

ENGLISH SUMMARY

I FOREWORD

This work is the report of archaeological excavations conducted by the Nara National Cultural Properties Research Institute at the request of the Nara Prefectural Board of Education, prior to the construction of a large-scale retail outlet in Shichijō-chō, Nara City.

Within the total area scheduled for development, extending over 31,500 m² of Block 13 of East First Ward on Sixth Street and Blocks 15 and 16 of East First Ward on Seventh Street, excavations were conducted five times between May 1994 and April 1995, focusing mainly on Block 16, which contains the major portion of area to be developed and includes the planned site of the retail store itself. The total area excavated was approximately 14,200 m².

II ARCHAEOLOGICAL FEATURES

A Features related to the city street grid

Remains of the city street grid on all four sides of Block 16 of East First Ward on Seventh Street were confirmed in this series of excavations. Within this ward, the drainage ditch forming the western side of East First Avenue, and the northern block-boundary street along with the ditches on both sides, were investigated over the length of an entire block; extending the area of excavation, the eastern ditch of East First Avenue, Sixth Street and the eastern block-boundary avenue within East First Ward on Seventh Street, together with ditches on both sides of the latter two roads, were confirmed. The interval between the centers of the ditches bordering East First Avenue was 22.5 m, which fails to yield a round number when calculated as either *taishaku* (long-scaled *shaku*, approximately 33.5 cm) or *shōshaku* (short-scaled *shaku*, approximately 29.6 cm) ; this is thought to result from repairs to the western ditch, which led to a shift in its position to the east. The western ditch ranged from 7.5 to 8.6 m in width and from 1.5 to 1.7 m in depth, similar in scale to findings for its upper reaches and suitable for a major drainage facility of the Nara capital. The sediments in the ditch are divisible into seven strata, tracing changes over three broad temporal periods. At the end of the Nara period the ditch underwent large-scale repair, and eventually, by means of a dam discovered in the center of the area of excavation, provided water for an irrigation channel flowing to the east. A bridge over the western ditch was also discovered. When considered as an entranceway for Block 16, at times when a barrier was erected around the perimeter of the block the bridge would serve as an opening onto a major road, and would thus bear some relation to the nature of the Block and its inhabitants. While it was not possible to determine with certainty the age of the bridge in these investigations, it is conceivable that it was a temporary structure, built

to accommodate the inflow of materials to a base which was used for the construction of the Nara capital during Phase I of the site.

Further, this was the first time both ditches bordering Sixth Street were uncovered simultaneously, and along with the discovery that the road lies south of its anticipated position, it became clear that the road's width was 14.3 m (40 *taishaku*) as measured from the centers of the ditches, narrower than other major roads of the capital. It must be left to subsequent research to determine whether this is true only for the excavated region, but if West Sixth Street was built to the same proportions, then a provisional solution may be seen concerning the positions of the southern gate of Yakushiji and the northern ditch of Sixth Street, as yet undetected in that area, which have been suggested as possibly overlapping. Further, as a result of the verification of the roads surrounding Block 16 on all four sides, it has become clear that the Block is relatively large in size, being slightly more than 450 *shōshaku* in both the north-south and east-west directions, and that the city street grid of the Nara capital accordingly contained irregularities in block dimensions.

B Temporal changes in the archaeological features

The remains of 58 buildings, 49 fences, 15 ditches, and 11 wells were detected in Blocks 15 and 16 together with pits and other features. Only a small portion of the northern part of Block 15 was investigated, however, yielding but four buildings and two fences, so that it was not feasible to evaluate the temporal sequence of these features. By contrast, whereas few artifacts indicating the age of features were unearthed in Block 16, a sequence of six phases from the Nara to the Heian periods was established, based mainly on relationships of overlap and on the relative positions of the features. Over the entire span, moreover, the site was not subdivided but used on the scale of a single city block.

In Phase I, at the beginning of the construction of the Nara capital, features concentrated in the western half of the block, with the eastern half remaining vacant. No regularity in the layout of the buildings could be detected, nor did any particular structure appear to be central, and judging from the geographical position of the block, it seems possible that it was used as a temporary facility related to the construction of the capital, rather than as an ordinary site for housing.

By contrast, in Phases II and III, planned use as a building site is evident, thought to have been for housing government officials. Buildings were arranged in orderly fashion in the southeastern portion of the block in the pattern of a main and secondary halls; the western half of the block, marked off by a north-south fence, may thus have served as an area for food preparation.

In Phase IV, which extended from the end of the Nara into the Heian period, buildings concentrated in the western half of the block. It is difficult to regard these as ordinary houses, however, judging from the arrangement of the buildings and the existence of warehouses and

other structures, and considering the recovery from the western ditch of East First Avenue of slag, and of fragments of clay bellows nozzles and shaft furnaces, it is thought that some kind of manufacturing activity was conducted in the block.

Even during the Heian period, in Phase V, although the site was less intensely utilized, it nonetheless served as the locus of housing, thus verifying the continuing occupation of the site even subsequent to the abandonment of the Nara capital. Also, a wooden coffin burial was conducted in one corner of the site. In Phase VI, however, only small-scale buildings existed in scattered fashion, and it appears that the bulk of the site was turned into cultivated land. It was at this time that the western ditch of East First Avenue served as an irrigation ditch.

From a pit discovered at the base of the southern ditch of the northern block-boundary street of East First Ward on Seventh Street, crania and long bones of horses were recovered, together with pottery bearing human faces drawn in ink and other objects. Datable from the pottery to the start of the Nara period, this pit, associated with animal-related ritual, was dug at a stage when water was not flowing through the ditch. Also, from the result of fatty acid analysis, the five pottery interments discovered at road surfaces and elsewhere were all determined to have held human remains, and judging from their sizes, are believed to have been the graves of children. The above discoveries will likely draw attention as the first examples known for the Nara palace site. In addition, pit dwellings from the Kofun period were detected at the surface of East First Avenue.

III ARTIFACTS

Artifacts yielded mainly by the western ditch of East First Avenue included pottery and other baked clay objects, roof tiles and bricks, wooden implements, metal goods, stone objects, and *mokkan* (inscribed wooden tablets) ; Jōwa *shōhō* copper coins, lacquer ware, and pottery were also recovered from the wooden coffin burial. Among these items, ritual-related articles such as metal human effigies, wooden objects serving as effigies for *koto* and other objects, pottery bearing human faces drawn in ink, and ceramic miniature table and cooking ware, will receive attention as materials bearing on rituals in the Nara capital. The *koto* effigies suggest the existence of a prototype heretofore not known among *koto*, and spear effigies with wavy lines drawn in ink are also likely to receive notice for their rarity.

A large number of metal human effigies have been recovered from the southern half of the Nara capital, with the bulk of these being made of iron. Some of these have wavy bodies formed with gently meandering curves, others are upright figures with the legs spreading outward, still others are perforated with four round holes from the face down to the abdomen. With regard to the latter type, it can be seen that they were made by first drawing the eyes, nose, and mouth with a burin, then executing the holes, and finally cutting the legs apart with a burin and spreading them to the right and left.

The recovery of a stone belt fitting, together with the existence of a wooden coffin burial, indicates that even in the Heian period human activity was conducted at this locus, a finding not inconsistent with the temporal change in archaeological features.

From the perspective of scientific analysis, it has become clear from examinations of fatty acid residues that pottery interments, made in the roadway and elsewhere, were jar burials of humans, and also that offerings placed in the lacquer ware and pottery included in the wooden coffin burial possibly contained animal products. Further, pollen analysis and diatom analysis of the fill from the western ditch of East First Avenue have clarified the manner of sedimentation of the ditch.

IV ISSUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It is now evident, with regard to the archaeological features of Block 16, that temporal change occurred in six phases; it is thought that the move of the capital to Kuni took place between the second and third phases. Whereas this move has been regarded as an epoch-making event with regard to changes in archaeological features, as investigations of the Nara capital have proceeded in recent years and clues for concrete knowledge of the trends at Nara at the time of the move gradually increase, examples have been recognized for the period encompassing the move to Kuni in which the basic arrangement of buildings did not greatly change, with one portion of the structures remaining while others were rebuilt. In the current investigations as well, the basic continuity in the shape of utilization of the site should be noted. In addition, on the basis of previous smaller-scaled excavations, the existence of roofed earthen walls has been deduced from the detection of ground-level gutters to catch the runoff from the roof; in the current investigations a broader-scaled area was investigated, and from a consideration of the features together with the recovered artifacts, it is now conceivable that the construction of the outer enclosure of the block took a certain span of time to complete. In other words, it can be seen in this case that construction of the eastern side took place after the northern, and was followed by that of the southern side, and it has accordingly become clear that housing sites were not always accompanied by facilities forming an outer enclosure. Further, the discovery of a housing site, from the first half of the Nara period, on the scale of an entire block, in the southern half of the capital where small-scaled house sites were regarded as common, shows that traditional views in this regard are not definitive, and that reexamination based on advances made in subsequent investigations will be necessary.

With regard to artifacts recovered from roadside ditches, these involve the problem of uncertainty about the place where they were discarded. The western ditch of East First Avenue was a major drainage route of the capital, flowing south from the Nara palace, and as the ditch assumes a gentle inclination at this point for topographical reasons, it is hard to rule out the possibility that these artifacts flowed down from the upper reaches of the ditch. But unlike the

wooden spear and *koto* effigies, judging from the conditions in which *mokkan*, pottery, and animal remains are found, and from the states of preservation of these items themselves, it is thought that they were discarded at places not far removed from the point of discovery. From this perspective, the *mokkan* from the western ditch of East First Avenue suggest, by their contents, that a facility similar in nature to a dormitory for lower government officials existed in the nearby area, including the excavation site itself. If such a facility was indeed located in Block 16, from the position of the strata yielding the *mokkan*, it would correspond with Phases II and III of the sequence of archaeological features, thought to represent a housing site for government officials. On the other hand, the jar used in the pottery interment appears strongly related to the central Kawachi region, or the area extending from eastern Setsu to southern Yamashiro, and is thought to belong to the Heijōkyū 2 style; some kind of relationship may therefore be assumed between these regions and the residents of Phase II. Whether the two interpretations just given are compatible cannot be clearly resolved at present, and the form in which the facility mentioned above will reveal itself in terms of archaeological features is also uncertain. It is hoped that these issues will become clear through subsequent developments in the archaeological investigation of the Nara capital.