

## **The Takahashi Shell Mound in Kagoshima Pref. : A Relay Point in Neolithic Shell Trade Based on the Analysis of Strombus Shell Waste Fragments Excavated from the Site**

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The Takahashi shell mound is located in southern Kyūshū. It was a relay point for shell trade between the Okinawa Islands and northern Kyūshū during the Yayoi period. This paper attempts to describe the actual situation of the relay through the analysis of the traded shells left in the site as outlined below.

- The Takahashi shell mound is a settlement site that started in the middle of the early Yayoi period and continued to the latter part of the same period. The cultural layers from layer I to layer V are deposited almost horizontally, and 187 shell fragments in total have been excavated. They reveal all stages in the production process for bracelets from large conches from the Ryūkyū Islands. More than 90% of these are *Strombus*.

- The people living at Takahashi shell mound made two types of shell bracelets during the layer V period and exported them to different areas. One is a finished product of shell bracelets using the back of *Strombus*. This was made from roughly processed products that arrived from Okinawa and was exported to northwestern Kyūshū. The other was a roughly processed product using the abdomen of *Strombus*, which was exported to northern Kyūshū.

- During the period of layer IV, people began to produce roughly processed items from the back of shells for bracelets by themselves and exported these to northwestern Kyūshū.

- During the period of layer I and II, roughly processed products from the abdomen of *Strombus* begin to decrease at the Takahashi shell mound site, on the other hand, an increase of the same style of roughly processed products in sites of the Okinawa Islands can be observed parallel in time. Both phenomena indicate that the production base had moved from the Takahashi shell mound to Okinawa.

- Roughly processed products of the abdominal shell bracelets began to reach the consumption are in northern Kyūshū directly, without passing the Takahashi shell mound any more, such that the importance of the site as a relay point in shell trade decreased and the site itself declined soon.

The characteristic of Takahashi shell mound as a relay point is that it played an economic role in the early stages of shell trade by processing and exporting shells and roughly processed products

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materials that arrived from Okinawa for two consumption areas.

Key words: Takahashi shell mound, Relay Point, Shell Trade, Strombus shells, Early Yayoi Period, Okinawa Islands, Shell Deposit