The Rectangular Stone Coffin of the Ofujiyama
Tomb in Gunma Prefecture

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In 1981 the National Museum of Japanese History produced a replica of the rectangular stone coffin found stored in Ofujiyama Kofun, "Old Tumulus", in Isezaki City, Gunma prefecture. This study presents the results of the survey made on the stone coffin in preparation for the reproduction of the model, and considers some characteristics of the rectangular stone coffins.

Ofujiyama Tomb is a key-hole shaped type 125 meters long. The stone coffin lies in the top of the circular part of the tomb. This stone coffin is rectangular (nagamochigata sekkan) similar to the shape of a box used to store clothes, nagamochi. The coffin is quite similar to the rectangular coffins stored in the huge tombs found in the Kinki District. Most of the lid has lost its shape, but the main body of the coffin remains complete. It is 2.85m long, 1.2m wide and 1.1m high.

The location of the coffin seemed to have been changed. There is a legend that supports the idea that the coffin was brought to the area from another tomb. From Ofujiyama cylindrical haniwa of the third stage were excavated, which had also been found in the Shiroishi Inariyama Tomb and Akaborichausuyama Tomb in Gunma Prefecture. Also the stone replicas excavated from this tomb also belong to almost the same period as these haniwa. On the other hand, when a comparison is made with the specimens seen in the Kinki District, the rectangular stone coffin is most similar to the specimen found in the Kutsukawa Kurumazuka Tomb in Kyoto; the study of the haniwa and stone miniatures show that this tomb was also constructed during almost the same period as Shiroishi Inariyama Tomb. Thus this rectangular stone coffin pertained to the same period as Ofujiyama. Furthermore, near this tomb, there were no tombs that stored rectangular shaped coffins that had anything in common with the huge tombs of the Kinki District. Thus the possibility that this stone coffin originally belonged to the same period as Ofujiyama is quite strong.

The style and the details of the patterns carved on the rectangular stone coffin stored in Ofujiyama are quite similar to those seen in the
Kinki District. Therefore, concerning the production of the stone coffin, it must be concluded that craftsmen of the Kinki District came to Togoku Area for the purpose of production. This shows that chiefs of the Togoku Area and the Kinki District still maintained an alliance during the fifth century.