The Acceptance and Development of Horse Breeding in the Yeongsan River Basin

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The toraijin (torai groups) were the people from overseas, especially from China and Korea, who settled in early Japan and introduced continental culture to the Japanese people. There is a predominant hypothesis that the toraijin from the Yeongsan river basin had a significant role to play at the beginning of horse breeding in the Japanese archipelago. The biggest problem with this hypothesis is that it mainly relies on the archeological references related to horses in the Japanese archipelago and the correlations at the level of ruins of the earthenware of the Yeongsan river basin lineage (produced). There is a definite lack of discussion of when and in what circumstances horse breeding began and how did it develop in the Yeongsan river basin. In this paper, we attempt to organize the current situation about the acceptance and development of horse breeding in the Yeongsan river basin. We compile archeological references related to horses excavated from the Jeollanam-do stretch with focus on the Yeongsan river basin, specifically horse trappings and horse remains.

We conducted a chronological analysis of horse trappings excavated from the Yeongsan river basin and ascertained that the period of appearance of horse trappings in the Yeongsan river basin was after the Ungjin period. The period dates back in the late 5th century, which is later compared not only to the other regions of Baekje or Silla and Gaya but also to Wa. Further, we clarify that the genealogy of the horse trappings was diverse and discuss that independent production in the Yeongsan river basin or the horse trappings did not appear under the centralized relationship with the central Baekje. We also conducted an examination of cases of appearance of horse remains, which indicates that the introduction of full-fledged breeding of horses in the Yeongsan river basin was after the Ungjin period. Additionally, the custom of sacrificing horses as part of a funeral ritual that appeared in the Yeongsan river basin was related not to the central Baekje but to Gaya, among others. Although the appearance of significant changes in the Yeongsan river basin society was during the period of the fall of Hanseong and the transfer of the capital to Ungjin as discussed based on various archeological references, the acceptance of horse breeding, at least, cannot be understood through a centralized relationship with the central Baekje. This indicates that relations with the various regions (various groups) of Gaya possibly have a more significant role to play.
Thus, we clarify that the period of the introduction of horse breeding in the Yeongsan river basin was at a later date than what has been stated in the Japanese archipelago. Consequently, one ought to look for the place where the toraijin (torai groups) who introduced horse breeding to the Japanese archipelago lived previously that is in regions other than the Yeongsan river basin.

Key words: Three-Kingdoms Period, Yeongsan river basin, horse trappings, horse breeding, horse remains