An Analysis of Contemporaneity in the Skeletons Unearthed from Mass Burial Pits at the Shimo’ota Shell Midden in Mobara City, Chiba Prefecture

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The mass burial pits found from the Shimo’ota shell midden in Chiba prefecture was considered as a skeletal population in a period as short as 20 years, because the partial articulation was observed among skeletons. Hence, the social complexity and lineage analyses has been conducted based on dental morphology and mitochondrial DNA analysis for this skeletal population. However, a series of radiocarbon dating on 10 individuals from mass burial pit-A, 4 from pit-B and one from pit-C showed a wider range of calibrated radiocarbon dates in conjunction with individual correction for the marine reservoir effect through marine food consumption. The range of the dates spans from Shomyoji pottery type to Horinouchi 2 pottery for pit-A, and also from Horinouchi 1 to 2 pottery type for the pit-B, which might correspond to a period as long as 200 years.

Key words: Ancient human skeletons, mass burial, grave system, radiocarbon dating, marine reservoir effect