

## **Shitaya Sakamoto Fuji**

### **Shitaya, Taito City, Tokyo**

Around 60 *Fujizuka* (“Fuji mounds”) were built within the limits of modern-day Tokyo. Most were lost or altered beyond recognition in the course of the radical urban development that began in the late nineteenth century, but some survive in their original form. One of these, constructed in 1828 by the Azuma-ko confraternity, one of the many Fuji-ko groups dedicated to worshipping Mt. Fuji active at the time, stands on the grounds of Onoterusaki-jinja Shrine in the Shitaya area of Taito City, Tokyo.

The Shitaya Sakamoto Fuji is five meters high and sixteen across. The front of the mound has a miniature recreation of the Yoshida Ascending Route, complete with stone pillars marking the mountain’s stations. In this way, the design of the *Fujizuka* expresses the spiritual worldview embodied by the pilgrimage route. Traces of a miniature Ochudo (Middle Road) pilgrimage route around the *Fujizuka* about halfway up are also visible. At the foot of the Shitaya Sakamoto Fuji stand statues of En no Gyoja, considered the founder of Shugen mountain asceticism, and two monkeys, traditional servants of the Mt. Fuji deity.

The Shitaya Sakamoto Fuji is an Important Tangible Folk Cultural Property, and generally closed to the public. However, on June 30 and July 1 every year—the start of Mt. Fuji’s climbing season—it is open to anyone who wishes to make a pilgrimage in spirit to the sacred mountain.