

Overview

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15 years has passed into the 21st century, and it seems today's world is in the midst of turbulent times with economic globalism and its counter reaction. In our country, serious problems are becoming apparent such as social disparity and aging society due to a decreasing birthrate. Trends of archaeological study are not at all unrelated to such states of the world and Japan. These situations seem to lie in the background of problems Japanese archaeology is facing in recent years, like a drastic decrease of researchers who support regional study, a serious shortage of staff in municipalities, and the educational environment of archaeology and educating the next generation of researchers at universities.

Discussion of each period and region will be left to each article, so some problems should be mentioned here.

Overlooking research trends from the Paleolithic to the Yayoi period, natural scientific methods occupy an important place in each period. Themes of study are varied such as paleoenvironment/paleoclimate, dating measurement, subsistence, source/material/technique, anthropology including physical anthropology and DNA analysis, and so on.

On the other hand, the relationship with history occupies an important position for study on and after the Kofun period. For example, history has yielded significant results on the study of national formation, and energization of the discussion between archaeology and history should be expected in the future on this matter.

Also, observable trends are study on the arrival of modern humans to the Japanese islands and surrounding Asian regions in regards of the arrival in the Paleolithic, study on early cultivation in East Asia and beginning of farming in Japan as well as the problem of eastern diffusion of early metal tools from northeast Asia during the Yayoi period, and formation of nations in East Asia and viewpoints of comparative archaeology for the Kofun period.

As for research technology, examples are increasing in practice of three-dimensional measurement and laser measurement, and study using highly accurate survey maps is progressing. It is a development of study by introduction of new technology.

It can be said that Japanese archaeology in recent years is in a big stream of diversification of methodology and expansion of periods and space to be studied. In addition to traditional

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TRENDS IN ARCHAEOLOGY IN JAPAN

analysis methods in archaeology, natural scientific analyses are actively introduced which is bringing epochal progress in dating measurement, reconstruction of paleoenvironment/paleoclimate, and dietary analysis.

Other than the expansion of study subjects to be analyzed due to diversification of analysis methods, research and study are now conducted on modern/contemporary sites that have not been handled by archaeology in the past. Also, evaluation of Japanese culture within the world or Asia and study from the perspective of comparative archaeology appear to be new directions of study. A large task in the future for research and education is how to respond to such trends in archaeology.

On the other hand, Japanese archaeology, in its long academic history, has always been overlooking the entire archipelago based on steady research/study of each region. Important problems that should be explored in the future are how to relate results of archaeological study in each region to the archaeology of the entire Japanese islands, and how to locate it within the world.