

Ancient Chigasaki and Excavated Remains

よみがえる古代の茅ヶ崎 よみがえる 古代の 茅ヶ崎

The coastal region of Chigasaki consists of one of the most important sand dunes in Japan and is called Shonan sandhill. This area used to be covered by the sea, but over the millennia gradually changed its form to become land. In addition to the sea and sands, the geography of Chigasaki also includes rivers and hilly terrain, making it an interesting landform from a topographical standpoint. Historically, from one era to the next, each successive group of inhabitants of Chigasaki has developed its own specific methods of cultivating the land.

On the plateau in the northern part of Chigasaki, it is believed that the history of human beings started about 30,000 years ago. However, the clearest archaeological evidence suggests that the oldest human activity in Chigasaki took place about 18,000 years ago. Arrowheads and knife-like stone tools as well as gatherings of stones excavated on the northern plateau have been dated to the Upper Paleolithic. Earthenware found in the districts of Kagawa and Akabane has also provided clues about the activities of human beings in Prehistoric Japan.

About 10,000 years ago, the most recent glacial period ended, the climate started to get warmer, and volcanic activity lessened leading to an environment resembling that of today. As a result, the scenery became much greener as forests and grasslands developed and spread across the continents, and animal life became more abundant. In what was the district of Tsutsumi about 8,000 years ago, many oval traces, evidence of fire burning, have been found. These are indicative of a camping lifestyle, and many other remains including shell mounds have been discovered.

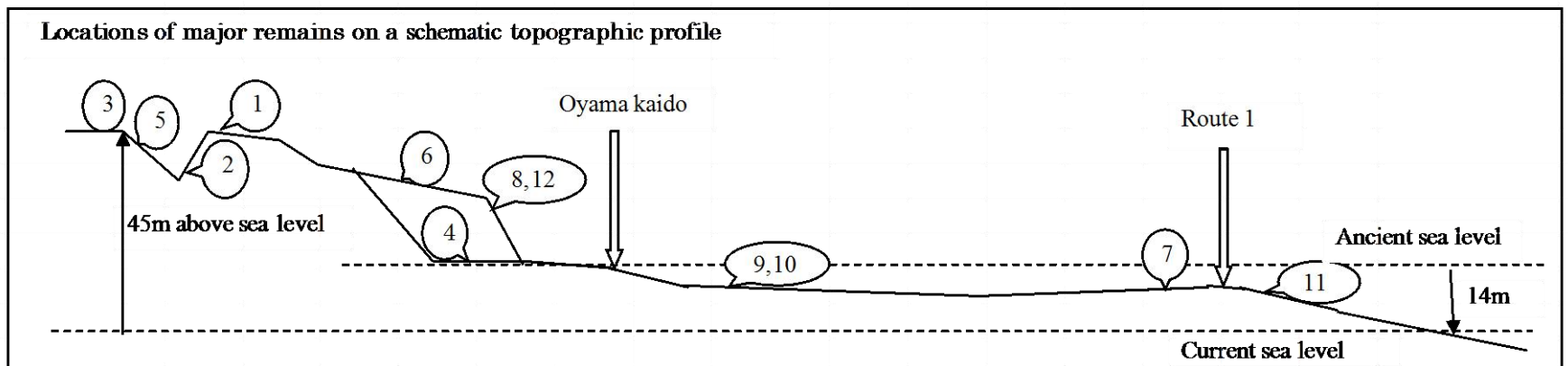
A shell mound, dating to about 6,000 years ago, was also found in Nishikata, as were traces of the oldest residence in Chigasaki. Buried below the surface or excavated from open archaeological trenches, buildings supposedly used for meetings and for religious services were identified as well as a storehouse and graves. Storehouses and graves were also in evidence among the more than ten dwelling sites reported to have been found amongst the Ōkubo remains, which date from about 4,500 years ago. Elsewhere along the plateau belt, remains of several large-scale settlements have been located.

The natural remains found in shell mounds in particular are very important archaeologically as they provide valuable insights not only into the history of Chigasaki and its inhabitants over many thousands of years, but also reveal much about the natural flora and fauna of the past.

Major Remains, their Locations and Excavated Artifacts

主な遺跡の場所と出土品 おも いせき ぼしょ しゅつとひん

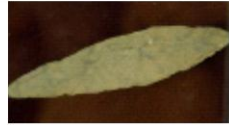
The diagram shows major remains and their locations on a schematic topographic profile. It shows that human habitats moved from the northern hills to the southern lowlands as the sea level lowered. The table shows excavated artifacts in each era as well as example pictures.



Era	Paleo-lithic	Jōmon						Yayoi					Kofun	Asuka	Nara	Heian	Kamakura - Edo
		Incipient	Initial	Early	Middle	Late	Final	Initial, Early	Middle	Late	Final						
Remains	14000BC	10000	4000	3000	2000	1000	500	200	AD 1	200	300	600	710	794	1192	1868	
1.Suwayato	T																
2.Namegaya		S	C			K J P											
3.Usukubo			C P	← J →					Se								
4.Nishikata				K P J					Se			← E P Ro →					
5.Ōkubo					P							H					
6.Tsutsumi						K J P											
7.Imura							J*		MP				← M P Ro →				
8.Shinoyama									Y			Ky		E			
9.Kaminomachi			Camp site						Y				← E P →				
10.Hiromachi													← M P →				
11.Ishigami												Ky	← E P →				
12.Shinoyato													← Ht →				



T: knife tool (stone)



S: stone spearhead



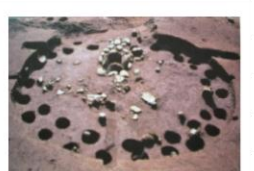
E: earthenware



K: kitchen midden (shell mound)



Se: settlement with moat (schematic picture)



P: pit



Y: Yayoi pottery



C: conical earthenware



J: Jōmon pottery
J*: pot fragments



M: moat



Ky: keyhole-shaped tumulus

Ht: horizontal tomb dug into hill

Major Remains found in Chigasaki

ちがさき ほっけん おも いせき
茅ヶ崎で発見された主な遺跡

A total of 215 historic sites dating from the Japanese Paleolithic period (about 17,000 years ago) to the end of the Edo era (AD 1868) have been found in the city. Some of the major sites are shown on the map (right) and described below.

1. The Suwayato Remains

Small stone tools believed to have been used as knives and spearheads were excavated from the Upper Paleolithic layer at the Suwayato remains located on a northern height of the city. Charred gravel and obsidian fragments indicated that the inhabitants made fires and produced those stone tools. The absence of evidence of a settlement suggests that they were nomadic, roaming around the site and its vicinity in search of food. The human history of the City started around this area at least 18,000 years ago when the final glacial period was coming to an end.

2. The Namegaya Remains

Stone spearheads and conical earthenware believed to date back to the Upper Paleolithic and Initial Jōmon period (up to 4,000BC) were unearthed at the Namegaya remains near Bunkyo University. A small kitchen midden (shell mound) containing predominantly freshwater clam and oyster shells, believed to have been made in the Late Jōmon period was also found. As the remains are six kilometers from the coast, it is assumed that inhabitants went up and down the Koide and Komayose rivers by boat. A lot of earthenware and stone tools as well as graves and tens of pits were also excavated, suggesting that the inhabitants had established a large settlement with a mature Jōmon culture, and led sedentary lives.

3. The Usukubo Remains

This site in Serizawa contains a mixture of remains and relics from the Jōmon, Yayoi, Kofun and early modern periods, including a sizeable Late Yayoi era settlement encircled by a moat, remains of which can still be seen to the north and west.

4. The Nishikata Remains

Investigation of the Nishikata remains in Shimoterao has revealed evidence of human habitation from the Early Jōmon era (c. 6,000 years ago) to the Middle Ages (c. 600 years ago). In a kitchen midden from about 6,000 years ago, bones of bonitos, yellowtails, red sea breams and whales as well as shells were found, suggesting that ancient residents even went out to sea to catch fish offshore. It is believed that humans started establishing settlements rather than living a nomadic life as the climate was warming up around this time following the end of the last glacial period, and lush forests started supplying abundant sources of food for both humans and animals. Each settlement seems to have had a central square surrounded by pit dwellings within which there are the telltale signs of fires being used in hearths sunk into the floors.

About 2,000 years ago a group of people having a different culture to that of earlier settlers arrived and built a fort-like settlement here, between two rivers and surrounded by a moat, presumably for defence. It stretched 400m east to west and 240m north to south, and is one of the prefecture's largest known settlements from the Yayoi era (an Iron Age era lasting from 300 BC to AD 300), as evidenced by the unearthing of iron hatchets amongst the remains, typical of the techniques in metallurgy that appeared around this time. Most of the dwellings show signs of fire damage, suggesting that hostile conflict was not uncommon; a characteristic of Yayoi society.

5. The Ōkubo Remains

At this site in Serizawa, traces of two settlements from the Middle Jōmon period (about 4000 to 4500 years ago) have been found so far. Within each settlement, more than ten pit dwellings surround a group of small pillar pits and several larger pits which seem to have been used as storehouses and graves. At the entrances of quite a lot of the dwellings, pots, in which placentas were deposited, were buried under the ground. Experts think that Jōmon people at that time prayed for their children's growth by stepping on where the pots were buried. These remnants are indicative of their deep affection for their family. It is likely that the affectionate spirits of the inhabitants strengthened communal ties and helped the Jōmon society to grow.



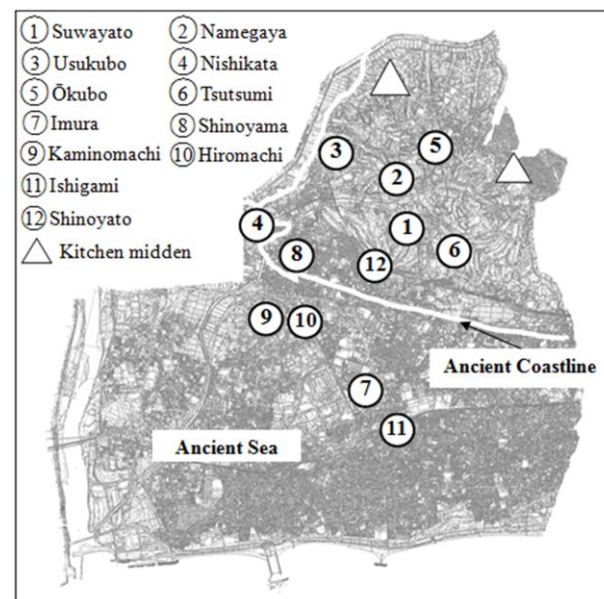
Kettle-type Jōmon pottery from Tsutsumi



Yayoi pottery from Nishikata



Namegaya pits



6. The Tsutsumi Shell Mound

The Tsutsumi Kaizuka or shell mound found in Tsutsumi district is located on a plateau in the upper reaches of the Komayose river, about thirty or so meters above sea level, and it is about 3,500 years old, dating back to the Late phase of the Jōmon era (2000-1000 BC). The mound's scale is fairly large and the layer which contains the shells has been preserved underground in good condition. Tsutsumi Kaizuka was designated as a historical site by the Kanagawa Prefecture in 1992 (Heisei 4) and is regarded as one of the best such mounds in the prefecture.

The settlement that made the shell mound at Tsutsumi was thought to have been substantial, and a number of extremely precious relics found at the site have revealed much about how people lived in those days. The core of the shell mound contained *danbei-kisago* (or Giant Button Top Shell), but *bai* (or Japanese Ivory Shell) and *kaki* (oyster) as well as harpoon fragments made from *rokkaku* (deer's horn), fish hooks, *gyokotsu* (fish bones) and *jūkotsu-rui* (animal bones) of wild boar and dolphin were also uncovered. In addition, *sekifu* (an ancient stone implement resembling an axe), stone plates for grinding and crushing nuts, *suriishi* (stones for grinding, *sekisui* (stone weights) and *dosui* (clay weights) used to weigh down fish nets were also amongst the finds.

7. The Imura Remains

The Imura remains are located within the sand hill stretching from Honson to JR Kita-Chigasaki station. Dwellings found there were situated on the slightly elevated region of the site, with rice paddy fields on the neighboring, lower, wetland. The dating of excavated artifacts ranges from the Final Jōmon through Nara-Heian to early modern periods. Artifacts of the late Middle Yayoi period (about 2,000 years ago), moats and pit dwellings as well as an earthenware pot, typical of south Kantō, and fragments of jar-shaped pottery with patterns on it have been unearthed. The moat, with a U-shaped section wider than 2m, may have encircled the settlement to protect it, like the quintessential settlement in the Yayoi period.

Three wooden plates with Chinese characters on them were also found. The characters recorded the amount of *sake* and food given to influential people in the local community at an event in an August of the late 9th century (the Heian period). The largest of the three plates is about 46cm long, and is larger than any other similar wooden plate unearthed in the prefecture. The plates will provide valuable information about the area's ancient society.

8. The Shinoyama Remains

These settlement remains are located on a hill about 600m north-east of JR Kagawa station. Earthenware of the Late Yayoi era, including pots for the storage of grain or cooking, and cups having a stand for offerings, has been unearthed. This pottery for offerings is quite similar to that found in the Tōkai area (Shizuoka and Aichi), suggesting that residents of the settlement had close relationships with Yayoi societies in Tōkai.

This summary of archeological remains found in Chigasaki will be continued in the next issue.