Large Keyhole-shaped Mounded Tomb in the Later Kofun Period
in Kantō District

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When we compare the numbers of large, keyhole-shaped mounded tomb with a mound length of over 60m, built in various areas in the Japanese Archipelago in the 6th century, that is in the Later Kofun Period, we see that the Kantō District contains the largest number by far. Classified according to the statutory provinces in the Kantō District, there are 97 in Kōzuke, 16 in Shimotsuke, 38 in Hitachi, 11 in Shimousa, 28 in Kazusa, 26 in Musashi, and none in Sagami, a total of 216 tumuli. Even in the Kinai District, which includes Daiō 大王 tombs, there are 20 in Yamato, 12 in Kawachi, none in Iwami, 2 in Settsu, and 5 in Yamashiro, a total of only 39 tumuli. In the Kibi District, there are 2 in Bizen, 1 in Bitchū, 1 in Bingo, and none in Mimasaka, a total of only 4. In the Tōkai District, there are 12 in Owari, and 7 in Mino. It is thought that the large number in Owari is due to special political reasons, that the power in this region played an important role in supporting the Keitai Daiō 税体大王 in this accession to the throne. Therefore, it is obvious that only the Kantō District was a special region with regard to the construction of later keyhole-shaped mounded tomb in eastern Japan.

Generally, keyhole-shaped mounded tomb have been considered to have been established by the chiefs of various regions which joined the political association centering around the power in the Kinai District, in accordance with the status order in this association. In the Kantō District of the 6th century, however, obviously a standard different to that of other regions was applied to the construction of keyhole-shaped mounded tomb.

Furthermore, from the concentration rate of large keyhole-shaped mounded tomb in small areas, it must be taken that the persons buried were not only regional chiefs who simply ruled their local territory, but who also had positions as the regional controllers of Be 部 groups, such as Koshiro 子代 and Nashiro 名代, or Toneri 舎人, who were positioned in large numbers in this region by the Kinai Government. The reasons many large keyhole-shaped mounded tomb were constructed under a standard which was different from other regions thought to be as follows: this region was extremely important as an economic and military base supporting the Kinai Government; various powerful families which formed the Kinai Government in association wished to tie up with the local powers in the Kantō District to acquire bases of control. So the above circumstances may be considered to have come about from the structural features of the Kinai Government.