

Paleolithic

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Discussion of fiscal 2020 Paleolithic studies in Japan continued to focus on issues of the beginning of the Paleolithic and a transitional phase to the Jomon period. Also, there was successive publication of research results based on accumulation in the past of experimental archaeology and use-wear study.

Multiple hypotheses different from those in the past were indicated for the origin of the Upper Paleolithic in Japan, based on lithics excavated from Kyushu Island and the central highlands. Reconsideration was prompted for regarding emergence of blades technique, advancement of *Homo sapiens*, and the beginning of Upper Paleolithic in Japan synonymously. As for diffusion of *Homo sapiens*, explanations were given based on research from the Ryukyu Islands where prehistoric human bones have been excavated, and mathematical models. In addition, discussions were held on the existence of lithics that precede the Upper Paleolithic in Japan and verification methods, and the necessity for a study based on multiple viewpoints such as sedimentary settings was indicated.

As for study regarding the transitional phase from the Paleolithic to the Jomon period, there was a tendency to discuss changes in material culture such as the emergence of pottery based on correspondence to residential styles of human groups and climate change, due to accumulation of data on climate change for both wide/local areas. Also, the transitional processes became to be understood as non-linear and complicated phenomena with space-time variations, reflecting development of studies in other regions of East Asia. Future accumulation of information is anticipated for these fields.

As for experimental archaeology and use-wear study, theses submitted by researchers pointed out the need for establishing extensive and systematic study that objects trace cultural/non-cultural formation processes assumed for each step of lithic origins such as manufacture, use, and disposal. The possibility of expanding fields of future Paleolithic study was indicated with the introduction of flaked surface analysis from a viewpoint of fracture mechanics.

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