

Culture and Science of Acorn II - The Jomon People and the Acorn -

Toshio Mitsunaga

Professor Emeritus of Kinki University

101-3, Kashiwabe-cho, Shimogamo, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto 606-0815, Japan

Summary

The Jomon period lasted about ten thousand years from 10,000 B.C. to 300 B.C.

The period was a pre-cultivation period, and the people acquired their foodstuffs by collecting, hunting and fishing. Their foodstuffs were nuts such as acorns, root crops such as yam, wild plants such as bracken, fish such as red sea bream, shellfish such as short-necked clam, and meats such as wild boar and duck. Among them, nuts such as acorns are starchy foods and the best foods from a calorimetric viewpoint. The people converted acorns with an astringent taste to edible foods by getting rid of the harshness.

A great deal of acorns was dug out of many ruins of the Jomon period. It was verified that acorns were the staple food for Jomon people by stable isotope analysis of carbon and nitrogen, and residual fat analysis on the remains from the Jomon period. It is thought that the prototype of the typical Japanese-style meal was born in the Jomon period.