

Nomination form

International Memory of the World Register

1.0 Checklist

Nominees may find the following checklist useful before sending the nomination form to the International Memory of the World Secretariat. The information provided in italics on the form is there for guidance only and should be deleted once the sections have been completed.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Summary completed (section 1) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Nomination and contact details completed (section 2) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Declaration of Authority signed and dated (section 2) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | If this is a joint nomination, section 2 appropriately modified, and all Declarations of Authority obtained |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Documentary heritage identified (sections 3.1 – 3.3) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | History/provenance completed (section 3.4) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Bibliography completed (section 3.5) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Names, qualifications and contact details of up to three independent people or organizations recorded (section 3.6) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Details of owner completed (section 4.1) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Details of custodian – if different from owner – completed (section 4.2) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Details of legal status completed (section 4.3) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Details of accessibility completed (section 4.4) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Details of copyright status completed (section 4.5) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Evidence presented to support fulfilment of the criteria? (section 5) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Additional information provided (section 6) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Details of consultation with stakeholders completed (section 7) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Assessment of risk completed (section 8) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Summary of Preservation and Access Management Plan completed. If there is no formal Plan attach details about current and/or planned access, storage and custody arrangements (section 9) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Any other information provided – if applicable (section 10) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Suitable reproduction quality photographs identified to illustrate the documentary heritage. (300dpi, jpg format, full-colour preferred). |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Copyright permissions forms signed and attached. Agreement to propose item(s) for inclusion on the World Digital Library if inscribed |

Nomination form

International Memory of the World Register

Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke

ID Code [2016-53]

1.0 Summary (max 200 words)

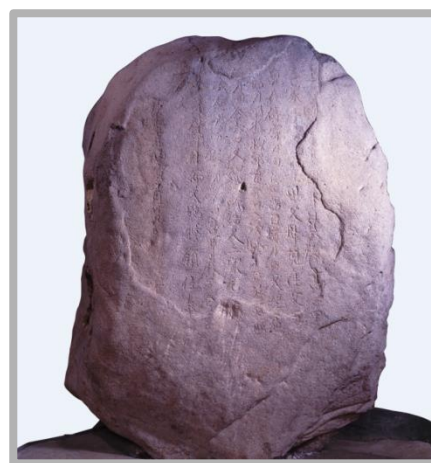
Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke are the series of stela, consisting of Yamanoue Stela (681 C.E.), Tago Stela (ca.711) and Kanaizawa Stela (726), in Gunma Prefecture, north of Tokyo, which were erected far from the center of seventh and eighth century Japan. These stelae are one of the world's oldest representations of Chinese character written in Japanese grammar, and are the invaluable memorial sites of ensuing interaction among Asian culture, illustrating that the Chinese-style political system and the Buddhism were introduced into the marginal area of Japan already at that time. Such exchange was penetrating the East Asian history. The people in Gunma Prefecture, under the historical value, have been making great efforts in preserving these stelae, for example, in August, 1945, hiding underground the Tago Stela because they were afraid that the occupation troops stationed in Japan at that time would take it. Both facts manifest their immeasurable quality as one of the Memory of the World.



Yamanoue Stela (681)



Tago Stela (ca.711)



Kanaizawa Stela (726)

2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)

Kozuke Sampi Sekai Kioku Isan Toroku Suishin Kyogikai [Council for Promoting the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke for the International Memory of the World Register]

2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage

The members of this Council include the Gunma Prefectural Government where the stelae are located, the Takasaki Municipal Government responsible for the maintenance and protection of the three stelae, local societies dedicated to cultural heritage management, local private firms, and professional and amateur scholars of ancient history.

2.3 Contact person(s) (to provide information on nomination)

YOKOSHIMA Shoji, Chairman of the Council

(Office: Cultural Promotion Division, Gunma Prefectural Government)

2.4 Contact details

Name	Address	Telephone	Facsimile	Email
YOKOSHIMA Shoji, Chairman	c/o Cultural Promotion Division, Gunma Prefectural Government, 1-1-1Ote-machi, Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture	+81-27-226-2525	+81-27-221-0300	bunshinka@pref.gunma.lg.jp

3.0 Identity and description of the documentary heritage

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

If inscribed, the exact title and institution(s) to appear on the certificate should be given

Name: Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke

Owner: National Government of Japan



3.1.1 Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke

The Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke are a set of three ancient stelae, namely Yamanoue 山上 Stela (681), Tago 多胡 Stela (711), and Kanaizawa 金井沢 Stela (726). Kozuke 上野 is the ancient name of a province which existed from ancient to early modern times and which is now called Gunma Prefecture, located inland in eastern Japan. The three stelae are located in close proximity to one another in southwestern Gunma.

The practice of engraving characters on stones and of erecting stelae was introduced to Japan from the Korean peninsula and China around the seventh century, C.E. In ancient Japan writing was the preserve of a limited elite. This practice of erecting stelae never became as widespread as in China and Korea. In Japan it was limited to those who were willing to accept foreign cultures brought by immigrants¹, or who were devoted to Chinese culture. Accordingly, there are a mere eighteen stelae which remain standing from the seventh to eleventh centuries in Japan. It is of major historical significance that three of these eighteen stelae are located a narrowly defined area of southwestern Gunma. It is well-known that local people in this area welcomed immigrants, and that local people erected these stelae because of their interactions with these immigrants. It is likely that the local inhabitants were proud of their own sophisticated cultures in comparison with other regions of Japan.



Locations of Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke

From the inscriptions of the three stelae, we can learn about the nature of the regional administrative system and marriage and the bonds between clans around the beginning of the eighth century when Nippon came to be used as the name of Japan and the ancient state had matured. Most importantly, these three stelae are firm evidence that the use of Chinese characters and devotion to Buddhism had reached Kozuke Province, which was located far away from the contemporary capital (Asuka or Nara) of Japan, which was situated in the eastern periphery of the Eurasian Continent. The three stelae are indeed the foremost historic sources for understanding cultural interactions in ancient East Asia.

Since 1819 when Kibe Tsukumomaro 木部百満 published the *Sampi Ko* 『三碑考』 [Consideration of the Three Cherished Stelae], the name “Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke” has appeared in numerous scholarly publications and guide books. When the Law of the Preservation of Historic Sites, Scenic Spots and Natural Monuments was adopted in 1919, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke were designated as a Historic Site on March 3, 1921 (first designation) as a set following scholarly advice that “the three stelae should be treated together because these three were erected within 45 years in a narrowly defined area of the former Tago County.”

3.1.2 Yamanoue Stela

[Inscription]

辛巳歲集月三日記

佐野三家定賜健守命孫黑壳刀自此

新川臣兒斯多々弥足尼孫大兒臣娶生兒

長利僧母為記定文也 放光寺僧



[Transliteration of the inscriptions]

(First line) Kanoto-no-mi no toshi, Jugatsu mikka ni shirusu.

(Second line) Sano Miyake wo sadame tamaeru Takemori no Mikoto no Mago no Kurome Toji,

(Third line) kore Nitkawa no Omi no ko no Shitatami no Sukune no mago no Ogo no Omi ni totsugite umeru ko no

(Fourth line) Nagatoshi no Hoshi ga, Haha no tame ni shirushi sadamuru bun nari. Hoko-ji So.

[Dimension] 111 cm in height, 47 cm in width, and 52 cm in thickness.

[Inscriptions] 53 Chinese characters in four vertical lines

[Rock] Pyroxene andesite

[Location] 2104 Aza-yamakamidani, Yamana-machi, Takasaki City,
Gunma Prefecture, Japan

[Transliteration of the inscriptions]

(First line) Kanoto-no-mi no toshi, Jugatsu mikka ni shirusu.

(Second line) Sano Miyake wo sadame tamaeru Takemori no Mikoto no Mago no Kurome Toji,

(Third line) kore Niikawa no Omi no ko no Shitatami no Sukune no mago no Ogo no Omi ni totsugite umeru ko no

(Fourth line) Nagatoshi no Hoshi ga, Haha no tame ni shirushi sadamuru bun nari. Hoko-ji So.

[Translation]

Written on the third day of the tenth month (lunar calendar), in the year of 681 C.E. (*kanoto-no-mi*)ⁱⁱ. Kurome Toji is a descendant of Takemori no Mikoto who was the first magistrate of the Sano imperial land. Kurome Toji is married to Ogo no Omi, who is a descendant of Shitatami no Sukune, who was the son of Niikawa no Omi. Kurome Toji gave birth to me as her son, and I, Priest Nagatoshi, have drafted this in my mother's honor. Priest at the Hoko-ji Temple.

Notes: Toji was an honorific for a woman; Omi and Sukune are honorifics for men.

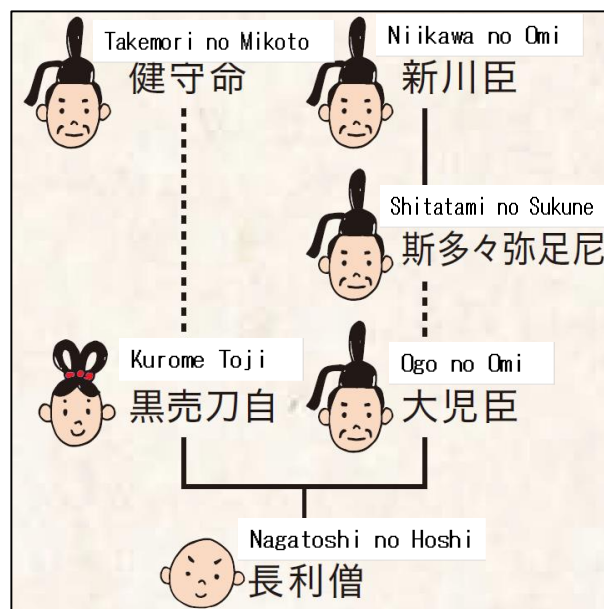
[Explanation]

The Yamanoue Stela is the oldest of the still-standing stela in Japan. The stela was erected in front of the Yamanoue Mounded Tomb where Kurome Toji, the mother of Priest Nagatoshi, was buried. Nagatoshi was a priest of the Hoko-ji Buddhist Temple, and was a descendant of the elite who managed the Sano imperial land. Imperial land referred to land under the direct military and economic control of the central government in Nara from the sixth century to the early seventh century.

The morphology of the stela is characterized by the use of a natural, unsculpted rock. This morphology is common to Uljinela (524 C.E.) at Uljin 蔚珍, Jeokseong 赤城 Stela (ca. 545) at Danyang 丹陽, King Jinheung 真興 Chyangnyeong 昌寧 Stela (561), and Namsan Sinseong 南山新城 Stela (591), all in Silla, Korea. The expression of the date in the first line, "Written on the third day of the tenth month (lunar calendar), 681," is common to other epigraphs and inscriptions on wooden tablets of the seventh century. The Chinese characters are written in the scribal style, which is of an older style.

According to local oral traditions, the stela used to stand on the eastern side of the Yamanoue Mounded Tomb, or at the foot of the hill where the Yamanoue Mounded Tombs was built. We know, however, that by 1875 this stela stood at its present location.

[Memory]



Kin relationship as evidenced by the Yamanoue Stela



Namsan Sinseong Stela (591)

While all the inscriptions are in Chinese characters, the Chinese characters were written according to Japanese grammar; i.e. the verb comes at the end of the sentence, rather than following a subject. This is a very early example of a characteristically Japanese adoption of Chinese characters. Although Chinese characters are and were used in China, Korea, and Vietnam, evidence for regional differences in the adoption of Chinese characters is historically precious. This stela should be adopted as a heritage to be shared with the world as a source showing regional difference in the adoption of Chinese characters.

3.1.3 Tago Stela



[Inscription]

弁官符上野国片岡郡緑野郡廿
良郡并三郡内三百戸郡成給羊
成多胡郡和銅四年三月九日甲寅
宣左中弁正五位下多治比真人
太政官二品穂積親王左大臣正二
位石上尊右大臣正二位藤原尊

[Transliteration of the inscriptions]

(First line) Benkan oosu. Kozuke no Kuni no Kataoka no Koori, Midono no Koori, Ka-
(Second line) ra no Koori awaseite mitsu no koori no uchi, sanbyaku ko wo koori to nashi, Hitsuji ni tamate
(Third line) Tago no Koori to nase. Wado 4 nen 3 gatsu 9 nichu koin ni
(Fourth line) noru. Sa-chuben Sho 5-i no ge Tajih no Mahito
(Fifth line) Daijokan 2-hon Hozumi no Mikko, Sa-daijin Sho 2-
(Sixth line) i Isonokami no Mikoto, U-daijin Sho 2-i Fujiwara no Mikoto.

[Dimension]

Cap stone: 95 cm in width, 90 cm in depth, 27 cm in thickness at the center,
15 to 17 cm at the edge

Stela body: 129 cm in height, 69 cm in width, and 62 cm in thickness.

[Inscriptions] 80 Chinese characters in six vertical lines

[Rock] Local (Ushibuse) sandstone (Lithic wacke)

[Location] 1095 Ike, Yoshii-machi, Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture, Japan

[Transliteration of the inscriptions]

(First line) Benkan oosu. Kozuke no Kuni no Kataoka no Koori, Midono no Koori, Ka-

(Second line) ra no Koori awasete mitsu no koori no uchi, sanbyaku ko wo koori to nashi, Hitsuji^{mii} ni tamaite

(Third line) Tago no Koori to nase. Wado 4 nen 3 gatsu 9 nichi koin ni

(Fourth line) noru. Sa-chuben Sho 5-i no ge Tajihi no Mahito

(Fifth line) Daijokan 2-hon Hozumi no Miko, Sa-daijin Sho 2-

(Sixth line) i Isonokami no Mikoto, U-daijin Sho 2-i Fujiwara no Mikoto.

[Translation]

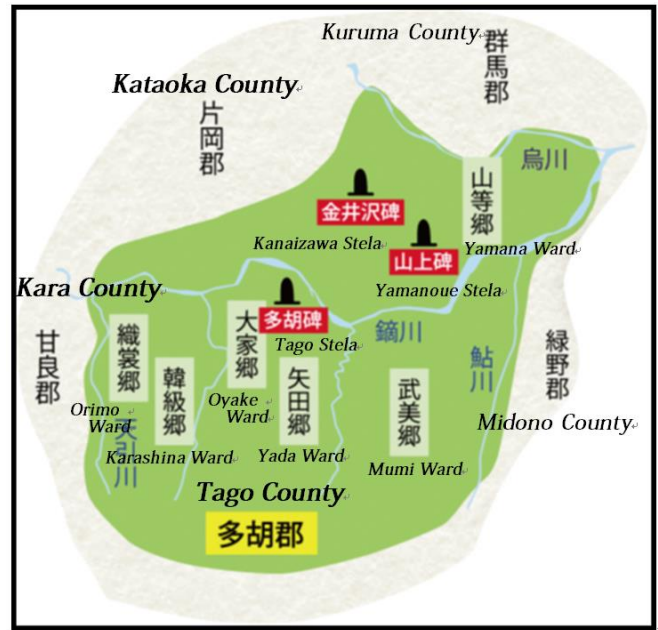
There was an order from the Communication [Benkan] Bureau of the central government. From the three counties of Kataoka, Midono, and Kara of Kozuke Province, select three hundred residences to establish a new county. Hitsuji 羊 should be entrusted to manage the new county, and the name of the new county shall be Tago. Order on the 9th day, 3rd month (lunar calendar), 4th year of Wado (711). The order orally delivered by Tajihi no Mahito, Left-intermediate communication officer of the court rank of senior five minor. At that time, the Prime Minister was Prince Hozumi of the court rank of higher second, Minister of the Left Isonokami [no Maro] Mikoto of the court rank of the senior second, Minister of the Right Fujiwara [no Fuhito] Mikoto of the court rank of the senior second.

Notes: Mikoto was an honorific.

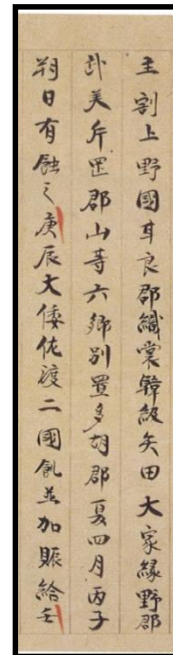
[Explanation]

The inscription makes reference to the process by which Tago County was officially established by the central government: the three neighboring counties of Kataoka 片岡, Midono 緑野, and Kara 甘良 in Kozuke Province were ordered to select three hundred residences to form the new county of Tago. Hitsuji was named as the first County Magistrate of the new county.

It is highly significant that this corresponds exactly to an entry on the establishment of Tago County in an entry for the third month of the fourth year of Wado in the *Shoku-Nihon-gi* or the *Continuation of the Chronicles of Japan*, the official history of Japan compiled in 797. Although the date and year of the erection are not



Presumed Area of the Tago county



Shoku-Nihon-gi



Bukhansan Stela

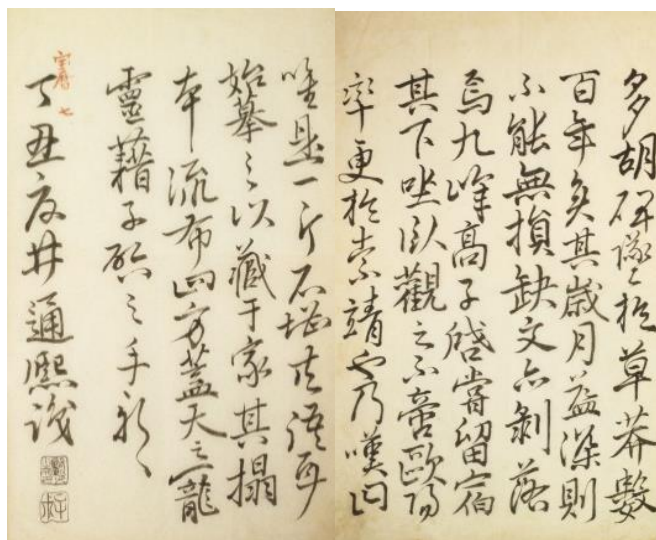
inscribed, we suspect that the stela was erected around 711. The correlation between two different sources gives support for this conclusion.

The structure of the stela is characterized by a “cap stone” on the top and the main body carved to a square column. This is similar to Maunryeong 磨雲嶺 Stela (568) and Bukhansan 北漢山 Stela (ca. 568) of Silla, Korea, both of which were erected to commemorate border inspections by King Jinheung 真興. In Japan, it is similar to the Stela of the Nasu Provincial Governor erected in 700. The raw material of the stela is locally quarried sandstone, of hardness comparable to concrete. Another feature of this stela is the large size of the Chinese characters inscribed. Obviously, the stela was intended to be displayed. We also assume that the inscriptions were intended to be read aloud because the size of Chinese characters is larger in this stela than in the other two stelae and also because the use of the term “Mikoto” was colloquial. While the style of writing used in this stela is somewhat similar to that of stelae carved in cliffs during the Northern and Southern Dynasties of China (439-589), it is more of the square style, and stylistically newer than that of the Yamanoue Stela.

Finally, the existence of the Tago Stela is already recorded as “Kozuke no Kuni Tago-Gun Benkanfu Hi [Stela of the Communication Officer between the Center and Region, Stationed in Tago County, Kozuke Province]” 「上野国多胡郡弁官符碑」 in the *Azumaji no Tsuto* [Souvenirs of Journeys to the East] 『東路のつと』 written by Saiokuken Socho 柴屋軒宗長 in 1511.

[Memory]

The style of writing of the Tago Stela is a fully developed square style, and the inscriptions were engraved. The inscriptions of the Tago Stela were published in the *Jomo Tago-Gun Hi-Jo* [Note on Stelae in Tago County, Kozuke Province] 『上毛多胡郡碑帖』 written in 1756 by Japanese calligrapher Sawada Toko 沢田東江, and edited by Takahashi Dosai 高橋道齋. In 1764, Sawada gave a copy of this book to Song Daejun 成



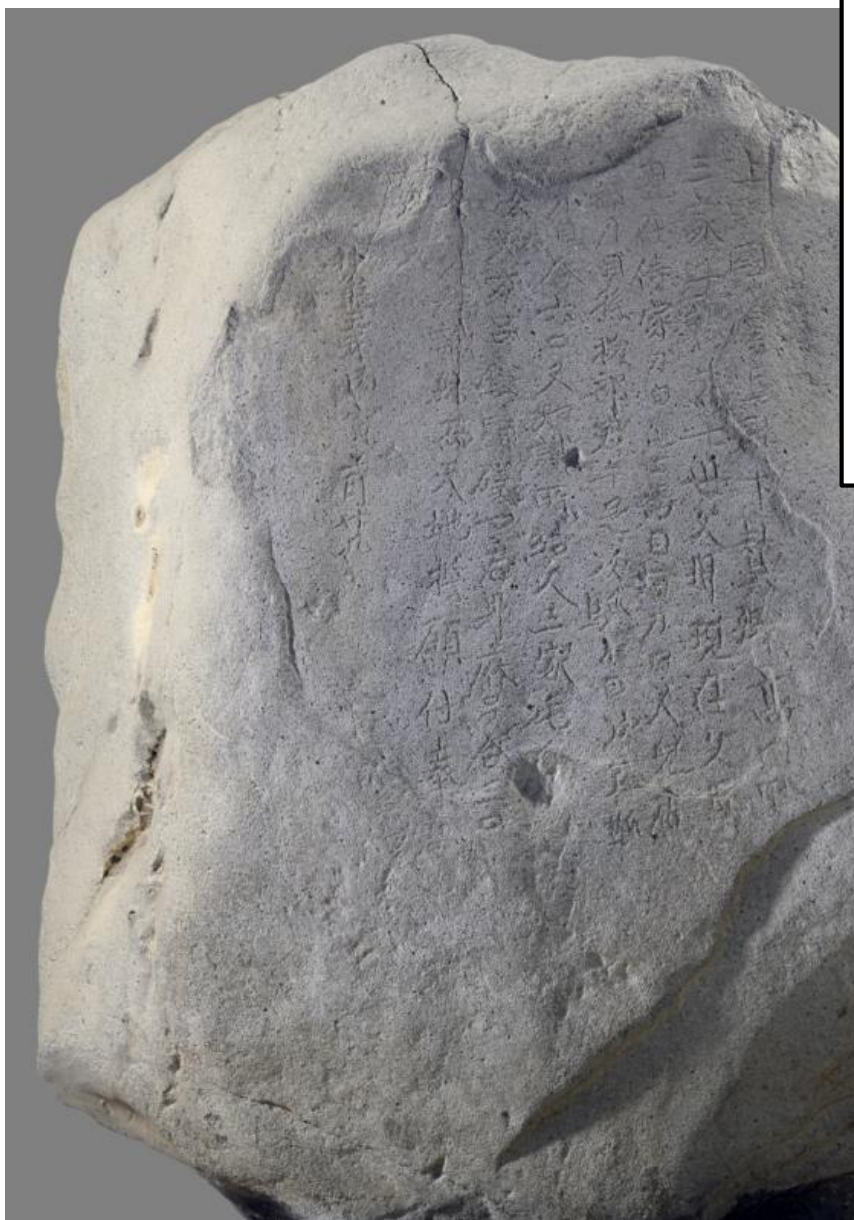
Jomo Tago-Gun Hi-Jo [Text of the Inscriptions of Stelae in the Tago county]



Inscription Introduced in the *Kāi fā sù yuán* by Yang Shoujing

大中, a Korean secretary of the Korean diplomatic mission, on the occasion of their visit to Edo to celebrate Tokugawa Ieharu's inauguration as the tenth shogun. Later, the Korean diplomatic mission took the book to Qing China, and showed it to Wēng Fāng'gāng 翁方綱(1733-1818), one of the Four Acclaimed Calligrapher of Qing. In 1880, when Yang Shoujing 楊守敬(1839-1915), a Qing diplomat and scholar, visited Japan and distributed copies of his book *Kǎi fǎ sù yuán* 『楷法溯源』 [Origins of the Square Style of Writing] to Japanese calligraphers. In the book, the 39 characters of the Tago Stela inscription were reproduced. This episode shows the immense significance of the Tago Stela in the history of calligraphy. In the field of calligraphy, the Tago Stela has contributed to cultural interactions between China, Korea, and Japan from the eighteenth century to the present.

3.1.4 Kanaizawa Stela



[Dimension] 110 cm in height, 70 cm in width, and 65 cm in thickness.

[Inscriptions] 112 Chinese characters in nine vertical lines

[Rock] Pyroxene andesite

[Location] 2334 Kanaizawa, Yamana-machi, Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture, Japan

[Inscription] □:unreadable character
 上野國羣馬郡下賛郷高田里
 三家子□為七世父母現在父母
(他田)
(類)
 現在侍家刀自□□君目□刀自又尻□
(加)
(三)
 那刀自孫物部君午足次馱刀自次□馱
 刀自合六口又知識所結人三家毛人
 次知万呂鍛師礪マ君身麻呂合三口
 如是知識結而天地誓願仕奉
 石文
 神龜三年丙寅二月廿九日

[Transliteration of the inscriptions]
 (First line) (First line) Kozuke no Kuni Kuruma no Koori Shimosanu no sato Takada no kozato no
 (Second line) Miyake Ko-(unreadable character) ga, shichisei fubo to genzai fubo no tameni,
 (Third line) genzai haberu ie-toji no Osada no Kimi Mezura-Toji, mata ko no Ka-
 (Fourth line) na-Toji, mago no Mononobe no Kimi Umataru, tsuguni Hizume-Toji, tsuguni Otohizume-
 (Fifth line) Toji no awasete roku-(6)-kuchi, mata chishiki wo musubishi tokoro no hito, Miyake no Emishi,
 (Sixth line) tsuguni Chinaro, kanuchi no Isobe no Kimi Minaro no awasete mi-(3)-kuchi,
 (Seventh line) kono gotoku chishiki wo musubite tenchi ni seigan shi tsukae tatematsuru
 (Eighth line) ishi-bumi
 (ninth line) Jinki 3-nen, hejin, 2-gatsu 29-nichi

[Transliteration of the inscriptions]

(First line) Kozuke no Kuni Kuruma no Koori Shimosanu no sato Takada no kozato no
 (Second line) Miyake Ko-(unreadable character) ga, shichisei fubo to genzai fubo no tameni,
 (Third line) genzai haberu ie-toji no Osada no Kimi Mezura-Toji, mata ko no Ka-
 (Fourth line) na-Toji, mago no Mononobe no Kimi Umatari, tsugini Hizume-Toji, tsugini Otohizume-
 (Fifth line) Toji no awasete roku-(6)-kuchi, mata chishiki wo musubishi tokoro no hito, Miyake no Emishi,
 (Sixth line) tsugini Chimaro, kanuchi no Isobe no Kimi Mimaro no awasete mi-(3)-kuchi,
 (Seventh line) kono gotoku chishiki wo musubite tenchi ni seigan shi tsukae tatematsuru
 (Eighth line) ishi-bumi
 (ninth line) Jinki 3-nen, heiin, 2-gatsu 29-nichi

[Translation]

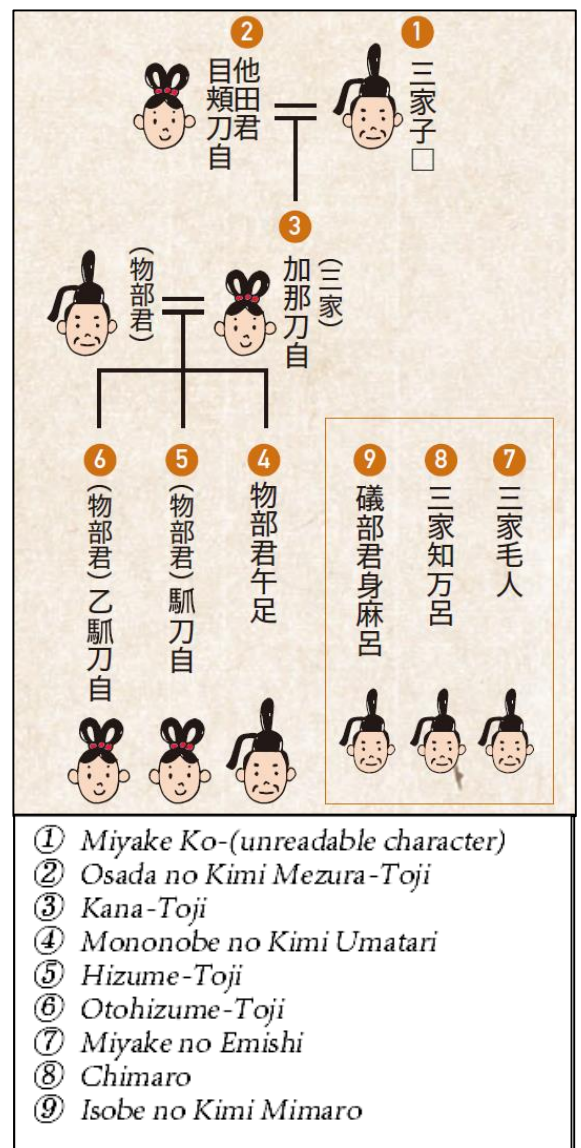
Miyake Ko-(unreadable character) who lives in the Takada Village, Shimosanu Ward, Kuruma County, Kozuke Province, swears by heaven and earth to be a devoted follower of Buddhism in the memory of ancestors and parents, together with six family members, including Osada no Kimi Mezura-Toji, who was the matriarch, her daughter Kana-Toji, and grandchildren Mononobe no Kimi Umatari, Hizume-Toji, and Otohizume-Toji, as well as three other people through belief in Buddhism, including Miyake no Emishi, Chimaro, and Isobe no Kimi Mimaro, the ironsmith. This oath is inscribed in stone.

29th day of the second month (lunar calendar), 726 (3rd year of Jinki)

Notes: *Ie-toji* was a rank of influential women who manages household; i.e. matriarch. *Chishiki* in this context means a group of people who are bonded together through their belief in Buddhism. *Kanuchi* is an ironsmith or craftsman involved in metal. Mononobe was the family name of an influential elite in ancient Japan.

[Explanation]

The content of the inscription of the stela is that the members of the Miyake Clan swore by heaven and earth to be united in their devotion for Buddhism. The morphology of the stela is characterized by the utilization of a natural rock that has not been worked, and it is similar to Bongpyeong Stela (524 C.E.) at Uljin, Jeokseong Stela (ca. 545) at Danyang, and Chyangnyeong Stela (561) of Silla, Korea. The style of writing is the same as the Yamanoue Stela because it adopts



Kin relationship as evidenced by the Kanaizawa Stela

the scribal style of writing and it gives the impression of being of an older style.

The expression of the place name in the first line of the inscriptions, “the Takada Village, Shimosanu Ward, Gunma County, Kozuke Province,” matches a local unit of regional administrative system adopted from 717 to 740. It indicates that this system was in effect in Kozuke Province at that time. Furthermore, the introduction of additional family members by *tsugi* [next] and the expression of a personal name following his or her occupation, as exemplified by “kanuchi no



Jeokseong Stela, Danyang (ca.545)

Isobe no Kimi Mimaro,” are the same as the format of the *Mino no Kuni Koseki* [Family Register of the Mino Province (Mino being the present Gifu Prefecture)] 「御野(美濃)国戸籍」. This stela is the oldest evidence that a family registry was also prepared in Kozuke Province for taxation and conscription.

[Memory]

The expression of *shichisei fubo* 七世父母 or “parents of seven successive generations” is often found in Buddhist stelae in China. In the Korean peninsula, there are four such examples dated from the fifth to seventh centuries, including the inscriptions of the stone Buddha Triad (489) in the collection of the Tong’a University Museum in Pusan, being the oldest, and the inscriptions of Buddha Triad and One Thousand Buddha (673) in the collection of the Kongju National Museum. In Japan, we find the expression of *shichisei fubo* in inscriptions of late seventh century Buddha images. Similarly, the word *seigan* 誓願 or swearing to god has Buddhist connotations, and can be seen in several other historic sources. It is important to note that these expressions and words were used in eastern Japan. It is clear evidence that Buddhism came to be accepted in local communities upon the foundation of local religious systems. This stela is a precious primary historical source indicating the regional pattern of the diffusion of Buddhism in East Asia.

3.1.5 Relevant Information

1. Practice of Stela Erection in Ancient Japan and the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke

The culture of erecting stelae existed in India in the third century, B.C.E. The inscriptions of some of these Indian stelae are Buddhist in nature, such as oaths to be a devoted follower of Buddhism. The earliest stela in China dates back to the reign of Emperor Wu (159-87 B.C.E.) of Western Han, and it remains to be investigated how the culture of erecting stelae appeared in China because of the difference in time and also difference in the nature of inscriptions. The inscriptions of early Chinese stelae were not Buddhist in nature. This culture of erecting stelae in China reached the Korean peninsula around the fourth to fifth centuries, C.E, and was introduced to Japan in the middle seventh century by Korean people who immigrated to Japan. Including tomb epitaphs and monuments, there are only eighteen stelae of ancient Japan (seventh to eleventh centuries) that have survived today.

Among these eighteen, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke, namely the Yamanoue Stela, Tago Stela, and Kanaizawa Stela, are located in a small area of a three-kilometer diameter. These stela were erected by local people. Since then, local people have taken great care to protect the three stelae for over 1300 years. Owing to this care, the stelae are in very good preservation. The Yamanoue Stela, the oldest of the three, is the oldest still-standing stela in Japan.

From the inscriptions of the three stelae, we learn that Kozuke Province located inland in eastern Japan, closely followed the dynamics of societies in East Asia as well as the advanced cultures which had writing systems. Indeed, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke are one of the most important historic sites, for understanding the history not only of Japan but also of East Asia. For this reason, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke are nationally designated as a Historic Site of Special Significance, equivalent to a National Treasure.

2. Kozuke Province that Welcomed Immigrants

The region that would become Kozuke Province, where the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke were erected, became prosperous because of the large-scale developments of rice paddies in the third century C.E. and of its closer ties with the central polity of Yamato than the other local polities of eastern Japan. The central polity of Yamato in west-central Japan at that time was trying to extend its sphere of influence to eastern Japan. For that purpose, the central polity had established very close relationships with local elites in Kozuke. Such close ties are evidenced by the sharing of keyhole-shaped mounded tombs, a form that originated from the Yamato region. Among mounded tombs built from the fourth to seventh centuries in Kozuke, the number of large keyhole-shaped mounded tombs is considerable in eastern Japan, most notably Ota-Tenjinyama of 210 meters in length, the largest keyhole-shaped mounded tomb in eastern Japan.



Ota-Tenjinyama Mounded Tomb

In the area where the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke were erected in Kozuke, immigrants from the Korean peninsula apparently had been welcomed and contributed to the development of the local community from an early period. Clear evidence for their activities comes from the late fifth century



Kenzaki-Nagatoro-Nishi site in Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture. At the site, archaeologists discovered a square cairn, a burial practice originating in the Korean

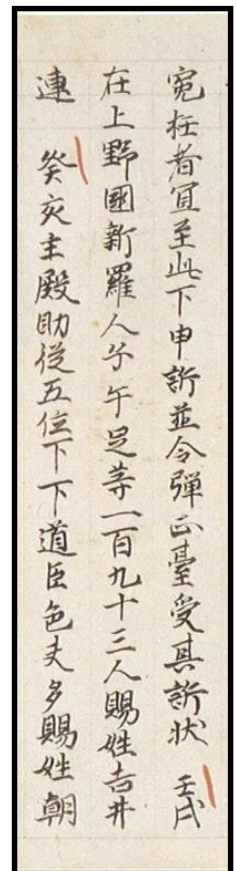
Square cairn and gold earring

peninsula, a gold earring with long chains apparently brought from the Korean peninsula, and pits where horses were ritually buried. The practice of horse riding had also been introduced from the Korean peninsula to Japan by the beginning of the fifth century.

It is also evident that local people were actively engaged in interactions with other regions of East Asia in the late sixth century. Archaeological excavations of the late sixth century keyhole-shaped mounded Tombs, Kannonyama and Kannonzuka, both in Takasaki City, resulted in the discoveries of an iron helmet, gilt-bronze horse trappings, a bronze bowl, and a bronze water pitcher, all of which were high-quality objects, imported from Silla and Paekche Korea and Northern Qi China

Since the late fifth century, local elites in Kozuke welcomed craftsmen from the Korean peninsula, who brought advanced technologies, such as raising and breeding horses, iron working, stoneware production, and weaving. These immigrants also introduced new culture and knowledge, including a writing system and Buddhism. In association with local people, these immigrants contributed to the formation of a locally characteristic culture.

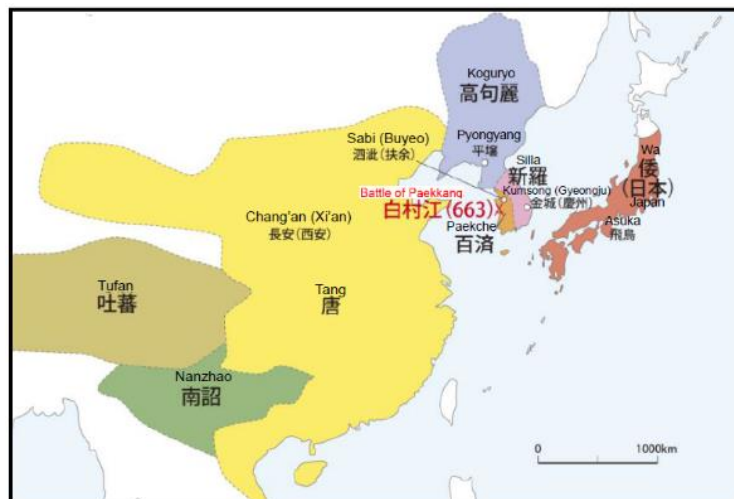
Tago County, where the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke were erected, contained the Karashina 韓級 Ward. We learn from the ink inscriptions on a cloth in the Shosho-in Treasure in the Todai-ji Buddhist Temple that the Hatahito Family, who had emigrated from Silla Korea, were residing in the Karashina Ward in the eighth century. The *Shoku-Nihon-gi* or *Continuation of the Chronicles of Japan* records in the entry on the second year of Tempyo-Jingo (766) that the central government granted 193 Silla people residing in Kozuke the family name of Yoshii-muraji. Yoshii happens to be the name of a place in southwestern Takasaki City. This evidence strongly suggests that numerous immigrants from Silla and other countries lived in this region at that time.



Shoku-Nihon-gi

Indeed, the area where the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke were erected had received both people and objects from various countries of East Asia since an early period. The immigrants and local people worked together to form a multi-ethnic community, which was open to members of any society.

From 600 to 838, the central government of Yamato dispatched diplomatic missions, along with students and priests, to China twenty times in order to learn and acquire the knowledge of advanced political systems and cultures. This was necessary for the central government to establish a strong, centralized state system. In China at the end of the sixth century, the Sui Dynasty united the northern and southern dynasties, thereby establishing a unified empire. Sui was replaced by Tang at the beginning of the seventh century.



East Asia at the middle of the seventh century

On the Korean peninsula, Silla was allied with Tang. Through this alliance, Silla defeated Paekche in 660 and Koguryo in 668, thereby unifying the Korean peninsula. As part of such political turmoil in the peninsula, a large number of people immigrated to Japan. These immigrants settled in various regions of Japan and had considerable cultural influence. The erection of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke is a prominent example of local culture influenced by immigrants.

At the same time, it is important to note that the contents of the inscriptions of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke are very Japanese and local. Having acquired the knowledge and technologies brought by immigrants and utilizing a writing system, which was the most sophisticated culture at that time, local people inscribed and recorded the dynamics of society, the family system, and the nature of belief in Buddhism in eastern Japan.

3.4 History/provenance

[Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke]

Although it is evident that numerous people were interested in the Tago Stela since the sixteenth century, it was in 1819 when the three stelae of Yamanoue, Tago, and Kanaizawa were for the first time treated scholarly as a set in Kibe Tsukumomaro's book, *Sampi Ko* [Consideration of the Three Cherished Stelae] in 1819. This was followed by the publication of *Kozuke Sampi Ko* 『上野三碑考』 [Consideration of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke] in 1836 by Ban Nobutomo 伴信友.

Since then, the three stelae have often been treated as the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke in studies of epigraphy and regional history, as well as guides to historic sites. In 1921, the three stelae were nationally designated as a historic site as a set under the Law of the Preservation of Historic Sites, Scenic Spots and Natural Monuments. The same was the case for the national designation of a historic site of the special significance in 1954 under the new Law of the Cultural Properties Protection. All these indicate that the scholarly recognition of these three stelae historically related to one another was maintained throughout modern history.

[Yamanoue Stela]

This stela is listed as a “stela housed in a temple dedicated to Avalokitesvara or Kannon in the Yamana Village” in the *Shuko Jisshu* [Collection of Ten Kinds of Antiquaries] 『集古十種』 compiled by Matsudaira Sadanobu 松平定信 in the 1790's. It was referred to as a “stela in the Yamana Village” in the *Kokyo Ibun* [Old Stories of Ancient Cities] 『古京遺文』 written by Kariya Ekisai 狩谷被齋 (1775-1835), a specialist of textual exegesis. These indicate that the stela had already been located in the Yamana Village, the same ward as the present. Oral traditions state that the stela stood at the foot of a pine tree by a small shrine in front of the Yamanoue Mounded Tomb or moved to the foot of a hill. Around 1875, another oral tradition stated that this stela stood at a location very close to the present location.

In 1884, Katori Motohiko 楫取素彦, then the governor of the Gunma Prefecture, ordered the prefectural government to purchase a land where the Yamanoue stela was located. In order to take measures necessary to preserve the stela, Katori also ordered to build a small structure to cover the stela and put stela on a new basal stone. The location and the condition of the Yamanoue stela, consisting of the body and the base, has remained unchanged since Katori's involvement in 1884. The present reinforced concrete structure to cover the stela was built in 1992 to further protect the stela.

[Tago Stela]

The earliest dated publication on the Tago Stela is an article dated to 1511 published in the *Azumaji no Tsuto* [Souvenirs of Journeys to the East] written by Saiokuken Socho. In the *Shinto-Shu* [Collection of Stories Related to Shintoism] 『神道集』 compiled in the middle fourteenth century, an oral tradition of Hitsuji-tayu 羊太夫 of the Tago Ward was published. Since the seventeenth century, various oral traditions related to *hitsuji* 羊, a character in the inscriptions, have been recorded. An illustration of the stela was published in the *Koshin-roku* [Record of Friends Getting Together] 『盍簪録』 written by Ito Togai 伊藤東涯 in 1720. In the *Koshin-roku*, Ito introduced

oral traditions that the stela was called “Shrine of Hitsuji-tayu,” located by a large camphor tree and that the stela was the tomb of Prince Hozumi 穂積(?-715; fifth son of Emperor Temmu [r. 673-686]).

The style of writing of the Tago Stela was introduced to Korea in 1764 through a Korean diplomatic mission to Japan. It was further introduced to Qing China by a Korean diplomat. This episode is a good evidence for diffusion of Chinese characters and their writing. Indeed, the Tago Stela has contributed to cultural interactions among China, Korea, and Japan from the eighteenth century to the present.

In 1875, Katori Motohiko ordered the prefectural government to purchase the land where the stela stood, enclose it with a wooden fence, and build a cover over the stela. In 1967, a reinforced concrete structure was newly built to protect the stela.

[Kanaizawa Stela]

The *Yamabuki Nikki* [Diary of Japanese Rose] 『山吹日記』 written by Nasa Katsutaka 奈佐勝臯 in 1786 records indirect information that this stela was dug up in a place very close to the present location. This stela is listed as a “stela in the Yamana Village” in the *Shuko Jisshu* [Collection of Ten Kinds of Antiquaries] compiled by Matsudaira Sadanobu in the 1790’s, which indicates that this stela had already been located in the Yamana Village, the same ward as the present.

In 1884, Katori Motohiko ordered the prefectural government to purchase a land where the Kanaizawa stela was located. In order to take measures necessary to preserve the stela, Katori also ordered the construction of a small structure to cover the stela and to put the stela on a new basal stone. The location and the condition of the Kanaizawa stela, consisting of the body and the base, has remained unchanged since Katori’s involvement in 1884. The present reinforced concrete structure to cover the stela was built in 1991 to further protect the stela.

4.0 Legal information

4.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

Name	Address	
National Government of Japan (Agency for Cultural Affairs)	3-2-2 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo100-8959, Japan	
Telephone	Facsimile	Email
+81-3-5253-4111 (operator)		

4.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner)

Name	Address	
Takasaki City	35-1 Takamatsu-cho, Takasaki City, Gunma Prefecture379-8501	
Telephone	Facsimile	Email
+81-27-321-1111 (operator)	+81-27-328-2295	

【Division in charge】

Name	Address	Telephone	Facsimile	Email
Division of Cultural Heritage Management, Takasaki Municipal Board of Education	same as above	+81-27-321-1292 (direct)	+81-27-321-2295	ky-bunkazai@city.takasaki.gunma.jp

4.3 Legal status

Because of their historic value as a group of the oldest stelae in Japan, the Yamanoue, Tago, and Kanaizawa Stelae were designated as a Historic Site as a set by the imperial government on March 3, 1921, under the Law of the Preservation of Historic Sites, Scenic Spots and Natural Monuments (law adopted in 1919). At present, the stelae are designated as a historic site of special significance by the national government under the Law of the Cultural Properties Protection. The designation took place on March 20, 1954.

4.4 Accessibility

[Homepage and guide]

Both the Gunma prefectural government and Takasaki municipal government have released Japanese homepages of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke. English, French, Chinese (simplified characters), and Korean summaries of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke are also available on internet. In addition, the Gunma prefectural government has produced a video describing the three stelae. The prefectural government is also planning to publish English, French, Chinese (simplified characters), and Korean guides to the three stelae.

[Daily maintenance]



All three stelae are protected by small structures built with reinforced concrete. These structures are usually locked. Visitors can look at the stelae through glass windows from three directions. Visitors can also turn the light on inside the structures. A Japanese audio guide is also available for the Tago Stela.

The Takasaki Municipal Government maintains the keys to these structures. On Sunday in early March, every year, visitors are allowed into the structures. Scholars and teachers leading students can make appointments so that staff of the municipal government unlock the structures and give guides to the three stelae.

Tago Stela

[Digitizing]

The Gunma Prefectural government created 3-dimensional digital images of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke in March 2014. Their resolution is 0.5 mm, and the resolutions of the images of the inscriptions are 0.1 mm.

[Replicas]

Replicas of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke are on display at the Gunma Prefectural Museum of History in Takasaki City. Additionally, the Takasaki Municipal Government and the National Museum of Japanese History own replicas of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke. These replicas are available for loan to other museums and research institutions for temporary display and research.

[Tago Stela Museum]

The Tago Stela Museum is located at Ike, Yoshii-machi, Takasaki City, near the Tago Stela. On display at this museum are replicas of epigraphic materials outside Japan, rubbings of ancient and medieval Chinese stelae, replicas of ancient Japanese stelae, archeological findings in Tago County, and materials related to Hitsuji-tayu. Such an array of displays allow visitors to situate the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke into broader historical contexts from various perspectives.



Tago Stela Museum



4.5 Copyright status

Under the copyright law of Japan, copyright is protected 50 years after the authors' death. This means that there is no copyright of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke.

The copyright of this text is owned by the Council for Promoting the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke for the UNESCO Registration of World Memories. The copyright of the photograph of Ota-Tenjinyama Mounded Tomb is by the Ota Municipal Board of Education, Gunma Prefecture, and those of the Sanno Buddhist Temple Site by the Maebashi Municipal Board of Education, Gunma Prefecture. The copyright of all other photographs and illustrations are owned by Council for Promoting the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke for the International Memory of the World Register.

5.0 Assessment against the selection criteria

5.1 Authenticity.

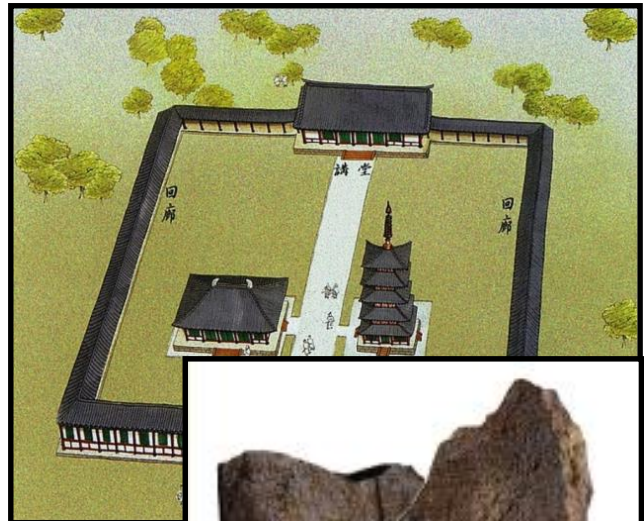
The authenticity of each of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke may be demonstrated as follows:

[Yamanoue Stela]

Location The Yamanoue Stela stands by the entrance to the burial chamber of the Yamanoue Mounded Tomb built in the middle seventh century. It is likely that Kurome Toji was buried in this mounded tomb. If this is indeed the case, the date inscribed in this stela fits very well; the stela was erected in 681 in memory of Priest Nagatoshi's mother who died in the middle seventh century.

Morphology The use of a natural rock without modification is common to sixth century Silla stelae of Korea, such as the Bongpyeong Stela (524 C.E.) at Uljin, Jeokseong Stela (ca. 545) at Danyang, Chyangnyeong Stela (561), and Namsan Sinseong Stela (591). It is likely that the Yamanoue Stela was designed and erected based on the information brought from Silla, Korea.

Inscriptions The style of writing is archaic. The expression of the first line, "written on which date, which month, and which year," is



Presumed reco



common to other seventh century epigraph and wooden tablet inscriptions. The manner of writing Chinese characters according to Japanese grammar can be seen in a personal letter written on a wooden tablet which was excavated at the Nishigawara-Morinouchi site, Yasu City, Shiga Prefecture.

The existence of the Hoko-ji 放光寺 Buddhist Temple where Nagatoshi was a priest has been confirmed archaeologically and historically. First, at the San'no 山王 Buddhist Temple site in Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture, dated to the middle seventh to late tenth centuries, C.E., roof tiles with inscriptions of “Hoko-ji” have been discovered. Second, the name “Hoko-ji” is listed in the section of Jogaku-ji in the *Kozuke no Kuni Kotai Jitsuroku Cho* [Collection of Records of Inaugurations and Retirements of Kozuke Provincial Governors] 「上野国交替実録帳」 compiled around 1030.

Rooftile with inscription of “Hoko-ji”

Previous research This stela is listed as a “stela housed in a temple dedicated to Avalokitesvara or Kannon” in the *Shuko Jisshu* [Collection of Ten Kinds of Antiquaries] compiled by Matsudaira Sadanobu in the 1790's. Around 1875, oral tradition stated that this stela stood at a location very close to the present location.

[Tago Stela]

Location The Tago Stela is located in Tago County as defined by the central government in the eighth century. In the neighborhood of this stela is the Omiya Shinto Shrine, an archaeological site where roof tiles have been collected, and another archaeological site that may be interpreted as the site of the county office compound. This geographical and historical context helps to confirm the content of the inscription of this stela that Tago County was officially established in the early eighth century.

Morphology The morphology of the Tago Stela is a square column, with a stone functioning as a cap on the top. This morphology is similar to that of the Maunryeong 磨雲嶺 Stela (568) and Hwangchoryeong 黄草嶺 Stela (568) of Silla Korea. In Japan, it is similar to the Stela of the Nasu Provincial Governor erected in 700 C.E. This morphology is typical of ancient stelae.

Inscriptions The style of writing is the fully developed square style, and gives the impression that it is newer than the Yamanoue Stela. The statement of the inscriptions that Tago County was established by incorporating three hundred residences in the neighboring three counties of Kataoka, Midono, and Kara matches the entry on the third month of the fourth year of Wado in the *Shoku-Nihon-gi* or *Continuation of the Chronicles of Japan*, an official history at that time. The names and titles in the inscriptions, such as Tajih no Mahito, the Communication Officer between the Center and Region, Prince Hozumi, the Prime Minister, Isonokami [no Maro], the Minister of the Left, and Fujiwara [no Fuhito], the Minister of the Right are all known to hold the relevant positions in the third month, 711 in the *Shoku-Nihon-gi* or *Continuation of the Chronicles of Japan* and the *Kugyo Bunin* [Appointments of High-Class Aristocrats to Governmental Offices] 『公卿補任』.

Previous research The earliest dated publication on the Tago Stela is an article dated 1511 and entitled “Kozuke no Kuni Tago-Gun Benkanfu Hi [Stela of Communication Officer between the Center and Region, Stationed in Tago County, Kozuke Province]” included in the *Azumaji no Tsuto* [Souvenirs of Journeys to the East] written by Saiokuken Socho. In the *Shinto-Shu* [Collection of Stories Related to Shintoism] compiled in the middle fourteenth century, an oral tradition of Hitsuji-tayu of the Tago Ward was published. Many other oral traditions related to *hitsuji* 羊, an inscribed character of the Tago Stela have been recorded in sources since the

seventeenth century. These all suggest that this stela had existed in this area prior to the medieval period.

[Kanaizawa Stela]

Location The Kanaizawa Stela is located only 1.5 kilometers away from the Yamanoue Stela, and both of the stelae are situated along the slopes of hills. Both of them were erected by members of the Miyake Family, who were descendants of the manager of the Sano imperial land. The content of the inscriptions of both reflect the devotion to Buddhism of those who erected them.

Morphology The raw material is pyroxene andesite, the same as the Yamanoue Stela. The use of a natural rock without modification is common to these two stelae. The agreement of both form and content shows that both of the stelae were erected by members of the Miyake Family.

Inscription The style of writing is very close to the scribal style of writing Chinese characters, and in many ways it is common to the style of writing of the Yamanoue Stela. In this sense, the style is archaic. Yet, the format of the Kanaizawa Stela is newer than that of the Yamanoue Stela because a Japanese era name is mentioned at the end of inscriptions. The expression of the place name in the first line of the inscriptions, “the Takada Village, Shimosanu Ward, Gunma County, Kozuke Province,” matches a local unit of regional administrative system adopted from 717 to 740.

Previous research The *Yamabuki Nikki* [Diary of Japanese Rose] written by Nasa Katsutaka in 1786 provides indirect information that this stela was excavated very close to the present location.

Based on the locations, morphologies, style and content of the inscriptions, as well as other evidence and previous research, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke were indeed erected in the years inscribed in the stelae themselves. They are indeed authentic.

5.2 World Significance

The international significance of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke may be summarized as follows:

[Cultural Diffusion in Eurasia and Local Acceptance in Ancient Japan]

Erecting a stone stele was a foreign practice diffused through the Korean peninsula from Han China where epigraphic culture flourished. Although stelae with inscriptions of a Buddhist nature similar to the Kanaizawa Stela were erected in third century B.C.E India, a relationship between Indian and Chinese stelae still remains to be investigated. Moreover, the inscriptions of early Chinese stelae were political in nature, and those of Buddhist nature appeared in the third century C.E. It may well be a mere coincidence that inscriptions of similar Buddhist nature were erected both in India and in Japan. In Japan, only eighteen stele dated before the eleventh century have survived. This rarity indicates that the practice of erecting stelae was not widely adopted, unlike China and Silla Korea.

In Japan and East Asia as a whole, a stela is a historic source, valuable in many different scholarly fields. It is clear evidence of a writing system, and its inscription often reflects a political and social system, as well as the belief system of the region where the stelae was erected. In this sense, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient

Kozuke is very good evidence of how Buddhism, a writing system, and political organization were adopted in eastern Japan. Buddhism originated in India, and the writing system and political organization developed in China. These cultural elements were transmitted through the Silk Road to the capital city of Nara, located at the eastern periphery of the Eurasian Continent. They were further transmitted to and accepted in the old province of Kozuke in the eastern Japan.

The old province of Kozuke is important in understanding the process of state formation in ancient Japan, as Kozuke was a stronghold of rule over eastern Japan by the central polity at that time. Since the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke were erected in such a strategically important place, the Stelae are a very good historic source for comparative analysis of the cultural formation, development, and local adoption of foreign cultures in East Asia. Understanding these stelae is highly relevant to understanding the histories of other regions of the world.

[Japanese Adaptation of Foreign Cultures and their Spread]

The contents of the three stelae are evidence not only for the acceptance of various foreign cultures originating in China and India but also for their local adaptation and further diffusion.

Among the three stelae, the Yamanoue Stela is the oldest surviving stela and one of the oldest examples of the writing Chinese characters according to the Japanese grammatical order. The Tago Stela refers to the establishment of a local county which is also mentioned in the *Shoku-Nihongi* or the *Continuation of the Chronicles of Japan*. However, the choice of vocabulary in the Tago inscriptions indicates that the history was written from a local perspective. Lastly, the Kanaizawa Stela records an aspect of local belief in Buddhism, and it hints, for example, at the erection of a Buddhist temple and the Japanese way of developing Buddhist culture.

[Evidence for Multi-Ethnic Communities]

In the western Kozuke region where the three stelae were erected, we find much archaeological and historical evidence for Korean immigrants settling in this region since the fifth century. At the Kenzaki-Nagatoro-Nishi site in Takasaki City, dated to the middle fifth to late sixth centuries C.E., for example, archaeologists have discovered a Korean style square cairn, gold earrings brought from Korea, and a horse burial, a practice originating from Korea. This evidence suggests that a group of immigrants was residing there at that time. Furthermore, archaeological excavations of a late sixth century keyhole-shaped mounded tomb and another keyhole-shaped mounded tomb dated to the beginning of the seventh century resulted in the discoveries of iron helmets, gilt-bronze horse trappings, and a bronze bowl. These discoveries indicate that elites in this area had been actively involved in interactions with Korea for an extended time.

Tago County was formally established in 711, as inscribed on the Tago Stela. One of the villages in this county was Karashina Village. An ink inscription surviving on a cloth in the Shosoin Repository records that the Hata-hito clan who had immigrated from Silla, Korea resided in the Karashina Village in the eighth century. Furthermore, the *Shoku-Nihon-gi* records that 193 Silla people residing in the province of Kozuke were granted the family name of Yoshii no Muraji 吉井連 in 766; there is still a Yoshii Town located in Tago County. These historic sources also suggest that numerous Korean people, including those from Silla, resided in this region.

The presence of such an international community may be a result of the long-standing international tradition of Kozuke. The *Nihon Shoki* or the *Chronicles of Japan* records diplomatic activities of Aratawake 荒田別, the ancestor of the Kamitsukeno 上毛野 Clan who occupied the position of the provincial governor of Kozuke, who was dispatched to Paekche, Korea, in order to invite famous scholar Wani 王仁 who would later introduce the Confucius' *Analects* and *Senjimon* 『千字文』, or One Thousand Character Verse.

Against this background, the erection of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke may be regarded as a natural consequence of the local tradition of a multi-ethnic community where local people actively adopted international cultures since the fifth century; these communities were made up of local people, immigrants from Korea, and people who moved from the northeastern mainland Japan. Owing to this tradition, the three stelae have been preserved as a precious historical heritage. This tradition of a multi-ethnic community has contemporary relevance since immigrants, especially refugees from wars and political instability, are a worldwide issue at present.

[Continuous Cultural Interactions in East Asia]

In 1764, the Japanese calligrapher Sawada Toko gave a rubbing of the Tago Stela and a book on stelae in Kozuke to Song Daejun, a Korean secretary of the Korean diplomatic mission on the occasion of their visit to Edo in order to celebrate Tokugawa Ieharu's inauguration as the tenth shogun. At that time, Song praised the style of inscriptions of the Tago Stelae as "the treasure of epigraphy in Japan." Later, the Korean diplomatic mission took the rubbing and the book to Qing China, and apparently showed them to Wēng Fāng'gāng (1733-1818), one of the Four Acclaimed Calligraphers of Qing. The rubbing and the book were both mentioned in the *Píng'ān-guǎn Jīnshí Wénzì Qīzhǒng* 『平安館金石文字七種』[Seven Examples of Epigraphs in the Ping'an Hall] compiled by Yè Zhìshēn 葉志詵, a disciple of Weng's. In 1880, when Yang Shoujing, a Qing diplomat and scholar, visited Japan, he distributed his book *Kǎi fǎ sù yuán* [Origins of the Square Style of Writing] to Japanese calligraphers. The 39 characters of the Tago Stela inscription appear in this book,. This episode emphasizes the wide cultural importance of the Tago Stela.

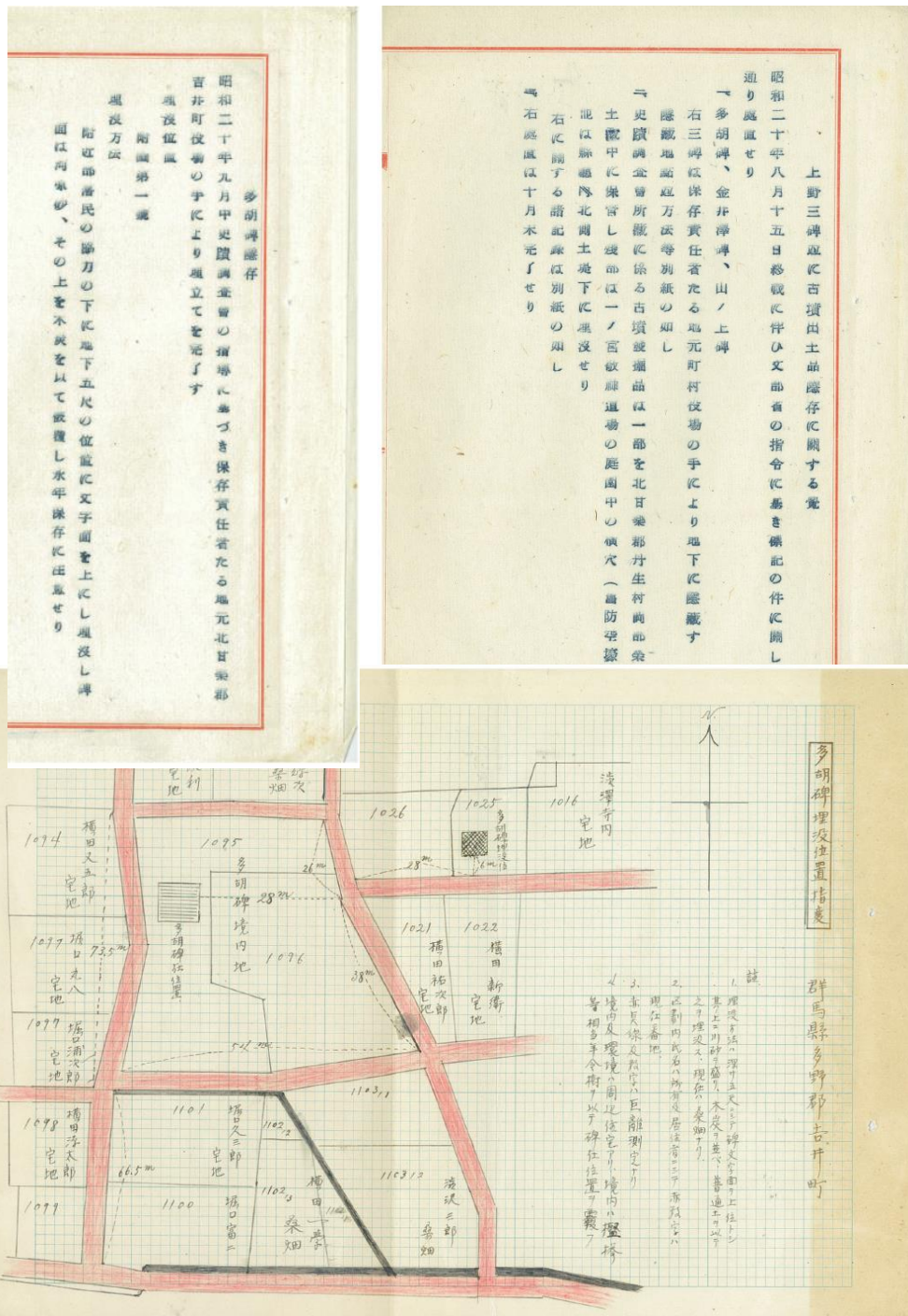
As this episode illustrates, the Tago Stela is evidence of cultural interactions in East Asia since the beginning of the modern history. In recent years, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke have attracted scholarly attention as historic sources in, for example, international research collaboration projects between China, Korea, and Japan conducted by the National Museum of Japanese History. Indeed, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke are an historical heritage that is of universal value for international interaction and understanding. This universal value should be shared worldwide.

[Protection and Preservation of Historical Heritages]

In August 1945, the Ministry of Education and Culture issued an order to hide cultural properties. Following this order, local people removed the Tago Stela and buried it underground 60 meters away from the original place. They did this because they were afraid of the possibility of cultural properties being taken by the occupation troops stationed in Japan at that time. Once such a concern became unnecessary, the Tago Stelae was returned to its original place in October 1946. In Takasaki City, artifacts discovered from the Yawata-Kannonzuka

Keyhole-Shaped Mounded Tomb located in the Tago Stela neighborhood were also hidden. These two were the only examples of cultural properties being hidden according to the August 1945 order. This phenomena indicates that local people were very aware of folk tales related to the Tago Stelae and made every conscious effort to protect these examples of local historical heritage.

In the contemporary world as a whole, how to protect cultural and historical heritage during strife and war has become a very serious issue to consider. We believe that the historical heritage has an important value when it is protected by people at its place of origin, utilized for education and other purposes widely, and preserved for the following generations. We consider it urgent to call for worldwide attention to this belief and to stress the importance of preserving and transmitting historical heritage to later generations. We would like to take a positive action now to share this episode of hiding the Tago Stela right after Japan's defeat in the Second World War.



Document describing the act of hiding the Tago Stela

5.3 Comparative criteria:

1 Time

Yamanoue Stela: 681 C.E.; inscribed as “the third day of the tenth month (lunar calendar), the year of *kanoto-no-mi* 辛巳”

Tago Stela: 711 C.E.; inscribed as “the ninth day of the third month (lunar calendar), fourth year of Wado 和銅”

Kanaizawa Stela: 726 C.E.; inscribed as “the 29th day of the second month (lunar calendar), third year of Jinki 神龜”

The Battle of Baekgang 白村江 in 663 as well as political turmoil, including the collapse of Paekche and Koguryo, resulted in a large number of Korean people leaving their home for Japan. These immigrants from Paekche, Silla, and Koguryo reached as far as eastern Japan. From the late seventh to late eighth century, counties were established in eastern Japan where people who had emigrated from Koguryo and Silla could be settled. Many of these immigrants were granted Japanese-like family names, and multi-ethnic communities were formed.

Some of the immigrants from the Korean peninsula were priests, scholars, and skilled craftsmen. It is highly likely that information about stelae, brought by these knowledgeable immigrants, combined with local belief in Buddhism and the locally adopted writing system, made it possible to erect the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke.

It was also in the period from the late seventh to early eighth centuries that the central government of Japan made a series of attempts to gain more control over the northeastern part of mainland Japan. This is evidenced by, for example, a counter measure adopted in 709 against rebellions by the Emishi 蝦夷 people, native in northeastern Japan, the establishment of the Dewa 出羽 Province (present Yamagata Prefecture in northeastern Japan) in 712, and the foundation of the Tagajo 多賀城 Fort in 724. Kozuke Province played an important role in the central government’s measures against the Emishi people, such as the recruitment of soldiers, resettlement of peasants, and procurement and transportation of necessary goods. It was a time of considerable social mobility originating from political turmoil both internally in Japan and internationally within East Asia, and the establishment of Tago County symbolized the foundation of a political stronghold. Indeed, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke,

including the Tago Stela, represents the fruit of the interactions of people caused by political unrest in East Asia and within Japan.

2 Place

[Adoption of the Practice of Erecting Stelae]

The practice of erecting stelae was an aspect of foreign culture introduced from several polities on the Korean peninsula. By nature, stelae are bulky, very heavy, and therefore difficult to transport. In fact, we have no archaeological evidence of stelae carved in China or the Korean peninsula and transported to Japan. This means that stelae erected in Japan came into existence because of the involvement of immigrants who possessed the knowledge and technology to carve them. The erection of stelae was only possible in areas where local people had actively embraced such foreign cultures. The Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke bear striking testimony to political changes in East Asia and the resultant movement of peoples since the late seventh century that reached eastern Japan far away from the capital.

[The Formation of Multi-Ethnic Communities]

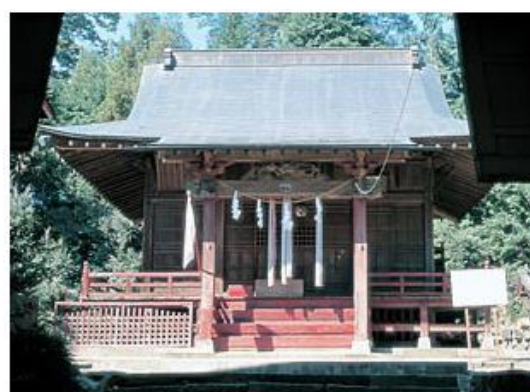
The Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke were erected in Tago County, Kozuke Province, which was formally established in 711. The inscriptions on the Tago Stela record the circumstances of the establishment from a local standpoint. In this area and its neighborhood, immigrants from the Korean peninsula had resided since ancient times. Owing to their knowledge and technologies, the production of stoneware pottery and roof tiles, iron, and fabrics developed locally. Buddhism was also introduced. The adoption of these advanced cultures facilitated the establishment of Tago County by the central government as a stronghold to gain more control over northeastern Japan. Because of this measure from the central government, people from northeastern Japan came to be settled in Tago County and its neighboring areas. These conditions resulted in the formation of a multi-ethnic community.



Rubbing of ‘Karashina no Ko no Kiyoniwa

The inscription of “three hundred residences” on the Tago Stela refers to those residences to be included in the Karashina Ward (formerly in Kara County; this is verified by an entry dating to the sixth day of the third month (lunar calendar) of 711 in the *Shoku-Nihongi* or the *Continuation of the Chronicles of Japan*. This indicates that the residences of people who had emigrated from the Korean peninsula already existed at the beginning of the eighth century. The Karashina Shrine, said to have been erected by Korean immigrants, was the most influential Shinto shrine in this area, and attracted the veneration of the descendants of these Korean immigrants. Even now, the Karashina Shrine is respected as the representative tutelary shrine of Tago County.

In addition, inscriptions engraved on roof tiles used for the repair of the Kozuke Provincial Temple indicate that the Ko 子 Family who originated from Silla, Korea, resided in the Karashina, Yamana, and Takemi Wards in the late eighth and ninth century. The inscription of the Kanaizawa Stela mentions



Karashina Shrine

that the Ko Family was tied to the influential Mononobe Family through their devotion to Buddhism. It is likely that the Ko Family and Mononobe Family contributed to the building and maintenance of the Kozuke Provincial Temple. This also indicates that the multi-ethnic community still remained even in the ninth century.

Another important Buddhist temple in this region was the Midono Temple that functioned as the center for the missionary activities of Priest Dochu 道忠 and his disciples. Priest Dochu was one of the most distinguished disciples of Priest Jianzhen 鑑真, a prominent Tang Chinese priest who founded the Toshodaiji 唐招提寺 Temple in Nara in 759. The teaching of Dochu and his disciples influenced Saicho 最澄 and Kukai 空海 who laid the foundation for Buddhism in Japan. Priest Nagatoshi of the Hokoji Temple contributed to the local acceptance of Buddhism and erected the Yamanoue Stela. It was a network of people tied by their devotion to Buddhism, as described in the inscriptions of the Kanaizawa Stela, that laid the foundation for the spread of Buddhism.

By verifying the contents of the inscriptions of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke and other historic sources, it is possible to clarify the nature of the multi-ethnic community in this region in its broader East Asian context.

3 People

[Yamanoue Stela]

The Yamanoue Stela was erected beside a mounded tomb by Priest Nagatoshi for his mother, Kurome Toji. Kurome Toji was the granddaughter of Takemori no Mikoto 健守命 who managed the imperial land of Sano 佐野. The inscription also mentions the ancestors of Nagatoshi's father. Listing both paternal and maternal ancestors suggests that the family at that time was conscious of its bilateral descent and that the society as a whole was organized according to bilateral descent groups. It is very rare to have a source that gives us such clues in order to understand the social organization of the late seventh century. The inscription also emphasizes that Nagatoshi was a priest of a Buddhist temple. It was during the seventh century when the material symbol of a society and/or clan changed from a mounded tomb to a Buddhist temple. The inscriptions are considered and valued as an important source for understanding local people's sentiment toward such local material symbols during the period of state formation.

[Tago Stela]

Although debates over the interpretation of the Chinese character “*hitsuji*” in the inscription have continued since the Tokugawa Period, the dominant hypothesis is that *hitsuji* is the name of a person who was appointed to be the first county magistrate of Tago County. Some scholars speculate that the name Tago means “numerous foreigners” because the Chinese character *ta* 多 means “numerous,” and the Chinese character *go* 胡 originally meant “nomadic barbarians north or northwest of China,” such as Xiong’nu. This theory is the basis for the hypothesis that Hitsuji was an immigrant family.

There are several lines of evidence that people originating from Silla, Korea, resided in Tago County and that Hitsuji was an immigrant family. One line of evidence is that in 766, 193 immigrants including Ko no Umatari 子午足 from Silla, Korea, were granted the Japanese family name of Yoshii no Muraji. Another is the discovery of numerous roof tiles with inscriptions at the site of the Kozuke Provincial Temple that indicate the presence of the

Ko Family in Tago County. The third is a cloth given to the central government as a tax, now kept in the Shoshoin Repository in Nara, with the following ink inscription: “[unidentified character that would indicate a family name] Takamaro, a Korean, the head of a family, Yamabe Ward, Tago County, Kozuke Province.”

[Kanaizawa Stela]

The inscriptions of this stela are a declaration by someone [unidentified character indicating a given name] of the Miyake Family to be devoted to Buddhism together with five other family members in the memory of their ancestors. The inscriptions list a matrilineal genealogy of mother, daughter, and granddaughter. It is evidence for family consciousness during the early eighth century, shortly after the erection of the Yamanoue Stela. Furthermore, it shows that not only family members but also the members of the whole clan of the Miyake Family intended to strengthen their spiritual ties through belief in Buddhism. The stela is significant as an invaluable source for understanding the nature of the family at that time.

[People who contributed to the protection of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke]

The earliest-recorded research into the significance of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke was conducted by Kibe Tsukumomaro who published *Sampi Ko* [Consideration of the Three Cherished Stelae] in 1819. This was followed by the publication of *Kozuke Sampi Ko* [Consideration of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke] in 1836 by Ban Nobutomo. Through the research by local scholars and literati who attempted to evaluate the significance of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke, the importance of the stelae was widely recognized by the late Tokugawa Period or the early and middle nineteenth century.

In 1876, when the Gunma Prefecture was established for the second time after the Meiji Restoration (1868), Katori Motohiko, who was appointed to be the first governor of the prefecture, recognized the importance of the three ancient stelae surviving together in a small local area. He took the initiative to honor and preserve the three stela. These early efforts bore fruit on March 3, 1921, when the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke were designated as a historic site by the national government under the newly adopted Law of the Preservation of Historic Sites, Scenic Spots and Natural Monuments. Kuroita Katsumi, a leading historian of the time who had investigated the historical significance of the three stelae, recognized the great scholarly value of the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke. After the Second World War, under the new Law of the Protection of the Cultural Properties, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke were nationally designated as a Historic Site of Special Significance as a set in 1954. This designation helped to begin the process to protect the three stelae.

4 Subject and theme

Not applicable.

5 Form and style

[Yamanoue Stela]

The Yamanoue Stela is made from natural pyroxene andesite from the nearby Haruna Volcano. The inscriptions are engraved on one surface of the rock. Although stelae of this type do not exist in China, they can

be found in Silla, Korea. For example, the Bongpyeong Stela (524 C.E.) at Uljin, Jeokseong Stela (ca. 545) at Danyang, Chyangnyeong Stela (561), and the first stela of the Namsan Sinseong Stelae (591) are morphologically similar to the Yamanoue Stela. The Yamanoue Stela is distinguished from these Silla stelae, however, by the purpose of its erection. While the Yamanoue Stela was erected by Priest Nagatoshi for his mother, the Silla stelae were erected for political expressions and kingship.

Furthermore, the style of the inscriptions of the Yamanoue Stela is somewhat archaic. The most noteworthy aspect of the inscription is that Chinese characters were written according to the order of Japanese grammar. This is one of the oldest surviving piece of evidence for the early formation of the Japanese language. It is even more significant that this stela is located in an eastern peripheral region of Japan, rather than in the capital or its vicinity. In the Korean peninsula, the writing of Chinese characters according to the order of Korean grammar is also exemplified by the Imsin sogi sok 壬申誓記石 of Silla (552 or 612). The Yamanoue Stela and Imsin sogi sok share other common features, such as the use of natural rock and the inscriptions of personal matters. These similarities, especially in the attempt to adapt Chinese characters to their own languages, indicate the degree of contact which Kozuke had with Silla.

[Tago Stela]

The Tago Stela is made from the locally quarried Ushibuse sandstone(Lithic wacke). The rock was carved into a square column. On the top of the square column is a stone that functions as a cap, and the bottom of the square column is inserted into a basal rock. The inscriptions are engraved on one face of the column. The content of the inscription is political in nature because it describes the official establishment of Tago County. The political content of the inscriptions is similar to that of the Jinheung-Wang Sunsu Bi 真興太王巡狩管境 Stela (Monument commemorating the border inspection Mt. Bukhansan by King Jinheung; 540-575) of Silla. It is therefore possible to surmise that the erection of the Tago Stela was facilitated by information obtained from immigrants from the Korean peninsula.

The Tago Stela is morphologically very similar to the Stela of the Nasu Provincial Governor erected in 700 in the present eastern Tochigi Prefecture or the old province of Nasu. Scholars suspect that immigrants from Silla were also involved in the production of the Stela of the Nasu Provincial Governor. The Tago Stela is distinguished from these similar ancient stelae by its morphology: it is characterized by perfect proportion and large and clear inscriptions. While the style of writing used on the Tago Stela is somewhat similar to that of stelae carved in cliffs during the Northern and Southern Dynasties of China (439-589), the latter are more of the square style, and stylistically newer than that of the Yamanoue Stela.

The official establishment of Tago County is also mentioned in an entry for the third month of the fourth year of Wado in the *Shoku-Nihongi* or the *Continuation of the Chronicles of Japan*. When compared with the inscriptions of the Tago Stela, we see slight differences; some information recorded in the *Shoku-Nihongi* is missing in the Tago Stela, and information not recorded in *Shoku-Nihongi* is inscribed on the stela. This difference is not only the result of the inscriptions having been written from a local perspective, but also the result of the necessity to show and read aloud the inscriptions. Indeed, the Stela is a rare example of historical heritage used to indicate a method of transmitting and preserving information.

[Kanaizawa Stela]

The Kanaizawa Stela is made from natural pyroxene andesite that originated from the Haruna Volcano nearby, and the inscriptions are engraved on one face of the natural rock, a morphology similar to that of the Yamanoue Stela. The inscription records that the members of the whole Miyake Clan swore to strengthen their spiritual ties through belief in Buddhism in the memories of their ancestors. This Buddhist content is common to that of the Yamanoue Stela. The Miyake Family was descended from the manager of the Sano imperial land, and the Kanaizawa Stela indicates that the Miyake Family had a unbroken tradition of welcoming various aspects of foreign cultures, including Buddhism, a writing system, and the erection of stelae. It is a clear example of local people recognizing the function of a stela as a medium of preserving information.

The Kanaizawa Stela is similar to the Yamanoue Stela in the adoption of the scribal style of writing Chinese characters, which is evidence of an archaic style. On the other hand, the format of the Kanaizawa Stela is newer than that of the Yamanoue Stela because a Japanese era name is mentioned at the end of inscriptions.

6 Social/ spiritual/ community significance:

[Women's Position in Ancient Local History]

Among the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke, the inscriptions of the Yamanoue Stela and Kanaizawa Stela are personal in nature because they describe personal belief and bonds among members of a clan. It is a clear contrast to the stelae in the Korean peninsula which describe political activities, such as tours made by the king. Although the Tago Stela records a political event of the official establishment of a county, in reality, it serves to publicly honor Hitsuji for being appointed the County Magistrate. Accordingly, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke are very unusual sources of history that give us insight into the personal relationships and mentality of the local people, which are not usually recorded in official history^{iv}.

For example, the inscription of the Yamanoue Stela emphasizes the genealogy of Priest Nagatoshi who erected the Stela. Furthermore, the inscription stresses the matrilineal side of Nagatoshi's genealogy; his great ancestor, Takemori no Mikoto, who was the manager of the Sano imperial land, must have been a hero. The contents of the inscription are very personal in nature. Finally, it is highly noteworthy that Nagatoshi erected the stela "for his mother," which illustrates the reality of matrilineal society.

The Kanaizawa Stela was erected 45 years after the Yamanoue Stela and was planned by descendants of the Miyake Family and Priest Nagatoshi. It is likely that the erection of the Kanaizawa Stela was a commemorative event, and a model of this event was the earlier erection of the Yamanoue Stela by Priest Nagatoshi. The inscription of the Kanaizawa Stela states that the Miyake, Osada, Mononobe, and Isobe Clans united in their devotion to Buddhism. More importantly, four out of the nine individuals listed in the inscription were women, and their names were inscribed as Mezuratoji and Kanatoji. Inscribing women's names is clearly distinguished in Japanese history because women's names were often omitted from genealogies of samurai families in the later history of Japan. Even the names of the authors of the *Tale of Genji* and the *Pillow Book* of the eleventh century are not known because they were women. Inscribing women's names is good evidence that women's social status

was not inferior to that of men in ancient Japan.

As these lines of evidence show, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke are examples of important and precious historical heritage that give us clues to understand the nature of ancient society, such as multi-ethnic communities, the family structure of commoners and lower elites, equality between men and women, and local belief system of Buddhism. The Stelae also give us hints about the contributions of people that would otherwise not have been recorded.

[Oral Traditions of Hitsuji-tayu]

In the Tago area, there are many oral traditions related to *hitsuji*, an inscribed character of the Tago Stela. Representative of such oral traditions are Hitsuji-tayu of the Tago Ward recorded in the *Shinto-Shu* [Collection of Stories Related to Shintoism] compiled in the middle fourteenth century and a tragedy of Hitsuji mentioned in “Tago Sunago 多胡砂子” included in the *Jomo-Shiryō* 上毛志料 [Historic Sources of Kozuke Province], compiled by Ichikawa Kansai 市河寛齋 and Beian 米庵 in 1821. The existence of numerous oral traditions related to the Tago Stela suggests that, because the Stela recorded the memory of the formation of a local community, the Stela remained an object of local belief and functioned as a social and spiritual bond of local people for a long time. At the same time, it suggests that such strong communal bonds ensured the protection of the stela.

[Matrilineal Genealogy]

Both the Yamanoue Stela and Kanaizawa Stela were erected by members of the Miyake Family who was a descendant of a clan that managed the Sano imperial land. In both of the stelae, not only patrilineal but also matrilineal genealogies were inscribed. This indicates that society at that time was bilateral. It gives us important evidence for aspects of marriage and family structure among commoners and local elites in ancient Japan. It is also a clue to understanding a very early form of family and local community. Indeed, these stelae are very rare sources of historical understanding.

6.0 Contextual information

6.1 Rarity

[Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke as the Oldest Surviving Set of Stelae]

In Japan, there are only eighteen still-standing ancient stelae dated between the seventh and eleventh centuries, and all of them possess great values as historical heritage. Of the eighteen, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke are particularly important because the three stelae were erected within 45 years from the late seventh to early eighth centuries in a narrowly defined region, and because one of the three is the oldest still-standing stela in Japan. More importantly, the three stelae were erected for purposes closely related to local communities. At the same time, the erection of these three was made possible through the continuous cultural interactions of the local communities with the rest of East Asia. Indeed, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke are the primary source for understanding the acceptance process of the foreign culture of erecting stela in Japan.

[Yamanoue Stela]

The Yamanoue Stela is the oldest still-standing stela in Japan, and one of the oldest historic sources in which Chinese characters were written according to Japanese grammar. “Priest Nagatoshi” is recorded as the inscriber, and “a priest of the Hoko-ji Temple” is recorded as the erector of this stela. Nagatoshi, who became a priest of a locally influential Buddhist temple, erected this stela in his mother’s memory in front of her mounded tomb. Archaeological excavations of the San’no Buddhist Temple site in Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture, dated to the middle seventh to late tenth centuries, C.E., yielded roof tiles with inscriptions of “Hoko-ji,” thereby confirming the existence of the Hoko-ji Temple. The name “Hoko-ji” is also listed in the section of Jogaku-ji in the *Kozuke no Kuni Kotai Jitsuroku Cho* [Collection of Records of Inaugurations and Retirements of Kozuke Provincial Governors] compiled around 1030, which also confirms the existence of the Hoko-ji Temple. In fact, the Hoko-ji case is the only case in Japan in which epigraphic, archaeological, and historiographic lines of evidence correlate with one another, allowing us to approach a historical phenomenon from various perspectives.

[Tago Stela]

It states that Tago County was officially established in the fourth year of Wado, or 711. This coincides to the entry of the third month, fourth year of Wado in the *Shoku-Nihon-gi* or the *Continuation of the Chronicles of Japan*, the official history of Japan compiled in 797. This is one of the very rare cases in which a description of local history contained in the official history prepared by the central government is confirmed by another historic source written in the local region. More importantly, the Tago Stela is evidence that information issued by the central government was recorded from a local perspective in a local manner.

The history of the protection and preservation of the Tago Stela is also very rare and unusual. Following an order issued by the Ministry of Culture and Education in August, 1945, local people moved the Stela from the original place in order to hide it from the occupation troops stationed in Japan. To our knowledge, this is the only case in Japan. This rare phenomenon shows that local people strove to protect their cultural heritage out of a deep respect for tradition and history and an understanding about cultural heritage. This phenomenon is relevant to the contemporary and universal issue of how to protect historical heritage from destruction resulting from warfare.

[Kanaizawa Stela]

The Kanaizawa Stela is an invaluable source of history because the inscriptions are an important clue to understanding how Buddhism spread to local regions and the nature of the family system at that time. In the inscription is a place name and a person's name with his title. The place name, Takada Village, Shimosanu Ward, Gunma County, Kozuke Province, indicates that the hierarchically-structured regional system consisting of a village and ward was already in effect at that time. The personal name and title, Isobe no Kimi Mimaro, the ironsmith, suggests that a family register as evidenced by the *Mino no Kuni Koseki* [Family Register of the Mino Province] was also prepared in Kozuke Province, and this stela is the oldest evidence for a family registry.

The Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke offer us clues to understand the nature and reality of the politics and society of ancient Japan, as well as being a primary source of history for international comparative analyses. The Stelae are indeed invaluable examples of our historical heritage.

6.2 Completeness

[Yamanoue Stela]

The local history and the history of the Yamanoue Stela suggest that the stela still stands at the original location in the original environment. Although the basal stone has been lost and the surface of the stela has somewhat deteriorated over the past 1300 years, no visible damage has occurred to the stela. All the inscriptions are readable. It is the oldest still-standing stela.

[Tago Stela]

Although there exists a record of this stela being moved a little to the south in 1880 when the stela was repaired, its present location is very close to the original site. The morphology and inscriptions of this stela were published for the first time in an article dated to 1511 and entitled as “Kozuke no Kuni Tago-Gun Benkanfu Hi [Stela of Communication Officer between the Center and Region, Stationed in Tago County, Kozuke Province]” included in the *Azumaji no Tsuto* [Souvenirs of Journeys to the East] written by Shibayaken Munenaga. An

illustration of the stela was published in the *Koshin-roku* [Record of Friends Getting Together] written by Ito Togai in 1720. When the stela is compared with these old publications, the deterioration of the stela is minimum, except for its concrete base that was added in 1946 when the stela was returned to its original place from where it had been hidden. All the inscriptions are readable, and it remains in perfect condition.

[Kanaizawa Stela]

The *Yamabuki Nikki* [Diary of Japanese Rose] published in 1786 records indirect information that this stela was excavated very close to its present location. This suggests that the stela had been erected nearby. The basal rock has been lost. Due to the natural deterioration of the surface over 1300 years, a few characters in the inscriptions are worn with one character rendered unidentifiable. Still, no damage to the stela has occurred, and the stela remains in almost perfect condition.

[Maintaining the Completeness]

The Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke have remained standing at their original or very close to their original locations over the past 1300 years. With the exceptions of replaced basal rocks and natural deterioration of the surface, the three stelae have survived in almost perfect condition, without damage or modification. With the exception of one unidentifiable character in the inscription of the Kanaizawa Stela, all the inscriptions of the three stela are readable. The three remain as an invaluable source of local history and scholarly research. Indeed, the three are valuable historical heritages that assist in our understanding not only of ancient society, but also in the activities of people.

In order to protect these historical heritages for the future, the Three Cherished Stelae of Ancient Kozuke were designated as a Historic Site as a set for the first time under the newly adopted Law of the Preservation of Historic Sites, Scenic Spots and Natural Monuments in 1921. At present, the three stela are in very good condition and are protected as a nationally designated Historic Site of Special Significance under the Cultural Properties Protection Law.

ⁱ In this application, we use the term “immigrants” for the English translation of the Japanese term *toraijin* or people who came from abroad. The use of this term is based on the following observations: 1) by the seventh century there was a clear border between the Japanese archipelago and the Korean peninsula, and people from the Korean peninsula were recognized as “foreigners”; and 2) archaeological and historical evidence shows that people who came from the Korean peninsula lived and died in Kozuke Province.

ⁱⁱ The name of the year of *kanoto-no-mi* 辛巳 is assigned according to Chinese calendrical system. The name is given by a combination of ten characters and twelve annual zodiac signs, which results in 60 names of a year. The year of *kanoto-no-mi* can mean 621, 681, or 741, but in this context 681 is the only possibility. The Japanese system of era names started in 701.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Hitsuji” can also be pronounced as “yo,” and some historians argue for the latter. By adopting “Hitsuji,” we do not mean to denounce the latter scholarly position.

^{iv} Inscriptions of similar personal and Buddhist nature can also be found from third century B.C.E. India.