

Life in the Satsumon Period

The peoples of the Satsumon period (600–1200 CE) continued to hunt and gather like their ancestors, gradually becoming more involved in salmon fishing and subsistence farming. They lived in pit dwellings near rivers for access to fishing grounds. Excavations at riverside sites around the present-day city of Asahikawa have revealed evidence of weirs used for capturing migrating salmon.

Salmon, as well as being a dietary staple, was an important commodity, traded along with furs for iron and other resources from Honshu (the main island of the Japanese archipelago). Satsumon people adopted new technologies from Honshu such as iron tools, textiles, and clay cooking stoves. With ironware, they were able to till the land and grow cold-resistant grains like millet and barley to supplement their diet.

As Satsumon people traded more widely, they came into contact with

Okhotsk people, who lived around the Sea of Okhotsk in Sakhalin, the Kuril Islands, and northern Hokkaido. They lived near the shore and hunted seals, whales, and other marine mammals. Over time, a shared culture emerged, and some archaeologists believe that the interaction between the Okhotsk and Satsumon peoples played a role in the formation of Ainu culture.