

A new conception of the Yayoi culture of Jomon descent

SHITARA Hiromi

Abstract: This article presents a basic argument for understanding the observed variety in the formative agricultural culture in the Japanese archipelago introducing the theory of multilineal change. One's answer to the question of how to interpret the Yayoi culture varies according to his/her understanding of history. Some see the Yayoi culture as "a culture forming political societies" and consider this to be the key distinguishing point from the preceding Jomon culture. Based on this theory, however, early agricultural societies in eastern Japan cannot be included in the Yayoi culture, in spite of their searching for the ways to become agricultural society, keeping strong Jomon traditions, under the influence of the Yayoi political societies. The author divides the Yayoi culture into the Continental descent and the Jomon descent; the former witnessing the formation of the political societies by adopting agriculture from the southern part of the Korean Peninsula, while the latter formed no significant political groups under the strong Jomon tradition. Based on this categorization, the author discusses the spatial and chronological range of the Yayoi culture of Jomon descent, the meaning of the double structure of the two descents, and finally the meaning and evaluation of each cultural element. The author concludes by insisting that YAMANOUCHI Sugao's theory of unilineal change should be reexamined.

Keywords: Agricultural culture; eastern Japan; Yayoi culture of the Continental descent; Yayoi culture of the Jomon descent; multilineal change.

From: *Kokogaku Kenkyu* 47(1), 2000, pp. 88-100.