

Kazu-chō site (Kazu-chō, Kashihara city)

This is a representative settlement site for Nara prefecture from the Early into the Late Yayoi periods, located at Kazu-chō in the city of Kashihara. It is situated on a level area in between the hills of Sector C of the Niizawa Senzuka tomb group, which includes the Niizawa No. 500 tomb and others, to the east, and the Soga river flowing northward to the west. The area of the site is inferred as about 700 m north–south by 250 m east–west. In addition to the Uenoyama site, an upland site of the start of the Late Yayoi period, atop the hills to its east, on the west bank of the Soga river is the Early Yayoi moated settlement of the Kawanishi Nenarigaki site, plus the Kannonji Honma site where Middle Yayoi period square-shaped burial precincts spread out, and so forth.

Since its discovery in 1915, the Kazu-chō (also called Niizawakazu) site has attracted the attention of numerous scholars, and has been excavated more than 10 times. Among finds of particular note are a pitcher-shaped vessel that has been designated nationally as an Important Cultural Property, and the outer portion of a clay mold for casting. The pitcher-shaped vessel is Middle Yayoi period pottery, the rim has a lip for pouring on one side, and a U-shaped handle attached to the shoulder. From that shape it is called a “water pitcher-shaped vessel.” It is 21.9 cm in height, and the greatest diameter of the body is 15 cm. From the top of the rim down over the lower half of the body, it is decorated with combed designs in reed-mat and punctured patterns, and with a wavy line pattern. The base has a pedestal with leaf-shaped windows alternately facing right and left. From the patterns applied and from the clay used for the body, it is thought to have been brought in from the Kawachi region in Osaka. It was designated an Important cultural property in 1967. The outer mold for casting made of clay is related to the production of bronze implements, which has been confirmed for only five sites within Nara prefecture. It is the lone item indicating bronze implement production for the Yayoi period in the southwestern part of the Nara basin. In addition to these, the Kazu-chō site was a base in the distribution into the Nara basin of schist, used for stone knives, produced in the Yoshino river basin. From the bringing in of the pitcher-shaped vessel from the Kawachi region in Osaka as well, the Kazu-chō (Niizawakazu) site is considered to have been a base for the exchange of goods from the Middle Yayoi period on, and to have flourished as a production site of bronze implements.