The Oldest Reburial Grave with Funerary Urn

—Reexamination of the Negoya Site—

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The funeral system which characterizes the early Yayoi culture in eastern Japan is the reburial grave. This is a funeral method in which the body was temporarily buried in the earth and then reburied after ossification. Funerary urns were so frequently used as mortuary receptacles in this period that this type of grave is called a “reburial grave with funerary urn”.

Many problems await solution regarding the reburial graves with funerary urns. In particular, clarification of its origin is one of the most important subjects of study. As a preliminary work in the investigation of the origin of reburial graves with funerary urns, this paper analyzes the period and types of earthenware and the custom of tooth extraction at the Negoya site in Fukushima Prefecture, a site which is regarded as one of the oldest for reburial graves with funerary urns.

As a result, it was proved that the earthen funerary urns of Negoya are mostly of the period corresponding to the Ōbara A type and the Kōri I type of the final Jōmon period. By analyzing the transition and types of motifs of the patterns on the earthenware, the method of pattern expression, the shapes of the urn and the ground patterns, it was found that the earthenware in the Negoya site was based on the local earthenware under the strong influence of the Middle Tōhoku and Aizu Districts, and that it remained the tradition of earthenware of the final Jōmon period. On the other hand, our attention was attracted by the appearance of factors which characterized the subsequent early Yayoi earthenware in eastern Japan, such as the formation of various large urns. We have also confirmed that the practice of tooth extraction had something in common with the earthenware. While the tooth extraction style in Negoya followed the principle of the final Jōmon period of the Kantō and South Tōhoku Districts, the process of tooth extraction changed under the influence of the Tōkai District.

It has been proved that rice cultivation started in the Chūbu district before this time. Against this background of dramatic cultural changes, such as the establishment of reburial graves mainly using large funerary urns and changes in conventional
tooth extraction based on the western Japanese style, I thought it necessary to examine the influence of foreign culture which brought about a revolution in life style and is already recognized at the Negoya site.