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PROPERTIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE, NO. 42

NARA IMPERIAL PALACE SITE EXCAVATON REPORT XII

SURVEYS AT THE LOCATION OF THE IMPERIAL
STABLE BUREAU

ENGLISH SUMMARY

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ENGLISH SUMMARY

1

The Nara National Cultural Properties Research Institute has been carrying out a continuous series of archaeological investigation at the site of the Nara Imperial Palace since 1959. Results of these investigations have been published in Nara Palace Site Excavation Report, Nos. I~XI. The present report is the following one, No. XII, containing the results of nine excavations (excavation Nos. 47, 50, 52, 59 north-south, 63, 71, and 127) carried out between 1967 and 1980.

The investigation area dealt with in this report is the westernmost locus of the palace grounds along the west enclosure wall between central gate (*Saeki-mon* 佐伯門) and north gate (*Kusakabe-mon* 藻壁門) measuring 280 meters north to south and 110 meters east to west. Since there is no paddy placename or land division in this area, it was previously considered to be the Western Palace (*Saigû* 西宮) based on Tadashi Sekino's expectation. However, as the excavations of this area progressed, it became apparent that the ground plans of architectural structures were not equivalent to *Saigû* but one of the government bureaus.

The results of excavations are first described dividing into two categories; features and artifacts. By means of using those results it is going to be made clear that this area is the site of the Imperial Stable Bureaus (*Meryô* 馬寮).

2

Topographically this area lies on the alluvial apron of the Nara basin lowlands and is almost flat (70.5 m msl at the north-western corner and 69.5 m msl at the south-eastern corner). During Yayoi and Kofun periods peoples seem to have inhabited in this area because 1 dwelling, 2 ditches and 6 pits of early Yayoi period and 5 ditches and 6 pits of Kofun period were uncovered, most of which were concentrated in the southern portion of the area. The ditches of both periods can be considered to have flowed from north-west to south-east, that means the topography prior to the Palace construction was almost same as present.

The features uncovered can be assigned to five phases between the beginning of the Nara period and the early Heian period. They represent the construction and layout of a palace compound with special characteristics not changing throughout whole phases. And after the palace's abandonment around 835, this area was begun to be continuously used for inhabitation until about the 14th century (Phase VI), therefore many features of different phases are complicatedly overlapped.

Phase I (beginning of the Nara period)

The construction of the Palace started; the ground was prepared and allotted and some provisional structures such as fence SA3680 were erected, but no structures for administrative use had not been completed.

Phase II (early Nara period)

This is the period in which the layout of the Imperial Stable Bureau was first settled. At the center of the northern sector was built a main hall SB6450 which was accompanied by side hall SB6425 and front building SB6280. These com-

posed the administrative headquarter. To the south, on both sides, there situated stables SB6170・5955・5956 and storage SB6330. All these structures were arranged accordingly to the 75 shaku grid plan. The central part of the southern sector formed a kind of courtyard without any architectural structures whatsoever. This can be supposed to be a riding ground. To the west of the headquarters there found a large rectangular pit SK6350 which fits to the washing pond for horses.

Phase III (middle Nara period)

In this phase most of the structures were rebuilt according to the same idea of layout as that of the Phase II. However, the composition of the structures was different somehow, as well as the east boundary of the compound was first encompassed by wooden fence SA5950. In all eleven architectural structures were regularly laid out on a grid plan of 40 shaku basic units; these structures included three administrative buildings on north to south axes lined up in a row in the center of the northern sector, stables SB6172・5951・6120, storage SB6140 and smithy building SB6360 on either side.

Phase IV (late Nara period)

Basic layout followed the previous one, but composition was drastically changed. The administrative office buildings situated in the northern one-third of this area became more intensive with doublefold composition; three long buildings SB6175・6430・6400 being placed to the north, east and west formed a outlineal division, while wooden fences surrounded inner quarter. For the boundary of east and north there constructed compound wall SA5950B and SA6475.

Phase V (early Heian period)

The extent of the area enclosed by compound wall was same as previous ones, but by the ditch SD5961 running west to east near the center the area divided into two sectors, north and south. In the northern half there existed several buildings in the same manner as those of phases I~IV; the main building SB6386 at northern center and two long buildings on each side (SB6173・6460・6401), and the front of main building was left to be a open space. On the contrary the southern half seems to have had different characteristics. There were only two buildings SB6130・6141 at the northeast corner and remaining part was vacant.

3

Artifacts unearthed are relatively scarce.

Wooden tablets are only 18 and most of them seem to concern with the nature of the neighboring ministry or bureau to the east of the area.

There were unearthed 873 pieces of eaves-tiles. These consist of 54 types and 110 sub-types. In comparison with the other excavated areas in the Palace, it can be pointed out that the numbers of types and sub-types are so many considering about the total amount that the specific pairings of rounded and flat eaves-tiles can not be extracted.

The earthenware was discovered evenly throughout the excavated area in great number. Those include various kind of pottery dating from Yayoi period down to the 14th century.

Wooden objects, metal objects and coins are very scarce.

After recording above factual information, the report attempts some interpretations. At first changing configurations at the location of the Imperial Stable Bureau and the absolute chronology are examined. Secondly the nature of the location is studied in accordance with the written resources. Thirdly the Heian period pottery types are considered by using the specimens unearthed from the ancient Nara capital. Fourthly the pillars used in the location of the Imperial Stable Bureau are studied by dendrochronological method. And lastly conclusive phrases come.

Among the artifacts, the pottery sherds with brush writing play a very important role in reconstructing the use of this area. There are two kinds of writings; one is “*shume* 主馬” and the other is “*naikyû* 内厩”. In case of *shume* it indicates two possibilities, *Shume-ryô* 主馬寮 and *Shume-shô* 主馬署. *Shume-ryô* appeared in historical records between the 1st year of *Ten'nô* (天応, 781A.D.) and the 1st year of *Daidô* (大同, 806A.D.). Since the pottery type on which brush writings are is belonged to the end of the Nara period, and the extent of location is too extensive for *Shume-shô* that is a branch of the Crown Prince's office, *Shume-ryô* is more probable than *shume-sho*.

Naikyû means *Naikyû-ryô* 内厩寮 which had established in the 1st year of *Ten'pyô-jingo* (天平神護, 765A.D.) and appeared in historical records down to the 1st year of *Daidô*. This bureau was closely related to *Meryô* and *Shume-ryô* on account of their function. So it is clear that *Shume-ryô* situated in this area at the end of Nara period. And as *Shume-ryô* can be considered to have followed *Meryô* conforming to the regal cords having edited at latest in the late 7th century, it is natural to consider that before *Shume-ryô*'s establishment *Meryô* also had been here

The location and size of this bureau is similar to those of the *Meryô* in the old map of the Heian Palace. And in the Fujiwara Palace site situates so-called “western government quarters” at the same location and it shows the same composition and layout of the architectural structures as both side of the area must be the stables, and storages were probably for storing horse furnitures.

By the reasons cited above, this report intended to conclude that the bureau discovered in this area is the site of *Meryô* and *Shume-ryô* of Nara period and early Heian period. But according to the regal cords, *Meryô* was divided into two, (left)-*Sameryô* and (wright)-*Umaryô*, to which this area merges we do not have sufficient bases yet.