A Study of Tokutan Castle and Remains of Glazed Tiles

ABE, Gihei
NAGASHIMA, Masaharu

Tokutan castle was constructed by the ritsu-ryō Nation in the northern part of the country at the beginning of the ninth century. It was located on a plain near the upper Kitakami River in the Tōhoku, and was adjacent to the northern Emishi District. During this period, Japan was formed into a unified nation and continued to fight to rule over Emishi, which had already been culturally influenced. From the excavation of the site, it was clarified, that Tokutan castle was the smallest among the 20 castles constructed in the Tōhoku area. It was almost 355m. square, surrounded by a fence, with a central space called Seichō functioned for administrative purposes and rituals. Turrets surrounded the castle and there was a gate on each of the four sides of the fence. In 1967, 3 tiles were excavated from the south gate, one of which was a glazed tile. As there were few tiles, it is assumed that they were placed on the big ridge of the roof and represented a symbol of the castle. These tiles usually decorated main buildings and gates of capital and palaces and national temples, and were political symbols of authority. During the ninth century Tokutan castle was the only exception. The castle was not only small but was a supporting castle of Isawa castle (about 675m square) where the Chinjufu (general’s base camp) was transferred to after the ninth century. From the way Tokutan castle was constructed, it is assumed that it was constructed around the year 812 by reforming Shiwa castle (constructed in 803) which was 10 kilometers northwest of the site, and that a lot of the material including the glazed tiles originally had belonged to the Shiwa castle.

The width of Shiwa castle was 846 meters. Results of the excavation showed that the castle was almost as big as Taga castle (and as big as Dazaifu). It has been generally maintained that the Chinjufu was transferred from Taga castle constructed in the early eighth century to Isawa castle constructed in the early ninth century, but judging from the size of Shiwa castle in company on with other castles, there is a possibility that the Chinjufu was going to be transferred to the castle in the early ninth century, and it is the glazed tiles that prove this. This paper discusses regional policies and the changes in policies during ancient times based on the facts revealed by the remaining structures and remains.