

Hakuchōryō Tomb (Hakuchō-ryō Kofun)

Hakuchōryō literally means “mausoleum of the white bird,” a reference to the legendary folk hero Yamato Takeru. According to both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*, eighth-century texts chronicling early Japanese history and mythology, Yamato Takeru was a prince in the line of emperors who expanded the territory of the Yamato clan.

He is said to have been fatally wounded when he fought a mountain god barehanded. After winning the battle, he set out for home, but died on the way in Nobono in Mie Prefecture. According to legend, a large white bird (commonly depicted as a swan) was seen flying away from his remains. His companions followed the bird, thinking it was Takeru’s soul manifested as a bird. Reportedly the bird landed here, and Takeru’s followers built the *kofun* burial mound as his eternal resting place. The Imperial Household Agency manages the tomb and has declared this *kofun* to be the tomb of Yamato Takeru based on this story. Some evidence indicates that this tomb was built in the late fifth century, suggesting that the Takeru connection may be primarily legendary. The *kofun* covers an area of about 5.7 hectares but is only 3 meters high at its highest point. It is surrounded by a large moat that attracts local waterfowl. A remaining stretch of the Takenouchi Kaido, the oldest recorded road in Japan, runs along the northern side.