The Background to the Appearance of the Marozuka Tomb
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Extremely well preserved armor, iron arrowheads, and the like have been recovered from the Marozuka Tomb. However, the tomb's precise location still remains unknown. The most likely candidate location is the left bank of the western half of the Kōshi River middle watershed, which is a tributary of the Kikuchi River running through northern Kumamoto.

There are several noteworthy features on the left bank of the western half of the middle Kōshi River. First, the haniwa of the first keyhole-shaped tumulus in the area (Takakuma Kofun) are of great finesse, and are a product of the same technological system as the haniwa of the Kinki area (the central government). Second, if the lower Kōshi River watershed is also included, there are three tumuli from which obigane-shiki (laminar) armor has been found. Third, the construction of large round tumuli was concentrated in that area in the middle Kofun Period. Fourth, tumuli were constructed here without interruption from the early to late Kofun Period, and among them there are some graves with horse burials, a feature of imported Korean peninsula culture.

These features demonstrate that this area had a close relationship with the central government in the middle part of the mid-Kofun Period. Similar trends can be observed in the north Aso caldera and the Midori River middle watershed in Kumamoto Prefecture, the Yame region and Yoshii region in the Chikugo River middle watershed of Fukuoka Prefecture, and elsewhere. A lack of any prior powerful tumuli is common to these locations. Another common feature is the interior land routes not directly facing the Ariake Sea. I point out here that in the middle part of the mid-Kofun Period, interior land routes following the rivers in the Ariake Sea coastal area were seen as of great importance, and I also note the possibility that they were newly prepared according to the intentions of the central government.

The left bank of the western half of the Kōshi River middle watershed is a strategic point on the interior land route linking the Kikka basin, in the Kikuchi River watershed, with the Kumamoto plains in the south, and this is one reason why such an abundance of arms and armor is found as grave goods in the Marozuka Tomb.
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