The Amami Islands in the Period Corresponding
to the Final Jōmon Period

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The author, in this paper, deals with the period corresponding to the Final Jōmon period in the Tokara Islands and Amami Ōshima Island, part of the cultural sphere of the Nansei Island group, identifying the chronology of the pottery and analyzing the make-up of vessel types, in order to examine the background to changes in these.

The author set out a new classification for pottery and established chronology using pottery excavated from structural remains or well-defined cultural layers. Thus, he divided the period corresponding to the Final Jōmon period in this area into Periods I to III, and further divided Periods both I and II into Early and Late. Pottery excavated from the 13th layer of the Tebire Site was attributed to Early Period I: that from Layer III of the Samoto Site to Late Period I: that from the Hanta and Tachibana Sites to Early Period II: that from the 11th layer of the Tebire Site and the 2nd Layer of the Samoto Site to Late Period II: and that from the 9th layer of the Tebire Site was attributed to Period III.

The make-up of vessels in each period is characterized as follows. Vessels of Early Period I were mainly flat-bottomed and deep-bowl type pottery. Those of Late Period I, while retaining the features of Early Period I, differ in respect of the appearance of slightly pointed-based, round-bottomed shapes and unpatterned deep-bowl type pottery. In Early period II, the main vessel type shifted from deep-bowl type pottery to small, round-bottomed jar-type pottery, and both types showed round bottoms. Vessels from the 11th layer of the Tehiro Site, belonging to the Late Period II, were mainly small, round-bottomed jars, while those from the 2nd Layer of the Samoto Site were mainly deep bowls, again. This trend is also shared by pottery excavated from the 9th layer of the Tehiro Site, attributed to Period III. In this way, it can be pointed out that the composition of vessel types underwent great changes from Periods I to II, and from II to III.

Behind the appearance in Period II of vessel types that were mainly small, round-bottomed jar-type pottery, changes in the location of sites, the tendency to settle, and an increase in the number of stone tools used for processing food may be observed. It may be supposed that there was probably an epochmaking change in the production base of this period, which was reflected in the pottery culture. It may be considered that detailed clarification of the life style backed by the vessel types composed mainly of jar-type pottery, and the setting of the question of why the composition of vessel types changed rapidly back to deep bowls in such a short period of time, would seem to lead to an explanation of the primary factors leading to social changes in this period, which probably lie behind the change in vessel types.