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EXCAVATIONS ON  
13TH AND 14TH BLOCKS OF FIRST WARD,  
ON EIGHTH STREET, THE WESTERN SECTOR,  
HEIJŌ CAPITAL, NARA

ENGLISH SUMMARY

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—1989—

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## ENGLISH SUMMARY

This report summarizes the achievements of excavations carried out by the Yamato-Kōriyama Municipal Board of Education in 1984 and by the Nara National Cultural Properties Research Institute from 1985 to 1986. The excavations took place in Kujō-chō, Yamato-Kōriyama City, Nara Prefecture prior to the remodeling of a garbage processing plant in the northern part of the city. The excavated areas, which extend for approximately 7,400 square meters, are historically designated as the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Tsubo 坪 [Blocks] of the First Bō 坊 [Ward] on the Hachijō Ōji 八条大路 [Eighth Major-Street] in the Ukyō 右京 [Western Sector] of the Heijō 平城 Capital [in use 710–784, A.D.] (see Fig. 1). In the vicinity of the site are the Nishi Ichi 西市 [West Market] and the Rajō Mon 羅城門 [South Central Gate] (see Fig. 2). These excavations confirmed long-held expectations of the existence of state-sponsored workshops for metallurgy and the production of lacquer ware during the Nara Period [710–794].

### Major Excavated Features

Excavations have uncovered evidence of numerous structures, fences, alleys, ditches, wells, and pits. Most of these are dated to the Nara Period, which is divided into four phases in this volume: Phase I (early half of the Early Nara Period), Phase II (later half of the Early Nara Period), Phase III (early half of the Late Nara Period), and Phase IV (later half of the Late Nara Period.)

#### i) Features of the Phases I and II (Early Nara Period)

Metal work and lacquer ware workshops appear to be confined largely to the Fourteenth Block, while what appears to be the remains of governmental office complex (*kanga* 官衙) occupies the Thirteenth Block.

The northern half of the Fourteenth Block is divided into two clusters of features by a fence. Each cluster, one in the north and the other in the south, consists of a well, structures and a smelting furnace. The smelting furnaces are not intact; most of the features have been destroyed by pits filled with metal slag, and discarded metallurgical tools such as crucibles and tuyeres. We did, however, discover fragments of the furnace wall and the wall of a pit baked by excessive heat. The great quantity of charred material associated with these features is indicative of metal production.

In the southern half, we discovered a three-room building with a veranda (*hisashi* 庇), which we suspect was a central part of this workshop complex. Surrounding this building were numerous structures. Some of these structures may have functioned as storehouses, since they are supported by many more pillars than would typically be found in residential structures, and this would seem to be consistent with a reinforced superstructure.

Unlike the case of the metal workshop, none of the features in the Fourteenth Block can be directly linked to lacquer ware production. We, nonetheless, suspect that such features exist to the east of the present limits of the excavation,

because artifacts related to lacquer ware are concentrated along the eastern edge of the excavation.

In the Thirteenth Block, we have discovered a cluster of architectural remains which presumably pertain to a governmental office complex. The center of this building complex consists of two major structures, the Main Hall and Front Hall, wells, storehouses, and open areas. We assume that this complex occupied one or one-half *chō* 町<sup>1</sup>. It is noteworthy that the whole building complex faces north towards the workshops of the Fourteenth Block, rather than south which would be the standard orientation. This leads us to suspect that the complex was closely linked to the workshops, reinforcing the impression of state sponsorship.

Other important discoveries include features containing ritually buried pottery. Some pottery contained ritual objects used for ground-breaking ceremonies in connection with construction of some structures.

#### ii) Features of the Phases III and IV (Late Nara Period)

In the Late Nara Period, the whole character of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Blocks changes, and these Blocks become purely residential.

The Thirteenth Block is divided into the eastern and western sectors by a fenced alley. The northern half of the western sector consists of two residences within an area that corresponds to one sixteenth of a block. These residences are nearly square in plan, which is very unusual. The southern half of the western sector consists of four residences in the area of one thirty-second of a block. Each residence is composed of two to three buildings and a well.

In the Fourteenth Block, the wall which formerly marked the southern boundary of the Block was torn down and replaced by a fence during the Late Nara Period. Similarly, the wall dividing this Block into the eastern and western sectors became an alley. The eastern sector was divided into four parcels of which only one thirty-second of a block was allotted for residences and two parcels of one sixteenth block residential allotments. The alley only extends to the end of northernmost residential allotments, rather than to the northern end of this Block, suggesting that the sole purpose of this alley was to provide egress for the inhabitants. As was the case of the Thirteenth Block, these one sixteenth block residences are square in plan. While such residences generally consist of one Main Hall, a well, and a store house, one of the residences in this Block has two Main Hall-structures.

In addition to the remains of residences, we have discovered several features containing ritually buried pottery in the Thirteenth and the southern half of the Fourteenth Block. Some pottery contains female afterbirth, presumably wishing new-born babies a good health. These features are dated to the Late Nara Period when these Blocks were turned into residential districts.

#### Artifacts Discovered at the Site

The metallurgical tools which have been discovered in the Fourteenth Block are particularly noteworthy for several reasons. The crucibles are of interest because most of them have been refashioned from regular Haji wares. In addi-

<sup>1</sup> A unit of area; in the Heijō Capital, one *chō* equals one Tsubo or Block and is roughly 16,900 square meters in area; hereafter referred to as a "block".

tion, the crucibles from the Thirteenth Block are small. This fact, taken together with the discovery of unfinished metal belt fittings, suggests that this workshop specialized in the production of small items. A rare form of L-shaped tuyeres (Figs. 90 and 91) is also worthy of note.

Furthermore, a well at the southern end of the Thirteenth Block dated to the Late Nara Period yielded numerous metallurgical tools, such as iron tongs, iron dippers, as well as large whetstones, unfinished copper products and a great quantity of charred material. Although we could not detect clear features of a metal workshop, we suspect that such features exist to the south of our excavated areas.

The artifacts associated with the lacquer ware industry include discarded lacquer containers and sheets of paper soaked in lacquer. The lacquer containers are Sue ware, which have been broken up to extract the half-solidified lacquer inside, indicating intensive use of lacquer. Since some of the lacquer containers were made outside of the Kinki region, we suspect that lacquer was entering the Capital from several different sources. In addition, we have discovered a bunch of grass fibers used for the stopper of a container and paper used for the lid of a container. All of these strongly indicate the presence of a lacquer craft workshop. Some of the paper which has been soaked and preserved in lacquer consists of recycled sutras, census registrations, and record of taxpayers' registrations, clearly demonstrating active governmental involvement in the industry.

Other artifacts which suggest the nature of this site include: wooden tablets with inscriptions, one of which has the character Hata (秦 [family name]); a crown made of lacquered cloth (*shissha kan* 漆沙冠), *fuhon* 富本 coins, bronze mirror decorated with marine mammals and grape vine (*kaijū budō kyō* 海獸葡萄鏡), roof tiles glazed in three colors, ceramic ink stones with sheephead decoration, ceramics imported from Silla, Korea (668-935), pottery with inscriptions in ink.

### Nature of the Site

As was mentioned previously, the site covers the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Blocks of the First Ward on the Eighth Street, Western Sector of the Heijō Capital. It is evident that metal and lacquer ware workshops occupied the Thirteenth Block, and a cluster of buildings presumed to be a governmental office complex were located in the Fourteenth Block in the Early Nara Period. In the late Nara Period, these two Blocks were turned into residential districts.

As we have noted, there is good reason to believe that the workshops were under direct governmental control. Historical records suggest that the workshops belonged to the organizations such as Imono no Tsukasa [典鑄司 Bureau of Metal Production] and Nuribe no Tsukasa [漆部司 Bureau of Lacquer Work] under the Ōkura Shō [Ministry of Finance]. If this is indeed the case, the cluster of buildings in the Fourteenth Block are likely to be an administrative facility for these workshops.

For the residential districts in the Late Nara Period, we have distinguished two classes of allotments: one sixteenth of a block and one thirty-second. These Fourteenth and Thirteenth Blocks are unique in that the one sixteenth parcels are square in plan, rather than the usual horizontal rectangle. Another significant discovery is the existence of one thirty-second block parcels, which are

described in historical sources, but which had not been confirmed until the recent discovery at the Tenth Block, Third Ward on Ninth Street, the Eastern Sector of the Capital. These two discoveries push back the beginning dates of the *shigyō hachimon* [四行八門] system<sup>1</sup> (see Fig. 95) to the Late Nara Period. If indeed this is the case, the square parcel in the area of one sixteenth of a block may represent two units of residential allotments under this system rather than the usual allotment system in effect during the Nara Period.

In general, people of the lower classes were given smaller parcels of land to the out of the Fifth Major Street, farther from the Heijō Palace. This standard practice may not hold true for the case of residences in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Blocks. One factor is its close proximity to the West Market, which was one of two national redistribution and trade centers. Another factor is the discovery of metallurgical artifacts dated to the Late Nara Period. Therefore, future research should help to resolve such questions on the nature of these residences.

In conclusion, the major gain of this series of projects is that we have for the first time grasped the nature of government controlled workshops in the Capital. While the nature of the Late Nara Period features still remain subject to further discussion, this report, nonetheless, provides invaluable data for understanding residences during the Late Nara Period.

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<sup>1</sup> Literally, “four columns and eight gates system”; the land allotment system common in the Heian Capital; a square piece of land is divided into four columns, and each column is further divided into eight rows, thereby creating thirty-two parcels of land.