

Muro Miyayama (Muro no Ōbaka) tomb (Muro, Gose city)

This tomb is located in Muro in the city of Gose, in Nara prefecture. A keyhole-shaped mound of 238 m in overall length, it is the largest in scale for tombs in the southwestern portion of the Nara basin (the Kazuraki region).

The tomb is located on level ground directly to the northern side of the Koseyama tomb group, which numbers more than 500 clustered tombs standing atop the Koseyama hills. The front (rectangular) portion of the keyhole mound points west, and on this portion's northern side is a square projection. The traces of the moat are not distinct, but standing atop the outer rampart on the northern side is Nekozuka, a square mound 70 m on a side, regarded as a subsidiary tomb. Nekozuka is currently being used as farmland. The area to the southeast of the mound is currently a pond, and it is thought that originally a shield-shaped moat encircled the tomb. The mound is constructed in three tiers, and as exterior facilities the presence of surface cobbles and *haniwa* rows have been confirmed.

At the top of the round portion of the mound there are two burial facilities lined up north and south.

The southern burial facility is a vertical stone chamber containing a chest-shaped sarcophagus of Tatsuyama stone, and while it has been badly robbed, mirror fragments, steatite and jasper beads and steatite stone replicas, stone scepter heads, and so forth have been recovered.

Above the ceiling stone of the vertical chamber stood *haniwa* in the shapes of a pedestaled dish, and a large-scale (121 cm tall) house having a *chokkomon* (intersecting straight and curved line) pattern applied to its vermilion-painted square pillars as well as a hip-and-gable roof with the ridge topped with short perpendicular logs. There was also a square of *haniwa* rows enclosing this vertical stone chamber, in which items combining a shield and a helmet (141 cm tall), and those in the shapes of shields, quivers, and armor protecting the lower torso were stood facing outward. Further, to the front of these on the southern side were a total of four house-shaped *haniwa* with gable and hip roofs. All of these representational *haniwa* were finely made large items faithfully reproducing the actual objects, and are representative materials for the Kofun period of Japan. The centrally positioned large-scale house-shaped *haniwa* has a structure identical with that of a massive embedded-pillar building discovered at the Gokurakuji Hibiki site. The latter site is part of the large-scale site group of Nangō which lies to the southwest of this tomb, and the building discovered there was the grand hall (a structure built tall in a palatial manner) where the chief held court. The *haniwa* is thus a precious example giving expression to a place where governance was actually conducted.

The northern burial facility has not been excavated, but the ceiling stones of its vertical chamber are exposed. Also, fragments have been gathered of stoneware produced in the Gaya region of the southern Korean peninsula, as pedestaled dish and boat-shaped vessels. They are thought to have originally been placed in the stone chamber as grave goods.

There are also two burial facilities in the rectangular portion of the mound, and there are records of 11 mirrors and more than 170 beads and other items having been recovered. The current whereabouts of these materials are unknown. Additionally, material of a wooden coffin has been recovered, which is on display

in this museum. Further, a burial facility consisting of a clay compartment has been detected at the top of the square projection on the rectangular portion, from which lacquered goods, iron swords, cuirass fragments, iron arrowheads, and so forth have been recovered.

The date of construction of the tomb is the start of the Middle Kofun period (the beginning of the fifth century). It rivals the tombs of great kings in both scale and content. It is extremely important historically as a tomb of the ruling class in the Kazuraki region.