Emerging craft production and local identity: a case of the Late Jōmon Period

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ABSTRACT – *After the Late Jōmon period, several changes have been identified, such as a reduction in the number of settlements, new types of settlement, an increase in the number of ritual objects, and emerging local craft production. Of these changes, the appearance of new types of settlement implies a change in the settlement system, which leads to a more sedentary system. This can be connected with the emergence of local crafts and social identity. In the Kantō Plain of the Late Jōmon clay earrings, shell bracelets, stone rods, and salt were produced. In this paper, I focus on salt production in the Late Jōmon, and examine the meaning of emerging craft production in this period.*

IZVLEČEK – *Po obdobju mlajše/pozne kulture Jōmon so bile prepoznane številne spremembe, kot so zmanjšanje števila naselbin, novi tipi naselbin, povečanje števila ritualnih predmetov in uveljavljanje lokalne obrtniške proizvodnje. Med temi spremembami pa pojav novih tipov naselbin kaže na spremembo sistema poselitve, ki vodi v bolj sedentarni sistem poselitve. To lahko povežemo s pojavom lokalnih obrti in družbene identitete. Na ravnini Kantō so v poznem obdobju kulture Jōmon proizvajali glinene uhane, zapestnice iz školjk, kamnite palice in sol. V članku se osredotočam na proizvodnjo soli v poznem obdobju kulture Jōmon in preučujem pomen obrtniške proizvodnje, ki se je uveljavila v tem obdobju.*

KEY WORDS – *salt; craft production; identity; Jōmon; Japan*

Background to salt production in the Late Jōmon

After the Late Jōmon period, several changes are recognized, such as fewer of settlements, new types of settlement, an increase in the numbers of ritual objects, local craft production and so on. Of these changes, the appearance of new types of settlement implies a change in the settlement system, which led to a more sedentary system (*Kawashima 2010b*). At the end of the Middle Jōmon, there are many large archaeological sites, which consist of many pit houses. These large sites suddenly disappear at the end of the Middle Jōmon. Sites become smaller and are usually founded in a short time. Compared to the Middle Jōmon sites, those that appeared in the middle of the Late Jōmon were occupied until the middle of the Final Jōmon. As the new settlement system was adopted, regional craft production, shell bracelets, clay figurines, clay earrings, stone rods, and salt production, occurred in some parts of the Kantō Plain in this period. Although an increase in craft production is a general trend in the Late Jōmon (*Imamura 1996.116–120*), salt production – which first appears in the Kantō Plain – is a unique characteristic of this region. Numerous sites are close to the source of salt making, the sea; salt was produced only at specific places. This would be the key point for specifying the identity of prehistoric salt-makers.

An approach to studying craft production has been discussed (*Costin 1991; 1998; 2001*). For instance, Costin proposes analysing the specialisation of craft production. While most studies focus mainly on technical and socio-political aspects (*Costin 1998.4*), various studies suggest that craft production has a role in the formation of identity (*Dickie 2003; Schort-*

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man, Urban 2004). First, in order to examine the meaning of emerging craft production in terms of identity formation, I will describe salt making in the Jōmon and compare it with ethnographic examples of salt production in New Guinea.

Salt production in the Jōmon

As I have noted the outline of salt production (*Kawashima 2008b; 2010a; 2012*), I will explain it briefly. The main source of salt production from the Jōmon period to Modern period has been seawater. There is no archaeological evidence to show intensive salt production from salt springs in Japan. Since Jōmon salt-making pottery was discovered in the Kantō Plain (*Kondo 1962*), some places along the Pacific Ocean are reported as salt production areas (*Iwase 1994; Kitabayashi 1994; Kimishima 1999; Koikawa and Katō 1994; Tsuji 1994; Tsunematsu 1994*) (Fig. 1).[1] While the technological relationship between Kantō and Tōhoku is still not clear (*Takahashi 2008. 1085*), salt-making pottery appears at the end of the Late Jōmon in both regions around Lake Kasumigaura and Sendai Bay.

Salt-making pottery has similar characteristics, such as a reddish colour caused by secondary firing, scale (light grey material which is possibly formed from boiling seawater), exfoliation of the exterior surfaces, a thin wall, coarse finishing of exterior surfaces and rim, and small (including pointed) bottoms. On the other hand, the regional diversity of the shape and finish of salt-making pottery is known (*Kawashima 2008b; Takahashi 2008*) (Fig. 2). The salt-making pottery around Lake Kasumigaura has an exterior wall scraped with a sharp tool, probably a spatula. This finish is rough, compared to the 'normal' pottery in the same period, which was usually finished by rubbing or burnishing. The fact that the inside of salt-making pottery is well rubbed implies its function. Rubbing the inside wall prevents the liquid content from leaking or soaking into the wall, which is thought to cause a break because of crystallization. While the finish of the inside wall is fine, like those in the Kantō region, the exterior wall of salt-making pottery in the Tōhoku region usually leaves traces of ring building. With regard to the rough finish, salt-making pottery from both regions has similar characteristics. Rough finishing can be also seen on the rim. In the Tōhoku region, rims are not finished, but pinched with fingers so the profile is triangular, or rubbed roughly. While these kinds of finish are also found on rims in the Kantō region, the characteristic finish of rims in this region is an incision with a sharp tool (Fig 2.16). Salt-making pottery in the Jōmon period, including those in the Tōkai region, has basically similar characteristics such as rough finishing. This tendency can be applied to the bases, which are categorised into three shapes: small flat base, rounded base, and pointed base. In the first half of the Final Jōmon of the Tōhoku region, flat base pottery which measures approximately 5cm is dominant, but in the second half of the Final Jōmon, the diame-

Fig. 1. Distribution of salt-making pottery. 1. Mutsu Bay, 2. Northern Sanriku Coast, 3. Sendai Bay, 4. Kasumigaura (★: Hirohata Shell Mound), 5. Tōkai region (after* Kawashima 2010.Fig. 1*).

1 Some archaeologists doubt that salt production is carried out in the Tōkai region of the Jōmon (*Nie 2009*).

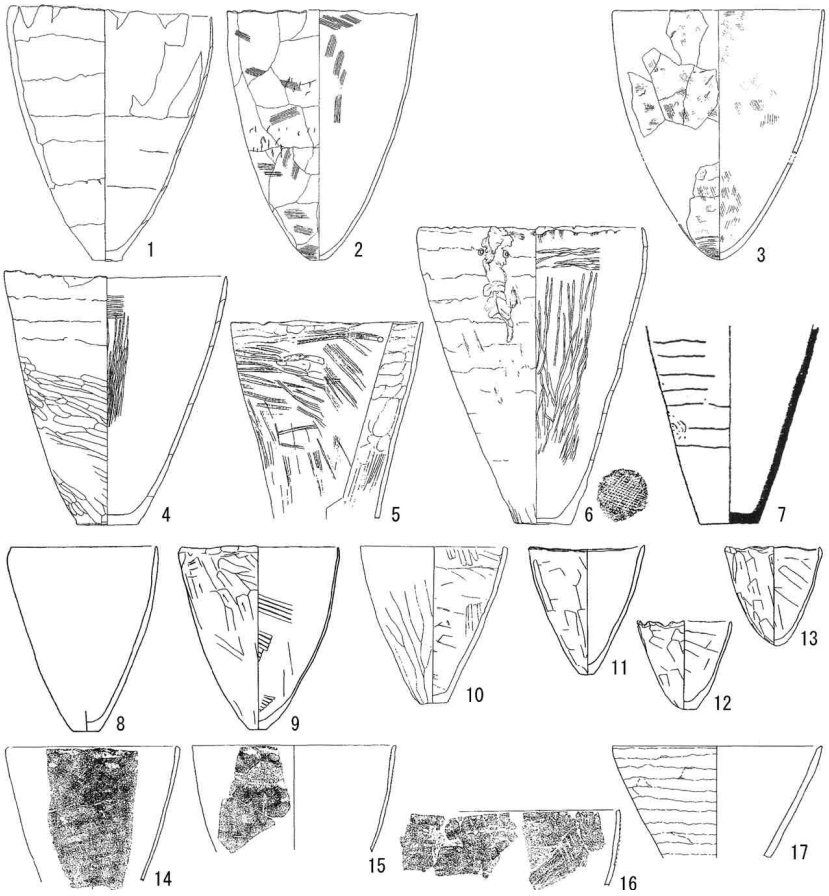

Fig. 2. Salt-making pottery: 1.Takihata (Aomori Pref.), 2–3. Ōashi I (Iwate Pref.), 4, 6–7. Satohama (Miyagi Pref.), 5. Minamizakai (Miyagi Pref.), 8. Kainohana (Chiba Pref), 9, 11–13. Kamitakatsu (Ibaraki Pref.), 10. Wakaumi (Ibaraki Pref.), 14–16. Hirohata (Ibaraki Pref.), 17. Ōnishi (Aichi Pref.) (after* Takahashi 2008.Fig. 1.2*).

ter of bases tends to be smaller, whereupon rounded and pointed bases become predominant.

As salt-making pottery is usually found in small sherds from which it is difficult to reconstruct a complete form, the study of salt-making pottery focuses on the shape and finish of rim and base sherds. Although typological studies suggest that the cut rim dates to the Final Jōmon, the rim sherds of salt-making pottery in previous studies were not stratigraphically uncovered. However, based on the re-examination of the sherds reported by Kaneko (*1979*), rim sherds at Hirohata show that type A becomes prevalent in layer 3, which is where most of the Final Jōmon sherds have been found. On the other hand, type D has features similar to normal pottery, such as a rim thicker than the body wall. In this case, the chronological transition in pottery forms is clear (Fig. 3).

That the diameter of salt-making pottery bases decreases in the Final Jōmon can be confirmed by comparing base sherds from Hirohata (Fig. 4) to those from Hōdō (Fig. 5), since the Hōdō site dates to the Final Jōmon (*Tozawa and Handa 1966*). While the Hirohata data reported by Kaneko contains remains from the Late Jōmon, in another excavation yielded a high percentage (35%) of rounded and pointed bases in a total of 81 sherds (*Takahashi, Nakamura 2000*). As this excavation area produced mostly the Final Jōmon pottery, a decrease in the diameter of the base, which probably leds to the appearance of rounded and pointed bases, occurred at production sites.

In the process of salt production, the standardisation of the finish for rims and bases accelerates in the Final Jōmon. As I have assumed that Jōmon salt production was performed part-time and was kin-based (*Kawashima 2008b; 2010a*), we should explore whether part-time salt makers in simple societies could establish their identity as salt makers.

Salt production in Highland New Guinea: salt production and identity

In Highland New Guinea, some examples of simple salt production have been reported (*Godelier 1976; Heider 1970; Honda 1967; Ishige 1976; McArthur 1972; Meggitt 1958; Parsons 2001*). In most of these examples, salt springs are the main source for salt production, while a special grass, which contains salt, is also used. As I have mentioned (*Kawashima 2010a; 2012*), at least the Moni, Enga, and Baruya tribal groups produce salt without pottery in Highland New Guinea. The scale of production is small, and the organisation is based on households or kin-based. The case of the Moni group, which is reported by Ishige (*1976*), probably is most useful for understanding how identity is formed in a prehistoric society.

Kumupa, which measures seven meters in diameter and 0.2–0.5m deep, is the most famous salt spring

in the Western Highlands of New Guinea (*Ishige 1976.361*). There is no owner of the salt spring. In the case of the Moni tribal group (*Ishige 1976.363–368*), women usually produce salt. They soak wood in the salt spring, where they then burn the wood on the following day. They collected the crystallised salt from the ash, and compress it in order to make salt cakes. Finally, salt cakes are wrapped with Zalu leaves and banana tree bark, which weighed approximately 1.5kg. Although Ishige does not mention the season for salt production, the Moni group could probably produce salt throughout the year, since Ishige stayed there from January to February, which is during the rainy season.

It is noteworthy that the salt at Kumupa is famous in the Western Highlands and distributed widely, while some other salt springs are also known in this area. In fact, while staying in a village, Ugimba, which is located on an exchange route, Ishige observed four parties going to Kumupa or returning with salt (*Ishige 1976.371–372*). Two had parties crossed the Nassau Mountains, which consists of 4000m high mountain chain. Each of the parties needed two or five days to reach Ugimba, from where it took five days to Kumupa. Therefore, the salt of Kumupa was a valuable item, while salt from other salt springs was used for local consumption.

This wide exchange network implies that the salt makers, the villages, or the salt springs were widely known in other villages. The partners to the exchange may have been related, as in Kula exchange (*Kawashima 2008a*). The fact that New Guinean salt was not often consumed in daily life, but mostly used for exchange and ritual, is supporting evidence for ritual exchange. The residents of such a salt making village could share the identity of salt makers. In the example of Baruya (*Godelier 1976*), only 2–5 salt makers existed in a village. However, the village members who did not produce salt also could identify themselves as members of a salt making village. The village must include members who are kin to the salt makers, and in fact some Baruya people are involved in harvesting salt grass as part of the salt producing process. The specific method of producing precious salt must have been inherited by a kin group or even more restricted. This would lead to the formation of social identity.

Emerging local identities in the Late Jōmon

In prehistoric Japan, salt was made from the seawater available anywhere along the coast. Nevertheless, salt was produced only in certain areas, such as the southern coast of Lake Kasumigaura, which are located near the mouth of a river in what had been a deep bay where the seawater is less saline. In this sense, the location of the salt producing sites in the Kantō region seems unsuitable for salt production. As salt was produced from the Late to Final

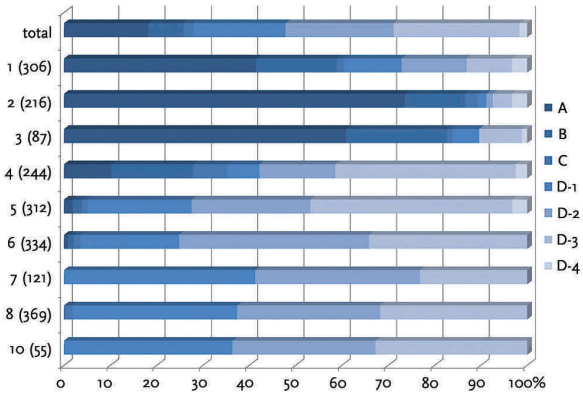

Fig. 3. Types of salt-making pottery at Hirohata (after* Kawashima 2008b.Fig. 2*).

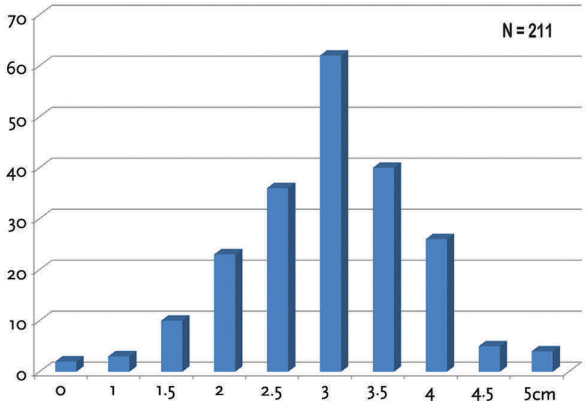

Fig. 4. Diameter of salt-making pottery base at Hirohata (0: rouded or pointed base).

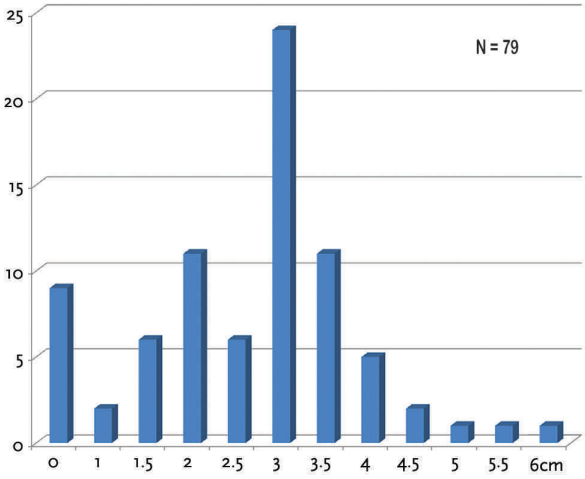

Fig. 5. Diameter of salt-making pottery base at Hōdō (0: rouded or pointed base).

Jōmon, the salt producing technique and knowledge must have been handed down there. This is probably because pottery-based salt production is derived from non-pottery production in this area in a previous period (*Kanō 2000*).

While these tribal groups in New Guinea subsist primarily on sweet potato cultivation by slash-and-burn agriculture, the organisations observed in these examples of salt production give an insight into Jōmon salt production. In the Jōmon, salt-making pottery was invented and made in an efficient way, solely for salt production. There are traces of intensive salt production, such as hearths and the accumulation of ash, as well as the standardisation of salt-making pottery. Even if though there are no other historical or ethnographical examples of pottery-based salt production by hunter-gatherers, the production of salt in the Jōmon must have been based on kinship, as in the New Guinean examples. In New Guinea, salt is produced seasonally or periodically performed by part-time specialists. As I assume that the Jōmon salt production was also a seasonal activity of part-time specialists (*Kawashima 2010a*), Jōmon salt makers could have developed an identity as salt makers or as members of a salt-making group. Therefore, craft production in the Jōmon period played an important role in the formation of local identity.

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