The Geomorphological Environment and the Location of Archaeological Sites in the Vicinity of the Kenaga River in the Northern Tokyo Lowlands

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During the period of my involvement in the excavation survey in the northern part of Adachi-Ward involving the Ikou Site near the Kenaga River, I drew a micro-Geomorphological Land Classification Map of this region. The method adopted for this Micro-geomorphological classification entailed the interpretation of aerial photographs (S=1:20,000) taken by the US military and basing classifications on the following criteria: difference in relative elevation, water content in the ground and land use. When making these classifications I also referred to other materials, including observational findings of stratum sedimentation obtained from excavation and topographic maps compiled between about 1906 and 1937.

These classifications made it possible to discover old land forms that had been filled in. I also investigated vegetation and the sedimentary environment by employing natural science analysis that included pollen fossils and diatom fossils.

In addition to gaining an understanding of the natural environment surrounding the site, I undertook a general survey of the evidence that had been discovered as a result of the excavation and documents from the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period. As a result, I identified the following five stages and produced impressionistic maps of the landscape for the natural environment and the process of change in people's lives in the area surrounding Kenaga River based around the Ikou Site.

1. Late Jomon Period to Early Final Jomon
   Although most of the land in this area was submerged in the sea at the culmination of the Holocene transgression, tidal flats gradually emerged and land was formed. Although Jomon people did not live here, they visited temporarily and left behind earthenware.

2. Late Final Jomon to Yayoi Period
   The Kenaga River became the main river of the old Tone-and-Ara River, forming a large river course and low ridges. There are few traces of human activity.

3. End of the Yayoi Period to the Kofun Period
   The old Tone-and-Ara River shifted east so that the Kenaga River was no longer a huge river. The basic topography that has lasted up to today comprising of the low ridges and the former river course was more or less formed. People came to live there. The Ikou Site underwent considerable development as a specific site for religious rites related to water transportation.
4. Nara Period to Early Heian Period

Infilling of the old river course of the Kenaga River progressed. Although the Ikou Site existed as a place for conducting religious rites and as a government office, there is a decrease in the amount of remains and artifacts from this time.

5. Middle Ages

The infilling of the old river course of the Kenaga River progressed. There are fewer remains and artifacts from the Ikou Site dating from this period and the center of sites from this period are to be found some distance from the side of the Kenaga River, spelling the end of their role as bases for water transportation.