Aspects of Tumuli in the Later Kofun Period
in Hitachi

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In the first half of the 6th century two areas in Ibaraki Prefecture came to show distinctive characteristics: one area being the region centering on Lake Kusumigaura, the other being the western and northern parts of the Prefecture. Near Lake Kasumigaura, box-type stone coffins, as seen at the Sanmaizuka Tumulus, were used for the first time in the burial mounds.

This type of stone coffin became the most common, being placed in both the later keyhole-shaped burial mounds (square at the head and rounded at the foot) and round burial mounds. In areas with this tradition, a few tumuli have distinctive tunnel-type stone rooms; some are keyhole-shaped tumuli, including the Kazegaeshi-Inariyama Tumulus in Dejima Village, the Karabitsu Tumulus at Taishi (with colored wall painting), and the Dainichizuka Tumulus in the Okisu Tumuli Group, which is close to the Sanmaizuka Tumulus; as well as the round shaped Maeyama Tumulus in Sakuragawa Village.

On the other hand, in the region from the northern to western areas of the Prefecture, the adit-type stone room is the most common in both keyhole-shaped and round tumuli; but a small number of box-type coffins and some cave-type graves are also seen. A box-type stone coffin is found in the keyhole-shaped Nakayama Tumulus No. 3 in Taishi Town, on the upper reaches of the Kuji River; however, the tumuli group to which this belongs is considered to have been influenced by the Nasu Region.

Square burial mounds with adit-type stone rooms, and sometimes with mural paintings, appeared in both the latter classification given above and in the Tsukuba region in the first half of the 7th century. Examples include the Funadama Tumulus (with colored mural painting) in Sekishiro Town in the province of Nihari; the Sadogaiwaya Tumulus in Tsukuba City in the province of Tsukuba; and the Yoshida Tumulus (with line mural drawing) in Mito City in the province of Naka. In addition to the above, some have special characteristics, for example, the adit-type stone room of the Torazuka Tumulus in Katsuta City, which was remodelled and colored at a later date; and the Kanbaruiana cave-type grave in Hitachi City, which is decorated with colored mural paintings.

At the same time, a group of tumuli was built along the Koise River which runs south of Ishioka City, capital of the province, on the border with Chiyoda Village. The shapes of tumuli were varied, from round to deformed small keyhole-shapes, and the box-type stone coffin was the most common. In the Hirasawa-Yamaguchi District, where the Sadogaiwaya Tumulus is located, tunnel-type stone rooms and box-shaped adit-type stone rooms are seen in round tumuli. This box-shaped adit-type stone room is common to the underground box-shaped adit-type stone room in the Mushazuka Tumulus in Nihari Village, and the Ishikurayama Tumulus in Tsuchiura City. This
shape is also seen in the Awata-Kuriyama Group Tumuli in Chiyoda Village.

These all appeared in the second half of the 7th century. Evidence of the fact that the capital of the province of Hitachi was placed at Ishioka can be sought in these tumuli groups of the final Kofun Period.