

Manga

# Guide to Cultural Properties for Beginners

**Kuninomiya — Legendary Imperial Palace**



## Introduction

The Mikanohara area is located in Kizugawa City in the southern part of Kyoto Prefecture. This area is home to a beautiful pastoral landscape, to which cherry blossoms and cosmos flowers add color in spring and fall, respectively. With mountains in three directions and the gentle Kizugawa River in the south, Mikanohara has geographical features that would have been suitable for an ancient capital.

In the 12th year of the Tenpyo era (roughly 740), about 1,300 years ago, Emperor Shomu relocated the national capital from Heijokyo to Kunikyo, whose central part—Kuninomiya—was in present-day Mikanohara. After that, the imperial palace was again relocated to Heijokyo, while Kuninomiya was reconstructed as a provincial monastery. Although Kunikyo was a national capital only during the very short period from the 12th year to the 16th year of the Tenpyo era (from 740 to 744)—three years and three months— that period saw a variety of very important measures implemented to establish Japan as a full-fledged state and improve its national systems under Emperor Shomu, including the issuance of the order to build provincial monasteries around the country, the formulation of the Law Permitting Permanent Ownership of Newly Cultivated Land, and the issuance of the order to build the Great Buddha of Nara. In this sense, Kunikyo played an important role as a national capital.

Since 1973, the Kyoto Prefectural Board of Education has been conducting archeological surveys on the historic site of Kuninomiya, gradually revealing what the short-term “legendary” imperial palace looked like at the time of its existence.

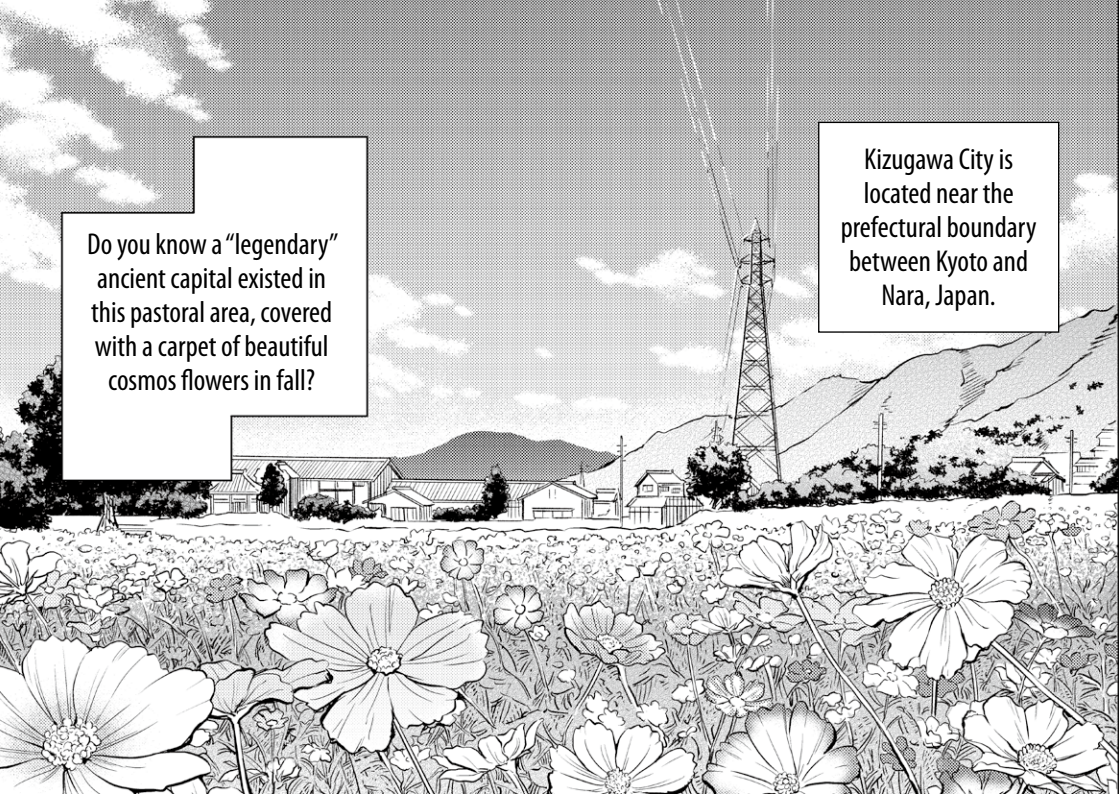
We have published this booklet, *Manga Guide to Cultural Properties for Beginners: Kuninomiya—Legendary Imperial Palace*, to provide details about the historic site of Kuninomiya. We hope that this booklet serves as a starting point for your intellectual journey to the background to the establishment of Kuninomiya and regional history.

Approximately 1,300 years after its establishment, Kuninomiya does not exist in its original form but still lies calmly under the ground. If this booklet inspires your interest in Kuninomiya, why not visit the site in person and imagine what the capital looked like in ancient times?

In conclusion, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Rocho Enoki, the manga artist who drew the manga in this booklet, and other people involved for their cooperation.

January 2023


Akinori Maekawa, Superintendent of the Kyoto Prefectural Board of Education



Do you know a "legendary" ancient capital existed in this pastoral area, covered with a carpet of beautiful cosmos flowers in fall?

Kizugawa City is located near the prefectural boundary between Kyoto and Nara, Japan.

**The capital was named "Kunikyō," and the imperial palace therein was "Kuninomiya."**



Its total picture has not yet been revealed...

What did the capital look like? What was its position?



Akino!  
You also must  
take frequent  
breaks!

Mikanohara  
area,  
Kamo-cho,  
Kizugawa City

The weather  
forecast said  
that today  
would be the  
hottest this  
year so far...

Be careful  
not to suffer  
heatstroke!

How hot!

**Sakura Akino**  
*Local government academic staff member*



What are  
you doing?

I also want to dig up roof  
tiles on my own!!

Shuk  
Shuk

Shuk  
Shuk



Yesterday, roof tiles were dug up  
in front of me!

I had seen ancient roof tiles in storage  
and exhibition rooms before.  
But it was the first time for me to see  
roof tiles actually dug up!!

So many  
tile pieces!

大量

Shuk  
Shuk



I don't want  
to take a  
break now!



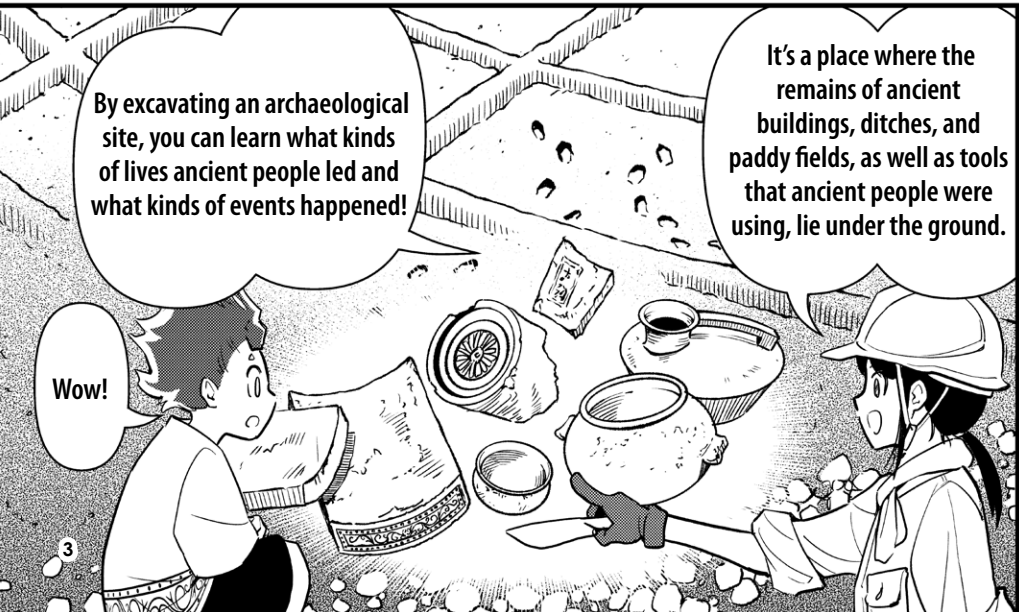
We are excavating an archaeological site!



Is this boy a Kuni Elementary School student?



Archaeological site?



By excavating an archaeological site, you can learn what kinds of lives ancient people led and what kinds of events happened!

It's a place where the remains of ancient buildings, ditches, and paddy fields, as well as tools that ancient people were using, lie under the ground.

Wow!

The emperor lived there long ago.

There was also a building called "Daigokuden," an ancient Diet building, which was the political center of Japan!

*Ku Ku! Buh baah*

Actually, behind Kuni Elementary School, which you attend, was the center of Japan about 1,300 years ago!

Really?

**Kuni Elementary School**

That's natural because it's a calm place now.

But that place now looks like an ordinary park, so I can't imagine what it looked like long ago.

Yes, of course!  
This entire area was formerly an imperial palace called Kuninomiya!

Were there various other buildings?

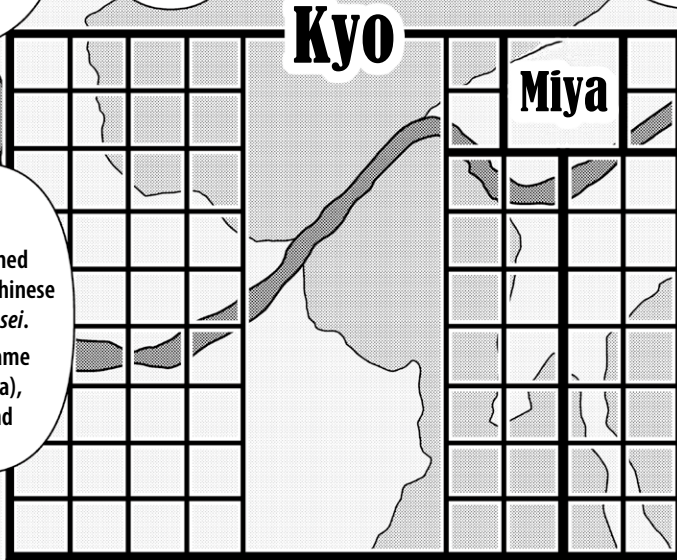
From the Miya area, a wide street led toward the south.

Other streets were parallel to that road or at right angles to it. So, the Kyo area as a whole looked like a grid.

But Kuninomiya was 3.8 times larger than the Kyoto Imperial Palace!

Kuninomiya, the Miya area of the imperial capital called "Kunikyō," was roughly one-third as large as Heijōkyū, the Miya area of the previous capital located in Nara.

An ancient capital consisted of two areas: Miya, the area with the imperial residence and political facilities; and Kyō, a residential area for ordinary people.



Kunikyō was designed based on a model of Chinese capitals called *jobosei*.

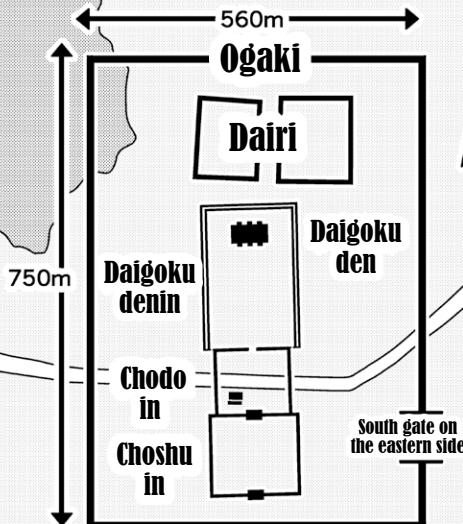
It was structured in the same manner as Heijōkyō (Nara), Nagaokakyo (Kyoto), and Heiankyō (Kyoto)!

This restored layout is based on a theory proposed by Kenryo Ashikaga.

Kuninomiya was unique in that its Dairi comprised two sections.

The reason why there were two Dairi sections is still unknown.

One theory explains that Emperor Shōmu lived in one of the two sections, while the abdicated Empress Genshō, his aunt, lived in the other. Another theory suggests that the two sections were built at different times.



In addition to Daigokudenin, a zone centered around Daigokuden, the Miya area of Kunikyō had Chodo in and Choshu in,

zones where government officials were working, and

Dairi, the residence of Emperor Shōmu, who was the emperor at that time.

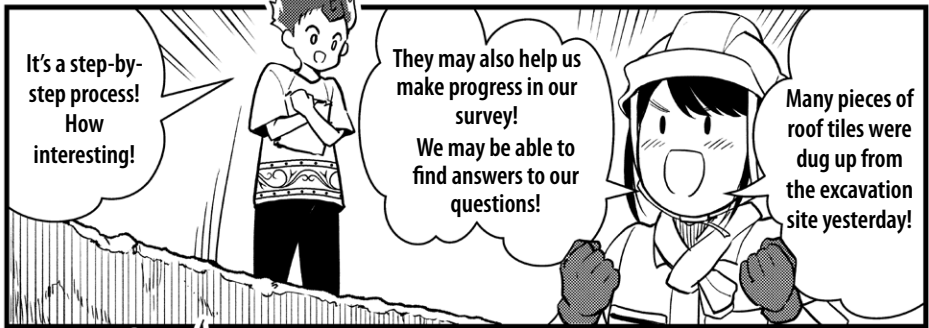


But various theories have been proposed and compared with descriptions in the historical materials. Various excavated relics have also helped to gradually verify the proposed theories!



Excavations have been conducted for 50 years, but there are still many things we don't know...

Some things still remain unknown.



It's a step-by-step process! How interesting!

They may also help us make progress in our survey! We may be able to find answers to our questions!

Many pieces of roof tiles were dug up from the excavation site yesterday!



I'm Irakami!



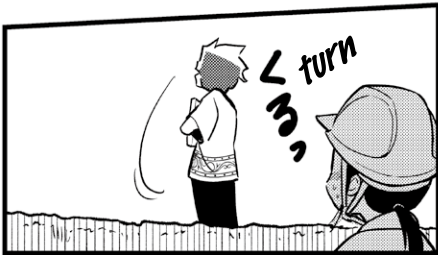
Well



What's your name?

I'm happy that you seem interested!





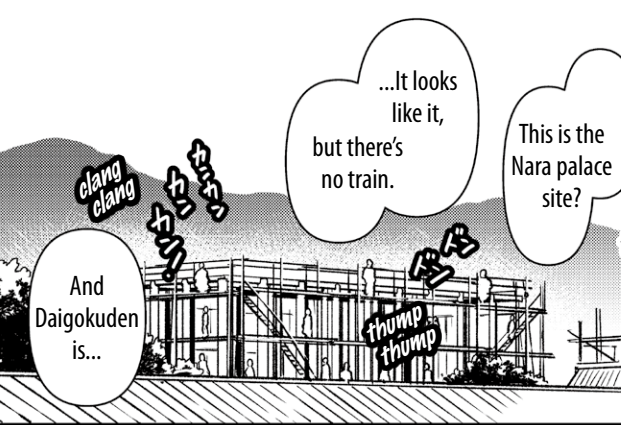


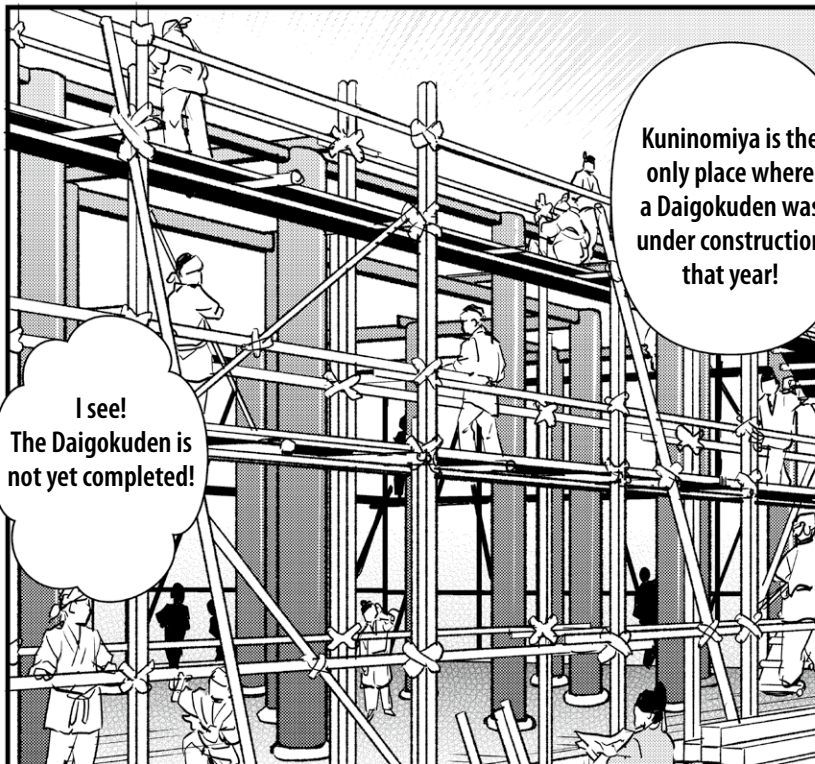
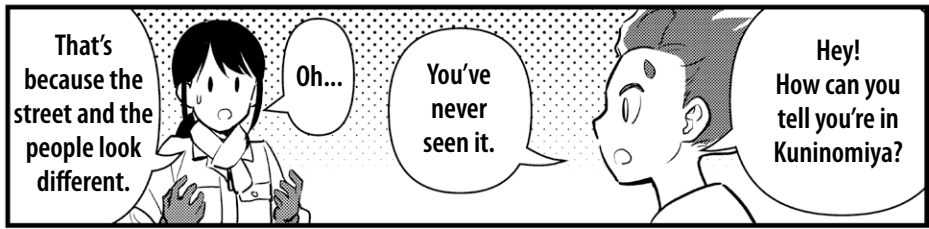
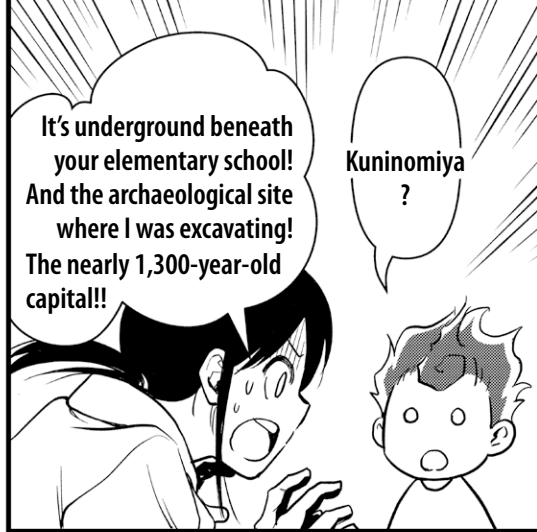
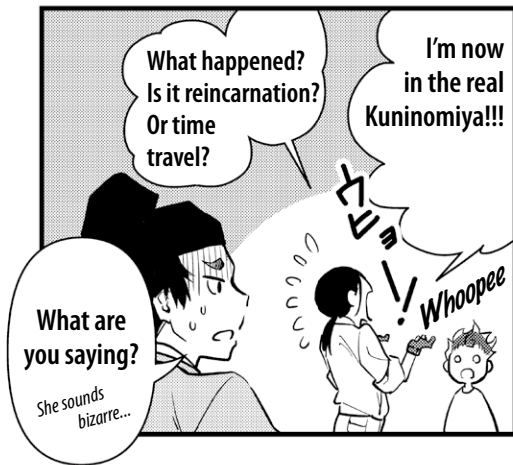
What?

FLOAT

クッ

THUD!

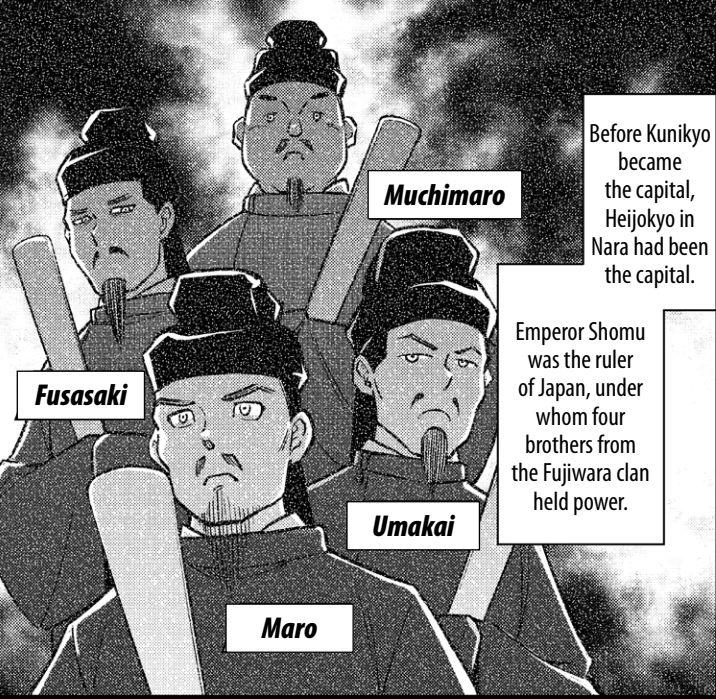




Kunitomiya is the  
only place where  
a Daigokuden was  
under construction  
that year!

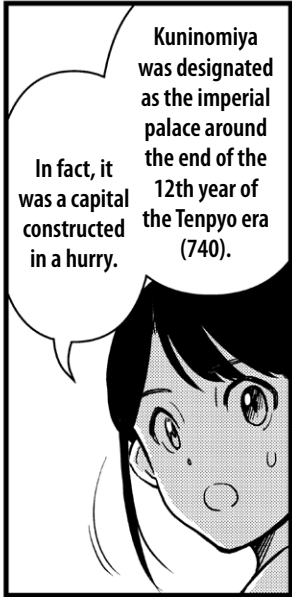
And he said  
it's in the 13th  
year of the  
Tenpyo era.





Before Kunikyo became the capital, Heijokyo in Nara had been the capital.

Emperor Shomu was the ruler of Japan, under whom four brothers from the Fujiwara clan held power.



Kuninomiya was designated as the imperial palace around the end of the 12th year of the Tenpyo era (740).

In fact, it was a capital constructed in a hurry.



All four Fujiwara brothers also died from smallpox.

At that time, many people died due to famine, an earthquake, and the spread of smallpox, a contagious viral disease.



But Fujiwara no Hirotsugu, a member of the Fujiwara clan felt dissatisfied with that and rebelled against Tachibana no Moroe, throwing the entire society into great turmoil.

After that, Tachibana no Moroe, a former member of the imperial family who had been demoted to a subject, held political power and appointed competent people, including scholars and Buddhist priests, to work with him.



The new location of the capital was this,

To make a breakthrough in that difficult situation, the emperor decided to relocate the capital.

Kuninomiya!



I will leave for Kuninomiya.

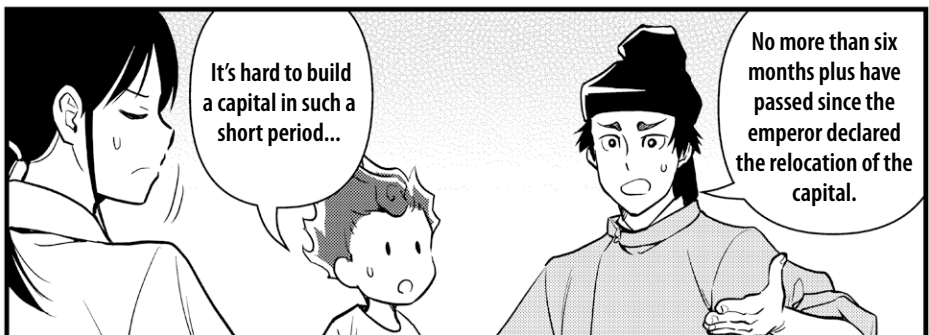
By building provincial monasteries across the country, he aimed to rule the nation with the help of Buddha.

On the 14th day of the second month\* of the 13th year of the Tenpyo era (741), soon after Emperor Shomu began to live at Kuninomiya, he issued an order to build provincial monasteries around Japan.



I'm not sure this is true, but I've heard a rumor that the mastermind of the relocation was Tachibana no Moroe.

\* This date is based on a description in *Konkomyo Saishoogyo* (a Buddhist scripture).



It's hard to build a capital in such a short period...

No more than six months plus have passed since the emperor declared the relocation of the capital.

**Daigokuden in Heijokyo**

Reconstruction work is now under way.

That's why Mokuryo staff are very busy.

The Daigokuden building in Heijokyo will be disassembled and reconstructed on the Kunikyo site to be used as the center of imperial politics.

Are you also working at Mokuryo?

I see. That's because they were constructing buildings at the center of the state!

**Mokuryo**

**Daiku  
Shoku  
Chojoko  
Banjoko**

The highest-ranking Mokuryo official was "Daiku," who had a very high status.

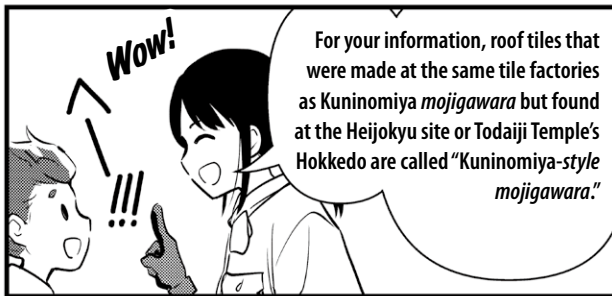
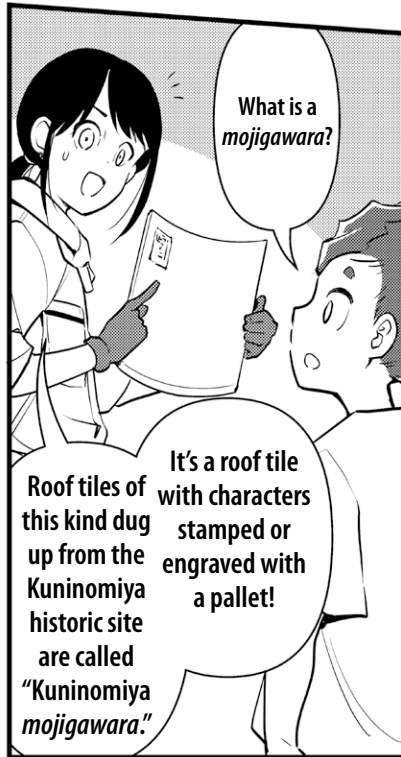
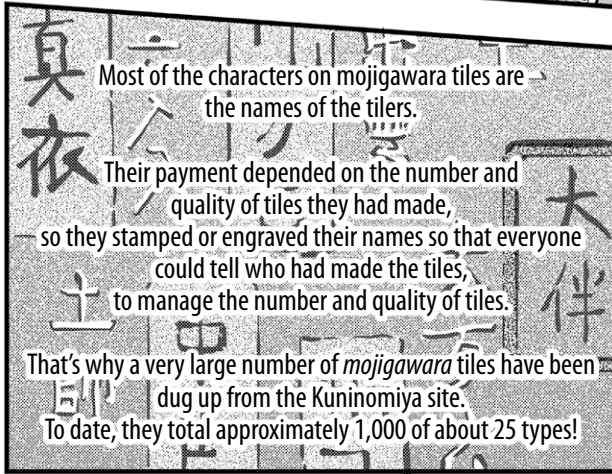
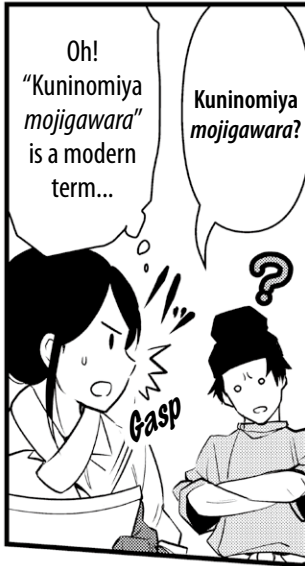
"Mokuryo" was the name of a government body in charge of constructing temples and court buildings.

As you see, I'm a tiler.

No.

!!

ZAP







Dear God,  
dear Buddha,  
thank you  
very much!

**WHOOPEE!**

She sounds  
too excited.



It's miraculous I  
could meet a tiler  
at that time in  
person!!

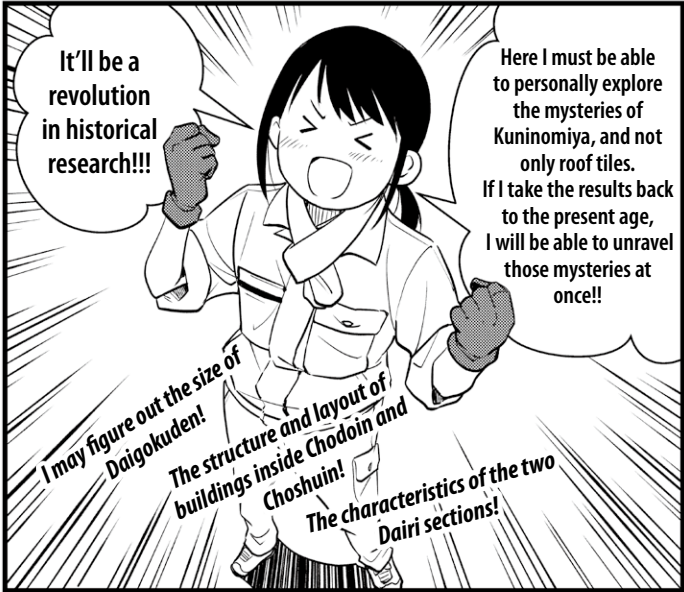


Anyway

hehe



How will you  
return to the  
present age?



It'll be a  
revolution  
in historical  
research!!!

Here I must be able  
to personally explore  
the mysteries of  
Kuninomiya, and not  
only roof tiles.  
If I take the results back  
to the present age,  
I will be able to unravel  
those mysteries at  
once!!

I may figure out the size of  
Daigokuden!

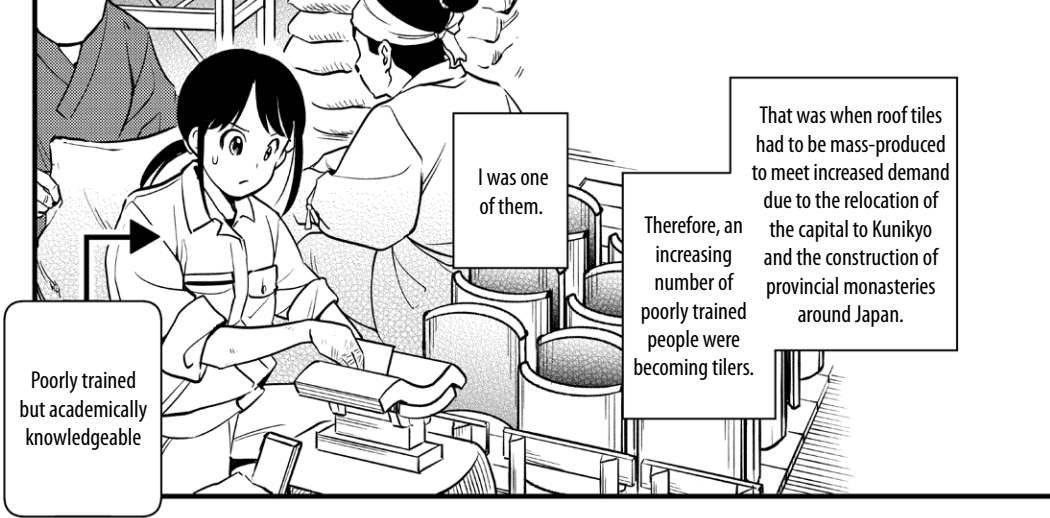
The structure and layout of  
buildings inside Chodoin and  
Choshuin!

The characteristics of the two  
Dairi sections!



I happened to  
assist the tiler at  
his tile factory  
until I could  
return to the  
present age.

**ああああああ!!**  
**AAAARGH!!**



Poorly trained but academically knowledgeable

I was one of them.

Therefore, an increasing number of poorly trained people were becoming tilers.

That was when roof tiles had to be mass-produced due to the relocation of the capital to Kunikyo and the construction of provincial monasteries around Japan.



This would be enough to be used at Daigokuden.



It's done! I stamped the tile with my name!

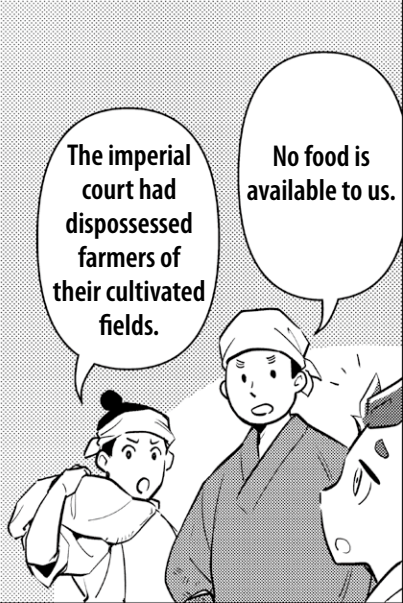


Two years passed...

Meanwhile, Chodoin and Choshuin were zoned with simple pillared fences...

Daigokudenin was zoned with a corridor called Tsuiji-kairo.

When I had a break, I observed various spots at Kuninomiya to verify findings from excavations.



The imperial court had dispossessed farmers of their cultivated fields.

No food is available to us.

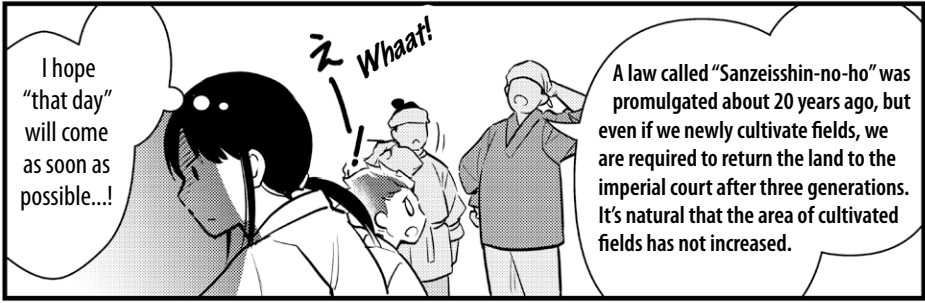


I'm hungry...

Grumble

smart

I fitted in with the Nara period, which corresponds roughly with the eighth century, in my own way.



I hope "that day" will come as soon as possible...!

Whaat!

A law called "Sanzeishin-no-ho" was promulgated about 20 years ago, but even if we newly cultivate fields, we are required to return the land to the imperial court after three generations. It's natural that the area of cultivated fields has not increased.

\* Sanzeishin-no-ho: A law that permitted farmers who had built fields and irrigation ditches themselves to own the land for three generations



It was promulgated at Kuninomiya!!

I memorized the name "Konden Einen Shizai-ho" at school!

It's finally come!!

It'd be good to become a farmer...

What a bold decision!

It has been decided to permit us to permanently own the entire tract of land we newly cultivate!

On the 27th day of the fifth month of the 15th year of the Tenpyo era (743), Emperor Shomu promulgated the Konden Einen Shizai-ho (Law Permitting Permanent Ownership of Newly Cultivated Land).

However, the timeline of Japanese history was approaching other critical days...



Shigarakinomiya was an imperial villa built in present-day Koga City, Shiga Prefecture. Furthermore...

Really?

Shigarakinomiya

Kunikyo

Heijokyo

I've heard the imperial court will invest in Shigarakinomiya.

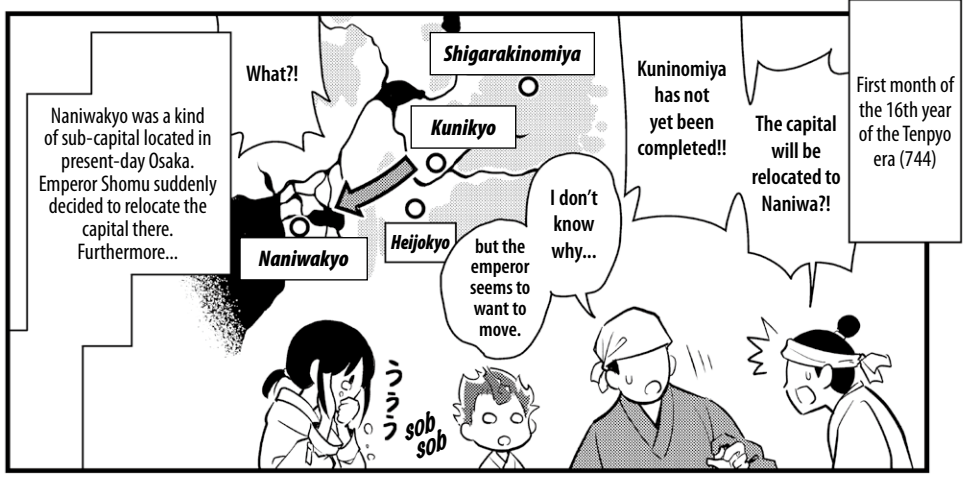
It's not yet been completed!!

It has been decided to discontinue constructing Kuninomiya

26th day of the 12th month of the 15th year of the Tenpyo era (743)



きたん GASP



Naniwakyō was a kind of sub-capital located in present-day Osaka. Emperor Shomu suddenly decided to relocate the capital there. Furthermore...

What?!

Shigarakinomiya

Kunikyo

Heijokyo

Naniwakyō

I don't know why... but the emperor seems to want to move.

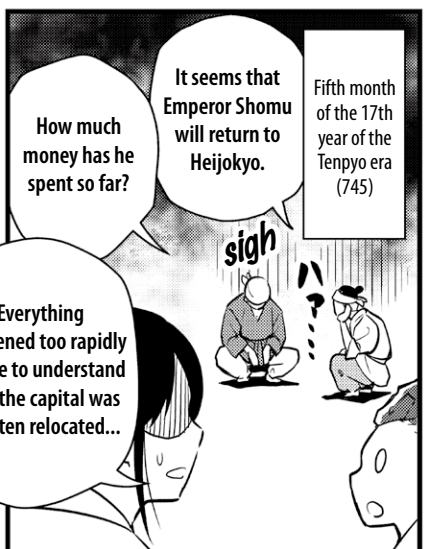
Kuninomiya has not yet been completed!!

The capital will be relocated to Naniwa?!

First month of the 16th year of the Tenpyo era (744)



すすり sob



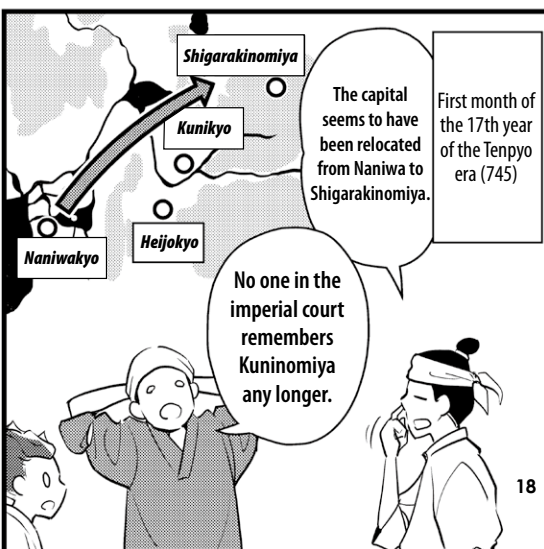
How much money has he spent so far?

It seems that Emperor Shomu will return to Heijokyo.

Fifth month of the 17th year of the Tenpyo era (745)

sigh

Everything happened too rapidly for me to understand why the capital was so often relocated...



Shigarakinomiya

Kunikyo

Heijokyo

Naniwakyō

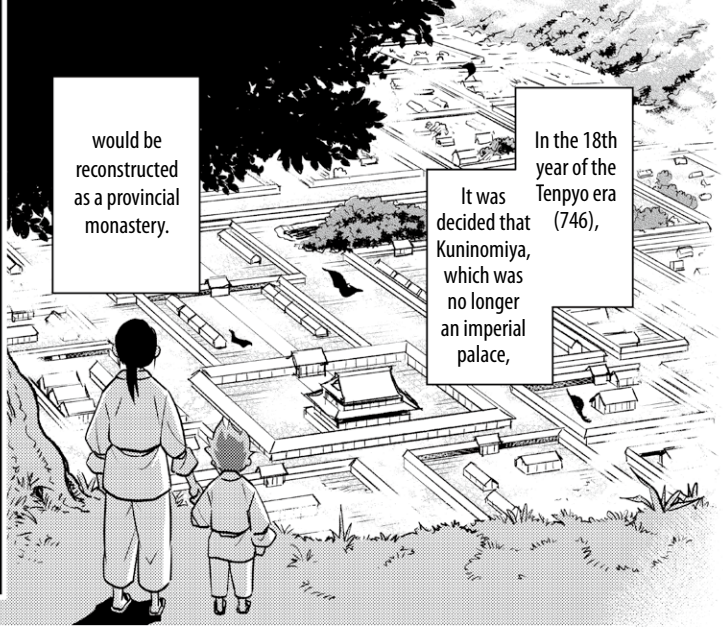
The capital seems to have been relocated from Naniwa to Shigarakinomiya.

First month of the 17th year of the Tenpyo era (745)

No one in the imperial court remembers Kuninomiya any longer.

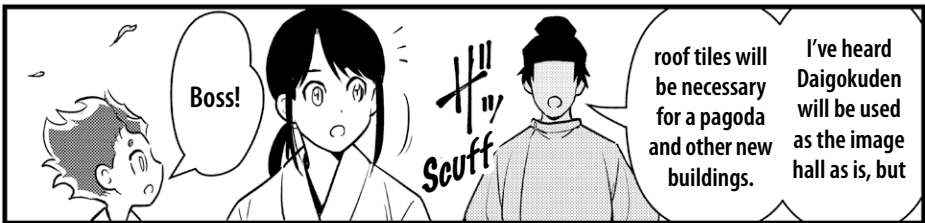


Sakura,  
what will  
happen to  
our work?



would be  
reconstructed  
as a provincial  
monastery.

In the 18th  
year of the  
Tenpyo era  
(746),  
It was  
decided that  
Kuninomiya,  
which was  
no longer an  
imperial  
palace,



Boss!

H!!  
Scuff

roof tiles will  
be necessary  
for a pagoda  
and other new  
buildings.  
I've heard  
Daigokuden  
will be used  
as the image  
hall as is, but



Sure!

One year  
later...



We will cooperate  
in constructing the  
provincial monastery  
to bring peace to this  
area!

\* Foundation stones: Stones supporting the lower end of the pillar of the pagoda

In the future, foundation stones of the pagoda will remain.

Even if the landscape changes, something will be handed down because history connects the past with the future.

Thank you

Sakura!

from the bottom of my heart...

I'm truly happy to have met you.

I'm delighted that you are so interested in history!

A seven-storied pagoda roofed with tiles produced by us was completed.

In the future, Kuni Elementary School will be built around this seven-storied pagoda and the main hall.



I feel as if I've had a five-year-long dream...

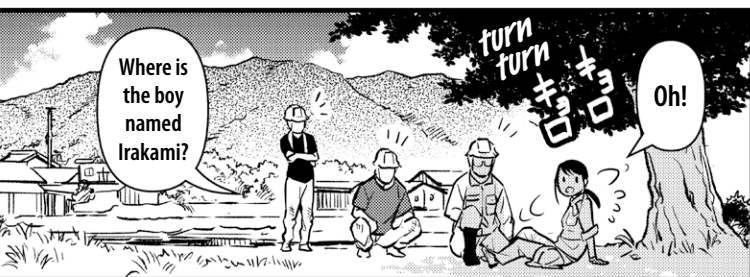
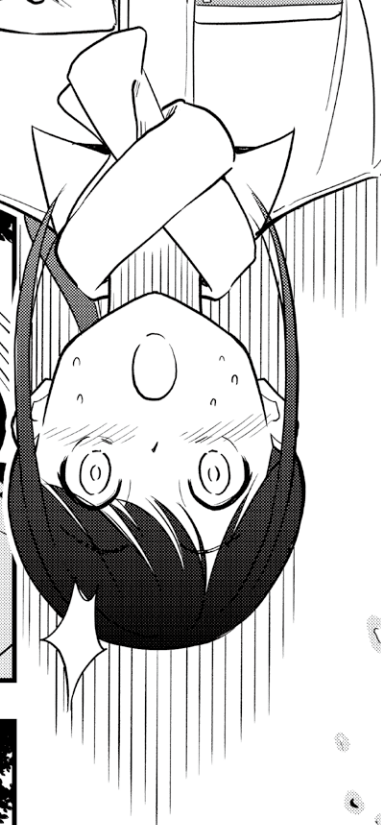


That's why we warned you!

At the excavation site. You suddenly fell.

Where am I?

You suffered heatstroke.



Where is the boy named Irakami?

turn turn くるくる

Oh!



You suffered hallucinations... You should visit the hospital!

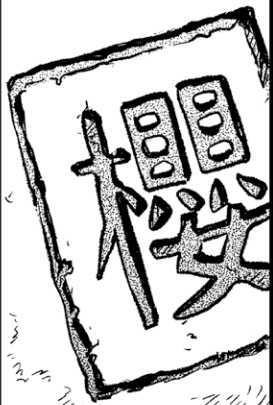
What?

What? There is no such boy here, and no more than five minutes have passed.

Yes...

Hallucinations...

This character...  
It's my name!



Click

I'm delighted that



you love history!

beneath this peaceful and  
calm land.

History connects the past with  
the future



I don't know whether that was  
a dream or reality.  
But it's certain that  
Kuninomiya existed here.



End

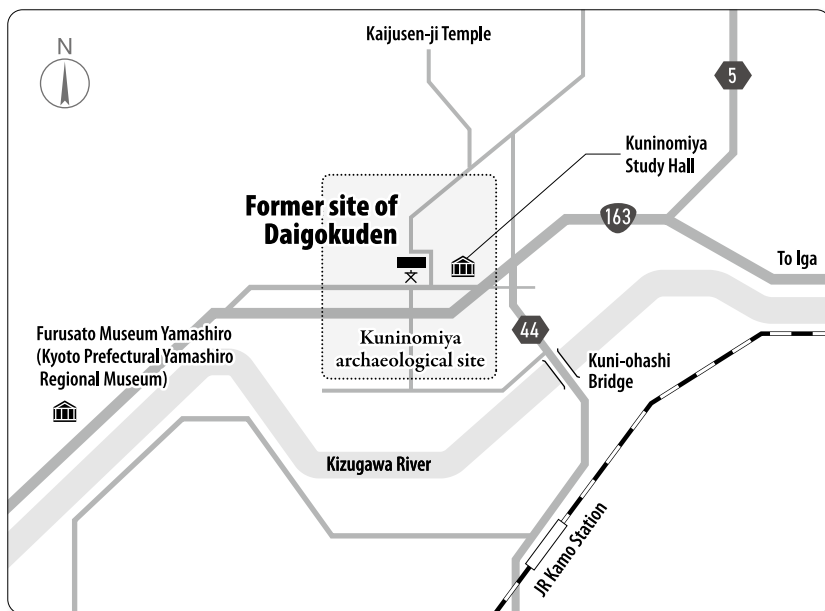


## Kuninomiya Chronology

(Extracted from *Shoku Nihongi*)

Year in the Tenpyo era	Corresponding Gregorian year	Lunar month and day: Events
12th year	740	<b>11th to 12th months:</b> Emperor Shomu visited Iga, Ise, Mino, and Omi Provinces. <b>15th day of the 12th month:</b> Emperor Shomu visited Kuninomiya and created a capital there for the first time. The abdicated empress and the consort of Emperor Shomu both arrived later.
13th year	741	<b>1st day of the 1st month:</b> Emperor Shomu visited Kuninomiya and held a New Year event called “Choga” there. Since the fences at the imperial palace had not yet been completed, curtains were used instead.
		<b>11th day of the 1st month:</b> Emperor Shomu reported to Ise Jingu Shrine and other shrines around Japan that the capital had been relocated to Kuninomiya. <b>24th day of the 3rd month:</b> Emperor Shomu issued the order to build provincial monasteries.
		<b>28th day of the 8th month:</b> Two markets (Higashinoichi and Nishinoichi) in Heijokyo were relocated to Kuninomiya. <b>16th day of the 10th month:</b> A bridge across a river to the east of Mt. Kase was completed. <b>21st day of the 11th month:</b> Emperor Shomu named the new capital “Yamato-no-kuni-no-Omiya.”
14th year	742	<b>1st day of the 1st month:</b> Since Daigokuden had not yet been completed, an arbor was temporarily built and used to hold the Choga event.
		<b>5th day of the 2nd month:</b> An envoy from Silla visited Japan. However, since the new capital had not yet been completed, the envoy was entertained in Dazaifu before being sent off. A road named “Kuninomiya Tohokudo” was constructed between Kuninomiya and Koga District, Omi Province.
		<b>From the 8th month:</b> Emperor Shomu began to sometimes visit Shigaraki Village, Koga.
15th year	743	<b>3rd day of the 1st month:</b> Emperor Shomu held the Choga event at Kuninomiya after spending New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day at Shigarakinomiya. <b>27th day of the 5th month:</b> Emperor Shomu promulgated the Konden Einen Shizai-ho (Law Permitting Permanent Ownership of Newly Cultivated Land).
		<b>15th day of the 10th month:</b> Emperor Shomu issued the order to build a Great Buddha. <b>24th day of the 12th month:</b> Weapons that had been left behind in Heijokyo, including ones for ritual use, were carried to Kuninomiya. <b>26th day of the 12th month:</b> Since it was decided to build Shigarakinomiya, the construction of Kuninomiya was discontinued.
16th year	744	<b>1st day of the intercalary 1st month:</b> Emperor Shomu sought government officials’ opinions about which he should designate as the capital—Kuni or Naniwa—with 181 retainers answering “Kuni” and 153 “Naniwa.” <b>4th day of the intercalary 1st month:</b> In response to the same question, all ordinary people surveyed at the local market answered that they hoped that Kunikyō would become the capital. However, one person answered “Naniwa” and one “Heijo.”
		<b>1st day of the 2nd month:</b> Station bells, the seal of the emperor, and the seal of the Grand Council of State were carried from Kuninomiya to Naniwanomiya. <b>20th day of the 2nd month:</b> The Imperial Throne, large shields, and weapons, including ones for ritual use, were also carried from Kuninomiya to Naniwanomiya.
		<b>21st day of the 2nd month:</b> Ordinary people who lived in Kuninomiya were permitted to move to Naniwanomiya if they wanted. <b>26th day of the 2nd month:</b> Emperor Shomu declared that he would designate Naniwanomiya as the imperial capital.
17th year	745	<b>Around the 6th month:</b> Emperor Shomu redesignated Heijokyo as the capital.
18th year	746	<b>29th day of the 9th month:</b> Daigokuden in Kuninomiya, the former capital, was donated to Yamashiro Kokubun-ji Temple (the local provincial monastery).

## Kuninomiya Map



### Access

#### To JR Kamo Station

- About 15 minutes from JR Nara Station (Take the train bound for Kamo.)
- About one hour from JR Kyoto Station (Take the train bound for Nara and change at Kizu Station.)
- About 50 minutes from JR Tennoji Station (Take the train bound for Kamo.)

### Museums exhibiting items excavated at the Kuninomiya archaeological site

#### Furusato Museum Yamashiro (Kyoto Prefectural Yamashiro Regional Museum)

Senryoiwa, Kamikoma, Yamashiro-cho, Kizugawa City, Kyoto Prefecture 619-0204 / Tel.: +81 (0)774-86-5199

[Hours] 9:00 am to 4:30 pm

[Closed] Mondays (Open on Mondays that are national holidays, and closed the next day); New Year holidays (December 28 to January 4)

- This museum displays exhibits related to the unique history and culture of the southern part of Kyoto Prefecture in the fields of archaeology, history, and folklore.
- It features a permanent exhibition of roof tiles and earthen vessels excavated at the Kuninomiya archaeological site, which are mentioned in this booklet.

#### Kuninomiya Study Hall

28 Okazaki Kangae, Kamo-cho, Kizugawa City, Kyoto Prefecture 619-1103 / Tel.: +81 (0)774-76-9202

[Hours] 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

[Closed] Mondays (Open on Mondays that are national holidays, and closed the next day); New Year holidays (December 28 to January 4)

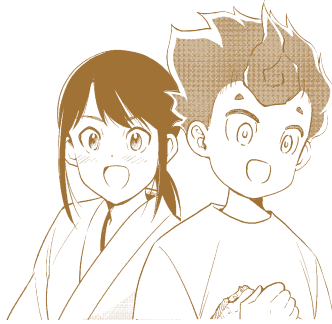
- This museum shows a video (DVD) of a restored image of Kuninomiya and displays roof tiles, earthen vessels, and other excavated items.



Former site of Daigokuden in Kuninomiya (photo by Shabo Nankado)



Pieces of Kuninomiya-style majigawara (roof tiles) (photo by Shabo Nankado)



Manga

## Guide to Cultural Properties for Beginners

**Kuninomiya—Legendary Imperial Palace**

Manga

### Guide to Cultural Properties for Beginners :Kuninomiya—Legendary Imperial Palace

1st print of the 1st issue published in January 2023

2nd print of the 1st issue published in January 2023

English Version: first edition, November 2023

- Publisher: Kyoto Prefectural Board of Education  
Yabunouchi-cho, Nishiiru, Shinmachi, Shimodachiuri-dori, Kamigyo-ku, Kyoto-shi, Kyoto Prefecture 602-8570 Japan / Tel.: +81 (0)75-414-5903
- Manga artist: Rocho Enoki
- Supervisor: Cultural Property Preservation Section, Kyoto Prefectural Board of Education
- Editor: Business Promotion Office, Kyoto Seika University (Kyoto International Manga Museum)

\* This booklet has been created under a comprehensive partnership agreement between Kyoto Prefecture and Kyoto Seika University.

\* No part of this booklet may be reproduced in any form, such as photocopies, scanned images, or digital files, or reprinted elsewhere without permission, excluding exceptions defined by the Copyright Act.

© 2023 Kyoto Prefecture