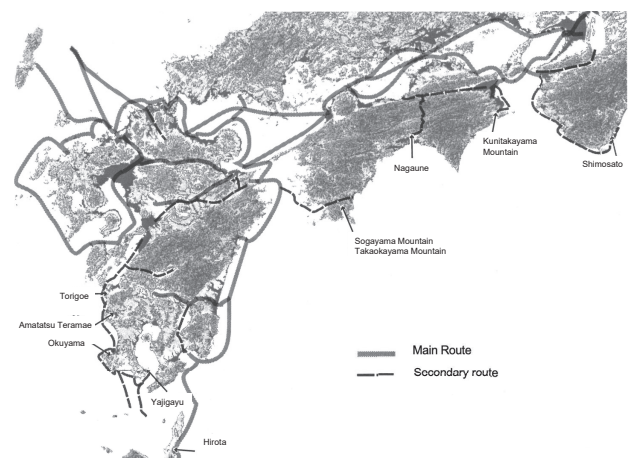


Fig. 2 : Pre- and Middle Kofun Period Interregional Exchange Routes in Chugoku and Shikoku (Hashimoto, 2010).

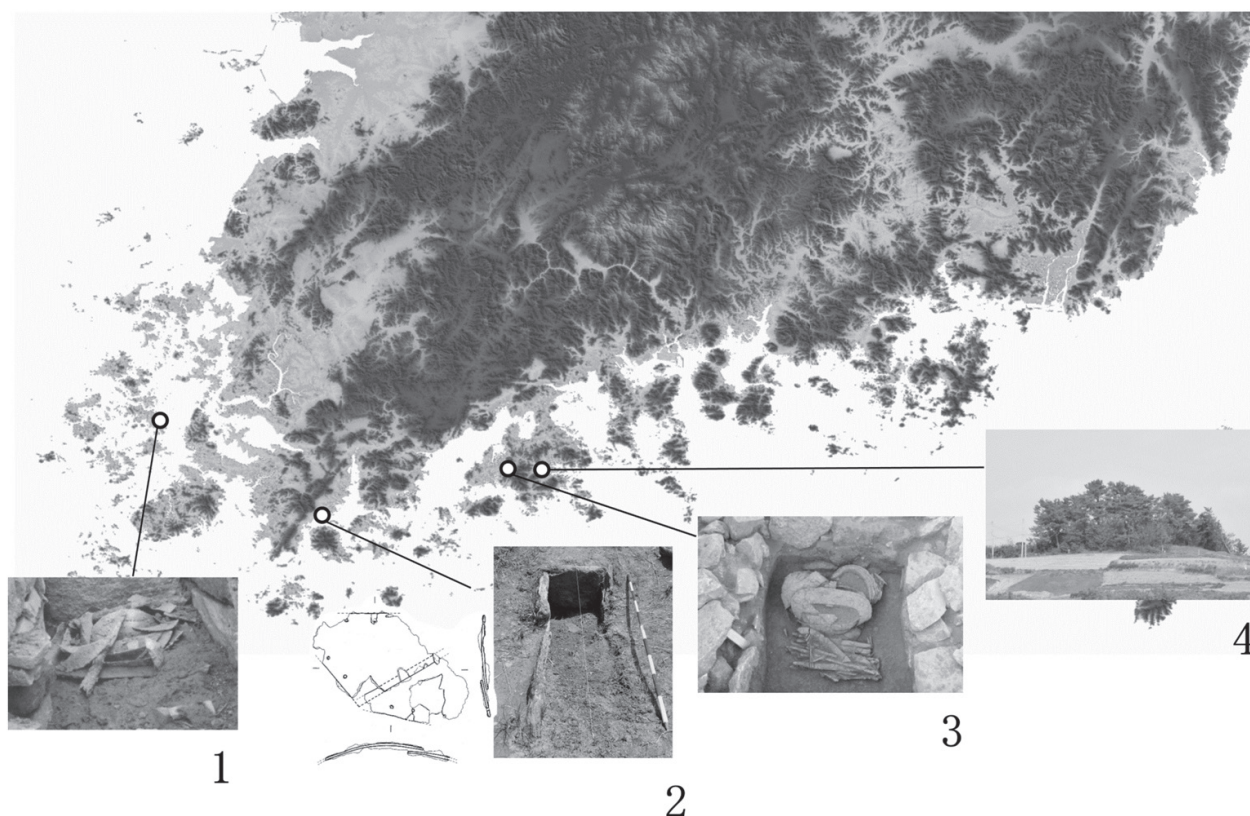


Fig. 3 : Major “Wa-style burial mounds” dating to the early fifth century on the western and southern coastal regions of the Korean Peninsula.

- 1.Sinan Baeneolli tomb No.3 2.Haenam Oedo tomb No.1
3.Goheung Yamak tomb 4.Goheung Gildu-ri Andong tomb

many of the abovementioned Wa-style burial mounds have been confirmed. The main four such burial mounds are: the Baeneolli burial mound in Sinan County, the Oedo burial mound in Haenam County, the Yamak burial mound in Goheung County, and the Gilduri-Andong

burial mound, also in Goheung County (Fig. 3).

These burial mounds were all constructed very close to the sea, the most representative example being the Yamak burial mound (Fig. 4). In terms of what is unique about this burial mound, not only are the sides of the



Fig. 4 : Panoramic view of Goheung Yamak tomb (Naju National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage).



Fig. 5 : Distant view of Goheung Gildu-ri Andong tomb.

mound covered in *fuki-ishi* stones, the tomb in the center is very similar to those of northern Kyushu, and, as will be introduced later, there are also many burial goods originating from Wa that have been found buried in the tomb.

Next is the Gilduri-Andong burial mound (Fig. 5). The bay was originally known as Haechangman Bay and was once very close to the burial mound (Fig. 6).

Oedo Tombs No.1 and 2 in Haenam County are now connected to the mainland after land reclamation, but originally they were constructed on a small island (Fig. 7). Baeneolli Tomb No.3 in Sinan County is still located right in front of the ocean, indicating that the tomb was built on what was a small island (Fig. 8). At Yamak too,



Fig. 6 : Goheungman Bay viewed from Yamak tomb (upper photo) and Haechangman Bay viewed from Andong tomb (lower photo).



Fig. 7 : Distant view of Haenam Oedo Tombs No.1 and 2 (left photo) and the box-shaped stone coffin of Tomb No.1 (right photo).

the sea is just a short way north of the burial mound.

The left side of Fig. 9 shows the tomb of the Wa-style Yamak burial mound, and the right side shows the tomb of the Tanabataike burial mound in Fukuoka Prefecture. As can be seen from the photograph, both tombs are characterized by a very wide stone surround around



Fig. 8 : Sinan Baeneolli tomb No. 3 (upper photo) and the sandy beach directly in front of it (lower photo) .

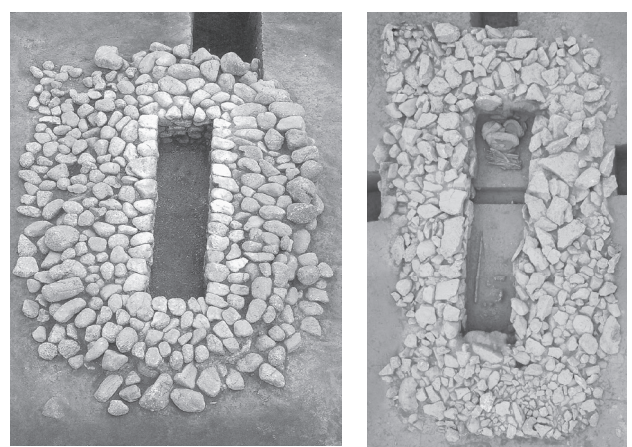


Fig. 9 : Burial places at Yamak tomb and Tanabataike burial mound.

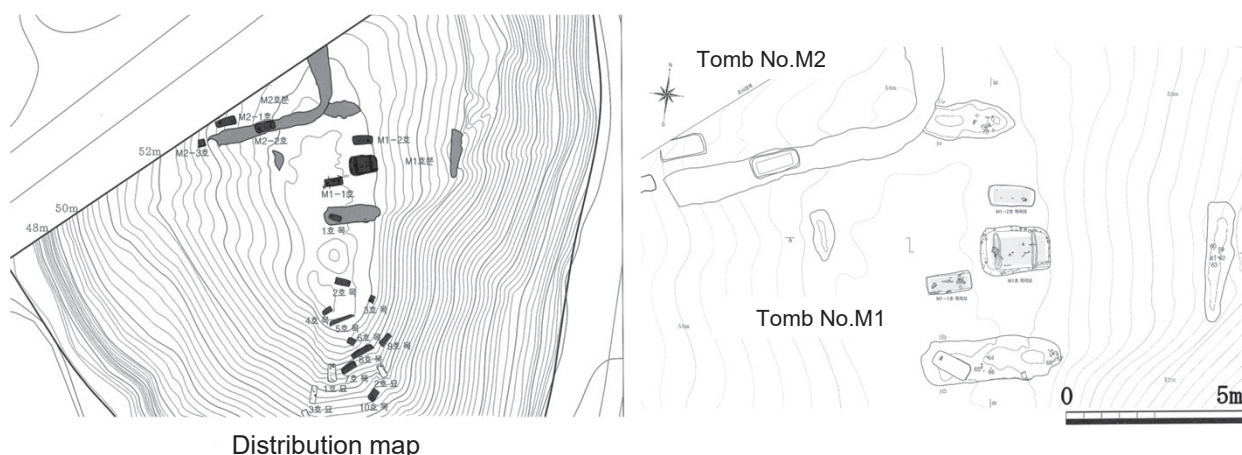


Fig. 10 : Jangdeok-ri Jangdong site, Goheung

the burial space for the deceased. Although each burial mound has its own detailed features, the tombs most similar to that of the Yamak burial mound are the pit-type stone chambers found in northern Kyushu.

At the Yamak burial mound the burial goods in the tomb include Chinese mirrors and mirrors made in Wa. In the western and southern coastal regions of the Korean Peninsula there was basically no tradition or custom of burying people with mirrors. It is from such characteristics that we can see that these Wa-style burial mounds incorporate aspects of actual Wa burials.

Combs are also found among the burial goods, and on the Korean Peninsula there are at most only two or three examples to date of combs being included among burial goods. Wa-style armor and weapons are also among the burial goods, and that armor is almost certainly more likely to have been produced in the Japanese archipelago than on the Korean Peninsula.

With regard to the iron arrowheads also found in the burial goods, it is natural to consider that these too were produced not in the Korean Peninsula, but rather in northern Kyushu or the Kinai region.

Among the burial goods are also artifacts that have links to the southern Kyushu region. Examples include a serpentine sword and an iron arrowhead with line engravings excavated from the Berunori Tomb 3.

Since the center of distribution of such stylized swords and iron arrowheads is currently considered to be the southern Kyushu region, it is possible that people from this region were involved in the construction of the Wa-style burial mounds in some form or another.

So, what kind of people originally lived in the area where the Wa-style burial mounds with these various characteristics are located? When considering this question, the burial mounds built by the local people provide an important source of information.

An example of a tomb built by local people is the Jangdeok-ri Jang-dong site in Goheung County. It is basically a burial mound with multiple tombs constructed inside and surrounded by a trench (Fig. 10). This style of burial mound and tomb was typical of those constructed and used by local people.

Another feature of the tomb is the many burial goods that originate from other regions, indicative of the active exchanges that took place, given its close proximity to the sea. For example, the earthenware on the left in Fig. 11-2 is thought to be from the Geumgwan-Gaya region. There is a high possibility that the pot on the upper left in Fig. 11-1 is from Sogaya, given its fine detailing. There are also iron ingots among the burial goods that are thought to have been brought from the Gaya region (Lower part of Fig. 11-1). Judging from the characteristics of these

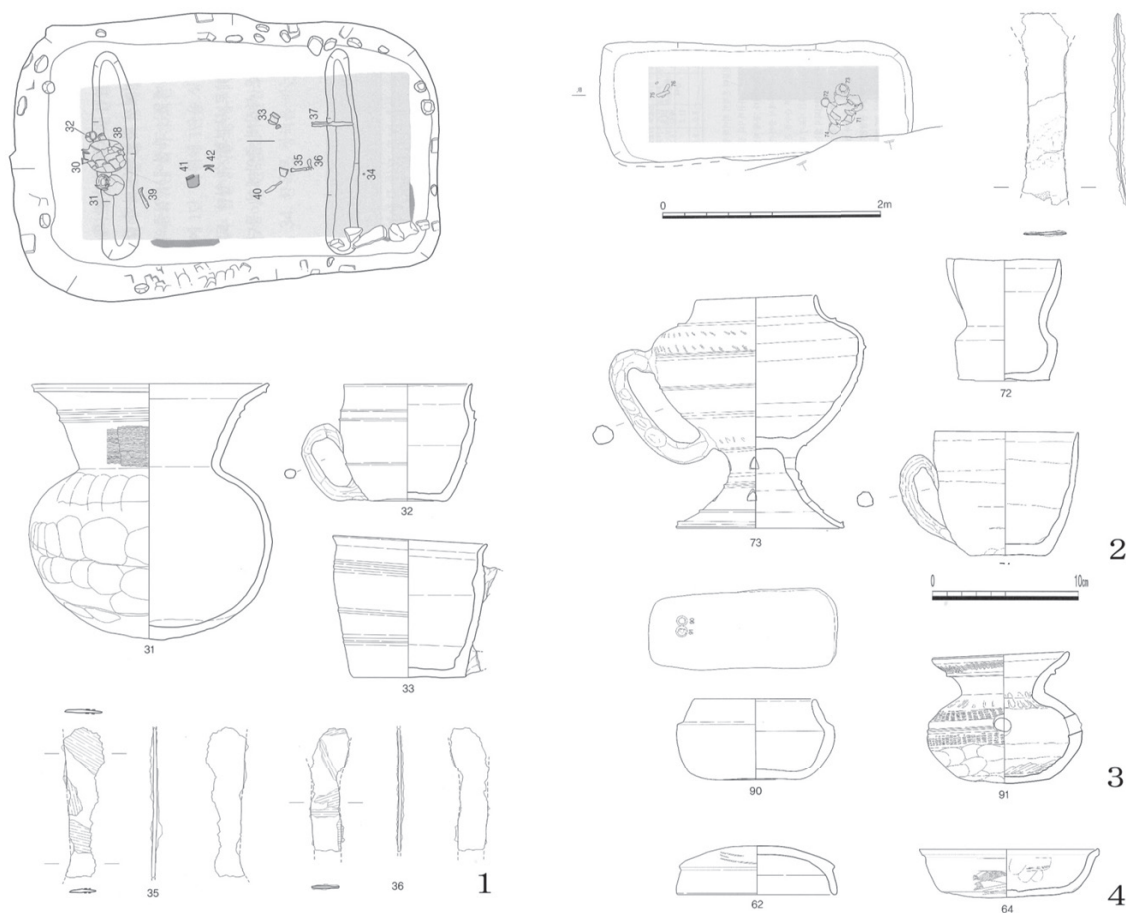


Fig. 11 : Burial places at the Jangdong site and artifacts

1. Wooden burial chamber No. M1
2. Wooden burial chamber No. M2-1
3. Artifacts from Wooden burial chamber No. 1 (separate individual chamber)
4. Artifacts from Moat surrounding the tomb No.M1

burial mounds it is thought the western and southern coastal region was once home to scattered groups that engaged actively in sea-borne trade with other regions, and that these groups were linked by a network. It is thought that the people of Wa used this regional network, deepening interactions with the people of the Korean Peninsula, travelling to Baekje and the Yeongsan River basin region, and constructing Wa-style burial mounds. An excavated item that enables us to take a different angle in hypothesizing about the character and position of the persons buried in Wa-style Japanese burial mounds is a Baekje crown hat that was among the burial goods in the Andong burial mound (Fig. 12).

The fact that a crown hat of Baekje's superior quality is included among the burial goods suggests that the people buried in the Andong burial mound and other Wa-style burial mounds, or the group that constructed them, had connections not only with the Kingdom of Wa, but also the Kingdom of Baekje. This suggests that these people of Wa origin served as intermediaries in mutual interactions between Wa, the Yeongsan River basin area, and Baekje.

As described above, the persons buried in the Wa-style burial mounds and the groups that constructed them must actually have been the ones responsible for exchanges between the societies of Wa, Baekje, and the Yeongsan



Fig. 12 : Baekje-style crown excavated from the Andong tomb, Goheung (Chungnam National University Museum)

River basin, participating as they did in the network that formed along western and southern coastal regions. These people may also have used ports along the maritime route as ports of call, or requested local groups whose livelihoods depended on trade (arrow fishing) to guide them on their voyages. This situation would suggest that groups of Wa people settled for a certain period in the locality, “mingling” with local groups, where they constructed Wa-style burial mounds.

II . Introduction to port-related archaeological sites

Next, let us take a look at a number of port-related archaeological sites along the western and southern

coastal region of the Korean Peninsula.

Firstly, there are the port-related sites in the Gimhae and Geumgwan-Gaya regions that were also the arrival point on the Korean Peninsula for ships plying sea routes from Iki and Tsushima. These are the Gimhae Gwandongri and Sinmunli sites. Here, remains of wharves and warehouses, etc., have been identified and are now preserved as historic sites.

At these sites, earthenware of a type brought from Wa, or made locally by people from Wa, has been excavated (Fig. 13). In addition, people came from the Yeongsan River basin region, bringing earthenware with them, or making it once they arrived. These sites offer a glimpse of a port city that once brought people from diverse regions together.

Next is the Ajudong site on Geojedo Island. A number of square pit dwellings and earthenware, which are commonly found in the Yeongsan River basin region, have been confirmed, and *hajiki* earthenware has also been uncovered (Fig. 14).

Moreover, at the Yonggari-Sokcheong site in Gwangyang, Wa-style *hajiki* earthenware, together with Gaya-style earthenware, particularly Ara Gaya earthenware, as well as locally produced earthenware goods have been excavated from the same pit dwellings. From this we can appreciate that the port-related sites were places where people from various locations came together (Fig. 15).

Furthermore, remains of a pier-like structure have been confirmed at the site at Naju Wolyang-ri Guyang Site, together with traces of roads and waterways. Given



Fig. 13 : Earthenware *hajiki*-style vessel, excavated from the Sinmun-ri site (Foundation of East Asia Cultural Properties Institute).

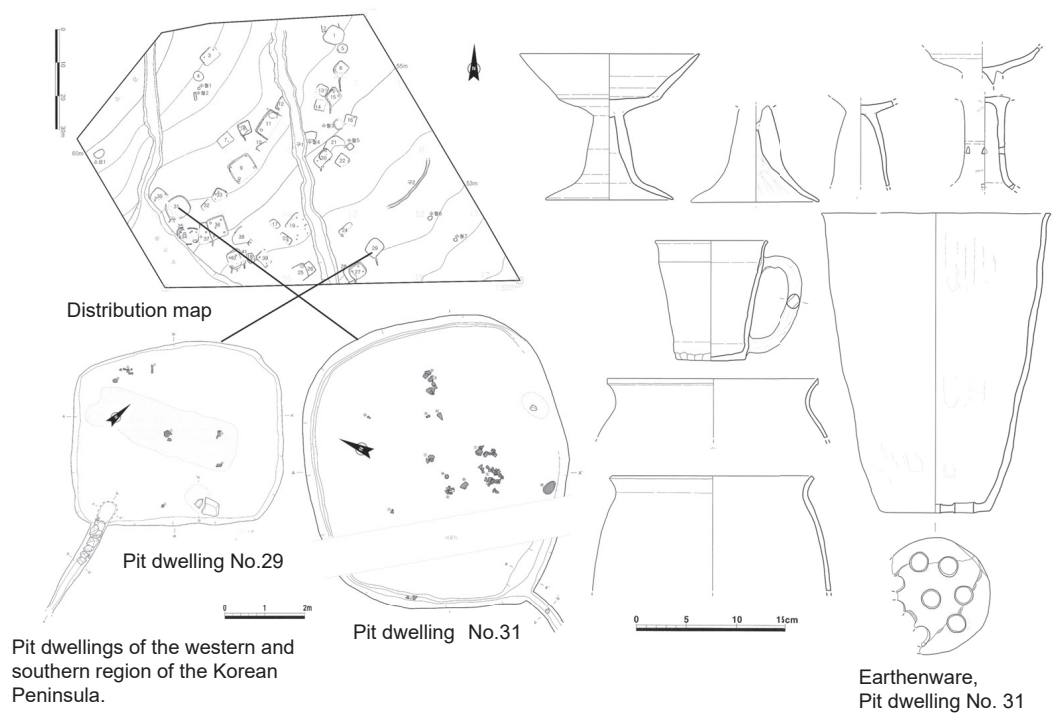


Fig. 14 : Geoje Aju-dong site (Area 1485).

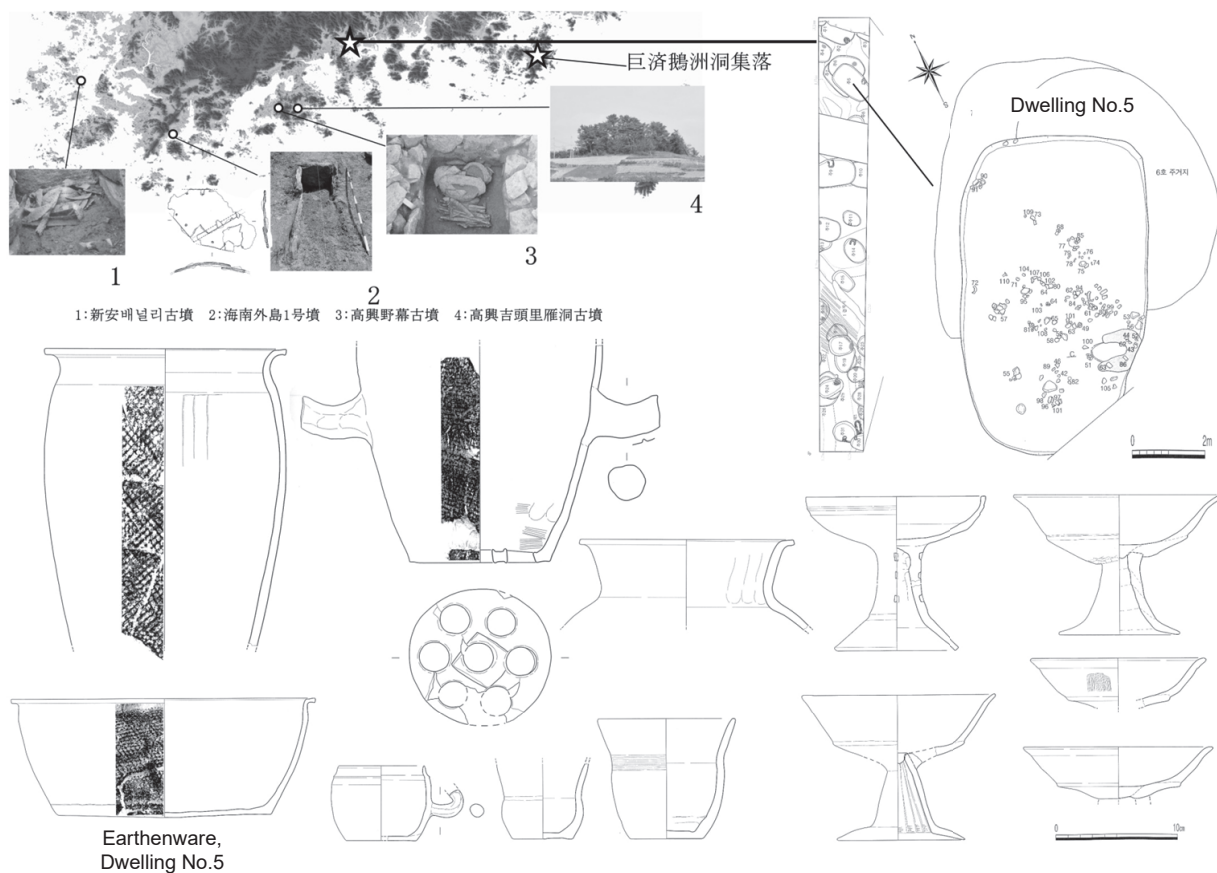


Fig. 15 : Gwangyang Yonggang-ri Seokjeong Site

its waterfront position, it can be surmised to be a port-related historical site. It is in this place that Wa-style *hajiki* earthenware and *haniwa* have been excavated (Fig. 16).

Immediately north of the Yamak burial mound, one of the Wa-style burial mounds mentioned above, is a site that was a port-related settlement (Fig. 17), named Handong-Bangsa. Here too Sue-ware and miniature comma-shaped beads mounted (*komochi magatama*) are among the artifacts that have been excavated.

As described above, archaeological materials are gradually revealing the existence of Wa people as they traveled along the western and southern coastal regions of the Korean Peninsula. The prime example of a ritual site where these people from Wa would pray for safe passage across the ocean is the Buan Jungmak-dong ritual site.

III. Jungmak-dong ritual site and the spread of steatite objects of implements and items

The Jungmak-dong ritual site is considered to be a national ritual site that was administered by the Baekje

Kingdom. While this is by no means mistaken, it should not be taken to mean that it was only the people of central Baekje who engaged in such rituals. This is something that can be inferred to some extent from the production sites of the earthenware used as ritual implements.

Although it is certainly the case that most of the earthenware used in rituals was from the Gyeonggi region in central Baekje, judging from the fine detailing of the earthenware it can be judged to be from the Yeongsan River basin region (Fig. 18-2 to 18-4 and 18-6), with an estimated production date between the late 3rd century and 4th century.

Next, in the 5th and 6th centuries, Baekje's central administration was strengthened by the use of ritual implements that shared aspects in common with central Baekje burial goods. However, the horse pendant (leaf shaped) is more characteristic of Daegaya (Fig. 18-8 and 18-9).

The earthenware shown in Fig. 18-7 is a bowl-shaped vessel stand from the Gochang region, slightly to the south of Jungmak-dong.

The steatite objects shown in Fig. 19 further underscore the involvement in the rituals of people from Wa. Of

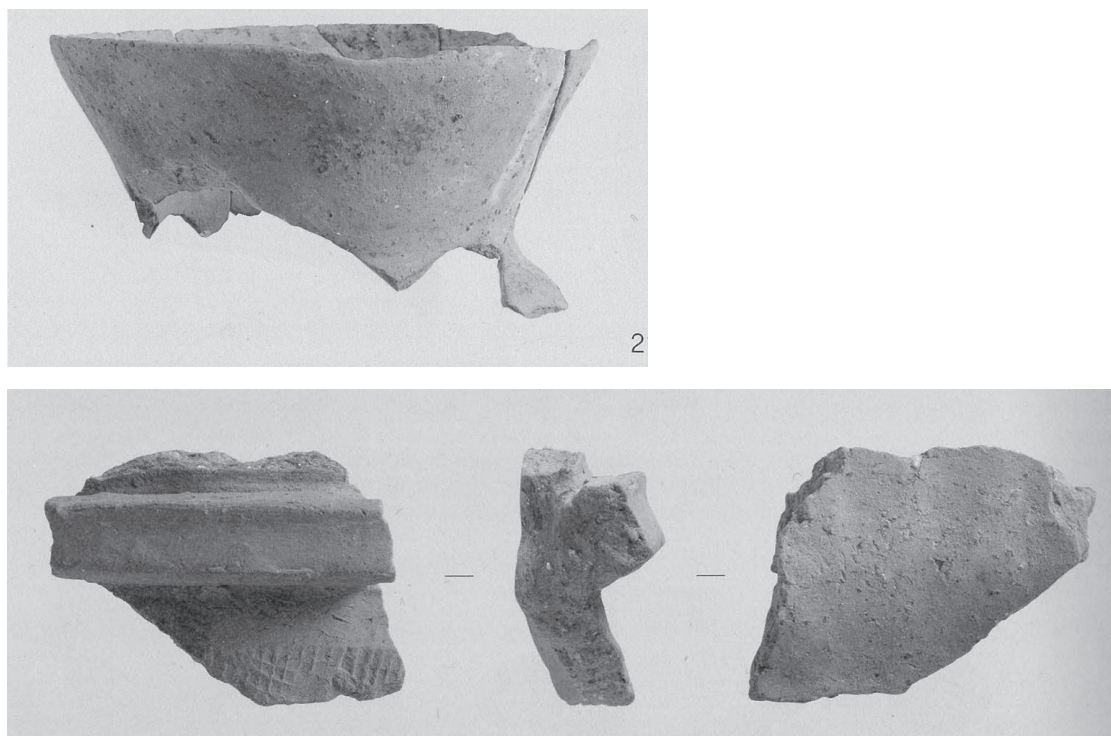


Fig. 16 : *Hajiki*-style earthenware and *haniwa* fragments excavated from the Naju Wolyang-ri Guyang site.

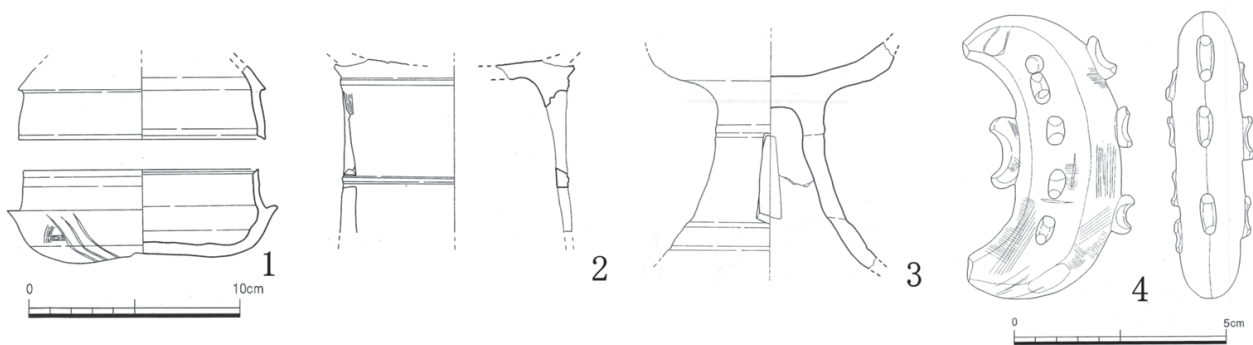


Fig. 17 : Artifacts excavated from the Handong and Goheng Bangsa Sites

1. Handong Residence Site No. 18 2. Handong Residence Site No. 21
3. Bangsa Residence Site No. 18 4. Bangsa Residence Site No. 39-4

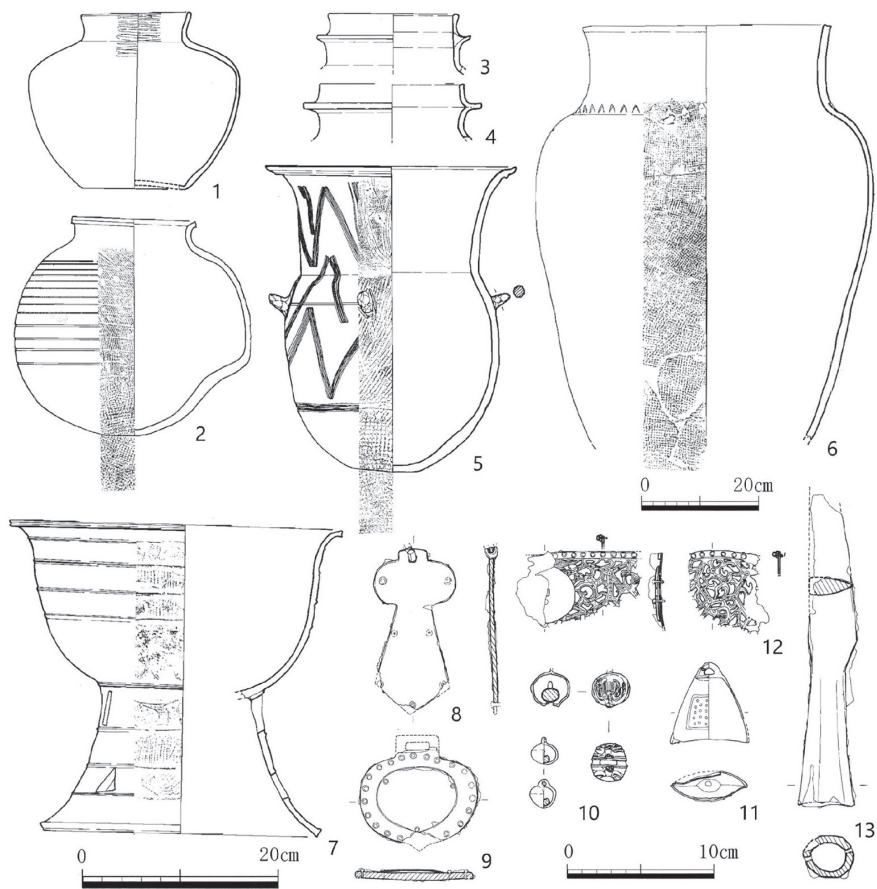


Fig. 18 : Artifacts excavated from the Jungmak-dong ritual site.

particular note is a stone-made copy of armor (Fig. 19, upper right). Six similar examples have been found in the Japanese archipelago, one of which was excavated from the Nakadono of the Shimotakamiya site of Munakata. The other examples are concentrated in eastern Japan. This is a strong indicator of the links that existed between the Okinoshima-Munakata region and Jungmak-dong. There is also a possibility that it indicates some kind of relationship with people from eastern Japan.

As described above, while the Jungmak-dong ritual site was a national ritual site of the Baekje Kingdom, it can also be seen to have been a site visited by people of Gaya, Wa and the Yeongsan River basin, who also engaged in rituals or festivities there. This demonstrates the tremendous diversity of exchanges that took place there.

Previously there were hardly any materials relating to

steatite objects excavated on the Korean Peninsula. However, recent studies and digs are gradually finding more and more examples of implements used in Wa-style rituals, including steatite objects and *komochi magatama*. By tracing their provenance, it is now becoming possible to infer from the archaeological record the actual sea routes that were taken back then.

Specifically, the distribution of steatite objects and *komochi magatama* shows that they have been excavated from settlements and ritual-related sites at ports and also at locations a little way inland from ports, as seen at Gimhae, Neukdo, Suncheon, Gwangyang, Goheung, Beoseong, Sinan, and Naju, and also at the Jungmak-dong ritual site (Fig. 20).

To reiterate, these steatite objects and other artifacts are distributed on maritime routes along the western and southern coastal region of the Korean Peninsula, up to

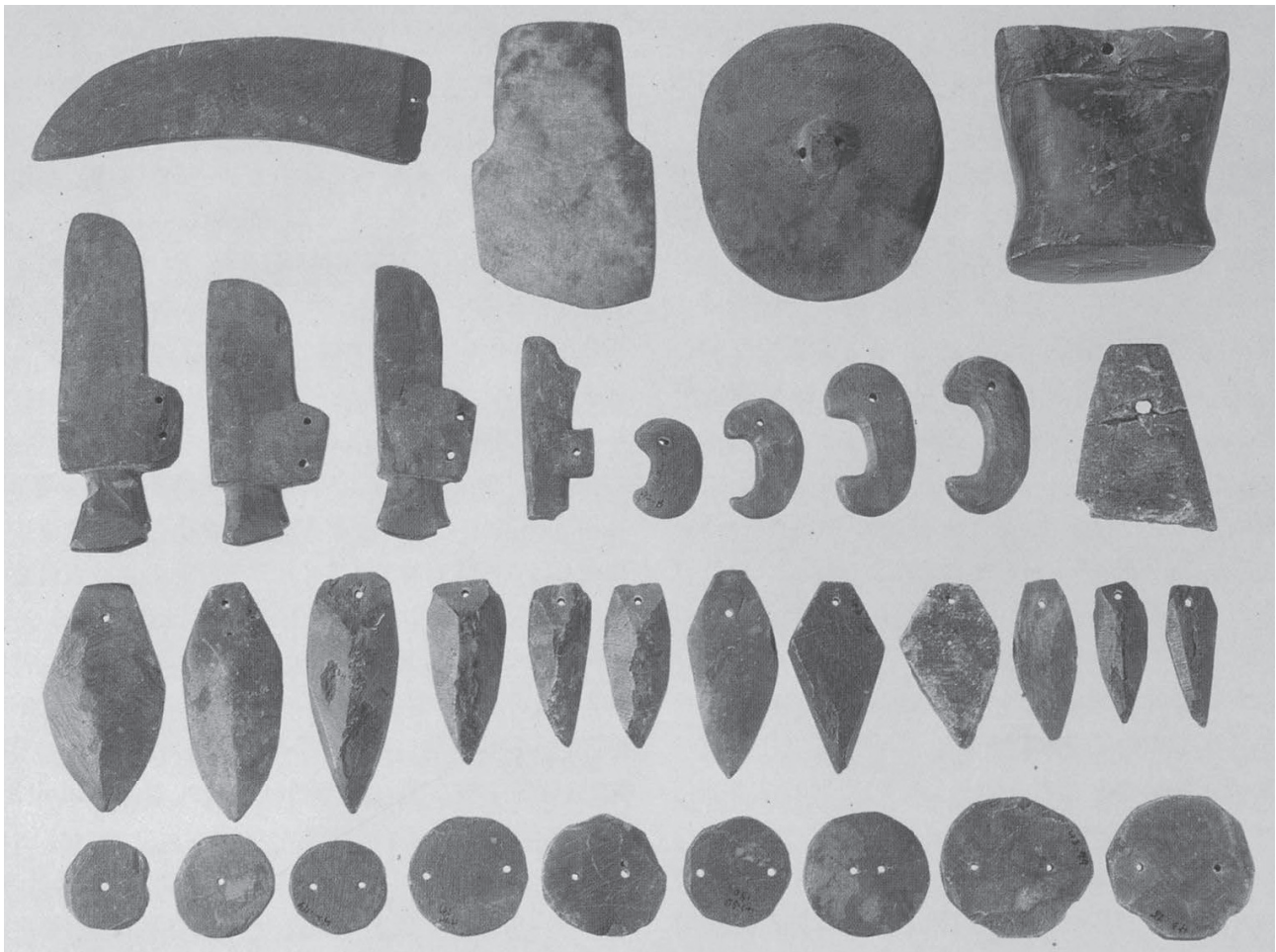


Fig. 19 : Steatite objects (Jeonju National Museum)

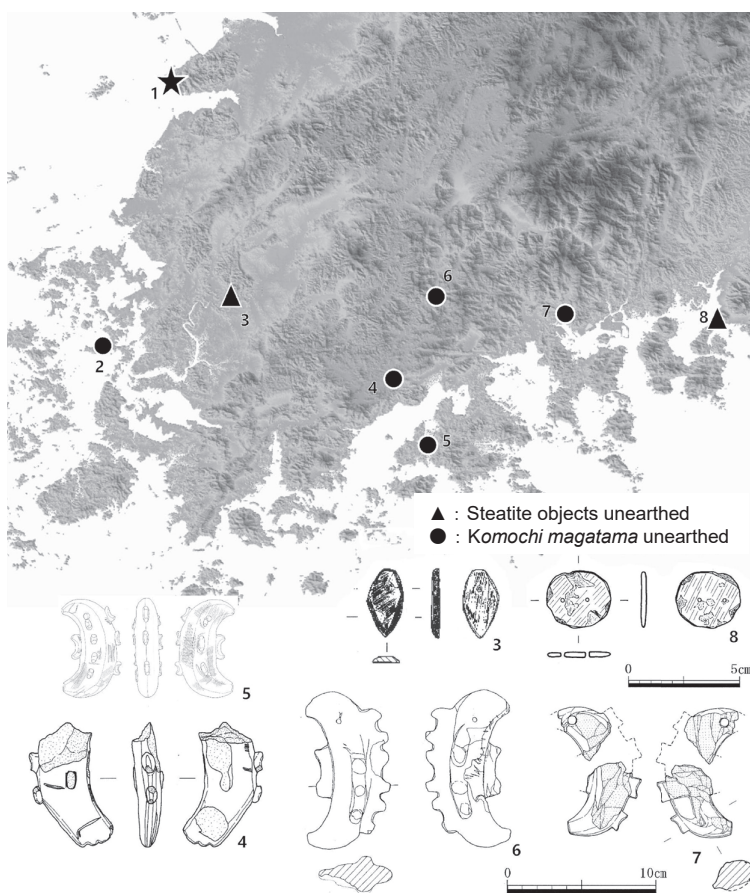


Fig. 20 : Steatite objects and *komochi magatama* miniature beads from the Korean Peninsula.

the Yeongsan River basin in the direction of Baekje, and have been excavated from sites that are close to the sea and presumably related to ports, where foreign pottery has also been excavated. They have also been excavated on islands, and from places that are assumed to have been ritual sites located somewhat distant from the sea.

Although it is anticipated that further materials and artifacts will be discovered in the future, it could be reasonably hypothesized that groups from Wa that traveled between Wa, Baekje, and the Yeongsan River basin held rituals to pray for safe passage, while staying for short periods at port-related sites around the region, as they waited for favorable winds and tides.

Conclusion

To conclude, there is another archaeological site that can be introduced. This paper has focused on introducing sites along maritime routes, in the western and southern

coastal regions, the region from Gimhae to the Yeongsan River basin, and the Jungmak-dong ritual site. However, it is also conceivable that there was a route that ran from Okinoshima up the eastern coast of the Korean Peninsula. However, there are far fewer excavated artifacts along this eastern route compared to the western and southern coastal regions that would suggest a relationship with Wa. What there is, though, is an important burial mound at Gijang, on the way up the eastern coast from Gimhae, which provides clues to the existence of an eastern route. That is the stone chamber tomb No. 12 at Dongbaek-ri III district in Gijang County.

Although much of the earthenware buried in the tombs can be appraised as having been produced locally in the Silla style, the nine fitted covers for earthenware dishes as depicted in the upper left of Fig. 21 are all Sue ware. It is thought that they were made in Wa and brought to Korea. There is little room for doubt that people from Wa were involved in some way or another when the tomb

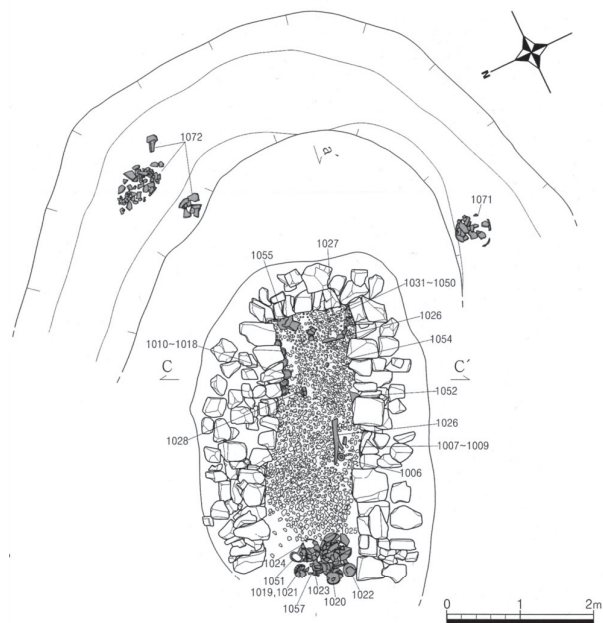
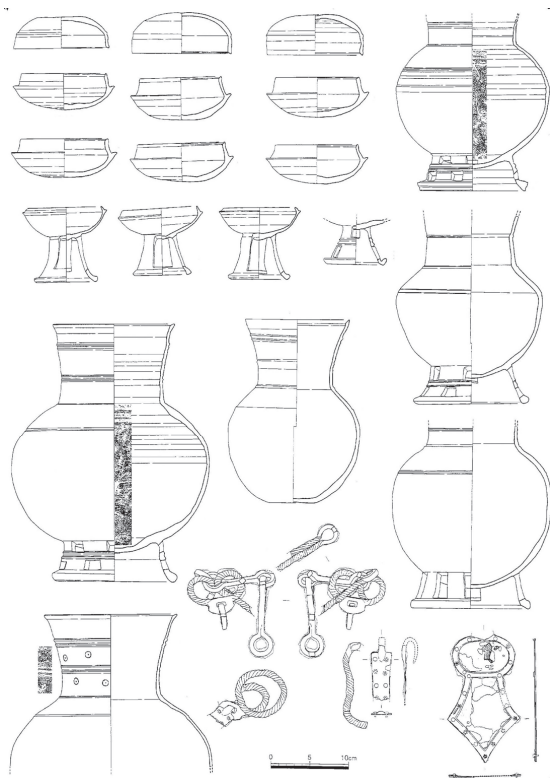


Fig. 21 : Stone chamber tomb No. 12, Area III, Gijang Dongbaek-ri site.

was being constructed.

The tomb itself is a side-opening stone chamber often seen in the region, indicating a low likelihood that the person being buried was from Wa. However, the point that as many as nine artifacts among the burial goods are Sue ware is an important one. There is also a possibility that in addition to the Sue ware, the horse pendant (leaf-shaped, lower left, Fig. 21) was made in Wa.

It is thus highly likely that people crossing from Wa to the Korean Peninsula were travelling in multiple directions and that voyages at the time were basically made in sight of land, meaning that interaction with local people at ports and other locations was likely to have taken place.

That the Okinoshima and Jungmak-dong ritual sites played an important role as a place to pray for safe passage, tells us just how closely the people of the Japanese archipelago and the Korean Peninsula were contact with each other. It is to be hoped that archaeological studies will shed further light on the realities of this history of

interaction.

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