After starting rice cultivation, people used weapon-shaped stone tools and diverted small sharp-edged bronze implements to different purposes for a long time, while there were no metal implements. Following this preliminary stage, weapon-shaped bronze implements appeared in the beginning of the Middle Yayoi period. On the other hand, skipping the preliminary stage, small bronze bells appeared in northern Kyushu and bronze bells in Kinki in the first half of the Middle Yayoi period. In other words, the area around Kinki consciously adopted bronze bells rather than weapon-shaped bronze implements. Having a ceremonial nature as a sounder, the bronze bells came to be used for nothing but ritual purposes. In contrast, the weapon-shaped bronze implements came to mix two purposes: practical utility as a weapon and dignity demonstration as a military power. While various kinds of imitations were appearing in the periphery and outside of northern Kyushu, however, the bronze implements as a whole also came to be used in rituals, such as bronze swords with two holes in the joint part. In northern Kyushu as well, people started to wear swords not only for practical purposes but also for demonstration of personal dignity, which led to the acceptance of bronze swords as ritual implements. Respective areas promoted the development of bronze tools into ritual implements in their own ways while a wide variety of imitations appeared depending on the choice of type and amount of bronze implements each local society acquired. Eventually, in the end of the Middle Yayoi period, a variety of bronze tools fell into different categories with different roles in northern Kyushu, which established a bronze system centering on medium broad bronze spearheads. On the other hand, focusing on particular types of bronze implements, each area in Chugoku/Shikoku region and eastward developed its own local bronze tools. Although both weapon-shaped bronze implements and bronze bells lost their original purposes and became larger in size, they accentuated different features of the material; whereas weapon-shaped bronze implements got to emphasize the function of dignity demonstration with metallic luster, bronze bells attached importance to the creation of patterns rather than acoustics and metallic luster. While this difference was inherited later, more and more areas stopped using bronze ritual implements, and bronze came to be used not only for ritual implements but also for other small tools. Then, the Yayoi bronze ritual implements disappeared, newly replaced by the Kofun ritual implements. Carrying the prestige of Chinese dynasties, bronze mirrors were adopted as the Kofun...
ritual implements while inheriting both of the accented features of the Yayoi ritual implements, metallic luster and pattern creation.

Key words: Yayoi bronze implements, Ritual implements, Weapon-shaped bronze implements, Bronze bells, Imitation, Regions