

Topic- 10,000 years ago in Japan, the ancient view of nature and the heart of Shinto

Learn the roots of sustainability.

One of the World Heritage registration criteria "the only or at least rare evidence of an existing or extinct cultural tradition or civilization.;"

- In 2021, 17 ancient remains of the Jomon period, which lasted 10,000 years from 14000 years ago to around 4000 years ago, were registered as a World Heritage Site in Japan. It was a different type of traditional cultural heritage from locations such as Kyoto and Nara, and natural heritage like Shiretoko and Yakushima. In addition, the ancient remains of the traditional world, even the oldest ruins, were destroyed from 8000 to 3000 years, and even if the civilization was long, it was destroyed by the next dynasty, etc., but the Jomon culture had continued for more than 3000 years. It had been going on for millions of years. What was the key point to their success?

- **The archaeological view of civilization states that culture and civilization cannot develop when there is no production economy** = when there is no settlement and agriculture / livestock, when there are no traces of large-scale settlements such as cities, and when there are no letters. **Such a society was thought to be an acquired economic society = an undeveloped society.**

However, during the **Jomon period**, there was **no farming (so-called wheat fields or paddy fields) or livestock farming** that became the foundation of cultural life, and despite having led the **life of harvesting, hunting, and fishing, they settled down and lived together in village-like villages**. Even without letters, there was earthenware and various symbolic relics, and it was a ruin that could not be understood well by the general knowledge of archeology.

From the beginning of the 21st century, archaeological surveys that lasted between 10~20 years revealed the lifestyle of the Jomon period through various pieces of evidence. One example of the **Jomon period ruins is the Sannai Maruyama Site in Aomori, Touhoku** (a village where more than 500 people had continued to live for more than 500 years). There were **pit-house type dwellings** (not a temporary dwelling, a fixed dwelling that can be lived in for generations) that accommodate large family units, large buildings that served as a **meeting places**, and **“yagura”like structures** 20m high that would make one think that they could also be used for religious events and festivals. There was even a garbage area (similar to shell middens/mounds), and a graveyard section. And around the village, edible and fruit-bearing trees such as chestnut trees and horse chestnut trees were intentionally planted.

In addition, to respect nature, they separated their villages as inside and outside so that they can enjoy the **blessings of nature in each season all year round with minimal damage to the surrounding natural environment.** While receiving the blessings of the natural world, such as plants, fruits and seeds, deer, boar and birds, fish and shellfish from the rivers and the sea, **they lived a life that coexisted and co-prospered with nature.** Looking at the dietary habits of those days, we found that there were more than dozens of species of fish, more than 350 kinds of shellfish, and more than dozens of plants that were collected throughout spring, summer, autumn and winter. You can see that it was a wide variety of eating habits. **The way of life that can be learned from the life of the Jomon period is the Shinto view of nature that later became the foundation of the Japanese spirit.** (The Japanese view of nature is to respect the gods of the mountains, forest, rivers and sea.)

● **What are the characteristics of traditional ideas since the Jomon period in Japan?**

① Live with nature. ② Make the heart of your ancestors, your own heart. ③ Living in peace with people. ④ Find peace of mind in living in harmony with nature. ⑤ Gain spiritual support by respecting the traditions that have been passed down from the times of our ancestors. ⑥ Value the bonds that connect people and find a better way of life.

■ At the 1997 International Shinto Studies Association, Dr. Thomas Berry, CP, PHD (1941-2009) of the United States stated as follows.

"The universal thing taught by Shinto is that the way to the holy world can only be found in the world we live in. The best feature of Shinto is the nature as it is and its eternal value. It is in the simplicity that is directly connected to. Japanese culture is now attracting attention from all over the world.

Inspired by the Shinto tradition, by renewing this fellowship with the forces of nature, we may be able to receive, be guided and greatly healed by the vitality of nature that humanity is now seeking. unknown"……