

## IUFoST Scientific Roundtable Discussion #8 FOOD CULTURE AND TRADITIONAL FOODS

Date Time: Apr 29, 2021 07:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

### **Korean Foodways from prehistory to the present**

Thank you, Chairman.

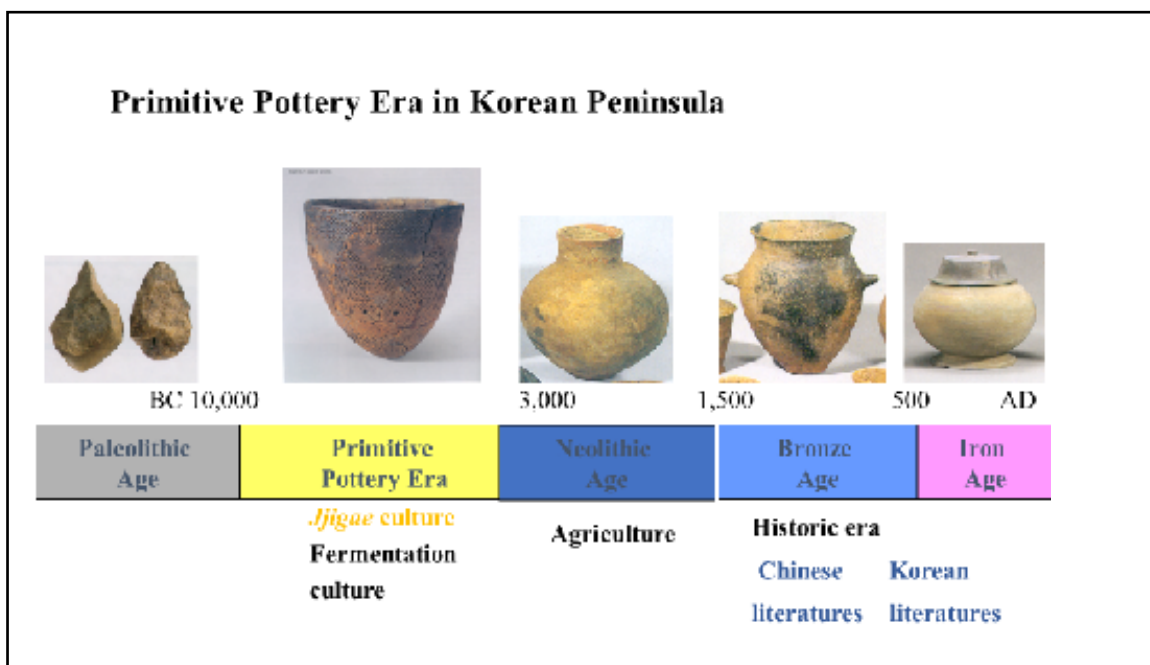
I must thank to the organizer inviting me as a speaker to this interesting roundtable.

Recently I published a book titled “A History of Korean Food” in Korean, and the English edition will be published soon in the title of “Korean Food Ways from prehistory to the present”, subtitle “Cultural and Anthropological Approaches”.

In Northeast Asia, China, Korea and Japan have developed their own characteristic food cultures and traditional foods. However, the origin of Korean food culture has not been studied properly, due to the destruction of many source materials in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and competing national views on the early history of Korea. The archeological studies in Korea began in 1960s, over 100 years later than Europe, and a half century behind compare to China and Japan. In spite of the delayed start, the Korean archeology has achieved outstanding research results; the excavation of Lower Paleolithic sites in Danyang Geumgul, and Gongju Seokjangri which are comparable to the Zhoukodian site in China. Several Middle and Upper Paleolithic sites were also excavated, and the pollens of rice family and pulse family were confirmed in the Paleolithic remains. The distribution of the Paleolithic sites in Northeast Asia shows that Korean Peninsula was functioned as a land bridge connecting Manchuria and Japanese islands for the seasonal migration of Pleolithic hunters and gatherers, and the Korea Strait was a hurdle in the route, where people gathered around for crossing the water.

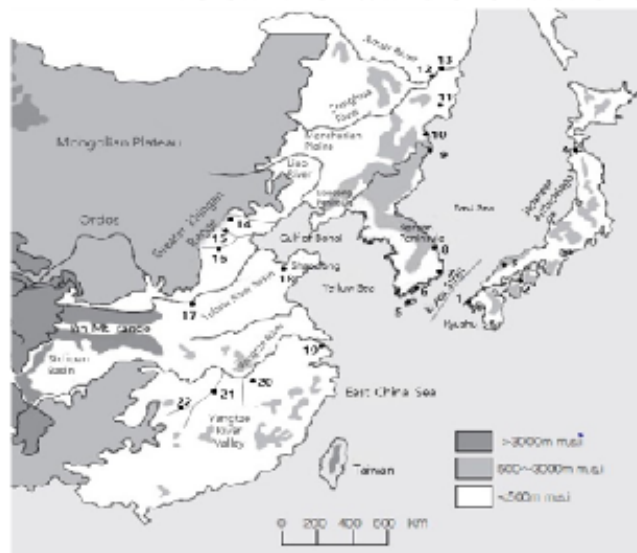
The Primitive Pottery Culture of BCE 8000 to 5000 in the Korea Strait region has special meaning. Pottery is the first utensil man developed for boiling water and keeping wet material for long time. The littoral foragers life in the south

coast of Korean peninsula and northwest coast of Kyushu, Japan, accelerated the use of earthen vessels for cooking and storage of perishable marine products. They developed the *Jigae* (boiled stew in an earthen vessel) which is a typical Korean cuisine today, and the fermentation technology that Korean people are mostly depended upon. Keeping vegetables in seawater containing 3% of salt in an earthen jar makes *kimchi* naturally, and layering fish and shellfish in salt in an earthen croak naturally results in *jeotgal*, the fermented fish products in Korea. It is a natural process growing mold and yeast on the grains and starchy tubers stored in an earthen jar, and this is *nuruk*, the grain alcoholic fermentation starter used for making rice wine. Thus, using earthen vessels in the coastal region means the start of boiling technology replacing roasting, and salt-fermentation technology substituting drying. It resulted in the improvement of food availability and nutritional status of the people in the region, and also accelerated the sedentary life of the people before agriculture began.



The primitive pottery sites found in Northeast Asia are scattered all over the Chinese continent, the Maritime Province of Russia and Korea Strait region, but the oldest ones are found in the caves. The potteries in the Korea Strait region are found in the shell midden, where earthen vessels are decayed easily and returned to soil. The potteries in the coastal region of the East Sea are considered as having the same cultural root, and different from those found in the inland of the Chinese continent.

## Primitive earthenware excavations in Northeast Asia



- 1:Fukui, 2:Kamikuroiwa, 3:Mawatari,
- 4:Odai Yamamoto, 5: Gosanri,
- 6:Sangnodaedo, 7:Dongsamdong,
- 8:Osanri, 9:Seopohang, 10:Ustinovka,
- 11:Almazinka, 12:Gasya, 13:Khummy,
- 14:Hutouliang, 15:Donghulin,
- 16:Nanzhuangtou, 17:Lijiagou,
- 19:Bianbiandong, 19:Shangshan,
- 20:Xianrendong, 21:Yuchanyan,
- 22:Zengpiyan

Source: CH Lee, A History of Korean Food, Sikanyeon, Seoul, 2021. (in Korean)

Soybeans are originated in the area of southern Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula, and Dongyi people are thought to be the first in human history to use soybeans as food. Recent archeological studies evidence that most of the carbonized beans excavated from the Yangshao and Lungshan cultural sites in China are wild beans, and the large beans from the Korean Peninsula around 2000 BCE are cultivated ones. The technique for fermenting soybeans to make sauce developed almost simultaneously with the use of soybeans as food. It is estimated that the manufacture of fermented sauces using beans would have begun in Korea in the 1000s BCE.

## Traditional Foods in Korea



Rice wine



Kimchi



Joethal



### Sundubu-Chigae

Soybean curd (dubu),  
Soybean paste (doenjang),  
Hot-bean paste (gochujang),  
Clam, Shrimp, Vegetables,  
Laver (gim), Sea mustard (myeok),  
Cooked rice.

My book “A History of Korean food” aims to correct misinformation and use recent archeological findings and early Korean history studies to provide a basis for the origin of cooking methods and fermented foods in Korea. In addition, a thorough survey of classical literature reveals the historical background and manufacture methods of traditional food categories, such as rice cakes, Korean sweets, fermented sauces, and alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. This book also examines changes in Korean food culture brought about by recent historical events, and suggests the future contributions of Korean foodways to the world, particularly regarding the latest research on the intersection of food and Traditional Eastern Medicine. Thank you.

#### Q&A:

1. Kimchi is an excellent lactic acid fermented food which can be disseminated to African countries to improve the nutritional status of the region. UN World Health Organization tried to introduce lactic acid fermentation technology to Africa many years ago. This kind of effort should be continued not only to Africa, but world-wide ', especially in the COVID-19 pandemic era. Recent European studies revealed that consumption of lactic acid fermented vegetables is related to lowering mortality rate of Corona virus patients.