Basic Research on Green-Glazed Wares Produced in Suō and Nagato

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It has been clarified that the “Glazed Ware of Nagato Province” (長門国瓷器), listed as miscellaneous vessels for annual provision in the “Code of the Ministry of Financial Affairs of the Engi Era” (延喜式部省式), means green-glazed wares made in Suō and Nagato provinces. However, no remains of kilns have been so far discovered, and research on these wares lags well behind in the field of research on the production of glazed wares in Ancient Japan. This being the case, the author has attempted in this paper to make a basic examination of these wares.

As a preparatory work, the author first considered the problem of the accuracy of the absolute chronology in Daxiaifu area, and pointed out its contradictions with the chronology in the Kinai Region. I then decided to proceed applying the chronology of Kinai, where data for estimating the chronology is more abundant. Then, I picked out items related to green-glazed wares produced in Suō and Nagato from materials excavated at the consumption sites, and put the characteristics in order. That done, I classified bowls and plates, which are the main types of vessel, examined them chronologically, and propose the chronology of Periods I to V.

I continued by dealing with the various problems concerning green-glazed wares produced in Suō and Nagato area. It was found that the production was basically the same as that of the Tokai Region in terms of vessel types and dimensions, so it is highly probable that common standards of production were communicated to the Suō and Nagato areas as well as to Tokai. However, compared with wares produced in the Tokai Region, those of Suō and Nagato are strong in local color, and they are rather crudely made. It is estimated that these differences reflect the difference in technical levels between these two regions.

As for distribution, it has been made clear that a small quantity of the green-glazed wares of Suō and Nagato found its way into Kinai. Besides it became clear that, unlike flow of products made in the other areas, the area in which the green-glazed wares of Suō and Nagato were predominant was limited to the area around Nagato, and that the ratio of Suō and Nagato wares gradually decreased in proportion to the distance from there. This makes it obvious that the production volume of green-glazed wares of Suō and Nagato was considerably smaller than that of other areas, and that the system which the products were distributed evenly to each area did not exist.

Finally, as for the process by which production expanded, it is estimated that, in Nagato, the green-glazed wares were produced from the first half of the 9th century to the 10th century; while, in Suō, production started in the 10th century and came to an end in the middle of the 11th century.