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The Naumann elephant

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The Naumann elephant *Palaeoloxodon naumanni* is an extinct species that lived in Southern Japan in the late Pleistocene about 500,000 to 15,000 years ago. It is named after Heinrich Edmund Naumann (1854-1927) who studied and described elephant fossils from Japan in 1882.

The fossil elephants have been discovered in strata and at the bottom of Seto Inland Sea since the 18th Century in Japan. The Japanese people thought they were the bones of a dragon and good for medicine. Japanese people did not know elephants because no elephants lived in Japan. But in the late of 18th Century some elephants were brought from India area as a show. Intelligent Japanese soon understood that the bones of the dragon were a fossil elephant at the beginning of 19th Century.

Heinrich Edmund Naumann, a German geologist came to Japan in 1875, taught geology in the University of Tokyo and founded the Geological Survey of Japan. His doctoral thesis was the description of Quaternary mammal fossils in Germany. His paper titled "Ueber japanische Elephanten der Vorzeit." (1882) was highly regarded. He classified the fossil as the Indian elephant. In 1924, Jiro Makiyama (1896-1986) researched fossils and reported the elephant was a new subspecies and named the fossil, the Naumann elephant *Elephas namadicus naumanni*.

After World War II, a group of communist Japanese geologists founded Chidanken in 1947. Chidanken aimed to be a grassroots geological movement. In 1946, a tusk of *Palaeoloxodon naumanni* was discovered accidentally near Lake Nojiri, central Japan. From 1962 to 1965, Chidanken mobilized many ordinary people to excavate the bottom of the lake. The leader of Chidanken wrote many books on the excavation movement of Naumann elephants. Many textbooks of elementary school inserted the report of this movement. In Japan even children know the name of Naumann although they do not know who is Naumann.

