



24 Tomb of Emperor Nintoku in Sakai, Osaka prefecture.
Late 4th to early 5th century C.E.

southern Korea—events unmentioned in either Korean or Chinese histories.

In the opinion of the fourteenth-century historian Kitabatake Chikafusa, Jingu should be considered identical with the Himiko of the *Weizhi*, although she outlasted the Chinese state of Wei and is reputed to have died at the venerable age of 100. Obviously, when compared to the archaeological record, both histories are made unreliable by their outrageous claims—mass human sacrifice in the first case and conquering Korea in the second. There is also a disparity of locale, as the *Weizhi* places Himiko of Yamatai within a Kyūshū context, whereas by this time, according to the *Kojiki*, the house of Yamato had long been firmly ensconced on the Yamato Plain of southern Honshū. However, both texts do confirm Japan's interaction with the outer world, and importantly feature significant positions for women within the Yayoi elite, to the extent that they could take on the supreme role of Mizoguchi's shamanic/warrior ruler. In early historical times, this situation would continue, but in the eighth century it would famously come to an end in the name of national security.

The Kofun Period (300–710 C.E.)

According to the *Kojiki*, Jingu's grandson was the emperor Nintoku (r. 395–427), and one of the earliest monuments of the succeeding Kofun period has traditionally been ascribed to this emperor. An enormous key-shaped mound known as a *kofun* it is in fact the largest of all such tomb mounds that would be created in this period (Fig. 24). Located at Sakai, near Osaka, the central keyhole shape is 90 ft (27 m) at its apex and almost one third of a mile (half a kilometer) long and is surrounded by three moats; the entire monument, including its moats, covers 458 acres (185 ha). Nintoku's alleged tomb, however, is not the first *kofun*, as these massive monuments make their appearance on the Yamato Plain—in the present Kansai region—around the beginning of the fourth century, and gradually spread throughout Japan. Their appearance in other parts of Japan parallels the efforts beginning in the fourth and fifth centuries to centralize authority in the main islands of Kyūshū, Shikoku, and Honshū within a Yamato state. Therefore, the spread of the *kofun* style of tomb has been interpreted as mirroring that extension of Yamato power. The rulers of the Yamato dynasty themselves would have been interred in the Kansai region, the seat of their power, but those buried outside the imperial precinct would have been high-

ranking members of the great clans who helped to establish the Yamato state and who ruled in the provinces as the emperor's representatives.

Although tomb mounds for great leaders have a strong precedent in China in the two millennia before the Kofun period, and in Korea for at least a thousand years before, the most direct ancestor of the Japanese *kofun* is likely to be found in the relatively small, but numerous mound burials that first started appearing in the early Yayoi period. By the middle Yayoi period, around the beginning of the first millennium C.E., a new type of monumental mound for the burial of a single important personage had appeared. Placed inside a wooden chamber at the heart of the mound, the body was accompanied by the blades and mirrors that symbolized its status. This replaced the simpler coffin burial for the elite, and the new mounds were sited separately from the cemeteries, often on the crest of a hill and making a significant impression from a considerable distance. Essentially these Yayoi mounds were round and could be up to 151 feet (46 m) in diameter. They often had two other mound projections, rectangular in shape, which served the practical purposes of leading to the mound's summit—up to 17 feet (5 m) in height—and acting as platforms for funerary rituals. The Yayoi mounds were also surrounded by stone markers that delimited this sacred space from the countryside around.

However, although these Yayoi mounds are the ancestors of the keyhole-shaped *kofun*, there are substantial differences between them and it is these that form the distinction between the Yayoi and Kofun periods. First is the question of sheer size: even the smallest of the *kofun* measures in length more than 328 feet (100 m), while the largest of the Yayoi mounds is less than 164 feet (50 m) long. Second, the bronze blades, as well as the ritual burying of *dōtaku* that feature in Yayoi grave mounds, utterly disappear in the *kofun*. Third, the rectangular projections either side of the Yayoi mound become a single triangular mound fronting the massive circular **tumulus** to create the characteristic keyhole shape of the *kofun*. All these differences point to a substantial shift in ritual practice as well as to the increased importance with which the community regarded such honored dead.

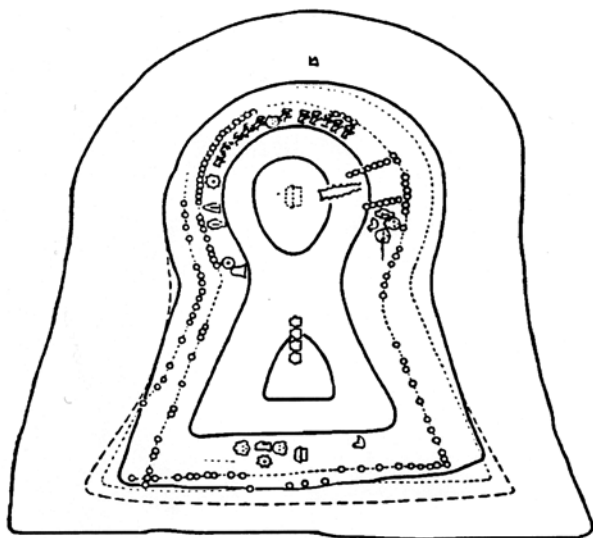
The main *kofun* tumulus also contains a pit-shaft grave, in which the burial chamber, an earth-floored room with stone walls, was usually located near the top of the mound. Once the wooden coffin and the appropriate grave goods were in place, the chamber would be sealed with a rock cap and earth would then be then mounded over it. The objects placed within the tomb continue to be weapons—but made of iron and now not of archaic form—in addition to the bronze mirror and the C-shaped *magatama* and ornaments of jasper, as well as gold crowns and jewelry, and exotic items such as glass bowls. Furthermore, clay sculptures modeled on a cylindrical form and called *haniwa* were distributed over the surface of the mound. These appear to have evolved out of the jars and cylindrical stands that were placed on similar mounds during the late Yayoi period.

As mentioned, the most impressive *kofun* are located in the Kansai region and were built for members of the imperial Yamato family. However, the joining of the main clans under a more or less nominal allegiance to the Yamato rulers is not considered to have been effected until the end of the fourth century, perhaps in the time of the semi-legendary Emperor Nintoku, whose reign is famous for the long period of peace and productivity it brought. Yet there are quite a few *kofun* of more than 656 feet (200 m) in length that predate the one attributed to Nintoku, and would have required for their construction a concentration of labor it is likely that the Japanese islands had never before seen. In the opinion of Koji Mizoguchi, the Yamato would not have had either the military, political, or economic clout to have either forced or hired labor to construct these tombs. With an eye to the powerful belief that the emperors are of unilineal descent from Amaterasu and the heavenly gods, Mizoguchi suggests that perhaps the labor to construct the imperial *kofun* was offered on a voluntary basis, much as the Christian faithful of medieval Europe would offer themselves for the construction of a cathedral.

Certainly the aura of sanctity that surrounds the imperial house is immensely strong, even in today's Japan. Although the Kofun period is the most recent of these prehistoric and protohistoric periods, archaeologists still know surprisingly little about it compared to the Jōmon and Yayoi periods. The primary reason for this is that a significant number of the most important *kofun* are still today the property of the emperor, and under the administration of the Imperial Household Agency. Access to these sites is largely prohibited, and the possibility of digging or disinterring unthinkable. For example, the tomb identified with Emperor Nintoku is attributed to him by imperial tradition, but this claim has not been substantiated by modern scientific archaeology. However, not all *kofun* are considered imperial, and therefore can be investigated; and on special occasions even the great imperial *kofun* can become subject to limited inspection, such as when material within sites is exposed through the damage caused by events such as natural disaster.

HANIWA

Haniwa (*hani* means "clay" and *wa* "circle") appeared first on the early *kofun* of the Kansai region; it is conjectured that the *kofun* of Nintoku was once covered by over twenty thousand. Typically, a house-shaped *haniwa* was placed directly over the deceased, with others distributed in concentric patterns at midslope, at the base of the mound, and at the entrance to the burial chamber. During the sixth century, however, *haniwa* disappeared as a feature from imperial *kofun* of the Kansai region, and the manufacture of these objects appears to have shifted eastward to the Kantō, the plain surrounding present-day Tokyo. The pattern of *haniwa* placement on tomb mounds is demonstrated in Figure 25 by the diagram of their distribution on one of these eastern *kofun*, the Futatsuyama tumulus in Gunma prefecture. The largest *haniwa* house appeared at



25 Diagram of *haniwa* placement, Futatsuyama Tomb, Gunma prefecture.

the center of the circular mound over the deceased, and on the top of the triangular section was a neat line of four additional houses. Simple cylinders outlined the entire keyhole shape; inside this border figural images were placed around the curve and also along the straight edge of the mound.

It is thought *haniwa* evolved out of hourglass-shaped jar stands used in conjunction with mound burials in the Yayoi period, perhaps to support vessels containing offerings. *Haniwa* were made of unglazed ceramic fashioned out of slabs or coils of clay and fired at low temperatures by the same craftsmen who made the everyday ware, or *haji*; the materials and techniques were the same for both. The *haniwa* ranged in shape from the simplest cylinders to detailed renderings of architecture and military equipment, and included shields decorated with incised patterns, quivers, helmets, ceremonial parasols, and, occasionally, human figures.

An episode from the *Nihon shoki* (or *Nihongi*) of a gentleman riding past the *kofun* of Emperor Ōjin (Nintoku's father) by moonlight suggests how lifelike these *haniwa* could appear.

[he] fell in with a horseman mounted on a red courser, which dashed along like the flight of a dragon, with splendid high-springing action, darting off like a wild goose....In his heart he wished to possess him [the red horse], so he whipped up the piebald horse which he rode and brought him alongside. But the red horse shot ahead, spurning the earth, and galloping on, speedily vanished in the distance.

W.G. Aston, trans., *Nihongi*, London, 1896, 357–8.

However, the rider of the other horse intuited the man's desire and exchanged horses with him. Happy, the gentleman returned home, placed his new horse in the stable, and went to bed. The next morning he found the red courser to be made of

clay and upon going back and searching around the tomb he found his own piebald horse, for which he exchanged the *haniwa* horse.

The function for which the *haniwa* were intended is still being debated. However, even by the eighth century it is obvious that the Japanese themselves were struggling for an explanation of their use: in another passage from the *Nihon shoki*, an emperor, perhaps Suinin (r. 29–70), requested that a substitute be found for the live burial of attendants after the death of a member of the imperial family, and, in response, the clayworkers' guild produced images of people and horses.

There are isolated mentions in the *fudoki* reports from the provinces of child sacrifices occurring in the past at the foundation of structures such as bridges (and these are described as barbaric practices by the recorders). However, unlike in ancient China (which the writers of the *Nihon shoki* clearly admired), there has so far been no evidence to support the idea of mass human sacrifice near any tomb of the Japanese elite. The story of Emperor Suinin was written at a time when the Japanese elite were almost fanatically trying to model themselves on Chinese imperial custom. Indeed in tombs of the Chinese elite, and particularly in the Chinese imperial tombs, there was a long tradition of placing ceramic figures within the tomb chamber. These are meant to represent the attendants and possessions of the deceased, and had evolved from a practice of human sacrifice at the time of burial that was discontinued no later than the early first millennium C.E. The most curious facet of this episode from the *Nihon shoki* is the extent to which the Japanese imperial court of the eighth century would attribute to themselves even the most unsavory aspects of Chinese imperial history. Amongst continental tomb ceramics, however, *haniwa* have close cousins in the cylindrically-based and simply modeled tomb sculptures that can be found placed in pairs in fifth/sixth-century tombs of the Kaya Hill States (part of present-day Korea).

It has also been suggested that the *haniwa* were intended to keep the earth of the artificial mounds in place, but the placing of the clay cylinders, at least as known today, would not have prevented erosion. The most workable theory is that they served two functions: to separate the world of the dead from that of the living, and to protect the deceased and provide their spirits with a familiar resting place.

The early *haniwa*, those produced in the Kansai region, are very limited in type, as though the clayworkers were required to adhere to a precise ritual standard that allowed little room for creative variety and evolution. Nevertheless, the pieces are well, often superbly, made, and some are striking in appearance. The sunshade, or *kinugasa*, from Anderayama *kofun* (in a suburb of modern Kyoto) is an object of great formal strength (Fig. 26). The basic shape is that of a round umbrella set on a cylindrical base, probably deriving from the sunshade held over people of importance at outdoor rituals. The drama of the piece is considerably heightened by the four featherlike shapes that rise up from a ring at the top, and by the four flanged pieces that extend down from the ring to the



26 Sun-shade-shaped *haniwa*, from Anderayama Kofun, Uji prefecture. Kofun period (300–710). Clay; height 36 3/4 in. (93 cm). Archeological Museum, Kyoto University.



27 Shield-shaped *haniwa*, from Nara prefecture. Kofun period (300–710). Clay; height 58 3/4 in. (149 cm). Tokyo National Museum.



28 *Haniwa* figure of a warrior, from a site in Gunma prefecture. Kofun period (300–710). Clay; height 49 1/4 in. (125 cm). Aikawa Archaeological Museum, Isezaki.

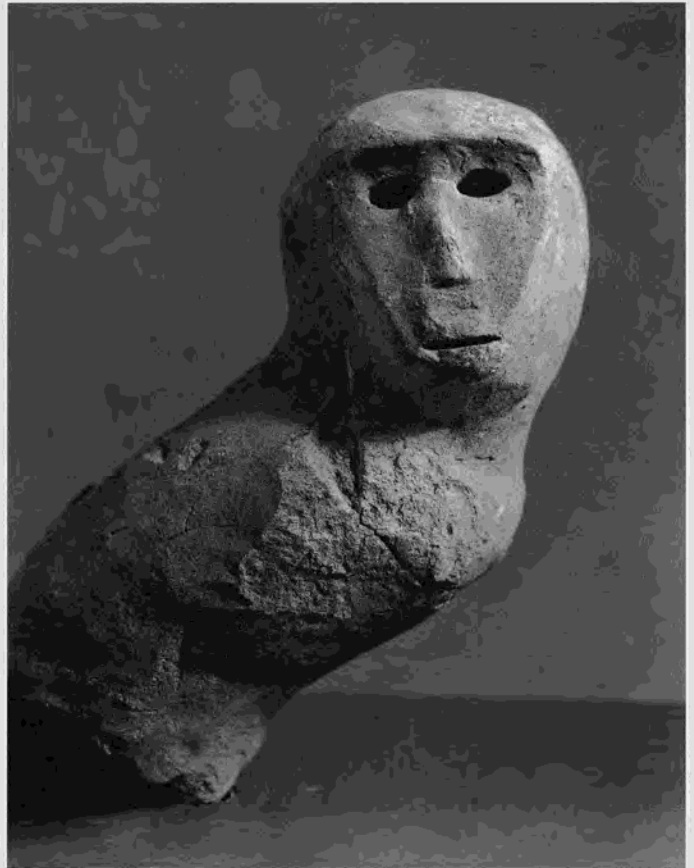
edge of the umbrella and then curl back again. Carved on the surface of the piece is a design known as the *chokkomon*, a geometric pattern of curves and intersecting lines. Another shape frequently found in the Kansai is the shield (Fig. 27). Modeled from what might have been a leather object, it is set on top of the cylinder typical of *haniwa* sculpture. The surface of this piece, too, is decorated with the *chokkomon* design.

The variety of later *haniwa* shapes from the eastern Kantō region around Tokyo is much richer. Figural *haniwa*—men, women, singers, dancers, soldiers, and animals—are found throughout the region in such numbers and different types



29 *Haniwa* figure of a farmer, from a site in Gunma prefecture. Kofun period (300–710). Clay; height 36 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (92.5 cm). Tokyo National Museum.

that Miki Fumio has called them genre sculpture. The frequency with which armor-clad figures appear suggests that warfare was not uncommon in this hinterland of the Yamato state. The warrior in Figure 28 wears full-body armor over wide-legged trousers, gauntlets, and a helmet. In contrast, the farmer, with a hoe over his shoulder and a wide grin on his face, is the epitome of a happy-go-lucky peasant (Fig. 29). The sculpture of a monkey is a true masterpiece (Fig. 30). From one angle she appears to turn her head as if to communicate with an offspring perched on her back. From another she seems alert and watchful, as if danger were at hand.



30 *Haniwa* figure of a monkey, from a site in Ibaraki prefecture. Kofun period (300–710). Clay; height of entire figure 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (27.3 cm). Private collection, Tokyo.



31 Female head from a *haniwa* figure, from the Tomb of Emperor Nintoku. Kofun period (300–710). Clay; height 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (20 cm). Imperial Household Agency.