Study of the Burial Process of House-Pit Vestiges of the Jomon Period

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The dwelling activities in the Jomon Period are characterized in the semisubterranean dwelling facilities called house-pits. Through the archaeological investigations, mainly the lower structure (portion made in the ground) of a house-pit facility has been clarified and the structure and the use conditions have been studied. The life cycle of a house-pit is as follows: a. selection of the construction site and construction design (digging, setting of accessory structures) → b. use (life including living, cooking, eating, etc.) → c. maintenance of facility (maintenance and repair, modification, improvement) → d. abandonment. After dwellings were abandoned, they were left as they were, in some cases. But people in the prehistoric age often kept a connection with the place, and d'. the abandoned dwelling vestiges were repeatedly used as a disposal site, graveyard, ceremonial place, cooking facility, manufacturing of stone implements, etc. Finally, e. they were buried (natural burial, backfill). Clarification of the length of time of each segment of the life cycle as described above is very significant to people in the prehistoric age for reproduction of the dwelling system, means of livelihood and social organization. It leads reproduction of the durable years of the dwelling itself or years of living, the rate of settlement in the land (several hundred years of long-term settlement, several years of short-term living, repeated seasonal residence transfers, etc.) and means of livelihood lying in the background (collecting and hunting, semi-agriculture such as managed cultivation and burnt farming) and social organizations (scale of colony, class, etc.).

By clarifying the length of time of each segment of the dwelling life cycle, elucidation of the dwelling system will be made possible. To that end, it is important to organize and grasp the position in the life cycle as settlement for radiocarbon-dating of samples excavated from dwelling. In this report, the times for disposal action and for burial of dwelling vestiges after abandonment of the dwelling which is set as “d” in the life cycle are studied.

The targets of the study are Ideuenohara site, Umenoki site, Chikaramochi site and Sannaimaru-yama site, and the case example of radiocarbon-dating for the samples excavated from the soil covering of house-pits is examined. It was pointed out that No. 45 dwelling vestiges of the Ideuenohara site were used for 250 to 300 years or more during the period from the use of dwelling to the burial. On the other hand, for No. 18 dwelling vestiges of the Umenoki site, although the preservation state of
The construction has problems, it was presumed according to the study of the existing conditions that it was buried in a relatively short time. The above studies showed that it is necessary to investigate the length of time taken for burial of a dwelling as well as the state of inclusion of carbide and the action for disposal of earthenware and stone implements and to study the use of house-pit vestiges in a colony.

Key words: Jomon Period, radiocarbon-dating, house-pit