Formation Process of Local Administration Units in the Miyagi Prefecture Area

FURUKAWA Kazuaki

The Miyagi Prefecture in the Tohoku region of the Japan Islands is known as the northernmost area for sites of late Kofun period keyhole-shaped kofun (ancient burial mounds), collections of massed kofun with an internal main structure of horizontal stone chambers, and collections of massed tunnel kofun. In addition, in the same area a number of sites of josaku kanga (fortified administrative buildings) established in the late 7th century have been discovered; for example, the Koriyama site in Sendai City, the Myodate Kanga site in Osaki City, and the Akai site in Higashi-Matsushima City. For each small area, from the viewpoint of the relation between the central government and local areas, this paper examined the formation process of local administration units, which were the foundations of josaku kanga sites established in the late 7th century, especially by focusing on the process from the local viewpoint since the Kofun period, rather than from the traditional viewpoint of focusing on a government promoting the formation of a nation under the ritsuryo codes.

It can be considered that the system to govern local areas at that time was essentially different from the control of domains based on the county-village system, and particularly in the border areas where josaku kanga were established, group relationship under such people-based ruling systems as kuni no miyatsuko, bemin, and miyake since the Kofun period, remained strong. It is also possible to consider that this tendency was embodied specifically by the explosive construction of collections of massed kofun and tunnel kofun in the Miyagi Prefecture area mainly in the late 7th century.

The distribution of keyhole-shaped kofun, collections of massed kofun and tunnel kofun in the Miyagi Prefecture area was examined, and the following deduced: in the formation stage of josaku kanga, the central government selected those areas with weak local clans, and by sending immigrants from districts already ruled by the miyake system, they introduced into remote areas, a form of society and group relations similar to the bemin system or the miyake system. It can be thought that the central government involved local clans in the areas around josaku kanga in the development of the county-village system as the local administration unit.

Key words: Collections of massed kofun, collections of massed tunnel kofun, josaku kanga, local administration unit, kuni no miyatsuko system, bemin system, miyake system