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**ASUKA AND FUJIWARA PALACE SITES  
EXCAVATION REPORT V**

INVESTIGATION OF THE EAST THIRD WARD ON SIXTH STREET  
OF THE FUJIWARA CAPITAL SITE

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NARA NATIONAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
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### CONTENTS

<b>Chapter I Introduction</b>	1
1. Background	1
A. The past and the present of Fujiwara Capital	1
B. The urban planning <i>Jōbō</i> of Fujiwara Capital	3
2. Process of investigation	6
3. Organization of investigation	9
4. Publication of the report	9
<b>Chapter II Outline of excavation</b>	12
1. Excavation areas	12
A. Location and its setting	12
B. Survey and division of precincts	19
2. Summary of excavations	22
A. 45th excavation	22
B. 46th excavation	22
C. 47th excavation	23
D. 50th excavation	24
E. 53rd excavation	24
F. 133-7th and 13th excavations	25
G. Related investigations	25
3. Excavation log (excerpt)	26
A. 45th excavation	26
B. 46th excavation	29
C. 47th excavation	35
D. 50th excavation	39
E. 53rd excavation	43
F. 133-7th excavation	45
G. 133-13th excavation	45

<b>Chapter III</b>	<b>Archaeological Site</b>	46
1.	Geographical setting and topography	46
2.	Archaeological features	48
	A. Features of Fujiwara period	49
	B. Features of Nara period	71
	C. Features of the period before Fujiwara Capital	74
	D. Features from Heian to the Middle Ages	83
<b>Chapter IV</b>	<b>Artifacts</b>	96
1.	Roof tiles	96
	A. Eaves tiles	96
	B. Round and flat tiles	114
	C. Constructional and stamped writing tiles	122
	D. Buddha images in relief on tiles ( <i>Senbutsu</i> )	176
2.	Pottery and earthen wares	180
	A. Pottery recovered from east-west great ditch SD4130 and well SE4740	181
	B. Pottery recovered from street gullies and other ditches	206
	C. Pottery recovered from wells and pits	218
	D. Pottery recovered from buildings and walls	228
	E. Pottery before Fujiwara Capital and during the Middle Ages	233
	F. Stoneware ink slab ( <i>tōken</i> ) and special earthen wares	242
	G. Pottery with inscriptions and stamps	253
	H. Pottery with inscriptions associated with <i>Kaguyama</i> and its character style	256
3.	Wooden objects	261
	A. Wooden objects recovered from great ditch east-west SD4130	261
	B. Wooden objects recovered from well SE4740	284
	C. Wooden objects recovered from other features and deposits	292
	D. Bent wood boxes recovered from wells during the Middle age	297
	E. Architecture members and frames of the well	300
4.	Metal objects and coins	313
	A. Metal objects	313
	B. Coins	318
5.	Stone objects, earthen wares associated with metallurgy and stone tools	321
	A. Stone objects and earthen wares associated with metallurgy	321
	B. Stone tools	328
6.	Wooden tablets with inscription ( <i>mokkan</i> )	329

<b>Chapter V Scientific Analysis</b> .....	332
1. Faunal remains .....	332
2. Floral remains .....	333
A. Result from the analysis .....	333
B. Conclusion .....	334
3. Investigation on tree species of wooden objects .....	338
4. Analysis on Metal objects, coins and Buddha images in relief on tiles (Senbutsu) .....	342
<b>Chapter VI General Overview</b> .....	356
1. Archaeological features .....	356
A. Transition of the features .....	356
B. Government offices ( <i>kanga</i> ) in Fujiwara Capital .....	370
2. Pottery .....	379
A. Consideration of pottery recovered from SD4130 and SE4740 .....	379
B. Characteristics of the excavation site: A view from the stoneware ink slab ( <i>tōken</i> ) .....	385
C. Pottery of Kofun period .....	389
3. Roof tiles and bricks .....	393
4. Characteristics of the site: A view from historical documents .....	400
A. <i>Kaguyama Shōsō</i> (Kaguyama official warehouse) .....	400
B. Kaguyama Palace .....	406
C. <i>Sakyōshiki</i> (East Capital Administrative Office) .....	409
5. Excavation of Fujiwara Capital .....	418
A. Land allocation of Fujiwara Capital .....	418
B. About Southwest Block, West First Ward on Seventh Street .....	437
C. Actual condition of Fujiwara Capital .....	444
6. Conclusion .....	452
A. Archaeological features .....	452
B. Artifacts .....	453
C. Characteristics of the site .....	454



## Appendix

Construction of Office Buildings and Storages for the Department of Imperial Palace Sites Investigations (Asuka/Fujiwara), Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties .....	456
1. Decision of the construction site .....	456
2. Soil survey .....	456
3. Layout and construction .....	457
A. Process of construction .....	457
B. Basic policy of construction and structure .....	458
C. Outlines of the buildings .....	459
4. Reference Room for Fujiwara Palace Site and outside displays for the archaeological features .....	460
Figures .....	463
Tables .....	473
English summary .....	495
Chinese summary .....	525
Korean summary .....	543
Transcriptions of <i>mokkan</i> inscriptions .....	The end of this book

## FIGURES

Fig.

1. Comparison between Fujiwara and Nara Capitals ..... 4
2. The area of Greater Fujiwara Capital and the location of investigation ..... 5
3. Sites around Fujiwara Capital ..... 16
4. Wooden tablet with inscription (*mokkan*) recovered from 54-1st excavation ..... 17
5. Location of the investigation of East Third Ward on Sixth Street ..... 18
6. Excavation site and its divisions ..... 20
7. 45th excavation : the areas of I, III, and the Center ..... 26
8. Research scene (45th excavation) ..... 27
9. Research scene (SE4031) ..... 27
10. 45th excavation: the area of II (western part) and IV ..... 28
11. 45th excavation: the areas of II (eastern part) ..... 29
12. 46th excavation area ..... 30
13. Research scene (46th excavation) ..... 31
14. Research scene (46th excavation) ..... 31
15. Public site viewing (46th excavation) ..... 32
16. Public site viewing (46th excavation) ..... 32
17. Orientation points making (46th excavation) ..... 33
18. Aerial scene (46th excavation) ..... 33
19. Research scene (SE4468) ..... 34
20. Research scene (SE4469) ..... 34
21. 47th excavation area ..... 35
22. Scene of photographing (47th excavation) ..... 36
23. Research scene (47th excavation) ..... 36
24. Orientation points making (47th excavation) ..... 37
25. Public site viewing (47th excavation) ..... 37

Fig.

26. Scene of scale drawing of cross section (47th excavation) ..... 38
27. Research scene (SE4740) ..... 38
28. 50th excavation area (western part) ..... 39
29. Research scene (50th excavation) ..... 40
30. Research scene (50th excavation) ..... 40
31. Visit of Commissioner of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (50th excavation) ..... 41
32. 50th excavation area (eastern part) ..... 41
33. Public site viewing (50th excavation) ..... 42
34. Public site viewing (50th excavation) ..... 42
35. Research scene (SD4143) ..... 43
36. 53rd excavation area ..... 43
37. Research scene (SE5940) ..... 44
38. Research scene (53rd excavation) ..... 44
39. 133-7th and 13th excavation areas ..... 45
40. Topographic map in the area of East Third Ward on Sixth Street ..... 46
41. Excavation site and topography in the area ..... 47
42. Cross section of SD4139 and 4311 ..... 49
43. Cross section of SD4143 ..... 51
44. Plan and cross section of SE10175 ..... 54
45. Excavated situation about roof tiles of SD4255 ..... 55
46. Posthole's plan and cross section of SA4283 and 4990 ..... 56
47. Posthole's plan and cross section of SA4286 ..... 57
48. Posthole's plan and cross section of SB4726 and SA4730 ..... 58
49. Posthole's plan and cross section of SB5000 and 4332 ..... 60
50. Posthole's plan and cross section of SB4340 and 4330 ..... 62

Fig.

51. Plan and cross section of SK4325 and SE4335	64
52. Cross section of SE4740	65
53. Summary for Excavated situation of <i>Wadō Kaichin</i> coins at SE4740	65
54. Plan and cross section of SE4740	66
55. Cross section of SD4130	67
56. Plan view of SD4131, SX4133 and 4134	69
57. Plan and cross section of SE5950	70
58. Posthole's plan and cross section of SB5050	74
59. Plan and cross section of SJ4260	76
60. Estimated basin area of NR4225 and NR4226 and surrounding pit dwellings	77
61. Plan and cross section of SI4231 and 4232	79
62. Plan and cross section of SI4233	80
63. Plan and cross section of SI4234 and 4235	81
64. Plan and cross section of SI4236	82
65. Plan and cross section of SE4466, 4467 and 4468	87
66. Plan and cross section of SE4474	89
67. Posthole's plan and cross section of SB4405	89
68. Cross section of SD4745, 4755 and 4743	91
69. Plan and cross section of SE5940	93
70. Cross section of SK5015	95
71. Round eave tiles Type 1A	97
72. Round eave tiles Type 1B	99
73. Round eave tiles Types 2-5E	101
74. Round eave tiles Types 5F-7	103
75. Round eave tiles Type 8	104
76. Flat eave tiles Type 1A	106

Fig.

77. Flat eave tiles Type 1B	107
78. Flat eave tiles Type 2	109
79. Flat eave tiles Types 3-6	111
80. Flat eave tiles Types 7-9	113
81. Filler tile	115
82. Ridge tiles and clay drainage pipe	116
83. Angle and flat tile	117
84. Tiles, roof tile with stamped characters and stoneware disks	119
85. Crowning tiles of Middle Age	121
86. Filler tiles of Middle Age and ridge tiles	123
87. Enel eave tiles of Middle Age roof tiles with stamped characters and unknown constructional tiles	124
88. Round tiles Group I, B1-D1	126
89. Round tile Group I, D2	127
90. Four variations of step part of round tile Group II	128
91. Type A of step part of round tile	129
92. Type B of step part of round tile	130
93. Type C of step part of round tile	131
94. Type D of step part of round tile	133
95. Round tiles Group III, D	134
96. Flat tiles Group I, A	137
97. Flat tiles Group I, B (1)	139
98. Flat tiles Group I, B (2)	141
99. Flat tiles Group I, B (3)	143
100. Flat tiles Group I, B (4)	145
101. Flat tile Group I, C (1)	146
102. Flat tiles Group I, C (2)	147
103. Flat tiles Group I, C (3)	149
104. Flat tiles Group I, C (4)	151
105. Flat tiles Group I, D (1)	153
106. Flat tiles Group I, D (2)	154

Fig.

107. Flat tiles Group I, E .....	155
108. Flat tile Group II (1) .....	157
109. Flat tiles Group II (2) .....	158
110. Flat tiles Group II (3) .....	159
111. Flat tile Group II (4) .....	160
112. Flat tile Group II (5) .....	161
113. Flat tile Group II (6) .....	162
114. Flat tiles Group II (7) .....	163
115. Flat tiles Group II (8) .....	165
116. Flat tiles Group III .....	166
117. Round tiles of Middle Age Group i (1) .....	168
118. Round tiles of Middle Age Group i (2) .....	169
119. Patterns of hanging straps on concave, round tile of Middle Age Group i .....	170
120. Round tile of Middle age, Group ii (1) .....	171
121. Round tiles of Middle Age, Group ii (2) .....	172
122. Flat tile of Middle Age, Group i (1) .....	173
123. Flat tile of Middle Age, Group i (2) .....	174
124. Flat tiles of Middle Age, Group i (3) and ii .....	175
125. Square-shaped triad of Buddha image in relief on a tile made in a mold Type B recovered from Fujiwara Palace .....	176
126. Measure point for Sue wares Lid B and G .....	180
127. Pottery recovered from SD4131 and 4132 .....	211
128. Pottery recovered from SD4135 ....	213
129. Pottery recovered from SD4143 ....	215
130. Pottery recovered from other ditches .....	217

Fig.

131. Pottery recovered from SK4327 ....	223
132. Pottery recovered from SK4265 ....	225
133. Pottery recovered from SK4271 ....	226
134. Pottery recovered from SK4266, 4365 and SJ4260 .....	227
135. Pottery recovered from the embedded- pillar buildings .....	231
136. Pottery recovered from the pillared fences .....	232
137. Jomon pottery .....	233
138. Pottery recovered from SI4231 and 4233 .....	235
139. Pottery recovered from SI4230, 4232 and 4234 .....	237
140. Pottery recovered from SI4235 and 4236 .....	239
141. Korean style pottery .....	240
142. Situation about pottery recovered from SJ5007 .....	241
143. Green glaze ink-slab with animal- foot-shaped pedestal .....	243
144. Gilded bronze small banner stored in Hōryūji temple and Green glaze ink-slab with animal-foot-shaped pedestal .....	244
145. Formal ink-slabs .....	247
146. Converted ink-slabs .....	248
147. Horse-shaped clay figurines Type I .....	249
148. Horse-shaped clay figurines Type II and III .....	250
149. Small miniature pottery .....	251
150. Salt-making pottery .....	252
151. Typical example of writing "Kaguyama" .....	257
152. Shapes of writing "Kaguyama" .....	258
153. Wooden object recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (1) .....	261

**Fig.**

- 154. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (2)..... 262
- 155. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (3)..... 263
- 156. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (4)..... 264
- 157. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (5)..... 265
- 158. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (6)..... 266
- 159. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (7)..... 267
- 160. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (8)..... 269
- 161. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (9)..... 271
- 162. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (10)..... 272
- 163. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (11)..... 273
- 164. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (12)..... 275
- 165. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (13)..... 276
- 166. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (14)..... 277
- 167. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer at SD4130 (15)..... 278
- 168. Wooden objects recovered from the upper layer at SD4130 (1)..... 279
- 169. Wooden objects recovered from the upper layer at SD4130 (2)..... 280
- 170. Wooden objects recovered from the upper layer at SD4130 (3)..... 281
- 171. Wooden objects recovered from the upper layer at SD4130 (4)..... 282
- 172. Wooden objects recovered from the upper layer at SD4130 (5)..... 283
- 173. Wooden objects recovered from the bottom and lower layer at SE 4740 ..... 285

**Fig.**

- 174. Wooden objects recovered from the lower layer, SE4740 (1)..... 286
- 175. Wooden objects recovered from the lower layer, SE4740 (2)..... 287
- 176. Wooden objects recovered from the middle layer, SE4740 ..... 288
- 177. Wooden objects recovered from the upper layer, SE4740 (1) ..... 289
- 178. Wooden object recovered from the upper layer, SE4740 (2) ..... 290
- 179. Wooden objects recovered from the upper layer, SE4740 (3) ..... 291
- 180. Wooden objects recovered from SB4332 and 4737 ..... 292
- 181. Wooden objects recovered from SK4325 ..... 292
- 182. Lacquer ware recovered from SE4790..... 293
- 183. Wooden objects recovered from SE4790..... 294
- 184. Wooden objects recovered from the well in Middle Age (1)..... 295
- 185. Wooden objects recovered from the well in Middle Age (2) and disturbed layer ..... 296
- 186. Wooden objects recovered from the well in Middle Age (3)..... 297
- 187. Bent wood boxes recovered from SE4177 and 4468 ..... 298
- 188. Bent wood boxes recovered from SE5001 and 4464 ..... 299
- 189. Hole for tie-up on remains of a pillar recovered from SA4730 ..... 300
- 190. Trace of shaping on the bottom of remains of a pillar recovered from SB4445 ..... 300
- 191. Wooden members recovered from SA4730 and SB5000 ..... 301
- 192. Wooden members recovered from SB4330, 4331, 4332, 4445, 4738, and 5050 ..... 303

Fig.

193. New mortise and the impression of cross rail on northwest corner pillar .....	304
194. Old mortise on northeast corner pillar .....	304
195. Old connection on southeast corner pillar .....	304
196. Corner pillars of SE4740 (1) .....	305
197. Corner pillars of SE4740 (2) .....	306
198. Rectangular tenon on north cross rail .....	307
199. Rectangular tenon on south cross rail .....	307
200. Cross rails of SE4740 .....	308
201. Crosscut planks of SE4740 (1) .....	309
202. Crosscut planks of SE4740 (2) .....	310
203. Crosscut planks of SE4740 (3) .....	311
204. Ironwares (1) .....	314
205. Ironwares (2) .....	315
206. Ironwares (3) .....	316
207. Copperwares .....	317
208. Plain silver coin .....	318
209. Measurement point of silver coins .....	319
210. Stone implements (1) .....	321
211. Stone implements (2) .....	322
212. Stone implements (3) .....	323
213. Stone implements (4) .....	324
214. Objects associated with casting (1) .....	325
215. Objects associated with casting (2) .....	326
216. Stone tools .....	327
217. Small rounded gravel .....	328
218. Stones of peach .....	336
219. Taxon of seeds .....	337

Fig.

220. Gilded bronze stick and its photomicrograph .....	342
221. Bronze mirror and its permeable X-ray image .....	343
222. Photomicrograph of the hole on plain silver coin .....	344
223. Permeable X-ray image of <i>Wadō Kaichin</i> coins .....	344
224. Chemical composition of <i>Wadō Kaichin</i> coins (Cu-Sn-Pb) .....	346
225. Chemical composition of <i>Wadō Kaichin</i> coins (Fe-Cu) .....	346
226. Characteristics of chemical composition of the materials .....	347
227. Characteristics of chemical composition of the existing materials and their relation with inscription .....	347
228. Examples of spectrum of each type .....	348
229. Characteristic of each type based on the average of chemical system .....	348
230. Chinese coin No. 29 and its permeable X-ray image .....	349
231. Debris A .....	350
232. The white part on a concave of debris A .....	350
233. Brown substance existed on white foundation of debris A .....	350
234. Brown substance existed on white foundation of debris A (with gloss) .....	351
235. Dark brown backside of debris A and brown deposits .....	351
236. Reddish brown part of debris A .....	351
237. Head of copper nail of debris A .....	351
238. Gold leaf of debris A .....	351
239. Permeable X-ray image of copper nail of debris A .....	351

Fig.	
240.	Debris B ..... 351
241.	White foundation on a concave of relief of debris B ..... 352
242.	Brown substance existed on white foundation of debris B ..... 352
243.	Debris C ..... 352
244.	White foundation of debris C ..... 352
245.	Brown part of debris C ..... 352
246.	Debris D ..... 353
247.	Clay composition and reddish brown part of debris D ..... 353
248.	Pale red and white parts of debris D ..... 353
249.	Debris E ..... 353
250.	Brown substance of debris E ..... 353
251.	Red pigment (vermilion) and white found-ation (white lead) of debris E ..... 353
252.	A result of X-ray fluorescence analysis ..... 354
253.	A result of FT-IR analysis on brown substance backside of debris A .... 355
254.	Archaeological features of Phase I ..... 357
255.	Archaeological features of Phase II ..... 357
256.	Archaeological features of Phase III-A ..... 359
257.	Southwest Block, West First Ward on the Seventh Street, Fujiwara Capital ..... 361
258.	Archaeological features of Phase III-B ..... 362
259.	The well SE4740 of Fujiwara period and the well SE4467 of Heian period ..... 363
260.	Archaeological features of Phase III-C ..... 365
261.	Archaeological features of Phase IV ..... 367

Fig.	
262.	Archaeological features of Phase V ..... 368
263.	Archaeological features of Phase VI ..... 368
264.	Ministry of Military Affairs in Nara Palace ..... 370
265.	Block 14, East Second Ward on Fifth Street, Nara capital ..... 370
266.	East Third Ward on Sixth Street (Phase III-C), Fujiwara Capital Hitachi Provincial Head-quarters (Phase III-b) and Dazaifu Government Office (Phase II) ..... 372
267.	Fore Hall SB4340, the line of pillar holes SX4342-4349 and a tent house..... 375
268.	Reconstruction view of buildings at East Third Ward on Sixth Street, Fujiwara Capital (Phase III-B) ..... 376
269.	Reconstruction view of buildings at East Third Ward on Sixth Street Fujiwara Capital (Phase III-C) ..... 377
270.	Distribution and number of major eating utensils recovered from the middle layer of SD4130 and the lower layer of SE4740 ..... 384
271.	Pattern of excavated ink-slab ..... 387
272.	Distribution of stoneware ink-slab... 388
273.	Classification of the pot's rim section ..... 389
274.	Comparison between round eave tile Type 1a and that of Kibiike- haiji Type IA ..... 393
275.	Adhered materials recovered from the excavation area ..... 396
276.	Distribution of eave tiles ..... 397
277.	Distribution of round and flat eave tiles ..... 398
278.	Distribution of archaeological features at Northeast and Northwest Blocks, East Third Ward on Fourth Street ..... 419

**Fig.**

279. Distribution of archaeological features at East First Ward on Seventh Street ..... 420
280. Distribution of archaeological features at West First Ward on Second Street ..... 421
281. Distribution of archaeological features at Northeast and Northwest Blocks, West Second Ward on Second Street ..... 422
282. Distribution of archaeological features at Northeast and Northwest Blocks, West Second Ward on Eleventh Street ..... 423
283. Distribution of archaeological features at Southwest Block, East Third Ward on Second Street ..... 423
284. Distribution of archaeological features at Southwest Block, East Third Ward on Seventh Street .... 424
285. Distribution of archaeological features at Northeast Block, West Second Ward on First Street ..... 424
286. Distribution of archaeological features at Southeast and West Block, West Third Ward on Second Street and Northeast and Northwest Block, West Third Ward on Third Street ..... 425
287. Distribution of archaeological features at West First Ward on Seventh Street, Northeast and Northwest Blocks, First Ward on the Eighth Street ..... 427
288. Distribution of archaeological features at Northwest Block, East Second Ward on Second Street .... 428
289. Distribution of archaeological features at Southeast Block, East Second Ward on Seventh Street ... 429
290. Distribution of archaeological features at Southwest Block, East First Ward on Eleventh Street .... 429

**Fig.**

291. Distribution of archaeological features at Southwest Block, East Second Ward on Eleventh Street ..... 430
292. Distribution of archaeological features at Southwest Block, West Tenth Ward on North Fifth Street ..... 430
293. Distribution of archaeological features at West First Ward on First Street ..... 431
294. Distribution of archaeological features at Northeast and Southeast Blocks, West sixth Ward on Fourth Street ..... 432
295. Distribution of archaeological features at Southeast Block, West Sixth Ward on Fifth Street ..... 433
296. Distribution of archaeological features at Northeast Block, West Fifth Ward on Sixth Street ..... 434
297. Distribution of archaeological features at Northwest Block, West Forth Ward on Tenth Street ..... 434
298. Distribution of archaeological features at Southeast Block, West Fifth Ward on Tenth Street ..... 435
299. Distribution of archaeological features at Northeast Block, West Third Ward on Eleventh Street ... 435
300. Distribution of archaeological features at Southwest Block, East Third Ward on Eleventh Street ... 436
301. Distribution of archaeological features at Southwest Block, West First Ward on Seventh Street ..... 439
302. Plan and cross section of SB4975 ... 440
303. Transition of archaeological features at Northwest, Southwest Blocks, West First Ward on Seventh Street and Northwest Block, West First Ward on Eighth Street (1) ... 441



Fig.		Fig.	
304.	Transition of archaeological features at Northwest, Southwest Blocks, West First Ward on Seventh Street and Northwest Block, West First Ward on Eighth Street (2)····	305.	Location selection of Fujiwara Capital ·····
	442		445
		306.	New office buildings····
			457
		307.	Layout of new office buildings ·····
			459

## TABLES

Tab.	
1.	Excavation area and reference points ·····
	21
2.	List of investigations ·····
	25
3.	Surface finishing of Haji wares····
	180
4.	List of “ <i>Kabuyama</i> ” ink-inscribed pottery ·····
	259
5.	List of modified sticks recovered from the middle layer of SD4130 ·····
	274
6.	List of chopsticks recovered from SE4790 ·····
	293
7.	List of tree species and lumber techniques of boards from SE4740 ·····
	312
8.	Measurement values of silver and bronze coins ·····
	319
9.	List of small rounded gravels ·····
	328
10.	List of faunal remains ·····
	332
11.	List of identified seeds ·····
	335
12.	List of tree species of wooden implements ·····
	341
13.	Result of X-ray fluorescence analysis on silver coins recovered from Asuka and Fujiwara Capitals ·····
	344
14.	Result of analysis on quantitative determination on plain silver coins and <i>Wadō Kaichin</i> coins (wt%) ·····
	345
15.	Result of analysis on Chinese coins (wt%)····
	349
16.	Result of analysis on prepared clay composition of Buddha image in relief on a tile ·····
	354
17.	Sizes of government offices····
	371
18.	Ratio of stoneware ink-slabs recovered from each archaeological sites ·····
	386
19.	Frequency of pottery attribution recovered from pit dwellings ·····
	390
20.	List of eave tiles recovered from the excavation ·····
	393
21.	Eave tiles recovered from major archaeological features ·····
	398
22.	List of location of Fujiwara Capital (West Capital) ·····
	446
23.	List of location of Fujiwara Capital (East Capital) ·····
	447
24.	Outline of building and structure ·····
	458

## ADDITIONAL FIGURES

1. Plan and Cross section of SE4031, 4460, 4461 and 4462 .....	465
2. Plan and Cross section of SE4463, 4464 and 4465 .....	466
3. Plan and Cross section of SE4469, 4470, 4471, 4472 and 4473 .....	467
4. Plan and Cross section of SE4739, 4765, 4790 .....	468
5. Plan and Cross section of SE4782, 4793, 4980 and 5001 .....	469
6. Plan and Cross section of SE5010, 5022, 5023 and 5055 .....	470
7. Plan and Cross section of SE5060, 5065, 5076, 5095 and 5920 .....	471

## ADDITIONAL TABLES

1. List of well .....	475
2. List of types of Haji wares during seventh century .....	476
3. List of types of Sue wares during seventh century .....	478
4. Classification of pottery during seventh century .....	480
5. Constitution of pottery recovered from SD4130 .....	481
6. Constitution of pottery recovered from SE4740 .....	483
7. List of pottery recovered from SD4130 and SE 4740 .....	484
8. List of ink-inscribed pottery .....	487
9. Measurement values of large seeds .....	489
10. List of tree species of wooden implements recovered from SD4130 .....	491
11. List of tree species of wooden implements recovered from SE4740 and others .....	492
12. List of tree species of wooden members .....	493

## PLATES

### Pl.

1. Division of the plan
2. Measured drawing at precinct 6AJC-N and 6AJD-H
3. Measured drawing at precinct 6AJC-N, 6AJD-H and 5AJC-M and N
4. Measured drawing at precincts 6AJC-F and N, 6AJD-A and H and 5AJC-E, F and M
5. Measured drawing at precinct 6AJC-F and 6AJD-A
6. Measured drawing at precinct 6AJC-N and 6AJD-H and J, No.1

Pl.

7. Measured drawing at precinct 6AJC-N and 6AJD-H and J, No.2
8. Measured drawing at precincts 6AJC-F and N and 6AJD-A, B, H and J
9. Measured drawing at precinct 6AJC-F and 6AJD-A and B
10. Measured drawing at precinct 6AJD-H and J, No.1
11. Measured drawing at precinct 6AJD-H and J, No.2
12. Measured drawing of Buddha image in relief on a tile made in a mold, No1
13. Measured drawing of Buddha image in relief on a tile made in a mold, No.2
14. Measured drawing of Haji wares recovered from lower layer at SD4130
15. Measured drawing of Sue wares recovered from lower layer at SD4130, No.1
16. Measured drawing of Sue wares recovered from lower layer at SD4130, No.2
17. Measured drawing of Haji wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.1
18. Measured drawing of Haji wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.2
19. Measured drawing of Haji wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.3
20. Measured drawing of Haji wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.4
21. Measured drawing of Haji wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.5
22. Measured drawing of Sue wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.1
23. Measured drawing of Sue wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.2
24. Measured drawing of Sue wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.3
25. Measured drawing of Sue wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.4
26. Measured drawing of Sue wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.5
27. Measured drawing of pottery recovered from upper layer at SD4130, No.1
28. Measured drawing of pottery recovered from upper layer at SD4130, No.2
29. Measured drawing of pottery recovered from upper layer at SD4130, No.3
30. Measured drawing of pottery recovered from SE4740, No.1
31. Measured drawing of pottery recovered from SE4740, No.2
32. Measured drawing of pottery recovered from side ditch between Sixth row avenue and Third East column avenue
33. Measured drawing of pottery recovered from SE5950 and 4335
34. Measured drawing of pottery recovered from SK4325
35. Measured drawing of pottery and ceramic of the Middle Age
36. Measured drawing of ink-inscribed pottery recovered from lower and middle layers at SD4130, No.1
37. Measured drawing of ink-inscribed pottery recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.2
38. Measured drawing of ink-inscribed pottery recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.3
39. Measured drawing of ink-inscribed pottery recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.4

Pl.

40. Measured drawing of ink-inscribed pottery recovered from upper layer at SD4130
41. Measured drawing of ink-inscribed, incised writings and stamped characters pottery recovered from lower and middle layers at SD4130
42. Measured drawing of ink-inscribed pottery recovered from the lowest and lower layers at SE4740, No.1
43. Measured drawing of ink-inscribed pottery recovered from lower layer at SE4740, No.2
44. Measured drawing of ink-inscribed pottery recovered from lower layer at SE4740, No.3
45. Measured drawing of ink-inscribed pottery recovered from middle layer at SE4740, No.1
46. Measured drawing of ink-inscribed pottery recovered from middle layer, No.2 and surrounding area at SE4740

## PHOTOGRAPHS

Ph.

1. Around the site and the urban plan (*jōbō*) of Fujiwara Capital
2. Distant view of the site
3. Full view of the site and research scene
4. 45th excavation, No.1
5. 45th excavation, No.2
6. 45th excavation, No.3
7. 45th excavation, No.4
8. 45th excavation, No.5
9. 45th excavation, No.6
10. 45th excavation, No.7
11. 46th excavation, No.1
12. 46th excavation, No.2
13. 46th excavation, No.3
14. 46th excavation, No.4
15. 46th excavation, No.5
16. 46th excavation, No.6
17. 46th excavation, No.7
18. 46th excavation, No.8
19. 46th excavation, No.9
20. 46th excavation, No.10

Ph.

21. 47th excavation, No.1
22. 47th excavation, No.2
23. 47th excavation, No.3
24. 47th excavation, No.4
25. 47th excavation, No.5
26. 47th excavation, No.6
27. 47th excavation, No.7
28. 47th excavation, No.8
29. 50th West excavation, No.1
30. 50th West excavation, No.2
31. 50th West excavation, No.3
32. 50th West excavation, No.4
33. 50th West excavation, No.5
34. 50th West excavation, No.6
35. 50th East excavation, No.1
36. 50th East excavation, No.2
37. 50th East excavation, No.3
38. 53rd North excavation, No.1
39. 53rd North excavation, No.2
40. 53rd Middle excavation, No.1
41. 53rd Middle excavation, No.2

Ph.

42. 53rd North, Middle and South Excavations
43. 133-7th and 13th excavations
44. Pit dwellings 1
45. Pit dwellings 2
46. Wells from Heian and Middle Age, No.1
47. Wells from Heian and Middle Age, No.2
48. Wells from Heian and Middle Age, No.3
49. Wells from Heian and Middle Age, No.4
50. Wells from Heian and Middle Age, No.5
51. Wells from Heian and Middle Age, No.6
52. Round eave tiles, Type 1A
53. Round eave tiles, Types 1B-4
54. Round eave tiles, Types 5 and 7
55. Round eave tiles, Types 6 and 8
56. Flat eave tiles, Types 1 and 2
57. Flat eave tiles, Type 3-9
58. Constructional roof tiles and tiles with stamped characters of ancient times
59. Constructional roof tiles of Middle Ages, No.1 (ridge-end tiles, bird perch tiles and crowing tiles)
60. Constructional roof tiles, No.2 (others) and tiles with stamped characters of Middle Age
61. Round tiles, Types I and II, No.1 (step Type A)
62. Round tiles, Type of II, No.2 (step Types B, C, and D)
63. Round tiles, Type of III (D) and details of paddled impression
64. Flat tiles, Type I, No.1 (A and B)
65. Flat tiles, Type I, No.2 (B and C)
66. Flat tiles, Type I, No.3 (C)
67. Flat tiles, Type I, No.4 (C and E)
68. Flat tiles, Type II, No.1 (recovered from SK4160, SD4255, 4751 and SK4325)

Ph.

69. Flat tiles, Types II, No.2 (recovered from SK4325, SD4130 and SE4740) and III
70. Paddle impression of flat tiles, Type I, No.1 (A and B1-11)
71. Paddle impression of flat tiles, Type I, No.2 (B12-26)
72. Paddle impression of flat tiles, Type I, No.3 (B27-31 and C1-10)
73. Paddle impression of flat tiles, Type I, No.4 (C11-15, D and E)
74. Round tiles of the Middle Age
75. Flat tiles of the Middle Age
76. Pottery recovered from lower and upper layers at SD4130
77. Pottery recovered from middle layer at SD4130
78. Pottery recovered from SE4740
79. Pottery recovered from the lowest and lower layers at SE4740
80. Haji wares and Sue wares recovered from lower layer at SD4130, No.1
81. Sue wares recovered from lower layer at SD4130, No.2
82. Haji wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.1
83. Haji wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.2
84. Haji wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.3
85. Haji wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.4
86. Sue wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.1
87. Sue wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.2
88. Sue wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.3
89. Sue wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.4

Ph.

90. Sue wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.5
91. Sue wares recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.6
92. Haji wares recovered from upper layer at SD4130
93. Sue wares recovered from upper layer at SD4130
94. Pottery recovered from the lowest layer at SE4740
95. Haji wares recovered from lower layer at SE4740, No.1
96. Haji wares recovered from lower layer at SE4740, No.2
97. Haji wares recovered from lower layer at SE4740, No.3 and Sue wares
98. Pottery recovered from middle and upper layers at SE4740
99. Haji wares recovered from middle layer at SE4740
100. Pottery recovered from middle and upper layer at SE4740, and surrounding area
101. Pottery recovered from SD4132, 4139 and 4311
102. Pottery recovered from SD4131
103. Pottery recovered from SD4135
104. Pottery recovered from SD4129, 4143, 4179, 4255, and 4357
105. Pottery recovered from SE5950 and SK4325, No.1
106. Pottery recovered from SK4325, No.2
107. Pottery recovered from SE4335
108. Pottery recovered from SK4327
109. Pottery recovered from SK4265, 4266, 4271, 4365 and SJ4260
110. Pottery recovered from SI4230, 4231 and 4233
111. Pottery recovered from SI4232 and 4234

Ph.

112. Pottery recovered from SI4235 and 4236
113. Korean style pottery and Jomon pottery
114. Pottery recovered from SE4790, SJ5007 and 5029
115. Green glaze inkslab with animal-foot shaped pedestal
116. Inkslabs
117. Horse-shaped clay figurines
118. Ink-scribed pottery recovered from lower and middle layers at SD4130, No.1
119. Ink-scribed pottery recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.2
120. Ink-scribed pottery recovered from middle and upper layers at SD4130, No.3, SB5020 and SE5950
121. Ink-scribed pottery recovered from lower layer at SE4740, No.1
122. Ink-scribed pottery recovered from the lowest, lower, middle layers and surrounding area at SE4740, No.2
123. Pottery with incised writing and stamped characters recovered from SD4130, 4311 and others
124. Pottery with incised writing recovered from SD4130, No.1
125. Pottery with incised writing recovered from SD4130, No.2
126. Pottery with incised writing recovered from SE4740
127. Wooden implements recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.1
128. Wooden implements recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.2
129. Wooden implements recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.3
130. Wooden implements recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.4
131. Wooden implements recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.5

Ph.

132. Wooden implements recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.6
133. Wooden implements recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.7
134. Wooden implements recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.8
135. Wooden implements recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.9
136. Wooden implements recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.10
137. Wooden implements recovered from middle layer at SD4130, No.11
138. Wooden implements recovered from upper layer at SD4130, No.1
139. Wooden implements recovered from upper layer at SD4130, No.2
140. Wooden implements recovered from upper layer at SD4130, No.3
141. Wooden implements recovered from the lowest and lower layers at SE4740, No.1
142. Wooden implements recovered from lower layer at SE4740, No.2
143. Wooden implements recovered from middle and upper layers at SD4740, No.1
144. Wooden implements recovered from upper layer at SE4740, No.2
145. Wooden implements recovered from upper layer at SE4740, No.3 and SE4790 and 4782
146. Wooden implements recovered from other wells and disturbed layer, No.1
147. Wooden implements recovered from other wells and disturbed layer, No.2

Ph.

148. Bent wood boxes recovered from the wells of the Middle Age
149. Remains of pillars and foundation boards
150. Corner posts at SE4740, No.1
151. Corner posts at SE4740, No.2
152. Cross rails at SE4740
153. Crosscut planks at SE4740, No.1
154. Crosscut planks at SE4740, No.2
155. Ironwares, No.1
156. Ironwares, No.2 and copperwares, No.1
157. Ironwares, No.3 and copperwares, No.2
158. Coins No.1
159. Coins No.2
160. Coins No.3
161. Coins No.4
162. Stone implements, No.1 and stone tools
163. Stone implements, No.2 and artifacts associated with casting
164. Wooden writing tablet, *mokkan*, No.1
165. Wooden writing tablet, *mokkan*, No.2
166. Photomicrograph of wooden material, No.1
167. Photomicrograph of wooden material No.2
168. Photomicrograph of wooden material, No.3
169. Photomicrograph of wooden material, No.4
170. Transmission X-ray photo of coins
171. Presentation of the site

## ATTACHED MAP

1. Map of archaeological features at the East Third Ward on Sixth Street of the Fujiwara Capital Site
2. Map of location selection of Fujiwara Capital

## Chapter I Introduction

This is the archaeological report of the excavations in the East Third Ward on Sixth Street of the Fujiwara Capital Site, conducted by the Department of Fujiwara Palace Sites Investigations, Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, in advance of the construction of office building of the institute. The archaeological investigation was carried out for five seasons, in the period from April 1985 to May 1987. In addition, two supplemental investigations were conducted in 2004. A total of 17,000 m<sup>2</sup> areas were excavated.

## Chapter II Outline of the Fujiwara Capital

### History of the Fujiwara Capital

The Fujiwara Capital was the first Chinese-style planned city that had a square-shaped Imperial Palace area spanned 1 km square in its center. The city area was divided in regular fashion into residential blocks by streets and avenues intersecting at right angles in the form of a checkerboard. Divided by the central north-south road called *Suzaku-Ōji*, the western part of the city was called the Right Capital (*Ukyō*), and the eastern part the Left Capital (*Sakyō*). The smallest residential block called *tsubo* or *chō* was ca. 130 m square, and four *tsubo* (*chō*) blocks composed one ward called *bō*, which was ca. 265 m square and equal to a half of the ancient Japanese mile called *ri*. There were a number of residential houses, Buddhist temples and government offices in the city area, and sizes of the residences varied depending on the rank of the owner, from a quarter of *chō* to four *chō*. Although each ward had its own name such as “*rinbō*”, not all the original name has been known today, so we conventionally call a name of ward according to the name of facing road, such as East Third Ward on Six Street.

According to the Chronicles of Japan (*Nihon Shoki*), in AD 676 Emperor Tenmu decided to set up a new capital and planned to move from Asuka Kiyomihara Palace to the new palace. It was just after five years of his enthronement, but this plan was not realized at that time. He started the plan again to set up a capital in AD 682, but the construction was halted due to his death in AD 686. Succeeding Empress Jitō resumed the construction in AD 690, and relocated the capital to the newly founded



Fujiwara Capital in AD 694. Until the relocation of the capital to Nara in AD 710, the Fujiwara Capital had been served as the national capital of Japan for sixteen years.

The construction process of the capital has gradually been clarified by the results of successive archaeological investigations. The studies has revealed that the location of the palace had not been decided in the beginning of the construction, and the streets and avenues were firstly built covering all parts of the city. Excavations in the Fujiwara Palace Site revealed features of side ditches of the roads, which are called “precedent roads”. After the setting of the palace location, the side ditches of the “precedent roads” were buried, and channels were newly dug to facilitate the transportation of construction supplies for the palace. The wooden tablets dating back to AD 682 to 685 were recovered from the channels. This implies that the palace construction was ongoing at that time. In addition, it is considered that the construction of the Moto Yakushiji temple was started in AD 680, and archaeological investigations revealed that the Main Hall of temple had been accomplished in AD 688. The land of the temple precisely corresponded to the grid of the West Third Ward on Eighth Street. This suggests that the temple land was set using the streets and avenues as reference lines. In addition, the excavations revealed that the features of the small column avenue of the West Third Ward and the buildings and walls inside the ward existed below the prepared soil for the temple land. These evidences suggests that the city construction was ongoing at the time when the construction of the Moto Yakushiji was started. In addition, the small column avenue of the West Third Ward was buried at the time of the accomplishment of the capital, so this situation is equal to that of the “precedent roads” in the Fujiwara Palace. Therefore, not all the excavated roads in the city area necessarily continued to exist after the accomplishment of the capital, and it is possible that a residential area might spanned several blocks in the beginnings.

### **Plan of the Fujiwara Capital**

About the plan of the Fujiwara Capital, Kishi Toshio had firstly proposed a hypothesis based on the investigations carried out from 1966 to 1968. He had shown

the plan that the capital spanned 8 wards from east to west and 12 wards from north to south, and that the eastern side corresponded to the Nakatsu-michi road, the western side corresponded to the Shimotsu-michi road, the northern side corresponded to the *Yoko-ōji* road, and the southern side corresponded to the *Abe-no-Yamada-michi* road respectively. The Kishi's reconstruction plan had been widely accepted for a long time; however, after 1979 a number of archaeological features of the streets and avenues have been revealed in the areas outside of the Kishi's plan. In the wake of the discoveries, many new reconstruction plans have been proposed as "Greater Fujiwara Capital". In 1996, T-junctions that corresponds to both the eastern and western sides of the capital were revealed, which assured that the capital spanned 10 wards from east to west. At present, the reconstruction plan that spanned 10 wards from east to west and 10 wards from north to south has been widely accepted. According to this plan, the Fujiwara Palace was positioned in the center of the city area, whereas the other ancient capitals in Japan had their palace area positioned in the north.

### Chapter III Archaeological Features

In the archaeological excavations in East Third Ward on Sixth Street of the Fujiwara Capital Site, the area of ca. 17,000 m<sup>2</sup> was opened. A number of archaeological features that date back to the period between the Kofun period and the Middle Ages were revealed, including 2 city roads, 83 buildings with embedded pillars, 8 pit dwellings, 45 walls with embedded pillars, 38 wells, 37 ditches, 4 pits for buried pottery, and so on. For the most part of the features date back to the period of the Fujiwara Capital. In addition, some features belong to the Nara period (from AD 710 to 784). In this report, we divide the period into six Phases as follow: Phase I includes the Kofun period, mainly around fifth century. Phase II includes the period before the construction of the Fujiwara Capital in the seventh century. Phase III includes the period of the Fujiwara Capital, including its construction period, and this Phase is subdivided into three sub-Phases as follow: Phase III-A corresponds to the construction period. Phase III-B corresponds to the early part of the Fujiwara Capital. Phase III-C corresponds to the later period of the Fujiwara Capital. Phase IV

includes the Nara Period in the eighth century. Phase V includes the later part of the Heian period from the tenth to eleventh centuries. Phase VI includes the period after the later part of the Heian period in the twelfth century.

In Phase I, some features of pit dwellings were distributed along a winding natural stream that ran from the south.

In Phase II, the feature of large north-south ditch SD 4143 was positioned in the eastern side of the excavated area, and some features of buildings with embedded pillars were distributed in the west side of the ditch. These buildings were congregated around a relatively large building.

In Phase III, the area was used as the East Third Ward on Sixth Street of the Fujiwara Capital. This land was in a prime location of the capital, since it faced the eastern side of the Fujiwara Palace. In addition, it faced the Sixth Street in the south side, which ran through the southern side of the Fujiwara Palace, and also faced the Fifth Street in the north side, which extended from the Southern East Gate of the palace.

In Phase III-A, the ward was divided into four *tsubo* blocks by the small row street of the Sixth Street and the small column avenue of the West Third Ward. Among the four *tsubo* blocks, the situation of the northeastern and southeastern blocks were clarified relatively. The northeastern block was subdivided into eastern and western parts, and there was a compartment surrounded by walls. The compartment had a gate in the middle of the southern side, and buildings were positioned systematically inside the compartment. This situation suggests that the compartment was an official facility. The southeastern block was also subdivided into northern and southern parts, and each part occupied an area of a half *chō*. This situation suggests that the compartment was used for organized purposes like the western part of the northeastern compartment.

In Phase III-B, the previously subdivided blocks became integrated as one, and the large building SB 5000 was positioned in the center of the East Third Ward on Sixth Street. It is probable that this building was used as the main building in the ward, since there were neither other buildings on the central line of the ward, nor other large-scale buildings in the ward. In the east, there was a line of wall in the

north-south direction that divided the outer and inner compartments. Inside the inner compartment, a north-south building was positioned in the southeast of the main building. Although the area in the southwest of the main building has not been excavated yet, it is likely that there was another north-south building symmetrically. It is probable that the main building and two north-south buildings were arranged in triangle. In the northeast of the main building was an east-west building, and another east-west building was positioned over there. These buildings were positioned systematically, so it is likely that another pair of buildings were positioned at bilaterally symmetric location. At the front courtyard in the south of the main building, there was a feature of temporary structure. It is probable that this structure was associated with a ritual performed at the front courtyard. In addition, large east-west ditch SD 4130 was extended from the large north-south ditch and ran to the west direction, and large well SE 4740 was positioned nearby.

In Phase III-C, the ward still occupied four *chō* blocks, which was same as before, and the inner compound became larger. In the inner compound, an east-west building was positioned in the east of the main building, and two north-south building were positioned on a line in the southeast of the main building. It is probable that a group of buildings were distributed symmetrically in the western part of the compound. Although the layout of the compound adhered fundamentally to the previous one, the extent became larger substantially. In addition, a small building was positioned just in the south of the main building.

In Phase IV in the Nara period, the water channels still continued to exist. In the south part of the excavated area, a compartment surrounded by walls with embedded pillars was revealed. A pair of small and large east-west building were positioned on a line in the north-south direction inside the compound. In the northwest corner of the excavated area, a building with internal pillars was revealed, which is estimated that it was a warehouse. Considering the layout and extent of the structures, it is probable that these structures belonged to a government office.

In Phase V, large north-south ditch SD 4143 was revealed in the eastern side of the excavated area; however, the previous ditches SD 4130 and SE 4740 were almost buried. A pair of small and large buildings were positioned in the south part of the

excavated area. Although there were some large building in this Phase, it is probable that these were not a part of government office but a settlement.

In Phase VI, the area was subdivided into small plots, and wells were dug at every plots. Two groups of structures including a large building with small buildings, walls, ditches and pits were revealed in the center of the excavated area. The layout of these structures was modified at short intervals. After the Kamakura period, a curved ditch, that was probably a moat, ran in the northwest part of the excavated area, and some wells and east-west buildings were distributed around the area inside the moat. In addition, a number of roof tiles were recovered. This implies that there was a temple or shrine. Artifacts recovered from the moat date back to the later part of the fourteenth century. The present landscape of agricultural community around this region may trace back to that period.

## **Chapter IV   Artifacts**

A number of artifacts were recovered from the excavated area, especially from the large ditch SD 4130 and the well SE 4740 on the south side of the ditch, including roof tiles, bricks, pottery, earthen wares, wooden tools, metal tools and wooden writing tablets.

**Roof tiles and bricks:** A total of 121 round eave roof tiles, classified into 17 types, and 84 flat eave roof tiles, classified into 25 types, were recovered, which date back to the period between the ancient times and the Middle Ages. Most of the roof tiles of the ancient times were made from the same molds used in the Fujiwara Palace and Buddhist temples in the Yamato region. Especially, the existences of the round eave roof tiles with the design of simple lotus eight petals with concentric circle pattern and flat eave roof tiles with embossing palmette scroll design are worth noting, for the roof tiles of the same design are considered to be the earliest roof tiles used in the Kibiike abandoned temple (the Kudara Ōdera temple) erected in the early seventh century. The roof tiles of the Middle Ages includes two groups; the former dates back to the period between the late thirteenth and the early fourteenth centuries (in the transition period from Kamakura to Muromachi), and the latter dates back to the period between the middle and late fourteenth century. A total of 3,860

pieces and 966.1 kg in weight round roof tiles, and 22,993 pieces and 3,083.9 kg in weight flat roof tiles were recovered from the site. In addition, a total of 9 fragments of square-shaped tile with relief of triad Buddha images were recovered from the northwest part of the excavated area.

**Pottery and earthen wares:** A total of 397 wooden boxes of pottery and earthen wares were recovered, which date back to the period between the Jomon period and the early modern period. Most of them were Haji and Sue wares recovered from the ditch SD 4130 and the well SE 4740. The artifacts recovered from SD 4130 date back to the period between the Fujiwara period and the later part of the tenth century, and those from SE 4740 date back to the period between the Fujiwara period and the early part of the tenth century. It should be noted that a large amount of the artifacts of the Nara period were also recovered even though the capital had already been abandoned at that time. In addition, the occurrence rates of eating utensils and other distinctive types are similar to those from other areas used for government offices. This suggests that the site had been used for a certain official facility in the Nara period. A total of 134 pottery with ink inscription were recovered, and over the 95 percent of them were from the features of SD 4130 and SE 4740. A total of 22 pottery have inscriptions associated with Mt. Kaguyama.

**Wooden tools, metal tools, and coins:** A total of 120 containers of wooden tools were recovered, mainly from the ditch SD 4130 and the well SE 4740, including containers such as bent wood boxes and lacquer wares, textile manufacturing tools such as spindles, accessories such as combs, musical instruments such as *koto* bridges, ritual implements such as figurines and pointed boards, and tools such as hafts of knife. The unearthed metal tools include iron implements such as short swords, sickles and nails, and bronze implements such as bronze bracelets and flower-shaped ornaments. In addition, a total of 46 coins were recovered. Among them, one plain silver coin and 27 *Wadō Kaichin* coins were recovered from the lower layers of the filling soils of the well SE 4740.

**Wooden writing tablets:** One talisman tablet was recovered from the well SE 4740. A total of 28 tablets were recovered from the ditch SD 4230 including tablets with inscriptions of office names such as “*Sakyō-shiki*” and “*Natsumi-no-tsukasa*”, tablets

and baggage tags with inscriptions of quantity terms such as “*soku*” and “*wa*”, and so on.

**Analyses of archaeological science:** Faunal remains such as horns of Japanese deer and teeth of horse were recovered from the ditch SD 4130. Other faunal remains including horses, cows, humans and soft-shell turtles were recovered from the features and layers of the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Plants remains including seeds of bayberry, chestnuts, plums and peaches were also recovered. It is probable that these were residues of edible fruits. An analysis of species identification for wooden implements clarified that bent wood boxes and pointed boards were mostly made from cypress. An analysis by florescence X-ray for *Wadō Kaichin* coins clarified that they were divided into four groups by their components. This corresponds to the difference of letters inscribed on the coins. Another componential analysis for attached matters to the tiles with Buddha relief clarified that the tiles were originally covered by some materials such as a white base coat, lacquer, and gold leaf. In addition, the covering materials differs from one tile to another.

## Chapter V Conclusion

In conclusion we consider the characteristics of the site based on our investigations and studies.

**In Fujiwara period:** The site of the East Third Ward on Sixth Street was used for a government office, since the layout of the buildings was systematic and the front courtyard was placed surrounded by the buildings. The pottery recovered from the site also shows some distinctive characteristics of the ceramics used at government offices. Previous studies on excavated wooden writing tablets have clarified that there had been at least two government offices positioned in the city area; one was “*Emon-fu*”, the Headquarter of the Palace Gate Guards, at the East First Ward on Seventh Street, and the other was “*Ukyō-shiki*”, the West Capital Administrative Office, at the West First Ward on Seventh Street. Both of them were situated next to the palace. In addition, these facilities occupied large areas; the “*Emon-fu*” occupied four *chō* blocks and the “*Ukyō-shiki*” occupied more than three *chō* blocks.

These features are common to the counterparts of the site of the East Third Ward on Sixth Street.

During the Fujiwara period, the *Taihō* Code, the first full-fledged law system in Japan, was put in force in AD 701. In the wake of the implement, the “*Kyō-shiki*” was subdivided into the “*Sakyō-shiki*” and “*Ukyō-shiki*”. The wooden writing tablet with the inscription of “*Sakyō-shiki*” was recovered from the site of the East Third Ward on Sixth Street. In addition, the site was situated in the area of East Capital (*Sakyō*). It is probable the site was used for the “*Sakyō-shiki*”. From the beginning to the end of the Fujiwara period, the site had continued occupying four *chō* blocks. Therefore we consider that the “*Kyō-shiki*” had been placed on the site by AD 701, then the site had been used for the “*Sakyō-shiki*” after that. The change of the building layout from Phases III-B to III-C corresponds to the modification of the facility.

On the other hand, the “*Ukyō-shiki*” was placed on the new location at the West First Ward on Seventh Street. In the early part of the Fujiwara period, the West First Ward on Seventh Street was divided into four *chō* blocks, and it is considered that the southwestern *chō* block was used for a residence of an aristocrat. In the later part of the Fujiwara period, the residence at the southwest was modified into a government office, and it annexed the northwest block at the West First Ward on Seventh Street and the southwest block at the West First Ward on Eighth Street, then it occupied a long area covering more than three *chō* blocks. To secure the land for the “*Ukyō-shiki*”, the western parts of the West First Ward on Seventh Street and the West First Ward on Eighth Street were modified accordingly.

**In Nara period:** It should be noted that there are some pottery with the inscriptions associated with “*Kaguyama*” in the collection of artifacts of the Nara period. The “*Kaguyama*” means the Mt. Kaguyama located in the east of the site. It has been regarded as a sacred mountain and composed the famous “Yamato Triad Mountains”, together with Mt. Unebi and Mt. Miminashi. There has been a hypothesis that this site had some association with the facility named “*Kaguyama Shōsō*” (Kaguyama official warehouse) described on the “*Yamato-no-kuni Shōzei-chō*” (the tax list in Yamato Province) in *Tenpyō* 2 (AD 730), and the existence of the building that was possibly a



warehouse may support the hypothesis. In the studies on the “*Yamato-no-kuni Shōzei-chō*”, it has been considered that the “*Kaguyama Shōsō*” was situated not in the *Toichi* district but in the *Takaichi* district. The site is just situated on the border between the *Toichi* and *Takaichi* districts. According to the previous studies on the *Engi-shiki*, the book about laws and customs written in the ninth century, and other historical documents associated with the *Kidono-shō* manor in the later eleventh century, it is probable that the site belonged to the *Toichi* district. Therefore, the hypothesis that the site was associated with the “*Kaguyama Shōsō*” needs to be reconsidered. Instead, it is probable that there was another facility named after Mt. Kaguyama, and the pottery with inscriptions of “*Kaguyama*” were derived from it.

**In other periods:** Our study also clarify the situations of land use in the other periods. In the Kofun period, a number of pottery in the Korean peninsula style were recovered from the pit dwellings. This implies that some immigrants from the Korean peninsula were based in the Asuka region at that time. Although there were a few archaeological features date back to the seventh century at the site, it should be noted that some roof tiles had the same designs as the counterparts in the Kibiike abandoned temple (the Kudara Ōdera temple) erected in the 11th year of Emperor Jomei (AD 639). After the Heian period, the site has gradually blended into the surrounding landscape of rural country.

**Perspectives and future issues:** The archaeological investigation at the East Third Ward on Sixth Street of the Fujiwara Capital Site produce good results for understanding the past of the site. The study clarified that the archaeological features of the Fujiwara period were associated with the “*Sakyō-shiki*”. This is a new clue to understand the status of government facilities in the Fujiwara Capital. Especially, it is an important result to clarify the layout of the buildings in the government office, since there have been previously a few evidences to reconstruct the plan of the government offices. In addition, the study also shows that some important facilities were positioned around the palace. Especially, it is an important finding that both “*Sakyō-shiki*” and “*Ukyō-shiki*” occupied large areas, for understanding the situation of government offices in the Fujiwara Capital. However, there still have been a less investigations conducted on the Fujiwara Capital,

comparing to the other sites of the ancient capitals. Therefore, a full understanding of the Fujiwara Capital, the first full-fledged Chinese-style capital in Japan, awaits further investigations.