

Ichikawaōno Station

Designated National Historic Sites in Ichikawa

Ubayama Shell
Mound (Historic Site)

Funabashihōten Station

Minowadai Site Point B

Designated National Historic Sites in Ichikawa

Since ancient times, Ichikawa City has been characterized by a comfortable living environment with abundant nature, which can also be seen from the fact that people started settling in the area around 23,000 BCE up to the present time through many eras. As proof of its long history, a large number of historic remains have been discovered in the city, among which the five designated national historic sites (photos below) deserve special mention.

The area around Ichikawa City in the Jōmon Period (11,000 to 500 BCE) featured an extremely high distribution density of shell mounds, and is today known as one of the most notable areas in Japan for such mounds. More than 55 shell mounds have been found thus far in the city. These include the Ubayama Shell Mound, the Soya Shell Mound, and the Horinouchi Shell Mound, which are horseshoe-shaped shell mounds that represent Ichikawa City. These remains and

research findings have also made a significant mark on the development of Japanese archaeology.

Ichikawa City was one of the largest key junctions in the Kanto region, where water transport connecting Tokyo Bay and the Edogawa River downstream to the Tonegawa River intersected with land transport along Tokyo Bay.

For this reason, kokucho, the provincial government office responsible for the ceremonial affairs of Shimōsa Province, was placed in Kōnodai, overlooking the Edogawa River and Tokyo Bay during the time from the Asuka Period (538 to 710) to the Nara Period (710 to 794). A kokubunji (monastery) and an amadera (nunnery) were established in Kōnodai, on the eastern side of the government office; both the monastery and the nunnery were designated as national historical sites, demonstrating the authority of the ancient state.



▲Shimōsa
Provincial
Nunnery Site



▲Kitashita Tile Kiln Site
Attached to Shimōsa
Provincial Temple Site



▲Horinouchi Shell Mound



▲Ubayama
Shell Mound



▲Soya Shell Mound

Photo credit for the earthenware on
the cover sheet: Tadahiro Ogawa

Paleolithic (pre-earthenware) period 23,000 BCE to 11,000 BCE

23,000	The oldest remains in Ichikawa were excavated (Kōnodai 6-chome Niiyama Site).
--------	---

Jōmon Period 11,000 BCE to 500 BCE

7500	The oldest Jōmon pottery in Ichikawa was used.
5000	The oldest shell mound in Ichikawa was made around this time.
4000	The Holocene glacial retreat reached a peak, and shell mounds were built in various places throughout the city around the peak period.
3000	Ichikawa sandbar started forming around this time.
2800 to 500	Horseshoe-shaped shell mounds, such as the Ubayama, Soya, and Horinouchi Shell Mounds, were built.

Yayoi and Kofun Periods 500 BCE to 600 CE

Around 500	Rice farming started in Ichikawa.
The 500s CE	A cluster of tumulus tombs were made in Kōnodai and the Ichikawa sandbar.

Asuka, Nara, and Heian Periods Around 600 to 1185

The late 600s	Shimōsa Provincial Office was established.
710 to 730	Yamabe no Akahito and Takahashi no Mushimaro composed poems of Tekona.
741	Construction of provincial temples was ordered.
900 to the 1000s	The size of the Shimōsa Provincial Temple and the nunnery was reduced.

The Perfectly Preserved Remains of Pit Dwellings Were Excavated for the First Time Ever in Japan

Location / Age / Size

Ubayama Shell Mound is the remains of a community founded in the mid to late Jōmon Period (2800 to 1000 BCE), located on a plateau with an elevation of 22 to 24 meters. The shell layers of the shell mound are distributed in the shape of the letter C, and the outside diameter is approximately 130 meters from east to west and about 120 meters from north to south. Marine hard clams constitute the major portion of the shellfishes that make up the shell layers, while few button snails are contained and can easily be found in the shell mounds in the city.

Pit dwellings and Jōmon human remains

More than 30 pit dwellings and over 140 human remains were discovered in past excavations. The human remains made a great contribution to estimating the average height and life expectancy of Jōmon people. The 1926 excavation at Point A unveiled the perfectly preserved remains of pit dwellings for the first time



▲The first aerial photo ever taken (1926)

Photo credit: The University Museum, The University of Tokyo



▲Perfectly preserved remains of the pit dwelling excavated (1926)

Photo credit: The University Museum, The University of Tokyo



▲Remains of the pit dwelling where five human skeletons were found (1926)

Photo credit: The University Museum, The University of Tokyo

Ubayama Shell Mound (Historic Site)

●Representative excavated artifacts



▲Jōmon potteries excavated at Point C



▲Ubayama Shell Mound and designated areas

Ubayama Shell Mound

Location: 1-1212 Kashiwaimachi, and others

Designation date: August 17, 1967

Designated area: 22,772.81 m²

Access: Take the bus at Funabashihōten Station on the JR Musashino Line, get off at the "Ubayama Kaizuka Kōen (Ubayama Shell Mound Park)" bus stop, and walk 5 minutes / Walk 15 minutes from Funabashihōten Station on the Musashino Line

Viewing: Open to the public as Ubayama Shell Mound Park

ever in Japan, making the site famous nationwide. In this excavation, a total of five sets of human remains were found, on the floor surface of a pit dwelling, including two adult men, two women, and one child; this discovery led to a dispute over their cause of death and their relationship with one another.

The first carbon dating in Japan

Ubayama Shell Mound is also the first place in Japan where radiocarbon dating was performed to determine age. The dating carried out on the carbonized materials unearthed at Point D in 1948 suggested that they date as far back as around 4,500 years ago. The age determined by the dating method made an impact on the archaeological world at that time, triggering a debate over the new estimated dates of the Jōmon Period.

The first aerial photography in Japan

This shell mound is also the first historic site in Japan that was photographed from the air. The aerial photo taken by the Shimoshizu Army Flight School in 1926 clearly shows the pure white shells distributed in a circular pattern (upper right of the photo) on the vast field of the plateau.

Soya Shell Mound (Historic Site)

One of the Largest Horseshoe-Shaped Shell Mounds in Japan

Location / Age / Size

Soya Shell Mound is the remains of a community founded in the late Jōmon Period (2000 to 1000 BCE), located on a plateau with an elevation of 20 to 25 meters. The shell layers of the shell mound are distributed in the shape of the letter U, and the outside diameter is approximately 210 meters from east to west and about 240 meters from north to south. This is the largest solo horseshoe-shaped shell mound with a sunken center in Japan.

Soya-style earthenware

This shell mound is also known for the remains that served as a reference for Soya-style earthenware in the late Jōmon Period. Sugao Yamanouchi, an archaeologist who excavated this shell mound in 1936, found that the shape and pattern of the unearthed earthenware were different from those of the Jōmon earthenware already known at that time; thus, he named it Soya-style earthenware, employing this as a unit indicating its age.



▲Unfinished shell bracelets made of densely lamellated oysters

Shell bracelets of densely lamellated oysters

Many shells of densely lamellated oysters and unfinished shell bracelets were unearthed from the small pit dwelling at Point D. Materials regarding the production of shell bracelets of densely lamellated oysters are rare nationwide, thereby drawing attention in understanding shell bracelet production in the Jōmon Period.

Coprolite

Coprolite was excavated in clusters from this shell mound, which contributes to the history of coprolite research. Coprolite may possibly be the key to identifying the nutritional status and health conditions of the humans or dogs that left it, or even to duplicating the environment around the historic site.

Fishing and hunting tools

As for fishing tools, many pointed spears used as attachments to the end of sticks for spearfishing were unearthed. People at that time were engaged in fishing over a wide-ranging area, from the inner bay to the river mouth. When it comes to hunting tools, obsidian and chert stone arrowheads were excavated, while a few more chert tools were found.

●Representative excavated artifacts



▲Jōmon pottery excavated at Points D and E (The center is a Soya-style pottery)



▲Excavation activity at Point E



▲Soya Shell Mound and designated areas

Soya Shell Mound

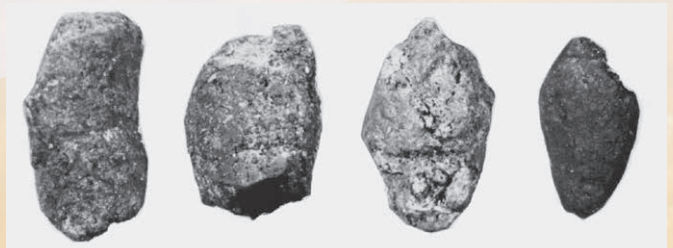
Location: 2-15 Soya, and others

Designation date: December 22, 1979 Additionally designated on July 23, 2009, and March 1, 2016

Designated area: 50,216.87 m²

Access: Take the bus at Moto-Yawata Station on the JR Sōbu Line, get off at the "Soya" bus stop, and walk 10 minutes

Viewing: Open to the public



▲Coprolite excavated at Point E

A Type Site of Horinouchi-Style Earthenware

Location / Age / Size

Horinouchi Shell Mound is the remains of a community founded in the late Jōmon Period (2000 to 500 BCE), located at an elevation of 22 to 23 meters. The shell layers of the shell mound are distributed in the shape of the letter U, and the outside diameter is approximately 225 meters from east to west and about 120 meters from north to south. The elongated space in the center is located at the highest point, and the shell layers are distributed mainly around the slope of the plateau, with an elevation of about 10 to 20 meters.

Pit dwellings and Jōmon human remains

This shell mound was discovered by the Tokyo Anthropological Society in 1904, making the mound famous nationwide. On the following day of the discovery, a complete buried human skeleton was found for the first time in Japan. Thus far, six pit dwellings and 13 sets of human bones have been unveiled in past excavations. The number of pit dwellings unearthed is extremely small, meaning that excavation underneath the shell layers is still insufficient.

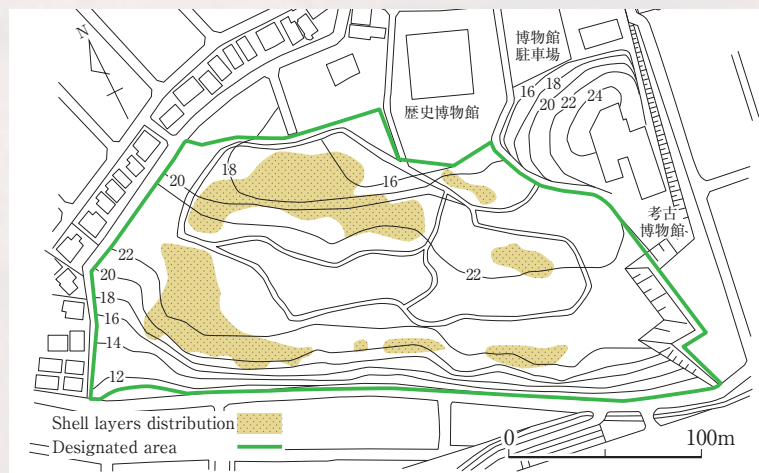
Horinouchi-style earthenware

This shell mound is well known for the remains that served as a reference for Horinouchi-style earthenware in the late Jōmon Period. The earthenware is distributed mainly around the Kanto region and even in adjacent areas.



▲Cuttlefish shells

Photo credit: Nanzan University Museum of Anthropology



▲Horinouchi Shell Mound and designated areas



▲Shell layers of button snails

Photo credit: Meiji University Museum

Horinouchi Shell Mound (Historic Site)

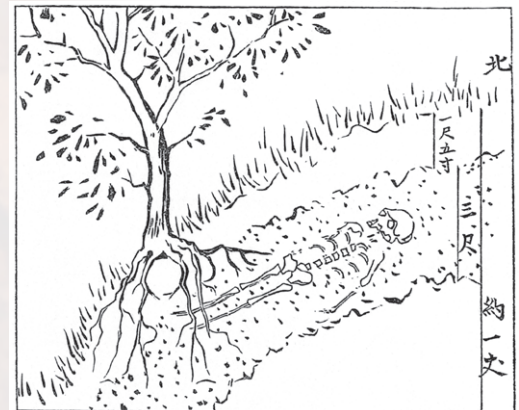
●Representative excavated artifacts



▲Pottery that served as a reference for

Horinouchi-style earthenware (private collection)

Photo courtesy: Tokyo National Museum Image Archives



▲A complete skeleton of a buried man (1904)

(Source: "Kaizuka Sōwa" 8-5 in the Archaeological Journal)

Horinouchi Shell Mound

Location: 2-15 Horinouchi

Designation date: July 6, 1964

Designated area: 26,789.85 m²

Access: Take the bus at Ichikawa Station on the JR Sōbu Line, get off at the "Hakubutsukan-Iriguchi (Entrance to Museum)" bus stop, and walk 10 minutes / Walk 10 minutes from Kokubun Station on the Hokusō Line

Parking area: Available (Next to the History Museum)

Viewing: Open to the public as Horinouchi Shell Mound Park

Shellfish and squid in the shell mound

The shellfish constituting the shell mound are mainly hard clams and button snails in the first half of the late Jōmon Period, while hard clams and circular clams are the main components of the shell mound in the end period, which indicates environmental changes that occurred around that time due to marine regression. What is remarkable about the excavation is that the remains of many squid, such as cuttlefish and kisslip cuttlefish, were unearthed from the shell mound. People at that time caught squid that came close to the shallow seaweed beds for spawning during the period from spring to early summer.

Relation with Dōmekiyatsu Site

The Dōmekiyatsu Site, on the south of the shell mound, was excavated in the course of the construction of the Tokyo Outer Ring Road. The remains of a wooden framework and a large amount of Japanese horse chestnut fruits were found at low altitudes beneath the plateau. The wooden framework is thought to have been a facility where Jōmon men living at the Horinouchi Shell Mound were engaged in removing peels from, and processing, the Japanese horse chestnut fruits.

Shimōsa Provincial Nunnery Site (Historic Site)

Shimōsa Provincial Nunnery Site

Location: 4-17-1 Kokubun, and others
 Designation date: December 27, 1967 Additionally designated on March 29, 1989, and September 20, 2002
 Designated area: 6,615.49 m²
 Access: Take the bus at Ichikawa Station on JR Sōbu Line, get off at the "Kokubun" bus stop, and walk 10 minutes
 Viewing: Open to the public as Provincial Nunnery Site Park



▲Garanchi east-side border wall and ditch sites



▲Garanchi east-side border ditch



Ama-dera (nunnery)

▲Ink writing earthenware indicating nunnery



▲Two-colored gallipot excavated from the Jiinchi east-side ditch



▲Ink writing earthenware describing the face of a monk or nun and Sono (vegetable garden or flower garden)



Kubozono



Constructed as a National Project

Construction of provincial temples

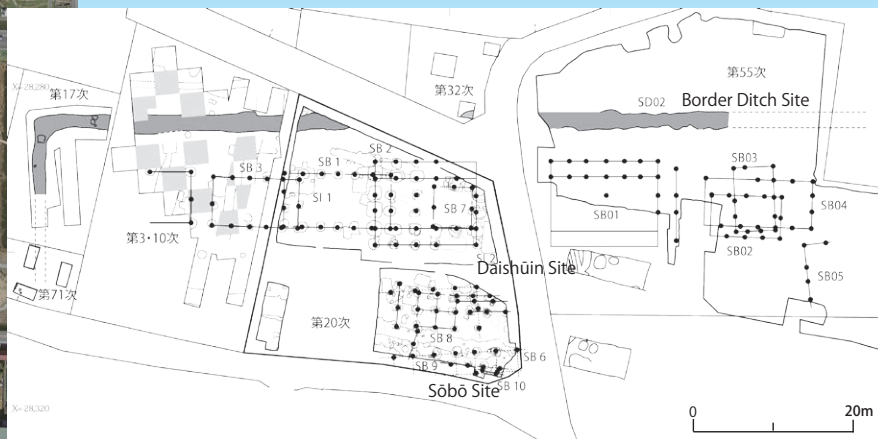
The ancient state performed Buddhist rituals to pray for the peace of the state. In response to the outbreaks of smallpox and famine in 735 and 737, in 741 Emperor Shōmu ordered the establishment of a provincial temple in each province, consisting of a monastery and a nunnery. Shimōsa Provincial Temple was constructed on the south edge of Kokubudai in Ichikawa City, with a monastery and a nunnery built in parallel in the east-west direction. Ink writing earthenware, describing the monastery as Tōji temple, was also unearthed there. The technical term for a monastery at national historic sites is kokubunji. The title of page 6 is the name of a historic site.

Facilities discovered in excavations

The monastery and nunnery of Shimōsa Province started to be excavated in 1932, which identified the location of the temples. Meanwhile, the 1966–1967 excavation found the remains of the Kondō Hall (the building enshrining the principal image), the Lecture Hall (the building where Buddhist monks studied the sutras) and the Nanajunotō (a 60-meter-tall, seven-story pagoda) at the monastery, while the remains of a Kondō Hall and a Lecture Hall were also discovered in the nunnery. No nunnery has a pagoda on its premises. Since the halls and pagoda at the monastery are arranged similarly to those at the Hōryūji Temple in Nara Prefecture, the layout is called a Hōryūji-style arrangement, but the two temples are not related.

Later on, Jiinchi (the premises of the temple) was marked off by ditches, with the maximum area of the premises approximately 340 meters from north to south and about 330 meters from east to west. The excavation also confirmed the remains of the Sōbō (residence for monks), the Daishūin (the temple office), the Kōjiin (a residence for high-ranked master monks), and the Zōjisho (a facility for construction and

Kitashita Tile Kiln Site Attached to Shimōsa Provincial Temple Site (Historic Site)



▲Sites of Provincial Temple's Sōbō and Daishūin



Tōji Temple



Daiin (Daishūin)

▲Ink-writing earthenware indicating the monastery and Daishūin



▲Kitashita Tile Kiln site Photo credit: Chiba Prefectural Board of Education

repair work). The size of the Jiinchi at the nunnery is up to approximately 340 meters from north to south and about 430 meters from east to west. Walls and ditches used to mark off the Garanchi (a place where the Kondō Hall, the Lecture Hall, the Nibō [residence for nuns], and other central facilities are located) were found in the excavation, meaning that a Nibō, Daishūin, and Sono (vegetable garden or flower garden) are thought to have existed in the premises.

The 2002–2016 excavation carried out in the course of the construction of the Tokyo Outer Ring Road discovered the Kitashita Site on the east side of the monastery. The plateau and its slope at the Kitashita Site were places where temple bells, as well as roof tiles used for building and repairing the provincial temple, were produced. The excavation also found two tile kilns that had been used in the foundation period; the name given to them is “Kitashita Tile Kiln.” Tiles made at the Kitashita Tile Kiln were also supplied to kokuchō, the provincial government office.

Background to the construction

Roofing tiles for building the kokuchō at the time of the provincial temple construction can be seen in many other provinces. In the capital at that time, renovations were made to the Heijō-kyū palace, and the construction of Tōdaiji temple also commenced. It is reasonable to think that the provincial temples built around that time were intended not only to pray for the peace of the state, but also to show other provinces how influential they were. In other words, whether in the capital or local areas, the provinces attempted to demonstrate their power by constructing new buildings. The 60-meter-tall, seven-story pagoda at the monastery was also a symbol of provincial prestige.

Construction of a provincial temple was a big project for the honor and dignity of the provinces.



▲The hōsōgemon (abstract flower pattern) tiles on the roof eaves can rarely be seen, even at provincial temples in other provinces



▲Tile on which the tile artisan's name is written

Kitashita Tile Kiln Site Attached to Shimōsa Provincial Temple Site

Location: 3-20-1 Kokubun, etc.
Designation date: December 27, 1967 Additionally designated on September 20, 2002, and August 5, 2010
Designated area: 21,336.85 m²
Access: Take the bus at Ichikawa Station on the JR Sōbu Line, get off at the “Kokubun” bus stop, and walk 5 minutes
Parking area: Available for visitors
Viewing: Open to the public



Kita-Kokubun Station

**Horinouchi
Shell Mound
(Historic Site)**

Municipal Museum of
History in Ichikawa
Municipal Museum of
Archaeology in Ichikawa

● Roadside Station Ichikawa

**Shimōsa Provincial
Nunnery Site
(Historic Site)**

**Soya
Shell Mound
(Historic Site)**

● Shimōsa Shrine Site

**Kitashita Tile Kiln Site Attached to
Shimōsa Provincial Temple Site (Historic Site)**

● Suwada Site

Konodai Station

Ichikawamama Station

Ichikawa Station

Sugano Station

Keisei Yawata Station

Moto-Yawata Station

Municipal Museum of Archaeology in Ichikawa

2-27-1 Horinouchi, Ichikawa, Chiba Prefecture

Tel.: 047-701-8399

July 2019



Cultural properties
in Ichikawa City