

Fujinoki tomb (Ikaruga-chō, Ikoma district)

The Fujinoki tomb is located in Ikaruga-chō in the district of Ikoma. It is situated about 350 m west from Hōryūji temple, on a gently sloping surface extending south from the Yata hills.

The round mound of approximately 50 m diameter has as its burial facility a horizontal stone chamber in which a dugout type of house-shaped sarcophagus is placed.

The mound was greatly altered in the Heian period or later, and in its present form neither construction in tiers nor surface cobbles can be confirmed. The bases of cylindrical *haniwa* have been recovered from around the base of the mound, so it is thought to have originally had *haniwa* placements.

The horizontal stone chamber opening to the south has a double-sleeved form (the main burial chamber widening in both directions at the entrance from the passageway), is 13.95 m in overall length, and the main chamber measures 6.0 m long by 2.3 m wide and 4.4 m high. The entire surface of the main chamber's floor is packed with gravel. A stone-lined drainage ditch was installed, running beneath the floor from the passageway and underneath the stones sealing the entrance out to the exterior of the chamber.

In the main chamber, the sarcophagus was placed in a direction perpendicular with the chamber's central axis. The house-shaped sarcophagus was gouged out from white volcanic tuff produced at Mt. Nijō lying on the border between Osaka and Nara prefectures, and the exterior and interior were painted vermilion. The greatest dimensions for the body of the sarcophagus were 235 cm for the length, 139 cm for the width, and 152 cm for the height, and it widened at the eastern side where the head was placed. The lid was fashioned with two lugs on each of its long sides.

Artifacts from within the main chamber were recovered entirely from the chamber floor, concentrating at the area where the chamber widened at the entrance from the passageway and in the environs of the sarcophagus. Sue and Haji ware pottery was recovered from the former locus. From around the sarcophagus were equestrian gear, lamellar (scale) armor, iron swords, iron arrowheads, and so forth. One portion had been disturbed at a later date, but it is thought that originally all of these items had been placed between the sarcophagus and the back or eastern lateral wall.

Three sets of equestrian gear can be discerned. The most exquisite of these had gilt-bronze spiked-leaf-shaped harness pendants, a bit with heart-shaped cheekplates, circular decorative fittings, a decorative crupper with gold disc pendants, decorative fittings with a dragon motif, a saddle, mudguards, toed stirrups, and so forth. While all of these are superb items that are wondrous to behold, in particular the saddle fittings were of the highest class in terms of the elaborately executed technique and decoration without parallel in East Asia at the time. The demon holding an axe and sword, the figures in openwork carving of elephants, dragons, lions, demon faces, phoenixes, and rabbits, and the palmette, dragon motif, and other designs executed around the frame, plus the extremely delicate execution of the superior metalworking skills, are all truly astonishing.

Within the sarcophagus two individuals were interred with their heads resting to the east. Around them immense amounts of grave goods had been laid.

From near the head of the person interred on the northern side there were three mirrors recovered, and

around these were many personal ornamental items including round glass beads, and silver-plated beads that were in fluted or hollow ball shapes. From the head down to the torso, long strings of glass beads were found in alternate rows of dark blue and yellow, extending over an area some 60 cm long by 20 cm wide in the manner of a reed mat. These were an accessory that had decorated the back of the deceased's head. At the feet were a gilt-bronze crown, gilt-bronze ornamental shoes, and by the body were placed a sword and a long dagger.

From near the head of the person interred on the southern side were found a pair of earrings and a bronze mirror, and by the top of the head was a gilt-bronze cylindrical object. From the vicinity of the neck were hollow silver beads strung together and numerous glass beads of green, yellow, etc. From near the feet were gilt-bronze ornamental shoes, and adjacent to these was a large gilt-bronze belt. Also, two strings of large glass beads were recovered wound around each ankle. There were further four swords laid by the southern occupant.

Thus with regard to artifacts within the sarcophagus as well, which included the crown that was arranged with fish-, bird-, and boat-shaped decorations, plus the shoes, the cylindrical object, the resplendent personal accessories, and the swords including two with twisted loop pommels decorated with silver, gold, and glass, all of these articles are unsurpassed first-class items.

The Fujinoki artifacts from the stone chamber and sarcophagus were designated a National Treasure in 2004.

The tomb's date of construction is considered to be the latter half of the sixth century. As candidates for the identity of its principal occupant, the names of Emperor Sushun, Imperial Prince Anahobe, Imperial Prince Yakabe, and members of the Ki, Heguri, and Kashiwade families are put forth. Regardless, it is thought to be a person holding a vital position in the nation who was skilled in foreign diplomacy.