

## Sakurai Chausuyama tomb

In the southeast portion of the Nara basin, there are a total of six colossal keyhole tombs with mounds of 200 m or greater in length. Beginning with Hashihaka tomb, these were built one after another within the Early Kofun period. They are considered to represent the royal tombs of the initial Yamato polity. Of these colossal keyhole tombs, the two tombs Sakurai Chausuyama and Mesuriyama were built slightly apart from the rest, on the southern fringe of the urban area in the modern city of Sakurai.

The Sakurai Chausuyama tomb is located in Tobi, in the city of Sakurai. A round keyhole with a mound approximately 200 m in length, an excavation was conducted in the round portion of the mound in 1949–50, and in 1973 it was designated a National Historic Site. Subsequently, investigations have been made in the immediate environs, and in 2009 the round portion of the mound was reexcavated.

The mound was constructed in three tiers for the round portion and two tiers for the rectangular portion of the keyhole shape, and was entirely covered with cobbles. The long and narrow rectangular portion gives the mound a shape resembling a round handheld mirror. The mound was built by shaping the natural soil of a hilly extension, in the manner of sectioning off the end of a ridge. There is no surrounding moat, but a large-scale rectangular precinct was established around the mound.

At the top of the round portion is a rectangular platform 9.2 m east–west by 11.7 m north–south, on the perimeter of which an enclosure in the form of a tightly built palisade was made of logs around 30 cm in diameter. Lined up along the inside of the palisade were double-rimmed jars with holes made in their bottoms prior to firing. These are considered to be the origin of jar-shaped *haniwa*. In the center of the platform, parallel to the main axis of the tomb, a large-scale vertical stone chamber was built.

The walls of the stone chamber rose up in vertical fashion, the stones were painted with cinnabar, giving a magnificent crimson appearance. The chamber floor, which was also the bottom of the pit dug for the chamber, was paved with flagstones that had been painted crimson. An earthen bed for the coffin was made, and on this survived the bottom portion of a wooden coffin of umbrella pine, 4.89 m long and 27 cm thick (maximum). Twelve huge ceiling stones provided a framework, upon which a covering of red clay which had been painted with red iron oxide was laid, tightly sealing the stone chamber.

Even though it had been previously robbed, a wide variety of grave goods were detected, including mirror fragments, beads, stone-made objects including leaf-shaped items of jasper, weaponry including iron arrowheads and swords, and various tools. By sifting the soil fill from the hole dug by the grave robbers, the overall amount of recovered artifacts thus increased through this reexcavation. While they consist entirely of tiny fragments, bits from mirrors counted a total of 384 pieces, from which it was learned that there were no fewer than 81 mirrors present, including *naikō kamon* (interconnected-arc design), TLV, triangular-rimmed, and animal-motif band mirrors. It is thought that probably more than 100 mirrors were included as grave goods in the stone chamber.

The tomb's scale, its vertical stone chamber and wooden coffin, and the contents of the grave goods all bear the majestic dignity befitting a royal tomb. It is thought to have been built in the latter half of the third century, in the generation following Hashihaka, and either preceding or simultaneous with the Nishi Tonozuka tomb.