

The Hirabaru Site and *Wajinden* Research

Notes on the Archaeology of the Kings of Ito

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The Yayoi period – covering roughly the years 350 B.C. to 300 A.D. – has always been looked upon as one of the most crucial periods in Japanese prehistory. Facing a sudden rush in cultural, technological and economic development, the Yayoi people – in contrast to the Jōmon period hunting and gathering communities – are regarded as the first homogeneous or even “historical” unit in ancient Japan.

Subsistence had changed to already highly developed wet-rice-field agriculture and the technique of moulding bronze and iron implements was quickly adopted from the mainland. Bronze objects imported from China, especially Han mirrors, were esteemed as the most precious grave goods in the Yayoi period. Considering the quantity and quality of mound burials furnished with bronze goods, compared with the usual practice of constructing large jar burial cemeteries, a rapidly increasing social stratification becomes apparent. In the Late Yayoi period a number of small principalities began to appear on the scene.

The rapid economic and political developments on the Japanese archipelago met their response even on the Chinese mainland. While in the Han period information concerning the so-called “Wa”-people was still extremely limited,¹ the increasing necessity of dealing with “Eastern barbarian”, respectively Wa affairs resulted in the first historical report on ancient Japan only a couple of centuries later: the *Wajinden* 倭人伝 or “Accounts of the Wa people”. The historical source correlates in many ways to the archaeological situation in Japan, especially in Northern Kyūshū. One of these correlations – the parallels between the “country” of Ito and Late Yayoi Itoshima peninsula – shall be examined here with special regard to the most important archaeological site of this region, the rich burial site of Hirabaru and the extensive interpretations of its excavator, Harada Dairoku 原田大六.

1 The *Han shu* noticed: “In the middle of the Lo-lang sea there are the Wa people. They are subdivided into more than a hundred ‘countries’. Depending on the season they come and offer tribute” (*Han-shu, So-yin po-na-pen erh-shih-ssu-shi-* 縮印百衲本二十四史 Edition (hereafter: *Po-na*-Edition), Peking: Commercial Press 1958: 1628).

The *Wajinden* account

The Chinese historiographer Ch'en Shou 陳壽 (233–297) compiled the *San-kuo-chih* 三国志, which combines the accounts of the Wei 魏, Wu 吳 and Shu 蜀 dynasties, at the end of the third century A.D. Almost 150 years later (in 428 A.D.) P'ei Sung-chih 裴松之, an official under the Sung 宋 dynasty, was ordered to write a commentary on Ch'en Shou's work. He presented it to Emperor Wen-ti 文帝 only a year later, and since then the *San-kuo-chih* has been handed down to later generations in P'ei Sung-chih's annotated version.

The last part of the Wei dynasty accounts – the *Tung-i-chuan* 東夷傳, or “Accounts of the Eastern Barbarians” – describes the culture and characteristics of the non-Chinese peoples on the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago. It was intended to serve as a kind of political and economic relations handbook for the use of Chinese bureaucrats. One of the altogether eleven chapters of the *Tung-i-chuan* deals with early Japan, the *Wo-jen-chuan*. It therefore commonly goes by its Japanese reading, *Wajinden* (“Accounts of the Wa people”). Besides an in parts surprisingly detailed account of the cultural peculiarities of the Wa people, their economic and political situation, and a record of several legations going to and fro the Chinese commandery Taifang (situated in the north-western part of the Korean peninsula) and the leading Wa “country” (*kuni* 国, chin. *kuo*; hereafter: *kuni*)² Yama'ichi 邪馬壹,³ the *Wajinden* includes an itinerary which explains the route from Taifang southward, along the west coast of Korea and across the Korean Straits to the queen's residence in Yama'ichi.

Due to the ambivalent information of the itinerary the search for the legendary land of Queen Himiko 卑弥呼 is still going on,⁴ but it has nevertheless been possible to identify some of the northern *kuni* belonging to the Wa area. One of them is Ito 伊都[国] (chin. I-tu). As to historical and archaeological interpretation, Ito is especially interesting. The *Wajinden* reports only three *kuni* out of 29, which were ruled by kings, namely Yama'ichi (Queen Himiko; chin. Pei-mi-hu), Kunu 狗奴 (King Himikyûko 卑弥弓呼; chin. Pei-mi-kung-hu) and Ito, for which no individual king is mentioned, but it is said that “there have been kings for generations; subject to the queen's *kuni* they rule [Ito]”.⁵

2 The term “country” – as the Chinese historiographer used it – connotes a geographical region of a certain extension and political development that does not correspond to the situation of the small and still competitive “principalities” in the Yayoi period Japan.

3 Although the original text reads “Yama'ichi (chin. Hsieh-ma-i)”, the residence of queen Himiko is commonly known as “Yamatai” 邪馬臺. The latter reading goes back to Matsushita Kenrin (1637–1703), whose interpretation has dominated the *Wajinden* research for centuries.

4 A recently re-discovered 17th century map of the Japanese islands strongly suggests that Yama'ichi/Yamatai was located in the Kinai region (see SEYOCK, Barbara: “Hu Wei's ‘Map of the Four Seas’ and its significance for Yama'ichi research”, in: *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft (ZDMG)* 1999, Bd. 149, Heft 1, pp. 191–202).

5 *San-kuo-chih*, Po-na-Edition: 4527.

Localization

The centre of Ito is believed to have been in the vicinity of Maebaru City 前原 [市] (Fukuoka Prefecture, Kyûshû), right in the middle of the Itoshima peninsula 糸島 [半島]. Protruding into the Genkai Sea, with the Karatsu bay in the west, and the Hakata bay lying in the east, the northern part of the Itoshima peninsula is rather hilly. The large plain in the south extends as far as the Sefuri mountain system 背振 [山地]. Due to their rich variety of grave goods three archaeological sites of this region are discussed as probable locations of Ito king's burials: Mikumo-minami-shôji, Ihara-yarimizo and Hirabaru (Fig. 1).

The Hirabaru site 平原 [遺跡] was already excavated in 1965, and for many years it has been only reluctantly discussed. Due to a posthumously published book of Hirabaru's excavator Harada Dairoku,⁶ Hirabaru has recently attracted the attention of a wider audience of Japanese archaeologists. The site is situated near the northern tip of a low tongue-shaped hill between the rivers Raizan 雷山 [川] and Zuibaiji 瑞梅寺 [川]. The area was originally assigned for a tangerine-tree plantation. In the course of cultivation work in 1965 fragments of bronze mirrors and an iron sword with a ring pommel (*sokantô no tachi* 素環頭大刀) were unearthed. Official excavation headed by Harada Dairoku started soon after. Some parts of the site had been badly damaged by the irrigation ditches. It was not possible therefore to trace the exact dimensions of the upper part of the Late Yayoi mound burial (*funkyûbo* 墳丘墓), the main feature of the Hirabaru site.

The Hirabaru burial

The shape of the Hirabaru burial precinct is more or less rectangular (ca. 14 m x 10 m) with rounded corners (Fig. 2). The moat surrounding the original mound burial has an average width of around 2 m and a land bridge in the southeast. Situated almost in the centre of the precinct a rectangular grave (4.5 m x 3.6 m x 0.5 m) contained traces of a wooden split log coffin (*waridakegata mokkan* 割竹形木管; 3 m x 75–95 cm). The quality of the wood could not be verified, but due to some cinnabar pigments found in the carbonised layer it is supposed that the coffin was painted or plastered red, a feature typical for Middle and Late Yayoi burials. The Hirabaru Yayoi split log coffin is, according to Harada, not only the first one ever found, it is also the oldest example of this kind of burial in Japan.⁷

At the time of the excavation the upper part of the mound burial was already completely destroyed, but since rows of postholes surrounding the grave have been found on the surface level, it may be supposed that the mound was not very high. Several more or less rectangular pits, one at the south side of the

6 HARADA Dairoku: *Hirabaru Yayoi-kofun. Oho-hiru-me no muchi no haka* 平原弥生古墳・大日靈貴の墓. Fukuoka: Asahi shoten 1991.

7 HARADA 1991: 9seqq.; YANAGIDA Yasuo: "Ito-koku. Mikumo iseki-gun" 伊都国・三雲遺跡群, in: *Kikan kôkogaku* 季刊考古学, 51 (1995), p. 36.

grave, the others inside the surrounding moat, may have been pit burials. Harada believed that especially the one directly beside the rectangular grave proved the existence of a ritual mentioned in the *Wajinden*, the practice of “accompanying the death of one's Lord by committing suicide” (*junsô* 殉葬).⁸ However, evidence for such a practise is missing in Japanese archaeological record.⁹ The satellite burials of Hirabaru are not necessarily contemporary to the main grave. They can be better understood as successive burials, e.g. of members of the same high ranking family. In contrast to the “burial” pits inside the moat the pit attached to the main grave moreover did not contain any grave goods like beads or iron objects. It must have had a different function.

Beads

Inside the coffin hundreds of beads were found in two different spots (Fig. 3). Nine types have been verified including globular, cylindrical, round and comma-shaped beads of different colours and material. The head part of the coffin was damaged by one of the irrigation ditches, so the exact circumstances of these finds are not clear. However, 10~12 blue cylindrical glass beads (*garasu seishoku kudatama* ガラス青色管玉) (Fig. 3b), 17~18 “bone like” cylindrical glass beads (*garasu kotsu-jôka kudatama* ガラス骨状化管玉) (Fig. 3c) and more than 480 dark blue globular glass beads (*garasu konshoku kodama* ガラス紺色小玉) (Fig. 3d) come from this part. Moreover, 12 cylindrical agate beads (*menô kudatama* 瑪瑙管玉) of approximately 2cm length, which may have formed a bracelet (Fig. 3a), and some fragments of an amber-opal earring have been unearthed. Of special interest are the deep blue “joined” glass beads (*garasu konjô tsuradama* ガラス紺青連玉), small beads of an average length of 0.19cm. Although most of the beads are broken, the special shape of several of the 872 fragments reveals they belong to the “joined” beads type, that means beads composed of 2 to 4 rings. Considering the average weight of the single rings of the ten complete beads (0.0416 gram), the original number of rings must have been around 320; 41 of these may have been parts of “joined” beads. Since the beads are rather uniform in material, colour and shape, they probably belonged to one single necklace.

In the middle part of the coffin three blue curved glass beads (*garasu magatama* ガラス勾玉) were found (Fig. 4). Due to little divergences in shape and weight it is supposed that they come from different moulds. The holes are perforated on both sides, which is an uncommon feature.¹⁰ The “T-shaped” lines

8 HARADA 1991, pp. 16seqq.

9 See ESAKA Teruya; SERIZAWA Chôsuke; SAKAZUME Hide'ichi: *Nihon kôkogaku shôjiten* 日本考古学小事典. Tôkyô: Nyû saiensu 1984, s. v. “*junsô*” 殉葬.

10 Usually the holes were made during the moulding process by putting a stick into a little hole of the mould assigned for this purpose. See for example the mould of Aka'ide site 赤井手 [遺跡] (KASUGA-SHI KYÔIKU IINKAI (ed.) 春日市教育委員会 発行: “Aka'ide iseki” 赤井

radiating from the perforations were cut after the moulding. The middle part of the coffin also contained almost 500 round amber-opal beads (*kohaku tanpa-kuseki marudama* 琥珀蛋白石丸玉). They are of a blackish-brown colour, 5.9 to 7.8mm in diameter and 4.3 to 6.5mm long. If they belonged to one necklace, it would have had a length of approximately 3m.¹¹

Considering the beads of the Hirabaru site it is not only the vast abundance which is surprising, it is also the material. Agate beads, for instance, are extremely uncommon on Yayoi sites, although they are quite abundant in Late Kofun burials. There is only one other example of a cylindrical agate bead found in the Yayoi time context: A single bead was found inside the wooden coffin of a Late Yayoi mound burial (*funkyûbo*) of Tatetsuki site 楯築[遺跡] (Okayama). Since this kind of bead is very frequent on Han period sites in China and in the region of the former Lolang commandery (North Korea), the Hirabaru agate beads are probably imports. The amber-opal beads too point in this direction. Apart from the Hirabaru examples they are completely unknown in Japan, even in the Kofun period context, but rather frequent in the Three Kingdom period Korean and the Han period Chinese mound burials. Amber-opal earrings turned up especially in Late Han burials of Lolang. Besides the vast amount of beads an earring find is the main reason for the assumption that the Hirabaru split log coffin contained a female.¹² Dark blue globular glass beads are relatively common in Late Yayoi mound burials. “Joined” beads on the other hand, although they are different in colour and shape from the Hirabaru examples, were found in Late Yayoi and initial Kofun coffins on the Fujisaki 藤崎[遺跡] (Fukuoka) and Sumonaka-michinodan 洲藻中道壇 [遺跡] (Tsushima) sites.

Mirrors

The most remarkable finds of Hirabaru are the mirrors. A vast amount of bronze mirror fragments were collected from inside the rectangular grave. 39 mirrors have been reconstructed. The four *bôseikyô* 仿製鏡 (mirrors manufactured in Japan according to Chinese prototype) with a diameter of ca. 46.5cm (Fig. 5) are the largest examples ever found. 35 mirrors are of Han period Chinese manufacture containing 32 TLV mirrors with four guardian spirits (*hokakukiku shishinkyô* 方格規矩四神鏡) (Fig. 6), two mirrors decorated with petaloid design (*naikô kamonkyô* 内行花紋鏡) (Fig. 7), and a mirror with four-dragon design (*shichikyô* 四螭鏡). Of the TLV mirrors 18 are not single specimen, but sets of

手遺跡, in: *Kasuga-shi bunkazai chōsa hōkokusho* 春日市文化財調査報告書, 6 (1980). Kasuga: Kasuga-shi kyōiku iinkai, 116seqq.).

11 See WATANABE Masaki: “Hirabaru Yayoi-kofun kankei no gyokurui” 平原弥生古墳関係の玉類, in: HARADA 1991, pp. 235–260.

12 Liu Hsi 劉熙, a scholar of the Late Han period, mentioned in his *Shih-ming* 釋名 (“explaining names”) that the women of the southern barbarians used to wear earrings (according to WATANABE 1991: 246).

two or three identical mirrors, which come from seven different moulds.¹³ This fact led to the conclusion that the mirrors of Hirabaru came rather directly from the workshop where they were manufactured without much intermediate trading.¹⁴

The 39 mirrors of Hirabaru are the largest quantity found in the Yayoi and even Kofun context. As to the Yayoi sites, burial No. 1 of Mikumo-minami-shôji site 三雲南小路[遺跡] ranks second (35 mirrors), Suku-okamoto site 須玖岡本[遺跡] follows with 32 mirrors, then burial No. 2 of Mikumo-minami-shôji (22 mirrors) and then Ihara-yarimizo site 井原鑑溝[遺跡] with 21 mirrors. Bronze mirrors, most of them being imported from China, are estimated as being the most valuable grave goods in Yayoi times, indicating therefore the burial of a very high-ranking person.¹⁵

According to Yanagida Yasuo the deposition of super-sized bronze mirrors is one of the criteria for identifying the burial of a king or queen, which on the whole are:

- a tomb of a certain dimension, which is separated from a group of other burials
- outstanding grave goods, mainly assemblages of big or super-sized mirrors
- (written) evidence for the existence of a king/queen in the geographical region¹⁶

The last requirement, the written evidence, is covered for the Itoshima region by the *Wajinden* description. It is said that there were kings ruling Ito. Yanagida lists three sites of this region which meet all of the requirements: Hirabaru, Mikumo-minami-shôji and Ihara-yarimizo. Mikumo revealed two jar burials supplied with Han mirrors, annular glass ornaments (*garasu heki* ガラス壁), a gilt bronze four petaled knob seat fitting (*kondô shiyôza-shoku kanagu* 金銅 四葉座飾金具), socketed bronze spearheads (*dôhoko* 銅矛), a bronze halberd (*dôka* 銅戈), a bronze dagger with handle (*yûhei dôken* 有丙銅劍) and moreover cylindrical and curved glass beads (*garasu kudatama*, *garasu magatama*).

Ihara-yarimizo also produced Han mirrors, and moreover three bronze cog-wheel plaques with central boss (*tomoegata dôki* 巴形銅器) and a sword (*tôken* 刀劍). Hirabaru ranks first comparing the quantity and variety of the grave goods. One interesting point about the mirrors of Hirabaru is the fact that almost all of them were broken in pieces, which is an uncommon feature for Yayoi burials. Due to the earth pressure grave goods used to break now and then, but

13 HARADA 1991: 11seqq; 37seqq.

14 HARADA Dairoku: *Himiko no haka* 卑弥呼の墓. Tôkyô: Rôkkô 1977: 172; YANAGIDA 1995: 37.

15 HARADA Dairoku: *Himiko no kagami* 卑弥呼の鏡. Tôkyô: Rôkkô 1978: 265seqq.; TAKAKURA Hiroaki 高倉洋彰: *Kin'in kokka-gun no jidai. Higashi Ajia sekai to Yayoi shakai* 金印国家群の時代・東アジア世界と弥生社会. Tôkyô: Aoki 1995: 134seqq.

16 YANAGIDA 1995: 37.

the Hirabaru mirror examples seem to have been broken deliberately before they were buried with the dead.¹⁷

A storehouse used as a temporary mortuary?

One of the main elements of Harada Dairoku's interpretation relates to the posthole remains. According to Harada the postholes surrounding the grave suggest a sort of temporary mortuary (*mogari no miya* 殯宮). Four postholes on each of the long sides of the grave – in a rather symmetrical position – and two additional postholes on each of the short sides led Harada to the conclusion that there must have been pillars supporting a ridgepole beam (*munamochi-bashira* 棟持柱). This construction resembles a Yayoi raised-floor storehouse (*takayuka soko* 高床倉庫) as it was depicted on Yayoi period bronze bells (*dôtaku* 銅鐸) (Fig. 8), mirrors or sherds. The two additional postholes may suggest a sort of staircase or ladder. Thus the reconstructed building bears a certain resemblance to one of the Ise shrines (Aramatsuri no miya 荒祭宮) (Fig. 9), which besides the Izumo shrine are believed to represent the oldest shrine architecture of Japan. Harada concluded that since the raised floor storehouses must have been of divine nature to the Yayoi people anyway – storing rice was one of the basic requirements for survival –, it was only natural to use this kind of architecture for a temporary mortuary.

The usage of temporary mortuaries in the Yayoi period is, according to Harada, suggested by the historical report. The *Wajinden* says that in case of death there would be a mourning period of ten days or more. These ten days would have been necessary to get all the relatives together for the funeral rites. In the meantime the corpse must have been somewhere in an appropriate place, that is in a temporary mortuary. Constructing a building like a raised floor storehouse, and then tearing it down again after only ten days seems to be a procedure of a rather unlikely expenditure. However, Harada suggested a longer period of usage by referring to the *Nihongi* 日本紀. The *Nihongi* reports that mourning ceremonies lasted from one month to several years.¹⁸ Harada did not refer to a special passage of the *Nihongi*, but he obviously was speaking of the early emperors such as Sûjin 崇神, Suinin 垂仁 or even Jinmu 神武 whose funeral ceremonies lasted that long.¹⁹

17 Harada rejects the idea of “preventing the dead from returning by destroying the grave goods” – a concept already discussed by Eduard Erkes in the context of Chinese written sources (ERKES, Eduard: „Die Totenbeigaben im alten China“, in: *Artibus Asiae*, 6 (1936): 17–36) –, but supposes an accidental breakage of the mirrors (HARADA 1991: 24).

18 HARADA 1991: 22.

19 See ASTON, W.G. (trans.): *Nihongi. Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697*. Vol. 1, Rutland (Verm.) & Tôkyô: Tuttle 1972: 135, 164, 186; SAKAMOTO Tarô et. al. (ed.) 坂本太郎 他: *Nihonshoki jô* 日本書紀 上. *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 日本古典文学大系 67, Tôkyô: Iwanami shoten 1967: 217, 255, 279.

It is commonly accepted that the accounts of the early emperors, which may correspond in time to the Yayoi period, are open to interpretation. It is more likely therefore that this kind of long-lasting funeral ceremony comes from a later age and was only projected back to earlier times by the author. An interesting phrase can be found in the first part of the *Nihongi*, which describes the Age of the Gods. Although “The Age of the Gods” is in no way a historical account, it may give us a hint concerning archaic rites of which a certain remembrance may have still existed in public consciousness by the time of the compilation. According to the *Nihongi* description Ame-waka-no-hiko 天稚彦 was sent down to earth by Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto 高皇彦靈尊 to pacify the Central Land. But Ame-waka-no-hiko was disloyal and never reported the result of his mission. Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto eventually killed him, and then:

The sound of weeping and mourning of Ame-waka-hiko's wife [...] reached heaven. At this time, Ame no Kuni-dama 天國玉 [...] sent down a swift wind to bring the body up to Heaven. Forthwith a mortuary house was made, in which it was temporarily deposited. [...] For eight days and eight nights they wept and sang dirges.²⁰

Although a temporary mortuary actually is mentioned in this phrase, the mourning period is only eight days and eight nights long. Thus this description comes very close to the *Wajinden* account:

In the case of death there is a mourning period of ten days or more. [...] The head mourner wails and weeps. Then the other people come [to] sing, dance, and drink wine.²¹

Supposing that such a short mourning period really implied the construction of a temporary mortuary – although the *Wajinden* account, which has to be considered much more authentic than the *Nihongi*, does not mention it –, it must have been a simple building. Presupposing that the *Nihongi* account of the Age of the Gods in this context actually can be regarded as a “historical” source, it suggests a construction that could have been accomplished “forthwith”, that is without much effort and in reasonable time. The doubtless rather labour-intensive and lengthy procedure of constructing a robust and complex building like a Yayoi raised-floor storehouse does not correspond to this conception. The expenditure would have been too high.

Shielded from profanation

After examining the historical sources the idea of constructing a raised-floor storehouse for use as a temporary mortuary has to be rejected. An archaeological approach will support this conclusion. Considering the position of the post-holes surrounding the Hirabaru central grave, two aspects oppose the suggestion of a raised-floor storehouse. First, the reconstructed ground plan of the suggested building looks almost like a parallelogram (Fig. 10a), a more than un-

²⁰ ASTON 1972: 66; SAKAMOTO 1967: 137.

²¹ *San-kuo-chih*, Po-na-Edition: 4528.

usual shape for a building. Harada indicated that ancient rites may have been responsible for it. Just like the custom to use poor hemp clothes for mourning rituals, Yayoi people may have used defective wood for the construction of a temporary mortuary.²² Besides the fact that we do not have any idea regarding the quality of the wood used in Hirabaru, this assumption would still not explain the crookedness of the building. The second problem relates to the size of the postholes. In comparison to the diameter of the postholes of e.g. the Yoshinogari site 吉野ヶ里[遺跡] (Saga prefecture) raised-floor storehouse remains (approximately 1 m)²³ the Hirabaru ones are – with an average diameter of around 20 cm – rather small. The pillars therefore must have been quite thin, even in comparison with the almost double-sized postholes inside and close to the surrounding moat, which are supposed to have been gate-like constructions. Relating to the size of the postholes the pillars must have had a diameter of little more than 10 to 12 cm. They could not have carried a heavy roof construction, if they carried anything at all.

It has been demonstrated that the postholes surrounding the grave could not be remains of a Yayoi raised-floor storehouse. The results of both historical and archaeological approaches suggest a much more simple construction. It shall be supposed here that the pillars did not carry anything. A ground plan in the shape of a crooked parallelogram, moreover, is not a convincing reconstruction. Instead I assume a fence-like construction with single pillars supporting the fence (Fig. 10b). The fence must have been composed of two elements, thus forming a sort of double clasp-shaped enclosure. The fence fields may have been filled with woven twigs or a similar construction. In support of the rectangular moat that divided the burial – a place of obviously divine nature – from the profane outside, the fence around the central grave functioned as an additional shield against profanation. Arranged in an asymmetrical way the two clasp-shaped fences provided two entrances to the grave without leaving it unprotected against inadmissible sight.

The postholes surrounding the Hirabaru central grave had long been a singular phenomenon, so it was not possible to compare these features to similar burial sites. On the Fujisaki site²⁴ (Fukuoka) a clasp-shaped clay belt (*nendo-tai* 粘土帶) enclosed the wooden coffin of the Late Yayoi mound burial (Fig. 11). However, the clay belt was a subterranean construction. It therefore must have had a different function. The similarity of the unusual shape is still striking. Recently a mound burial from the end of the Yayoi period excavated in Kyôto prefecture revealed structures similar to the Hirabaru grave. Postholes have been found surrounding the central grave of the Akasaka-ima'i site 赤坂今井

22 HARADA 1991: 24.

23 See SAGA-KEN KYÔIKU IINKAI (ed.) 佐賀県教育委員会 編: *Kangô shûraku Yoshinogari iseki gaihō* 環濠集落吉野ヶ里遺跡概報. Tôkyô: Yoshikawa kôbunkan 1990: 61seqq.

24 See FUKUOKA-SHI KYÔIKU IINKAI (ed.) 福岡市教育委員会 発行: *Fujisaki iseki* 藤崎遺跡. Fukuoka: Fukuoka-shi kyôiku iinkai 1982: 58seqq.

[遺跡]. From inside the grave cylindrical and comma-shaped beads and traces of cinnebar have been collected.²⁵ Future research into the development of Yayoi and Kofun burial customs may contribute to clarifying a possible relationship.

Still open to discussion is the question as to whether the inside of the Hirabaru fence construction actually functioned as a temporary mortuary. It has already been mentioned that the historical evidence is thin, since it relies only on a report from a much later age. As pointed out above, the almost contemporary *Wajinden* does not mention temporary mortuaries. From the archaeological perspective the idea of a mortuary erected in exactly the same place as the later burial is possible, but not probable. It would not have been very convenient for the people charged with digging the grave to work inside or underneath a temporary mortuary. In conclusion, Harada's idea relating to a temporary mortuary is interesting, but definite evidence is still lacking.

Shintô gates

Much easier to follow is the concept of early Shintô gates. Harada Dairoku discussed the Hirabaru site especially in the context of early Shintô belief. In his opinion the “mortuary house” construction resembles early Shintô architecture, and can therefore be interpreted as an indication of beginning Shintô rituals. He supported his argument with the assumption that the two pairs of postholes in the western part of the enclosure – one pair within and one on the inside of the moat – are remains of Shintô gates (*torii* 鳥居). He moreover believed that the gates as well as the grave were deliberately orientated towards different directions. According to Harada the gates were directed towards important landscape points, namely the Takasu mountain 高祖[山] in the east and the mountain pass of Hinata 日向[峠] in east-south-eastern direction, just like the *torii* of the Ômiwa shrine 大神[神社] in Nara prefecture were directed towards the peak of Miwa mountain 三輪[山]. The Hirabaru gates would hence show a strong relationship between the buried person and the main landscape points, a relationship that symbolises the power the dead person had maintained and moreover mirrors the deification of nature itself.²⁶

Harada even went one step further in saying that the orientation of the grave towards the sunrise direction (at the time of the vernal and fall equinox) proves the existence of sun worship in Yayoi times. Since wet-rice-field agriculture was the main feature of Yayoi subsistence, it naturally should have been so. Yayoi

25 See ISHIZAKI Yoshihisa/OKABAYASHI Mineo 石崎善久・岡林峰末 (2001): “Daikan nai no shu ga azayaka. Yayoi no kyodai funkyûbo”, in: *Hakkutsu sareta Nihon rettô 2001*, 『大棺内の朱が鮮やか』 — 弥生の巨大墳丘墓 — 発掘された日本列島 2001, p. 31; <http://www.kyokyo-u.ac.jp/50aniv/HPcontest/koukogaku/c-akasaka.htm>; http://www.town.mineyama.kyoto.jp/News.news01/new01_03400.htm.

26 HARADA 1991: 21seqq.

people were dependent on finding the right time for sowing and reaping. The *Wajinden* account supports this assumption by relating to the lack of a calendar:

In accordance with their customs [the Wa] are not aware of the first month [of the year]. Only by counting the field work in spring and the harvest in autumn they calculate the years.²⁷

Yayoi people therefore, according to Harada, just like the Maya of Central America should have been able to make astronomical observations.²⁸

The idea of comparing the Hirabaru site situation to the complex Maya society, which is characterised by impressive architectural achievements and a highly cultivated astronomical and mathematical system, unquestionably weakens Harada's basically convincing concept of early Shintô gates. A deliberate orientation of the grave as well as of one of the western posthole pairs towards the Hinata mountain pass is actually apparent. This orientation probably symbolises the supremacy of the buried person that reaches as far as the mountain pass, or even beyond the mountain range. Whether this relationship to landscape points mirrors the political and territorial position the deceased had maintained during his life, or whether it regards his (or her) spiritual influence in the afterlife is unclear. Most likely both aspects had their impact on the burial construction.

Yayoi people had religious conceptions that imply an afterlife. It is for this reason that the dead were supplied with precious goods, especially bronze ritual weapons and mirrors. Besides the grave goods, which are commonly found within the burial itself, additional goods are sometimes found in small pits in the vicinity of Yayoi burials. Filled with pottery they are interpreted as ritual pits (*saishi ikô* 祭祀遺構). The pit attached to the Hirabaru central grave may have been such a ritual deposit.

The Hirabaru site situation – a possible ritual deposit beside the grave and posthole pairs that are interpreted as gates – recalls the structure of another famous Yayoi mound burial. On the Yoshinogari site the Middle Yayoi mound (*funkyûbo*) contained several jar burials (*kamekanbo* 甕棺墓). Of special interest are the remains of a sort of passageway (Fig. 12). Starting from the outer moat in the west it follows the shape of the mound and then bends towards the south side of the mound burial where it ends abruptly. At the end of the passage a pair of postholes indicates the existence of a gate. In front of this gate a large pit filled with pottery is situated. Traces of fire were also found.²⁹ Apparently the passageway as well as the pit was of ritual function. Pottery, which may have contained food offers, was laid down in front of the burial and fires were

27 *San-kuo-chih*, *Po-na*-Edition: 4528.

28 HARADA 1991: 29seqq.

29 SAGA-KEN KYÔIKU IINKAI 1990: 67seqq.; TAKASHIMA Chûhei 高島忠平: “Kichô hôkoku Yoshinogari o hakkutsu shite” 基調報告 吉野ヶ里を発掘して, in: ÔTSUKA Hatsushige et. al. 大塚初重 他: *Wa-koku tairan to Yoshinogari* 倭国大乱と吉野ヶ里. Tôkyô: Yamakawa 1990: 35seqq. TAKASHIMA (*ibid*: 59) moreover suggests fences on both sides of the passageway.

lit. It appears that a form of ancestry cult was practised here by family members or members of the same tribe. The concept of early “Shintô” gates, implying the beginning of what was called Shintôism in much later ages, therefore appears plausible. A main feature of the “original” Japanese religion is ancestry worship, and on his way to a Shintô shrine – the place of worship – the pilgrim has to pass a *torii*, a Shintô gate. The features of the Yoshinogari site mound burial can support Harada's interpretation relating to the remains of early Shintô gates on the Hirabaru site.

Hirabaru Yayoi-*kofun* reconsidered

The Hirabaru Late Yayoi burial precinct apparently is of great significance for understanding the transition between the Yayoi period mound burial (*funkyûbo*) and the Kofun period keyhole-shaped mound burial (*zenpô kôenfun* 前方後円墳). It clearly was for this reason that Hirabaru's excavator, Harada Dairoku, created the term “Yayoi-*kofun*” 弥生古墳 to describe the site's main feature.³⁰

However, many Japanese archaeologists regard this terminology as inappropriate. Saitô Tadashi points out that Harada was right in calling a square-shaped mound (containing Yayoi finds) a “Yayoi-*kofun*”. Since a Kofun period mound burial is also called „*kofun*“ the risk of mixing these terms up would nevertheless be too high. The terminology for the Yayoi and Kofun periods would have been settled decades ago, the mound burial of Hirabaru should, according to Saitô, consequently be called „square-shaped moated burial precinct (*hōkei-shūkôbo* 方形周溝墓)“.³¹ Most scholars followed this opinion.³² Still, bearing in mind the posthole remains and their suggested function, there are features that actually do not fit into the perception of a Yayoi period *hōkei-shūkôbo*.

By using the term „Yayoi-*kofun*“ Harada indicated a direct relationship between the Yayoi and the Kofun mound burials, a relationship still discussed in 1986 by Kondô as not traceable in Northern Kyûshû. Kondô's main arguments against the theory of a Northern Kyûshû origin of the keyhole-shaped tumuli were that

30 HARADA already created this term in the year 1965, the year of the excavation (see: FUKUOKA-KEN KYÔIKU IINKAI (ed.) 福岡県教育委員会 発行: *Fukuoka-ken Itoshima-gun Hirabaru Yayoi-kofun chōsa gaihō* 福岡県糸島郡平原弥生古墳調査概報. Fukuoka 1965).

31 According to NISHITANI Tadashi 西谷正: “‘Hirabaru Yayoi-kofun’ hakkann ni yosete. ‘Yayoi kōki’ ni aratana hikari” 「平原弥生古墳」 発刊によせて・「弥生後期」に新たな光, in: *Asahi shinbun* 朝日新聞, 30.11.1991.

32 For example AMAKASU Ken: “The Significance of the Formation and Distribution of Kofun”, in: *Acta Asiatica*, 31 (1977): 25seqq.; YASUMOTO Biten 安本美典: “Iseki bunpu kara suitei suru Yamatai-koku” 遺跡分布から推定する邪馬台国, in: *Yamatai-koku* 邪馬台国, 29 (1986): 27; TAKAKURA 1995: 132; TORIGOE Kenzaburō 鳥越憲三郎: *Yayoi no ōkoku. Kita Kyūshū kodai kokka to Na-koku no ōto* 弥生の王国・北九州古代国家と奴国の王都. Tōkyō: Chūō kōronsha 1994: 91.

in Late Yayoi, particularly in the latter half, grave goods [in Northern Kyūshū] became fewer in number and poorer in quality. Moreover, there is nothing in the few Yayoi burial constructions of Kyūshū that indicates any tendency toward the development of large mounded tumuli. The Yayoi burials contain no prototypes of facing stones, *haniwa* figures, or other funerary sculptures.³³

One of the main features of the Late Yayoi Tatetsuki mound in Okayama prefecture for example, discussed extensively by Kondō and Tsude,³⁴ are the standing stones surrounding the grave. The Hirabaru burial does not provide any facing stones or standing stones. However, the pillars surrounding the grave and moreover the gates, suggested by the posthole pairs, are complex features which correspond to Kondō's "missing link". Even though there are various problems relating to this specific subject, understanding the development towards the *zenpō kōenfun* should imply a look at the Hirabaru site.

It was only in recent years that Harada's lifework was rediscovered by the archaeological audience of Japan.³⁵ Due to a particularly slender excavation report³⁶ the Hirabaru site was overlooked for several decades. Harada's extensive interpretations – only a few aspects could be discussed here – have nevertheless resulted in a vast number of books and articles regarding early Shintō belief, temporary mortuaries and the astronomical capabilities of Yayoi people.³⁷ By lacking a detailed excavation report they may have contributed to the unwillingness of the archaeological community to examine the Hirabaru finds critically.

It has been demonstrated that Harada's interpretations are open to criticism in several points. The Hirabaru site nevertheless offers great insight into the situation of the Late Yayoi people in Northern Kyūshū. Grave goods outstanding in quantity and quality not only show a strong influence of continental culture; they also demonstrate a highly hierarchical structure of the society of that time. It is presumed that a person holding an important position was buried in the central grave of the Hirabaru site. The dating of the burial is a crucial point relating to the historical interpretation. The remarkable features of the rectangular burial precinct with its supposed clasp-shaped fence enclosure suggest – besides the enormous quantity of grave goods – that the precinct was constructed during the last phase of the Late Yayoi period. The Hirabaru site is thus the latest ex-

33 KONDŌ Yoshirō: "The Keyhole Tumulus and Its Relationship to Earlier Forms of Burial", in: Richard J. PEARSON (ed.): *Windows on the Japanese Past. Studies in Archaeology and Prehistory*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan 1986: 336.

34 KONDŌ 1986: 335–348; TSUDE Hiroshi: "The Kofun Period and State Formation", in: *Acta Asiatica*, 63 (1992): 64–86.

35 See "Miete kita Ito-koku no sugata. 'Kasetsu no hôko' Itoshima – Hirabaru iseki o chôsa" 見えてきた伊都国の姿・「仮説の宝庫」糸島・平原遺跡を調査, in: *Asahi shinbun* 朝日新聞, 5.2.1999.

36 HARADA 1965.

37 See complete bibliography in HARADA 1991: 369 *seqq.*

ample of a *hōkei shūkōbo* in Northern Kyūshū. On the Itoshima peninsula the practice of burying important persons in a moated burial precinct lasted longer than in neighbouring areas.

Considering the historical source for the 3rd century A.D. an interesting parallel is apparent. The *Wajinden* mentions the existence of 29 different *kuni* (≈ “country”, see above), but only three were ruled by kings. One of them was Ito, where “there have been kings for generations, subject to the queens *kuni* [Yama’ichi] they rule”.³⁸ The localisation of the former *kuni* Ito was identified with the Itoshima peninsula. It was consequently assumed that the Late Yayoi burial of Hirabaru was a king’s or a queen’s grave respectively.

The question remains why – in spite of the power of the Queen of Wa, Himiko – Ito was able to continue its kingship institution. The Ito kings were obviously powerful enough to be recognised as kings by the Chinese historiographer. On the other hand these kings must have accepted high-ranking officials from Yama’ichi, where Himiko resided, to inspect the trade going on in their own territory. The *Wajinden* says that

high [ranking] Wa are sent to inspect [the trade of the different *kuni*]. A high leader was especially sent to [the region] north of the queen’s land. He inspects all the *kuni* there. Regularly he rules in Ito.³⁹

Another *Wajinden* phrase may give an explanation:

When envoys are coming [to the queen’s land] from the [Taifang] commandery, or going back [from Yama’ichi to Taifang] they usually stop [in Ito].⁴⁰

Ito therefore maintained an important role concerning international relations. It may have been due to this position, that although there were Yama’ichi inspectors in Ito, Yama’ichi was not able to completely break the power of the Ito kings, a power archaeologically mirrored by the rich burial site of Hirabaru.⁴¹

38 *San-kuo-chih*, *Po-na*-Edition: 4527.

39 *San-kuo-chih*, *Po-na*-Edition: 4528.

40 *San-kuo-chih*, *Po-na*-Edition: 4528.

41 For further information on the situation of the different *kuni* as mentioned in the *Wajinden* see my Ph.D. thesis which is due to be published under the title “Auf den Spuren der Ostbarbaren – Zur Archäologie proto-historischer Kulturen in Südkorea und Westjapan“ (Tracing the Eastern Barbarians – The archaeology of proto-historic cultures in South Korea and western Japan) in 2003 (in: Bunka, Tübinger interkulturelle und linguistische Japanstudien. Tuebingen intercultural and linguistic studies on Japan. LIT-Verlag: Hamburg, Münster, London).



Fig. 1: Location of Hirabaru site

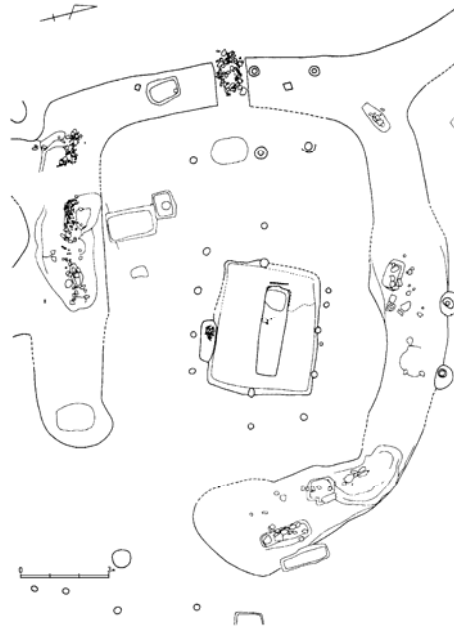


Fig. 2: Hirabaru burial precinct
(after: HARADA 1991:291).

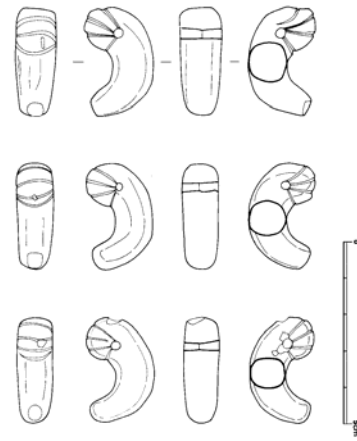


Fig. 4: Curved glass beads
(after: HARADA 1991:248).

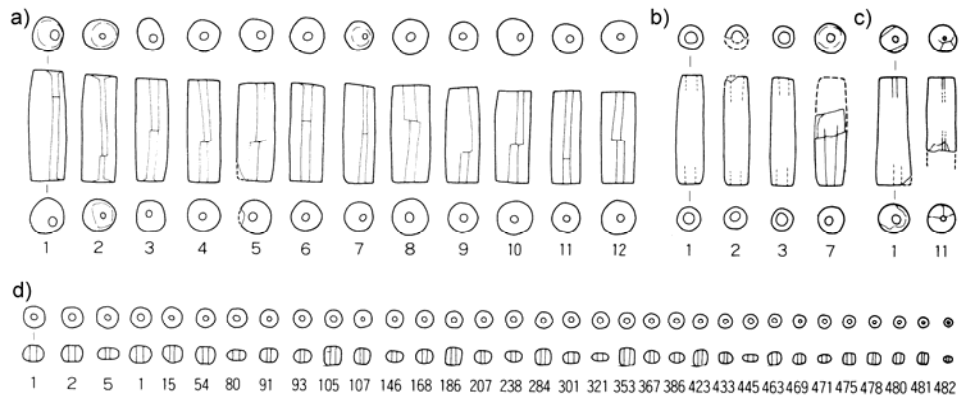


Fig. 3: Beads.
a) cylindrical agate beads, b) cylindrical glass beads, c) “bone like” cylindrical glass beads, d) globular glass beads
(after: HARADA, 1991:248).

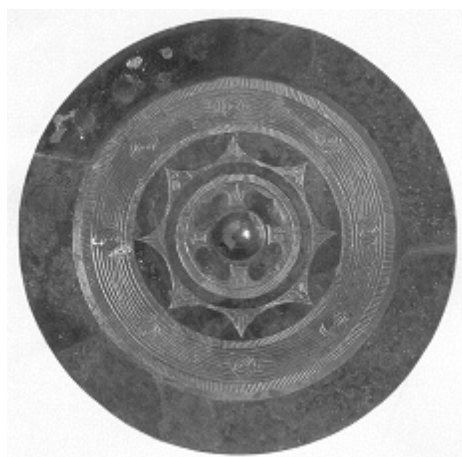


Fig. 5: Hirabaru mirror (*bôseikyô*, 46,5cm)

(after: MAEBARU-SHI RITSU ITO REKISHI SHIRYÔKAN (ed.) 前原市立伊都歴史資料館 発行: *Ito. Kodai no Itoshima* 伊都・古代の糸島 1992:18).



Fig. 6: TLV mirror (15,9 cm)
(after: MAEBARU-SHI RITSU ITO
REKISHI SHIRYÔKAN (ed.) 1992:
19).



**Fig. 7: Mirror with petaloid design
(18,8 cm)**
(after: MAEBARU-SHI RITSU ITO
REKISHI SHIRYÔKAN (ed.)

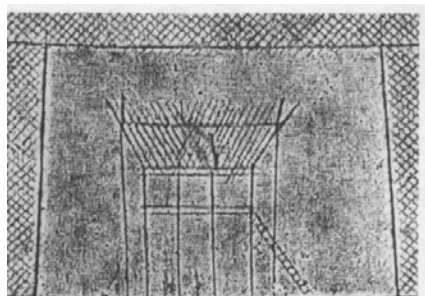


Fig. 8: Yayoi storehouse
(after: MATSUMOTO Seichô 松
本清張: *Dôken, dôtake,*
dôhoko to Izumo ôkoku no ji-
dai 銅劍・銅鐸・銅矛と出
雲王国の時代. Tôkyô 1986).

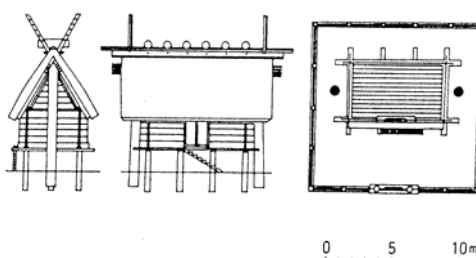


Fig. 9: Aramatsuri no miya
(after: HARADA Dairoku 原田
大六: *Hirabaru Yayoi-kofun.*
Oho-hiru-me no muchi no
haka 平原弥生古墳・大日
甕貴の墓. Fukuoka 1991).

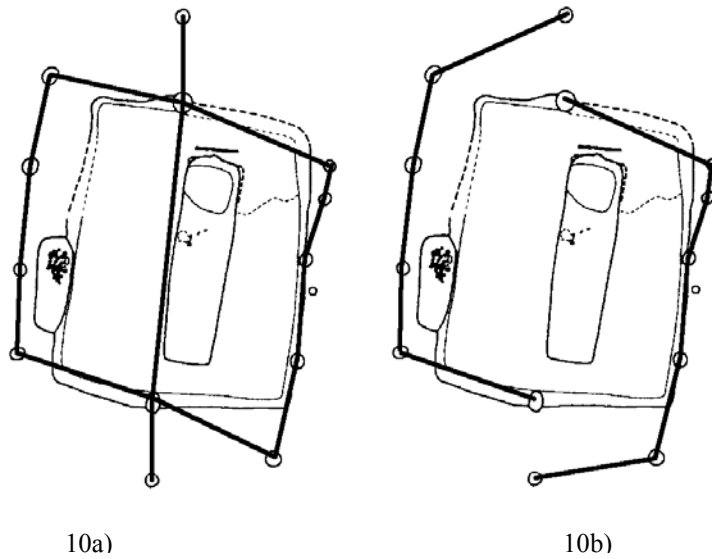


Fig. 10: Reconstruction
 (a: Harada's supposition;
 b: new theory)

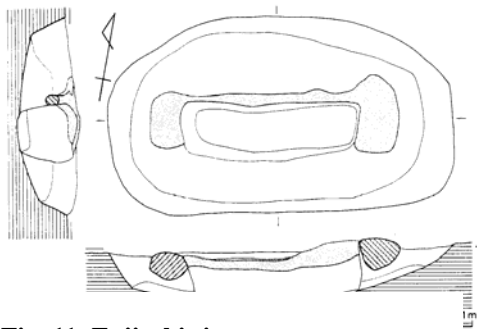
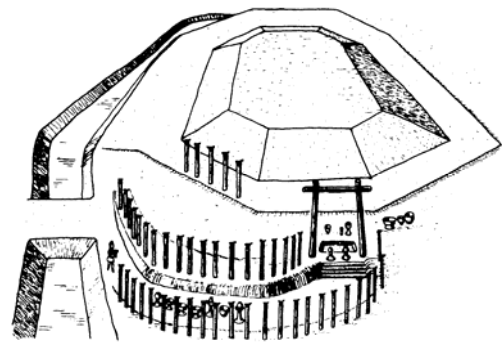


Fig. 11: Fujisaki site
 (after: FUKUOKA-SHI KYŌIKU
 IINKAI (Hg.) 福岡市教育委員
 会 発行: *Fujisaki iseki* 藤崎遺
 跡. Fukuoka 1982).



**Fig. 12: Yoshinogari mound burial
 reconstruction**
 (after: TAKASHIMA Tadahira 高島
 忠平: “Kichō hōkoku Yoshinogari
 o hakkutsu shite” 基調報告 吉野
 ケ里を発掘して, in: ÔTSUKA
 Hatsushige et al. 大塚初重 他:
Wakoku tairan to Yoshinogari 倭
 国 大乱と吉野ヶ里. Tôkyô: Ya-
 makawa 1990:59).