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Article :

Lessons from the Prehistoric Jōmon People of Japan

Directions: Read the following article aloud.

The existence of the Sannai-Maruyama site, a prehistoric Japanese settlement from the Jōmon period in Aomori City, had been known since the Edo period.

But truly extraordinary finds were only discovered in the early Heisei period during excavations that were carried out before starting construction to expand the nearby Aomori Prefectural Sports Park.

The finds include six post holes, each two meters in diameter and two meters deep, with remains of a wooden pole one meter in diameter peeking out from the bottom of the holes. All these indicate that a large structure nearly 30 meters tall had once risen from the ground on that spot roughly 5,000 years ago.

An impressive number of Jōmon pottery, stoneware, lacquerware, and clay figurines have also been excavated from the remains of the largest Jōmon settlement in Japan. Objects made of obsidian from Hokkaido and jade from Niigata Prefecture indicate trade with distant regions. Chestnuts, walnuts, and burdocks were also found to have been cultivated in the area.

The finds have completely overturned the idea that Jōmon people only lived a primitive hunter-gatherer life and were constantly on the move in search of food, as most Japanese students had learned at school. In fact, the Jōmon people settled down and grew plants for food, even before agriculture began in the Yayoi period.

The Jōmon Archaeological Sites in Hokkaidō and Northern Tōhoku, including the Sannai-Maruyama Site, are expected to make it onto the UNESCO World Heritage list. Among these, the Kamegaoka Stone Age Site in Tsugaru City, Aomori Prefecture, is known for its shakōki-dogū (literally, snow goggle clay figure), an especially popular type of Jōmon clay figure named after its large eyes, which resemble snow goggles.

Aomori Prefecture is also home to the world's oldest earthenware vessel dating back to 16,500 years ago, which was discovered at the Ōdai Yamamoto Site in Sotogahama.

Source: Lessons from the Prehistoric Jōmon People of Japan

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Article :

EDITORIAL | Japan Islands Eyed as World Heritage Site Offer Insights into Biodiversity

Directions: Read the following article aloud.

The Jōmon people held funerals and religious ceremonies, and the disabled among their communities were well cared for. These ancestors of the Japanese people were able to live enriched lives for more than 10,000 years.

As sustainability becomes a major challenge and theme for those living in the present age, the lives of the Jōmon people pose a disconcerting question: will our current way of living sustain our civilization for 10,000 years, too?

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2 Key phrases and vocabulary

Directions: First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. sustainability 持続可能であること、環境を壊さず利用可能であること、環境に優しい性質
Solar panels could be used on the new development as part of a drive towards environmental sustainability.

2. carry out (計画などを)実行する・実施する
The investigation was carried out by the police.

3. settle down 定住する、身を落ち着ける、～に落ち着く
It seems many people think Vancouver is one of the best place to settle down for immigrants.

4. date back to ～ (発端や期限などが)～にさかのぼる
The origins of Mother's Day in the US date back to the 19th century.

5. care for ～ ～のお世話をする、～に配慮し思いやる、～に関心を持つ、～を欲する
It is the safety net for children whose parents cannot care for them.

3 Questions

Directions: Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. Since when do people know about the Sannai-Maruyama site?
2. How have those newer discoveries changed our recognition of jomon people's life style?
3. What are the examples that tell us their culture was civilized?
4. What could we learn from Jomon people to live sustainably?

4 日本語関連記事： 縄文時代の遺跡に思うサステナビリティ

青森市内にある縄文時代の三内丸山遺跡の存在は、江戸時代から知られていた。平成に入って近くにある青森県総合運動公園の拡張が決まる。工事に先立ち発掘調査が行われると、とんでもないものが見つかった。

直径2メートル、深さ2メートルの柱穴が6個並んでおり、穴の底には直径1メートルの木柱の一部が顔を出していた。約5千年前に、30メートル近い高さの大型の建造物がそびえていたことになる。

日本最大の縄文集落の跡からは、大量の縄文土器や石器、漆器、土偶の数々が出土した。北海道産の黒曜石、新潟県産のヒスイなどは、遠隔地との交易の事実を示す。クリやクルミ、ゴボウなどが栽培されていたことも分かった。

縄文時代の人々は原始的な狩猟採集生活を送り、食料を求めて常に移動していた。小欄が中学、高校で習った知識は完全に覆された。農耕が始まった弥生時代を待たずに、人々はすでに定住し、食用のための植物も育てていた。

三内丸山遺跡を含む「北海道・北東北の縄文遺跡群」が、ユネスコ世界文化遺産に登録される見通しとなった。このうち亀ヶ岡石器時代遺跡(青森県つがる市)は、縄文土偶の中でも特に人気の高い遮光器(しゃこうき)土偶で知られる。極端に大きな目が遮光器(スノーゴーグル)に似ていることから名付けられた。大平(おおだい)山元遺跡(同外ヶ浜町)からは、約1万6500年前の世界最古級の土器が発見されている。

葬送や宗教的な行事も催され、体の不自由な人は手厚く介護されていた。日本人の祖先は1万年以上もの間、心豊かに暮らしてきた。縄文時代を知れば知るほど、最近よく耳にするサステナビリティ(持続可能性)という言葉の重みを感じるようになる。我々の文明は、1万年も続くだろうか。

出典：縄文時代の遺跡に思うサステナビリティ

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