

Akasaka-Imai Tomb

The Akasaka-Imai Tomb is the burial site of a powerful leader of an ancient kingdom of this area, historically known as Tango. Measuring 51 by 45 meters, it was one of the largest tombs in Japan at the time it was constructed around the turn of the third century. The size of the mound indicates that the person entombed had great economic power in what must have been a stable agrarian society.

A total of 25 graves have been discovered on this site, six of which, located on the upper level, belong to the former ruler and presumably close family members. The largest burial chamber has not yet been fully excavated, but the wooden coffin found in the second largest was opened in 2000. The deceased had deteriorated inside, leaving behind a red silhouette and the remnants of a glass and jasper beaded headdress. A pair of earrings, an iron sword, and a *yariganna* planing tool were also unearthed. Some of the glass beads contained an imported blue pigment, and the iron instruments were made with technology nonexistent in Japan, evidence that this civilization traded with the Asian continent.

Postholes located west of the main chamber indicate that funeral rites were held there. Although it is unclear what rituals were performed, approximately 300 rocks and pieces of crushed earthenware were recovered from the surface; these were perhaps scattered during funeral ceremonies.

Artifacts from the tomb, including the original beads and a replica headdress, are on display at the Ancient Tango Village Museum.