CHŌISHI STONES OF TŌNOMINE: A STATUS REPORT

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This is a status report of chōishi stones (stupa, or marking stones) along the pilgrimage path to Tanzan-jinja Shrine (former Tōnomine Myōraku-ji Temple). In this report, I mainly differentiate between the chōishi stones listed in Sakurai-shi shi (published in 1979) and their current condition.

Along the pilgrimage path between the first torii gate and gateway to Tōnomine, there used to be 52 stones. Generally, the chōishi stones were placed every 1 cho (approx. 109m) on a path to shrines or temples, and had been created across the country, especially in western Japan, since the Kamakura period. Currently, there are 32 stones along the path of Tōnomine. Each of them is approximately 150cm high, with a triangular-pyramid top on which characters are carved in a square frame. According the inscription, they were established by the monk Yōei in the Edo Period, Shō 3 (1654).

Although there are supposedly more than 100 chōishi stones remaining at shrines and temples throughout Japan, the amount of those in good condition are limited. However, more than half of Tōnomine chōishi stones have been well-preserved and are considered to be remarkably valuable cultural treasures despite their recent completion in the early Edo period.