

A SYMBOL OF ANCIENT JAPANESE HISTORY CARVED ON LIMESTONE IN OKINAWA

by

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Summary

The ruins called GUSUKU in Ryukyu (Okinawa) Islands are usually considered as a kind of castle, however most of the GUSUKU have religious sanctuary called UTAKI in which people do some religious behavior. A legendary goddess AMAMIKO in Okinawa was believed to be the constructor of the TAMA-GUSUKU castle, one of the oldest GUSUKU in Tamagusuku-village. The TAMA-GUSUKU-castle has queerly carved gate by digging out of limestone of an upheaval coral reef. The shape of the gate is alike to GOHORA-shell (*Strombus latissimus*) itself and that in the form of a bracelet, which was the special symbol of political and religious power in mainland Japan especially in Kyusyu in the war time of middle-stage in the Yayoi period (about 200 BC – 50 AD). The GUSUKU should be made by a religious and political group of women named AMAMIKO who came from mainland Japan about 2000 years ago. The native people of Okinawa respected the AMAMIKO very much, and the AMAMIKO gradually had become a prototype of the goddess, this being considered to be the origin of characteristic religion in Okinawa. A chant that has been handed down orally in Okinawa shows that the people from mainland had come to Okinawa in quest of *kuni-no-naosa* (the peace of nation).

The GOHORA-bracelets, containing so-called “hoe blade-shaped stone” that was made of stone keeping its shape as that of the shell-bracelet, were distributed almost all over Japanese Islands until about 350 AD. Therefore, the GOHORA from Okinawa was supposed to be one of the symbols of the unity among the small states of Japanese Islands for ending the wartime.

The greatest symbol of the followed new age so-called Kohun (ancient burial mounds) period was the huge tomb that was named archaeologically as “keyhole shaped mound”, which was noticed to be alike to the hoe blade-shaped stone that originated from the GOROURA-shell. This suggests that Okinawa Island was once considered a kind of Utopia for the first established united nation in Japan at the early stage of the ancient burial mounds period.

1. A strange limestone gate of castle ruins in Tamagusuku village

THE RUINS called GUSUKU in Ryukyu (Okinawa) Islands are usually considered as a kind of castle, however many arguments on the significance of the GUSUKU have been continuing for long time, because GUSUKU is seemed not only for defensive institution. Even now, most of the GUSUKU have religious sanctuary called UTAKI in which people do some religious behavior, although the UTAKI is not always inside of the GUSUKU. There are no such places in the castle of mainland Japan. The people in mainland Japan usually do their religious behavior in the shrine or temple.

There is one of the oldest GUSUKU named TAMA-GUSUKU in *Tamagusuku* village. According to a legend, the goddess AMAMIKO, who was believed to be a kind of creator of Okinawa, constructed the TAMA-GUSUKU castle. It has not been known clearly who the AMAMIKO was in the history of Okinawa. We would like to approach to the lost history of Japan, examining the queerly carved gate of TAMA-GUSUKU castle, which is shown in Fig.1.

Although we can see some building blocks of limestone in part, the gate of the GUSUKU is clear to be made by digging out of a big limestone of an upheaval coral reef. The dug height of the gate is 1.75 m or more. The lower part of the gate is finely curved, giving a belief that the gate was made artificially with a mysterious intention.

The legendary AMAMIKO might be a real person, because "she" made this artificial institution, and also she might be considered to be a leading person of a group that was big enough to construct such a large-scale GUSUKU castle. This postulation would lead that there might be a certain hidden historical facts in the background of this legend.

Presume that the TAMA-GUSUKU was constructed mainly as a defensive facility preparing for outbreak of battle. The main gate of the defensive facility generally should have a strong door not to be destroyed by outside invader, so that the lower part of the gate should be simply square. The gate shown in Fig.1 must be difficult to have a strong door, because it is so complex in its figure of bottom. In fact, there is no any trace that the gate once had the door. These findings suggests that the TAMA-GUSUKU castle had not been constructed as the facility for battle. Therefore we have to consider about the sanctuary that is the other significance of the GUSUKU. This might be connected with a historical phenomenon that took place about 2000 years ago, in the middle stage of *Yayoi* Period as described below. At that time, a number of people came to Okinawa from mainland Japan.

2. The origin of the figure of gate might be a shape of cell-bracelet

ABOUT 3,000 years ago, the cultivation of paddy-field rice was introduced from continental China and/or Korean peninsula. This new culture was widely spread in almost all part of Japanese Islands together with metal technique up to about 2,300 years ago. The spread of these new technologies was epoch-making for opening of a new time called *Yayoi* period that had been continued up to about 250 AD for more than 600 years, the beginning time of the *Yayoi* being one of the hottest disputing points at present.

The population in Japanese Islands increased with the spread of new agricultural technology. At the same time, with a misfortune, the new civilization brought an age of civil wars caused by shortage of field and water that were required for more and stable rice crop.

Curiously, in such wartime of *Yayoi* period middle stage, special bracelets that were made from big shells collected in Okinawa



Fig.1: The gate of TAMA-GUSUKU castle

islands had become popular in mainland Japan especially in Kyushu. Figure 2 shows the whole shell that is called GOHORA in general at present, which seems to be connected with construction of the TAMA-GUSUKU as described below.

BY THE WAY, the fact that the shell-bracelet was made from GOHORA (*Strombus latissimus*) from Okinawa had not been known for long time, until Dr. M. Nagai, an anthropologist of Kyushu University, proved it in 1969.

The *Kaki-no-hana* shell mound, also one of the ruins of the Yayoi period middle stage, is located about 1.3 km far from TAMA-GUSUKU castle. Once from this shell mound, archaeologists unearthed a GOHORA-shell bracelet, which the same type was shown in Fig.3-2 comparing with the right-and-left reversal figure of the gate (Fig.3-1). The shape of the bracelet made from GOHORA was changed later as shown in Fig.3-3 (by Professor Kinoshita of Kumamoto University) in around 200-300 AD that was between the last stage of Yayoi and the first stage of the KOHUN (ancient burial mounds) period.

These figures show that the shape of the castle gate is very much alike to GOHORA itself and that in the form of the bracelet. Therefore, a conclusion could be obtained that the gate of the GUSUKU was dug out imaging the GOHORA and its bracelet, and that the GUSUKU should be made by the power of people came from mainland Japan with help of native people of Okinawa 2000 years ago.

The legend in Okinawa indicated that those people consisted of mainly women, or their leader was a woman named AMAMIKO. The native people of Okinawa respected the AMAMIKO very much, and she gradually had become a prototype of goddess, it being considered to be the origin of characteristic religion in Okinawa. This also explains why

the people of Okinawa have been doing the religious behavior still now in sanctuary UTAKI that is inside of the GUSUKU, a kind of castle.

3. The precious GOHORA in ancient history of Japan

It was proved that the GOHORA-shells were collected only in Okinawa including its surrounding small islands. Contrastively, the shell-bracelets were widely distributed over western Japan, mainly in the Kyushu at the time of Yayoi period middle stage. Fig.4 shows the distribution map of the shell-bracelets. There contained the points of shell-pile ruins in which the raw materials of shell were accumulated in holes, which indicated the habitats of the collected shellfishes.

The distribution map would indicate that the collected GOHORA-shells were transported to mainland Japan under that wartime, it indicating that the people of mainland might consider the GOHORA-shells as to be the opposite of the scene of war, namely as the symbols of peace. In fact, one of the chants that have been chanting at a religious festival in Okinawa says that the people from mainland had come to Okinawa in quest of *kuni-no-naosa* (literally, justice of nation, in other words, it would be the peace).

GOHORA-bracelets were distributed mainly on today's Fukuoka, Saga and Nagasaki prefecture, and were unearthed from the graves of head-class persons in those countries. Therefore, the GOHORA from Okinawa was supposed to be one of the symbols of political power. If assumption that GOHORA was the symbol of peace was reasonable as stated above, the GOHORA-bracelets should be considered to become also the symbol of the unity among the small state group of Kyushu for ending the wartime.

The spread of GOHORA-bracelet in mainland Japan once ended within the middle



Fig.2: The GOHORA shell

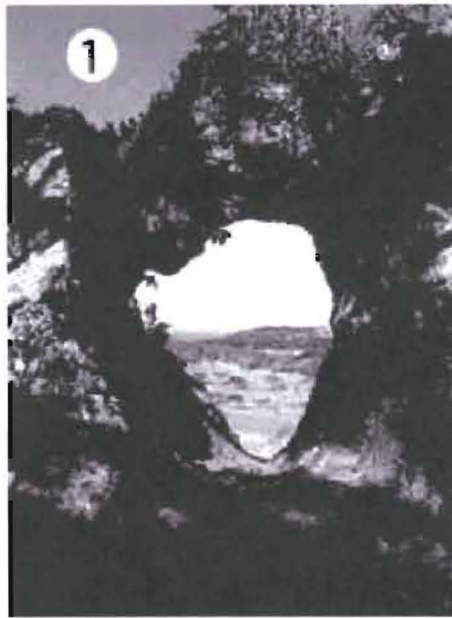


Fig.3-1: Figure of the gate



Fig.3-2: GOHORA-shell bracelet

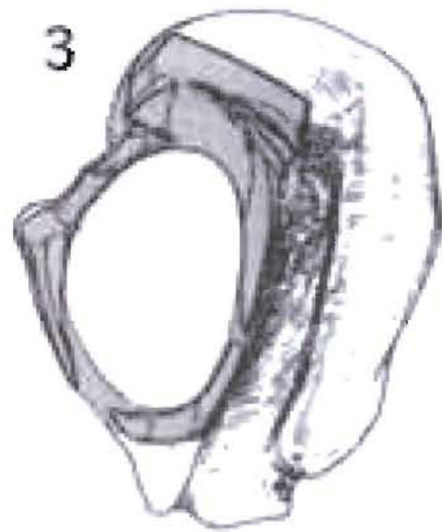


Fig.3-3: The shape of the bracelet made from GOHORA was changed later

of the *Yayoi* period. The accumulation ruins of GOHORA in Okinawa had not seen since then either, however GOHORA-bracelets had not been forgotten in Japanese Islands. About 100 years after since once the bracelets had disappeared, the bracelets became popular again beyond Hyogo prefecture that was the north bounds in the Fig.4.

4. Hoe blade-shaped stone came from the GOHORA-bracelet

CURIOUSLY, the GOHORA-bracelet had begun to be made using the stone of mainland Japan as its materials instead of GOHORA itself, keeping its shape as that of characteristic GOHORA-bracelet. The stone bracelet was named "Hoe blade-shaped stone" in Edo period (1603-1869), because its shape was alike to a blade of hoe as shown in Fig.5-2. The stone bracelet of Fig.5-2 was excavated from an ancient tomb of about 3rd century in Osaka, together with the bracelet made from GOHORA (Fig.5-1) at the same time.

They are quite alike in the shape. Therefore it had become an accepted theory that the hoe blade-shaped stone was a copy of the GOHORA bracelet. As described above, the GOHORA was collected only in Okinawa, so that the hoe blade-shaped stone could be defined as "Okinawa-type stone bracelet". There were some other types of bracelet made from other kinds of shells that were collected in southern sea as like the GOHORA at the same time. The definition of "Okinawa-type stone bracelet" is able to include them.

The distribution pattern of the Okinawa-type stone bracelets in almost all Japan was totally shown in Fig.6, comparably with that of a type of bronze mirror (*san-kaku-buti-sin-zyu-kyo*: trihedron-edged mirror with the relief of a sacred animal on the back).

This type of bronze mirror was considered as a symbol of the original union-government

known as YAMATAI-KOKU, the first nation materialized in Japanese Islands in about 250 AD year at Kinki (near NARA and Kyoto) district. The comparable distribution pattern clearly indicated that the Okinawa-type stone bracelets should be also the symbol of the political right for the first nation materialized in Japanese Islands. This indicates that the Okinawa itself might be a symbolic existence for the original nation of Japan, the YAMATAI-KOKU.

5. The shape of keyhole-shaped mound came from the shape of Okinawa-type stone bracelet

The confused ages of the *Yayoi* period with wartime had finished, and the unified nation was born in the Japanese Islands. The peaceful time that people asked for was recovered, although it had continued only for 100 years or less.

According to a Chinese ancient literature, the most important person of the unified country of Japan was a queen named HIMIKO. The HIMIKO might be the same name as the goddess AMAMIKO of Okinawa, because HI (sun) is convertible to AMA (heaven or sky) in Japanese. The AMA also means the sea or ocean, so that the name AMAMIKO means the goddess of/from the sea. The name HIMIKO or AMAMIKO maybe was not for an individual but for a status.

THE NEW AGES so called the *Kofun* (ancient burial mounds) period at present had continued approximately from the 3rd century to 7th century. The greatest symbol of the new period was the huge tomb called "keyhole shaped mound". The shape of the central part of the tomb is alike to a keyhole, as the English name of the tomb indicates (Fig.7-1).

There have been various discussions what the keyhole shape of the mound means, however no accepted theory has being established yet. In the meantime, the shape of the hoe blade-shaped stone had been changed to be

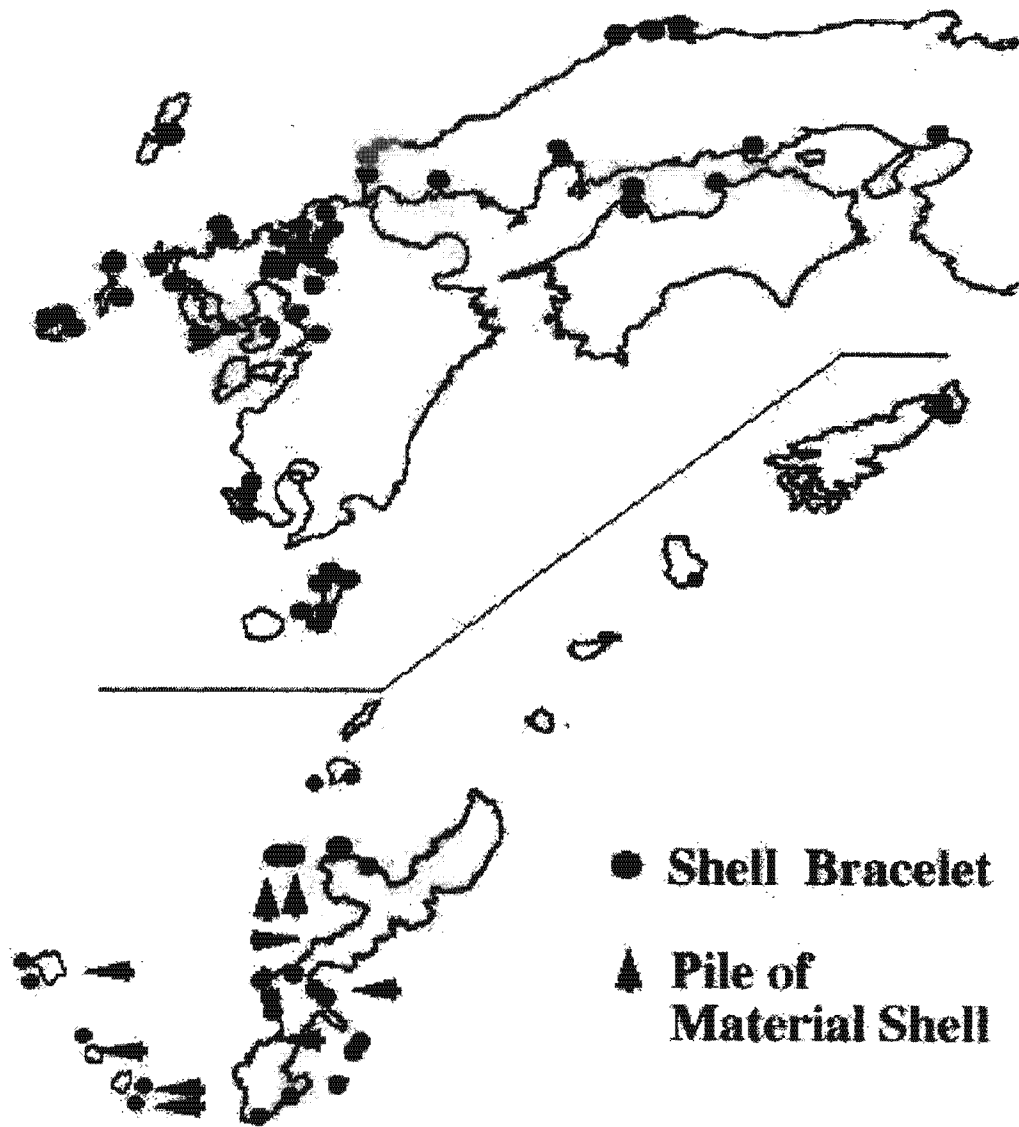


Fig.4: Distribution Map of the Shell-bracelets

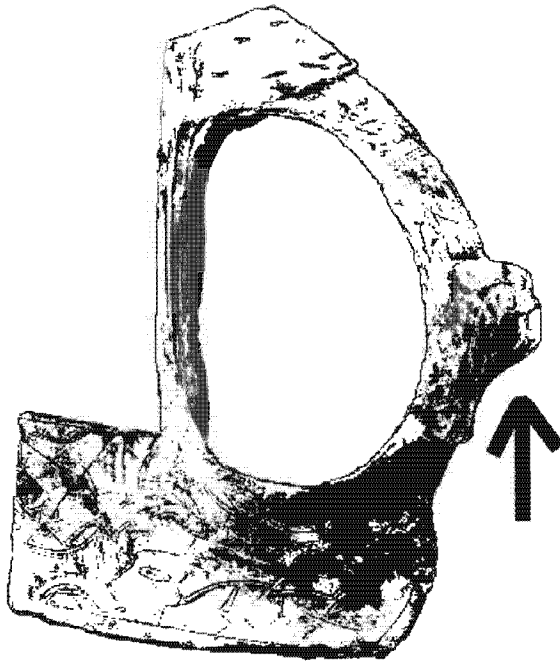


Fig.5-1: Bracelet made from GOHORA

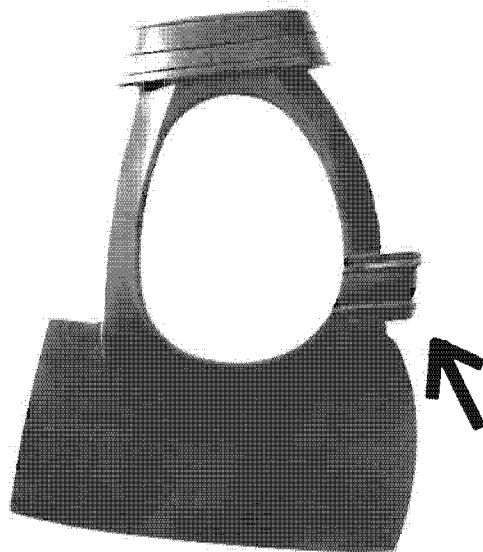


Fig.5-2: "Hoe blade-shaped stone"

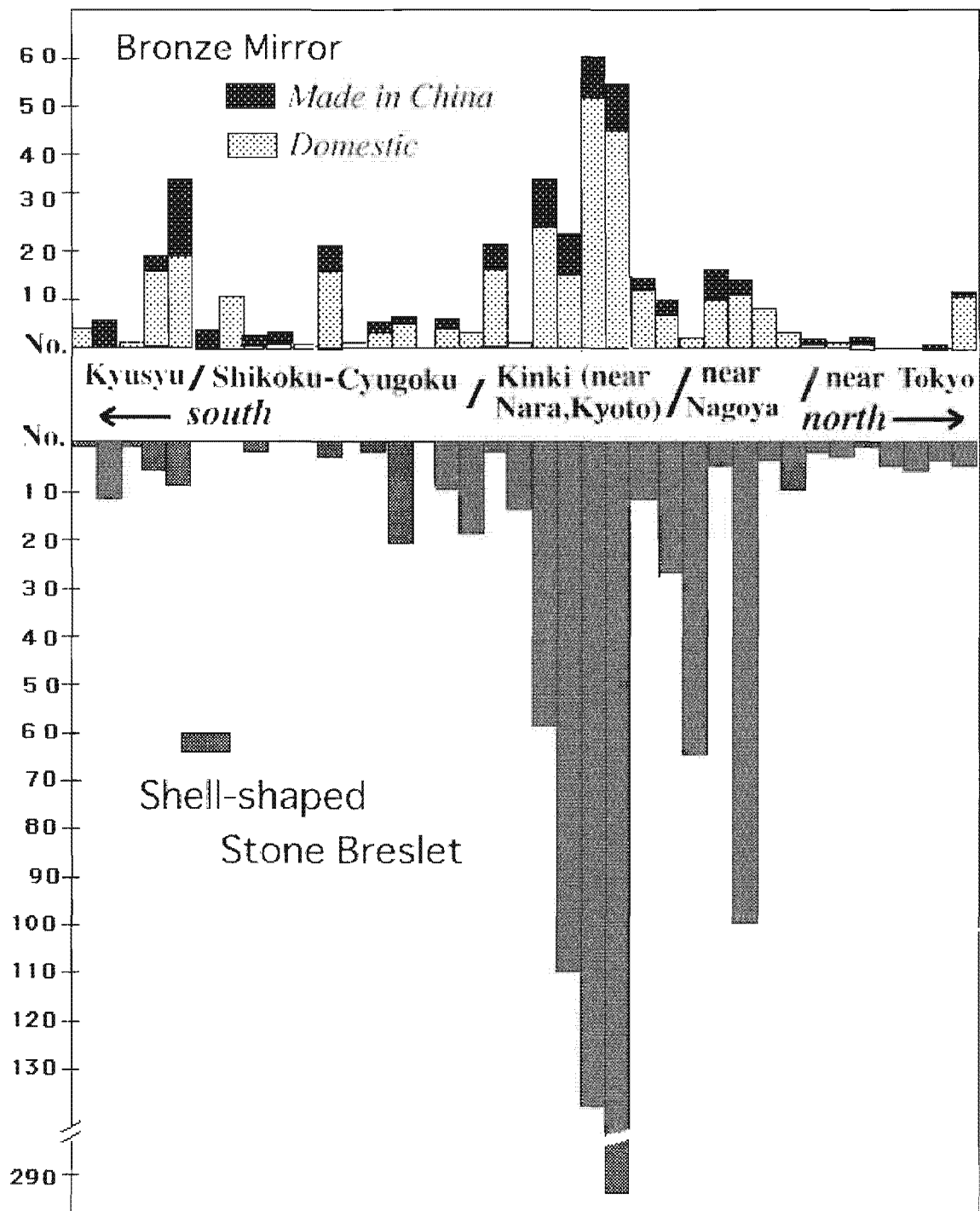


Fig.6: Distribution of Okinawa-type Stone-Bracelet, and Bronze Mirror in the 4th Century over Japanese Islands

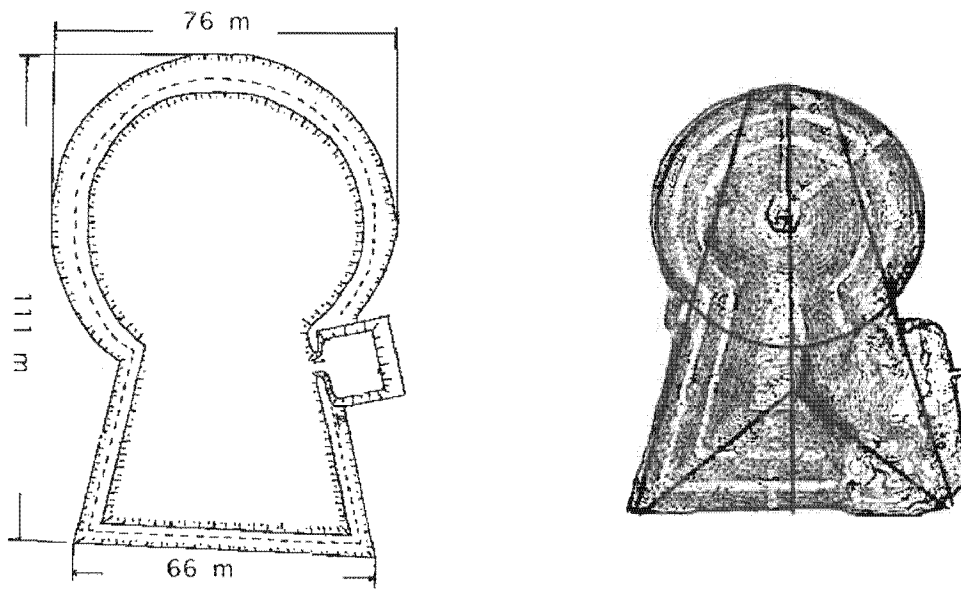
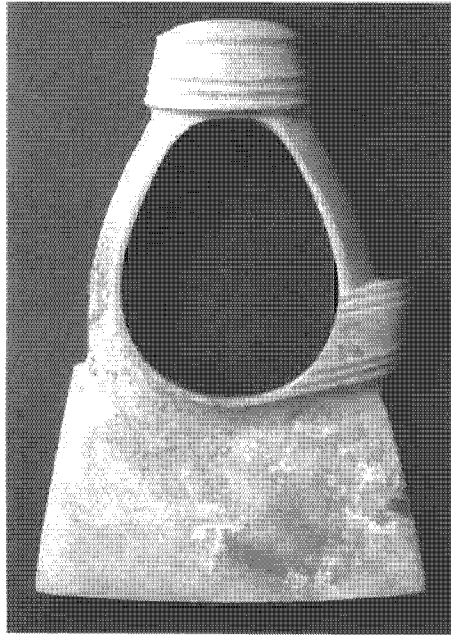


Fig.7-1: Keyhole shaped mound



Figg.7-2: Hoe blade-shaped stone

approximately symmetrical even in its unbalanced lower part as shown in Fig.7-2, it being able to compare with the typical keyhole shaped mound of Fig.7-1. Those are alike to each other therefore the origin of shape of these two should be same, being no other than the GOHORA.

THUS THE GOROURA could be considered that it had been used as the symbol of political power until about 350 AD for more than 350 years, the time covering the processes of formation, achievement and collapse of the initially unified country in Japanese Islands. This maybe means that the initial government of Japan considered Okinawa as one of the most important districts.

In the KONJIKI, the oldest book of Japanese history and myth, there appeared two mysterious countries, TOKOYO-NO-KUNI (literally, eternal country) and WATATUMI-NO-KAMI-NO-MIYA (the home country of the sea-god). These two would be understandable as being Okinawa as a kind of Utopia for ancient Japan as follows.

The WATATUMI-NO-KAMI-NO-MIYA (the home country of the sea-god) was told as related to the source of political right for the first Emperor JINMU. It was located in the offing of one-day distance from SATUMA peninsula (in Kagoshima prefecture) by riding on the back of a shark, which was a vehicle of god. This indicated the place must be Okinawa.

The first Emperor JINMU'S mother, TAMA-YORI-HIME, was the second daughter of the sea-god. Also his father's mother, TOYO-TAMA-HIME was the first daughter of the sea-god. According to the KOJIKI, the true character of the TOYO-TAMA-HIME was a shark, although another myth book said it was a dragon. Therefore these women should be considered as the original symbols for authorization of the first Emperor.

In these two women's name, it contained a ward TAMA respectively, which literally means jewelry ball. The TAMA also meant usually the bracelet in ancient Japan, so that the name of the first daughter TOYO-TAMA-HIME would mean literally "the rich bracelet princess" and the second TAMA-YORI-HIME, "the princess standing on bracelet". Thus, we could suppose the first daughter of the sea-god were as a symbol of the GOHORA-bracelet in 2000 years ago in Kyusyu, and the second one were the hoe blade-shaped stone that widely spread all over Japan, respectively.

Returning to TAMA-GUSUKU in the first paragraph, now we understand why it contained TAMA in its name. Not only from its shape of the gate, but also from its name, we could estimate what happened here 2000 years ago. The TAMA meant the big shell for the bracelet that became the symbol of unified nation of Japan. We would like to get another opportunity to describe that the TAMA also meant woman's wombs that could eat the devil, which stood for the wartime of *Yayoi* period.

FOLKLORISTS in Okinawa have been considering the gate of TAMA-GUSUKU as *Tida-ga-ana* (a hole of the sun), which was written in the chant book OMORO-SAUSI that was edited in the period of Ryukyu Kingdom. The local name of GOHORA in the Ryukyu Islands was *teda-nu-su* (mother of the sun) or *teruko-niya* (shell of the sun), so that the naming as the *Tida-ga-ana* (a hole of the sun) for the gate of TAMA-GUSUKU, the shape of GOHORA, would be reasonable.

Ancient people maybe considered that the rising sun from the horizon was born in the big GOHORA-shell living under the eastern ocean, and setting sun would return to the GOHORA again in western sea.

The gate is opened to the northeast direction, which is the direction of mainland Japan. There is a main sacred place just inside of the

gate directing southwest, which must be supposed to be the direction of the setting sun in a time of afternoon. About 2000 years ago, AMAMIKO's people maybe did prayer here for the peace of whole Japan to the setting sun.

IMMEDIATELY after passing along the gate and coming into inside, they could sit at the sacred place and prayed their desire, supposing the solar light went through the hole of gate and the holy light would reached their home country in Kyusyu and others. This imagination must be the original concept of the hole of sun, together with the concept of the mother of the sun. The GOHORA itself, the GOHORA-bracelet, all kinds of the Okinawa-type stone bracelet and also keyhole-shaped mound might be considered as the hole of sun in ancient Japan.

6. The end of Okinawa ages in ancient Japan

Typical grave goods in the middle stage of the KOHUN (ancient burial mounds) period were changed to weapons, instead of peaceful goods like the Okinawa-type stone bracelets that were once typical grave goods in the first stage. The Okinawa-type stone bracelet had disappeared since around 350 AD years, the beginning of middle stage of the KOHUN period, although the keyhole-shaped mound had continued to be built as huge symbol of autocratic regimes until the 7th century when Buddhism become popular. This new trend probably meant the intimate relation between Okinawa and mainland Japan was broken. Since then, Okinawa had been isolated and later become independent as the Ryukyu Kingdom.

Almost all the people of Japan including Okinawa believe that Okinawa became a part of Japan for the first time when the Ryukyu Kingdom was annexed by the *Satsuma-han* (Kagoshima prefecture at present) in 1609. It might be true if you could ignore the older

ages than the 5th century in Japanese history. Also linguistics and many folkloric evidences indicate that their belief is due to their misunderstanding.

The language in Ryukyu (Okinawa) islands belongs to one line of Japanese language. According to a linguist's opinion, the language that has been spoken around the Okinawa areas was separated from the language of mainland Japan at around the 3rd century. The archaeological evidences described above agree to this linguist's research result.

Even after being isolated from mainland Japan, the people of Okinawa have been continuing the old religious festival that was caused by the people from the Kyusyu. A leading woman, who is usually called NORO in the religious festival, recites a lot of chants, which have been published as texts recently together with the description of festival situations. These chants maybe include a core-thought for the formation of first unified nation of original Japan.

THERE APPEARS in these chants an interesting phrase that says *yamato-kara-kudarita-akawann-no-yonaosi*, literally means that the red-boll revolution that had come down from mainland Japan. The "red-boll" in this phrase maybe means the red colored earthenware that was made in Kyusyu and was known as SUGU-type earthenware at present, because no other red colored goods have come to Okinawa. It was widely spread over western Japan including Okinawa and also to a part of Korean peninsula. The red SUGU-type earthenware was spread at the same ages and over the same districts as the GOHORA-bracelet. According to those chants and other folkloric data, the red-boll was the symbol of *Yonaosi* (social reformation), namely the revolution.

These suggest that the whole formation process of the original Japan as a nation was due to a social reformation movement named

“the red-boll revolution”. This might be the reason why the first unify nation of Japan was hidden together with Okinawa as the ideal mother’s land of the original Japan. The idealism of the first government was not acceptable for the military dictatorship that

was successively born in the Japanese island in the middle of the 4th century.

The gate of TAMA-GUSUKU castle, and other evidences briefly described here would be the keys to unveil the hidden history of ancient Japan in around the 4th century.

REFERENCES

Hiroshi NAGO, “AKAWANN-NO-YONAOSHI (The red-boll revolution)”, 2001, Yui Publication, Gushikawa-city Japan.

The description about the shape of the gate of TAMAGUSUKI castle relating to the HOGOURA-shell is first appeared in this report, however the historical background of this was already described in an author’s own above work (in Japanese) in detail. Almost all the figures taken up in this paper were already carried in this book, in which the sources of the original drawing of them were notified already.

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要旨

沖縄各地にあるグスクとよばれる遺跡は、「城」の字をあてられるが、ほとんどのグスクの内部にはウタキ（御嶽）という一種の聖地が存在し、グスクが戦争のためだけの施設ではなかったことを示唆する。最も古いグスクの一つである玉城グスクは、伝承によれば、沖縄の祖神アマミコが造ったとされ、その城門は隆起サンゴ礁の石灰岩を削り貫いた奇妙な形のものである。

弥生時代中期（およそ BC 200 - AD 50）、九州を主とする日本本土から、須玖（すぐ）系の土器を携えた人々が奄美・沖縄にまで来島し、海底からとれる巻き貝（ゴホウラなど）を採取して持ち帰り、それを腕輪の形にして西日本各地に広めたが、玉城グスクの城門は、そのゴホウラ製腕輪の形に削り貫かれていることに注目すべきである。ゴホウラの腕輪は玉城村内にある貝塚からも出土しており、グスクの城門は弥生中期の九州から来た人々が刻んだものと思われる。

ゴホウラの腕輪は、日本本土においては、政権の中枢にあった人々が用いたものであった。また沖縄の神祭りに伴って歌われる神歌では、本土からの人々は沖縄に「国の直さ（平和）とりに来た」とされることから、貝の腕輪は単なる装飾品ではなく、戦争の時代を克服することを目指した人々による政治的、宗教的なシンボルであったと思われる。本土から来島したその人々こそが沖縄でいう女神アマミコの原形であり、女性たちを主体とする一種の革命運動の集団であったことは、「ヤマトから下りたる赤腕の世直し」という神歌の章句からも示唆される。

ゴホウラの腕輪は、弥生後期から古墳時代前期になると、南島の巻き貝の原形を保ちながらもその材料を石に転換し、東北地方の南部にまで普及する。邪馬台国すなわち原初のヤマト国家は、これらの沖縄を記念する遺物の拡大にともなって形成されたと考えられるから、原初のヤマトは、沖縄の神歌にいう「赤腕の世直し」という一種の革命運動の結果形成された、不戦と平和を目指した連合的な国家であったと思われる。当時、沖縄は日本神話でいう常世国、すなわち一種のユートピアと想定されたのであろう。