

Interdisciplinary Research

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This article discussed fiscal 2021 research trends on organic artifacts such as human bones, animal and plant remains, as well as various natural scientific methods such as dating measurements and source analysis.

Discussion was quite active for human bone study, on the origin and diffusion of humanity in the Japanese archipelago by DNA analysis. The major discussion of animal remains study was on domesticated animals, especially many theses were on horses. Oxygen isotope analysis and study on earthenware impression were often conducted for the study of botanical remains. Dating measurement on plant seeds resulted in different dates assumed by excavation research. There was an increase in dating measurement study using Bayesian statistics and dating measurement of pollen and cremated bones became possible. Assumption of origin was conducted on various artifacts from various ages, the most discussed was on obsidian from the paleolithic to Jomon periods. Carbon/nitrogen isotope analysis and lipid analysis were actively conducted to discuss pottery usage. Also, due to an increase of interest in the history of climate and natural environments, much attention was paid to an exhibition to convey research results of animal and botanical remains. On the other hand, problems of researcher development and research systems were pointed out.

Almost 40 years has past since research trends of organic artifacts and natural scientific methods started being published as individual articles in Annual Report of the Japanese Archaeological Studies and Excavations, apart from research trends of each period. However, this research should be reviewed as a part of the research trend of each period. This fiscal year saw many multilateral and comprehensive historical studies including interdisciplinary research, such as the origin of pottery and Jomon pottery, highland settlement, social and environmental changes, spinning and weaving, gender, authority, and art. Nevertheless, it is not very meaningful to handle only research related to organic artifacts and natural scientific analysis. In Japan, study on organic artifacts and natural scientific analysis has been collectively called by various names such as interdisciplinary fields, neighboring science, surrounding science, and related science. While recognizing the importance of these studies, Japanese archaeology has been placing organic artifact study and natural scientific analysis at a very close but outside position like interdisciplinary, neighboring, surrounding, and related, without expanding or redefining the academic framework. The author wishes that proper interest will be paid to various “interdisciplinary studies” handled in this article, not just focusing on the results.

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