The Circulation of Chinese Coins in Hokkaido and Sakhalin from the 15th Century onward

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1. Coins Excavated in Hokkaido Island and Sakhalin Island

Hokkaido is an island situated in the northern part of the Japanese archipelago. To the north of Hokkaido lies the island of Sakhalin, which belongs to the Russian Federation. After the 13th Century, the trade between the continent and Hokkaido Island through Sakhalin Island was developed. The Chinese brocades called 'Ezo-nishiki' in Japan were obtained by Ainu people in Hokkaido Island. 'ezo' means Ainu and 'nishiki' means brocade. So 'Ezo-nishiki' means the brocades of Ainu.

Large volumes of Chinese coins circulated in Japan from the 12th century onward. These coins reached as far as Hokkaido Island. To date, five batches of coins have been discovered in Hokkaido Island (Figure 1).

The first batch of coins was excavated in Shinori, Hakodate City. Accordingly, these coins are referred to as the Shinori Kosen ("Shinori ancient coins" - hereunder "Shinori batch"). The Shinori batch contains a total of 387,515 coins comprising 97 varieties, from the 四銖半両 *Sizhu Banliang* (first minted in 175 BC) to the 洪武通寶 *Hongwu Tongbao* (first minted in 1368). The second batch of coins was discovered near the remains of the Suzakidate (The castle of Suzaki), Kaminokuni Town, and these are called the Suzakidate Kosen (hereunder "Suzakidate batch"). The Suzakidate batch contains a total of 490 coins comprising 35 varieties, from the 開元通寶 *Kaiyuan Tongbao* (first minted in 621) to the 永楽通寶 *Yongle Tongbao* (first minted in 1408). The third batch of coins was discovered near the Wakimoto castle, Shiriuchi Town, and these coins are called the Wakimoto Kosen (hereunder, "Wakimoto batch.") The Wakimoto batch contains a total of 996 coins comprising 39 varieties, from the 開元通寶 *Kaiyuan Tongbao* to the 宣徳通寶 *Xuande Tongbao* (first minted in 1433). The fourth batch was discovered in Kabari, Hidaka Town, and these coins are called the Kabari Kosen (hereunder, "Kabari batch"). The Kabari batch contains a total of 664 coins comprising 35 varieties, from the 開元通寶 *Kaiyuan Tongbao* to the 宣徳通寶 *Xuande Tongbao*. The fifth and final batch was discovered in Kotanhama, Rumoi City, and these coins are called the Kotanhama Kosen (hereunder, Kotanhama batch"). The Kotenhama batch contains a total of 460 coins comprising 43 varieties, from the 開元通寶 *Kaiuan Tongbao* to the 咸豊通寶 *Xienfeng Tongbao* (first minted in 1851). Hakodate City, Shiriuchi Town and Kaminokuni Town are all situated in the Oshima Peninsula, which is in the southwestern part of Hokkaido Island. Hidaka Town is situated in the southern part of Hokkaido Island, and Rumoi City is situated in the northern part of Hokkaido Island.

Aside from these batch finds, there have also been discoveries of single coins. We will refer to these as "single finds." The single finds of Hokkaido Island have yet to be compiled, and so it is unknown exactly how many and what types of single finds exist.

The situation concerning excavated coins in Sakhalin Island was unclear for many years. The situation became clear in recent years after the findings were compiled by Igor A. Samarin (Самарин 2006, 2011, Samarin 2008, 2014). According to Samarin, there have been only single finds on Sakhalin Island; there have been no batch findings such as the ones in Hokkaido Island.

2. The Characteristics of Hokkaido Coin Batches and the Date these Batches were buried

We will indicate the ratios (%) of the coin varieties contained in each coin batch (Table 1). Of the varieties shown, 開元通寶 *Kaiuan Tongbao* is the earliest, and 咸豊通寶 *Xienfeng Tongbao* is the latest. Let me explain why we have shown these varieties. First, take a look at the largest batch - the Shinori batch. We have selected the twenty most numerous varieties and the latest variety of the batch - the 洪武通寶 *Hongwu Tongbao*. Next, We added eight varieties from the Ming and Qing periods (永楽通寶 *Yongle Tongbao* to 咸豊通寶 *Xienfeng Tongbao*); these coins do not appear in the Shinori batch, but they are included among the other batches. There are a total of 29 varieties. This method makes it possible to compare batches with different numbers of coins (Sakuraki 1992, 2009, Miyake 2005).

We will leave the Kotanhama batch aside for a moment and analyze the remaining four batches, as these four batches share a similar composition. It should be noted first of all that the composition of these four batches is also similar to coin batches excavated in the Tohoku area, which is in the northern part of the Honshu island of Japan. It is therefore assumed that these batches were brought across from Honshu Island. During the 15th century, Wajin (Japanese from the mainland) built settlements in Oshima Peninsula called Tate (Castles of Japanese) as represented by the term "Donan Juni Tate" (The 12 castles in the southwestern part of Hokkaido Island). The Shinori batch was discovered near Shinoridate (The castle of Shinori), one of the 12 castles. The Suzakidate and Wakimoto batches were also discovered near the Japanese castles. While being military outposts, the Japanese castles also functioned as trade outposts. Therefore, these coins probably came together around the rulers of the castles.

Let us now examine in detail the compositions of the Shinori, Suzakidate, Wakimoto, and Kabari batches. All four batches are very similar in composition from the 開元通寶 *Kaiyuan Tongbao* until the 政和通寶 *Zhenghe Tongbao* (first minted in 1111). Disparities emerge from the 洪武通寶 *Hongwu Tongbao* onward. With regard to the Shinori batch first of all, the latest coin is the 洪武通寶 *Hongwu Tongbao*. In the Suzakidate batch, the latest coin is the 永楽通寶 *Yongle Tongbao*. The 宣徳通寶 *Xuande Tongbao* is the latest coin in the Wakimoto and Kabari batches, both of which are notable for having a high proportion of 永楽通寶 *Yongle Tongbao* coins. The Shinori batch was probably buried because of the Battle of Koshamain, which started in 1456 or 1457. Koshamain was the leader of Ainu people and he attacked the Japanese castles (Лим 2008). With regard to the Wakimoto and Kabari batches, considering the time when the 永楽通寶 *Yongle Tongbao* came to Japan and reached as far as Hokkaido, it was probably buried at the end of the 15th century or later. As for the Suzakidate batch, it was probably buried later than the burial of the Shinori batch and before that of the Wakimoto and Kabari batches. This supposition is based on the low proportion of 永楽通寶 *Yongle Tongbao*. The Suzakidate batch was likely buried shortly after the 永楽通寶 *Yongle Tongbao* was introduced into Hokkaido Island.

There have been numerous discoveries of 永楽通寶 *Yongle Tongbao* throughout Japan. However, according to the research of Toshihiko Miyake, there have been scarcely any discoveries of the 永楽通寶 *Yongle Tongbao* in China (Miyake, 2005). Moreover, there have been no reported discoveries of the coin in the Russian Primor'e Provinces (Miyake & Ivliev 2008, Миякэ и Ивлиев 2016). It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the 永楽通寶 *Yongle Tongbao* discovered in Hokkaido Island was brought across from mainland Japan.

Then, we changed perspective within the research. We made the chemical analysis of 205 coins of *Yongle Tongbao* in Wakimoto batch and also 216 coins of *Yongle Tongbao* in Kabari batch. We used the handheld X-ray fluorescence analyzer (Thermo-NITON). We analyzed 2 points of the front side of the coin and also 2 points of the back side of the coin. So we analyzed 4 points for each coin, spending 1 minute per point.

We will indicate the ternary diagram of the ratio of the components of 永楽通寶 *Yongle Tngbao* in Wakimoto batch and Kabari batch (Table 2). The components of both batches were similar. It supports the previous interpretation that two batches were buried in the same area which was probably the northern part of Honshu Island.

It should be noted that the Wakimoto batch contains a single 開泰元寶 *Khai Thái nguyên bảo*; a Vietnamese coin first minted in 1324 (Figure 2). To date, this is the only such find in Japan. It is thought that this coin did not come to Japan directly, but was brought to the country via China (Nomura & Nakamura 2012).

Assuming that the Wakimoto and Kabari batches were indeed buried at around the same time, this would have certain implications. We would like to state what, in my view, these implications are as follows. Beginning in 1456 or 1457, the Battle of Koshamain dramatically changed the relationship between Hokkaido's indigenous population, the Ainu, and the Wajin-Japanese residing there. According to the *Shinra-no-kiroku*, a historical chronicle of the Matsumae Clan, before the Battle of Koshamain erupted, the Wajin had settled as far as present-day Yoichi Town on the Japan Sea side, and present-day Mukawa Town on the Pacific side (Figure 1). Incidentally, as a result of the Battle of Koshamain, the areas of Japanese settlement were reduced to a narrow strip along the southwest of Oshima Peninsula that corresponds to the area from Matsumae Town to Kaminokuni Town. The Kabari batch was probably from the Japanese settlement that had reached as far as Mukawa town. If this batch was buried at the end of the 15th century or later, then it can be supposed that the Japanese settlement of Mukawa Town was still in existence around 40 years after the Battle of Koshaimain began. The process of the waning of Japanese settlement is unclear from historical documents. An analysis of the excavated coins suggests that the Japanese settlements on the Pacific side of Hokkaido Island may have remained in existence during the period from the end of the 15th century to the beginning of the 16th century.

Now let us turn to the Kotanhama batch. Under the present limits of the research, it is difficult to analyze the nature of this batch. The latest coin in the batch is dated around the mid-19th century. Most of the coins in the Kotanhama batch are from the Tang to Northern Song periods. In this respect, it resembles the composition of other unearthed coins in Hokkaido Island. What marks this batch apart from the rest is that it contains eight coins dating from the end of the Ming period to the Qing period. What was the origin of this particularity? It is our belief that the Chinese coins contained in the Kotanhama batch can be categorized into two groups. The first group comprises coins that date from anywhere between the Tang and the early Ming periods. As with the Shinori batch, these coins were brought from the mainland northwards to Hokkaido Island. The reason for this claim is the high number of similarities in composition with the Shinori batch. The second group comprises coins from the 萬曆通寶 *Wanli Tongbao* onward; in other words, coins dated from the late Ming and Qing periods. These coins were probably brought from the lower reaches of the Amur River to Hokkaido Island via Sakhalin Island. This claim is based on the fact that, as will be mentioned in the next chapter, the same types of coins tend to be excavated in Sakhalin Island. From the 18th century to the first half of the 19th century, there was trade between the lower reaches of the Amur River and Hokkaido Island via Sakhalin Island. In Japan, this is referred to as *Santan Kôeki* ("Santan Trade"). While the two groups of coins had different origins, they

probably came together in Rumoi City. The Kotanhama batch was discovered at the beginning of the 20th century when repair works were being conducted in the port of Rumoi. It was not an archeological excavation, and so the details of the excavation are not clear. There is also a possibility that this batch was contaminated by single finds or coins from another batch. We dealt with Kotanhama bach as collectively excavated coins, but there is also a possibility that they are integration of the single find coin.

3. Coins Excavated in Sakhalin Island

I.A. Samarin has published a compilation of the coins excavated in Sakhalin Island to date. According to this publication, 78.6% of the coins excavated are Qing period coins (Самарин 2006, Samarin 2008). The detailed breakdown is as follows:

順治通寶 *Shunzhi Tongbao* (first minted in 1644): 6.2%
康熙通寶 *Kangxi Tongbao* (first minted in 1662): 8.7%
雍正通寶 *Yongzhen Tongbao* (first minted in 1723): One coin only.
乾隆通寶 *Qianlong Tongbao* (first minted in 1736): 41.2%
嘉慶通寶 *Jiaqing Tongbao* (first minted in 1796): 17.5%
道光通寶 *Daoguang Tongbao* (first minted in 1821): 5.0%

The fact that most of the coins excavated in Sakhalin Island date from the Qing period is a point of considerable difference with the coins excavated in Hokkaido Island, which comprise coins from the Tang, Northern Song, Southern Song, and Ming periods. Another difference concerns the 永楽通寶 *Yongle Tongbao*. Vast volumes of this coin have been found in Hokkaido Island and other parts of the Japanese archipelago, but only one such coin has been discovered in Sakhalin Island; the coin was unearthed from a site in Chaivo, the north of Sakhalin Island. On the other hand, there have been discoveries of coins dated from the end of the Ming period, such as the 萬曆通寶 *Wanli Tongbao* and 崇禎通寶 *Chongzhen Tongbao* (first minted in 1628), although the numbers of such finds are few. As we mentioned previously, there have been few discoveries of the 永楽通寶 *Yongle Tongbao* in China, and there are no reported discoveries in the Russian Primor'e Provinces, either. This being the case, it is reasonable to suppose that the single find in Chaivo had been brought there via Hokkaido Island.

Furthermore, a characteristic of the coins excavated in Sakhalin Island is the high proportion of large-sized coins (Miyake 2012, 2013). In relation to this point, let us take a look at the *Ezo Karafuto Santan Uchikomizu* ("Pictures of the Santan Trade in Sakhalin Island") which is held by the Waseda University Library in Tokyo, Japan. There is a theory that the author was Gen'nosuke Kobayashi, a *Yoriki* (assistant to feudal lord) of the department of Nishinomaru of the Tougawa Shogunate (or Edo Bakufu) , who migrated to Sakhalin Island together with Tokunai Mogami in 1792. Looking at the lettering, it appears that the name of the coin is 泰和重寶 *Taihe Zhongbao*. There is also a punched hole near the edge. The note written on the tag identifies these specimens as large coins (Figure 3).

右銭満州国之大銭ニ而、カラフト嶋夷共所持致有レ之由申聞候。
The coin on the right is a large coin from Manchuria. It is apparent that many such coins were owned by the

Ezo people (Ainu) residing in the island of Karafuto (or Sakhalin).

This note reveals that there were many large coins in Sakhalin Island during the 18th century.

4. The Circulation of Coins in Hokkaido and Sakhalin

The Chinese coins that circulated in the Japanese archipelago did not reach any further north than Hokkaido Island, and they did not reach Sakhalin Island. Moreover, the sphere of circulation was largely limited to Wajin or Japanese settlements. It is thought that the Ainu used the coins as jewelry.

The Chinese coins of Sakhalin Island were brought to the island from the lower reaches of the Amur River. The Sakhalin islanders also used these coins as jewelry, and so they never circulated as monetary currency on the island. The high proportion of large coins found in Sakhalin Island and the presence of holes near the edge of them suggests that they were indeed worn as jewelry.

Most of the coins excavated in Japan are small coins, each of which was worth 1 文 *mon*. However, large coins have also been discovered in rare cases. Discoveries of large coins tend to take place in southwestern Japan. No large coins have been discovered in in Kanto and Tohoku district in Honshu Island, but there have been three discoveries in Hokkaido Island, and one discovery in Aomori Prefecture. Some years ago, Naoki Yoshinari hypothesized that these large coins had been brought from the south via a maritime network (Yoshinari 2007). However, in view of the discoveries of large coins in Sakhalin Island, the large coins found in Hokkaido Island and Aomori Prefecture in Honshu Island must surely have come from the north via Sakhalin Island.

Finally, we would like to conclude by mentioning the situation from the early-modern period on. Chinese coins rapidly vanished from circulation in Japan after the launch of the Japanese coin 寛永通寶 *Kan'ei Tsuho* (first minted in 1636). The reason for Qing coins were excavated only in the Sakhalin Island was that Hokkaido Island became the range of distribution of 寛永通寶 *Kan'ei Tsuho*. There have also been discoveries of the 寛永通寶 *Kan'ei Tsuho* on Sakhalin Island, along with the Qing period coins. The presence of the 寛永通寶 *Kan'ei Tsuho* on Sakhalin Island is indicative of the influence of the Matsumae Clan and the Tougawa Shogunate forces over the island, but we will leave the details for another time.

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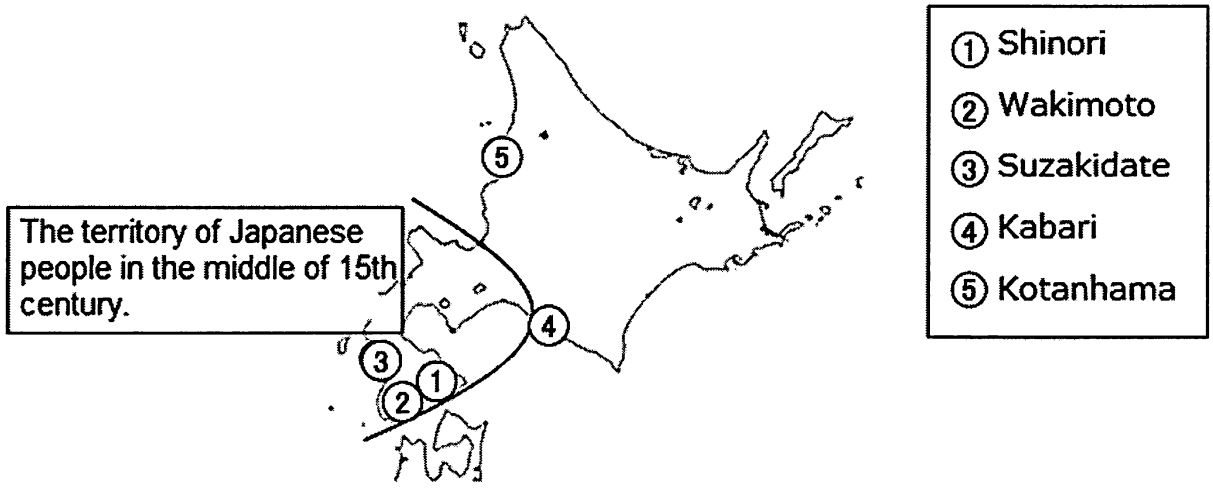

Figure 1. The five batches of coins discovered in Hokkaido Island and the territory of Japanese people in the middle of 15th Century

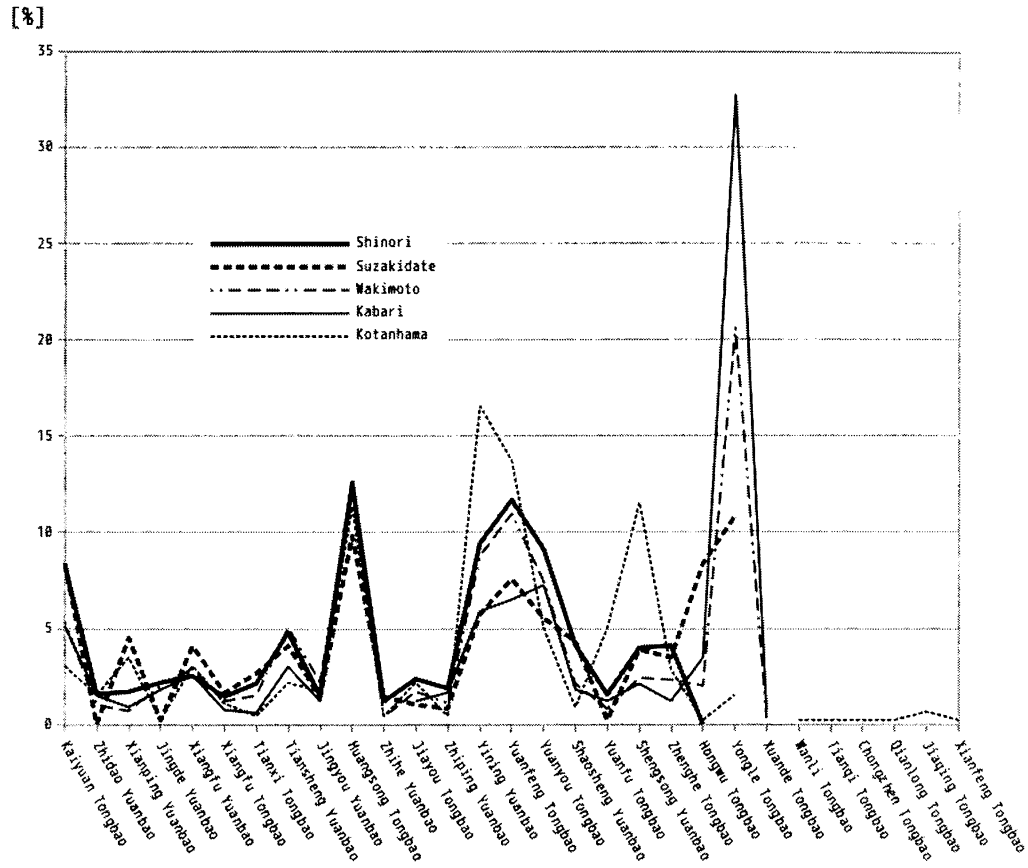

Table 1. The graph of ratios (%) of the coin varieties contained in five coin batches

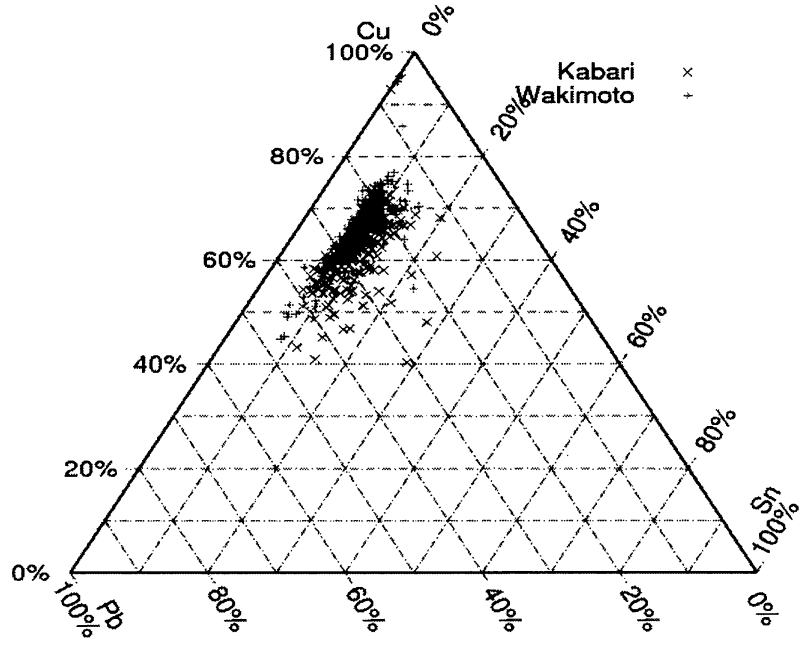

Table 2. The ternary diagram of the ratio of the components of *Yongle Tongbao* in Wakimoto and Kabari batches (Cupper, Lead, Tin)

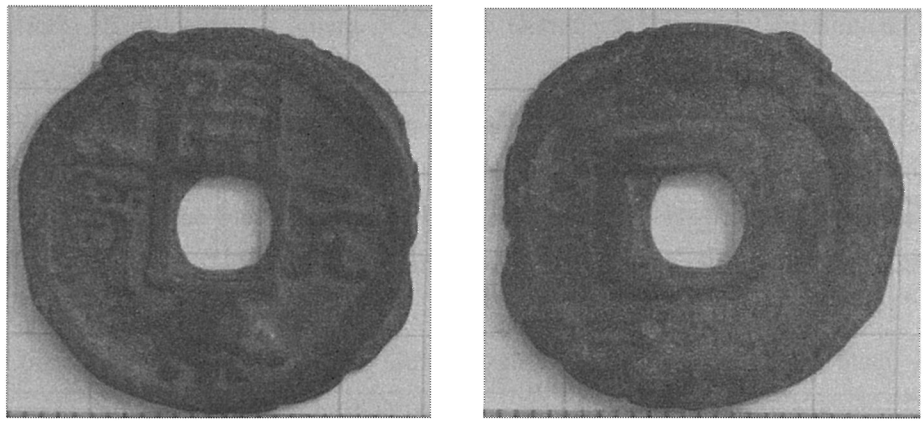

Figure 2. ***Khai Thái nguyên bảo*** **in Wakimoto batches which is the first discovery in Japan (Shiriuchi Town Museum, Hokkaido, Japan) : the front side (left), the back side (right)**

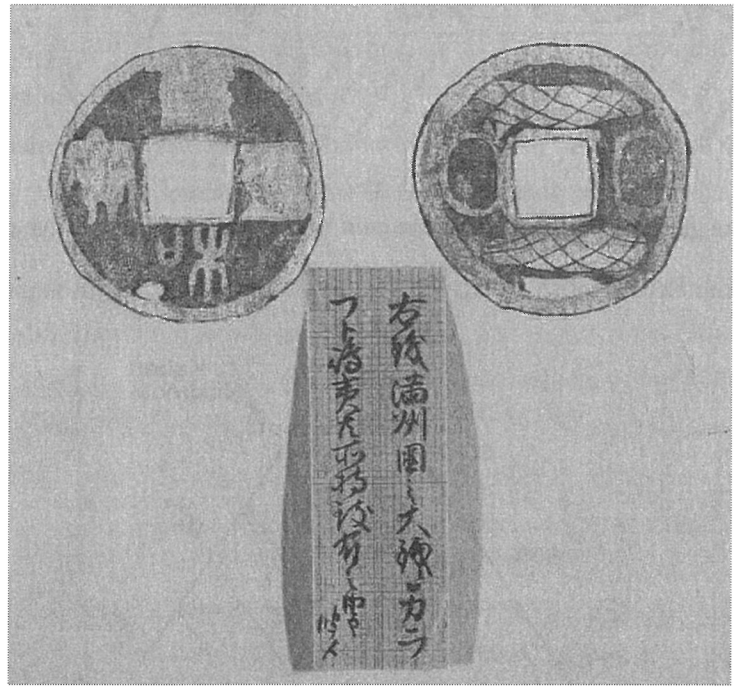

Figure 3. ***Ezo Karafuto Santan Uchikomizu*** **(Waseda University Library, Tokyo, Japan)**