

Shimizukaze site (Shimizukaze, Ōji-chō, Tenri city/ Karako, Tawaramoto-chō, Shiki district)

This is a site located from Ōji-chō in the city of Tenri to Karako in Tawaramoto-chō of Shiki district, where settlement and burial districts of the Yayoi period have been confirmed.

The settlement site was occupied in two discontinuous phases, belonging to the latter half of the Middle and the first half of the Late Yayoi periods. For the settlement of the latter part of the Middle Yayoi, there are almost no finds indicating people's daily lives such as wooden implements, stone tools, animal bone or seeds, but rather there is pottery differing from that comprising ordinary settlements, such as votive ceramics and pottery bearing drawings, or pottery with cinnabar adhesions and the like. Accordingly it is taken not as an ordinary settlement, but rather as a ceremonial site. The burial district is also of two phases, with square-shaped burial precincts from the start of the Middle Yayoi and also from the end of the Late Yayoi periods, thus differing from the periods of occupation. It is inferred as a cemetery belonging to the Karako/Kagi site lying 600 m south-southeast of the current site. From the above characteristics, it is assumed to be organically related to the Karako/Kagi site.

As archaeological features that are particularly noteworthy from the excavations conducted to date, a river course of the latter half of the Yayoi period that runs north-south through the site, detected in the first and second excavations, can be mentioned. From within the river course large amounts of pottery, unfinished attachments to farming hoes, pounding stones, and bell-shaped baked clay objects were recovered. As items worth particular mention, large amounts of pottery bearing drawings and a fragment of an Early Han period mirror can be named. The number of finds of pottery with drawings is the second greatest nationwide after the Karako/Kagi site, and they bear images of deer, fish, people, boats, buildings, arrows, and so forth. Examples have even been found in which the images were not drawn individually, but in a sequence as a composition. On the top half of the body of one vase that has been nearly reconstructed to its complete shape, a deer shot with an arrow, fish and a weir, human figures wearing bird costumes and holding dagger-axes and shields, and a building with a raised floor, are all drawn in sequence. It is an extremely valuable item for understanding the content of Yayoi period drawings on pottery. There are other examples of pottery drawn with human figures in bird costumes (possibly shaman figures), and are part of the regular exhibit of this museum. The Early Han mirror fragment is from an artifact-bearing stratum that includes pottery from the Middle Yayoi to the start of the Kofun period, so its date cannot be clearly determined. However, there are only three instances including this site of Early Han mirrors being found in the Kinki region, and clarification is awaited of the period and route by which these items were brought in.