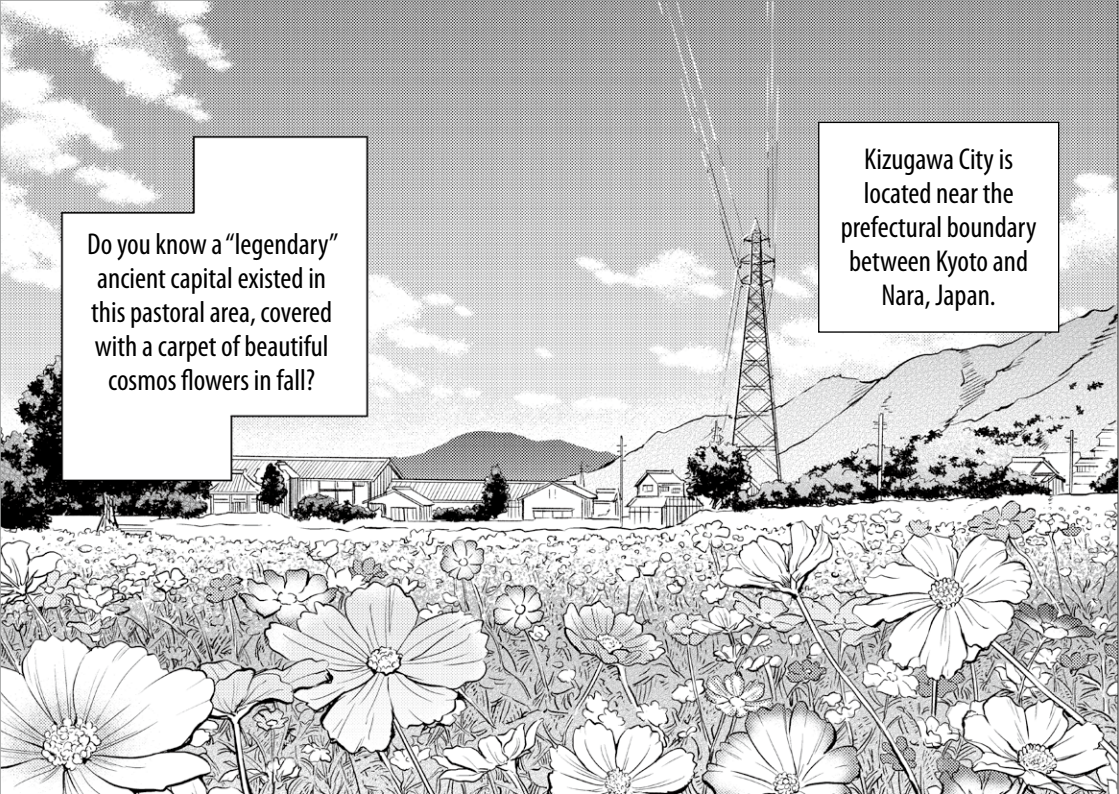


Manga

Guide to Cultural Properties for Beginners

Kuninomiya—Legendary Capital






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 “Kuninomiya.”



Its total picture has not yet been revealed...

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

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 Capital*, 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

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 Kuniomiya 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.

Kyo

Miya

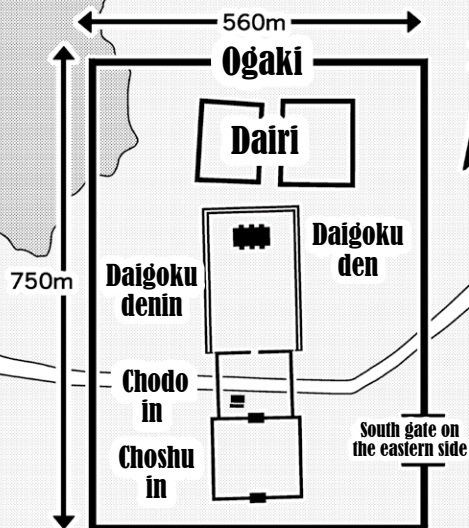
Kunikyō was designed based on a model of Chinese capitals called *jobosei*. It was structured in the same manner as Heijōkyō (Nara), Nagaokakyo (Kyoto), and Heiankyō (Kyoto)!

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

Kuninomiya was unique in that its Daiiri comprised two sections.

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

One theory explains that Emperor Shomu lived in one of the two sections, while the abdicated Empress Gensho, 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 Chodoin and Choshuin,

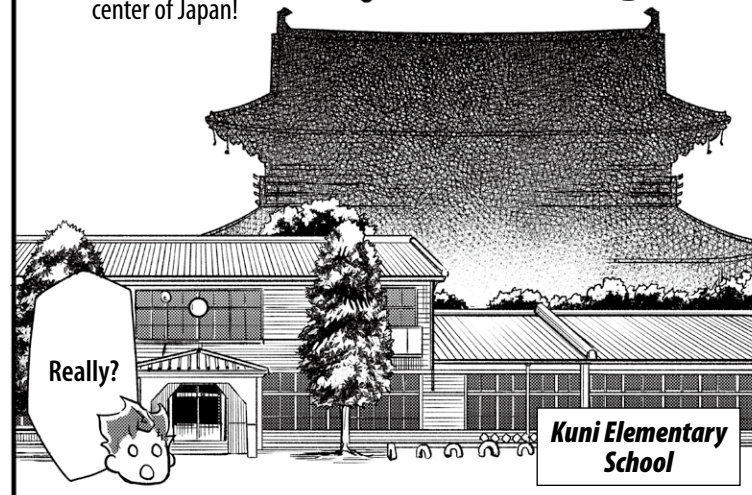
zones where government officials were working, and

Daiiri, the residence of Emperor Shomu, who was the emperor at that time.

The emperor lived there long ago.

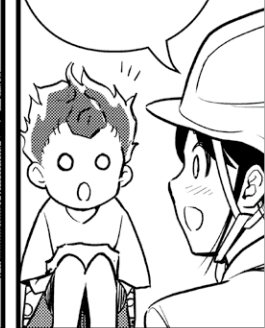
There was also a building called "Daigokuden," an ancient Diet building, which was the political center of Japan!

Buh baah



Really?

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



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

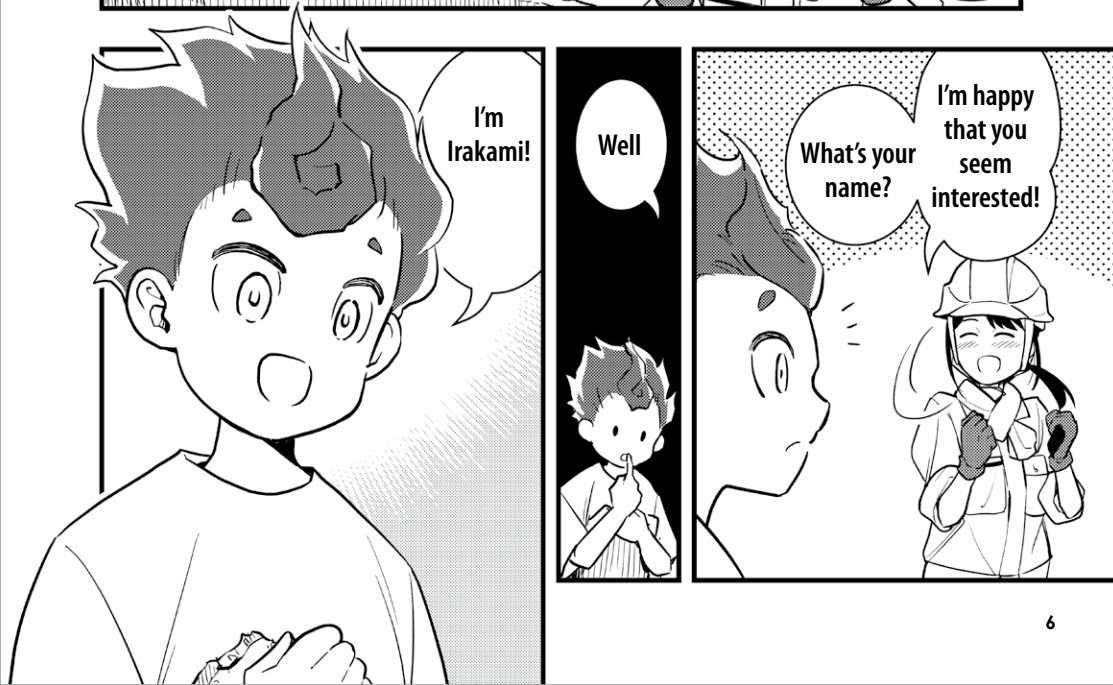
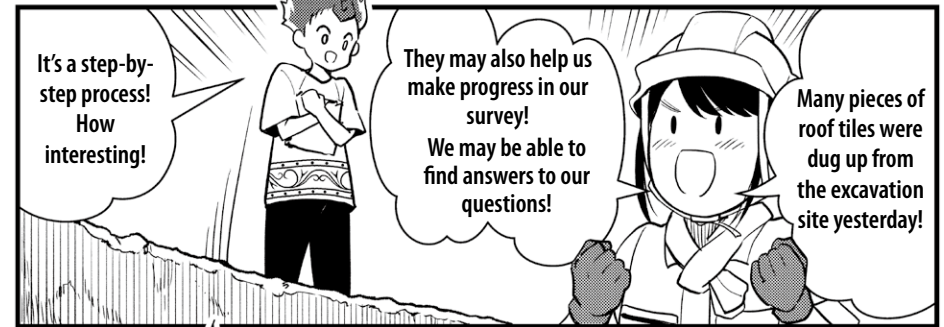
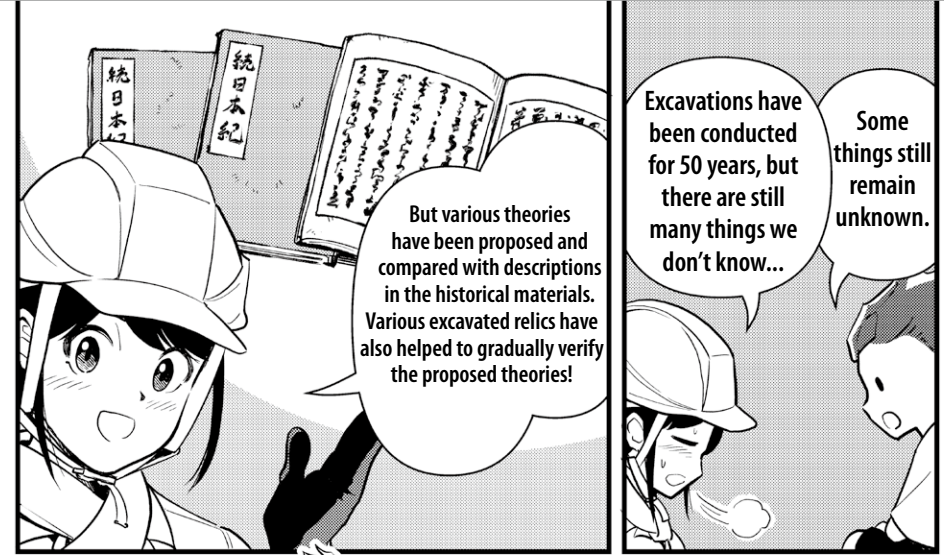
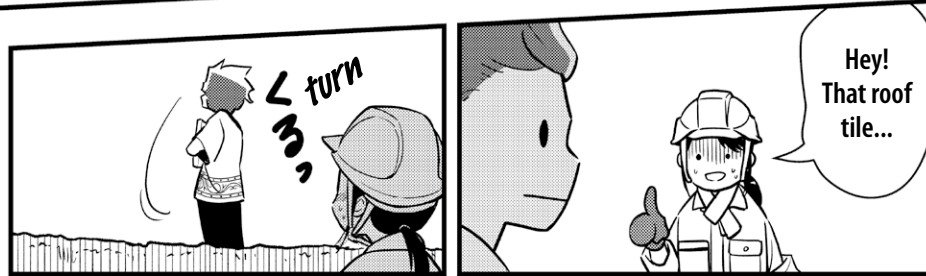
But that place now looks like an ordinary park, so I can't imagine what it looked like long ago.

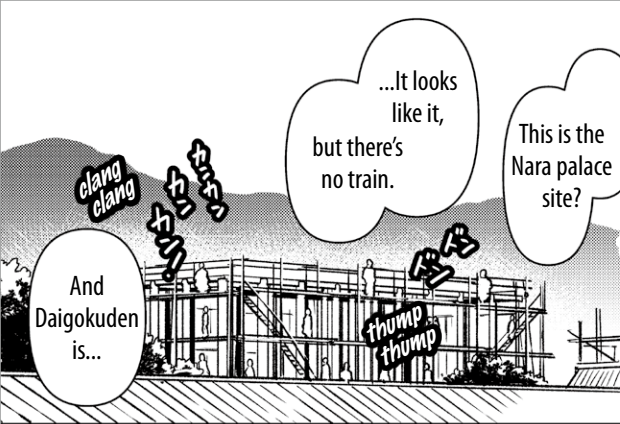


Yes, of course!
This entire area was formerly an imperial palace called Kuninomiya!

Were there various other buildings?









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.



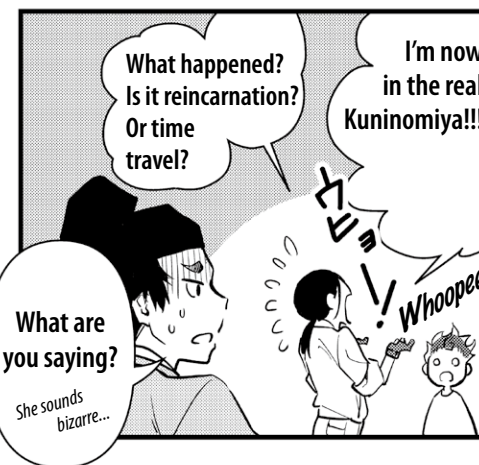
All four Fujiwara brothers also died from smallpox.

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.



What happened?
Is it reincarnation?
Or time travel?

I'm now in the real Kuninomiya!!!

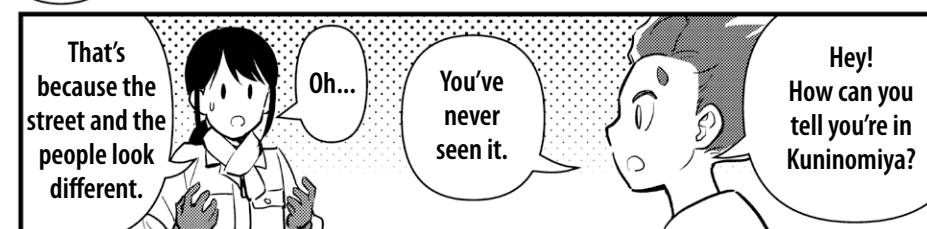
What are you saying?

She sounds bizarre...



It's underground beneath your elementary school! And the archaeological site where I was excavating! The nearly 1,300-year-old capital!!!

Kuninomiya?

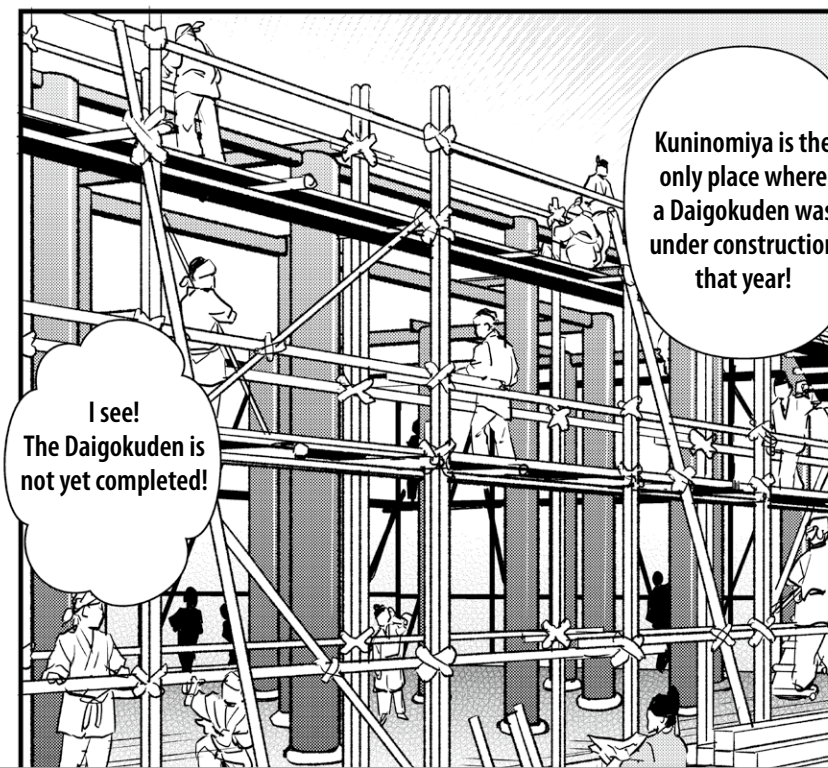


That's because the street and the people look different.

Oh...

You've never seen it.

Hey! How can you tell you're in Kuninomiya?

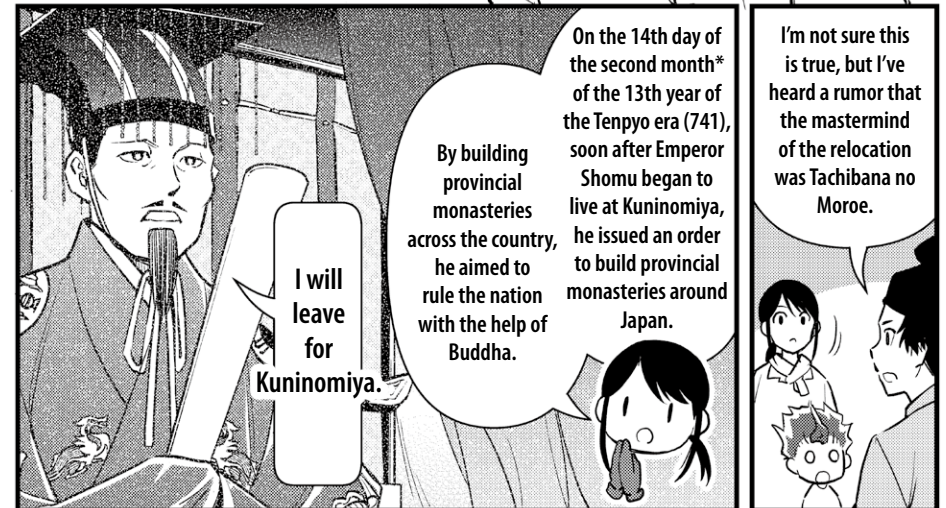
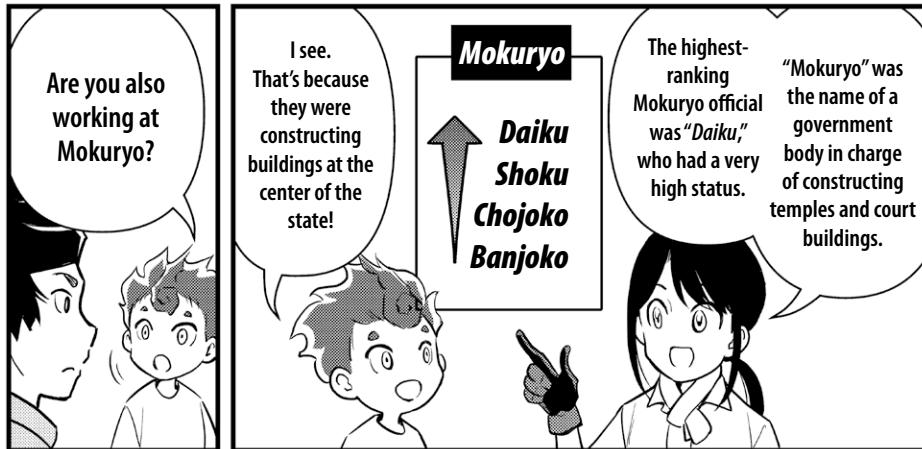
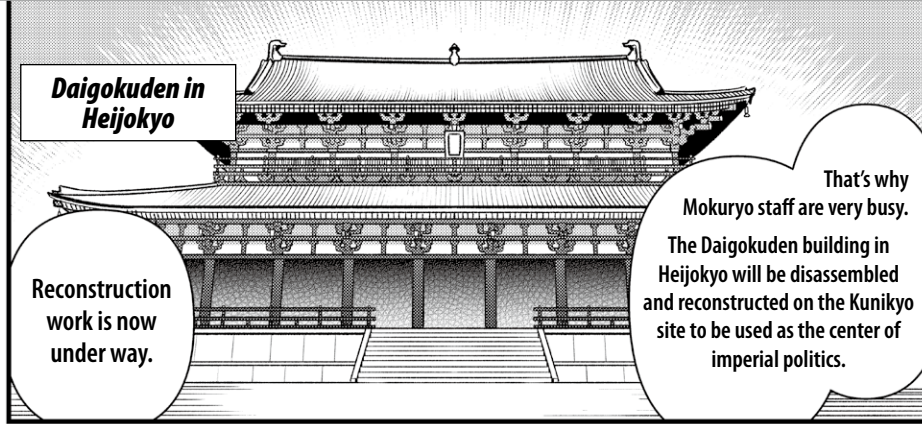


I see!
The Daigokuden is not yet completed!

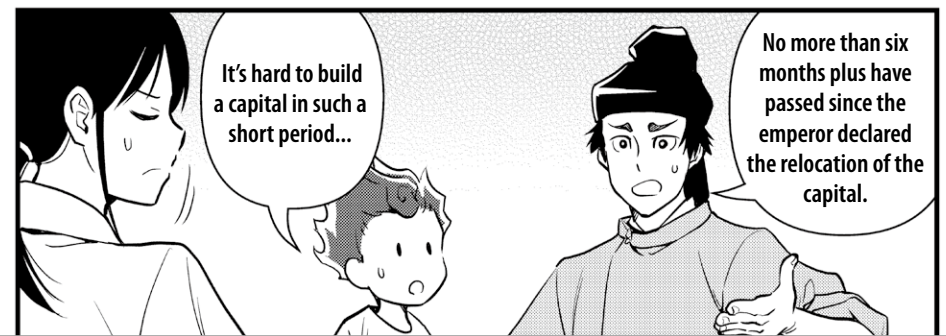
Kuninomiya is the only place where a Daigokuden was under construction that year!



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



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





Dear God,
dear Buddha,
thank you
very much!

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.

AAAARGH!!!



Oh!
"Kuninomiya
mojigawara"
is a modern
term...

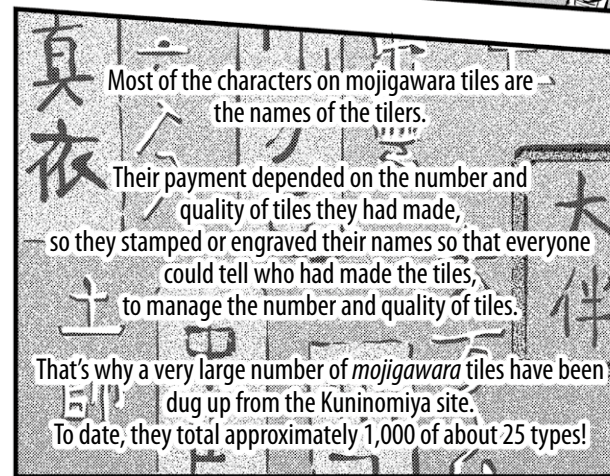
Kuninomiya
mojigawara?

Gasp



This is the first
time for me
to see such a
fresh ancient
roof tile...
of course!

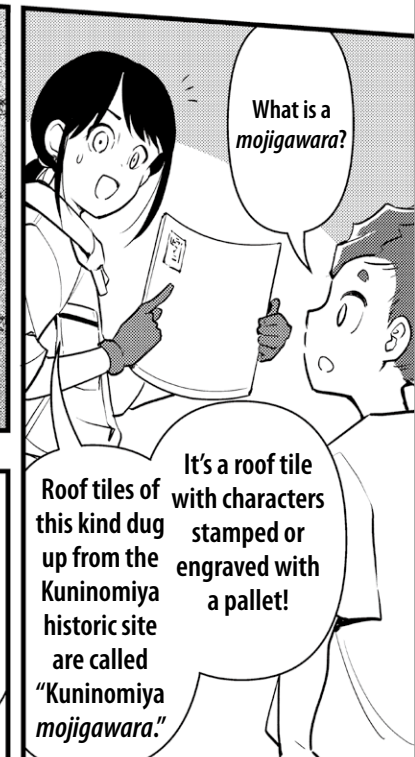
This must
be a freshly
made
Kuninomiya
mojigawara!



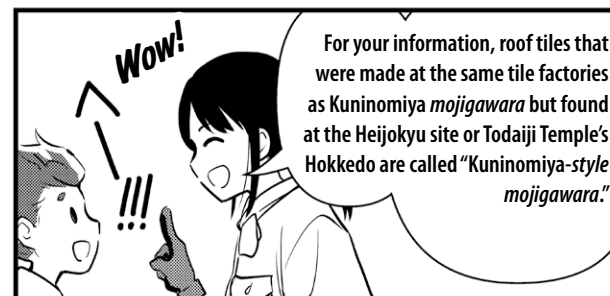
Most of the characters on mojigawara tiles are
the names of the tilers.

Their payment depended on the number and
quality of tiles they had made,
so they stamped or engraved their names so that everyone
could tell who had made the tiles,
to manage the number and quality of tiles.

That's why a very large number of *mojigawara* tiles have been
dug up from the Kuninomiya site.
To date, they total approximately 1,000 of about 25 types!



What is a
mojigawara?

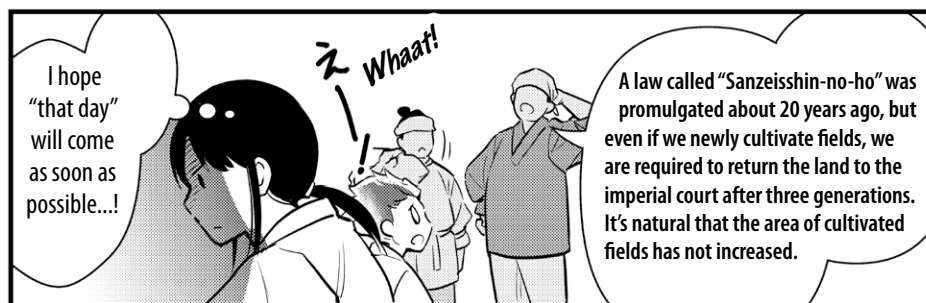


Wow!

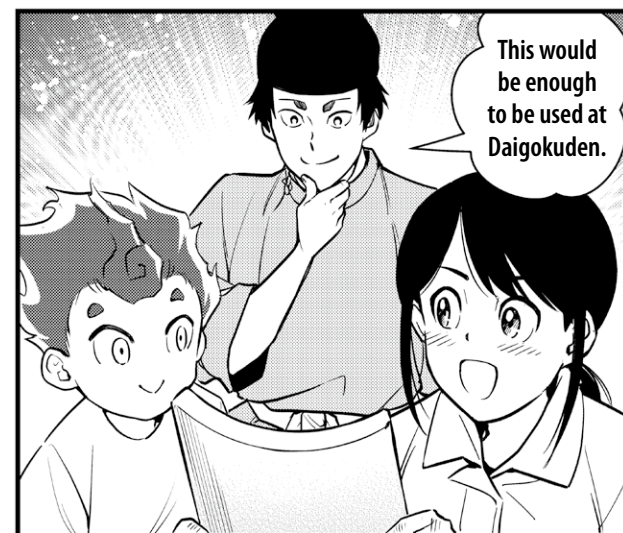
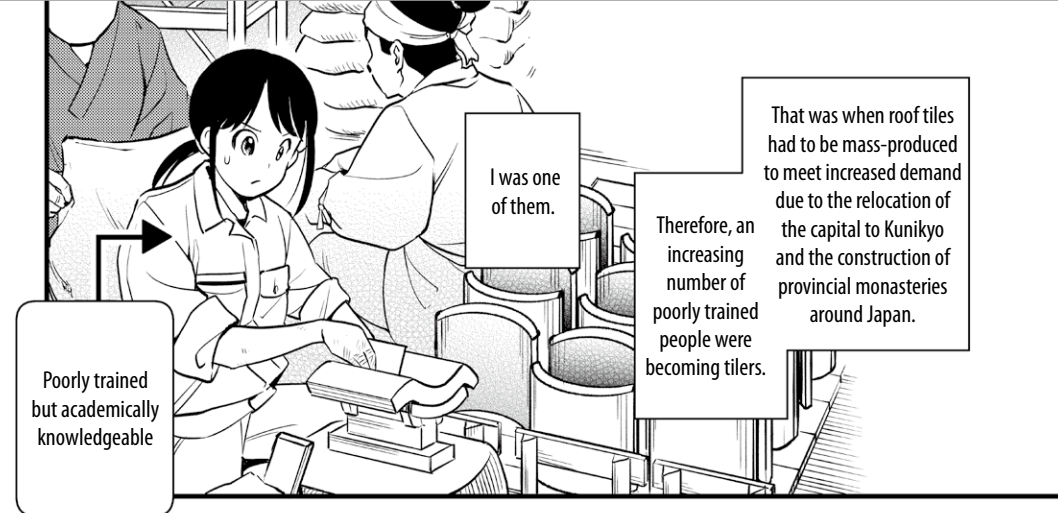
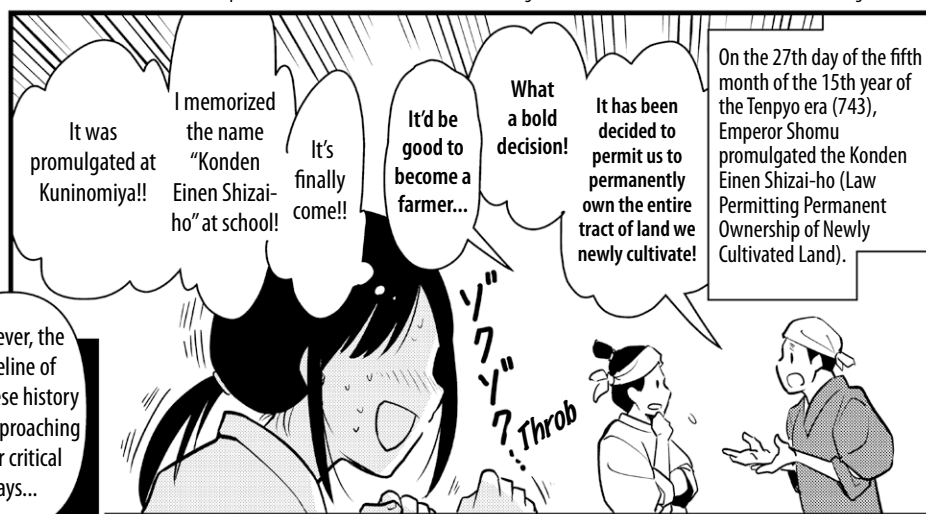
For your information, roof tiles that
were made at the same tile factories
as Kuninomiya *mojigawara* but found
at the Heijokyu site or Todaiji Temple's
Hokkedo are called "Kuninomiya-style
mojigawara."

Roof tiles of
this kind dug
up from the
Kuninomiya
historic site
are called
"Kuninomiya
mojigawara."

It's a roof tile
with characters
stamped or
engraved with
a pallet!

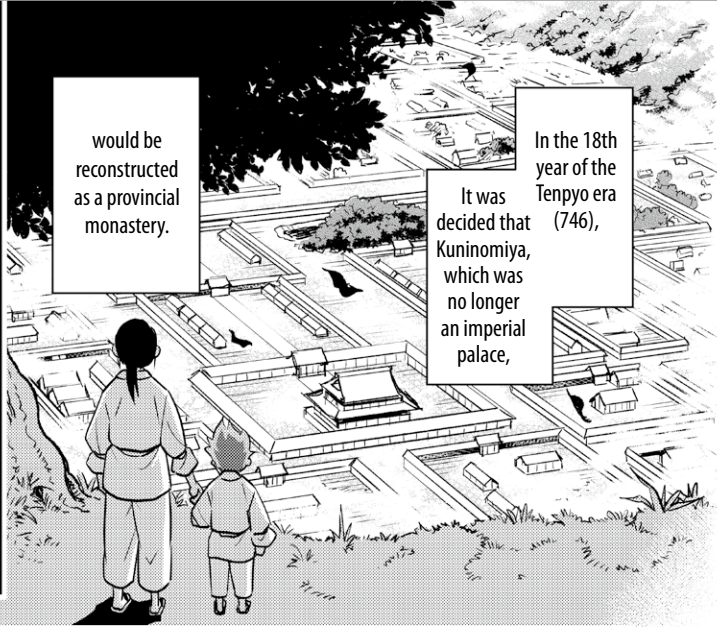


* Sanzeishin-no-ho: A law that permitted farmers who had built fields and irrigation ditches themselves to own the land for three generations





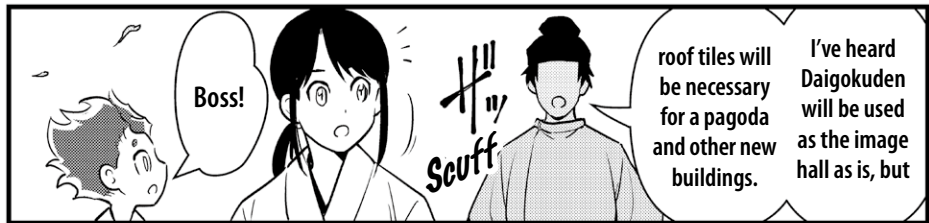
Sakura,
what will
happen to
our work?



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!

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!



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

Really?

Shigarakinomiya

Kunikyo

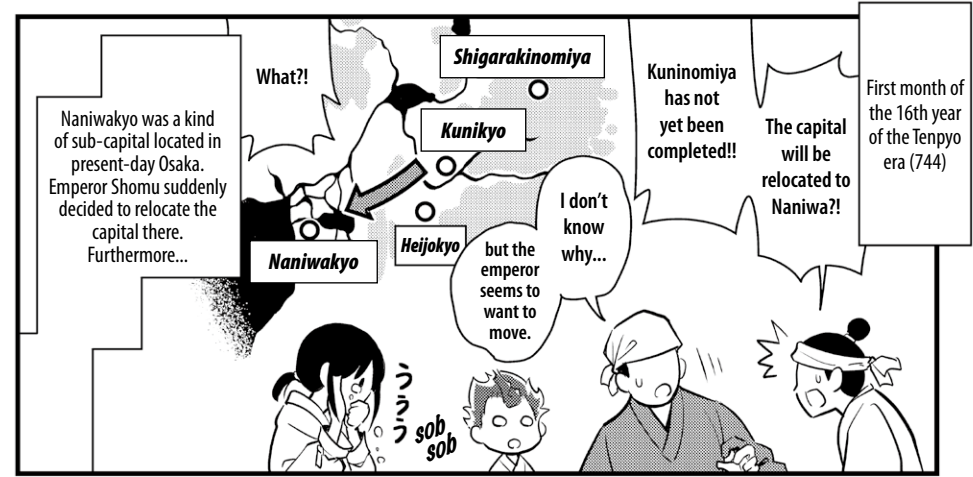
Heijokyo

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)



Naniwakyo 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

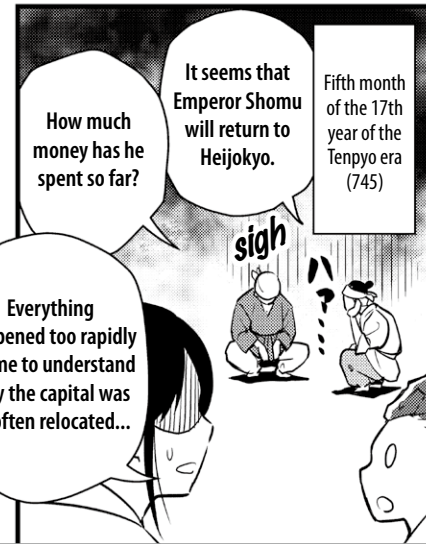
Naniwakyo

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)



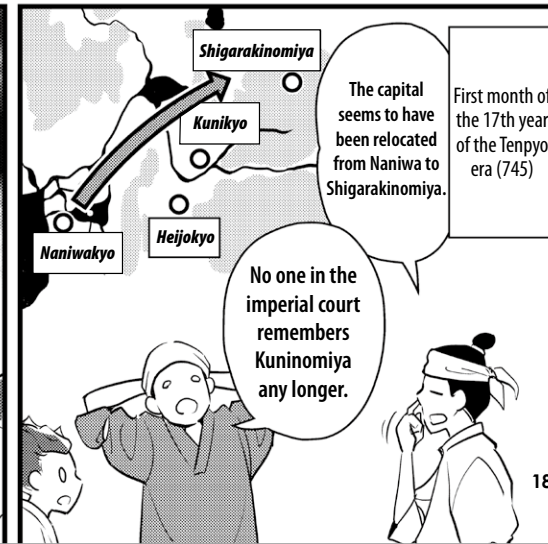
How much
money has he
spent so far?

It seems that
Emperor Shomu
will return to
Heijokyo.

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

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

sigh



Shigarakinomiya

Kunikyo

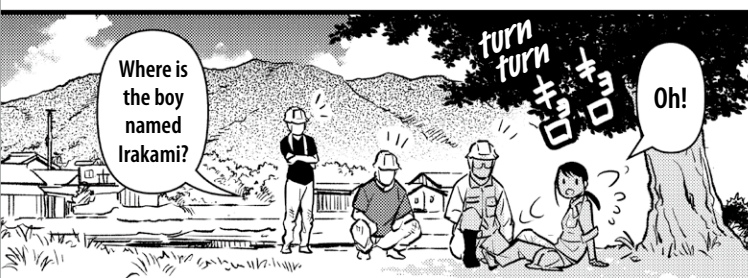
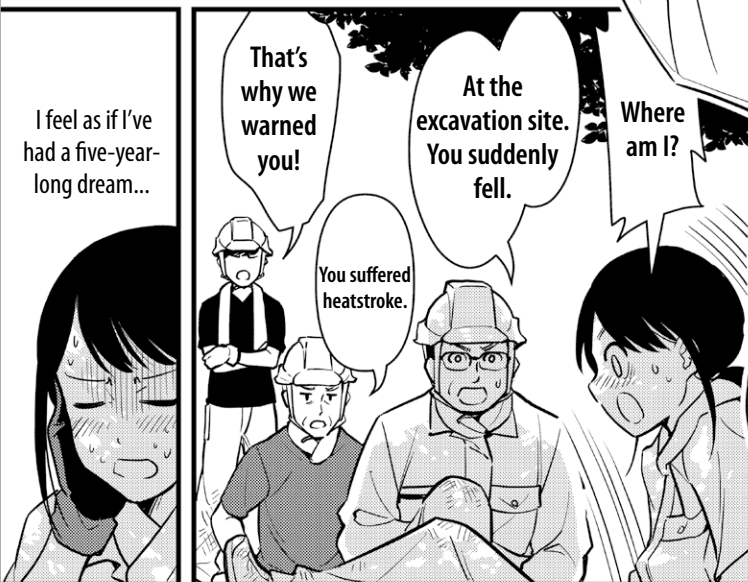
Heijokyo

Naniwakyo

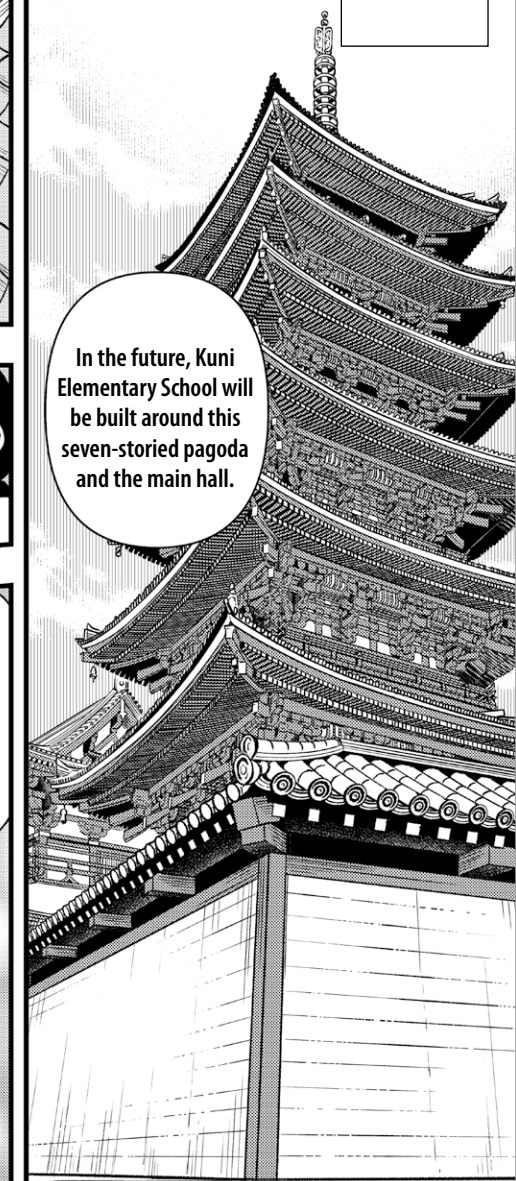
The capital
seems to have
been relocated
from Naniwa to
Shigarakinomiya.

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

No one in the
imperial court
remembers
Kuninomiya
any longer.



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

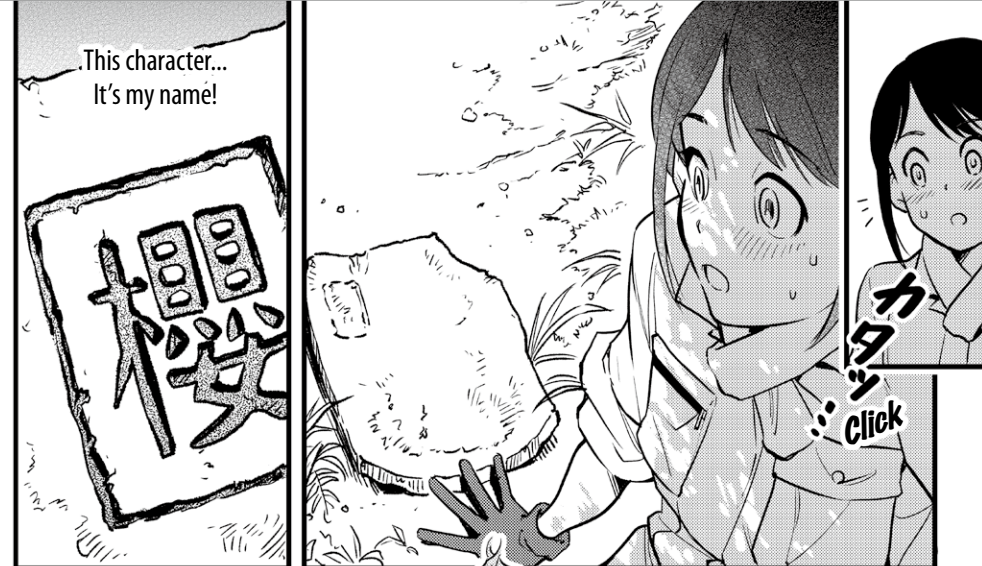


A seven-storied pagoda roofed with tiles produced by us was completed.

Kuninomiya Chronology

(Extracted from *Shoku Nihongi*)

Year in the Tenpyo era	Corresponding Gregorian year	Lunar month and day: Events
12th year	740	11th to 12th months: Emperor Shomu visited Iga, Ise, Mino, and Omi Provinces. 15th day of the 12th month: 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	1st day of the 1st month: 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. 11th day of the 1st month: Emperor Shomu reported to Ise Jingu Shrine and other shrines around Japan that the capital had been relocated to Kuninomiya. 24th day of the 3rd month: Emperor Shomu issued the order to build provincial monasteries. 28th day of the 8th month: Two markets (Higashinoichi and Nishinoichi) in Heijokyo were relocated to Kuninomiya. 16th day of the 10th month: A bridge across a river to the east of Mt. Kase was completed. 21st day of the 11th month: Emperor Shomu named the new capital "Yamato-no-kuni-no-Omiya."
14th year	742	1st day of the 1st month: Since Daigokuden had not yet been completed, an arbor was temporarily built and used to hold the Choga event. 5th day of the 2nd month: 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. From the 8th month: Emperor Shomu began to sometimes visit Shigaraki Village, Koga.
15th year	743	3rd day of the 1st month: Emperor Shomu held the Choga event at Kuninomiya after spending New Year's Eve and New Year's Day at Shigarakinomiya. 27th day of the 5th month: Emperor Shomu promulgated the Konden Einen Shizai-ho (Law Permitting Permanent Ownership of Newly Cultivated Land). 15th day of the 10th month: Emperor Shomu issued the order to build a Great Buddha. 24th day of the 12th month: Weapons that had been left behind in Heijokyo, including ones for ritual use, were carried to Kuninomiya. 26th day of the 12th month: Since it was decided to build Shigarakinomiya, the construction of Kuninomiya was discontinued.
16th year	744	1st day of the intercalary 1st month: 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." 4th day of the intercalary 1st month: 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." 1st day of the 2nd month: Station bells, the seal of the emperor, and the seal of the Grand Council of State were carried from Kuninomiya to Naniwanomiya. 20th day of the 2nd month: The Imperial Throne, large shields, and weapons, including ones for ritual use, were also carried from Kuninomiya to Naniwanomiya. 21st day of the 2nd month: Ordinary people who lived in Kuninomiya were permitted to move to Naniwanomiya if they wanted. 26th day of the 2nd month: Emperor Shomu declared that he would designate Naniwanomiya as the imperial capital.
17th year	745	Around the 6th month: Emperor Shomu redesignated Heijokyo as the capital.
18th year	746	29th day of the 9th month: Daigokuden in Kuninomiya, the former capital, was donated to Yamashiro Kokubun-ji Temple (the local provincial monastery).



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



End

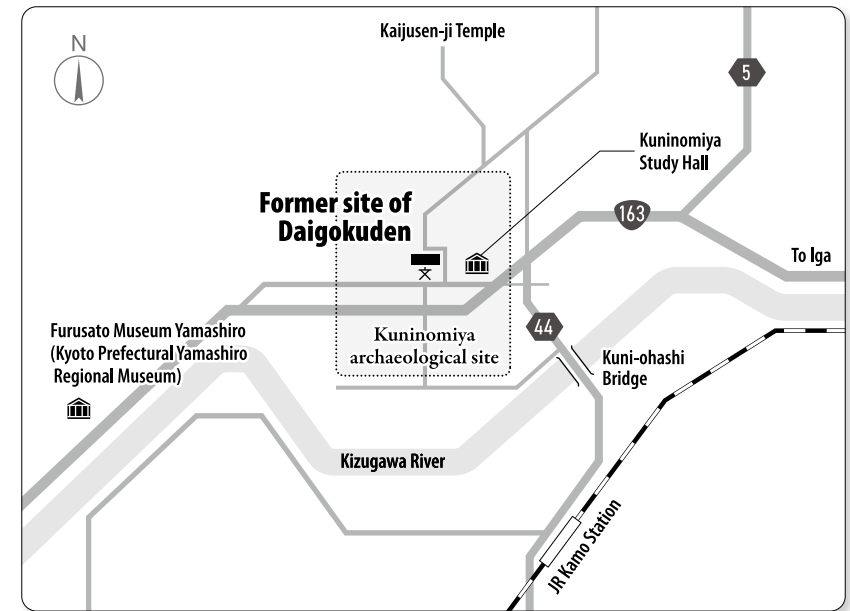


Former site of Daigokuden in Kuninomiya (photo by Shabo Nankado)



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

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.

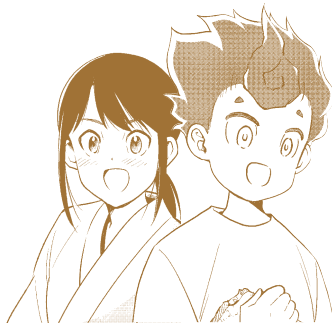
Kuninomiya Study Hall

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.



Manga

Guide to Cultural Properties for Beginners

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Manga

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- 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)

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