

Re-consideration of Miyajidake Tomb, Chikushi

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Munakata in northern Kyushu is notable as the Munakata clan, a powerful lineage group in charge of the ritual held at Okinoshima Island for Yamato government, had its base there in ancient times. Particularly during the Kofun period the numerous key-hole shaped tombs were erected and manual industry flourished there neither of which seems impossible in a society based on the agricultural production which continued from the Yayoi period. At its most prosperous point during the latter half of the Kofun period the Munakata clan established a matrimonial relationship with the imperial family and in the following Nara period was in charge of the administration of the Munakata district as well as that of Munakata Jinja, which made the area distinguishable from other provincial regions.

Miyajidake tomb is a gallery grave located at Miyaji, Tsuyazaki machi, Fukuoka with a burial structure measuring 23m long from the entrance to the end, and is one of the largest tombs dating from the 7th century in northern Kyushu. It was believed that funerary objects including the horse equipments and swords which were accidentally discovered on several occasions during and after the Meiji period had previously been excavated, possibly also by accident, but re-buried outside the burial chamber. However, how these objects were discovered was kept secret because the tomb is also a sanctuary with an image of Fudō, a Buddhist deity, enshrined there. This article, based on the records of interviews with people involved in the discoveries carried out by Mr. Umehara Sueji before 1929 and recent survey of the burial chamber, evaluates this tomb comprehensively. The author points out the defects of studying the funeral objects (horse equipments, swords, bronze bowls, and a crown) and the stone chamber separately, and considers how the objects were buried in the tomb originally based on the examination of Mr. Umehara's interviews. The basic method is to decide the Miyajidake tomb's position among all the tombs of the Munakata region first, and then consider the nature of this tomb in view of the Munakata region's peculiarity in northern Kyushu. The author also sheds light upon the Yamato government's control of provincial regions through the case of Munakata.

(Translation by KŌNO Tetsurō)