The View of Making Light of the Gaya History Revisited

Kim, Tae-Sik

The assumption that there was the so-called 'The Age of Four States' including Gaya is crucial in understanding the history of the ancient Korea and also that of the ancient Japan correctly. In this paper, Gaya history is briefly discussed with its relations to the other three states, Goguryeo, Baekje and Shilla.

Gaya began to form in the Gyeongsang Nam-do area. Its developed culture was based on ironware and ash color earthen vessel which had come from north-western areas of the Korean Peninsula at the end of the 2nd century B.C. or 1st century B.C. It was in the mid 2nd century that small states were formed and at the beginning of the 3rd century they had a loose league. From the second half of the 3rd century, the Guya-guk began to rise to a leader of the league which was a little more tight.

While Shilla developed under the Goguryeo's influence since the second half of the 4th century, Gaya played a role mediating between Baekje and Wa. But the struggle for supremacy between Goguryeo and Baekje influenced Shilla and Gaya, both of which were lower in power. And the early state confederation of Gaya composed of Gimhae's Garak-guk as the central figure was dismantled in 400 years due to the direct armed intervention of Goguryeo.

In the late 5th century, the state confederation of Gaya revived with Goryeong's Dae-Gaya as a central figure, and developed enough to include the east area of Jeolla Nambuk-do located in the west of the Sobaeck Mountains. The later state confederation of Gaya accomplished the centralization of power fairly well, even though its system formation was later than the other countries', and developed the early ancient state in the early 6th century. Nevertheless, it was ruined by Shilla in the middle of the 6th century.

Therefore, we can say that in the Korean ancient time there were two strong states, that is, Goguryeo and Baekje and the other two weak states, that is, Shilla and Gaya. In the early 5th century, when the early Gaya confederation was dismantled, a great many emigrants went over to Japanese Islands, and initiated iron production and also the manufacture process of Sueki that is an earthenware of hard surface. And the ancient civilization of Japan started.