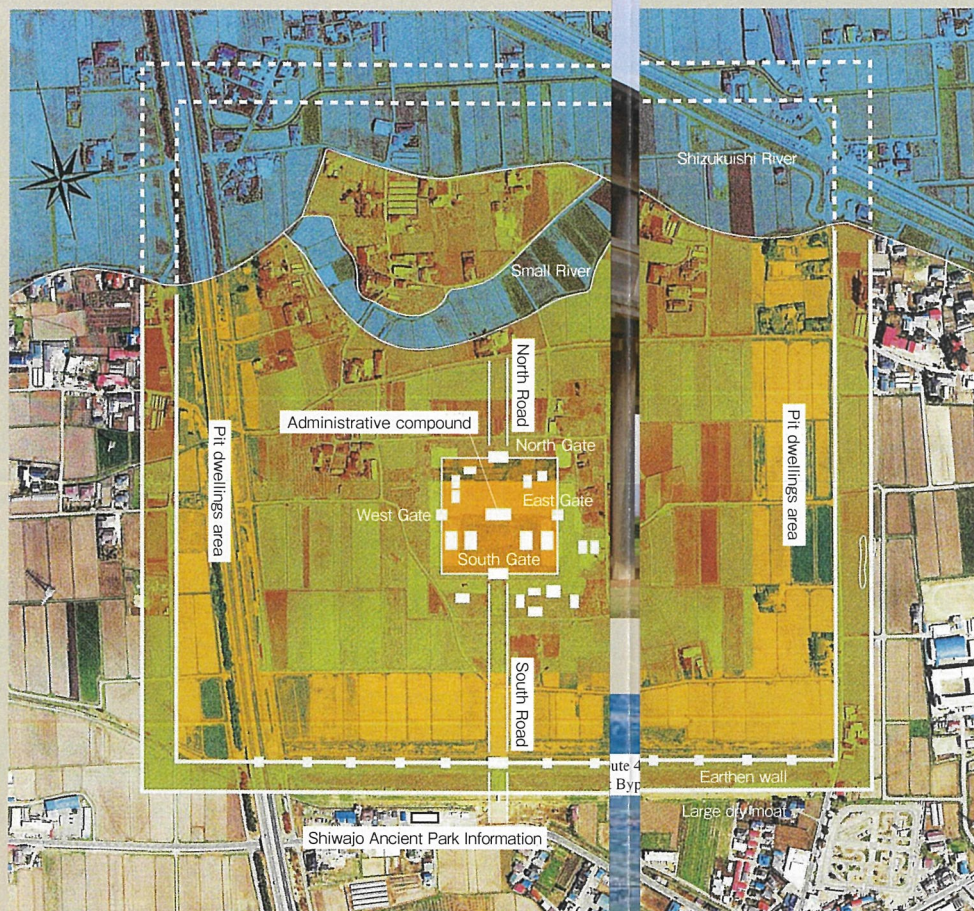


Historic Site, Shiwajo Site Mutsu Province's
Northernmost Ancient Fortified Government Office

Shiwajo Ancient Park



Morioka City Board of Education



1. Shiwajo about 1,200 years ago

At the beginning of the Heian period (794-1185), a group of people living in the northern Tohoku region were known as Emishi and were beyond the control of the government. The government, under the leadership of the emperor, embarked on an aggressive campaign to expand its territory, constructing Jōhoku fortifications as administrative and military bases to govern and manage the northern Tohoku region.

One of these fortifications was Shiwajo, built in 803 by Sakanoue no Tamuramaro on the orders of Emperor Kanmu. It was the most northern of over a dozen Jōhoku fortifications constructed in Mutsu Province (the eastern part of the Tohoku region), and was comparable in size to Taka Castle, another fortress in the province.

2. Military and public administration

Shiwajo was a square enclosure consisting of an 840m earthen rampart (Tsuiji-bei) and protected by a 928m dry moat (Soto omizo) on each side. There was a gate at the center of each side with Yagura watchtowers constructed at intervals of 60m. Located slightly to the south of the center of the castle was the administrative compound known as Seicho, which was enclosed by another Tsuiji-bei earthen wall measuring 150m square. The compound was used as administrative office, as well as for holding rituals and ceremonies to entertain the Emishi and connected to the outer gate via a large road. Around the compound were a group of government buildings where administrative work was carried out, and along the outer wall were 1,200 to 2,000 pit dwellings that served as barracks.

3. Reconstructed buildings

The main South Gate of the outer wall is a two story 5-bay and 1-entrance structure of 15m long x 11m high in size and is the second largest reconstructed ancient gate after the Suzakumon Gate at the Heijō-kyō Palace site in Nara. The gate is flanked on both sides by the Tsuiji-bei walls built of hard-packed earth and Yagura watchtowers. The reconstructed outer earthen wall is 4.5 m high and 252 m long, making it one of the longest reconstructed structures in Japan. In the Seicho administrative compound, its South Gate, East and West Gates, and the 3.5m high earthen wall have been reconstructed. A large stilt building was reconstructed in the government building area to the southeast of the Seicho administrative compound and is open to the public as a guidance facility. Today, three pit dwellings that served as barracks have been developed on the southern side of the outer wall and made open to the public.

4. Excavation and reconstruction for opening

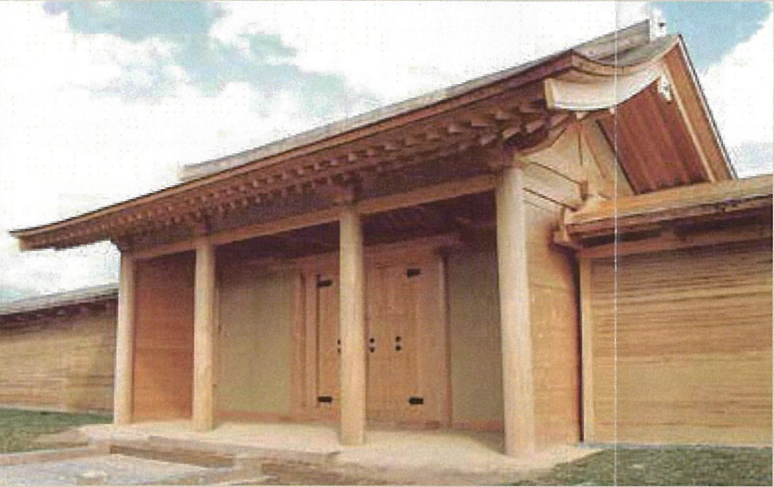
The Shiwajo Ancient Park is a reconstruction of the original buildings based on the findings of excavation and research, as well as the reference to existing ancient buildings and picture scrolls. To protect the remains of the Shiwajo from further damage, the site was filled after excavation. The reconstruction of the buildings and planimetric markings were then made directly above the fill. The remains of the 1,200-year-old structure lie directly underneath.



Planimetric markings of the west pavilion at the back of the administrative compound



Excavated northwest building of the administrative compound



South Gate of the administrative compound



East Gate of the administrative compound



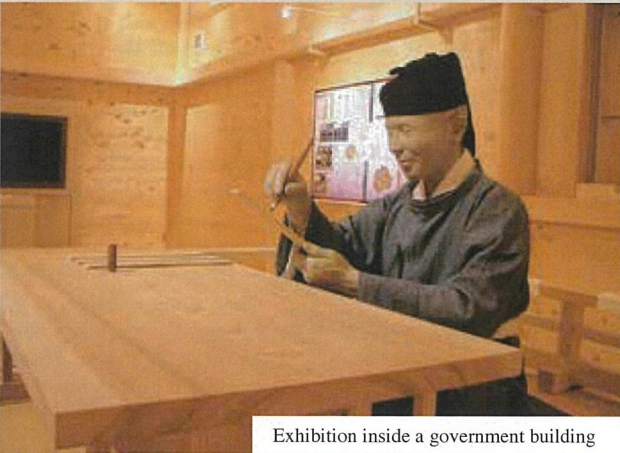
South Gate of the outer wall, earthen wall, and watchtowers



Full view of the site of Shiwajo (aerial photo taken from the south)



Government building



Exhibition inside a government building

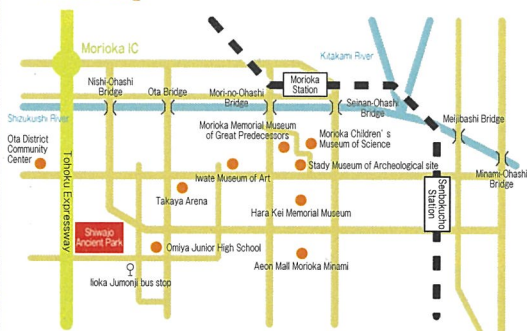
* If you would like to visit the inside the government buildings, please ask at the information desk.



Shiwajo Festival (children performing Sansa Odori dance)

For memorial rubber stamps

Access Map



From Morioka Station

Iwate-ken Kotsu (Iwate Prefectural Transportation) - Morioka Station East Exit #13

○Motomiya Line bound for Shiwajo Ancient Park

→ Get off at Shiwajo Ancient Park stop

○Haba line bound for Yahaba Eigyocho → Get off at Iioka Jumonji stop
→ 10 min on foot

From Tohoku Expressway

15 minutes from Morioka IC toward Senbokuchō

15 minutes from Morioka Minami IC toward Akita

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