

Some Topics on Haniwa Clay Figures of Fowls from Chubu and Tohoku Districts

Chikashi Nishida

Haniwa clay figures are known as necessary archaeological material for study on the lifestyles and beliefs of people in the Kofun period (4~6th century A.D.). Among these Haniwa clay figures, some figures of fowls were ever made arleady in 4th century, earlier than others, and put on the sacred areas such as summits of large mound tombs.

This time, following my latest study on Haniwa clay figures found in Kanto district (The Zoo-archaeology Vol.12 issued in May 1999), I tried to survey some other fowl figures reported from neighboring Chubu and Tohoku districts and their rolles at Kofun burial rites.

Compared to the examples in Kanto district, the clay figures of fowls from these two districts were made rather late, for instance, in 6th century A.D. and some of them were found, in different way, rather far from summits of mound tombs.

This fact, however, does not mean that original purposes of the burial rites had been misdirected, because, in these two districts too, they were dug out of Tsukuridashi sites as alters, and, at the same time, many of mound tombs seem to have provided not only with fowl figures but also with Haniwa clay figures of Miko's (maidens for the burial service) and clay figures of houses as places where the souls of deceased could return. In these two districts too, fowls might be regarded as holy birds with magical powers of waking up dead persons and leading them back in to this world.