I. Various Views on the Kofun Period Political Organization

A. Old Marxist view of “tribal confederacy” (dominant until the 1980’s)

B. Tsude’s proposal of an “early state” model based on the proposed “keyhole-tomb [political] system”

C. Suzuki Yasutami’s introduction of American neo-evolutionary model of chiefdom

D. Other views

1. Chiefdom confederacy

2. Fukunaga Shin’ya’s introduction of a “theater state” by Clifford Geertz

3. Cultural anthropologist Sasaki Komei’s introduction of “galactic polity” model by Stanley Tambiah (Harvard U.)

II. Evidence for the Strong Central Polity

A. Largest keyhole-shaped tumuli always located in Yamato (Nara), Kawachi and Izumi (Osaka)

B. Standard of the mound construction (construction plan) distributed to local elites by the highest-ranking chief in Yamato: 1/2, 1/3, 1/6 copies of the Hashihaka keyhole-shaped tumulus in Nara found in Kyoto and Okayama (Kibi)

C. Existence of three-tiered ranking system within elites in Yamato (Nara), Kawachi and Izumi (Osaka): 250+meter-class keyhole-shaped tumuli, 150meter-class keyhole-shaped tumuli, and circular and/or square tumuli (three-tiered ranking system absent in most other
regions): Striking correlation between the sizes and forms of mounds and the quality and quantities of funerary offerings deposited with the dead

III. Evidence for Autonomous Regional Polities

A. “Keyhole-tomb [political] system” not observed in eastern Japan

1. At Omuro, Shinano, small circular mounds with rich funerary offerings exist (would have been keyhole-shaped tumuli in Yamato, Kawachi, and Izumi)

2. At Shimokomatsu, Yamagata Prefecture (old province of Dewa), the foot of a small keyhole-shaped tumulus was destroyed during the construction of a circular tumulus

B. Local polities interacted with one another, probably without permission of the central polity

1. Haniwa fired in northern Musashi were exported to Kazusa (southern Chiba), and rocks collected in coastal regions of Kazusa were used in a stone burial chamber in northern Musashi

2. Floor plan of tunnel tombs (horizontal burial chambers dug into cliffs, no mounds) shared in southern Musashi and northern Hitachi

C. Some local polities interacted with polities in southern Korean peninsula

1. Practice of raising and reproducing horses may be introduced independently in northern and southern Shinano and Kawachi