

Remains of man in armour found at 'Pompeii of Japan'

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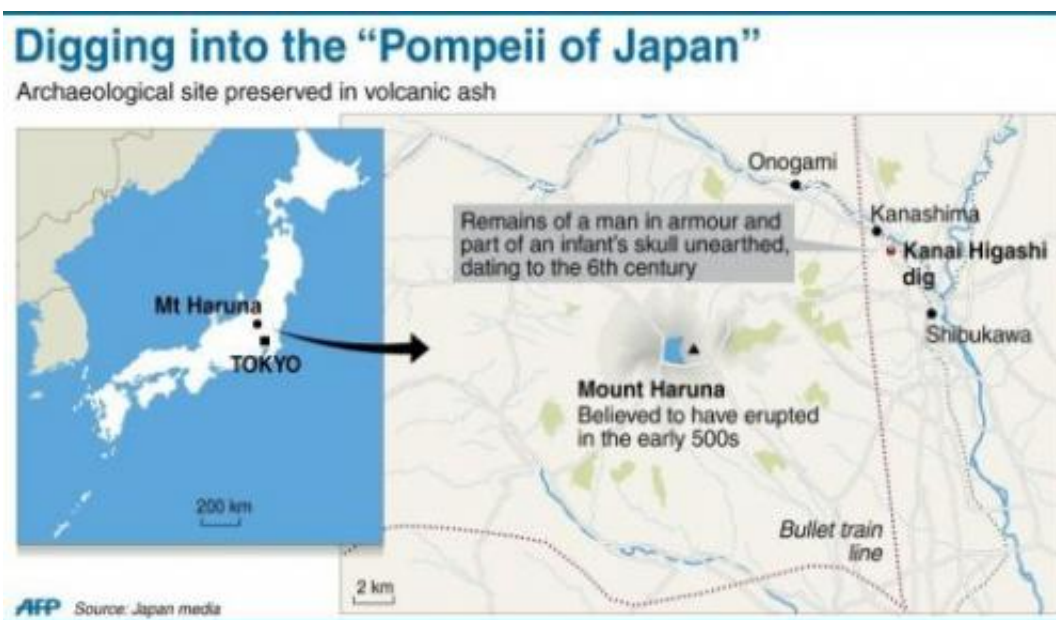
This handout picture taken by Gunma Archaeological Research Foundation on November 30, 2012 shows a well-preserved body of a sixth-century man in a suit of armour (yellow), found at the Kanai Higashiura dig in Gunma prefecture, 110km north of Tokyo. The man had apparently turned to face a flow of molten rock as it gushed through his settlement.

The remains of a high-caste man wearing armour who was buried by hot ash—possibly as he tried to calm the wrath of an erupting volcano—have been found in an area known as the "Pompeii of Japan".

Archaeologists say they have unearthed the well-preserved body of a sixth-century man who had apparently turned to face a flow of [molten rock](#) as it gushed through his settlement.

"Under normal circumstances, you would flee if [pyroclastic flows](#) are rushing toward you and bringing waves of heat. But this person died facing it," said Shinichiro Ohki, of Gunma Archaeological Research Foundation.

"Maybe, if he were someone of a high position, he might have been praying, or doing something in the direction of the volcano and attempting to appease its anger," Ohki told AFP on Monday.



Graphic showing an archaeological site in Japan. The remains of a high-caste sixth-century man wearing armour has been unearthed at the dig known as "Pompeii of Japan."

The remains, along with a part of an infant's skull, were found in the Kanai Higashiura dig in Gunma prefecture, roughly 110 kilometres (70 miles) northwest of Tokyo, at the site of the volcanic Mount Haruna.

The find comes from an area known to enthusiasts as the "Pompeii of Japan" a reference to the Roman city near modern-day Naples buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD79.

The body is clad in a relatively sophisticated kind of armour made by craftsmen who bound small [iron plates](#) with thin leather strips, which would have represented the latest technological import from the [Korean Peninsula](#).

It may have been brought to Japan after the practice of horse riding was introduced in the late fifth century, Ohki said, adding that the armour was much more sophisticated than the single-plate type common in the period.

"It indicates the person wearing it was someone of a high position, like a regional leader," Ohki told AFP, adding studies would be carried out to see if the man was related to occupants of [ancient tombs](#) dotting the region.

Archaeologists will also examine the bones to determine whether the man and the child were related.

"If possible, we would like to study their DNA. Were they related? Why and how did they die there?" Ohki said.

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