

Summary

Special Historic Site Kitora Tumulus is a tomb of the Final Kofun period, built at the end of the seventh to the start of the eighth centuries, and located on the southern slope of hills south of the Fujiwara capital. It is a round mound build in two tiers, with the diameter of the lower tier at 13.8 m, and the upper tier at 9.4 m. The lower tier does not make a complete circle but is built into the slope, and constructed with layers of tamped earth. A stone chamber survives within the mound, with the walls and ceiling covered in plaster, on which astronomical charts, and images of the sun and moon, the Four Directional Deities, and the twelve signs of the Chinese zodiac are drawn.

As the deterioration and potential collapse of the mural paintings had become a problem, in 2003 the Agency for Cultural Affairs set up a temporary protective facility, and from the following year until 2010 undertook the removal of the murals and the start of restoration work in successive fashion, while formulating a “Basic Plan for Restoration of the Special Historic Site Kitora Tumulus and Environs” in March 2005. Also, a “Commission Regarding the Preservation and Utilization of Tomb Murals” was established in 2010 in order to investigate and research matters essential for the preservation and utilization of the Takamatsuzuka Tumulus and Kitora Tumulus murals, which is continuing its deliberations. The basic policy for the restoration and management of the Kitora tomb was adopted in a meeting of March 2012. Its specific provisions include (1) restoration with the purpose of ensuring the protection of the features of the mound and the internal stone chamber, (2) based on the results of excavation, presentation of the particular characteristics of the two-tier construction and the groundwork on the northern side of the mound, and (3) preservation of the unexcavated portions of the mound and environs.

Restoration work was carried out from 2013 to 2016. After sealing off the stone chamber, the approach path was reburied using layers of tamped earth. In removing the temporary protective facility, one portion of the floor and rear walls was left in place for the protection of the archaeological features and the stability of the mounded soil. As the village of Asuka had eliminated the road which had adjoined the mound, the topography of the ridge on the western slope of the mound was restored, and a park path set up as a detour. In the restoration of the mound, dirt fill was applied for preserving the features, and the two-tier construction presented. Incidentally, in order to preserve the unexcavated portion of the terrace slope at the back of the mound, it has been made larger than its original shape. Construction for slope protection was carried out on the sides of the mound and surrounding slopes, and ground cover (*sasa*) was planted over the surface of the mound, as measures to lessen the effect of sunlight on the stone chamber and to stabilize the slopes. As preparation of the environment around

the mound within the area of historic site designation, coordination was carried out to promote its integral use as a sector of a national government park, matching the specifications of the park paths and lighting, protective fencing, and removing many of the coniferous trees within the site district and planting deciduous species (oaks and beeches). In addition to signposts, explanation panels, and topographic models, metal tablets where rubbings can be made of life-size replicas of the design elements of the murals have been set up, in anticipation of the site's utilization.