

Asakonoichi

In 1963, a tomb was destroyed during construction work to take fill at Asako in the city of Sakurai. From the soil at a place inferred to have been the rear wall of a horizontal stone chamber, artifacts were collected that included, in addition to a decorative Sue ware vessel stand nearly retaining its form completely intact, a miniature of a portable cooking stove, equestrian gear, and iron nails.

The vessel stand holds 7 dishes with their lids. The height measures 20.6 cm, and the diameter of the top of the stand is 27.4 cm. The leg portion has two tiers each pierced with rectangular holes facing in three directions. From near the rim of the top of the stand, the leg portion is decorated with a finely executed pattern of wave-like comb marking. An item with few parallels, it is also an exquisite piece having a beautiful form. The recovery of a decorative vessel stand in itself is extremely rare, with finds of vessel stands mounted with miniature dishes known from the Udozuka tomb in Heguri-chō (latter half, sixth century) and the Ishigami tomb in Ōyodo-chō (first half, seventh century).

The portable cooking stove miniature is taken to be an artifact connected with groups of immigrant derivation. Within the prefecture, in limited areas such as the Hinokuma environs of the Asuka region, the environs of Mt. Kaibuki, the eastern foothills of Mt. Katsuragi and Mt. Kongō, and the vicinity of Mt. Tomi, examples are seen of sets of cooking utensils, consisting of the stove, pot, and steamer, being interred as grave goods. This particular item is one example from the densely inhabited district on the northern side of Mt. Tomi. The equestrian gear was badly crumbled, but fine examples are seen to have been interred as grave goods, as there were items such as gilt-bronze f-shaped cheekplates (decorations for a bit), diamond-shaped harness pendants, and iron ring-shaped stirrups.

The date of construction of the tomb is thought to have been at the start of the sixth century, and as it would be a very early example of a horizontal stone chamber, it is regrettable that the structure is unknown.