Iron Objects of the Yan Guo and Liaoning Area in the Spring and Autumn Warring States Period, and Expansion to the Eastern Area around Korea and Japan

ISHIKAWA Takehiko and KOBAYASHI Seiji

This study examines how the early iron objects culture was characterized mainly by the cast iron objects of Yan State in the Spring and Autumn Warring States Period expanded from Liaoning (Liaoxi/Liaodong), which was the area placed under the dominance of Yan State, to the area north of the Ch‘ongch‘on River on the northern Korean Peninsula. It also clarifies how early iron objects spread beyond the above area over the Korean Peninsula south of the Ch‘ongch‘on River and the Japanese Islands. Analysis of the Yanxiadu remains shows that the early iron objects culture in Yan State began with the making of daily items iron objects, not for convenience, at the latest in the 5th century B.C. and gradually proceeded toward the use of iron for convenience. In the flow, interestingly, iron axes as items of convenience emerged first and the use of iron for weaponry was relatively delayed. The inroad of Yan State to the Liaoning region gathered momentum after the latter half of the 6th century B.C. Around B.C. 400, the plains except the Liaodong Peninsula of Liaoxi and Liaodong were placed under the dominance of Yan State. In the latter half of the 4th century B.C., the domination of Yan State reached the extremity of Liaodong Peninsula and the Liaodong Mountains, and it is considered that the iron objects culture expanded over these areas at that time. According to an analysis of the remains of Yongyeeon Cave, the iron objects culture reached the Korean Peninsula north of the Ch‘ongch‘on River by the 3rd century B.C at the latest. On the other hand, before the 4th century B.C., the iron objects culture expanded over the Korean Peninsula south of the Ch‘ongch‘on River, which was the peripheral region under the dominance of Yan State, and the Japanese Islands assimilated the iron objects culture in the 4th century B.C. The kinds of early iron objects are almost the same in the regions under the dominance of Yan State. In the Korean Peninsula and Japan, however, the major kinds of iron objects were tools, among which farming implements were remarkably few in number. On the Japanese Islands, there were many cases where chips of hoes (iron axes) were obtained from the regions under the dominance of Yan State and reworked. On the other hand, mainly in the area around the Ariake Sea in northern Kyushu, shipboard cast iron objects of Yan origin were obtained as grave goods, and it is possible that local groups in the northern Kyushu had already established some relationship with Yan State. As a result of the above study, it is possible that iron object materials before the intermediate time of the Yayoi Period correspond to those in the Yan State in the Warring States Period, the Unified
Qin Period, and the first half of the Former Han Period, according to a new view on the Yayoi Period, and this idea should be re-studied.

Key words: Iron objects, Yayoi culture, Yan, Yanxiadu, Korean Peninsula