

Shinmeiyama Tomb

The Shinmeiyama Tomb is a keyhole-shaped burial mound created sometime between the late fourth and early fifth century, presumably built for the ruler of an ancient Tango kingdom. It is the second-largest keyhole-shaped tomb along the Sea of Japan, which attests to the great wealth of the Tango kingdom during this period. Researchers estimate the 190-meter-long tumulus took at least five years to construct, requiring considerable labor from throughout the region. The structure resembles the other large Tango tombs: it is three-tiered, has sides overlaid with round stones (*fukiishi*), and was adorned with an estimated 2,000 terra-cotta funerary objects (*haniwa*). A large stone burial chamber is likely located in the round section, as found in similar keyhole-shaped tombs from this period.

At the time of its construction, the burial mound overlooked a lagoon that connected this civilization with its maritime trading partners on the Asian continent. The mound would have been a dominant figure in the landscape, manifested as a well-sculpted hill of gray rocks on the waterfront. Today, the lagoon is gone and the mound is covered with vegetation; however, you may still find loose *fukiishi* rocks scattered in the forest undergrowth.

Because the site has not been excavated, few artifacts have been recovered from the Shinmeiyama Tomb. One notable artifact from the site, a terra-cotta fragment engraved with an illustration of a person rowing a boat, is on display at the nearby Ancient Tango Village Museum.