

Paleolithic

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Fiscal 2018 saw active discussion on the background of archaeological results and their historical significance due to development of the study in recent years, not only from the viewpoint of the Japanese archipelago but from the global viewpoint.

As for Paleolithic culture in the Japanese archipelago and its evaluation, the issue of discussion was location of the indisputably oldest/final archaeological culture in the Japanese archipelago. On the oldest archaeological culture (about 40,000 years ago and after), people and their migration routes were mainly discussed, reflecting increased global interest on the spread of modern humanity and formation of Upper Paleolithic culture, as well as discoveries of new research material in Okinawa. On the other hand, human response to environmental change was discussed regarding the end of the Paleolithic, as it was a transitional period from the Pleistocene to the Holocene. Also, the issue of the division of periods was discussed regarding the continuing Jomon period as it overlapped with the emergence of pottery.

As for pursuit of the oldest lithic, search for lithics preceding blades in the Japanese archipelago, reevaluation, and comparative study with artifacts from the continent were seen.

As for study on lithic manufacturing techniques, blades, microliths, and study examples on the end of the Paleolithic were mentioned. Although there was abundant analysis on hunting tools, few were on processing tools, and a need to study the all lithics was pointed out.

As for experimental study, organization of issues such as methodology, as well as organization of back data to construct analysis standards for analyzing data were conducted.

As for the relationship between natural/resources environment and human activity, progress was seen on the standpoint of interdisciplinary research integrating various methods other than archaeology, volcanic disaster, and stone material.

This fiscal year saw clearing of aspects of the archaeological culture that is remarkable and varied with spatial-temporal incidents that developed in the Japanese archipelago between 40,000 to 11,700 years ago, due to research development in recent years and

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organization of the research results. On the other hand, it is getting clear that while such varied archaeological cultures are generally located within the Upper Paleolithic, there were few cultural commonalities between different geological units such as paleo-Hokkaido peninsula (Hokkaido), paleo-Honshu islands (Honshu/Shikoku/Kyushu), and paleo-Ryukyu islands (Okinawa), except being products of the Holocene. As Paleolithic study will be progressed in the future, it is about time for researchers to have a fundamental discussion on “what is the Paleolithic and Upper Paleolithic” including the division with the following Jomon Period.