Cemeterial Structures of the Early Yayoi Period in Sanin Region: Jomon and Yayoi Cultures from the Viewpoint of Burial Systems

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The shift from Jomon period to Yayoi period in the Sanin region has been considered relatively smooth but highly dynamic [Yamada 2009: 178-179]. However, detailed examinations on the structure of cemeteries at early Yayoi sites reveals that despite their foreign appearance, the burial system in that period actually involved local (Jomon-ish) elements in a complex way. At Horibe I site, for example, the foundations of the graves were built in a straight line, which can be regarded as a foreign structure since the Jomon burial system did not adopt this arrangement. The site, however, includes local elements: Inside of the graves, there remain several groups of burial mounds at each of which a small family unit was exclusively buried. The graves at Koura site, Shimane Prefecture, also contain local elements though the site is located on the coast where bones of immigrant Yayoi people have been unearthed. Following the Jomon burial system, the site has a classification by age and sex and building foundations arranged in clusters. Though Horibe I site and Koura site are contemporary ruins located close to each other, there is a large difference in the cemeterial structure. Their comparison shows the complexity of situation at that time. Moreover, the graves at Okijo site among the mountain appear to be an extension of the Jomon burial system, with building foundations laid in clusters, but it was revealed to have foreign elements at its understructure. From this invisible part, wooden coffins and cylindrical beads have been excavated. Based on the above mentioned points, this article suggests a revised perspective on the shift process to Yayoi culture in the Sanin region: Despite the smooth and dynamic shift in the long term, the burial system of each site contains both local and foreign elements, which illustrates how the local Jomon people interacted with immigrants and their foreign culture.

Key words: Early Yayoi period, Immigrant Yayoi people, Burial system, Line arrangement structure, Cluster arrangement structure