

Tamakiyama tomb group

On the north side of the Makimuku river opposite Mt. Miwa is Mt. Anashi, and near the end of a ridge branching from it to the west, the Tamakiyama tomb group is located at the top of the ridge. The group consists of three keyhole-shaped tombs lined up from east (No. 1) to west (No. 3), with tomb No. 2 built in the first half of the sixth century, followed by tomb No. 1 at mid-century and No. 3 in the latter half of the century.

In 1955, as the horizontal stone chamber in the round portion of tomb No. 1 was accidentally opened during the quarrying of dirt, an emergency excavation of the chamber was conducted over a four-day period. In 1958, when once again through quarrying for dirt the stones of a horizontal chamber in the round portion of tomb No. 3 were exposed, a topographic survey of the entire group, plus a small-scale test excavation on the mound of No. 2, and excavations of horizontal stone chambers in the round and the square portions of tomb No. 3 were conducted. Tomb No. 3 was subsequently demolished through development, with the exception of one part of the front portion. An excavation at the boundary between tombs No. 2 and No. 3 was carried out from 1985 to 1986, and in 2005 excavations were conducted to determine the extent of the mounds of tombs No. 1 and No. 2. The tomb group was nationally designated a Historic Site in 1978.

Tomb No. 1 is 50–55 m in overall length, with the diameter of the round portion at 25 m, and has cylindrical *haniwa*. The stone burial chamber widens to one side at the entrance from the passageway, and measures 3.4 m long by 1.6 m in width. Artifacts, recovered mostly between the composite box-shaped sarcophagus set in the center of the burial chamber and the chamber's lateral walls, included pottery (Sue and Haji ware), gilt-bronze equestrian gear (bits, saddles, stirrups, harness pendants, crupper strap bosses, strap dividers, decorative metal fittings), weapons (swords with ring pommels having a three-leaf design, swords decorated with silver inlay, spears, arrow heads, etc.), armor (quivers, scale armor, etc.), tools (knives, scissors, nails, clamps), beads (gilt-bronze, silver, amber, and glass), and personal ornaments (earrings, etc.).

Tomb No. 3 is about 50 m in overall length, with the diameter of the round portion at 26 m, and with cylindrical and human-shaped *haniwa*. The stone burial chamber of the round portion of the mound widens in both directions at the entrance from the passageway, and is 4.7 m long and 2.1 m wide, with the passageway measuring over 5.1 m in length. At the center of the burial chamber is a house-shaped sarcophagus, while at the burial chamber entrance a composite house-shaped sarcophagus was placed, and the recovered artifacts included pottery (Sue and Haji ware), gilt-bronze equestrian gear (bits, saddles, stirrups, harness pendants, crupper strap bosses, strap dividers, decorative metal fittings), and weapons (swords, including one with a twisted loop handle, spears, arrow heads, etc.). The stone burial chamber in the front portion of the mound widens in one direction at the entrance, with the burial chamber measuring 4.4 m long and 2.1 m wide, and the passageway 4.4 m long. Sue and Haji ware, earrings, and so forth were recovered.

As three chiefly tombs from the sixth century being built contiguously and in successive fashion, their

close relationship to one another being clearly visible, and with the nature of the features such as the mounds and stone chambers being well known along with the artifacts, this group draws attention as important materials for research not just for the gorgeous gilt-bronze equestrian gear that was recovered, but also because of the possibility these tombs offer for identifying their occupants with the Miwa or other ancient clans.