Keyhole-Shaped Mounds on the Katorinoumi Coast of Tokyo Bay: An Example of Rule Over Togoku (Eastern District) in the 5th to 7th Centuries

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Seven large seaside-type keyhole-shaped mounds were constructed on the coast of Tokyo Bay and the Katorinoumi coast in the 5th century. Since most of them were maintained only for one or two generations, they do not form a stable line of chiefs’ tombs. On the other hand, in the Kazusano and Shimousa regions and the southern area of Hitachi, a few keyhole-shaped mounds were constructed about the same time. This phenomenon appeared in the 6th century, too. Multiple lines of ancient tomb mounds such as the Dairizuka Burial Mounds on the coast of Tokyo Bay and the Tamari Burial Mounds on the Katorinoumi coast show an ideological integration with a plurality of keyhole-shaped mounds and round mounds, presenting a group of important chiefs as the core leading an intermediate group of several people.

As mentioned above, on the coasts of two inland seas, groups of important chiefs having strong involvement with transportation by water/by boat constructed keyhole-shaped mounds over two periods. What is noted here is the fact that this did not continue smoothly, that is, it looks as if the chiefs’ line of tombs, which once stopped, was restored after an interval of time. This uneven distribution of keyhole-shaped mounds and “discontinuous continuity” in the intermediate and later stages and their location at so-called important places for transportation are a common feature of lines of chiefs’ tombs in various regions including the central area of Kinai. Therefore, this phenomenon is difficult to consistently explain only by the autonomy of the local chief.

Keyhole-shaped mounds are political tomb mounds based on the order between central government and local government, and therefore, the double intention of the central government and local chiefs was imbued in them. The large keyhole-shaped mounds in the intermediate period and the multiple lines of ancient tomb mounds in the later period, which were strongly directed toward Tokyo Bay and Katorinoumi, represented the ruling system by the central government. In the first government from the early 5th century to the latter part of the 5th century, major chiefs ruled, and in the second government during the period from the end of the 5th century to the early 7th century, minor chiefs ruled. The rule by the second government brought a sudden increase in keyhole-shaped mounds in Togoku around the latter half of the 6th century.

In the primary policy of Togoku against Koguryu and in the secondary policy against Silla, Togoku
chiefs were asked to take the role of a kind of a military logistics base in the policy against Korea. The policies were realized by governing the important chiefs who controlled transportation by water or by boat, which formed the basis of the chiefs' network of objects and people.

Key words: Multiple lines of ancient tomb mounds, large seaside-type keyhole-shaped mounds, uneven distribution of keyhole-shaped mounds and "continuity of discontinuity," two ruling systems, central and local government