

Sakai City Museum

The Sakai City Museum focuses on the *kofun* burial mounds in the Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group and Sakai's history as a center of craftsmanship and commerce. The museum opened in 1980 and is located in the sprawling Daisen Park, near the tomb of Emperor Nintoku (NintokuTennō-ryō Kofun).

The first room of the museum is a small theater projecting a video presentation on how *kofun* were likely made. Originally, rows of decorative terracotta figures called *haniwa* outlined the flat surfaces of the tumuli. These hollow sculptures were made in the shape of humans, animals, and other symbolic figures. The museum has many terracotta *haniwa* in its collection as well as a few rare wooden *haniwa*. The video focuses on the tomb of Emperor Nintoku, the largest *kofun* in Japan. This tomb has never been excavated because of its connection to the imperial household. Even today, standing on the vast burial mound is forbidden.

The museum also contains objects that document Sakai's long history as a merchant town: a collection of Japanese matchlock muskets, models of merchant ships, a loom, and various other items connected to historical industries in Sakai. Sakai was known for making matchlocks during the sixteenth and seventeenth century struggles among rival warlords. One of the most popular pieces on display is the largest surviving Japanese matchlock gun. During the more than 200 years of peace that began in 1603 with the appointment of Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) as shogun, the gunsmiths of Sakai honed their skills, selling firearms to samurai and their lords. The gun industry in Japan was closed after World War II, but other metallurgical industries like knife making and bicycle manufacturing thrive today in its place.