Once Again We Learn from the Shell Mounds

——An Outline of the Directions of Shell Mounds Research——

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"The form of food acquisition defines the form of a society" said Sakazume Nakao, speaking of archaeology's attempt to recreate prehistoric societies from ruins and artifacts. With this idea, we are precisely ascertaining the validity of shell mound research. By investigating this unshakeable origin of human activity "food", we may use it as a base for our recreation of a society.

In terms of the contents of the actual shell mounds, by quantity analysis, we are able to accumulate accurate data and grasp a structure. The question remains, nonetheless, of what sort of things we can understand, in terms of human activity, from a shell mounds. We wished to follow the movements of a small unit of society, that is to say a settlement, by means of the shell mounds. Thus the Ostukoshi shell mounds in Saitama Prefecture was investigated. It is possible to arrive at an understanding of human activities over a small span of time which is not possible from ordinary pottery research. Further, by recognition of the correlation between the volume of the shell mound and the rise and fall of the village, a conjecture was arrived at prehistoric peoples have chosen places that have advantages for gathering rather than hunting as their settlements. Through knowledge of the state of occupations in the Jomon period it becomes possible to explain the construction, rise and fall and movements of the settlement.

Thus we must, once again, recognize the central position which animal remains research occupies in the area of the reconstruction of a society.