

Misato tomb

This is a keyhole-shaped tomb 35 m in overall length, located in the Misato area of Heguri town, Ikoma district. An excavation was conducted in 1975, and in the same year it was designated a Historic Site by the prefecture.

The burial facility consists of a horizontal stone chamber, opening to the south, and while the base tier of stones survives nearly intact, from which a horizontal plan can be grasped in which the burial chamber widens at the entrance in both directions from the center line, the upper portion of the chamber has been considerably destroyed through grave robbing and so forth, so that the height of the chamber and the structure of the ceiling are unknown. The overall length of the stone chamber measures 12.0 m, with the burial chamber at 4.8–4.92 m in length and 2.44 m wide at the center, and the passageway 6.16–7.06 m long and 1.32–1.45 wide. A notable feature is a stone shelf (*ishidana*), a projection made with a stone slab anchored into the chamber walls. Spanning the gap between the lateral walls, it was made by placing a single huge slab of stone 2.5 m long, 1.45 m wide, and 0.45 m thick along the chamber's back wall at a height of 0.4 m above the floor. Stone chambers having a stone shelf are seen in numbers in tombs of the Ki river basin such as the Iwase Senzuka tomb group in Wakayama prefecture, and in Nara prefecture (where the same river is called by the name Yoshino) as well there are examples in the upper reaches of the basin, such as the Okamine tomb in Shimoichi town and the Makigamine tomb in Ōyodo town. The Misato tomb is the lone example in the northern part of the prefecture, and even though it is in a different region and has a different form of stone chamber, it is possible that the powerful Ki family, which was firmly based in the lower Ki river basin, was involved in its construction in some way.

At the center of the burial chamber, the base stones of a composite house-shaped sarcophagus remain on the western side, while a composite box-shaped sarcophagus was detected in the passageway near the burial chamber entrance, from which it is thought to have been for a later burial. The house-shaped sarcophagus measured 2.0 m in length by 0.68–0.75 m wide, while the box-shaped item was 1.75 m long and 0.45–0.5 m in width. In addition, judging from the manner in which artifacts were found, it is inferred that wooden coffins were placed within the burial chamber on top of and beneath the stone shelf, and on the chamber's eastern side, plus in the passageway toward its entrance from the outside.

Artifacts recovered from within the burial chamber were personal ornaments (2 gold earrings, 67 small glass beads, 2 oblong amber beads), weaponry (1 sword, 10 or more iron arrowheads, 5 knives), tools (1 iron axe), equestrian gear (1 set of gilt bronze saddle fittings, 2 iron saddle crupper buckles, 1 set of toed stirrups, 1 bit with gilt bronze bell-shaped cheekplates, 1 bit with gilt bronze heart-shaped cheekplates, 9 gilt bronze bell-shaped harness pendants, 2 gilt bronze crupper strap dividers, 17 gilt bronze rosettes [strap joint bosses], 4 strap buckles, 4 decorative fittings), pottery (122 pieces of Sue ware, 23 of Haji ware, 6 of Ga ware, 1 piece of celadon, 3 flanged kettles), 2 copper coins, and 1 clay bell. Among these, the equestrian gear is a superb collection with very few parallel examples. Bell-shaped harness pendants are also seen in set B of equestrian gear at the Fujinoki tomb, but being coupled with bell-shaped cheekplates is a special feature of the Misato tomb only. The heart-shaped cheekplates have a pattern in the shape of a

cross, and as there are two types of bits, it is thought that two sets of equestrian gear were interred. Among the Sue ware are items belonging to the latter half of the sixth century, and those belonging to the start of the seventh century, which are believed to indicate the times of the initial and subsequent burials.

In the Heguri valley, where this tomb is located, there is also the Udozuka tomb, a keyhole mound 60 m in overall length that was built at around the same time, and both are thought to be ancestral tombs of Heguri family that held dominance in this region.