A Study of *Boyōdome Tankō* Armor Unearthed in Kumamoto: Chronological Placement and Distribution

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Iron tankō armor is a major burial accessory of the middle Kofun Period. Armor is a product of royal authority, and the distribution of such armor in regional society is thought to reflect the social and political relationships between royal authority and regional power bases.

The *Maruzuka* Tomb is situated in the Kumamoto area of central Kyushu. There are many tombs there from which armor has been excavated, yet there have been very few studies of such armor. This study takes up the byōdome (riveted) armor unearthed in the area of Kumamoto and evaluates its historical significance.

First, the period of manufacture (date of manufacture) of the byōdome armor unearthed in the Kumamoto area was studied from the point of view of the manufacturing technology. The results indicated that most of the armor was manufactured in the late fifth century. Next, I examined the tumuli in which byōdome armor is found as burial accessories from the point of view of the structure of the tumuli. Here I point out that in late fifth-century Kyushu, Kumamoto was one of the areas where there was a concentration of byōdome armor, and that the tumuli in the Kumamoto area in which armor is found are not evenly distributed.

Furthermore, I considered the historical background to the numerous examples of byōdome armor found in the Kumamoto area. This revealed a number of factors behind the phenomenon of the concentration of byōdome armor. Those factors can be summarized in two key themes: domestic development employing new technologies, and activities directed abroad towards the Korean peninsula. The outline of such an understanding is not limited to the individual examples of the Kumamoto area, but has a major significance that can be generalized and expanded to the entire fifth-century Japanese archipelago.

Keywords: middle Kofun Period, Kumamoto area, armor, domestic development and foreign relations