Distribution of Archaeological Cultures in the Hokkaido and Tōhoku Regions in the Late Yayoi and Kofun Periods

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The Epi-Jōmon culture spread southward from Hokkaido to Honshū Island in the late Yayoi and Kofun periods. This has been mainly attributed to the wide distribution of iron resources and other necessities, but some studies have also claimed that there may have been other reasons. It is therefore essential to consider this phenomenon from different angles, including climatic and other environmental changes.

Because some changes were shared by the Hokkaido and Tōhoku regions, such analysis should take a comprehensive view to see the changes spreading beyond the regional boundary. However, despite many studies comparing pottery-based chronologies beyond regional boundaries and examining the dynamics of cultural distribution, there have been few comprehensive studies of the Hokkaido and Tōhoku regions in the late Yayoi and Kofun periods. Moreover, the analysis of relationships between cultural distribution and environmental changes requires a review of absolute dating chronologies based on recent research results. This also suggests the need to lay the foundation for examining the factors that caused changes at each period of time.

Therefore, this study examines whether the pottery- and tomb-based chronologies of each area correspond to each other and reviews absolute dating chronologies. Based on the results, this study divides the period of time from the late Yayoi to Kofun eras into eight periods, examines the distribution patterns of the archaeological culture in each period, and analyzes the relationships between the cultural distribution patterns and the environmental changes that have been verified. In addition, this article highlights problems with the cold Kofun period and issues to be further analyzed.

Key words: Yayoi culture, Kofun culture, Epi-Jōmon culture, Okhotsk culture, distribution