

Advance of the Kashiwade no Omi Clan

Overview

The commercial and political relationship between Wakasa and the capital of the country began to take shape sometime before the eighth century. By that time, the emperor's court had already recognized the value of Wakasa's natural resources and strategic location along the coast of the Sea of Japan. A powerful clan that governed the region was made responsible for supplying food (particularly marine products) for the emperor and court nobility. As official purveyors of food to the court, the clan was granted the title of Kashiwade no Omi.

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A Powerful Wakasa Clan Supplying Food to the Court

Sometime in the second half of the seventh century, the Wakasa region came under the jurisdiction of the Yamato court, located in present-day Nara Prefecture. Among the regions along the Sea of Japan, Wakasa was the closest to the capital and thus an ideal source of marine products. To secure these resources, an influential clan that ruled over the area was appointed to serve as officials responsible for supplying food from Wakasa to the court and became formally known as Kashiwade no Omi. During the following centuries, the relationship with the capital (Nara and later Kyoto) developed and strengthened due to a network of trade routes and a high demand for the abundant seafood from Wakasa.

Ancient Burial Mounds and the Kashiwade no Omi Clan

The Kashiwade no Omi clan appears to be connected to some of the *kofun* (burial mounds) discovered in the Wakasa region. The clan ruled during a time when such tombs were built for clan leaders and other powerful figures. Excavations of the *kofun* in Wakasa unearthed various grave goods demonstrating that the region was a trading hub between the capital and mainland Asia. Such items were rare and valuable markers of status, indicating that the burial mounds were built for people of importance with ties to the capital, such as the Kashiwade no Omi clan.

Exhibition Items

The display features artifacts and historical documents related to the Kashiwade no Omi clan and their activities in the Wakasa region. Replicas of grave goods found in the burial chamber of Nishizuka Tumulus, one of the several *kofun* located in Wakasa,

include a decorated mirror, a silver bell, a gilt bronze belt fitting, and gold earrings. The clay fragments are from *haniwa*, ceremonial objects that once lined the exterior of the burial mound.

The texts on exhibit are Edo-period (1603–1867) reprints of *Sendai kuji hongei* and *Nihon shoki*, two of the early Japanese histories that contain some information about the Kashiwade no Omi clan. For example, volume 10 of *Sendai kuji hongei* tells the story of how Arato no Mikoto, the son of the clan's founder, was appointed to govern the Wakasa region in the fifth century.