Kofun (mounded tomb) in the Later and Final Kofun Period
in Hitachi Province, and Fudoki Articles on Establishment of County Units

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Articles on the establishment of various county units, such as Shida, Namekata, Kashima, Taga, Iwaki, etc., in the middle of the 7th century, are included in "Fudoki (Topography) of Hitachi Province" 『常陸国風土記』. The process of dividing the 6 districts of Niihari, Tsukuba, Ibaraki, Naka, Kuji, and Taka under the Kuni-no-miyatuko 国造 (ruler of province) system into 12 county units is known from these articles. Recent studies in philological history have made clear that these articles about the establishment of counties in the "Fudoki of Hitachi Province" are almost believable. In this paper, the existence of influential local chiefs in the 6th and 7th centuries supposed from archaeological materials, or Kofun in the later and final Kofun period in Hitachi Province, is discussed in comparison with the transient process of local ruling organizations established from philological materials. This study aims at conducting concrete research into the movements of local chiefs in the eastern provinces in the formative period of the ancient nation. At the same time, it is expected that this study will contribute to the appraisal of images of the persons buried in large tumuli in the later and final Kofun period in other regions where there is a lack of philological materials to refer to.

As a result, it was known that the territories of influential local chiefs in the 6th century, including those buried in large Zenpōkōenfun (keyhole-shaped mounded tomb), were much smaller than the areas ruled by Kuni-no-miyatuko, and that they rather conformed to the areas of counties established in the middle of the 7th century. In addition, many large Zenpōkōenfun were constructed in the 6th century in "Ibaraki Province", especially on the northern shore of Lake Kasumigaura. It is supposed that those buried in these great tombs were local administrators of Be 部 (administrative units of production and service group), such as Nashiro 名代 and Koshiro 子代, which were established in large numbers in this area due to its importance for traffic, rather than the "Kuni-no-miyatuko", rulers of the area. In connection with the above, it is also supposed that the enforcement or improvement
of the *Kuni-no-miyatuko* system in the eastern provinces might have extended to the early 7th century, and that the establishment of “new county units” by dividing up the existing provinces of *Kuni-no-miyatuko* was meant to secure, systematically, the control of the area by influential local chiefs, who had not necessarily been recognized under the *Kuni-no-miyatuko* system.