

Kofun Period

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It is a concern that although Kofun period study has one of the longest histories in Japanese archaeology, along with Jomon period study, there have been fewer results that may lead to future development compared to other study periods. As for the number of researchers, less people are joining “Zenpo-koenfun Kenkyukai (Research Society for Keyhole-shaped Mounded Tombs)” where Kofun period researchers gather and establish research organizations in each regional block. This means young researchers are in decline. KIKUCHI Yoshio pointed out “entering the 21st century, there seems less energy to generalize the Kofun period based on archaeological data,” manifesting his awareness that Kofun period study is at a turning point. As other researchers possess the same awareness, fiscal 2012 saw many theses that tried to generalize past study in order to grope for development of new research such as reexamination of methodology and organization of research history. HABUTA Yoshiyuki and KAMEDA Shuichi co-edited *Kofun Jidai Kenkyu no Genjo to Kadai Jo/Ge (Present Situation and Problems of the Kofun Period Study: Volume 1 and 2)* (Doseisha), and they pointed out in the book “the tendency to make little of research history which is recognized both directly and indirectly...results in discussion that gets nowhere.” They also advocated the necessity to go back to study history for “development of archaeological study in the future.”

As for “regional study,” which is one of the study trends in Japanese archaeology, UCHIYAMA Toshiyuki harshly criticized the present situation in which the existence or inexistence of exchange between regional groups is the conclusion of a study, and he explained that the meaning of exchange needs to be discussed. In this environment, there is a sign that new ambitious research is emerging again. Study on funeral equipment in mounded tombs is making steady progress; progress of bead study is especially remarkable. Based on results of funerary equipment study, there are researchers that try to generalize the Kofun period itself, like SHIMOGAKI Hitoshi. Remarkable progress has been made for “regional study” on the periphery of the Japanese islands, away from the center of Yamato sovereignty, and the results were published in many media such as *Kofun Jidai no Kokogaku (Archaeology of the Kofun Period)* (Doseisha). One of the

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TRENDS IN ARCHAEOLOGY IN JAPAN

important trends in fiscal 2012 was the heightened sense of crisis in preservation and utilization of mounded tombs after the Great East Japan Earthquake. It is our urgent task to preserve and restore burial mounds and stone chambers that were damaged in the earthquake. Since some areas are restricted due to the nuclear power plant disaster, future preservation measures for mounded and tunnel tombs in the area is a serious problem, since research and preservation is impossible. As mounded tombs are often located at the tip of a steep slope, they are facing the danger of further destruction due to steep slope improvement work as an earthquake measure. Kofun period researchers are required to be more conscious of their social role than ever. On the other hand, research books on the Kofun period are rapidly disappearing from general book stores. The cause is not only low sales of books due to the Internet, but also the possibility that general Japanese interest in understanding their nation and history from the foundation is getting weak. It is necessary for the Kofun period researchers to carefully observe this social trend.