

Yayoi Period

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The novel coronavirus infectious disease (COVID-19) confirmed originally in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in November 2019 spread rapidly and continues to have a big impact on the entire world. The pandemic has also had a great impact on the field of archaeology, and since February 2020, academic societies, lectures and symposiums that had been planned in various places were canceled. Research, nevertheless, has steadily progressed.

Looking back on research on the Yayoi period in 2019, various studies centered on food culture emerged. In addition, there was publication of a book summarizing the results of the symposiums and research conducted so far.

An ancient inkstone was first confirmed in 2001 at the Tawayama Site in Shimane Prefecture, and a similar one also excavated at the Mikumo-Iwara Site in Itoshima, Fukuoka Prefecture in 2016. As a result, the use of orthography in the Yayoi period has received a great deal of attention. YANAGIDA Yasuo and KUSUMI Takeo carried out research, and in 2019, other examples of inkstones were found at the Shimohara Site in Fukuoka Prefecture and the Harunotsuji Site in Nagasaki Prefecture.

The time division of the Yayoi Period proposed by TERAMAE Naoto in “Yayoi Period: Neolithic Yayoi Period and Early Metal Ware Yayoi Period” (*Kikan Kōkōgaku* [Archaeology Quarterly] 150), places the early Yayoi period in the Neolithic period, calling it the Neolithic Yayoi. Teramae proposes that the middle Yayoi period and later be called the early metal ware Yayoi period.

Scholarly exchange on the Yayoi period focused on discussion about the relationship between the Japanese archipelago, the Korean peninsula, and the Chinese continent. At the symposium held at the Osaka Museum of History, Japanese and Korean archaeologists discussed various themes over two days (Study Group on “New Archaeology of Japan-Korea Relations—Yayoi Period”).

Grain cultivation and food culture in the Yayoi Period have been central to discussion in the last few years, as they are closely linked to debates about the beginning of the Yayoi Period. As background, in addition to traditional relic research as a method of analysis for learning about grain cultivation and food, rapid progress and expansion has been seen in

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other methods such as the replica method, carbon and nitrogen stable isotope analysis, and lipid analysis of pottery. In fact, many studies have been published again this year.

The outcome of the symposium held in November 2017 was compiled as a special feature of *Kikan Kokogaku*, centering on the Izumizakashita site in Ibaraki Prefecture, which is a reburial grave site famous for a jar with a human face.

Discussions on archaeological environments were made at Session I (“Social Change from the Viewpoint of Environmental Change and Livelihood”) of the 2019 convention of the Japan Archaeological Association, as well as at the symposium on “Komatsugata Lake and Sand Dunes,” sponsored by Komatsu City.

(written by the author)