Square Tumuli of the Final Kofun Period

Andō Kōki

The final stage of the Kofun Period features the disappearance of Haniwa (burial mound figures) and keyhole-shaped tumuli.

Basic types of tumuli of this period, which ranged from the end of the 6th century to the beginning of the 8th century, were square or round. 173 or more square tumuli of the final Kofun period have been found from Miyazaki Prefecture to Ibaraki and Gumma Prefectures. Outside of the Kinki District, many are located in Ehime, Shizuoka, Chiba, Ibaraki, and Gumma Prefectures. The largest is the Iwaya Tumuli in Chiba Prefecture, with sides of 80m and 12m in height. It is larger than mounds supposed to be imperial mausoleums of that time.

The square tumuli of the final Kofun period in Chiba Prefecture pose very great problems, judging from their number, that is, 67 or more. On the estimation that a member of the Soga family, or an affiliated family, was buried in the Iwaya Tumulus, the author assumes that the Soga family made inroads into Tōgoku (eastern Japan), and ruled directly.