Abusolute Dates and Paleo-environment of the Appearance of Pottery:
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KUDO Yuichiro

Since the 1950s, research into the “beginning of the Jomon Period” or the “absolute date of the earliest pottery” has consistently progressed in close relation to advances in radiocarbon dating and paleo-environmental research. Therefore, in this paper I have arranged the flow of research from the late 19th century to the present, focusing attention on the ways in which these have been compared with the boundaries of the Pleistocene/Holocene (Diluvium/Alluvium) and the boundary of the Last Glacial /Post-Glacial or the Late Glacial. In the 1930s and 1940s, the general view of the geological age in the archaeologist were that the Jomon Period started after the peak of coastline transgression in the mid-Holocene. However, this view changed radically with the excavation of cords-marked stick pattern (Yoritomon) pottery and radiocarbon dating of the Natsushima shell mound published in 1959. Radiocarbon ages of the Natsushima shell mound dated about 9,000 years ago revealed that the appearance of pottery coincided with the start of the Post-Glacial period. It triggered that “Post-Glacial period adaptation theory” spread throughout the archaeologist. In 1966, however, it was reported that the linear-relief (Ryusenmon) pottery at the Fukui Cave and Kamikuroiwa site had a radiocarbon age going back as far around 12,000 years, exceeding the boundary of the Glacial /Post-Glacial, which was recognized as being around 10,000 years ago. These results led to the proposal of new periodization which removed the oldest pottery from the Jomon Period. In relation to this, a few researchers have started comparisons between the appearance of pottery and the Late Glacial in 1970s. By the 1990s, high-precision paleo-environmental research of the Greenland ice cores, etc. had been publicized, and the calibration curve IntCal93 indicated that the appearance of pottery might possibly go back as far as 15,000 years ago. Final major breakthrough was announced in 1999, when the radiocarbon dates of charred adhesion on potteries at the Odaï Yamamoto I site were measured and calibrated by IntCal98. As well as indicating that pottery first appeared as far back as around 16,000 years ago, it was established that pottery was first used in the cold environment of the Last Glacial, cutting into the Late Glacial. These new results for the earliest potteries led to the reconsideration of the “historical significance of the appearance of pottery” and its groundbreaking periodization. Understanding of calibration dates and the use thereof has spread since the “Sakura Declaration” of 2000, making it possible to conduct detailed comparisons of the beginning of the Jomon Period and the environmental setting, while advances also continue to be made with reconsideration of periodization.

Key words: beginning of the Jomon Period, appearance of pottery, radiocarbon dating, Late Glacial, paleo-environmental setting, periodization