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Inheritance of Sanctuaries: The Reuse of Kofuns in Tokyo

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ABSTRACT

“Kofuns” are Japanese ancient tombs that were built from the mid-third to seventh centuries. Some of these Kofuns have survived into the present urban tissue despite being reused and showing changes in their form and their meaning. This study investigates panoramically the modes of reuse of ancient tumuli in today’s modern Tokyo by considering the characteristic phenomenon of “inheritance of sanctuaries.” As the base of consideration, I present the historical background of Kofun and its distribution in the Tokyo area. Then I clarify the mode of reuse of Kofuns from seven points as follows: “Reuse as cemeteries,” “Reuse as precincts of temples and shrines,” “Reuse as Fujizuka,” “Reuse as mounds in the garden,” “Reuse as signposts,” “Reuse of soil,” and “Reuse of stone.” By presenting some characteristic cases, such as Matsuchiyama Shoden, Shiba Maruyama Kofun, and Tomizuka Kofun at Waseda, this study reveals the inheritance of topological meaning as sanctuaries of Kofuns in later periods.

Keywords: Inheritance; Sanctuary; Kofun; Tokyo

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Introduction

The urbanization of the Tokyo metropolis has progressed radically over the past 400 years since the settlement of Edo as the capital by the Tokugawa Shogunate. Unlike historical towns in Europe, the continuity of historical cities in today's modern Tokyo cannot be easily observed.

Wooden architecture, which is considered to be common, is the mainstream form of architecture in Japan. This fact explains why few historical buildings remain to this day because they were easily destroyed by earthquakes, fires, and typhoons. However, some traces of ancient life can still be found within urban Tokyo. Kanto region, where people have lived continuously from prehistoric times, has evolved from its political status as the great rival of Kinki region, the area which includes Nara, Osaka, and Kyoto as the capital of the Emperor's court. For example, ancient roads in Tokyo have been retained in the modern road networks, and although buildings have disappeared over time, the relationship between Jiwari (border of property) and the streets has been preserved.

One of the elements that connect the old with modern times is "Kofuns," Japanese ancient tombs that have survived in Tokyo despite showing changes in their form and, in some respects, their meaning. Given their long history, these tumuli hold some topological significance in today's Tokyo. Even after the memories related to a buried people have disappeared, a natural reverence for the Kofun structure formed a type of sacredness. The transfer of the sacredness to the new functions of the reuse is a characteristic of the reuse of Kofuns. This work investigates how these ancient barrows have been reused in today's modern Tokyo by considering the characteristic phenomenon of "Inheritance of Sanctuaries."

1. Overview of Kofuns

Kofuns are graves with megalithic mounds that were built throughout Japan (except in Okinawa and Hokkaido) from the mid-third to seventh centuries. These tombs, which show some variations in the shape of their barrows (square or circular), number around 200,000, including the passive graves.

In the mid-third century, local leaders were appointed through an order of the Yamato regime under the leadership of Queen Himiko. The governmental and societal structures evolved and achieved control over the entire country. In the late third century, local clans who had political, social, economic, and military power built many Kofuns as symbols of their authority. This historical period is called the "Kofun era" in Japan.

Kofuns were mostly built near villages and beside main roads, high flat lands, and southern slopes with a view of a river or seashore (**Figure 1**).



Figure 1: Imaginary drawing of Otsuka-yama Kofun (mid-fifth century, Chiba); A view of the keyhole-shaped mound from the sea (Kofun Jidai 2, 1990) is shown.

Source: Drawn by author

Many of these tumuli were surrounded by a moat, a practice that was clearly an influence of moated settlements. The surface of the mound was often covered with pebbles, and numerous Haniwa¹ were set on and around the mound.

Kofuns come in many variations, such as keyhole-shaped, double round, and scallop-shaped barrows. The round or square mound was the most common type of Kofun during the Yayoi (BC 300–AD 300) and Kofun eras. Given that the construction of keyhole-shaped mounds was expensive and requires much labor, only the local leaders appointed by the Yamato regime were permitted to create such tombs. For example, the largest keyhole-shaped mound in Japan is the 486 meter-long Daisen Kofun (late fifth century) in Sakai, Osaka (**Figure 2**).

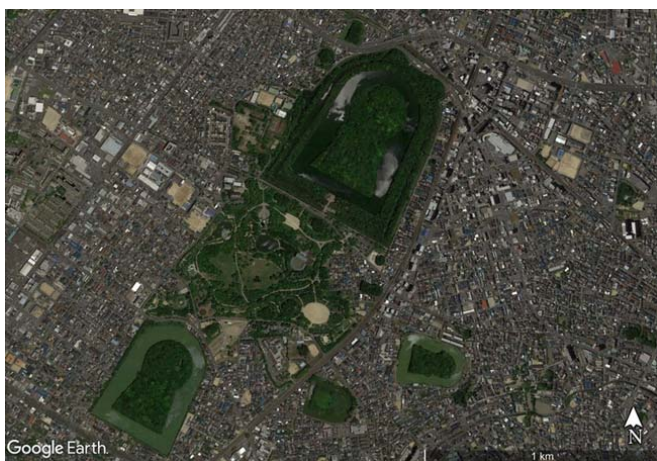


Figure 2: Daisen Kofun (center of the figure, late fifth century, Sakai, Osaka), the biggest keyhole-shaped mound in Japan. Daisen Kofun is a member of the Mozu tumulus clusters, which are composed of various-shaped mounds

Source: Google Earth

The alliance of local leaders with the Yamato regime was confirmed by the latter's permission to construct such a huge Kofun and by the gifts given, as symbolized in the burying of treasures. In fact, this Kofun was an imitation of the Emperor's grave.

In the stone chamber of a Kofun, a sarcophagus was set with buried treasures, including swords, mirrors, and beads, which were considered sacred symbols. The

stone chambers and sarcophaguses in Tokyo's Kofuns were built using Boshu stone, a gray tuff mixed shell fossil produced in Nokogiri-yama (Mount Saw) at the Boshu Peninsula in Chiba. Boshu stone is soft and easy to process. In ancient times, these stones were shipped from the quarry across Tokyo Bay to various ports in the Tokyo area, such as Shinagawa, Hibiya inlet, and Asakusa, and they were carried to the building sites also via water transport.

An edict issued in AD 646 restricted the scale of Kofuns according to the social position of the dead and forbade the burial of martyrs and horses. Aimed to highlight the Kofun as a symbol of the power of local leaders in the centralized Yamato regime, the issuance of this edict effectively stopped the construction of huge mounds and ended the Kofun era.

2. Distribution of Kofuns in Tokyo

Kofuns started to appear in Kanto region, which includes Tokyo, around the late fourth century following their appearance in Kinki region. Around 6,000 years ago, the Holocene glacial retreat raised the sea level approximately five meters higher than the present level, and Kanto Plain was inundated with water into the hinterland as a result. Musashino Terrace on the western side of Kanto Plain has a very complex coastline with numerous tongue-shaped plateaus facing Tokyo Bay. Tone River and Sumida River carried sand and alluvium to the bay, and a shipping port was constructed at the inlet to serve as the center of life and commerce. Owing to these factors, the water transportation systems and communities emerging at that time inspired the building of Kofuns near the sea or rivers.

The Kofuns in Tokyo are mainly distributed at the 1) east side of Musashino Terrace, 2) the Tokyo Lowland, 3) downstream of the left side of Tama River, 4) midstream of the left side of Tama River, and 5) midstream of the right side of Tama River (**Figure 3**).



Figure 3: Center of Tokyo in a transparent color shaded relief map by Google. The topography of Tokyo is clearly visible, and the contrast between Musashino Terrace and Tokyo Lowland is apparent. The reused Kofuns mentioned in this paper are indicated on the map.

Source: Google Earth

Ueno Plateau located northeast of Musashino Terrace has a cliff called Nippori Cliff Line, which has a height of about 20 meters and a length of about 10 kilometers and stretches from Nippori to Akabane-dai. Dubbed as the “greatest cliff in Tokyo,” Nippori Cliff Line was part of the ancient coastline on which many tumuli were built. The Tokyo Lowland is the estuary of Sumida River, a place suitable for water transport, fishery, and agriculture. A settlement and a port were built on the natural embankment of the river at a slightly higher point than its surroundings, and a group of Kofuns was built around the village. Ancient settlements formed at the basin of Tama River during the Jomon era (BC 10,000–BC 300), and the construction of numerous Kofuns soon followed. The city of Fuchu, which was located midstream of Tama River, served as the capital of Musashi province (AD 710) and became the political, military, and religious center of the province. Numerous ancient barrows were also built near Fuchu and Den-en-chofu.

This study examines the reused Kofuns in the center of Tokyo, particularly areas 1 and 2 (the east side of Musashino Terrace and the Tokyo Lowland, respectively).

Tokyo, once called “Edo” (meaning the “mouth of inlet”), changed significantly after the arrival of the Tokugawa clan (1590), which controlled six provinces in Kanto region. In 1457, Dokan Ohta, the military commander of the Uesugi clan (deputy governor of Musashi province), built Edo Castle to defend Musashi province. The castle faced Hibiya inlet, though Edo was a deserted local fishing village at that time. Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa started a major urbanization project to transform Edo into the capital of Japan. The project involved the reclamation of Hibiya inlet to create residential areas for main feudatories and the destruction of Mount Kanda to obtain soil for the reclamation. Over the years, the cityscape of Tokyo has radically changed, making it very difficult to find any trace of the old city in today’s modern era. Such radical change has included the destruction of the urban tissue as the growth and spread of the Tokyo metropolis continue.

3. Reuse of Kofuns

Studies on Kofuns have mainly been conducted in Kinki region. Although numerous ancient tombs can be found in Kanto region, research on ancient barrows in this area has not progressed because of the dominant political ideology about the Emperor, who has lived in Kinki region for many generations.

In Edo-Tokyo, the presence of ancient Kofuns was frequently referred as toponyms, for instance, Maruyama (big-scale mound), Otsuka (middle-scale mound), Totsuka (*To* means 10, referring to a cluster of burial mounds), Zenizuka (*Zeni* means coins, denoting the possibility of excavated burial goods), and Kitsunezuka or Hebizuka (fox mound or snake mound, referring to animals that lived in a passage or stone chamber). Many of these tombs have been defiled and destroyed to give way to buildings and road construction. The place name of Warizuka (divided mound) is not found in Tokyo, but it often means the road construction that cut through the mound.

In “Ancient Tokyo and Its Surroundings” (1927), archaeologist Ryuzo Torii found traces of ancient tumuli in the landscape of the Tokyo Lowland that burned during the Great Kanto Earthquake (1923). The elevated Kofuns in the burned fields clearly showed artificial and topographical features (**Figures 4 and 5**).



Figure 4: Benten-yama (Asakusa) just after the Great Kanto Earthquake (1923). The temple on the flattened mound appeared after the quake
Source: Torii, 1927.



Figure 5: Benten-yama and Senso-ji Temple (Asakusa) just after the Great Kanto Earthquake (1923). The site without surrounding buildings clearly shows the original form of the mound
Source: Torii, 1927

Torii hypothesized that many temples and shrines in Edo-Tokyo were built on the site of an ancient barrow. After discovering numerous Haniwa and burial goods from the tumulus clusters, including Shiba Maruyama Kofun, with his master, Dr. Tsuboi, Torii observed the “Inheritance of Sanctuaries.” The ancient graves in the original landscape of Tokyo later evolved into the sacred places.

According to Torii, some ancient barrows in Tokyo changed their appearance yet survived as sanctuaries. Below, I describe some ways that ancient Kofuns are reused following seven points: “Reuse as cemeteries,” “Reuse as precincts of temples and

shrines,” “Reuse as Fujizuka,” “Reuse as mounds in the garden,” “Reuse as signposts,” “Reuse of soil,” and “Reuse of stone.”

3.1. *Reuse as cemeteries*

The Kofuns, which had a pit stone chamber in the early and middle periods, were burial structures for the Emperor or a powerful leader. The body was buried in the pit stone chamber, which was then closed (single burial). By contrast, the mound with a passage and a chamber, which appeared by the end of the Kofun era, was usually closed by a stone table. Moreover, the local leader’s family or another member of the community could be buried in such a mound. Archaeological surveys clarified that multiple people were buried in one sarcophagus in some cases. Thus, the reuse of the mound with a pit stone chamber for reburials, additional burials, and group burials was observed in the Kofun era.

Unlike the above situation, in later times, the mounds were recognized as symbols of faith or as a resting place for the departed. Some Kofuns showed signs of being burial places for villagers and as places for pottery or coin donations conducted in later generations. Although there are no remaining Kofuns in Tokyo that are being reused as cemeteries, except one that refers to the legend of Taira no Masakado’s Kubizuka², the area between the mound and the moat of Hakayama Kofun (early fifth century; *Haka* means cemetery, and *Yama* means mound) in Osaka is currently being used as a graveyard. Small Kofuns have simply been used as burial places by digging a hole on the mound. Given the nature of Kofuns, their reuse as cemeteries may be considered rudimental.

3.2. *Reuse as precincts of temples and shrines*

Tumuli are recognized as sanctuaries, and since the Kofun era, they have taken on roles and functions beyond that of being only a tomb. A ritual field, such as an altar, was prepared around the mound. In the case of keyhole-shaped mounds, a special stage (Tsukuridashi) was built at the base on both sides of the mound on which rituals and prayers were performed.

After the Kofun

era, the names of the buried people were forgotten, but the sacredness of the mound was passed on in that place. These ancient mounds have become places of sanctity and religion and have been used for worshipping Shinto and Buddhist gods³, such as Inari, Hachiman, Tenjin, Koshin, and Benten. After the Middle Ages, Kofuns were converted into sites for religious buildings, namely, precincts for Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. Meanwhile, the mounds built in the plain regions offered sites and foundations for building temples, towers, and shrines.

The modes of reuse of Kofuns as sanctuaries are classified into three types according to the position of the shrine/temple, the relationship between the axis of the mound and the leading path, and the grade of demolition of the mound (**Figure 6**).

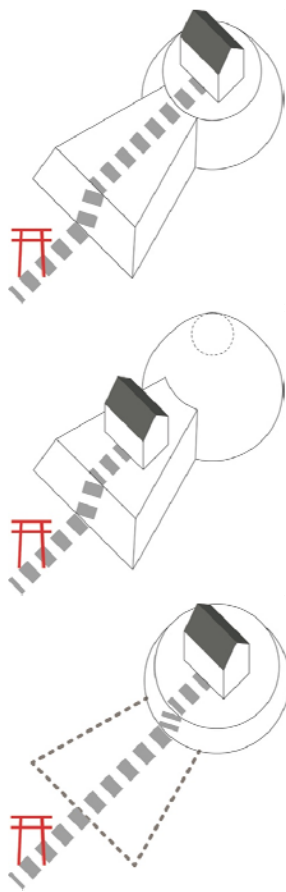


Figure 6: Reuse modes of Kofun as sanctuary; three types of the keyhole-shaped mound are reused as precincts of a Shinto shrine or Buddhist temple.

a) A shrine/temple built on the flattened mound and the set of the approach with a torii gate. A long axis is used for the leading path.

Examples: Matsuchi-yama Shoden, Suribachi-yama Kofun, Shiba Maruyama Kofun

b) A shrine/temple built on the front side of the keyhole-shaped mound. The mound on the rear side would be reused for another purpose, thereby maintaining its sacredness.

Example: Tomizuka Kofun

c) A shrine/temple built on the heavily demolished and flattened mound. The trace of barrow remains topographically located in the precincts.

Examples: Benten-yama, Shibamata Hachiman Shrine Kofun

Source: by author

a) A shrine/temple built on the flattened mound and the set of approach with the torii gate. In this case, the long axis of the Kofun would be used for the leading path. Matsuchi-yama Shoden, Suribachi-yama Kofun, and Shiba Maruyama Kofun are comparable examples in this paper.

b) A shrine/temple built on the front side of the keyhole-shaped mound. The round mound on the rear side would be reused for another purpose to retain its sacredness. Tomizuka Kofun and its reuse as a Fujizuka (i.e., a replica of Mt. Fuji) is an ideal example. Jujo Fujizuka Kofun, which is a reuse of the round mound, also corresponds to this type.

c) A shrine/temple built on the heavily demolished and flattened mound. The trace of barrow remains topographically in the precincts. Most Kofuns in Tokyo were demolished and became buildings or road sites unrelated to their original use. Benten-yama and Shibamata Hachiman Shrine Kofun are examples of this type.

In the following, I examine and analyze each case of the Reuse of Kofun on the basis of the three types mentioned above.

3.2.1. Matsuchi-yama Shoden

Matsuchi-yama Shoden near Sumida River on the north side of Senso-ji Temple at Asakusa was built on a small hill (**Figures 7 and 8**).



Figure 7: View of Matsuchi-yama Shoden from the Sanya Moat
Source: Kitamura Photography Studio, around 1900



Figure 8: Matsuchi-yama Shoden (Asakusa), a Buddhist temple built on the keyhole-shaped mound.

Source: picture by author

This temple was dedicated to the deity Kangi-ten, who is known as the god of marriage. The name “Matsuchi” also means “true soil,” and local legends say that true soil can only be found in this area when it is surrounded by sea mud. According to the temple’s legend, Matsuchi-yama rose up from the ground one night during the rule of Empress Suiko (seventh century). This legend must have been an interpretation and explanation of the ancient people for the isolated hill of diluvium that was washed on the beach of alluvial stack along the Sumida River.

Torii (Musashino and Its Surroundings, 1924) assumed that a keyhole-shaped mound was constructed on a hill of diluvium. Tumuli that squeezed the surrounding landscape and topography were often seen in Kanto and other regions, such as Shiba Maruyama Kofun. According to Torii, the precincts of Matsuchi-yama Shoden reused the keyhole-

shaped mound⁴ (Figure 6a) but a full-dress archaeological survey has not been conducted until today. The shrine was built on top of the round barrow covered with the concrete retaining wall (**Figure 9**).



Figure 9: Matsuchi-yama Shoden (Asakusa). The concrete retaining wall that covers the mound behind the temple is shown.

Source: picture by author

Torii assumed that the Benten-yama located southeast of Senso-ji Temple was the ruins of a small keyhole-shaped mound. On the flattened top of the mound, there was a temple dedicated to the deity Benzaiten and a belfry (Fig. 4). Today, it is quite difficult to distinguish the original shape of the Kofun in this small hill surrounded by buildings.

3.2.2. *Shibamata Hachiman Shrine Kofun*

Known as the scene of the popular Japanese movie “*Otoko wa tsurai yo*” (It’s Tough Being a Man), Shibamata (Katsushika) in downtown Tokyo was once called the village of “Shimamata” during ancient times. This area, which includes Shibamata Taisyakuten Temple (1629) and the shore of Edo River, was nominated as a National Important Cultural Landscape in 2018. Shibamata Hachiman Shrine (**Figure 10**) stands on the right bank of Edo River and has a path that gradually rises leading to the shrine. The stone structure was once seen behind the shrine in the pre-war era, and it was considered as part of the stone chamber of the tumulus. Archaeological surveys from 1965, when the shrine was being rebuilt, revealed that the shrine was constructed at the summit of a completely flattened ancient barrow at the end of sixth century (Fig. 6c). Many Haniwa and burial goods were excavated in the surrounding moat (**Figures 11 and 12**).



Figure 10: Shibamata Hachiman Shrine (Katsushika) built on the completely flattened keyhole-shaped mound. The leading path to the shrine is slightly rising.

Source: picture by author



Figure 11: Haniwa excavated in precincts of Shibamata Hachiman Shrine

Source: Katsushika City Museum.

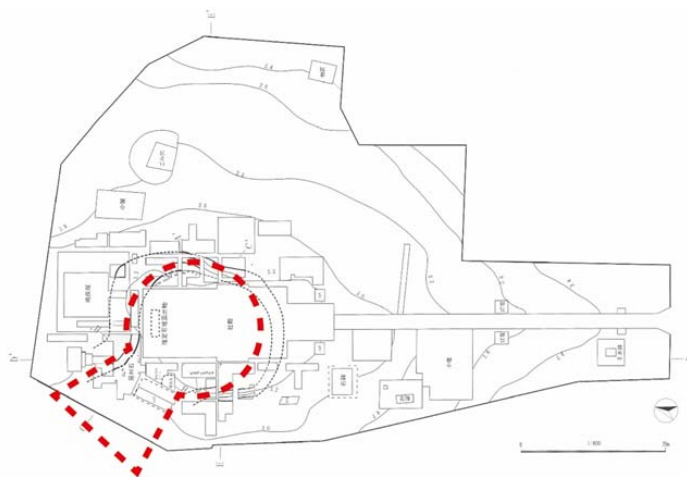


Figure 12: Indication of Shibamata Hachiman Shrine Kofun in the present site plan

Source: Hidaka, 2012.

The surveys clarified that Shibamata Hachiman Shrine Kofun was the sole mound with a stone chamber in the Tokyo Lowland and that it was not a round mound but a keyhole-shaped mound because of the narrow part that was excavated⁵. Today, the

reconstructed stone chamber with its original Boshu stones is preserved under the rebuilt shrine.

3.2.3. Shiba Maruyama Kofun

In some cases, temples and shrines were removed from the flattened mounds while the Kofuns were left in their original state.

Shiba Maruyama Kofun (mid-fifth century) in Shiba Park is 125 meters long, 40 meters wide at the front part, and has a diameter of 64 meters in the rear round mound, making it the largest keyhole-shaped mound in Tokyo (**Figure 13**).

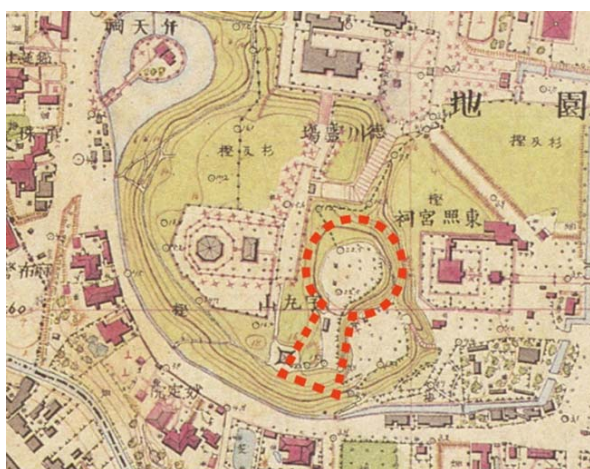


Figure 13: Indication of Shiba Maruyama Kofun in the original survey map of Tokyo on a 1:5000 scale

Source: Survey Department, Staff Headquarters of the Imperial Japanese Army, 1884.

This ancient tomb illustrates the high contrast between the modernized city and the sacred ancient site within the secular modern environment. The Kaizuka, a shell heap formed 3,500–4,000 years ago, was unearthed on the eastern side of this Kofun, suggesting that this site has served as a residential area since ancient times. In the Edo era, the top of the mound was flattened, and the Kofuns were placed in the precincts of Zojo-ji Temple. The Tsukuridashi was a religious facility often set at the narrow part of a keyhole-shaped mound. In the case of Shiba Maruyama Kofun, the Maruyama Inari Shrine stands at the narrow part (**Figure 14**). This shrine was built when Zojo-ji Temple (1598) was moved to this site. A retaining wall made from Boshu stone stands at the back of the shrine, which may have originated from the stone chamber. In 1897, Professor S. Tsuboi of Tokyo Imperial University surveyed the Shiba Maruyama Kofun clusters, including 11 small round barrows from the sixth and seventh centuries, under the commission of the city of Tokyo. Young Ryuzo Torii also helped conduct the survey, wherein many Haniwa and burial goods were unearthed.



Figure 14: View of Shiba Maruyama Kofun. Maruyama Inari shrine stands in the narrow part of the keyhole-shaped mound

Source: picture by author

The southern part of the mound was largely scraped due to road construction, the west side of the round mound was demolished to give way to a hotel construction in the 1950s, and all small round barrows were crushed. The size and form of the Shiba Maruyama Kofun changed significantly due to the influence of these various construction projects (**Figure 15**).



Figure 15: Plan of Shiba Maruyama Kofun The distortion of the keyhole-shaped mound is shown.

Source: Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education, 1985

3.2.4. *Suribachi-yama Kofun*

The Ueno-dai, which was once called Shinobugaoka hill, one of the tongue-shaped plateaus of the Musashino Terrace, is also one of the ancient residential areas in Tokyo. In the Edo era, the Kan-ei-ji Temple was built (1625) in Ueno according to *Feng Shui* traditions to protect the Edo Castle from a demon. Ueno-dai eventually became a precinct of the Kan-ei-ji Temple. Ueno-dai previously had many barrows, but after the Ueno Park opened in 1873, all tumuli were demolished to construct a zoo and several art museums. The only surviving tumulus in the park is the Suribachi-yama (mount

Mortar) Kofun in the late fifth century, a keyhole-shaped mound with a length of 70 m and a rear mound diameter of 43 m (**Figures 16 and 17**).



Figure 16: Indication of Suribachi-yama Kofun in Ueno Park (map of 1884). The red square in the center of the image is Kiyomizu Kannon-do Temple. The light blue area on the left is Shinobazu Lake.



Figure 17: Suribachi-yama Kofun (Ueno Park)

Source: picture by author

The upper part of the mound was flattened for the construction of the Kiyomizu Kannon-do Temple in 1631. The temple with a wide terrace, a replica of Kiyomizu-dera Temple in Kyoto, was relocated to the south side in 1694, a high place with a view of the Shinobazu Lake. The original site of the Kiyomizu Kannon-do Temple, which is now a small plaza, is 5 m high from the road inside the park and had an altitude of 24.46 m above sea level (**Figure 18**). When the Ueno Plateau was still a cape facing Tokyo Bay, the Suribachi-yama Kofun was a monumental place that could be seen from the sea.

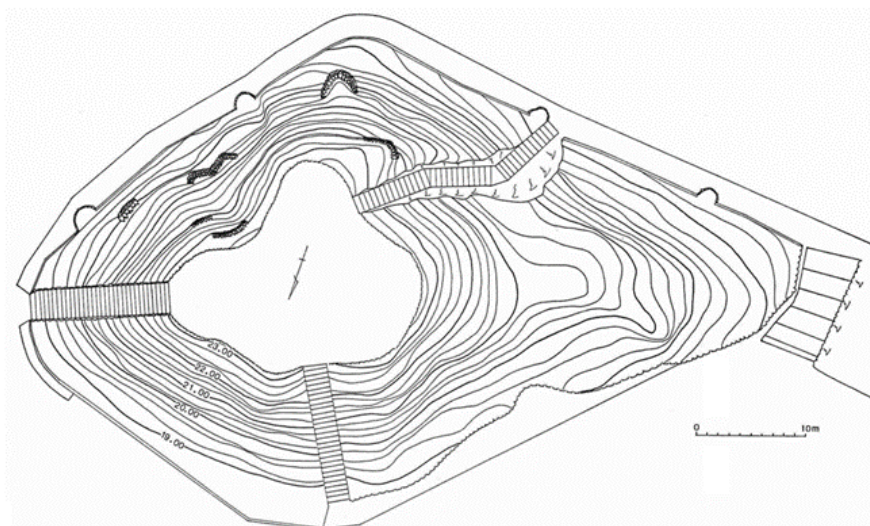


Figure 18: Plan of Suribachi-yama Kofun. Kiyomizu Kannon-do Temple was originally built on the flattened top of the mound

Source: Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education, 1985

3.2.5. *Ana Hachiman Shrine*

In cases where the lateral passage to the stone chamber was opened, a shrine was set up inside, thereby transforming the passage and the chamber into a sanctuary. During the construction of a priest house at the Takada Hachiman Shrine (Waseda, Shinjuku ward) in 1641, a cave was found on the slope under the shrine and the workers found a gold-plated statue inside the cave. After the discovery of the statue, the shrine was called Ana-Hachiman (Ana = hole). This fact explains the possibility of the existence of a passage grave⁶ and the discovery of buried objects. The area around the shrine, which is the midstream of the Kanda River, was previously called “Hyakuhachi-zuka,” which means “108 mounds.” The old place name suggests the presence of a cluster of barrows, including Tomizuka Kofun, which will be mentioned later. Although it is not confirmed by an archaeological survey, the hill-like site of Ana-Hachiman connotes a keyhole-shaped mound with a lateral passage.

In many cases, the original form of Kofun is often difficult to determine because the present buildings are standing on completely flattened mounds. Even if the mound is demolished and reading the shape of the mound in urban tissue is difficult, we can confirm the existence of the tumulus by excavating the original surrounding moat and buried objects with archeological surveys.

3.3. *Reuse as Fujizuka*

“Fuji-Ko” was a folk religion prevalent in the Edo era (seventeenth to nineteenth century), and this religious movement diffused in the city of Edo and the Kanto region. Since ancient times, Mount Fuji, with its thick rising smoke, has been worshipped as a

holy mountain that controls fire. This mountain served as a place of worship for ascetic hermits during the medieval period and attracted visits from people during the Edo era. An artificial Mount Fuji dubbed “Fujizuka” was built in the city and eventually became a place where people could climb and worship the mountain⁷. This place became a suitable alternative for people who could not travel long distances due to their economic and physical circumstances. It was also a suitable alternative for women who were forbidden to climb actual mountains during that time.

Some Fujizuka have also been built by reusing Kofuns. For instance, some burial mounds were converted into a miniature version of Mount Fuji, retaining its sacredness and acting as a symbol of faith.

3.3.1. Jujo Fujizuka Kofun

Nippori Cliff Line, dubbed the “greatest cliff in Tokyo” on the east side of Misashino Terrace, has a characteristic landscape, with ancient mounds continuing at the edge for many kilometers. Asukayama, Jujo-dai, and Akabane-dai are known as the sites of tumulus clusters in the sixth century (late Kofun era) and were built by local leaders.

The name of Asukayama comes from the Asuka Shrine, which was divided from Kumano Shrine in 1324 by the Toshima clan, and refers to the guardian spirit of the castle. Archeological surveys from 1937 clarified the presence of more than six round mounds and a moated settlement, one of the biggest in eastern Japan. On the Jujo-dai Terrace, northwest of Asukayama, three round mounds were excavated. In Akabane-dai, at the northern end of Musashino Terrace, more than 15 round mounds were discovered by a survey during the construction of the Tohoku Shinkan-sen line. The stone chamber of the mound n.3 was relocated near a park and opened to the public.

Jujo Fujizuka (constructed in 1840) on Jujo-dai Terrace is considered a reuse of the round mound. Lava rocks carried from Mount Fuji by pilgrims were piled up on a slope of the barrow, thereby forming a replica of the holy mountain (**Figure 19**).



Figure 19: Jujo Fujizuka Kofun. Reuse of Kofun as a replica of Mt. Fuji in the Edo era
Source: picture by author

The Fujizuka is about 18 meters in diameter and about 5 meters in height. Today, a straight stairway with a torii gate leads to the summit, but the adherents of Fuji-Ko originally climbed the slope on the side of Fujizuka like true mountaineers. The stone monuments of Fuji-Ko stand near the trail (**Figure 20**). At the fifth half level of Fujizuka, a small stone shrine is placed, representing the real Mount Fuji. At the summit, the stone shrine was set as a place of prayer dedicated to Mount Fuji (**Figure 21**). In this case, the reused ancient mound itself became the Jujo Fuji Shrine.



Figure 20: Jujo Fujizuka Kofun. The lava rocks of Mt. Fuji were piled on the ancient barrow. The stone monuments on sides are memorials for the adherents of Fuji-Ko in each time

Source: picture by author



Figure 21: Jujo Fujizuka Kofun. The small shrine erected as a tribute to the holy mountain was built on the summit of the Fujizuka

Source: picture by author

3.3.2. Takada Fuji and Tomizuka Kofun

Takada Fuji, which was once found behind the campus of Waseda University, was known as the biggest (about 10 meters in height) and oldest (constructed in 1780) Fujizuka in Edo and as one of the “Eight Mount Fujis in Edo.” This artificial Mount Fuji was built on the mound of Tomizuka Kofun. In front of the Tomizuka, the Mizu-Inari Shrine stands, which houses a local deity. According to the picture drawn by Hiroshige Ando in 1846 (**Figure 22**), Fujizuka is on the round mound and the Mizu-Inari Shrine is on the front side of the keyhole-shaped mound (Fig. 6b).

Tomizuka Kofun was demolished in 1965 to make way for the construction of Waseda University’s Building No. 9; whether Tomizuka was the round or the keyhole-shaped mound is unknown.



Figure 22: Takada Fuji, the biggest and oldest Fujizuka in Edo built on the Tomizuka Kofun (in *Ehon Edo miyage*, drawn by Ando Hiroshige, 1846). The Mizu-Inari Shrine is in front of Tomizuka. The topography in the picture shows the possibility of the presence of the keyhole-shaped mound

Source: drawn by Ando Hiroshige, 1846

However, the position of the shrine and Tomizuka Kofun indicates that the mound was considered the Sacred Mount Inari/Fujizuka and was worshipped from the foot of the mound. The reuse of the mound as the basement of Fujizuka helped facilitate the construction and increase the height of Fujizuka. The sacredness of the mound was adopted by the popular folk faith and was also enforced.

The Mizu-Inari Shrine was moved to the Kansen-en Garden in the northeast. The demolished Fujizuka was restored by using original soil and lava rocks in the part of the Garden. The historical miniature of the holy mountain is open to the public only on the third Monday of July.

Tomizuka Kofun, which was once reused as the basement of Fujizuka, was also reconstructed separately at the back of the present Mizu-Inari Shrine (**Figure 23**).



Figure 23: Passage or stone chamber of Tomizuka Kofun reconstructed behind the current Mizu-Inari Shrine in Kansen-en Garden

Source: picture by author

The restored gate of the passage or the stone chamber excavated from Kofun was dedicated to a small shrine for a fox. The old blocks of Boshu stone are piled behind the gate. The reconstruction seems to lack sufficient archaeological study. The traditional and topological format of the shrine as the “Mizu-Inari Shrine in front of Tomizuka” continued for religious reasons even after its relocation.

3.4. Reuse as mounds in the garden

3.4.1. Kamezuka

Some Kofuns were incorporated within various individual premises, such as samurai residences or aristocratic palaces, and these were also reused as mounds in gardens. A mound called Kamezuka (turtle barrow) can be found in Kamezuka Park (Mita), which is located halfway between Shiba Maruyama Kofun and the old port of Shinagawa (**Figure 24**).



Figure 24: Kamezuka (turtle barrow) in Kamezuka Park (Mita). The mound is thought to be an ancient tumulus

Source: picture by author

This mound is thought to be an ancient tumulus that can be traced back to the late Kofun period. This place is located at the cliff facing Tokyo Bay and was famous during the Edo era because of its excellent view of the moon, hence its nickname “the cape of the moon.” The park was formerly the site of the residences of the Toki clan, the feudal lord of the Numata district, and later, the site belonged to the Emperor’s family during the Meiji era. The garden was destroyed by an air raid in World War 2 and eventually became a city park. Yorioki, the second lord of the Numata district, erected a stone monument for “Kameyama” (turtle hill) on the mound in 1750. The Kamezuka Inari Shrine at the north side of the park was originally installed on the top of Kamezuka, and it was moved to the present site in the Meiji era. A kitchen midden dating back to around 4,000 years ago was excavated on the south side of Kamezuka, thereby indicating that the park served as a residential area during ancient times.

3.5. Reuse as signposts

3.5.1. Sarugaku-zuka and Minami-zuka

Two tumuli built in the sixth to seventh centuries can still be found behind the modern architecture of the Hillside Terrace in Daikan-yama (Shibuya ward). The larger mound with a diameter of about 20 meters and a height of 5 meters is called Sarugaku-zuka (**Figure 25**), the origin of the town name. A small shrine was built at the summit of the mound by the Asakura clan in the 1920s.



Figure 25: Sarugaku-zuka Kofun (Daikan-yama, Shibuya ward). The tumulus is surrounded with modern buildings of the Hillside Terrace

Source: picture by author

The smaller barrow called Minami-zuka (southern mound), which has a diameter of about 12 m, stands at the back of the building. The curve of the mound is used as a path leading to the traditional tea ceremony room. The form of the ancient structure is incorporated into the planning of the traditional architecture. In medieval times, the Kamakura Road passed between rows of two Kofuns. The Kamakura Road, whose name originated from the medieval capital city of Kamakura, crossed the Tama River

and the Meguro River at the northeast. The road continued up the cliff, passed through Sarugaku-cho, and continued to Shibuya and Shinjuku in Tokyo. Later in the Edo era (1604–), signposts called Ichiri-zuka (mound) were installed on both sides of the main road. The examples of Sarugaku-zuka and Minami-zuka show how Kofuns were reused as signposts along the road. Dokan Ohta, who built the original Edo Castle, placed a watch table on Sarugaku-zuka, and one can see a full view of the road and territory from the top of the mound.

Torii mentioned the Ichiri-zuka at Hongo Oiwake (Bunkyo ward) as a reuse of Kofun for the signpost. The mound at the intersection between Nakasen-do and the branch road heading toward Nikko was traditionally called Kurozuka (black mound). Torii (1927) pointed out the possibility of reusing the Kofun beside the old road from an analysis of historical topographies in Edo era. However, this mound disappeared due to road construction and urbanization.

3.6. Reuse of soil

Kofuns have been destroyed and disrespected from the Middle Ages to the present day due to the construction of buildings, roads, and agricultural areas. Some Kofuns were left alone because they were believed to carry a tatari or a curse. Such local beliefs may be due to the discovery of ancient human bones and buried objects. In some cases, after Kofuns were destroyed and cultivated, some excavated items were saved and stored in nearby temples and shrines. However, in many cases, these structures were demolished, and the excavated Haniwa and potteries were crushed, mixed with soil from the mound, and flattened to create agricultural fields.

The Matsuchi-yama Shoden at Asakusa shows an example of reusing the soil of such mounds. The slope of the Matsuchi-yama was scraped almost vertically, and the mound is now covered with stone walls and a concrete retaining wall (Fig. 9). The modification of the mound is considered to have occurred in the Edo era. The Asakusa area, including Matsuchi-yama, rises slightly from its surrounding land because of its natural embankment. A large wetland located north of Asakusa is frequently damaged by flooding from the Sumida River. The long bank, Nihon-zutsumi, was built in 1621 using the soil from Matsuchi-yama to protect the city. The current scale of Matsuchi-yama is around 100 meters in diameter. Considering the amount of soil shaved off the slope and the summit of the Kofun that was converted to build the bank, the original keyhole-shaped mound was much larger than the mound in its current state.

3.7. Reuse of stone materials

Reusing materials from the stone chamber and sarcophagus of Kofuns is not an unusual practice. For instance, in Europe, early medieval buildings were adorned by using beautiful sculptures and building materials taken from ancient roman architecture; this is known as “spolia.” However, the reuse of ancient materials is more rational and

realistic in the case of Japanese Kofuns. Heavy stone materials were expensive to cut and transport from the distant quarry, but they were cheap if they could be procured from a nearby field. The stone materials from Kofuns that have been destroyed, stolen, or damaged by earthquakes and typhoons were recycled and reused as precious materials, and these recycled materials were used for castle stone walls, garden stones, bridge stones, and tombstones in construction activities in neighboring areas.

3.7.1. Sarcophagus in Denpo-in Garden, Senso-ji Temple

In the garden of Denpo-in, a monastery house at Senso-ji Temple (Asakusa), a sarcophagus was reused as a washbasin (**Figure 26**).



Figure 26: Washbasin in the Garden of Dempo-in, Senso-ji (Asakusa). Reuse of the sarcophagus excavated from a mound behind the main Temple of Senso-ji (1868).

Source: picture by author

The sarcophagus was made of Boshu stone, measured 2.5 m long, 1.2 m wide, and 0.75 m high, and was excavated from the mound of the former Kumagaya Inari Shrine behind Senso-ji Temple in 1869. In the precincts of Senso-ji Temple, some places, such as Benten-do, Asakusa Shrine, Awashima-do, and Zeni-zuka, are considered ancient mounds by Torii (1927). The site of Senso-ji Temple might be founded on the cluster of barrows on the natural levee along Sumida River.

A famous example of sarcophagus reuse can be found in Sayama Pond (Osaka), the oldest dam reservoir in Japan that dates back to 616. In the repair work (1202) commanded by Chogen, the Buddhist monk who supervised the reconstruction of Todai-ji Temple at Nara, the sarcophagi brought from nearby Kofuns were cut off at both ends and joined together to make a stone gutter. The restoration of the dam was completed in less than three months, and the reuse of the sarcophagi contributed to the shortening of the construction period.

3.7.2. *Sekkan-butsum*

Sekkan-butsum, a type of Buddharupa or Buddha statue, also demonstrates an excellent reuse of sarcophagus: as Sekkan in the Kofun era. Figures of Amitabha, Jizo Bodhisattva, and other Bodhisattvas and Buddhas are carved on the lid or inside the body of the sarcophagus. Most Sekkan-butsum can be found in the Kinki region due to the quantity of Kofuns in that area. The Miroku Great Sekkan-butsum in Chogaku-ji Temple (Nara) and the Stone Buddharupa at Tamano (Hyogo) are other examples of such reuse of sarcophagi.

The Amida (Amitabha) Sekkan-butsum in Fukusho-ji Temple (Ebisu, Shibuya ward) is the only Sekkan-butsum (sixth century) remains found in Tokyo (**Figure 27**). However, the Buddharupa was not carved in the sarcophagus of Boshu stone, which is the major material for stone chambers of Kofuns in the Kanto region. Rather, it was made from Tatsuyama stone in Hyogo. This Sekkan-butsum was not made in Edo; it was a donation from an adherent of the temple, which was transported from the Kinki region in the 1950s.



Figure 27: Amida Sekkan-butsum in Fukusho-ji Temple (Ebisu). The only example of the sekkan-butsum, a reuse of the sarcophagi located in Tokyo.

Source: picture by author

3.7.3. *Tateishi-sama*

A small sanctuary with a torii gate and a low stone fence can be found in the residential area of Tateishi (Katsushika ward) in the Tokyo Lowland along the shore of Naka River (**Figure 28**).



Figure 28: Small sanctuary of Tateishi-sama (the standing stone) in the residential area (Katsushika ward). The torii (sacred gate) and the fence surround the object of folk faith

Source: picture by author

This sanctuary is dedicated to a stone column buried deep in the soil. The top of the stone, which is about 60 cm length×24 cm width× 4 cm height , is slightly exposed from the ground (**Figure 29**).



Figure 29: Top of Tateishi-sama slightly exposed from the ground.

Source:

This stone is called an honorific “Tateishi-sama” and is seen as an object of folk faith and religion. “Tateishi” means “standing stone” and serves as the origin of the town name. Tateishi was once known as a vital stone, and it was believed that the stone cracked by cold during winter will be restored automatically in the summer. The sacred stone was noted in various geographical booklets such as Edo meisyo-zue (**Figure 30**).



Figure 30: Tateishi at Tateishi village (in Edo meisyo-zue, 1893). The people are shown touching the stone to receive its blessing

Source: Edo meisyo-zue, 1893

In 1806, Shimada, the village head, tried to dig up the stone, which is also called “the stone with the root,” with some villagers for three days. However, there was no end to the stone, and the people involved in the digging fell ill one after another. They feared that the stone carried a curse and stopped their work. The sacred stone was worshipped by villagers, and the torii gate and fence were dedicated in 1811. The sanctuary became a grove for the village shrine, featuring bamboo and *Nageia nagi*, the sacred tree of Kumano Shrine (**Figure 31**).



Figure 31: Sanctuary of Tateishi-sama in a previous era (Torii, 1927). Grove of the village shrine with bamboo and *Nageia Nagi*

Source: Torii, 1927

Tateishi-sama survives to this day because local residents believe that whoever tries to dig out this strange stone would be cursed. Some archaeological surveys that aimed to

unearth the stone were all cancelled. The stone was originally about 60 cm high, but it was shortened because parts of it were scraped off by collectors and by those seeking its power, or it was grated for medicinal use.

Several Kofuns can also be found around Tateishi-sama, such as the Tateishi Kumano Shrine⁸ Kofun and the Nanzo-in-ura Kofun. Some fragments of burial goods such as Haniwa and pottery were also excavated from the site. However, the sacred stone itself has yet to be excavated and examined by an archaeological survey out of respect for the local faith. Tateishi-sama was made from Boshu stone, which was not produced in the Tokyo Lowland. The Boshu stone was widely used for building the stone chambers of Kofuns in the Kanto region. In this case, Tateishi-sama may be a reuse of the stone chamber materials of nearby Kofuns.

Torii (1924) supposed that Tateishi-sama may be the ancient Menhir in the Tokyo Lowland, but the site emerged after the Holocene glacial retreat. Thus, the idea that the object was built for a prehistoric religion is impossible. His theory has been rejected by geological analysis. The village of Tateishi lies on the ancient Tokai-do, the main road that connects the Kinki region with the Kanto region. Tateishi is found at the fork of two roads: the ancient Tokai-do leading to Shimousa Province and crossing Naka River, and the road to Shimamata Village, the main crossing point of Edo River. Today, Tateishi-sama is identified as the signpost of ancient Tokai-do and a reuse of the material of the nearby Kofun (Nanzo-in-ura?).

Conclusion

This paper examines the Kofuns in the center of Tokyo and how they have been reused in modern urban tissues, pointing out their various usages and considering its characteristic phenomenon of “inheritance of sanctuaries.”

The presence of these ancient tumuli proves that certain sites around the city served as residential areas in ancient times. Even after the disappearance of the name and memories of the buried people and with only the large mounds remaining, a natural reverence for the dead and the sacredness that comes from the structure of Kofun continued in some form or other. Geometrical mounds built on the edge of a terrace or on the natural levee near the river were recognized as local symbols. However, in modern Tokyo, where development is progressing radically, the tumulus can only survive if their sacredness and topological meaning as sanctuaries persist in some form or other in the future⁹.

This paper studied the mode of reuse of Kofuns from seven points. One of them, “Reuse as cemeteries,” is the earliest method of reuse and has direct continuity from the ancient tomb. In contrast, “Reuse as mounds in the garden,” “Reuse as signposts,” and “Reuse of soil” due to the characteristics of Kofun structures have a deep connection to the process of formation of the peripheral urban tissue. However, these methods have low relevance to the sacredness of the ancient mound.

“Reuse as precincts of temples and shrines,” “Reuse as Fujizuka,” and “Reuse of stone” in religious cases have high relevance to the inheritance of the sanctuaries.

The reused ancient barrows as the site of religious buildings show the clearest “inheritance of sanctuaries” even though religion and the forms of worships have changed. The mounds that could retain their own form for more than 1,500 years are well worked for the quality and the compaction of soil materials, and they have geotechnologically good properties. The Kofun could offer a good ground or foundation for the construction of shrines and temples. This fact facilitated the reuse as the site of religious buildings.

Folklore and topological memories encouraged inhabitants to venerate the mounds, which then produced a new topological meaning as sanctuaries even though they were not known as ancient Kofun. Human bones and burial goods accidentally exposed by landslides after earthquakes and typhoons were generally enshrined in nearby shrines or temples. Ordinary people who feared curses helped in the preservation of Kofun and the inheritance of the sacredness of mounds, with the possibility of rewriting memories into medieval legends¹⁰.

The reuse of mounds as Fujizuka, or a replica of the holy mountain, is the most significant example from the perspective of the inheritance of sanctuaries. The topological meaning and the form are changed significantly by piling lava rocks from Mount Fuji. However, the splendor of the Kofun as a sanctuary remains. When Tomizuka Kofun and Takada Fuji were demolished, the mound and Fujizuka were reconstructed separately. An interesting detail is that the ancient mound and Fujizuka were reconstructed separately because of the different religious reasons between Shrine and adherents of Fuji-Ko.

Tateishi-sama, the signpost of ancient Tokai-do, reused stone material from Kofun. As a result, it became a subject of folk faith and was believed to be a sacred stone, and a grove for the village shrine and a small sanctuary were produced. In this case, the stone was separated from the sacredness of the mound, but it assumed the folk faith because of the topological character of Tateishi as the fork of old roads and because of the mystery of the sacred stone. The new sanctuary was made by combining the urban historical context.

Many cases of Kofuns in Tokyo and their histories have not been confirmed through archaeological surveys, although some have suggested the possibility of finding ancient barrows in certain areas. To study the phenomenon of the reuse of Kofun and examine its role in the formation of the urban tissue, the tumulus clusters along the Tama River need to be analyzed. The development of modern districts in this area has certain relationships with the reuse and demolition of ancient barrows, as seen in the town of Den-en-chofu, which was planned based on the principles of the garden city movement. Under such circumstances, by using the theory of regional geography and *tipologia edilizia* in Italy, we can examine the relationship between the urban context and ancient architecture in consideration of the possibility of turning such architecture into sacred sanctuaries.

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¹ Haniwa refers to terracotta clay figures that were used as burial goods in the Kofun era. These figures come in cylindrical, house-like, horse-like, or human-like shapes. See Fig. 11 for examples of Haniwa.

² Kubizuka (*kubi* means “head”) has been revered as a sanctuary in Edo for a long time. According to legend, the decapitated head of Taira no Masakado (AD 940), a samurai who fought against the central court of the Emperor, flew up from Kyoto and dropped in Kanda, the center of Tokyo. The head of Masakado was buried reverently, making a mound. The Kubizuka is thought to be a round mound because it features a mound and the rest of it is a stone chamber.

³ Syncretism of Shintoism and Buddhism was commonly seen in Japan until the Meiji era. The coexistence of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples in same site was normal during the Edo era.

⁴ The legend of Senso-ji Temple says that the founder of the Temple Haji no Nakatomo was buried on Matsuchi-yama in the seventh century. The Haji clan worked on the construction of Kofun, the burial ceremony, and the production of Haniwa and potteries during the Kofun era.

⁵ Katsushika City Museum, 2011, pp. 100–109. Hidaka, 2012, pp. 17–18, 23.

⁶ The legendary cave is found on the south side at the foot of the Ana Inari Shrine, but it was closed after a shrine was recently built.

⁷ In Tokyo, around 50 Fujizuka remain today. Sendagaya Fujizuka in Hatomori Hachiman Shrine (Shibuya) is the oldest Fujizuka (1789) at present, and it is one of the “Eight Mount Fujis” in Edo.

⁸ Tateishi Kumano Shrine was founded by legendary sorcerer Seimei Abe around 999. The form of the site is a pentagon based on the Theory of Five Elements in Yin-Yang and the flattened Kofun (late seventh century) positioned beside the leading path. The object of worship of this shrine is an ancient stone sword (about 70 cm), which was thought to have been excavated from the Kofun.

⁹ One of the main reasons that Kofun could survive in the modern urban tissue is its reuse as religious buildings. This fact recalls the the reuse of ancient Greek or Roman temples as Christian churches, such as the Pantheon, the Temple of Minerva in Assisi, and the Temple of Athene in Syracuse even though the forms and materials are different.

¹⁰ Myoki-zuka on the coast of Sumida River is said to be the tomb of the mother who committed suicide in Kagami pond out of grief over her kidnapped child’s death. The story is written in the Noh drama “Sumida-gawa” (15th century). Torii (1927) suggested the presence of tumulus clusters around Kagami pond, including other mounds, namely, Uneme-zuka and Kubi-zuka (Hebi-zuka).