The Tumuli of the Kikuchi River Watershed

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At the present time it is impossible to identify the location of the Marozuka Tomb. The author conjectures that the tomb was at least located in the vicinity of the mid-Kikuchi River watershed, near the left bank of the Kōshi River, a tributary of the Kikuchi River. In this study I focused on the mid-Kikuchi River watershed, hypothesized to include the Marozuka Tomb, charted aspects of the tumuli and horizontal tombs of all phases of the Kofun Period, and examined the mutual relationships (lines) between headman graves and the unique features of tumulus culture in the area of the mid-Kikuchi River watershed. The aim was to conjecture the historical background to the construction of the Marozuka Tomb from a point of view centered on the Kikuchi River watershed.

In the Higo area inclusive of the Kikuchi River, major tumuli are concentrated in thirteen areas. Among them, the three areas of the Seki River, the lower Kikuchi River watershed, and the mid-Kikuchi River watershed are significant as areas of major tumuli distribution. These three areas can be further subdivided into smaller regions, and the characteristics of eighteen such areas were surveyed. It was shown that unique tumuli with distinctive features were constructed in each area, and that they contain grave goods that are worthy of note.

I discussed the features of the tumuli culture in these areas by organizing them into these five categories: (1) the genealogy of stone coffins, (2) the genealogy of stone chambers, (3) the distribution of decorated tumuli, (4) the distribution and regional spheres of headman graves, and (5) transportation routes. I paid particular attention to transportation routes, examining them in detail according to five viewpoints: (a) the roads along which haniwa were transported, (b) the roads along which earthen vessels were transported, (c) the roads along which salt was transported, (d) the dissemination of side-hole stone chambers constructed in multiple rooms of cut stone, and (e) several hypothesized land routes. I point out that an examination of these transportation routes will also explain the significance of the existence of Kikuchijō, which was built in the latter half of the seventh century after the Kofun Period.

Foreign artifacts mostly imported from the Korean peninsula are found in the Kōshi River watershed, which is the mid-Kikuchi River watershed in the sixth chronological period of keyhole shaped tumuli. It is thought that with these social conditions were behind the appearance of the
Marozuka Tomb with its abundant arms and armor.

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