

Alerte patrimoine ICOMOS : Remblai « Takanawa Chikutei » (Japon)

Appel à la conservation intégrale et *in-situ* du plus ancien site ferroviaire du Japon

Communiqué de presse

15 février 2022

En 1872, quatre ans après la fin de l'ère du shogunat Tokugawa et l'établissement d'un gouvernement moderne, la première ligne de chemin de fer du Japon a été construite sur 29 km entre Shinbashi, au centre de Tokyo, et Yokohama, une importante ville portuaire. Cette ligne de chemin de fer est d'une importance capitale non seulement pour le Japon, mais aussi du point de vue de l'histoire mondiale car elle marque le point de départ de la culture ferroviaire japonaise qui influencera plus tard d'autres parties du monde, tout en étant le premier chemin de fer interurbain construit en Asie de l'Est. Aujourd'hui, le train à grande vitesse japonais Shinkansen circule le long du même tracé. Le remblai « Takanawa Chikutei » est le site archéologique de cette ligne ferroviaire originale, qui est restée enfouie et pratiquement intacte en plein centre de la capitale du Japon.

Cependant, un projet de développement urbain à grande échelle (le « Projet de développement de Shinagawa »), qui comprend la construction de plusieurs tours de bureaux, d'appartements et de complexes commerciaux, est actuellement en cours dans la zone qui comprend le remblai historique « Takanawa Chikutei ». En 2019, des fouilles préliminaires ont commencé dans la première moitié de la zone de construction et un tronçon de 1,3 km du tout premier remblai ferroviaire a été miraculeusement découvert dans un état presque entièrement préservé, les fouilles ayant permis de retirer les voies ferrées ultérieures qui avaient été construites sur la ligne originale. La section mise au jour s'est avérée être une partie essentielle de la digue côtière maritime, qui s'étendait sur 2,7 km, construite selon une méthode de construction extrêmement unique combinant les techniques traditionnelles japonaises de murs de pierre et le génie civil britannique avancé. Ainsi, le remblai « Takanawa Chikutei » n'est pas un simple élément du patrimoine ferroviaire. Il s'agit d'un site patrimonial irremplaçable qui témoigne de l'histoire de la renaissance d'Edo, la ville des shoguns, en tant que Tokyo, la capitale moderne du Japon.

La compagnie ferroviaire de l'est du Japon (JR East), l'un des membres du consortium à la tête du projet de développement, a annoncé en avril 2021 sa décision de ne préserver qu'une infime partie du remblai, alors que l'étude archéologique n'était pas encore terminée. En réaction, l'Association japonaise d'archéologie (JAA), suivie par de nombreux autres organismes académiques, a adressé des lettres à JR East et aux organisations et autorités concernées, y compris le gouvernement japonais, pour demander la préservation de la totalité de la portion du remblai qui avait été mis au jour.

Cependant, en date de décembre 2021, le projet initial de développement n'a nullement été reconsidéré à la lumière de ces demandes. De plus, même l'autorité nationale en charge de la protection du patrimoine culturel, l'Agence japonaise des affaires culturelles, est susceptible d'approuver le projet de développement, bien que l'Agence ait reconnu les valeurs culturelles et historiques du remblai « Takanawa Chikutei ».

L'ICOMOS soutient pleinement les positions exprimées par la JAA et l'ICOMOS Japon, considérant également l'importance et la valeur globale du site en termes d'histoire du génie civil, et la rare opportunité qu'il représente de créer de nouvelles valeurs patrimoniales dans la société urbaine en constante transformation de Tokyo en préservant l'ensemble des vestiges découverts. L'ICOMOS s'associe donc aux appels à la préservation et au maintien *in-situ* du remblai « Takanawa Chikutei », et recommande vivement que la société JR East et les autres parties concernées reconsidèrent leur projet de développement et leurs décisions actuelles.

Lire la [lettre](#) complète envoyée par l'ICOMOS aux parties concernées.

Liste des illustrations jointes (Figs. 1 - 4 fournies par ICOMOS Japon) :

- Fig. 1. Carte des années 1870 produite par la ville de Minato.
- Fig. 2. Carte du début du 20^{ème} siècle produite par la ville de Minato.
- Fig. 3. Impression couleur montrant le remblai « Takanawa Chikutei » à l'ère Meiji (Musée d'histoire locale de la ville de Minato).
- Fig. 4. Carte du projet et images montrant la zone du projet d'aménagement actuel et l'étude archéologique préparatoire du remblai « Takanawa Chikutei ».

Annexe 1. Demande émise par l'ICOMOS Japon pour la conservation complète et *in-situ* du remblai « Takanawa Chikutei » (24 mai 2021).

Annexe 2. Déclaration de l'Association archéologique japonaise - JAA (2 mars 2021).

Annexe 3. Lettre de soutien du Président du TICCIH (Comité International pour la Conservation du Patrimoine Industriel) (2 juin 2021).

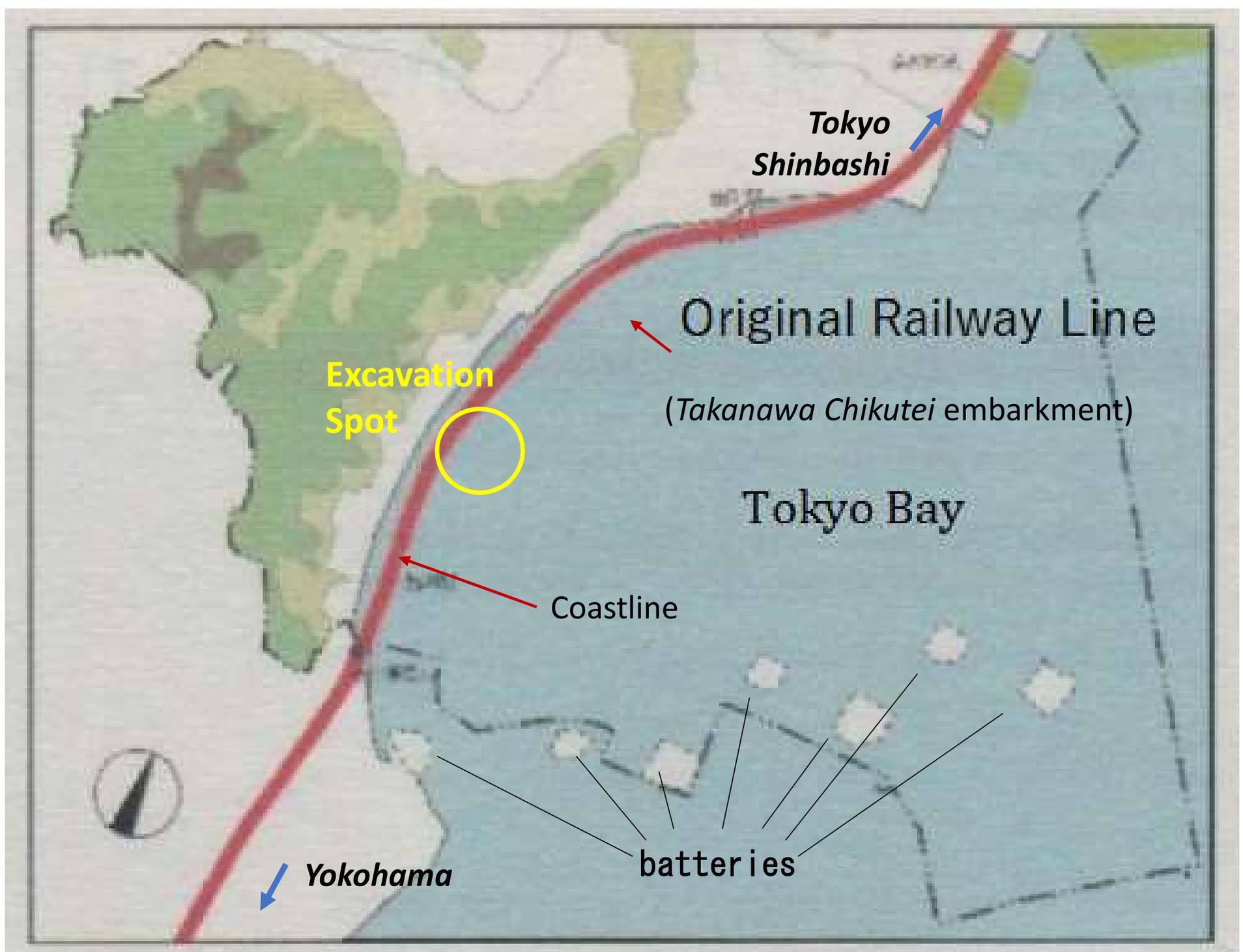
A propos de l'ICOMOS

Le Conseil International des Monuments et des Sites est une organisation internationale non-gouvernementale unique, à but non lucratif qui a pour mission de promouvoir la conservation, la protection, l'utilisation et la mise en valeur du patrimoine culturel à travers le monde. L'ICOMOS se consacre à l'élaboration des doctrines, à l'évolution et la diffusion de la connaissance, à l'amélioration des techniques de conservation et à la sensibilisation à l'importance du patrimoine. L'ICOMOS a construit un solide cadre philosophique, doctrinal et de gestion pour une conservation durable du patrimoine de par le monde. En tant qu'organisation consultative officielle du Comité du patrimoine mondial pour la mise en œuvre de la Convention du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO, l'ICOMOS examine les propositions d'inscription et donne des avis sur l'état de conservation des biens inscrits sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial.

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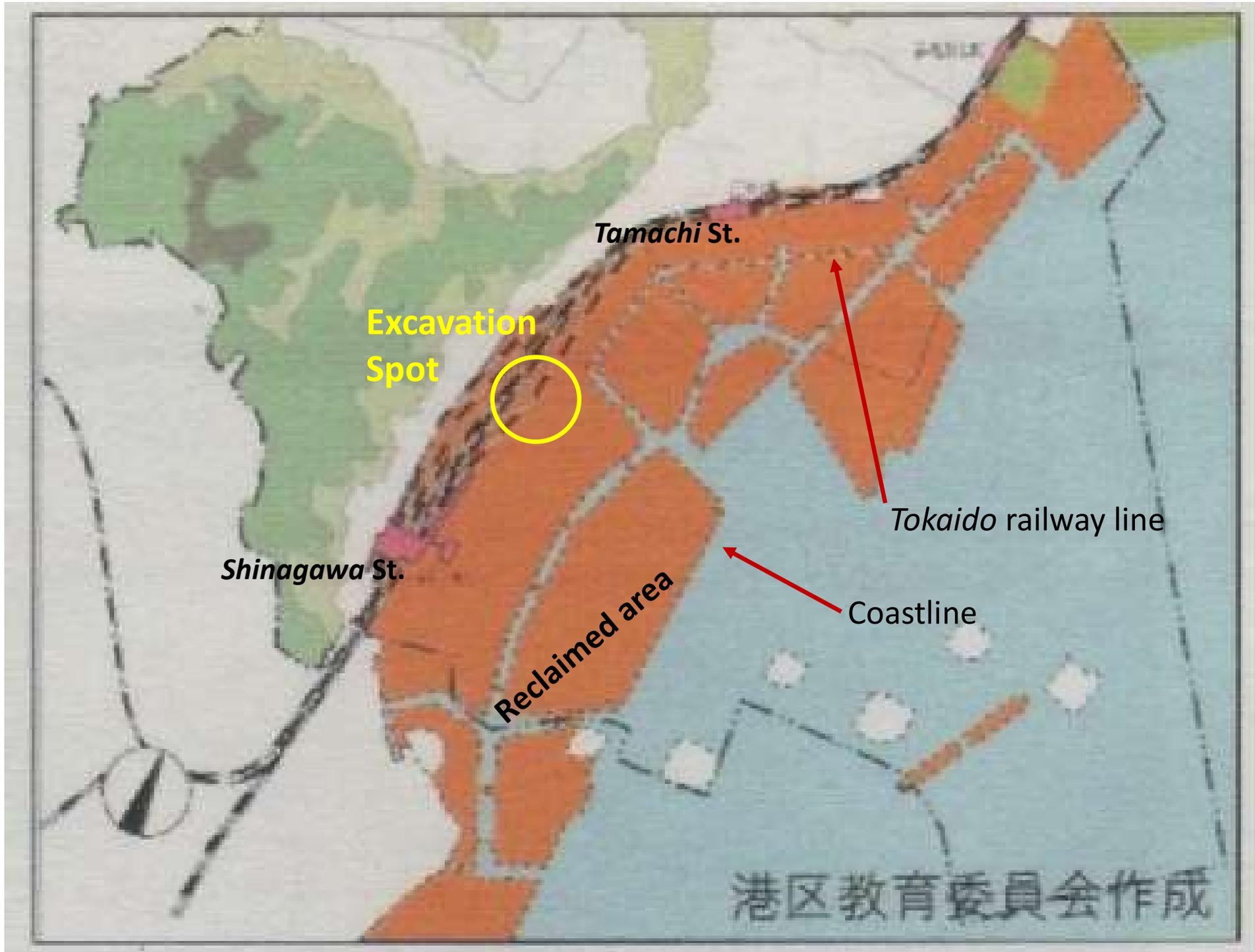
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c. 1 km

Fig.1. 1870s' map produced by Minato Ward



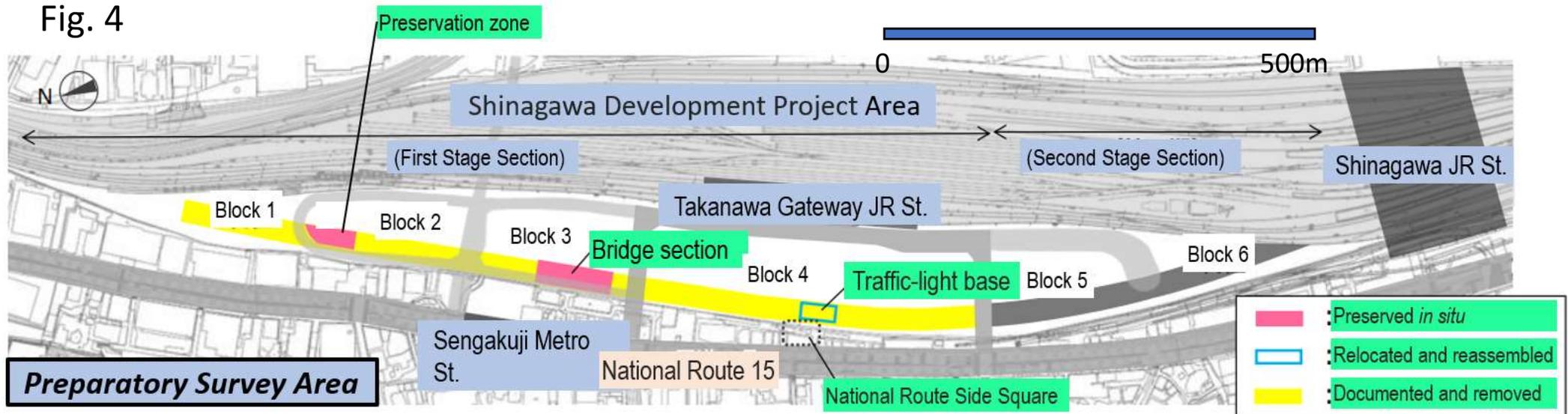
c. 1 km

Fig.2. Early 20th century map produced by Minato Ward



Fig. 3. Color print showing *Takanawa Chikutei* in Meiji Era
(Stored at Minato City Local History Museum)

Fig. 4



Project map showing the area of the development and the preparatory archaeological survey of Takanawa Chikutei



Bridge section in Block 3 (from east), to be partly preserved



Extending embankment with the traffic-light base unearthed in Block 4 (from south), to be removed

24 May 2021

To: Prime Minister of Japan
To: Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport
To: Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
To: Commissioner for Cultural Affairs
To: Governor of Tokyo Metropolitan Government
To: Speaker of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly
To: Superintendent of Education, Tokyo Metropolitan Government
To: Mayor of Minato City
To: Chairman of Minato City Assembly
To: Superintendent of Education, Minato City
To: President, East Japan Railway Company

Request for the full preservation of the Takanawa Chikutei maritime railway embankment, the oldest railway structure in Japan, and to review the development plan around Takanawa Gateway Station

Japan ICOMOS National Committee
Yasuyoshi OKADA (Chairman)

We, ICOMOS Japan, are very concerned and anxious about the plan proposed by the East Japan Railway Company to only partially preserve the Takanawa Chikutei, as many related academic societies have already expressed their similar concerns.

We believe that the discovery of Takanawa Chikutei is the greatest discovery of Japan's modernisation heritage in the 21st century and that it has the potential to be recognised by the international community as a World Cultural Heritage site. We believe that the preservation and utilization of this heritage is an important opportunity to review the Shinagawa Development Project around Takanawa Gateway Station, which was planned based on the value systems of the pre-COVID-19 pandemic era, and to re-imagine future urban development based on new value systems that would emerge after the end of the pandemic.

The Takanawa Chikutei marks the starting point of Japan's railways and the origin of Japan's modernisation. The Takanawa Chikutei is one of the earliest and most important remains of Japan's modern railway system.

Completed in 1872, the railway between Shinbashi and Yokohama, which ran on the Takanawa Chikutei maritime railway embankment, was the result of an international exchange of technology, built under the guidance of foreign engineers hired from Britain, using Japan's pre-existing civil engineering tradition of building castles and the Daiba sea fortresses. It was the first railway in East Asia in world history and was built as an autonomous national project, unlike the 'colonial railways' built by colonial suzerainty. The Takanawa Chikutei, like the "Yokohama Chikutei" in Kanagawa, is an extremely technically difficult civil engineering structure built over the sea, and it is surprising that almost half of its original length of 2.7 km, 1.3 km, has been preserved intact, making it a truly rare and valuable structure. The excavation of the masonry abutments of two railway bridges has transformed their images, which we had only seen in Nishiki-e woodcut prints, into reality. All the members of ICOMOS Japan who visited the site were convinced that it had a sufficient potential to be recognised as a World Heritage Site.

The reviewing of the development project by fully incorporating the rare cultural heritage of the Takanawa Chikutei will be an urban development project of extremely high historical value and truly rare in the world. We strongly believe that this will be a highly sophisticated development project that will convey a deep sense of well-being and cultural meaning to all those who live and work here.

ICOMOS Japan is therefore calling for a full and thorough excavation of the valuable remains found here, including the remains yet to be excavated in the adjacent areas, and a review of the development plan for the area around Takanawa Gateway Station, including the valuable remains, to ensure that the Takanawa Chikutei

railway embankment and associated remains are fully and entirely preserved and that a new plan is developed to reflect the changing times and changing value systems. We strongly request the following three points.

1. Global significance and value as a cultural heritage

The first railway in Japan, the Shinbashi-Yokohama line, was also the first railway in East Asia, and it has already been noted that it was not a colonial railway but an autonomous national project. Since its opening in 1872, the basic route of the railway has remained unchanged and there are still many remains of the original railway and related facilities along and around the line. These tracks are also buried beneath today's railway lines, and until recently have served them as the foundation of today's railways. The site of the former Shinbashi railway terminus has been designated as a national historic site and part of the original station building and tracks have been restored.

In addition to the Takanawa Chikutei, the Yokohama Chikutei also existed in Kanagawa Prefecture. A railway line still exists through Kanagawa, which was used for the construction of the embankment. In Yokohama you can also find related facilities, remains and artefacts, such as Takashimadai, from where Kaemon Takashima, the construction supervisor, directed the construction. The remaining brick abutments on the line are still in use today and are of great interest. It is likely that further research will uncover many more related structures and remains.

British engineers were involved in, and heavily involved in, the construction of Japan's first railway, including the Takanawa embankment. In the 'Gaijin' (foreigners') Cemetery in Yokohama, there are the graves of eight engineers and medical doctors, including Edmund Morrell, the Chief Builder, who died without ever having set foot on his native land again. Since its opening in 1872, the basic route of the railway has remained unchanged and there are still many remains of the original railway and related facilities along and around the line. These tracks were also buried beneath today's railway lines, and until recently have served them as their structural foundations. The site of the former Shinbashi railway terminus has been designated as a national historic site and part of the original station building and tracks have been restored.

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British engineers were heavily involved in the construction of Japan's first railways, including the Takanawa embankment. In the Gaijin (meaning "foreigners") Cemetery in Yokohama, there are the graves of eight engineers and doctors, including Edmund Morrell, the Chief Builder, who died without ever setting foot on his native soil again. In 1991, the very East Japan Railway Company, the principal developer of the Shinagawa Development Project, installed a plaque with the names of the eight who died here. The grave of Masaru Inoue, who was responsible for the construction of the railway line between Shinbashi and Yokohama and is known as the "Father of Japanese Railways", is also located in the Tokaiji Cemetery beside the railway line where the Keihin-Tohoku and Yamanote lines separate in Shinagawa Ward.

If the "Railway Trail of the Dawn of Civilisation" could be built, using the Takanawa embankment as its core, together with the first railway heritage trail in Japan between Shinbashi and Yokohama, the brick elevated arch bridge between Hamamatsucho and Tokyo Station, and Tokyo Station, it would be a new meeting place for people who live and work in the city, and a very powerful and important cultural and tourist resource.

The few examples of railway heritage currently on UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage List are limited to regional mountain railways around the world. In comparison, the "Takanawa Chikutei" is an extremely rare example of an urban railway link between Shinbashi and Yokohama, and has the potential to be recognised as a World Cultural Heritage site, as it is a remarkable testimony to the character of Japan's modernisation. In order to achieve this, it is important to preserve the entire Takanawa Chikutei, including the unexcavated parts, and to designate a large area around it as a buffer zone.

2. Significance and value in civil engineering history

The cultural value of the Takanawa embankment has already been pointed out by the relevant academic societies, but during our recent visit to the site, we were able to witness the ingenuity and precision of our

forebears in their quest for technological innovation and the spirit with which they accomplished their projects during the turbulent period of national opening and modernisation.

Why was it necessary to build the railway line on the sea instead of on land, where construction was easier? Why did it have to be built on the sea, a very long distance of 2.7 km? We know from historical records and documents that this was because the army and navy, who occupied the land along the coast, refused to provide the land. Hence the construction of the "Takanawa embankment", which allowed trains to run on the sea. However, this required a technically difficult construction method called underwater construction. It is important to note that Japan possessed such advanced technology at the time. This is the first time that a structure constructed using such advanced technology has been discovered. According to the Society for Industrial Heritage, the Takanawa Chikutei was one of the first maritime railway lines in the world to run on the sea.

In the third year of the Era of Taisho, i.e., 1914, the seaward side of the embankment was reclaimed and the masonry slopes were buried in the ground, thus protecting the masonry surfaces from weathering, and the embankment survived the earthquake and war. However, this required a technically difficult construction technique called underwater construction. It is important to note that Japan possessed such advanced technology at the time. This is the first time that a structure constructed using such advanced technology has been discovered. According to the Society for Industrial Heritage, the Takanawa Chikutei was one of the first railway lines in the world to run on the sea.

The Takanawa Chikutei was one of the first maritime embankments in the history of the world. In 1914, the seaward side of the embankment was reclaimed and the masonry slopes were buried in the ground, thus protecting the masonry surfaces from weathering, and thanks to this, the embankment survived the earthquake and war. We were all impressed by the excellent state of preservation. The Takanawa embankment complex, including the wooden piles, was reclaimed sometime after its construction, thus preserving the authenticity and integrity required of a World Heritage Site.

It is also a miracle that the bridge and the traffic light foundations have been preserved in a form reminiscent of their original state. It is no wonder that the people of the time left so many brocade pictures of these structures, since we who live today are so impressed by them.

Let's take a look at the structure itself.

First of all, you will notice that the slope of the masonry of the embankment is looser than that of a normal embankment built today. This is thought to have been done to lessen the impact of the waves. It is also noteworthy that the bottom of the channel under the bridge, which was built for the passage of fishing boats from the shipyard, is also lined with stones. This is probably to prevent the channel and the foundations of the bridge from being washed out by the ebb and flow of the tide. The stones are hewn and paved, and the bridge abutments in particular are finely paved and finished with a decorative joint.

The bridge abutments, in particular, have been designed with an elaborate fabric pile and a decorative joint. The protrusion of the piles from the seabed may have been to prevent collisions with boats (slope protection). According to the Society for Industrial Heritage, this type of construction has similarities with the construction of the Shinagawa Daiba at the end of the Edo period, and it is known that the earthworkers and masons involved in the construction of the Daiba batteries were also involved in the construction of the embankment. We were deeply impressed by the fact that we were able to see it as it is today, 150 years later.

It is also amazing that the base of Japan's first traffic light has been preserved and found almost intact during excavations. According to the Society for Industrial Heritage, the actual location of the signals, which were recorded to have existed on the embankment, was unknown until now. In addition to the significance and value of the structure, the alignment of the line, the speed of the locomotives and the view from the locomotive drivers can be reconstructed not only by old photographs, but also by the original installation site, the shape of the embankment itself and its continuous length. In this sense, it is a truly precious relic.

As mentioned above, it is possible to make various hypotheses and deductions just by visiting the site, and this reminds us of the continuity and complementarity between traditional Japanese technology and modern Western technology. We look forward to the results of the excavations, and hope that the Takanawa Chikutei, including the wooden piles, will be fully preserved and put to innovative use in a way that will make it an international heritage site.

3. Creating new values - building a vibrant society for the post-Corona era

While the world is suffering from the Corona disaster, a new way of life and a new way of society - the so-called new normal - is being sought in many parts of the world with a view to the after-Corona period. This

means that the values we had before the COVID-19 Pandemic are changing dramatically, and we are becoming increasingly aware of the need for new concepts and methods in economic activities.

In this context, the urban development plans made before the pandemic are facing new challenges and need to be adapted to these novel concepts and plans. New developments need to be conceived with the aim of creating new value, not necessarily in terms of the size of the investment or the total floor area. In particular, in the area where the Takanawa Chikutei, one of Japan's greatest treasures, has been discovered, it is important to respect the historical value of the remains and to incorporate their use into the main concept of the development, with the aim of creating a landmark for cultural tourism. It would be possible to make the Takanawa Chikutei not only a monument for viewing and admiring, but also a place where people could walk directly on the preserved embankment and experience 150 years of history.

In this sense, we can see the Corona disaster as an opportunity to rethink the Shinagawa development project, and to work on an ambitious utilization plan based on the premise of fully preserving the Takanawa embankment, including the wooden piles that stabilize the ground and protect the slope. The current development project involves a plan of six zones of town. Even if the project has been properly reviewed, it may be possible to introduce an evaluation process for each stage of construction, rather than constructing them all at once, and to proceed with a careful re-examination.

The current project, as a whole, was planned before the Corona disaster, with a large office component, and before the discovery of the Takanawa Chikutei, a national and world treasure. The depreciation period for a high-rise building is 50 to 100 years at most, and the value of the asset decreases year by year. In contrast, the Takanawa Chikutei, which is worthy of designation as a national historic site, will increase in heritage value as it ages, and can be used to pursue sustainable value in line with the SDGs goals. This is the way to make the most of the Takanawa embankment, which has advantages in terms of LCC (Life Cycle Cost) and LCM (Life Cycle Management), and is the way to realize the World Heritage Site, which is attracting international attention.

The Takanawa Chikutei embankment, including the wooden piles of the railway remains, will contribute to the improvement of railway culture and will be a great opportunity to raise the cultural profile of East Japan Railway Company. As a result, the area around Takanawa Gateway Station will become a suitable gateway to the historical city of Tokyo for visitors from overseas during the After-Corona period, and walking on and/or along the Takanawa Chikutei railway embankment will become a major purpose of cultural tourism in Japan. It will be a new source of pride for the Japanese people and a long-lasting cultural tourism resource for Japan.

The discovery of the Takanawa embankment, including the wooden piles, is of great importance to the history of East Japan Railway Company. According to some media reports, the dismantling and recording of the Takanawa embankment has already started, but we would like to urge you to take a step back and take a bold step towards the full preservation and active use of the Takanawa embankment, including the wooden piles. We strongly hope that you will take up the challenge to fully preserve and actively utilize the Takanawa Chikutei, including the wooden piles, and not just relocate and preserve it.

We sincerely hope that East Japan Railway Company and other concerned parties will make efforts and make wise decisions to pass on the precious history of the railway, including from the viewpoint of evaluation 100 years later.

We believe that the discovery of the Takanawa Chikutei and the review of the development plan for its preservation and use are extremely important and valuable from the viewpoints of international perspective, cultural history, and attractive urban development. We at Japan ICOMOS are determined to make full use of our expertise in the conservation and use of cultural heritage and town planning, and to work together with you to tackle this issue of national and international implications and concern in a sustained and proactive manner.

March 2, 2021

Japanese Archaeological Association statement calling for the full preservation of the Takanawa-Chikutei (maritime railway track embankment) site

In 1872, Japan's first railway line was built between Shinbashi and Yokohama. This was the beginning of Japan's world-famous railway culture. It was literary the first major project in the modernisation of Japan, known as the "Bun'mei-kaika (opening of civilisation)". As the first railway in East Asia, it was also of immense significance from a world-historical perspective and for the understanding of the modernisation of a nation on the eastern fringe of the expanding colonisation by the West.

The railway embankment¹⁾ was discovered during preliminary excavations for the 'Shinagawa Development Project', comprising the construction of several high-rise office-apartment-shopping complex buildings, which is currently underway in the Takanawa area of Minato Ward, Tokyo. The 2.7 km section of the railway embankment, parallel to the old Tokaido highway connecting Edo, the Tokugawa Shogunate capital and Kyoto, the imperial capital, was built using the extremely unique method of maritime embankment construction, combining traditional Japanese techniques with advanced British civil engineering. Land reclamation has extended the former coastline out to sea and buried the embankment beneath the surface. However, until 2019, the Tokaido, Keihin-Tohoku and Yamate line services of the East Japan Railway Company ("JR East") had run on it for a century and a half.

The railway embankment is the historical embodiment of Japan's railway development. This time, a 1.3 km stretch of the embankment from the northern to the southern end of the proposed project site was miraculously discovered in almost its original state. JR East, which is responsible for the redevelopment of the site, has announced that it will only preserve a tiny fraction of the embankment and relocate it. In response, the Japanese Archaeological Association ("JAA") submitted a letter of request to JR East and other relevant organisations and public bodies including the government of Japan and other relevant municipal governments to preserve the entire stretch of the excavated embankment, as the partial preservation and relocation would fundamentally undermine its significance and historical values. However, as far as we can see from their response dated 15 February, they have not changed their original policy. The Takanawa Chikutei railway embankment site is an extremely rare site in world history, showing the process of the modernisation of a nation on the eastern fringe of the expanding colonisation by the West, that was carried out by combining imported technologies and indigenous building techniques.

JR East should recognise the importance of this site, the birthplace of its company, and as the first railway site in East Asia. It has a responsibility to the world to preserve it in its entirety. As the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, who visited the site on 16 February, stated that there should be no conflict between the development of the site and the preservation of the embankment, we believe that a solution can be found by combining modern technology and wisdom. The embankment, without doubt, has the historical value worthy of being designated as the National Special Historic Site. The embankment is a direct continuation of the old Shinbashi railway station, the designated national historic site. The embankment site should be integrated into the core of Takanawa's new townscape, with the idea of combining the two as a single modernisation heritage site in the future. By doing so, Takanawa will become a new and attractive place for everyone to visit, just like the Meiji era Ukiyoe paintings depicting a train running on the embankment. We believe that to preserve this site is our duty to our predecessors of the Meiji era, who worked for the modernisation of a newly-born nationstate, and to the people of the future. The Japanese Archaeological Association urges the East Japan Railway Company (JR East) and other related organisations to work together to preserve this irreplaceable historical treasure for future generations, and we will spare no effort to cooperate in this effort.

Hideto TSUJI
President of the Japanese Archaeological Association

Notes 1) The Takanawa-Chikutei railway embankment and its excavated sections in photographs (Photographs and Caption sentences from a pamphlet by Minato Ward Board of Education distributed on 4 April 2021)

(photo 1) The Chikutei as it looked c. 1907 (40th Year of the Era of Meiji)

The Takanawa-Chikutei railway embankment is a railway structure that was built in 1872 to lay tracks across the sea when Japan's first railway was constructed. In 1869, the Meiji government decided to build a 29km railway connecting the capital Tokyo (former Edo) with the port city of Yokohama. However, the Ministry of War refused to hand over the land around Takanawa to the railway authorities on the grounds that it was needed for national defence, so it was decided to build a 2.7km section from Honshiba to Shinagawa Station via the Takanawa coast and run trains on the embankment. The construction of the embankment was carried out under the supervision of the British engineer Edmund Morrell, and was carried out by the Ministry of Civil Affairs' Railway Department and later by the Ministry of Works' Railway Department. The construction was difficult, as the earth and sand that had once been reclaimed was washed away by the waves and the embankment collapsed, and it was not completed until September 1872, just before the official opening.

(photo 2) View towards Shinagawa from the northern part of the site. Takanawa Gateway Station is on the left. You can see the linear extension of the well-preserved Chikutei embankment and wooden pile lines in front.

(photo 3) The protrusion of what appears to be a signal box.

The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage



To:

The Honorable Yoshihide Suga, Prime Minister of Japan
The Honorable Kazuyoshi Akaba, Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport
The Honorable Koichi Hagiuda, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
Mr Shun'ichi Tokura, Commissioner for Cultural Affairs
Ms Yuriko Koike, Governor of Tokyo Metropolitan Government
Mr Ryoich Ishikawa, Speaker of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly
Mr Yuji Fujita, Superintendent of Education, Tokyo Metropolitan Government
Mr Masaaki Takei, Mayor of Minato Ward
Mr Toyoji Mishima, Chairman of Minato Ward Assembly
Mr Mikio Urata, Superintendent of Education, Minato Ward
Mr Yuji Fukasawa, President, East Japan Railway Company

2 June 2021

The Takanawa Chikutei Railway Embankment

To whom it may concern,

I write to you today as the President of *The International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage* (TICCIH), the primary international organisation concerned with industrial heritage. Among our many activities, we support UNESCO's advisors, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and its work for the World Heritage Committee. Our expertise, advice and extensive global network has for many years embraced the world's most significant historic engineering structures, and we have in the recent past actively supported the Tomioka and Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution and Sado Island World Heritage nominations.

TICCIH is therefore aware both of the great work being done in Japan to promote and preserve industrial heritage, and of the wider significance of Japan's industrial history, not least its adoption and development of the railway. Indeed, in Scotland (where I am based) we are especially familiar with the engineer Kaichi Watanabe, who returned from working on the Forth Bridge (our latest World Heritage site) in 1888 and then played a major role in developing Japan's railways, and electrification in particular.

With this in mind, we were excited to hear about the discovery of a section of original 1872 railway embankment exposed recently by the 'Shinagawa Development Project' in Minato Ward. TICCIH agrees with ICOMOS Japan and the Japanese Archaeological Association (JAA) that this railway embankment 'embodies Japan's railway development', and it is extraordinary that 1.3km of the original embankment has been discovered in its original state.

We have been informed that at present, JR East plans to preserve and possibly relocate only a very small stretch of the exposed embankment. We believe this approach is very disappointing, especially because the embankment represents the birthplace of JR East and is a direct continuation of the old Shinbashi railway station, itself a national historic site. We understand that there is an opportunity to integrate the embankment into the core of Takanawa's new townscape, capturing the two components as a single site representing modernization heritage, building on the recognition afforded the industrial achievements of the Meiji era that was represented by the successful World Heritage inscription of 2015.

On a personal note, and as a regular visitor to Japan, I have personally witnessed how popular railway heritage is across the country. I therefore believe an ambitious project to preserve the Takanawa Chikutei Railway Embankment would generate more support and interest than JR East anticipates and would create a major heritage asset for the future. TICCIH is therefore delighted to be lend its support to ICOMOS Japan and the JAA in its campaign to preserve the entire stretch of the excavated Embankment.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Miles Oglethorpe', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr Miles Oglethorpe
TICCIH President

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