

## The Goal of Session III “Tracing the Migration of East Asian Peoples through a Comparative Study of Plow Shapes”

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I would like to explain what lies behind the title of this session: “Tracing the Migration of East Asian Peoples through a Comparative Study of Plow Shapes.”

Kanagawa University has pursued its COE Program “Systematization of Nonwritten Cultural Materials for the Study of Human Societies.” Culture is formed as people create such objects as clothes, houses, hoes, bows and arrows to facilitate their lives in nature. In this sense, culture can be determined by natural environment.

However, local cultures as we know them today cannot always be attributed to regional climates and environments. Migrations of people have taken place from time to time, and cultures born in certain regions have been delivered to places with different environments. The evergreen forest culture theory, which has propelled East Asian cultural studies in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, fails to pay heed to this point. The theory goes that Yunnan Province was the fount of East Asian culture. Yet ethnic minorities in this region have their roots in other parts of China, so Yunnan must have absorbed cultures developed in different environments. Information on whether the inhabitants of a region are indigenous and, if not, when and from where they came forms a cornerstone of cultural studies. Thus, Session III endeavors to unravel the migratory history of Asian peoples.

While Chinese history is recorded in ancient books, early Korean and Japanese history is shrouded in myths. Yet it has been confirmed that the shapes of plows do not change easily, and that, for instance, how Koreans settled in Japan in the 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries can be spelled out based on studies of plows used in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This session will demonstrate that, by conducting a comparative study of plows around East Asia, it is possible to unveil the immigration history of Asian peoples in the 2,500 years since the advent of plows in China’s Warring States Period.

Session III features several experts in the field. Tokai University Professor Takeshi Watabe explores the history of plow agriculture. He visits China from time to time to study folk tools and archaeological references. Inha University Emeritus Professor Kwang-eon Kim is an authority on folklore and folk tool studies in Korea. I will talk about Japanese plows, which I have been studying for 26 years at museums around Japan. The commentator for this session is Yunnan University Professor Shaoting Yin, who gave the presentation “The Source and Type of Yunnan Plows” at last year’s symposium.

Communication between Chinese and Japanese researchers studying East Asian plows has been fostered thanks to Professor Watabe. Yet as a whole, there have been few opportunities to exchange research findings with experts from different countries. Indeed, this symposium marks the first meeting of Japanese, Korean and Chinese researchers in this field. With presentations given on the theme of tracing the migrations of East Asian peoples, I hope we can gain insights into studies developed in different research environments and open the door to future research collaborations.