

A Study by Shiro Fujimura on the Planning Intentions for the Construction of Civic Center in the Castle Town City of Kofu, Japan

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Abstract

In Japan, as the social system underwent a transformation from the feudalistic period to the Meiji period, government office districts with a concentration of government facilities were formed in castle towns, which had been the main cities during the feudalistic period. In Kofu city, Yamanashi Prefecture, a civic center with quasi-Western-style architecture was formed by Shiro Fujimura, who was appointed as prefectural governor in 1873. The purpose of this study is to clarify the actual situation of the formation of the civic center by focusing on the Kofu civic center, which was planned by Shiro Fujimura in the early Meiji period, as well as how the spatial configuration of the castle town was read to construct public office facilities. Specifically, this study aims to 1) clarify Fujimura's urban planning intentions based on the layout of planned and constructed government facilities, and 2) clarify the uniqueness of the Kofu civic center by comparing it with Yamagata and Utsunomiya, where planned civic centers were established by prefectural governor Michitune Mishima. The findings are as follows: 1) an L-shaped civic center was formed in front of Ote-gomon and along Tokiwa-dori in the former samurai district near the castle, with the prefectural office facing east; 2) the urban space in the civic center showed modern landscaping with street trees, waterways, road maintenance, fire prevention measures, and shared open spaces; and 3) Mishima developed a symmetrical civic center centering on the prefectural government office as a symbol of the authority of the Meiji government, while Fujimura was the first to construct a silk mill, placing importance on the development of industry, and subsequently the civic center, which was centered on the silk mill.

Keywords

Shiro Fujimura, Michitune Mishima, government offices, castle town, Kofu, planning intent

How to cite

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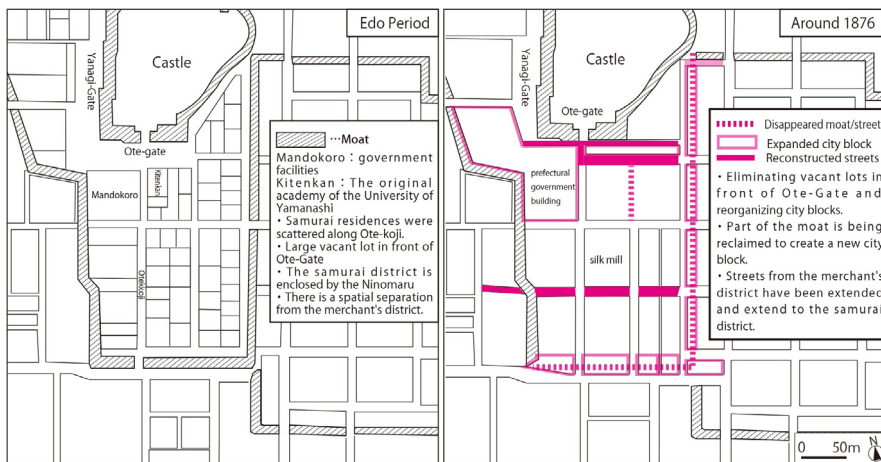


Fig. 1. Changes in the southern part of Ninomaru.

INTRODUCTION

At the time the social system in Japan was undergoing changes during the Meiji era, government offices and facilities were becoming concentrated in the castle towns that had been the main cities during the feudalistic period, leading to the formation of government office districts. In Kofu city, Yamanashi Prefecture, Shiro Fujimura¹, who was appointed as prefectural governor in 1873, created a civic center³ with so-called quasi-Western-style architecture (commonly known as “Fujimura-style architecture”²). As a prefectural governor, Fujimura promoted the modernization of Yamanashi Prefecture by implementing a number of modern policies until he retired in 1887.

Maizuru Street (formerly Nishikicho Street), the location of the current Kofu civic center, was formed during the Fujimura administration, and Kofu was one of the most modern regional cities in Japan in the early Meiji period⁴. However, the buildings from those days were destroyed by rebuilding and air raids, and thus, are not visible today. To clarify the basis of the current Kofu civic center and gain a better understanding of the actual image of the modernization of local cities, it is important to analyze the actual conditions of the Kofu civic center in the early Meiji period, as planned and developed by Shiro Fujimura. Michitsune Mishima⁵ is widely known as the person who led the planned formation of civic centers in local cities in the early Meiji period, but studies on Fujimura are scarce. With the aim of clarifying the actual situation of civic center formation, focusing on how the spatial configuration of the castle town was understood to construct government facilities, and how it related to urban development in the central city area of Kofu, this study focuses on the Kofu civic center, a planned civic center developed by Shiro Fujimura in the early Meiji period. Specifically, this study aims to clarify 1) Fujimura’s urban planning intentions based on the layout of planned and constructed government facilities, and 2) the uniqueness of Kofu’s civic center by comparing it with Yamagata and Utsunomiya⁶, where planned civic centers were formed by prefectural governor Mishima.

This research was conducted through the collection of archival data, such as official documents, a material survey at the Yamanashi Prefectural Museum, a literature survey (the histories of Yamanashi Prefecture and Kofu city, as well as other documents dealing with Kofu in the early Meiji period), and interviews to determine the existence and content of the planning intentions at that time. In addition, I recreated the layout of the buildings of the time based on photographs and drawings.

GOVERNMENT OFFICE DISTRICT PLAN BY SHIRO FUJIMURA

First, I analyze land use in the castle district by the Fujimura administration (before 1873). Kofu Castle was one of the most famous castles in the Kanto region during the feudal era, and prospered to the extent that it was called “Little Edo”. The samurai district was located in the Ninomaru area and the merchant district in the Sannomaru area, which were separated by moats (Figure 1). The samurai district in the southern part of the Ninomaru area housed a government office called “Mandokoro”, as well as central facilities such as the Ometsuke residence and Kitenkan (place of study). The merchant district on the southeast side was particularly prosperous. However, the town was devastated by upheaval in the Edo and Meiji periods. In 1868, Taisuke Itagaki and others entered Kofu Castle without bloodshed, and in February 1872, Kofu Castle was placed under the jurisdiction of the army. In the following year, 1873, the decision was made to abolish the castle; it was decided that only the inner castle would be preserved and that the Ninomaru and Sannomaru areas would be urbanized⁷. Later, as the old guard left the castle, it fell into disrepair and garbage was thrown into the moat, creating a poor environment.

Next, I analyze land use in regard to the castle after the Fujimura administration (after 1873). The castle district underwent major changes from 1873, the year Fujimura became prefectural governor. First, the land ownership of Kofu Castle changed. In the latter half of the domain period, Kofu Castle was under the direct control of the shogunate, but with the restoration of the shogunate’s domain in the Meiji period, all the land was returned to the Meiji government and Kofu Castle was placed under the jurisdiction of the army. Later, the Ninomaru area, part of which was owned by the prefecture, where government facilities and other public offices were constructed, was disposed of by the army. It is thought that it was rational to build a government office district on the same site because the Ninomaru area had been home to administrative offices such as the Imperial Administration Office since the feudal era, and because many of the posted duty guards had vacated the castle, which made it easy to develop a coherent development project in the samurai district.

Furthermore, a plan to demolish and reclaim the moat was implemented. In 1875, in a report to the Lord Privy Seal, titled “Request for the Disposal of the Outer Moat of Kofu Castle”, Fujimura requested that the moat be reclaimed. The contents of the request included the following: “Dust from the moat will cause health hazards because of the accumulation of bad water”, “The residences of nobles and the site of the former imperial residence were disposed of under the castle, and land tickets were issued to build a prefectural government office, hospitals,

schools, a silk mill, and other residences, which led to an increase in human traffic”, “There are bridges and gutters that supply water for regular use, and repairs to them are costly”, and “The moat is harmful and useless, so we wish to remove the distinction between the inside and outside by filling in the moat, which would allow us to build a house”. The demolition of the moat was subsequently approved, and parts of the Ninomaru and Sannomaru areas were reclaimed to make way for the construction of new streets (Figure 1). The road improvements created continuity from the merchants’ quarters to Ninomaru, and the flow of people between the government office and merchant districts became more active. From the content of the report and the actual condition of the road construction, it can be inferred that Fujimura planned the construction of a civic center in Ninomaru before the moat was reclaimed, and that he anticipated the future of the civic center.

Next, I look at the details of the plans for the civic center. The prefectural government was to be located in the original government office (Mandokoro), and a normal school and silk mill were to be established to serve as the mainstay of scholastic education and industrial development that Fujimura had been focusing on (Figure 2^a). This is considered to be a remarkable example of the policies⁹ of the Meiji government at that time. Among these plans, the earliest to be initiated was that for the Kangyo Silk Mill (Table 1). Because Fujimura believed that it was important to strengthen the finances of Yamanashi, an area with few specialty products, through the production of raw silk, the construction of a silk mill was considered a vital step in this direction. The overall appearance of the government office district changed from around 1881, when the silk mill was built, to around 1887, when the police station and city hall were constructed (Table 1). In the early Meiji period, government offices were formed in line with the policies of the Meiji government, such as the establishment of an industrial and educational system; however, in the mid-Meiji period, as the system took off and the privatization of industry progressed, the government began to focus on enhancing administrative functions. In fact, the reason why the Kangyo Silk Mill was not rebuilt after it was destroyed by fire can be attributed to the fact that the privatization of the silk industry had become widespread and thus, there was no need to rebuild.

Regarding the layout plan of the government office district, first, the prefectural government office was built on the site of the original imperial palace, and the silk mill and the prefectural governor’s residence were built on Tokiwa Street, forming an overall L-shaped government office district (Figure 2). The silk mill is located at the inner corner of the L-shape and occupies the central position in the civic center, facing Tokiwa Street. In addition, the government facilities on the street in front of Otemon were built facing east. It can be assumed that this shape was largely since the merchant’s area was located to the east. Assuming a flow of people from the merchant area, the main line of flow is thought to be through Tokiwa Street to Nishikicho Street. Considering this series of flow lines, it is considered inevitable that an L-shaped civic center would be formed.

Next, I examine the relationship between the streets and the civic center. To facilitate distribution, Fujimura intended to redevelop the roads that had connected Kofu to the outside world (Koshu-Kaido highway, Oume-Kaido highway, and Sunshu-Oukan highway) prior to the feudalistic period. In particular, the Koshu-Kaido highway passed through the town of Kofu

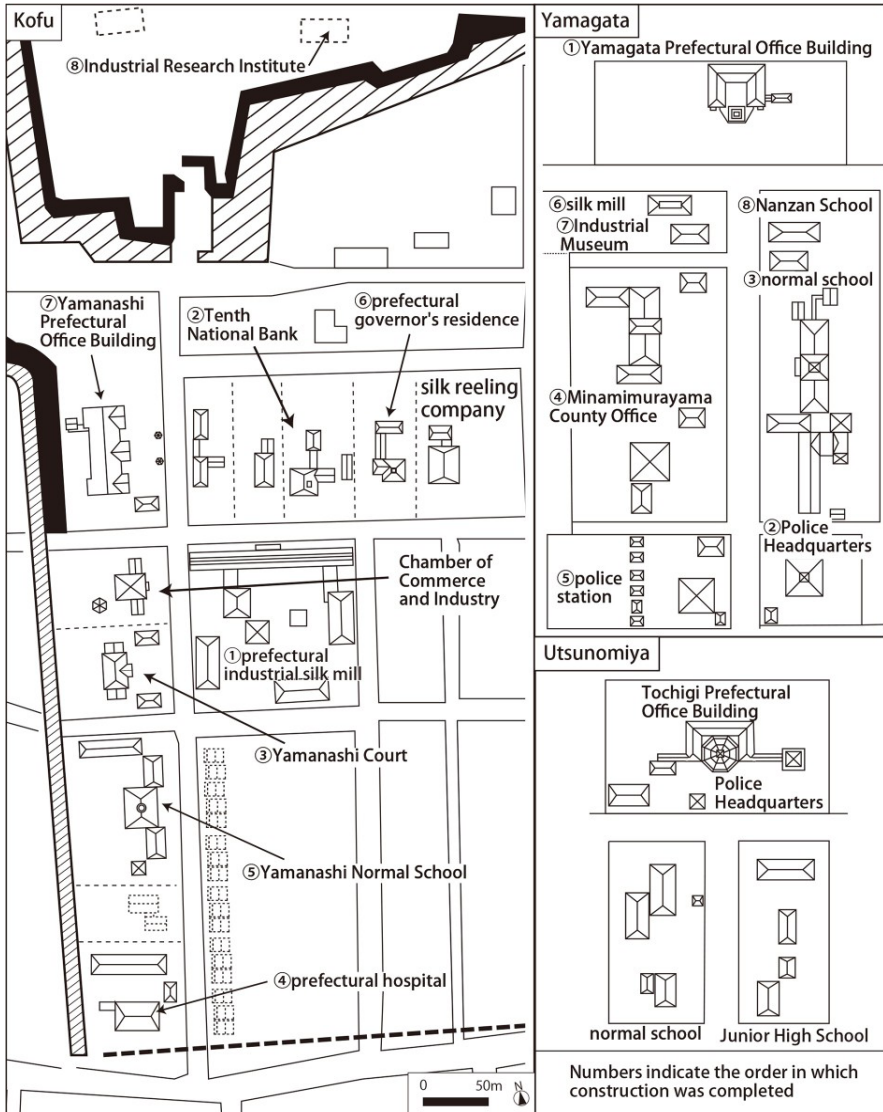


Fig. 2. Layout of facilities comprising the civic center

along Ninomaru, and the formation of towns along the highway indicates that it was an important highway in terms of logistics and human flow (Figure 3). Regarding access to the civic center, Tokiwa Street, an extension of Koshu-Kaido highway that ran through the merchant area, was probably the best choice as the main street for directing goods and people to the civic center. This good connection with Koshu-Kaido highway was a factor in the formation of the L-shaped civic center at the intersection of Nishiki-cho Street on the north-south axis and Tokiwa Street on the east-west axis. In fact, the silk mill faced Tokiwa Street and was ideally located for logistics.

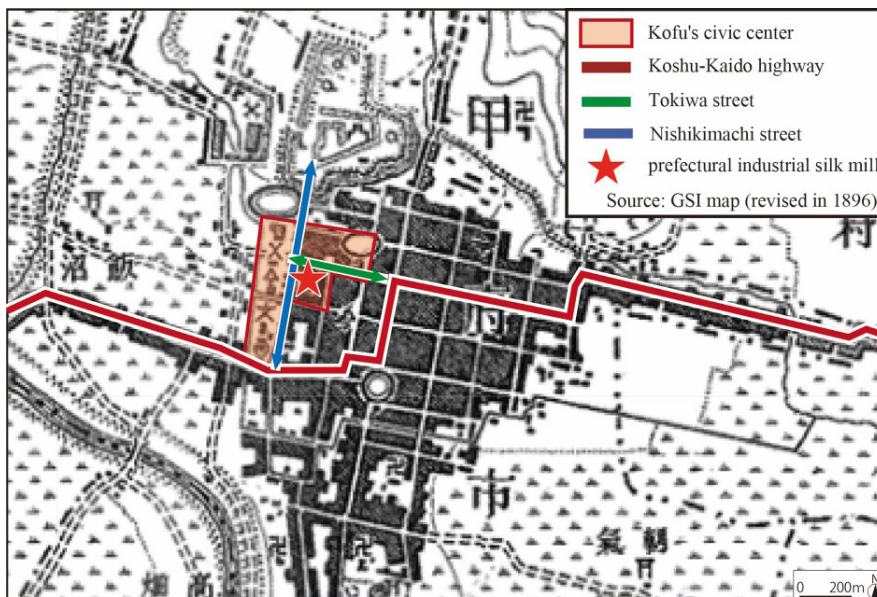


Fig. 3. Location of Kofu's civic center and the Koshu-Kaido highway

SPATIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF KOFU'S CIVIC CENTER

The width of each street was set at 6 ken (about 11 m), and to facilitate maintenance, additional land rent was to be paid for any portion of the street that extended beyond this width. Fujimura also established modern rules for the construction of houses¹⁰. He stipulated that there should always be some common open space on the left, right, and front of a house, and that trees should be planted to improve the appearance of urban areas and help prevent fires. Photographs and nishiki-e (woodblock prints) from that period show that the streets were well maintained and wide enough for horse-drawn carriages to pass through (Figure 4). In addition, buildings along the road were moderately set back, and stone walls, fences, and waterways were located at the street boundaries, giving the impression of neatness and cleanliness. Trees were planted along the street, resulting in the entire street being lush with greenery. The gate of Kofu Castle was located in front of Nishikimachi Street, the main street, indicating the proximity of the civic center and castle (Figure 4).

Finally, I compare the civic centers in Yamagata and Utsunomiya planned by Mishima in the early Meiji period with those in Kofu (Figure 2 and 5). First, regarding the location plan, Mishima did not establish government office districts within the castle district¹¹, but rather, on unused grassland and mountain foothills away from the castle (Figure 5). In doing so, they were conscious of connectivity from the merchant's area, and both Yamagata and Utsunomiya established civic centers adjacent to city streets. Kofu, on the other hand, established a civic center in Ninomaru, which was closely connected to the castle district. By utilizing the

samurai district and filling in the moat, the connection with the merchant's district was made closer. By following the urban framework of the castle town period, the city was naturally connected to the existing streets and avenues. Next, looking at the layout of the government facilities, Mishima is characterized by a symbolic spatial configuration, with a main street running north-south, government facilities on both sides, and the prefectural office building in front (Figure 2). In the case of Yamagata, the government offices were located on an extension of the highway extending north. In the case of Utsunomiya, the civic center was formed along a street orthogonal to the east-west highway, giving the strong impression that the civic center planned by Mishima was concerned with a symmetric urban landscape along the north-south axis. In the case of Kofu, on the other hand, the prefectural government building was located in a corner of a grid-like city block, giving the impression that it had less presence than Yamagata and Utsunomiya, and that the silk mill was placed in the center of the district. In addition, the shape of the civic center had two axes, east-west and north-south, and was less symbolic than the civic center planned by Mishima. Fujimura may have thought that the silk industry would support Yamanashi, an area with a weak industrial base, and thus planned the layout with greater emphasis on the silk mills than on the prefectural government buildings. Finally, looking at the year each facility was established, Kofu and Yamagata appear to share some common facilities, such as their prefectural office buildings, schools, courthouses, and silk mills (Table 1). These were strongly reflective of the policies of the Meiji government at the time of their establishment, such as the industrial reproduction and development and school system policies. However, looking at the order in which the facilities were built, the prefectural office building was built first in Yamagata, whereas the silk mill was built first in Kofu. While Mishima was concerned with the prestige of the government, Fujimura's intention to prioritize industrial development.

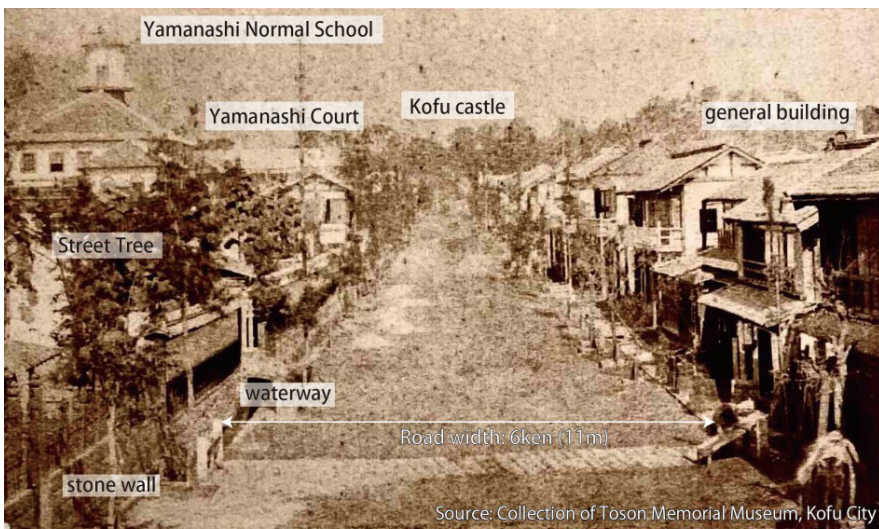


Fig. 4. Nishikimachi Street (estimated to be around 1876)

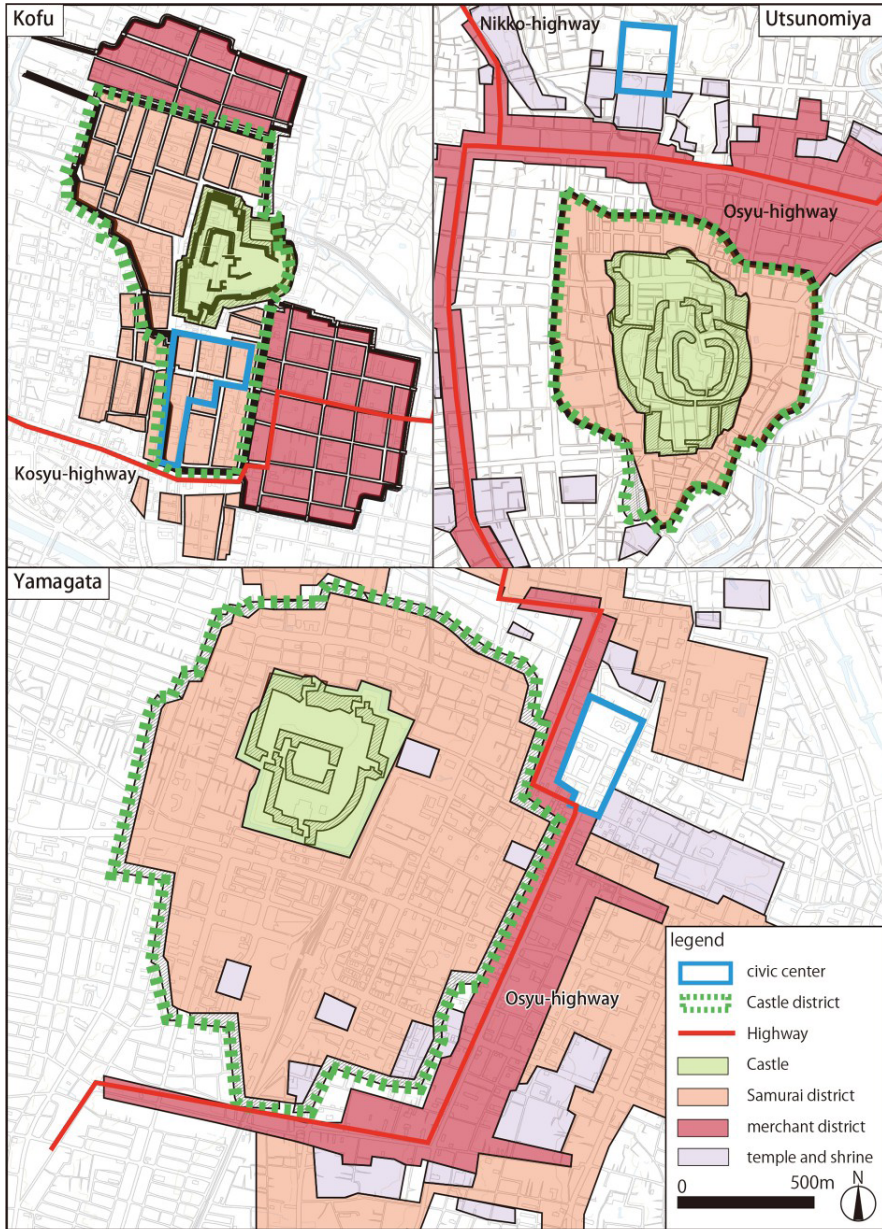


Fig. 5. Location of the civic center

CONCLUSION

The results of the study revealed the following two points.

First, an L-shaped civic center was formed in the samurai district in consideration of its connectivity with the merchant district. The southern part of the samurai district in the Ninomaru area of Kofu Castle had been a political center with administrative functions since the feudal period, and after the restoration of the shogunate, it was easy to develop the area on a large scale because of the withdrawal of the shoguns and land dispossession by the army. The prefectural government buildings were oriented toward the east. This is thought to have been done with an awareness of the connection from the merchant area and the street. The moat between the samurai and merchant areas was filled in and the castle district was modernized.

Second, compared with Yamagata and Utsunomiya by Mishima, Kofu's civic center was characterized by 1) being bordered by samurai districts close to the castle district, and 2) not producing the symbolism of a prefectural office building. Mishima developed a symmetrical government office district centering on the prefectural office building as a key symbol of authority for the Meiji government, while Fujimura was the first to build a silk mill and devote himself to the development of industry. Mishima was concerned with developing unused land and building a government district with a north-south axis from scratch, whereas Fujimura utilized the existing urban framework and transformed a samurai district into a civic center. Therefore, while the castle district, civic center, and merchant district were relatively closely adjacent to each other in Kofu, they are not symbolic of each other.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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ENDNOTES

6. He was a bureaucrat from Kumamoto, Higo Province. He was appointed as the prefectural governor of Yamanashi Prefecture in 1873. He was described as a “road prefectural governor” and promoted the modernization of Kofu until his retirement in 1887.
7. Government office districts in this study are defined as districts where facilities with public functions were concentrated, such as silk mills, hospitals, schools, and prefectural ordinance residences built by the prefecture, in addition to government facilities.
8. The buildings were planned by Shiro Fujimura and designed and built mainly by local carpenters Yataro Komiyama and Shozo Tsuchiya.
9. Ernest Sato, the British Minister to Japan who visited Kofu in 1877, wrote the following in his diary: “The number of buildings in this town imitating Western architecture is the largest in Japan, as far as I know, considering the size of the town” (http://yshisotricalplace.web.fc2.com/historical_place/mutsuzawagakko/index.htm (viewed May 11, 2024)). This shows that Fujimura was focused on modernizing the city of Kofu.
10. He was a bureaucrat from Kagoshima, Satsuma Province. He served as prefectural governor of Tsuruoka, Yamagata, Fukushima, and Tochigi. He promoted civil engineering projects such as the Kuriko Tunnel and the Aizu-Mikata Road, and worked to foster industry in the Tohoku region, earning him the reputation as a “civil engineering prefectural governor.”
11. For the Yamagata and Utsunomiya cases, see references 1) and 2).
12. It was deemed unsuitable as an army garrison.

13. The government office district around 1876 was reproduced based on the “Map of Kofu under Yamanashi Prefecture” (created in 1876), a drawing in the Kofu Newspaper (issued on September 25, 1876), and photographs of each government office building. Unknown items are marked with dotted lines. For the layout of Yamagata’s government facilities, etc., refer to references 1) and
14. 2). Utsunomiya’s government office district was reproduced with reference to photographs, maps, and the “History of Utsunomiya Manga”.
15. In addition to the academic, military, and taxation systems, the Meiji government focused on promoting industry and prestige.
16. Excerpt from Kofu City History, Historical Documents, Vol. 6, “About the Instructions for Building New Houses in Kofu City” (Kofu Newspaper, 1876) “If houses are built so close together that they are adjacent to each other, they may obstruct air circulation and cause health problems, or they may burn down in similar situations. Please be sure to leave some open space on the left, right, front and rear of the houses, and plant trees, etc., to keep them healthy and prevent fires, and do not build next to them as in the past.” May 8, 1918. Shiro Fujimura, Minister of Justice, Yamanashi Prefectural Government.
17. Castles and samurai lands surrounded by outer moats, earthen mounds, castle mountains, rivers, etc. are defined as castle districts.

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IMAGE SOURCES

- Figure 1 Changes in the southern part of Ninomaru
- Table 1 Start and completion of construction of government office facilities in Kofu and Yamagata
- Figure 2 Layout of facilities comprising the civic center
- Figure 3 Location of Kofu’s civic center and the Koshu-Kaido highway