

●Shinagawa Historical Museum Explanatory Sheet

Stone Monuments from the 14th to 16th Century

An Overview of Stone Monuments

Between the 14th and 16th century, three types of stone monuments were produced: *itabi* stone monuments, *hokyointo* stone pagodas, and *gorinto* stone pagodas.

Itabi stone monuments were engraved with inscriptions or images representing the Buddha, as well as the date they were carved and the name of the person the stone memorializes. Over 47,000 *itabi* monuments are believed to exist in the Kanto region, made of a soft stone that is easy to engrave and also easy to split into slabs. *Itabi* began appearing in the 14th century, and began to decline in popularity in the late 15th century, and stopped being made entirely by the end of the 16th century.

Hokyointo stone pagodas originally enclosed sutra scripts, but eventually only mimicked the appearance of such sutra cases. *Hokyointo* were primarily made as grave or memorial pagodas for samurai or wealthy merchants, and during the Edo Period they were built to memorialize *daimyo* lords and *hatamoto* retainers, both of which were wealthy land-holders and vassals to the shogunate government.

Gorinto stone pagodas were built with the five stones of different shapes representing the five universal elements that compose all things according to Buddhism. The stones were arranged from top to bottom in the order of these elements: heaven or sky, wind, fire, water, and earth.

Later, *gorinto* stone pagodas carved from a single stone came to outnumber those made from five separate stones. Inscriptions representing the Buddha can be found on the front of many *gorinto* pagodas. From the start of the Edo Period, inscriptions representing the five elements of heaven or sky, wind, fire, water and earth also began to appear.

The Stone Monuments of Shinagawa City

Stone Monuments unearthed from Gotenyama: Many *itabi* stone monuments, and *hokyointo* and *gorinto* stone pagodas were discovered together with human bones when Gotenyama was excavated during the construction of the Shinagawa battery islands in 1854.

Itabi Stone Monument



Hokyointo Stone Pagoda



Gorinto Stone Pagoda



Based on records and maps kept at Tokai-ji Temple, it is understood these artifacts were found from the area around Kita-Shinagawa 3-chome and 4-chome in Shinagawa City, Tokyo. After the artifacts were commemorated at Tokai-ji Temple, they were enshrined at Hozen-ji Temple. Today, 119 *itabi* stone monuments, 51 *hokyointo* and 104 *gorinto* stone pagodas are descended to the temple.

The *itabi* stone monuments are from the early 14th century to the end of the 15th century, with many dating in the middle of the 14th century to early 15th century. Among these monuments, 15 are made in a shape often seen among the downstream regions of the Tamagawa River, and five are made in a shape often found along the northern shore of Tokyo Bay.

The *hokyointo* stone pagodas date to between the late 14th and early 15th century, and the *gorinto* stone pagodas date to between the early 15th century and the early 16th century. While the majority of the *hokyointo* pagodas are made of Anzan stone excavated from the Izu Peninsula, some are also made from sandstone from the Tama region of western Tokyo.

The Kai'an-ji Temple *Gorinto* Stone Pagodas: Four *gorinto* pagodas can be found at Kai'an-ji Temple. Two of them were made in 1495 in preparation for memorial services that would be held after the death of those who commissioned the *gorinto*. Kai'an-ji Temple also safeguards *gorinto* made in a unique style from the

northern Kanto region not found in the Shinagawa region.

What We Can Learn From Them

Some stone monuments have shapes often seen in other regions and others are made from materials from other regions of Japan. This diversity of stone monuments speaks to the prosperity of the Shinagawa region, which had many prominent temples along the seaside, and carried out thriving nationwide trade.



▲ *Itabi* excavated from Gotenyama (Hozen-ji Temple Collection)



▲ *Hokyointo* and *gorinto* excavated from Gotenyama (Hozen-ji Temple Collection)