

Child Mortuary Practices of the Ancient Jomon of Japan

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Introduction

The project originally began as a comparative research to look at how past cultures treated their children when it came to mortuary practices.

However, upon beginning the research into the Jomon the discrepancies between Japanese archaeology and Western archaeology became more apparent.

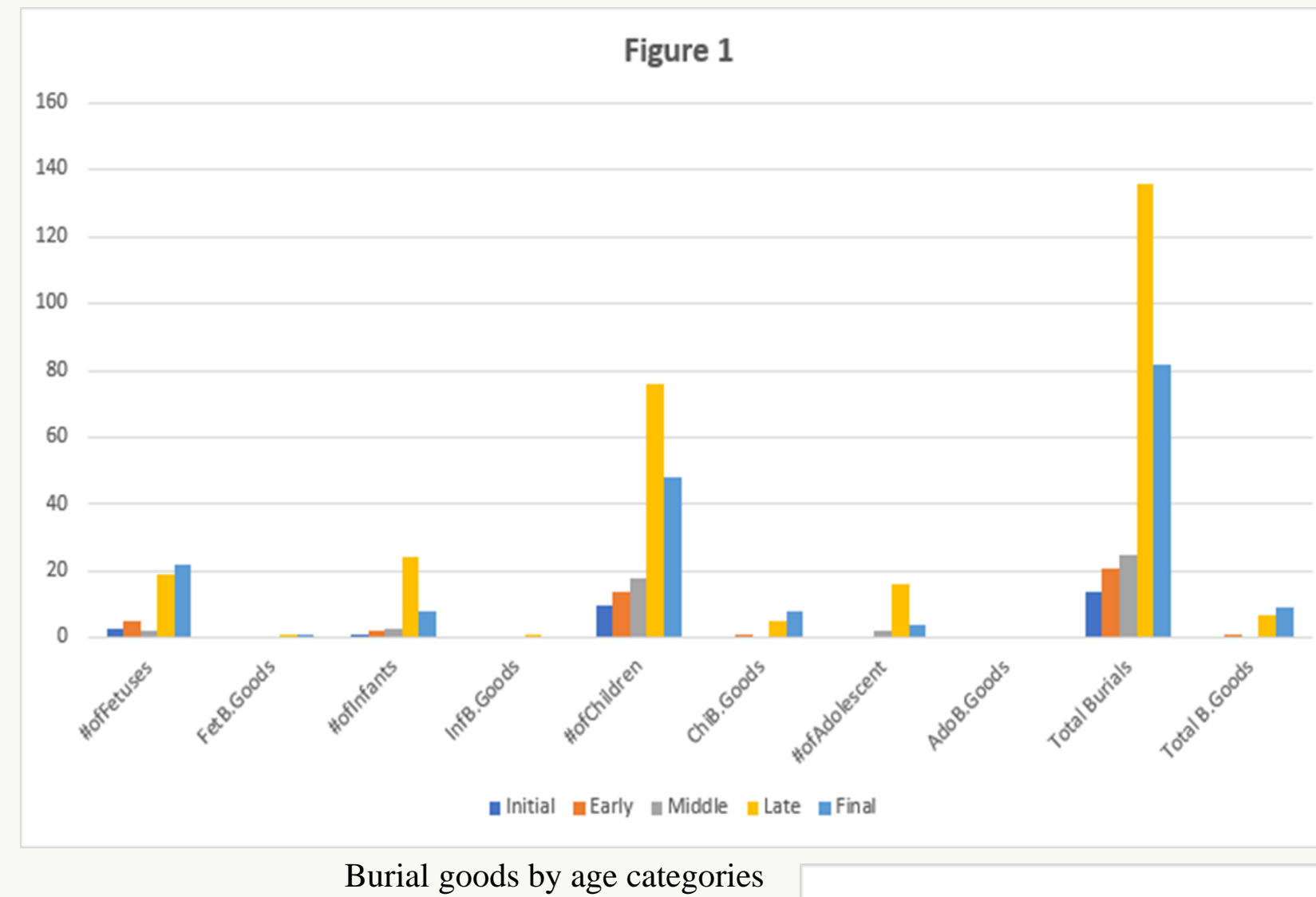
The Jomon Period lasted from 11,000 to 300 BCE and was followed by the Yayoi Period.

Material and Methods

This study focusses on Jomon child mortuary practices. The practices include studying grave goods and burial types. Another interest is to focus on the age and sex of the individuals in each grave. This data is taken from published materials It's also worth noting that while in America radiocarbon dating became prevalent in 1950s and as such has become the standard used for dating archaeological material, radiocarbon dating wasn't used successfully and widely in Japan until the year 2000. This paper excludes the Incipient Period due to the lack of available data.

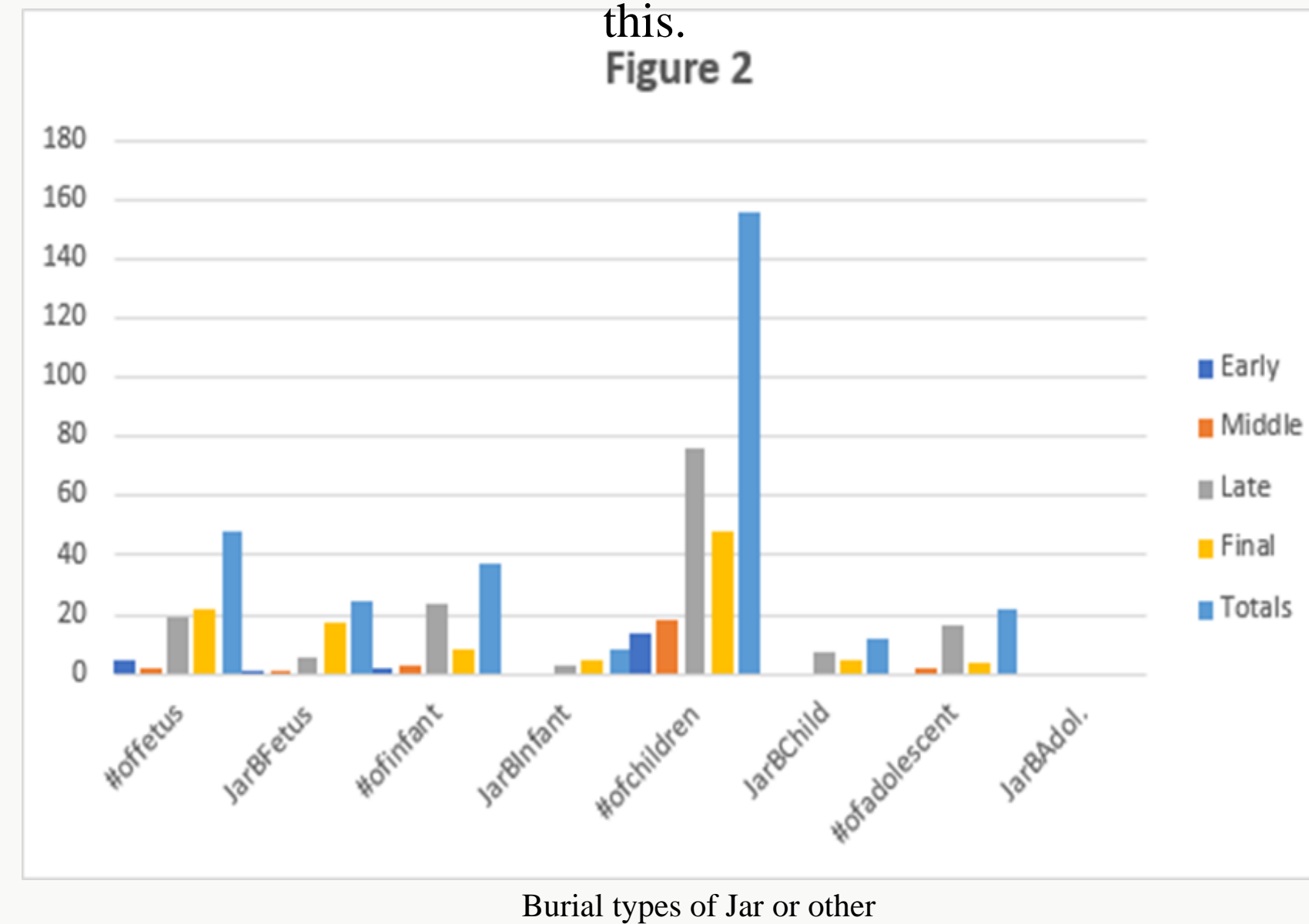
Data was collected from the sources published in Japanese and translated. Much of this research was working to match Japanese archaeology to Western practices in order to obtain a broader understanding which included also the converting of the dates from Years Before Present to Before Common Era (BCE).

Results



Overtime in the Jomon, children were increasingly buried with grave goods from 4.76% during the Early and 10.98% during the Final. This correlates to the beginning of becoming a less hunter gatherer society to a stationary one.

The Incipient Era is not included in these graphs due to there being no available burial data from the time. The Initial Era also has much less than the remaining four eras due to this.



The jar burials also increase in frequency from 4.76% of the burials in the Early period to 32.93% in the Final though this can also be attributed to the age of the burials due to the acidity of the soil on the Japanese Archipelago.

Not shown in these graphs are the children whose ages were unknown due to the poor preservation conditions. In total from the 478 individuals 42% were unable to be aged.

Discussion

The burial of children in pottery and grave goods was not only in the Jomon but around the world as well including in North American Mississippian Culture as well. Until the Yayoi Period however, only children were buried in vessels.

Jomon child mortuary practices with the jar burials also have holes either made or broken in the bottom of the jar. There are a few theories of this, but one includes the idea of the child's soul returning to the earth or mother. This isn't just seen in Jomon culture but in North America as well.

In the Jomon adult burials are commonly found with clay tablets that have footprints imprinted assumed to be of a child who had passed which furthers questions into the whole of Jomon burials.

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