Mt. Fuji (Fujisan, 富士山), the highest mountain in Japan (3,776 m.), straddles the border of modern Yamanashi and Shizuoka prefectures, but in Ancient Japan it belonged to Suruga province (駿河国), which corresponds to the central part of present-day Shizuoka prefecture. This majestically beautiful mountain, which is a perfectly shaped conical volcano, has become a symbol of modern Japan.

Nowadays we know many things about Mt. Fuji, such as the history of its worship as the body of a Shintō deity, its historical eruptions, its vegetation and natural habitat, the history of its climbing, etc. For the purposes of this article, the most important information is that Mt. Fuji is nowadays a dormant volcano.
The last historically recorded eruption occurred in 1707 AD, but before this date, it was quite active. The first historically attested eruption was on the sixth day of the seventh lunar month of the first year of Ten’ō (天應) (July 31, 781 AD). It is recorded in the Shoku Nihongi that on this day Mt. Fuji rained ash, and where the ash had fallen, all leaves withered (SnG 36.204). Between 781 and 1707 AD Mt. Fuji erupted at least ten times (or, this is what historical sources tell us). So the last four hundred years have been very peaceful, but Mt. Fuji is far from being dead, and it can awake any time.

What we do not know, however, is the etymology of its name, and it appears that it was already obscure in the early Heian period. This gave rise to endless folk etymologies through the subsequent ages. The first of these folk etymologies can be found in the closing lines of the late ninth or early tenth century text Taketori monogatari (竹取物語):

かのたてまつるふしのくすりに又つほくして御つかひににたまはす
勅使にはつきのいはかさといふ人をめしてするかの國にあなる山の
いただきにもてつくへきよし仰給みねにてすへきやうをしぇさ給
御ふみふしの葉つばならへて火をつけてもやすへきおほせ給そのよ
しろうけたまはりてつはものともあたまくして山へのぼりけるよりま
むそのやまをふしのやまとは名つけけるそのけふりいまだ雲のなか
へたちのほるとそいひたへたたる

[The emperor] placed the immortality elixir that she gave him in a jar, and gave [it] to the imperial messenger. [He] summoned a man called Tuki-no Ifakasa as an imperial messenger. [The emperor] gave the command that [Tuki-no Ifakasa] must bring [this jar] to the summit of a mountain that, as they say, was in Suruga province. [The emperor] explained [to Tuki-no Ifakasa] what [he] must do at the summit. [Namely, the emperor] gave the command that the immortality elixir and the letter must be put on fire and burnt together. Upon hearing that command, [Tuki-no Ifakasa], leading many soldiers, ascended to the mountain. From this time on, [the people] called that mountain the Mountain of Immortality. [The people] continue to tell a story that the smoke [from that fire] is still rising to the clouds.

TM 66.15–67.5

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2 The Taketori monogatari text is cited according to Sakakura Atsuyoshi's edition (1957: 3–78).