Perspectives on the Ancient Political Bodies of the Yeongsan River Basin

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This paper attempts to present a compilation of current opinions about the character of the political bodies of the Yeongsan River Basin and the exchanges between Wa and the Yeongsan River Basin in three kingdoms. It also aims to define the concepts and research methodology for the advancement of future research. We reviewed past interpretations about the southern expeditions by the Geunchogo of Baekje in the document materials about the Yeongsan river basin and toraijin (people from overseas, especially from China and Korea, who settled in early Japan and introduced continental culture to the Japanese people). The historical documents also relate to the Wa lineage's culture and civilization depicted in the past relations between Japan and Korea. The goal was to organize relevant issues and perspectives.

Our main focus was on the Wa lineage's Kofun or ancient tombs in the southwestern part of the Korean Peninsula, including the Yeongsan river basin. We attempt to classify from A to F the characteristics of buried persons and point out the need to consider the diversity further. If one would venture into, for instance, the issue of the large key-hole shaped tomb mounds of the Yeongsan river basins, it would be clear that this is only one of the various themes of the ancient history of the Japan–Korea relations. The period exhibiting the buried figures of the large key-hole shaped tomb mounds, the background of their appearance, and the Wa lineage’s Kofun in a plain and straightforward way must have already passed.

The diversity recognized in the Wa lineage’s Kofun shows that the negotiations between the southern part of the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese archipelago were very complex. In other words, it is essential to understand that it reflects the results of the dynamic activity of people with various nationalities, lineage, and status, and with different aims (such as political diplomacy, war, and commerce) who used a variety of pathways and accumulated mutual visits.

To steadily elucidate the situation, it will be necessary to have a broad range of research that takes into consideration the southern part of the Korean Peninsula and the entire Japanese archipelago rather than limit ourselves to areas such as the Yeongsan river basin and the south coast of the Korean Peninsula.

Key words: Mahan confederacy, Yeongsan river basin, Wa lineage kofun, diversity