

Yayoi Period

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Debate continues over the chronological age of the Yayoi period. SHITARA Hiromi discusses the formation of Yayoi culture from the position which advocates a longer Yayoi chronology beginning in the 10th–9th centuries BC, with the end of the Early Yayoi period going back to the 4th century BC. FUJIO Shin'ichiro sorts out various themes and chronological perspectives in need of reassessment under this longer chronology, and urges a reconstruction of the view of Yayoi culture. In opposition to these views, while touching upon the problems of C14 sampling and the calibration curve used to support the longer chronology, TANAKA Yoshiyuki suggests positing the latter half of the Final Jomon (Earliest Yayoi) to 700 BC or later, the Yusu II and Itazuke I pottery styles to 560 BC or later, and the end of the Early Yayoi period to no earlier than 260 BC. From a similar position of doubt regarding the longer chronology, IWANAGA Shozo discusses temporal and spatial assessments of Yayoi period and culture within the East Asian context.

Reevaluations are also proceeding regarding ‘Yayoi culture’ as a conceptual framework. SHITARA Hiromi defines Yayoi culture as an ‘agricultural cultural complex’ that emerged as the rites of daily production progressed along the axis of agricultural ritual, resulting in the influence of agriculture being pressed into every corner of daily life, while FUJIO Shin'ichiro defines thus: ‘Yayoi culture as a specialized product which arose from selectively placing wet paddy irrigated rice cultivation at the center of the structure of livelihood, leading continually and with no return into Kofun culture once begun.’ MORIOKA Hideto raises the issues of whether ‘Yayoi culture’ as a framework is not an “archaeological culture,” a multifaceted artificial construct fated for deconstruction, which may perhaps be granted an extension on life through repeated acts of redefinition. TANAKA Yoshiyuki argues that the bearers of Yayoi culture were a ‘Yayoi people’ who emerged through the process of Jomon descendants being added to mixed-blood groups produced by original Jomon peoples and immigrants. HASHINO Shimpei asserts that the Songgunni culture which emerged in the central western region of the Korean peninsula spread in various directions, with a transformation of

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it occurring in the Namgang and Gimhae regions and then crossing the sea against a background of climatic cooling, while MISAKA Kazunori searches out relations between indigenous peoples and immigrants through a comparison of pottery-making techniques of the Final Jomon to the start of the Yayoi period with those of the southern part of the Korean peninsula.

Research with work on material culture as an axis has advanced with regard to the spread of Yayoi culture and its regionality within the archipelago as well. In research on Yayoi pottery, there have been mutually stimulating interactions between studies examining ceramic aspects and trends within particular regions on the one hand and wide-area examinations extending beyond local regions on the other, as well as between studies of particular lines of typological development and those pursuing regional differences in development. With regard to stone knives at the start of the Yayoi period, SAKURAI Takuma has clarified regional characteristics based on production techniques, while TABATA Naohiko has pointed out commonalities in ceramics for the San'in and Kanmon regions. YOSHIDA Hiroshi has sorted out aspects of the appearance of bronze weapons and bells with respect to regional differences from the start to the mid-portion of the Middle Yayoi period, after the period lacking metal items following the start of rice agriculture.

Prompted by the view of a longer Yayoi chronology, archaeological research has made progress with regard not merely to Japan, but also to the bronze and iron cultures of the Korean peninsula and Liaoning regions. With regard to the appearance of iron implements in both Japan and Korea, Lee Chang Hee points out, recognizing congruity with the longer Yayoi chronology, that the diffusion of iron implements in the ancient Yan state possibly goes back prior to 300 BC. NOJIMA Hisashi sorts out the history of theories regarding iron, and emphasizes that iron implements given and received as prestige goods were related to the emergence of relations of imbalance among chiefs. NEGITA Yoshio conducted a reconsideration of the introduction of iron implements to the Kinki region of the Yayoi period, and points to the possibility of iron tool production at 13 sites based on examinations of artifacts and features related to iron tool manufacture, while SUGIYAMA Kazunori posits a complex network of circulation of iron swords for eastern Japan. There are noteworthy advances in every region in research aimed at reconstruction of various activities, and particularly in attempts at ascertaining human groups using multifaceted approaches stimulated by a new perspective in settlement debate, which sees single communities as possibly comprised of multiple groups. HIGAMI Noboru attempts to clarify how forest resources were managed at timber producing sites from the Yayoi into the Kofun periods.

With regard to exchange between regions, MORIMOTO Mikihiko makes an examination of the coastal region of Hakata Bay, and TAKESUE Jun'ichi points out that

three ‘bronze-bell-shaped stone objects’ from the Aoya Kamijichi site in Tottori prefecture were used as weights for a balance scale. While emphasizing the military nature of upland settlements along the coasts of the Inland Sea, TERASAWA Kaoru also discusses the roles they played in securing and transmitting information for maintaining territorial hold and controlling transportation routes; also, from an examination of materials derived from China, he renews debate over exchanges between the Korean peninsula and northern Kyushu, and between northern Kyushu and the eastern portions of Japan. SHIBATA Shoji sees boats with dugout hulls as the main type on the Inland Sea in the Yayoi period, with half-dugout types built up with planks on the sides developing from the mid-portion of the Middle period on; he also sees the unity of regional characteristics of Middle Yayoi pottery visible between the northern and southern areas of the Geiyo islands as reflecting chains of routine interactions in mutually beneficial exchanges, and observes that such links served as paths for trade in the formation of the Inland Sea maritime route. Based on new data and advances in research, the points and lines of the Yayoi trade networks are linking up bit by bit even as researchers themselves connect through modern social networks, and with the routinization of international exchange and the construction of researcher networks within and beyond local regions, we move toward an ‘era of great exchange’. (translated by Edwards Walter)