Tumuli of Later and Final Kofun Period in Kōzuke

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The region in the present Gumma Prefecture, called "Kōzuke-no-Kuni" (Country of Kōzuke) in the Statute Period, was closely related to the region called "Kamitsukenu" (Upper Kenu) or "Kenu" in the Tumulus Period. Its geographical environment features the Tone River and its numerous small and medium tributaries which flow out from the steep mountains in the north and west form the western part of the large and fertile Kanto Plain. In the early part of the Tumulus Period, when organized and large-scale agriculture started, this region advantaged by its productivity developed into one of the most influential region in the Tōgoku (Eastern Districts). The fact that this region occupied an important position in the traffic between the Kinai and the Tōgoku through a route which was close to the later Tōsandō, is also an essential factor in the examination of the relationship between the region and the Kinai in the Tumulus Period.

The Sōja Tumuli Group in Sōja Town, Maebashi City, is indispensable to the following historical development of this region from the 6th to 7th century. In the latter half of the 6th century, when the Sōja-Futagoyama Tumulus was constructed, keyhole-shaped tumuli of the same scale stood together in large numbers in each sub-area, so it is difficult to assume there was a power indicating the unified rule of the whole region. These were the last keyhole-shaped tumuli constructed in the region. The Atagoyama Tumulus constructed in the first half of the 7th century after the Futagoyama Tumulus is a 56m-sided square-shaped tumulus with a hollow house-shaped stone coffin installed in it. During this period no other remarkably large tumulus is recognized at all. That indicates the reorganization of the region was brought about with the power of the Sōja Tumuli Group as its pinnacle. At the same time, the existence of square tumuli and house-shaped coffins suggests that the Yamato Government had a direct hand in this reorganization.

The Hōtōyama Tumulus, which was constructed in the latter half of the 7th century after the Atagoyama Tumulus, is a 60m-sided square tumulus. This tumulus is noted for its exquisitely-beautiful stone room called the "aslated stone room", as well as for its hollow house-shaped stone coffin and plastered walls.

In the latter half of the 7th century, in which the Hōtōyama Tumulus and the subsequent Jaketuyama Tumulus were constructed, the construction of other large tumuli, which had come to a temporary stop, recommenced under the technical influence of these two tumuli. Their number amounted to about 30, which shows a situation corresponding to a regional reorganization with the two tumuli of the Sōja Tumuli Group as its peak. The construction of tumuli came to a complete stop at this time, indicating that the statutory regime in the province took a step nearer its completion.

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