

# Update on the Japanese Early and Middle Palaeolithic problem

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## Naoko Matsumoto

Faculty of Letters, Okayama University  
3-1-1 Tsushima-naka, Okayama 700-8530, Japan  
naoko\_m@cc.okayama-u.ac.jp

The most recent developments from the Special Committee for Investigating the Early/Middle Paleolithic Problem were reported at the Japanese Archaeological Association (JAA) meeting held in Tokyo on 25 May 2002. Although research papers were being read in three other sessions at that time, the large lecture hall assigned for the report was filled with an audience of 500.

In the five hour long report, results of the verification excavations, the examination of the surface features of the excavated stone tools, typological examination of the stone tools, and the historiographic and methodological examination of the forgery were reported and discussed. Over a year and a half after the detection of the forgery, the JAA concluded that none of the 30 sites under investigation that had been related to Fujimura in some way was reliable as archaeological material. This means that all the sites described in Kaner's paper except for Kashiwayamadate and Kanetori, which Fujimura did not visit, are now in the list of fabricated sites. Although we must bear in mind that this does not necessarily mean that all the evidence from these sites was planted by Fujimura, the fact that five verification excavations could only find evidence of fabrication but no sound evidence of artefacts nor structures has serious implications.

The verification excavation of Zazaragi site was not finished at the time of the report. On 9 June 2002, the investigating committee declared that all 63 stone tools excavated from Zazaragi in 1981 were fabricated and there is no Early nor Middle Palaeolithic evidence at the site. Zazaragi has thus become the thirty-first in the list of fabricated sites. According to the evidence from the re-excavation of Zazaragi and other examinations reported at the

JAA meeting it is also probable that Fujimura started planting the evidence in the mid 1970s.

Although it has now become clear that quite a number of sites were contaminated by the activities of Fujimura, how and why he was able to plant so many stone tools for such a long time without being noticed still remains a mystery. The re-examinations of excavation records indicate the surprising presumption that at several sites Fujimura must have planted the stone tools during the excavation, when other archaeologists were working near him.

While it is not totally clear how he planted the evidence in every case, there has been serious discussion since the detection of the fabrication as to why other archaeologists were not able to discover the forgery and some factors have been proposed as major reasons. The discovery of unnatural contexts for the excavated artefacts - such as space, intrusive soil and the impression of the tool used to plant the stone artefact - strongly indicate that the forgery should have been discovered much earlier if careful examination of the artefact in situ and its proper recording were carried out in each excavation. Linear buildup of iron on the surface of stone tools is considered to indicate a contact with steel farming tools that could not have happened if the artefact had been buried intact in the Early/Middle Palaeolithic layers. Throughout the verification process there has been criticism that the frequent occurrence of such telltale evidence of forgery had been ignored until Fujimura's activity was captured by the video camera.

Based on such surface features of the planted artefacts together with their typological and technological characteristics, it was confirmed in

the report that Fujimura used a part of his large number of surface collection of Jomon stone tools for the fabrication of the Early/Middle Palaeolithic sites.

The report on 26 May was still an interim one and there are many problems yet to be investigated.

The wound in Japanese archaeology caused by the continuous, wide-range forgery is undoubtedly deep, but not fatal as long as the systematic investigation can identify where we stand now and how we proceed from here.

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