Torazuka Decorated Tomb

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There are two major important aspects of the decorated tombs in Japan. First, while some 150 thousand or far more tombs were built during the Kofun period from the middle third to seventh centuries, only 700 or so decorated tombs are known. Second, the spatial distributions of the decorated tombs are skewed toward Kyushu and the northeastern mainland Japan, such as Hitachi (present Ibaraki Prefecture), Fukushima, and Miyagi Prefectures. It is highly noteworthy that these two regions are very far away from the Nara-Osaka areas where the central polity was presumably located during the Kofun period.

In eastern Japan, there are 18 decorated tombs in Hitachi, 54 in Fukushima Prefecture, and 34 in Miyagi Prefecture, totaling 106. Those in Hitachi are distinguished from those in Fukushima and Miyagi because, while the former are all mounded tombs, the latter are all tunnel tombs. The tunnel tombs were characterized by structures in which a burial chamber was constructed in a tunnel dug into a cliff.

The Torazuka Mounded Tomb is located 120 kilometers northeast of Tokyo. It is situated on a height in the tributary area of Naka River that flows into the Pacific Ocean. The mounded tomb is four kilometers away from the Pacific coast. The mounded tomb is keyhole-shaped.

The first excavation took place in 1973. The excavation yielded a result that the mounded tomb was 57 meters in length, seven meters in height. It was built in the early seventh century.

The excavation also resulted in the discovery of a corridor-style horizontal burial chamber in the circular, rear portion of the mound. The entrance to the burial chamber was sealed by a pile of large stones.

We found that the burial chamber was previously undisturbed. Accordingly, we commissioned the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties to investigate the environment inside the burial chamber prior to opening the burial chamber. Such an investigation was unprecedented in the history of Japanese archaeology. At this point of time, we did not foresee that the burial chamber was decorated.

The investigation of the environment inside the burial chamber yielded the results that the concentration of carbon dioxide was 50 times more than the ordinary natural environment, the temperature was 15 degrees in centigrade as opposed to 32 degrees at the time of excavation, 92%

humidity as opposed to 65% outside. These data are very important and useful for the preservation of the environment inside today.

After we obtained the data of the environment inside, we went on to open the burial chamber. The entrance to the main chamber was sealed by a large stone slab of 1.2 meters in height, 0.9 to 1.2 meters in width, and 20 centimeters in thickness.

After we removed the stone slab, we discovered mural wall paintings inside the main burial chamber. The condition of the mural walls was excellent because the burial chamber was sealed since the early seventh century. This was the first discovery of decorated tomb in a previously undisturbed condition in the history of Japanese archaeology. The paintings were on the back wall, side walls, and behind the entrance.

The paintings consist of geometric patterns and pictorial motifs of armor and weapons. On the back wall, there are two concentric circle patterns and a series of triangle patterns above the two concentric circles. Below the two concentric circles are, from the left, fifteen spears, quivers, archer's left-wrist protector, and three swords. The identification of the quivers, archer's left-wrist protector, and swords is based on *haniwa* ceramic figurine produced in the sixth century in Japan.

On the left wall, there are a series of triangle patterns at the top, nine circles and something U-shaped below the triangles, and what we interpret as horse gears further below.

On the right wall, a series of triangles pattern at the top, a small circle hanging down from the pattern, two quivers and three shields on a straight line in the center, what may be interpreted as a necklace and horse gears in the lower right, and other pictorial representations. Note that the ceiling is painted red.

For the mural wall, white plaster and red ocher rouge or *bengala* were used. A result of chemical analysis we conducted on the red pigment indicates that red ocher rouge was made from iron viscosity readily available in the vicinity of Torazuka.

We also discovered the traces of the axes of compass used for draw the two concentric circles on the back wall. The use of a compass allowed a Torazuka artist to draw true circles. An area within a concentric circle was painted red.

The adoption of both line drawing and color paintings was a technique very close to the technique adopted in Kumamoto Prefecture in Kyushu where the majority of decorated tombs in Japan are known. It is highly noteworthy that the same techniques and similar motifs were adopted to decorated tombs in Hitachi and Kyushu, more than 1,000 kilometers away from each other.

The material cultures, such as pictorial motifs, and techniques for decorating burial facilities, appeared in eastern Japan, without any precedents, toward the end of the sixth century. More importantly, these material cultures are closely related to Kyushu.

Black color, lacquer bowls have been excavated in the mound of Torazuka as well as at settlement sites in Hitachinaka City. This characteristic type of bowls has also been excavated at

settlement sites in Kumamoto Prefecture, and their similarity are very noteworthy.

What are the backgrounds to these phenomena? One of them would be, I argue, the intention of the central polity of Yamato to advance to the northeastern mainland Japan. Toward the end of the 520's, King Keitai quelled the rebellion of Iwai, the Provincial Governor of Tsukushi (present western Fukuoka Prefecture). While many regional elites far away from the central polity region remained relatively autonomous, King Keitai's successful military campaign allowed him to place many regions in northern Kyushu under the direct control of the central polity. Local elites in northern Kyushu under the direction of the central polity advanced into Hitachi and the surrounding areas to impart their superior navigational skills. The Kyushu elites and their peoples were first based in Hitachi, and then advanced to the northeastern mainland Japan. I hypothesize that elites and peoples from northern Kyushu who were settled in the eastern peripheral region of the sphere of the Yamato influence played the major role as "vanguard" to conquer the northeastern Japan. My hypothesize is backed by the historical phenomena that, local soldiers of Hitachi and its southern and southwestern neighboring regions were recruited to station in northern Kyushu to defend Japan against the potential threat of Tang China since the 650's.

Then, why did Hitachi was chosen to be the base for advancing to the northeastern Japan? The major reason was geographical. The Kuroshio current flowing from the southwestern Pacific to the Pacific coastal regions of Japan meets the Oyashio current flowing from the coastal region of the Russian Far East. These two currents from the south and from the north meet off the coast of Cape Chōshi, just south of Hitachi. This place where the two currents meet remained to be difficult and dangerous for sailors to navigate. Even during the Tokugawa period from 1600 to 1868, commodities and goods from the northern Japan were uploaded in the Hitachinaka area and transshipped to boats on rivers and lakes in Hitachi and its southwestern neighboring regions. In other words, areas surrounding Torazuka and Jūgorō-ana functioned as a traffic hub connecting maritime traffic and inland waterway transportation. Although this is a Tokugawa period phenomenon, my traffic hub hypothesis gains support from the discoveries of numerous non-local artifacts of the Kofun period in the Hitachinaka area.

Another line of archaeological evidence to support my traffic hub hypothesis is a group of mounded tombs and cist graves on the Pacific coast in Hitachinaka. There, more than 100 graves are distributed within a range of some three kilometers. These mounded tombs and cist graves are dated from the fifth to seventh centuries. Rocks for the cist graves were all collected on the local Pacific coast. The discovered artifacts, such as bone and antler arrowheads are closely associated with tombs on the coast. Therefore, I suspect that these mounded tombs and cist graves were the burials of people who were involved in maritime traffic and/or fisheries.

In sum, there are mounded tombs and cist graves since the fifth century as well as a decorated tomb and tunnel tombs of the seventh century in Hitachinaka. To conclude, Hitachinaka during the

Kofun period was a traffic hub where peoples from various regions met and goods from various regions were gathered. At the beginning of seventh century, a group of people with outstanding navigation skills were recruited from the northern Kyushu to settle in Hitachinaka and interacted with local people. Since the local people leaned navigation skills from the northern Kyushu group of people, Hitachinaka became the base for the advancement to the northeastern Japan. In fact, historic sources written in the eighth century mention that soldiers in northern Hitachi played the major role in conquering native peoples of the northeastern Japan. Our research into decorated tombs in Hitachi and its neighboring regions makes an important contribution to our understanding the seventh century history of Japan.

Finally, I would like to mention the protection, preservation, and opening to public of Torazuka. Since 1980, we open the burial chamber to public for eight days in spring and eight days in autumn every year in the past 45 years.

For the preservation and protection of the burial chamber, we have taken several measures in the past fifty years. For example, we have recorded the temperature and humidity of the inside the burial chamber 24 hours, 365 days since 1973. I guess that collecting environmental data of the inside of a burial chamber for such a long term is very unusual even in the world. The Torazuka data are useful for the protection of decorated tombs of other regions of Japan.

We still continue these measures. The Torazuka case is highly praised among Japanese archaeologists as a very rare example of the successful preservation of a decorated tomb in Japan.