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БАЙЫРКЫ АЗИЯДАГЫ ЖАА СЫМАЛ ТЕМИР КОМУЗ МАДАНИЯТЫ

THE CULTURE OF BOW-SHAPED METAL JEW'S HARP IN ANCIENT ASIA

КУЛЬТУРА ДУГОВОГО МЕТАЛЛИЧЕСКОГО ВАРГАНА В ДРЕВНЕЙ АЗИИ

Abstract. Music archeologically, the uniqueness of the jew's harp is that, when studying an excavated object, it can be almost definitely determined that it is nothing other than the jew's harp when it meets certain criteria.

The author discusses the similarities between the four examples of the bow-shaped iron jew's harp from Saitama and Chiba Prefectures, Japan (9-10th Century AD) and their chronological counterparts from Primorsky Krai, Russia and Heilongjiang Province, China – the area across the Sea of Japan, from where Mohe, Balhae and Jurchen jew's harps were unearthed. Also, he supposes how the jew's harp could reach to Japan, referring especially to the ancient cultural exchanges through Balhae missions to Japan dispatched thirty-four times between 727 and 919.

Keywords. Jew's harp, Saitama, Chiba, Primorsky Krai, Balhae, music archaeology

Аннотация. С точки зрения археологии музыкальная уникальность варгана заключается в том, что при изучении раскопанного предмета можно почти наверняка определить, что это не что иное, как варган, если он соответствует определенным критериям. Автор обсуждает сходства между четырьмя образцами железных варганов в форме дуги из префектур Сайтама и Тиба (Япония) 9-10 вв. н. э. и хронологически сходными с ними инструментами из Приморского края (Россия) и провинции Хэйлунцзян (Китай) — областей за Японским морем, откуда были раскопаны варганы Мохэ, Пархэ и чжурчжэней. Кроме того, он предполагает, как варган мог попасть в Японию, ссылаясь, в частности, на древние культурные обмены между Японией и государством Бохай, на миссии Бохай в Японию, отправленные тридцать четыре раза между 727 и 919 годами.

Ключевые слова: варган, Сайтама, Тиба, Приморский край, Бохай, музыкальная археология

Аннотация. Археологиялык көз караштан алганда, жаак варганынын музыкалык уникалдуулугу казылып алынган объектти изилдөөдө, эгерде ал белгилүү критерийлерге жооп берсе, анын жаак варганы экенин так аныктоого болот. Автор биздин замандын 9-10-кылымдарына таандык Япониянын Сайтама жана Чиба префектураларынан алынган жаа түрүндөгү темир жаа түрүндөгү варгандардын төрт үлгүсү менен Россиянын Приморск крайынан жана Кытайдын Хэйлунцзян провинциясынан алынган хронологиялык окшош аспаптардын ортосундагы окшоштуктарды талкуулайт. Ал ошондой эле жаак варганынын Японияга кантип жеткенин сунуштайт, атап айтканда Япония менен Бохай империясынын ортосундагы байыркы маданий алмашууларды келтирип, Японияга Бохай миссиялары 727-919-жылдар аралыгында отуз төрт жолу жөнөтүлгөн.

Негизги сөздөр: жаак варганы, Сайтама, Чиба, Приморский край, Бохай, музыкалык археология.

1. Criteria for judging excavated jew's harps as musical instruments

What makes the jew's harp unique in music archaeology is that when studying a certain artifact, if it meets certain criteria, it can be determined with almost certainty that it is nothing other than a jew's harp. This clearly shows that it was created for a specific purpose as a jew's harp, unlike other excavated "possible musical instruments" that could make sounds when struck, sound like a flute when blown, or, could be a part of a harp, or could be used as a drum if skin is stretched over it.

The conditions are as follows:

1) Lamellate jew's harp: The vibrating tongues are carved out of a thin, elastic rectangular plate made from bone, bamboo, metal, etc. (It is possible that vibrating tongue made of a different material from the frame may be attached, as in the ethnological examples of the Atayal people of Taiwan, but no such archaeological examples have been found at present).

The gap between the tongue and the frame is extremely narrow, just enough to allow the tongue to vibrate freely between the frames.

1-1) Stringed type - If it is the type that is making sound when the string is pulled, there is a hole for the string to pass through on (1) the frame near the base of the tongue, or (2) on the tongue itself near its base, and the frame on the handle side is short and thin.

1-2) Plucked type - If it is the type that is plucked at the end of the frame at the side of base of the tongue, the handle is long and thick.

2) Bow-shaped jew's harp: This type consists of a metal frame made of iron, copper, bronze, etc., and a thin, long, elastic vibrating tongue made of steel or some other material. The tongue is set between the arms of the frame so that it can vibrate freely (with the gap as small as possible), and one end is fixed in some way to the bottom of the frame (or there are visible traces of holes, mortise holes, etc. where it was fixed).

The cross section of the arms of the frame is shaped like a square rotated 45 degrees, such as ◆ ◆, or ▶ ◀, with the edges facing inward (there are a few examples of ■ ■ that have no edges, though).

The vibrating tongue may also have edges carved / made out.

When observed from the side, some method is used to match the edges of the vibrating tongue and the arms of the frame [Tadagawa 2020b: 22-23]. In many cases, it is bent at a very obtuse angle.

These points are actually an accumulation of small ideas, and it is not possible to make an instrument that produces a good sound by merely imitating its rough shape. Moreover, it is difficult to come up with these points from scratch, and because they are commonly found in different parts of the world, it can be said that the jew's harp was not commonly created at different places, but rather that one (or a very small number of) ideas spread.

The jew's harp is a more complex instrument than one would imagine, given its few parts and simple appearance, and it shows not only the propagation of objects, but also the ideas of the people who make them.

In older reports and other sources, partly because the jew's harp itself was not well known, and not considered as an important artifact, these points above were not understood and some items were mistakenly identified as «shuttle used in weaving» (an example unearthed in China's Inner Mongolia), «nail» or «hairpin» (Primorskii Krai, Russian Federation), etc. (which will be discussed later in the article). This is something to be careful of when consulting literatures.

2. Excavation and reporting of jew's harps in Saitama and Chiba Prefectures

On November 11th and 12th, 2015, the Saitama editions of newspapers were full of reports that an iron jew's harp from 10th century, the Heian period had been excavated in Hanyu City, Saitama Prefecture. The only archaeological discoveries of jew's harps in Japan at that time were two iron examples from the same period excavated at the Omiya Hikawa Shrine East Site in Saitama Prefecture (Omiya City Archaeological Research Committee, 1993). The Omiya harps were excavated on October 21st, 1989, and was reported in the national and Saitama editions of newspapers and on the National Broadcasting Company NHK television news from March 19th to 20th, 1991. The discovery from the Yashikiura Site in Hanyu City, located in the northernmost part of the prefecture, bordering Gunma Prefecture across the Tone River, adds another important piece of evidence to support the existence of jew's harp culture in Saitama Prefecture around one thousand years ago.

The articles on newspapers reporting on the discovery of Hanyu's jew's harp are as follows:

November 11, 2015: Asahi Shinbun Saitama edition, Saitama Shinbun, Tokyo Shinbun Saitama Central edition, Yomiuri Shinbun Saitama edition.

November 12, 2015: Mainichi Shinbun Saitama Central edition.

These articles are based on the press conference held by the Saitama Archaeological Research Foundation on November 10th, but when comparing these newspapers, it is clear that there is already an error in the simple fact of

the «year of excavation.» The Asahi and Yomiuri say that the site was excavated in 2011, while the Saitama, Tokyo, and Mainichi say that it was excavated in 2012. When the author asked the Foundation about this, they said, «Since the photo of the excavation is dated December 14th, 2011, we can determine that the excavation itself took place between October and early December of 2011.» It is puzzling why newspaper reporters write articles without checking the facts, and why the Mainichi Shimbun, which came one day later, published the incorrect information as is, but this was the reality.

Here, the author would like to confirm the years when the three jew's harps were excavated in Saitama Prefecture.

- Hikawa Shrine Eastern Site, Omiya City (currently Omiya Ward, Saitama City) (2 examples) Excavated October 21, 1989, press coverage began on March 19, 1991

- Yashikiura Site, Hanyu City (1 example) Excavated between October and early December 2011, press coverage began on November 11, 2015.

It is currently known that one more iron jew's harp was excavated from Hanayama site in Kisarazu, Chiba Prefecture. It was found on January 20, 1983, during an excavation carried out from 1982 to 1984, when a junior high school building was newly built, and a photograph and a measurement diagram were included in the investigation report published in 1988. But at the time, it was unknown what the item was, and no explanation was provided. However, in 2019, it was «rediscovered» by those involved in the excavation of Hanyu's jew's harp, and the author was involved in the appraisal, which confirmed that it was a jew's harp. It was preserved in 2019, and a report was published in 2020, where t is said that this harp dates to the end of the 9th century.

3. The "world's oldest" lamellate jew's harp

Another thing that bothers me about newspaper articles like the one above is the use of terms like "the oldest in Japan" and "the oldest in the world." The fact that a jew's harp from the Heian period was unearthed is sensational enough, as no one would have expected such a thing to be unearthed in Saitama Prefecture, or even in Japan, but I can't help but feel that the wording is too simplistic and ends up diluting its importance.

Certainly, the one in Hanyu (the first quarter of the 10th century) is apparently a little older than the two examples in Omiya (second quarter of the 10th century) [Fukuda 2016: 35], and with only three examples known at the time, it is a bit of an exaggeration to call it "the oldest in Japan," but...

So, is Hanyu's harp the "oldest in the world" as the Yomiuri claims? What is the basis for this? This point was already a big question when the discovery of the Omiya harps was reported in March 1991 with the words "oldest in the world". How old are the archaeological excavated examples of jew's harps, how many of them have they been excavated, and where have they been excavated from? Was it said to be the "oldest in the world" after sufficient comparison and examination? Since then, the author has been collecting information on excavated jew's harps from time to time, and has become acquainted with researchers of excavated jew's harps, music archaeologists, and people who have actually been involved in excavating jew's harps in Norway, Russia, and China. Since "in Europe, the only examples of bow-shaped jew's harps excavated are from the 12th to 13th centuries or later" [Kolltveit 2006], it was not clearly wrong to say that the two examples from Omiya in the first half of the 10th century were the oldest in the world in 1991.

However, in 2003, Frederick Crane, a leading American researcher in the field of jew's harps, told me that a lamellate, stringed bone-made harp had been excavated from a site belonging to the Xiajiadian Upper Culture (8th to 4th century BC) in Chifeng City, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China [Tadagawa 2007, 2016]. This fact easily took us back more than one thousand and four hundred years.

Further information research has revealed that the "world's oldest jew's harps" to date are lamellate, bow-shaped instruments dating back to around the 20th century BC, excavated in Shaanxi Province (23 examples) and Liaoning Province (2 examples) in China. Furthermore, it has become clear that excavations of the same type have been traced, gradually moving westward, with clear links to the horse-riding nomadic culture of the steppes, and are being unearthed in Shanxi Province (one example, around the 19th century BC), the outskirts of Beijing (four examples, 8th-5th centuries BC),

Inner Mongolia (the aforementioned one from the 8th-4th century BC and one other example, date unknown), Mongolia (one example, 3rd-1st century BC), the Altai Republic of the Russian Federation in southern Siberia (five examples, 5th century BC-5th century AD), the Tuva Republic of the same Federation (one example, 2nd century AD), and the Khakass Republic of the same Federation (two examples, 4th-5th centuries AD) [Tadagawa 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020].

All of these lamellate stringed jew's harps are of the type "with holes in the frame." Looking at ethnological examples of stringed jew's harps, it was generally thought that the type with "attaching the pull string to the frame" (such as the Balinese Genggong) was distributed in Southeast Asia, while the type with "attaching the pull string on the vibrating tongue itself, near its base" (such as the *mukkuri* of the Ainu and *zhygach ooz komuz* of the Kyrgyz) was distributed in the region from northern Asia to central Asia. From this perspective, it was difficult to explain the ethnological examples of northern jew's harps of the "attaching the pull string to the frame" type, which are found in Mongolia and Tuva in center of Asia, and in Nivkh and Chukchi in northern Asia, but it has become clear that these can be explained by considering them as direct descendants of the older type of jew's harps with "attaching the pull string to the frame" from "northern Asia, slightly southward" seen in the archaeological examples mentioned above.

Incidentally, as of now, only one excavated specimen of the type that has a "pull string attached to a vibrating tongue," such as the *mukkuri* or the Kyrgyz wooden jew's harp *jygach ooz komuz*, has been confirmed, a bone-made Khanty example from the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug of the Russian Federation, which dates back to the 18th or 19th century AD.

In addition, prior to the verification of the position of the string, there was no information on any excavated examples in Southeast Asia. Sachs considered the development process of the jew's harp [Sachs 1917] and also stated that "the origin of all jaw harps is in Southeast Asia" [Sachs 1940], but although this was the result of observing as many ethnological examples as possible at the time, it is only a subjective hypothesis and it is not possible at present to back this up with music archaeological evidence.

4. Examples of bow-shaped metal jew's harps excavated in Asia

On the other hand, the oldest bow-shaped jew's harp in the world at present dates back to the Mohe culture of the 5th to 6th century AD and was excavated in 2013 from the Andrianov settlement in the Partizan district in the southern Primorsky Krai of the Russian Federation, near Vladivostok, facing the Sea of Japan [Leshchenko & Prokopets 2015]. According to Leshchenko and Prokopets, a total of five other examples have been excavated from Primorsky Krai: four examples of curved iron jew's harps from the Balhae and Jurchen dynasties dating to the 11th century AD, and one from the Tongren culture in Heilongjiang Province, China. Furthermore, Beskrovny (2013) has reported on a Jurchen jew's harp from the 11th to 12th (or 12th to 13th) centuries from Primorsky Krai [Tadagawa 2018, 2020a]. If we arrange these in approximate chronological order, we get the following (measurements are indicated as "X mm" if stated in official reports, or "approximately X mm" if calculated by the author from measured drawings, etc.).

1) 5th-6th century AD, Andrianov settlement, Partizan district, Primorsky Krai, Russian Federation, Mohe culture, total length 60 mm, maximum width 12 mm, made of iron (fig. 1 bottom). The frame is hairpin-shaped with little bulge at the bottom.

2) 5th to 11th century AD, Tongren culture, Suibin County, Hegang City, Heilongjiang Province, China. Total length 110 mm, maximum width approx. 24.3 mm, made of iron. The frame is slightly bulged at the bottom, forming a long, teardrop-shaped ring. The vibrating tongue is thought to have been inserted through a hole drilled in the center of the frame and wedged in place. It is notable that the shape of the part of the vibrating tongue near the base, i.e. the «ring part of the frame», is shaped to match the curvature of the frame.

3) Shaiginsky Earthworks, Partizan District, Primorsky Krai, Russian Federation, 7th-8th century AD. Jurchen culture. Dimensions unknown. Made of bronze. Hairpin-shaped. There appears to be a hole for the tongue in the center of the bottom of the frame.

4) 9th century AD, Nikolayevka-I earthworks, Mikhailovka district, Primorsky Krai, Russian Federation, Balhae culture, total

length 80 mm, width 19-9 mm, made of iron. The frame is close to a hairpin shape, but has a slight bulge.

5) 9th-11th century AD, Smolnoye settlement, Anuchino district, Primorsky Krai, Russian Federation, Jurchen culture, total length 96 mm, width 28-11 mm, probably made of iron. Hairpin shape.

6) 11th-12th (or 12th-13th) century AD, Anuchino region, Primorsky Krai, Russian Federation, Jurchen culture, dimensions unknown, total length just over 90 mm. Probably made of iron. The shape of the frame is teardrop-shaped, and the shape of the part near the base of the vibrating tongue is very similar to example 2). There is a protrusion at the bottom of the frame.

When we place them on a map, we can see that excavated examples dating from the 5th to the 12th (and 13th) centuries are concentrated in a very limited area. Furthermore, there is a strong possibility that the jew's harps excavated in Japan, across the Northern Sea of Japan, belong to the same group in terms of both time and geography.

Other examples excavated from Asia and surrounding areas include the following.

1. One example from a Turkic burial mound from the 7-8th century [Kuznetsov 2005] found in the Esaurskiy tombs near Novokuznetsk in Kemerovo Oblast, Russian Federation (in southwestern Siberia, bordering the Altai Republic and the Khakass Republic). According to Kuznetsov, the frame was made by bending an iron rod with a square cross section, and in the center, there is a thin iron (steel?) vibrating tongue and a «sounding plate» formed into a certain shape. Judging from the actual measurement drawing, the total length is about 94 mm, the distance from the tip of the frame to the bottom of the ring is about 75 mm, and the maximum width is about 14 mm. In terms of period, it overlaps with a group of jew's harps from Primorsky Krai, but geographically it is quite far away, and at present no excavations have been confirmed from the points connecting the two. It remains to be clarified what the relationship between the jew's harps from both regions is. A similar shaped and sized jew's harp, with a hairpin-shaped loop, is still played in the bordering Republic of Tuva.

2. At least four examples estimated to date from the 16th century or later were excavated in the Gafuriysky District, Republic of Bashkortostan, Russian Federation. They are very small, with a total length of about 32-50 mm and a maximum width of about 17-25 mm. They are made of iron and copper, and include teardrop-shaped and nearly circular rings. The teardrop-shaped ones have a ring not made of a square bar but of a thin plate that is used vertically. As they are located just west of the Ural Mountains, they are geographically part of Europe, but are thought to have been part of the Turkic culture at the time.

3. A hairpin-shaped copper (or bronze) instrument in a boot-shaped wooden case from the 19th century, excavated by Kubarev from the grave of a Terengit woman near the Elangash River in the Kosh-Agach region of the Altai Republic [Tadagawa 2007, 2021]. It is about 47 mm long and 10 mm wide at its widest point (fig. 10). Boot-shaped cases are often found among modern Tuvan jew's harps.

4. Two examples of jew's harp excavated on the banks of the Vilyuy River in the Vilyuysk District of the Sakha Republic are on display at the Vilyuysk Jew's Harp Museum. Date unknown, possibly from the 19th century at the earliest [Tadagawa 2021]. The exact size is also unclear, but it is likely to be around 90 mm in total length. Made of iron, it has the same overall shape as the modern Sakha *khomus*, but is slightly smaller and the ridges of the frame run all the way through, meaning that the cross section of the frame is ◆. (In contrast, the cross section of the arms of the modern k*homus* is ◆, but the circular part is shaped like ■.)

Currently, there are very few examples of Jew's Harp excavated in the Sakha Republic, the region where Jew's Harp is most popular in the world, and even if there are any, they do not seem to date back more than 200 years.

The only known dated example of a jew's harp excavated in the Sakha Republic is a 17th century iron example excavated from a Russian (Cossack soldiers sent to collect fur taxes - *yasak*) fort called Alazeya Fort in the lower Alazeya River basin in the Srednekolymsk District at the eastern edge of the Republic. This specimen is currently on display at the Archaeological Museum of North-Eastern Federal University (formerly Yakutsk University). In his report, A. Alexeyev states that the Cossack soldiers may

have acquired the instrument from local Sakha people [Alekseev 1996], but the author believes that the possibility that it may have been brought from Russia in Europe should also be considered.

The point to be noted is the period when the Sakha ethnic identity was formed. The Sakha, known as a people who worked with iron, are people who lived around Lake Baikal, and in the 12th and 13th centuries, under pressure from the Mongolia from the south, moved north in several waves, and it is highly unlikely that curved iron jew's harps from before the 11th century would be excavated in the Sakha Republic region where the Sakha people currently live. This is not the only example in which the distribution of modern ethnological jew's harps does not exactly match the distribution of ancient jew's harps estimated from excavated examples.

5. At least six specimens are found by metal detecting surveys in Chunkurchak, 40 km from Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic in Central Asia, but as far as the author knows, no archaeological report is made. They are rather small in size, around 50 - 70 mm in total length. Made of iron, they have the slightly different overall shape as the modern Kyrgyz *temir komuz,* with more round form. Their date is unknown.

It is noteworthy that all of the examples from Kemerovo Oblast, Bashkortostan, Altai, Sakha, and Kyrgyzstan were unearthed in the cultural spheres of inland Turkic-speaking peoples. In inland Asia, the oldest examples are from the 7th to 8th centuries in Kemerovo Oblast, and several examples from the 17th century onwards may form a group (although there are very few examples) distributed over a vast geographical area, although their relationships are unclear.

In other parts of Asia, outside the Turkic cultural sphere, such as Southwest Asia and Southeast Asia, where the jew's harp is relatively popular among ethnic groups today, to the author's knowledge, no excavated examples have been found, either lamellate or bow-shaped. This is thought to be largely related to the fact that materials such as bamboo and wood are difficult to preserve, especially in the case of thin jew's harps. In Europe, as mentioned above, excavated examples of curved jew's harps date back to the 12th and 13th centuries and after. From this broader perspective, it seems that there is an increasingly close relationship between the group of bow-shaped metallic jew's harps, including the oldest examples in Primorsky Krai and Heilongjiang Province, China, located on either side of the Northern Japan Sea, and the group of jew's harps of Saitama and Chiba Prefectures of Japan.

5. Where did the Japanese jew's harps of the Heian Period come from?

Here, we would like to reconfirm the characteristics of the Japanese jew's harps by comparing them with the examples excavated in Primorsky Krai and Heilongjiang Province, and with examples from ethnological specimens in neighboring regions.

The overall length of Omiya No. 1 jew's harp is 128 mm, No. 2 jew's harp is 124 mm, and both Hanyu's and Kisarazu's jew's harps are 148 mm. The maximum widths are also 42 mm, 36 mm, 54 mm, and 49 mm, respectively. They are larger than the examples excavated on the continent, and the specimens from Hanyu and Kisarazu are particularly large. However, they are not so large that they could not have been a jew's harp, as for example of the Nivkh (Gilyak) from Sakhalin in the collection of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, which has a total length of 137 mm [Dournon-Taurelle & Wright 1978].

Regarding the shape of the round part of the frame, Omiya No. 1 is relatively circular. No. 2 has more of a teardrop shape that is closer to a hairpin. Hanyu's specimen has more round shape, as well as the one from Kisarazu.

The square bar – material for the frame is bent, rotated at a 45-degree angle, with a ridge running through the entire frame (in other words, no matter where you cut it, the cross section will be a ◆). This, combined with the fact that the entire frame is slightly bent when viewed from the side, indicates that it was made by someone with a thorough understanding of how a jew's harp produces sound.

The vibrating tongues have either broken off along the way, or are completely lost (in the Hanyu example, the tip of the frame remains). The shapes of the base of the vibrating tongues are not shaped to follow the shape of the round-shaped frame, as in example 2) from Heilongjiang Province and 6) from the Anuchino area.

The frame is thought to be made of iron and the vibrating tongues are probably made of steel, but this cannot be confirmed.

Is it possible to think that the jew's harps of the Heian period in Saitama and Chiba Pre-

fectures were brought from the Primorsky Krai or Heilongjiang Province (whether the objects themselves or only the idea behind them)? What route did they take? Given the historical and geographical background, the first possibility that comes to mind is the existence of trade with the Balhae kingdom.

More than 30 envoys from Balhae visited Japan between the 4th year of Jinki (727) in the Nara period and the 19th year of Engi (919) in the Heian period, and more than 10 envoys were sent from Japan to send off Balhae visitors when they returned home. Cultural exchange was also active – for example, an envoy exchanged Chinese poetry with Sugawara no Michizane, a Japanese scholar, poet and politician [Ueda 1992]. Balhae music was also played for the first time in front of Emperor Shomu on January 30, 12th year of Tenpyo (740), and there are records of it being played on several occasions, such as at the Buddhist sutra reading ceremony at Todaiji Temple on December 27th, 1st year of Shoho (749) [Obinata 2017], but there seems to be no record of whether the jew's harp was included. Due to changes in the musical system after the Heian period, music known as Balhae music was integrated with Kudara (Baekje) music and Shiragi (Silla) music, and became Koma (Goryeo) music, which is on the right side of *gagaku* court music, and continues to exist to this day, but there is no trace of the jew's harp. Of course, it is not necessarily true that the jew's harp was one of the musical instruments that made up the ensemble that played this kind of official music. The situation is the same even today, where the jew's harp is often an instrument for the general public, and it is very rare to see it performed in connection with music genres such as "court music." Of course, it is entirely conceivable that there was someone who came to Japan from Balhae carrying a jew's harp as a very private instrument.

Then, is it possible that the artifacts of Balhae that reached the Japanese coast of Sea of Japan, such as Dewa, Sado, Noto, and Echizen, were brought to the Kanto region? For example, there is a record that the seventh Balhae envoys, consisting of 325 people, arrived at Noshiro Port in Dewa Province in June 771, were transferred to Hitachi Province (a neighboring region of Saitama and Chiba), and entered Kyoto in December, so the connection between Balhae and these regions is quite conceivable. In addition, according to Hiroaki Tanaka, a belt ornament identical to the "belt ornaments of Balhae" excavated at the Uneda Nabeta site in Kanazawa City, Ishikawa Prefecture, was excavated at the Toba site in Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture [Tanaka 2016], so it is not at all unreasonable that the jew's harp reached Saitama and Chiba.

The Jurchen people, who founded the Jin Dynasty in 1115, had connections with Japan as follows. In February 1224, a Korean man who was cast ashore in Echigo had a silver plaque with four mysterious characters on his belt in the Azuma Kagami. After Shiratori Kurakichi pointed out that these were not Chinese characters but Jurchen characters, various interpretations were given to the characters. In 1976, a silver plaque with Jurchen characters, which was identical to the one in the Azuma Kagami, was discovered at the Shaygin site in Primorsky Krai, former Soviet Union, and was found to be a passport with the words "Sincerity of the Country" written on it [Kiyose 1997]. This is the same site as the Shaiginsky earthworks (or Shaiga fortress) where the jew's harp mentioned in 3) above was excavated.

The cultural exchange between the Balhae and Jurchen peoples and Japan was not as remote as is commonly thought today. The inhabitants of the Saitama and Chiba Prefectures a thousand years ago shared the "world's oldest" bow-shaped iron jew's harp culture with the region across the northern Japan Sea, or at least possessed instruments that were passed down from generation to generation. In what situations did the jew's harp, an instrument that shows the connection between Japan and the Eurasian continent, played, and what kind of sounds did it produce in ancient Japan?

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