Dae-Gaya and Wa

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With its base in Goryeong, the growth of Dae-Gaya was such that by the end of the 5th century it was the main state of Late Gaya after experiencing unprecedented growth in the history of Gaya as it spread across a wide area that included Hapcheon on the Hwangang River, Geochang, Hamyang on the Namgang River, Namwon (Ayeong and Unbong), the Namwon basin of the Somjin-gang River, Kurye, Hadong, Jangsu on the Kumgang River, and Jinan.

The change in articles from Korea that appeared in the Japanese Archipelago in the middle of the 5th century from those of the Kim-Guan Gaya type to the Dae-Gaya type, and the shift in the region where articles from Wa were introduced to Gaya from the region of Kim-Guan Gaya to the region of Dae-Gaya reflects the political change that had taken place whereby Goryeong had replaced Gimhae as the seat of authority concerning trade and interactions between Gaya and Wa. At this time, Dae-Gaya held control of the Namgang River valley, which served as a crossroad for traffic, and controlled interactions with Silla. At the same time, by acquiring Hadong, the trading port on the mouth of the Somjin-gang River on the other side of the Kurye region south of the Namwon basin, Dae-Gaya came to hold control over interactions with Wa, which included trade, that had previously been undertaken by Kim-Guan Gaya, Ara Gaya and Ko Gaya. Through controlling interactions with Paekche and Wa, Dae-Gaya brought Kim-Guan Gaya, Ara Gaya and Ko Gaya under its control, whereby it came to assume a key role as it reigned supreme over the Gaya region.

Judging from the keyhole-shaped tombs in the Yeongsan-gang River valley together with the types of stone chambers and the distribution and the appearance of stone coffins in stone chambers of the Keisan-ri No.1 tomb, the deceased buried in the Keisan-ri No.1 tomb at Uiryeong, the Unya-ri No.1 tomb, stone chamber B of the Songhak-dong No.1 tomb and the Dongcheonsen Shin-ri tomb were Wa people who originated from Northern Kyushu through to the Ariake Sea coast. We may assume that the deceased buried in the Wa-style tombs were not only involved in interaction between Dae-Gaya and Wa, Paekche and Silla, but that there is a possibility that they also fulfilled roles of regional officials.

In the first half of the 6th century when Paekche advanced into the Dae-Gaya region and
the Yeongsan-gang River valley further south, Korean articles were no longer shipped from Dae-Gaya but from Silla. Furthermore, as Wa-style articles came to be exchanged their concentration also shifted from the Nakdong-gang River valley to the Yeongsan-gang River Valley, which had strong relations with Silla. It was precisely in this first half of the 6th century that for the first time Silla held control over interaction with Wa by appropriating the trading relationships that had been commonplace between Wa and the traditional Gaya region since pre-historic times.