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ORNAMENTED TOMBS IN THE ISLAND OF KIUSHU

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TYPES OF THE YAYOISHIKI POTTERY

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Ornamented Tombs in the Island of Kiushu

(Résumé of the Japanese Text)

INTRODUCTION

In the first volume of this series of Reports, I dealt with a certain number of the ornamented tombs in the province of Higo, but the materials were not then exhausted, and moreover there have been, since our report were issued, not a few examples of the monuments discovered. I am, therefore, expecting to complete our researches and publish the results of studies in this sort of tomb in that province and in the neighbouring districts, in due course in this series of Reports. There is no need to mention that these ornamented tombs are important materials for the investigation of our past, especially of the ethnological problems concerning our ancestors and of the historical study of their artistic achievements. In the present volume, I describe those monuments in the province of Higo, and one near Kurume city in Chikugo, which, in its ornamentation, seems to have close affinity to the Idera tomb in Higo.

I. Kamao Tomb near Kumamoto, Higo

(Plates I—IX & Frontispiece)

This stands on a hill north of Kumamoto city, and the tumulus was originally round in form, about 15 feet high. It has a large square chamber inside, in the form of a vault corbelling from the walls, and a long passage or dromos connects the chamber with the outside. At the end of the chamber, there is a construction of andesite slabs in form of a cist or coffin, which must have been the place where the dead body was laid. In front of this, the room is divided by slabs of stone lengthwise into three sections, one in the middle for the passage connecting with the dromos, and two others for the places to bury the subordinate persons or the ritual objects. This is a form of tomb we often see in Higo. The interior was plundered already and when repairs

were made three years ago, only few fragments of iron swords, two *kudatama*, cylindrical beads, and broken pieces of Iwaibe pottery &c., were found there.

The decoration is applied to the cist-like construction and the walls of the dromos. It is painted in white (kaolin), red (ferric oxide) and blue (an unknown organic compound),¹ and the elements of the ornaments are entirely geometric, consisting of concentric circles, triangles, zigzags, &c. Amongst them, there is a curious form like a starfish, being concentric circles with radiating projections around it, of which we do not know the exact meaning, but it seems, perhaps, originally to represent some sort of creature. The walls of the chamber are also painted, the lower portion, in red, and in white, the upper parts.

II. Iwamura Tomb of Amakusa.

(Plates X & XI)

There is a group of round tumuli at the Cape near Iwamura in the island of Senzoku, Amakusa. One of them was destroyed last year, and three cists discovered inside of it. On the sand-stone slabs which formed the cists, it was noticed that certain figures were cut in low relief. The most interesting is a sword represented with a small knife (*tozu*) on its scabbard.² The hilt of the sword is in T form, perhaps made with a deer's antler with incised patterns like those found in the tombs in Kiushû, &c.³ Like the *makiri* knives of the Ainos, it has no guard, thus showing a type of sword coming directly from the utensil for domestic use, not yet differentiated for fighting purposes. On other slabs are cut also small knives, of quite the same type as above mentioned, which we meet very often in stone imitation from old tumuli. The other objects in round form, or semi-circular with handle-like projections, square tops with round bottoms, we are not certain what they represent. I suppose, however, they are intended for pottery bowls in plan and a side view of dish with stand or a mirror hung by a cord. The figures of the sword and small knives are quite realistic and interesting to compare with the real sword discovered in the tombs.

1) According to the chemical analysis kindly made by Prof. M. Chikashige.

2) Of another representation of a sword in a tomb at Ishinuki, see *Archaeological Report*, Vol. I. Chap. V.

3) Of sword-hilts of deer's antlers, see *ibid.* Chap. VI.

III. Hanazono Tomb in Higo

(Figs 5 & 6)

There are two tumuli in Hanazono village, one at Banmen, the other at Urûno, and both contain interesting stone sarcophagi. They are now reburied and we are not able to examine them. According to the notes and drawings taken by Mr Naitô and Dr Kosugi when the tombs were excavated, the coffins are in the form of a house, consisting of slabs which were cut smoothly. On the inner side of the coffins there are circles incised and a chrysanthemum pattern cut in relief on the Banmen one, and circles and zigzag ornaments on the Urûno example. Though we cannot believe the authenticity of the chrysanthemum pattern, the construction and ornamentation of the sarcophagi seem to have close relations with those tombs at Kurume and at Matubase which we have described elsewhere.

IV. Sugigami Tomb in Higo

(Plates XII, XX & XXV)

Only two tufa slabs of several which formerly made up the chamber are left in this tomb, on which we recognise two groups of concentric circles and red pigment painted over the slabs. The chamber must have originally been like that at the Senkoda tomb, &c.¹

V. Imaki Tomb in Higo

(Plates XII & XIII)

The mound is elliptic in form, about 100 feet long and 17 feet high. The chamber is rectangular in plan with corbelled vault, and a long dromos. At the end of the chamber there projects a shelf-like stone board, under which the dead was placed or certain ritual objects were laid upon it. The ornamentation was applied on the wall stone underneath the shelf, consisting of geometric patterns painted in various colours. At present, however, we can recognise only red paint and some faint figures like shields and lozenges, &c. The style and elements of ornamentation are akin to those in the tombs in Chikugo, for example, the Narayama tomb.

1) *Archaeological Report*, Vol I, Chap. III

VI. Matsubase Tomb in Higo

(Plates XIV & XV)

This is on a hill called Ugadake, near Matsubase and the chamber is bare, the tumulus having all disappeared. The chamber is rectangular in form and had been roofed with two stones, imitating the hipped-ridge roofs, one placed the front side in front, and the other the side facing it. On the walls there are incised ornaments, such as circles and triangles with traces of red pigment.

VII. Midorikawa Tomb in Higo

(Plates XIV & XV)

The tomb is situated on a hill-side east of Udo and only a ruined chamber remains. The chamber is rectangular in form, consisting of liparite blocks. Near by the tomb there stands a stele dated 1564, which has undoubtedly taken its material from the chamber, so it is evident that this tomb was opened before that date. On the eastern wall are incised about ten figures of boats, gondola-shaped, and something like tree-leaves, &c.; on the western wall a ship with raised sail. I am not sure whether all these figures were made at the time when the tomb was built or whether they were added sometime later by visitors or the like. But the liparite is a hard rock not easy to make graffiti for play and moreover, the type of boat on the eastern wall is similar to other authentic examples, for instance, to the incised figures in a rock-cut tomb at Takaida, &c.¹ So we have reserved our opinion for the present.

VIII. Yoshino Tomb in Higo

(Plates XVI & XVII)

The mound is now 8 feet high and 20 feet in diameter in a round form, with a tufa sarcophagus in it. This is constructed of four walls and a roof stone which is fashioned like a hipped-ridge roof. Inside the coffin, on the front and back walls, are represented round objects, some with a tongue-like thing attached to one end, and a small knife (*tozu*), all in bas-relief. The knife is similar to those on the slabs found in the Iwamura tomb, and the round

1) Mr K. Takahashi's article &c. in the *Archaeological Journal*, Vol IX, Nos. 2, 5, & 9.

objects here seem to be intended to represent mirrors. The inner surface of the roof stone is cut to show a sort of coffered ceiling. It is interesting to notice that the coffin is shaped like a house in its outward form as well as in its inward construction, with the dedicated objects on the walls. Red pigment is to be seen on the whole surface of the inside of the walls.

The tomb was excavated some twenty-five years ago, and it was noted by a Gokyōsei that he saw fragments of human bones and an iron ring when he visited this site a few years after the excavation.

IX. Ryūhō Tomb in Higo

(Plates XXII, XX & XXV)

This tomb was excavated a few years ago and the mound as well as the chamber are much ruined. The form of the tumulus, however, must have been round and the chamber of the Senkoda tomb type. On a wall stone, in tufa, we observe three groups of concentric circles and a line attached to each group, which seem to represent mirrors hanging by a cord, as in the case of the Senkoda tomb, &c.¹

X. Nikenjaya Tomb near Kurume in Chikugo

(Plates XXI—XXV)

About two miles south-east of Kurume city, behind a small village called Nikenjaya, stands this round tumulus conspicuously on a hillock. The diameter of the mound is about 130 feet and the height 18 feet. The chamber has its entrance to the N. E., with a rectangular plan, corbelled vault roofed with two huge stones, under which is laid a big tufa sarcophagus. The lid of the coffin is in a hipped-ridge form with four handles and the front wall of it has a window-like opening which has to be closed by a door and a bar hung down between two supports. In the coffin there is pillow-stone made in a separate piece, with a hollow for the head. This tomb was looted some fifty years ago, and it is said that human bones, *magatama* beads, gold ear-rings and iron armour were found, but we know nothing of their present whereabouts.

The interior walls of the sarcophagus are decorated with incised designs, a curious combination of straight and curved lines which we come across, for

1) *Archaeological Report*, Vol. I, Chap. III.

example, on the screens of the Idera tomb or on the hilts of the swords discovered in various tombs in Japan.¹ I have elsewhere discussed this design, tracing its origin to the plaited sinnet bound irregularly, as Professor Haddon has treated in his valuable work.² The inner and outer sides of the front wall as well as one side of the bar stone have also ornaments which are simplified variations of the peculiar design above described.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although I reserve my conclusion on the ornamented tombs as a whole in Kiushû, until the description of each tomb is completed, here I may make a few remarks on the general character of these tombs.

In the province of Higo we recognize that the ornamented tombs, as a rule, have incised designs and pigments on them. But on the tombs in Chikugo Province, the ornamentations are usually painted without incised lines under its ground. So the tomb at Kamao is, on this point, an exception with the elaborate decoration simply painted.

The elements of the ornaments mainly consist of geometric patterns, sometimes arranged in regular order and sometimes according to no plan. Concentric circles and triangles or lozenges prevail, perhaps the former being, or derived from, the symbol of the sun. A curious design, a combination of straight and curved lines, as we saw at Nikenjaya tomb, is a characteristic ornament of our dolmen period and seems to be a skeuomorphic pattern come from plaited sinnets or the like. It is, however, usually difficult to interpret the meaning of the decoration, as with the prehistoric tombs in Europe. There are also the patterns from the figures representing certain objects, such as shields, men with quivers on back. The peculiar pattern at Kamao tomb is also considered to be derived from the figure of a certain creature and to have some totemistic or religious meaning in it. These things are often shown combined with pure geometric ornaments. Besides these there occur realistic figures painted or engraved in relief, such

- 1) *Archaeological Report*, Vol. I, Chap. VI. Distribution of this kind of sword-handles is very wide, for example, in the provinces of Echizen, Musashi, Harima, Sanuki, Idzumi, Bungo and Chikuzen, and recently a specimen was found also in Korea, in a tomb at Kanan by Mr. Imanishi.
- 2) A. C. Haddon *Evolution in Art*. (London, 1895) pp. 84-88

as swords, mirrors and certain animals &c.

The forms of the tumulus and of the chamber are not the same in the tombs where the same kind of decoration is applied. Some have square chambers with short passages, some with long ones, and another sarcophagus in the chamber or mere cists in the mounds. From these facts we are not able to formulate the theory that certain types of tomb have certain kinds of decoration, but on the contrary, we must come to the conclusion that at the period when these sepulchres were constructed, there was a civilisation amongst the inhabitants in Kiushû island, which had differences of fusion or nuances, locally or tribally originated. In short, it is prejudice to consider that the primitive age, at least that with which we are concerned, was a simple savage period with a simple civilisation without differences in nuance, and to conclude that the varieties of types of tomb and of styles of decoration, must always come from the difference of the age of the race.¹

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1) Megalithic culture combined with sun worship is called by certain scholars the "Heliolithic culture-complex" and distributed over very wide area in the world, as widely separate as Europe, India, Indonesia, &c. And it is well established theory that we Japanese have certain ethnic relations with Indonesia or the Southern islands. I shall have in future occasion to discuss this most interesting problem in our anthropology as well as in our archaeology. Cp. Prof. Elliot Smith, *The Migration of Early Culture*. (Manchester, 1915); W. J. Perry, *The Megalithic Culture of Indonesia*. (Manchester, 1918) &c.

TYPES OF THE YAYOISHIKI POTTERY

The Yayaishiki pottery is a kind of pottery found in various parts of Japan, especially in the south-western provinces. They occur sometimes associated with stone implements, sometimes in the tombs with metal objects. So it is clear that pottery was manufactured by Proto-Japanese or ancient Japanese from the time when they used stone implements down to the histroic age, though the origin of the fabric is much disputed. The colour of the pottery is usually light brown, sometimes red-painted and polished with black spots, much resembling the black-topped ware of the Predynastic Egyptians. Generally they are plain, but not seldom have certain geometric ornaments incised upon them. In the following plates we show the different forms of the pottery, chiefly in our University Museum and those of which we have personally made sketches in various places. We regret that we have not been able to include those important specimens in the collections of the Tokyo Imperial University and of the Tokyo Imperial Household Museum, &c. But it is to be expected that this first attempt at a *corpus* of the pottery will be accepted as a useful and fundamental contribution to our archaeology and more complete ones of this kind will follow after our example.

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