The Mutual Interaction between Wa, Baekje, Yeongsan River Basin and its Historical Role

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This paper explores the interactions between Jeolla Province, centered on the Yeongsan River basin, and the Kinki region, located in the middle of the Japanese archipelago, in the fifth century by looking at the earthenware excavated from the tumuli and settlements of the Japanese Kofun period and the Three Kingdoms period in the Korean Peninsula. For that purpose, I analyzed the following archaeological materials.

First, after reviewing East Asia in the fifth century, I focused on the ritual pottery called Hasou (a teapot like small jar with a wide mouth and a hole) and assessed that this earthenware was used widely in both the Japanese archipelago and various parts of the Korean Peninsula, especially in Jeolla Province, in the fifth century. Second, I reexamined the identification of the period of Sue ware (unglazed ceramics), which has been excavated in increasing numbers since 2000, and confirmed the interactions between the Japanese archipelago and Baekje and the Yeongsan River basin in regard to Sue ware; this also involved reassessing the production of Sue ware in the Japanese archipelago. It is possible to understand the interactions seen from the earthenware described above by connecting the dynamics of the Korean-type earthenware, the production base of handicraft, and the early type of small tombs excavated from the settlements that developed organically in the Kinki region. As a third point of the discussion, I presented the idea, based on the research trends of recent years concerning earthenware, settlements, and small-scale tumuli, that the interactions with Baekje and the Yeongsan River basin had promoted social capital investments within the Kinki region.

The above archaeological examinations clarified the circumstances of the interactions with Wa (Japan) in Jeolla Province in the fifth century, which has so far remained unclear from the excavated material from the tumuli/tombs, and I was able to confirm the significant role the interactions between the peoples played in the social changes in the Wa society. In the sixth century, the Baekje and Wa began active interaction, but it is difficult to regard such a movement as part of the continuous process carried over from the fifth century; we can also recognize the dynamic changes that involved the central as well as regional societies in the Kinki region.

Key words: Kofun period, Three Kingdoms Period, Korean-Style earthenware, Craft production, early small tomb group