

Prosperity of Oshu Fujiwara clan and climatic change

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Last year, Hiraizumi in Iwate Prefecture was recognized as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site, where the ancient Oshu Fujiwara clan was flourished. Here, we regard as a prosperous era of the Oshu Fujiwara clan the period from 1087 A.D. when Gosannen no Eki ended and Kiyohira built up a firm foundation for the rule of Oshu as an only survivor of the Kiyohara clan to 1189 A.D. when the Fujiwara clan perished by the invasion of Minamoto no Yoritomo. This period of about 100 years spanning from the end of the Heian to the beginning of the Kamakura period is included within the Medieval Warm Period (900-1300), when temperatures on the Earth were elevated globally [1]. The view is broadly accepted that the prosperity of the Oshu Fujiwara clan was due to mass production of gold. However, it is also known that northern special products, as well as gold, such as tail feathers of sea-eagles and seal skins were presented to the court in Kyoto, which were highly appreciated among Heian aristocrats for the use of arrow feathers and harness. Furthermore, according to Azumakagami, the historical book of the Kamakura period, Kiyohira said proudly that people living in Karafuto and Siberia were obedient to me, which suggests the existence of the close relation with these areas [2]. In fact, the same iron arrowheads, which has the Z-shaped section, as excavated in the Nadedinskoe ruins in the Amur River basin was also found in the Atsuma town in Hokkaido. Thus, the possibility of the cultural interaction between Hokkaido and Siberia in those days is strongly suggested. Meanwhile, Japanese visitors to the Siberia continent in the Edo period, for example, Daikokuya Kodayu (1751-1828) and Mamiya Rinzou (1780-1844), told that the climate in these areas was very cold [3],[4],[5]. It should be noticed that this period overlaps the global cold period called Little Ice Age (1450-1850) including the Maunder Minimum (1645-1715) and the Dalton Minimum (the beginning of the 19th century). In the older times, other evidences for the inflow of the Siberian cultures can be found in the Sannai-maruyama ruins in the Jyomon period, when the climate are thought to have been comparatively mild. On the basis of these considerations, we could propose a following hypothesis, which connects the Japanese cultural history with climatic change on the Earth. That is, the exchange route was formed intermittently from Siberia to northern Japan via the Karafuto island in global warm periods, and that the inflow of continental cultures has been repeated.

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