PART TWO

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NAGAOKA CAPITAL

Historical records and the inscribed wooden tablets and other material remains unearthed during recent decades allow some grasp of the construction process that created the Nagaoka capital. Because of the archaeological excavations, we now realize that the city’s construction occurred during two distinct periods.\(^1\) The first phase, which ended in 786, involved rapid construction. The unusual concordance of the winter solstice on the first day of the eleventh lunar month with the first year of the sexagenary cycle prompted Kanmu to move within six months of dispatching the survey team. In the midst of the first phase, the eminent supervisor of construction Fujiwara no ason Tanetsugu was assassinated. It has long been assumed that events connected to and resulting from his death led to a halt in construction and to the eventual abandonment of the Nagaoka capital. However, around 788, the Year of Changing Fate, a second construction period started. Contrary to common belief, the dual capital system continued to exist. The second phase of Nagaoka’s construction finally brought an end to that system.

\(^1\) On the two construction phases of the Nagaoka capital, see Shimizu, “Nagaokakyō zōei ron—futatsu no kakki o megutte”.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE FIRST PHASE OF CONSTRUCTION

The historical records reveal that events unfolded rapidly once the site for the new capital was decided upon. The government officials in charge of construction were promptly appointed and various religious, practical, and economic measures were taken to ensure the success of the project.

Within a month of dispatching the inspection team, Kanmu appointed eighteen officials for the Construction of the Nagaoka Palace (zō-Nagaokagū-ši) (table 4.1). Fujiwara no Tanetsugu became the agency’s head and was assisted by Saeki no Imaemishi and Ki no Funamori, two other members of the inspection party. They were joined by Ishikawa no ason Kakimori, who was at that time without office; Unakami no mahito Mikari, the associate controller of the right (uchūben); Ōnakatomi no ason Morouo, the senior assistant minister of the Military Affairs Ministry (hyōbu taifu); Fun’ya no mahito Oshisakamaro, the associate director of the Tōdaiji Construction Agency (zō-Tōdaiji no suke); Kusakabe no sukune Omichi, also without office; Hasetsukabe no Ōmaro; Tajihī no sukune Makiyo; and eight other officials holding the sixth rank whose names are not mentioned in the edict appointing the construction officials. However, based upon an entry six months later in which several people were awarded a rise in court rank, the names of six of the eight officials holding the sixth rank can be added: Saeki no sukune Katsuragi, Nara no imiki Nagano, Ōmiwashimotoda no ason Ehi, Mitsukai no ason Kiyotari, Asada no muraji Karifu, and Takashino no muraji Hironami. It was the largest construction
agency ever to be appointed on the occasion of the construction of a new palace and capital, and its members also carried higher court ranks than in previous cases. This may be interpreted as a further

Table 4.1 Members of the construction agency in 784–785

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>NAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head official</td>
<td>junior third rank</td>
<td>Fujiwara no Tanetsugu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head official</td>
<td>junior third rank</td>
<td>Saecki no Imaemishi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant head</td>
<td>senior fourth rank upper grade</td>
<td>Ki no Funamori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>official</td>
<td>junior fourth rank lower grade</td>
<td>Ishikawa no Kakimori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>junior fifth rank upper grade</td>
<td>Unakami no Mikari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>junior fifth rank upper grade</td>
<td>Onakatomi no Morouo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>junior fifth rank lower grade</td>
<td>Fun’ya no Oshisakamaro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>junior fifth rank lower grade</td>
<td>Kusakabe no Omichi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>junior fifth rank lower grade</td>
<td>Hasetsukabe no Omaro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>outer junior fifth rank lower grade</td>
<td>Tajihi no Makii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>senior sixth rank upper grade</td>
<td>Saecki no Katsuragi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>senior sixth rank upper grade</td>
<td>Nara no Nagano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>senior sixth rank upper grade</td>
<td>Omiwashimoto no Ehi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>senior sixth rank upper grade</td>
<td>Mitsukai no Kiyotari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>senior sixth rank upper grade</td>
<td>Asada no Karifu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>senior sixth rank upper grade</td>
<td>Takashino no Hironami 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior architect</td>
<td>senior sixth rank upper grade</td>
<td>Mononobe no Takemaro</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Senior Architect for Palace Construction (*zōgū daiku*) Mononobe no Takemaro is not mentioned in the official historical records until 789 when he was given a rise in court rank [SN Enryaku 8/11/9]. It is therefore unclear whether he was part of the original construction agency.

For a comparison of the eighth-century palace and capital construction agencies, see Imaizumi, “Hasseiki zōei kanshi kō”. During the course of the following year, more than half of the members of the original construction agency were transferred to other government offices. Nara no Nagano was appointed associate director of the Tax Bureau (*shuzei no suke*); Hasetsukabe no Omaro became director of the Weaving Office (*orihe no kami*); Fun’ya no Oshisakamaro became director of the Carpentry Bureau (*moku no kami*); and Ki no Funamori became major captain of the Inner Palace Guards (*konoe taishō*) [SN Enryaku 4/1/15]. Six months later, Asada no Karifu was appointed senior recorder of the left (*sadaishī*); Saecki no Imaemishi was appointed popular affairs minister (*minbu no kami*); Ishikawa no Kamikori became imperial household minister (*kanai no kami*); and Onakatomi no Morouo was appointed acting director of the Military Guards’ Headquarters of the Left (*gon-sahyū no kami*) [SN Enryaku 4/7/6]. Another three weeks later, Takashino no Hironami was also appointed senior recorder of the left.
indication of Kanmu’s determination to construct a new permanent capital legitimising his reign.

Although there is no mention of it in the historical records, a groundbreaking ceremony (jichinsai) was likely held before the start of construction, to appease the tutelary deities of the building site and to pray for the safety of all concerned in the building operation.\(^5\) Traces of such a ceremony held before the construction of the Nagaoka palace might have been discovered in 1996 when the remains of a brushwood fence measuring 30 metres east-west by 36 metres north-south were unearthed during an excavation.\(^6\)

As if to confirm Kanmu’s decision to construct a new capital in Nagaoka, the *Shoku Nihongi* mentions an auspicious omen when the monk Gonkan of the Fukōji, a temple erected by one of Shōmu’s consorts in the Sōnokami district of Yamato province, caught a red crow two days after construction started. The following day, Kanmu dispatched Ki no Funamori to Yamashiro province to announce the construction of the new capital to the deities of the Kamo shrines.\(^7\) Kanmu also relied

\(^{[SN\ Enryaku 4/7/29]}\). However, since the success of construction depends more on the skill and experience of engineers and labourers than on the administrative personnel involved in the operation, these transfers are not signs of trouble, and construction continued to proceeded according to plan.

\(^5\) Historical records testify to groundbreaking ceremonies preceding the establishment of the Fujiwara and Nara capitals. When Great King Jitō prepared for the construction of the Fujiwara capital, two ceremonies took place: one in 691 to announce the commencement of construction on the city area, and one in 692 when construction on the palace area was begun [NS Jitō tennō 5/10/27; NS Jitō tennō 6/5/20]. The *Shoku Nihongi* also mentions a ceremony in 708 for the construction of the Nara palace [SN Wadō 1/12/5]. In the Nara period, groundbreaking ceremonies were carried out by the Divination Bureau, and although no description of the actual groundbreaking ceremony has been preserved, the Heian-period *Engi shiki* lists the various offerings required for the ceremony upon the construction of a new palace. Mori, “Nagaoka Heian futatsu no sento chinsai”, 283; *Engi shiki*, bk. 3, 62–3.

\(^6\) The fence was erected in a gutter approximately 300 mm wide and within the enclosure a temporary building had been erected in the northeast corner. Because of the presence of a large flat stone, it is possible that part of the enclosure had been paved. Within the enclosure, movable stoves (kamado) in green-glazed Sue-ware (ryokuyū sueki), clay net sinkers, and other remains were discovered. From the archaeological evidence, we also know that shortly after the ceremony, the pillars of the fence were cut off close to the ground and the utensils used in the ceremony were discarded. Yamanaka, *Nagaokakyō kenkyū josetsu*, 287–88. Proof of groundbreaking ceremonies carried out before the construction of private residences in the Nagaoka capital has also been unearthed in the late 1980s. Because of the large number of coins discovered here, Takahashi Tōru is convinced the ceremony was deeply rooted in Taoism. Takahashi, *Dōkyō to Nihon no kyūto*, 189–93.

\(^7\) SN Enryaku 3/6/12 and SN Enryaku 3/6/13.
heavily on support from various other kami. For instance, on the third day of the eighth month, Mio, a kami of a shrine in the Takashima district in Ōmi province, received the junior fifth rank lower grade, possibly to make sure the trees of the area around Lake Biwa could be safely felled and transported to Nagaoka.\(^8\)

Shortly after Funamori’s visit to the Kamo shrines, the historical records provide us with another indication of how badly Kanmu wanted to transfer the capital. It was ordered that the years’ taxes-in-kind (chō), labour tax (yō), and the various supplies needed by the construction workers of the palace were to be brought to Nagaoka.\(^9\) The fact that these goods had to be brought to a capital on which construction had barely started clearly indicates Kanmu’s intention to move there as quickly as possible. Throughout the following year, Kanmu continued to issue additional imperial written commands pertaining to the payment of the various taxes and tribute. Because the state’s finances were bad, it was of the utmost importance for him to collect good quality goods that conformed to the regulations stipulated in the codes.\(^10\) From then on, provincial officials (kokushi or kuni no tsukasa) were held personally responsible for forwarding goods of low quality and were threatened with permanent dismissal; district officials (gunji or kōri no tsukasa) were to be fired and removed from their family’s register. Kanmu also issued a written command condemning the improper use of the tax grain and other government property by local officials. Shortly thereafter,

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\(^9\) SN Enryaku 3/6/13. Taxes-in-kind, levied upon males between the ages of seventeen and sixty-five, were the primary source of the government’s income. They included many types of products manufactured or produced locally, such as marine products, woven and dyed materials, salt, and agricultural products. They were transported from the various provinces to the capital by the taxpayers themselves. Depending on whether a province was classified as a neighbouring province (kinkoku), a medium-distance province (chūgoku) or a distant province (engoku), the submittal of the taxes was expected between the middle of the eighth month and the end of the twelfth month. Ryō no shūge, bk. 13, 387; Ryō no gige, bk. 3, 117; and Tateno, “Miyako to sato no ōrai”, 369, 384.

\(^10\) On the problems of tax transmission and transportation between countryside and capital, see Hall, Government and Local Power in Japan 500 to 1700: A Study Based on Bizen Province, 100–105; and Hotate, “Ritsuryōsei shihai to tohi kōtsū”. Hotate Michihisa’s article has recently been translated and discussed in English by Janet Goodwin and Gustav Heldt. See Hotate, “Traffic between Capital and Countryside in Ritsuryō Japan”. 

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the first officials were punished for low quality and belated delivery of the provisions.\textsuperscript{11}

Still in the summer of 784, Kanmu divided 680,000 sheaves of rice of the tax grain of the various provinces among court officials above the position of imperial advisor, the imperial princesses (naishinnō), the imperial spouses (fujin), the directors of the Palace Retainers’ Office, and others as an incentive to build residences in the new capital.\textsuperscript{12} Then, the tax grain of Yamashiro province, amounting to more than 43,000 sheaves of rice, was divided among the peasants who were living in the area destined to become the new palace precinct, as compensation for the fact that they had to vacate their fields and homes.\textsuperscript{13} Nakayama Shūichi has calculated that this compensation amounted to 112.5 kg of rice per taxable family unit of approximately ten people. This was a trifling amount, since the families had already planted, and, with the planting season past, would not have a harvest that year. Nakayama also presumes that the families would not have been allowed to tear down their houses and salvage the building materials to construct new homes in a different area, since the houses could be used as storage space for equipment and provisions or as lodgings for the labourers working on the construction of the palace buildings and government offices.\textsuperscript{14}

After requesting the support and blessing of local Shintō deities, ensuring the delivery of taxes and supplies, and compensating aristocrats and farmers, Kanmu took measures to maintain smooth communication between the Nara capital and the construction site. Less than one month after construction had started, Awa, Sanuki, and Iyo, three provinces of the South Sea Route (Nankaidō), were charged with providing the necessary materials to repair Yamazaki bridge crossing over the Yodo River south of Nagaoka.\textsuperscript{15} Not only did this ensure smooth communication and personnel movement,\textsuperscript{16} the upkeep of the

\textsuperscript{11} SN Enryaku 4/5/24; SN Enryaku 4/7/24; RSK 19 Enryaku 4/7/24; and SN Enryaku 4/7/28.
\textsuperscript{12} SN Enryaku 3/6/23.
\textsuperscript{13} SN Enryaku 3/6/28.
\textsuperscript{14} Nakayama, “Miyakozukuri”, 296–97.
\textsuperscript{15} SN Enryaku 3/7/4.
\textsuperscript{16} It goes without saying that Kanmu needed to mobilise a large workforce. In part, he could rely on the system of corvée (警衞), but this labour tax was limited to sixty days a year. To ensure that the largest possible workforce was gathered, a directive of the Council of State ordered in mid-785 that an investigation be made of the number of houses and the population within each province, and that vagrants should all be sent to their place of origin [RSK 12 Enryaku 4/6/24].
bridge also facilitated the transport of building materials and various other goods to the site of the future capital.

As if to urge Kanmu to abandon the Nara capital and make sure there was no way to return, Nara was then hit by torrential rain, destroying the homes of many of the city’s inhabitants. Kanmu sent messengers and dispensed relief among the people.\(^{17}\) A month later, disaster struck in Kawachi province when the embankments of a river in the Manta district broke in fifteen places. Provisions were therefore given to 64,000 labourers so they could rebuild the banks.\(^{18}\)

By the tenth month of 784, construction had seemingly advanced to such a degree that Kanmu began preparations for the move to his new capital. First, he appointed the members of the Costume Office (goshōzokushi) and the Office for the Order of the Imperial Procession (zengo no shidaishi).\(^{19}\) Two days later, robes were distributed among the imperial princes and those officials holding the fifth rank and above who were to take part in the procession.\(^{20}\) By the end of the month, Kanmu appointed four officials as emissaries to appease the capital (chinkyōshi), two of them holding the fifth rank and two holding the sixth rank.\(^{21}\) It is unclear why he decided to appoint emissaries to appease the capital instead of the customary guardians in the sovereign’s absence (rusu), who were usually appointed during the transfer of a capital or during an

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At one particular point during construction, the historical records mention a workforce of 314,000 people; but judging from the total population of the realm at that time, it seems more likely that this number actually refers to the number of working days [SN Enryaku 4/7/20]. See Farris, Sacred Texts and Buried Treasures, 178.

\(^{17}\) SN Enryaku 3/9/5.

\(^{18}\) SN Enryaku 3/int.9/10.

\(^{19}\) SN Enryaku 3/10/5. According to the Engi shiki, these two offices had to be appointed several days before a sovereign’s journey that lasted more than ten days. The Costume Office was in charge of making the necessary arrangements and providing the appropriate ornaments; the Office for the Order of the Imperial Procession was in charge of establishing the order of all the people taking part in the imperial procession and consisted of two divisions, one in charge of the people preceding the emperor (gogen no shidaishi), the other in charge of the people following the emperor (gogo no shidaishi). Engi shiki, bk. 11, 436–37, 442; and Abe, Nihon kōdai kōshoku jiten, 310.

\(^{20}\) SN Enryaku 3/10/7.

\(^{21}\) SN Enryaku 3/10/26. Officials with a title similar to the emissaries to appease the capital are mentioned in the Tōdaiji yōroku, which records that four men commanding four hundred soldiers, were appointed as emissaries for appeasement inside the capital (chinkyōshi). These four men were in charge of taking care of the Nara capital while Koken, Shōmu, Komyō, and most of the court nobility were present at the eye-opening ceremony of the Great Buddha of the Tōdaiji in 752. Tōdaiji yōroku, bk. 2, 47.
emperor’s absence from the capital.22 However, there can be little doubt that the emissaries appointed by Kanmu had similar responsibilities to the latter, including supervising the capital and preserving law and order. There certainly seems to have been a need for them, as Kanmu referred to increasing looting and arson in the capital only a few days after having appointed the emissaries.23

Then, on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 784, Kanmu and most of the aristocrats and government officials moved to the new Nagaoka capital. While one must keep in mind that the *Nihon ryōiki* was compiled several decades after the transfer to Nagaoka, another omen seems to have preceded the move:

In the reign of Emperor Yamabe, on the night of the eighth of the eleventh month, in the first year of the rat, the third year of the Enryaku era, all heavenly stars moved and flew about wildly from eight in the evening to four in the morning. On the eleventh of the same month, the emperor with Prince Regent Sawara moved the palace from Nara to Nagaoka. The flight of the heavenly stars was a sign that the imperial palace would be moved.24

Kanmu’s mother, Takano no Niigasa, and his principal wife, Consort-empress Fujiwara no Otomuro, did not accompany him yet, presumably because Otomuro’s mother Abe no ason Komina had recently passed away and the women were observing mourning rituals.25 It is assumed that Kanmu actually wanted to move to Nagaoka on the first day of that month, but since it was deemed inappropriate to set out from the Nara capital in a wonderful procession only a few days after Abe no Komina’s death, Kanmu waited until the first mourning rituals had been completed before setting out to the Nagaoka palace. Because he

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22 The guardians in the sovereign’s absence are already mentioned in the historical records shortly before the Jinshin War of 672. They were appointed to take care of Tenji’s palace in Asuka while he moved to Otsu palace [SN Tenmu tennō 1/6/24].

23 SN Enryaku 3/10/30.


25 NS Enryaku 3/11/11; NS Enryaku 3/10/28; NS Enryaku 3/11/17. Kishi, *Nihon kodai kyōto no kenkyū*, 523. Nakamura Shūya seems to doubt this theory and suggests that the women did not accompany Kanmu yet, because the move occurred too suddenly and the preparations for their move were not complete. However, since the necessary offices for Kanmu’s transfer had already been appointed quite some time before the actual move and the women arrived only two weeks later, the suggestion that the transfer took place too suddenly seems unlikely. Nakamura, “Kanmu tennō to Yamashiro sento”, 284.
was deeply immersed in Chinese thought, the first day of the eleventh month carried a special meaning for him. On that day, the *Shoku Nihongi* mentions the following:

Historically, the first day of the eleventh month seldom coincides with the winter solstice and [when it does], it is an auspicious omen for a sovereign. We are unworthy, but now [this auspicious event] has occurred. To commemorate [this event], We grant rewards and would like to celebrate this auspicious day together [with the people]. We bestow gifts on the princes and [everybody from] the highest court officials on down, and We exempt the capital and the home provinces, without exception, from paying this years’ rice-paddy taxes.26

The significance of the winter solstice during Kanmu’s reign has already been touched upon in previous chapters, and the fact that he held a banquet on this day, the shortest day of the year, was not unusual.27 The unusual aspect is that this winter solstice of 784 was not a mere concordance of the winter solstice with the first day of the eleventh month (*sakutan tōji*). Although Kanmu did not refer to it, he must have known that the year in which this *sakutan tōji* took place also coincided with the first year of the sexagenary cycle. This event, known as *kashiki sakutan tōji*, thus reflected the ideal conditions for renewal or significant change. In the *Gōke shidai*, a late Heian-period ritual manual covering government business and court ceremonies, the *kashiki sakutan tōji* of 784 is associated with the reign of the legendary Yellow Emperor of China:

This is the first time *sakutan tōji* appears in the nation’s history. From the twenty-second year of the [reign of the] Yellow Emperor, a *kinoe-ne* year, until Enryaku 3 [784], a total of 3421 years [passed]…. We have certainly been given an auspicious time.28

About a week after Kanmu’s arrival in Nagaoka, Ishikawa no ason Toyohito and Wake no Kiyomaro were sent to the Nara capital to prepare for the move of Niigasa and Otomuro. Both women finally arrived in the Nagaoka palace a week later. Interestingly, the day

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26 *SN Enryaku 3/11/1.*

27 This Chinese custom had been adopted by Shōmu during the first decade of his reign. In 725, a first reference to such a banquet is made in the *Shoku Nihongi* [SN Jinki 2/11/10]. Further references to banquets being held on the winter solstice are made in 728, 731 and 732, but after that the custom seems to have been discontinued until 781 [SN Jinki 5/11/13; SN Tenpyō 3/11/5; SN Tenpyō 4/11/27]. These dates are also mentioned in the *Gōke shidai*, 293.

28 *Gōke shidai*, 293; Hayashi, “Kanmu tennō no seiji shishō”, 34.
the first phase of construction

coincided with a kanoto-tori day, corresponding to the fifty-eighth element in the cycle of sixty and also deemed a revolutionary moment.\textsuperscript{29}

With the transfer of the capital now complete, it was time to reward all parties concerned. First, Kanmu sent Ki no Funamori once more to the two Kamo shrines to bestow the junior second rank upon them. That same day, Onakatomi no Morouo was sent to the Matsuo shrine in the Kadono district and the Otokuni shrine in the Otokuni district, whereupon both shrines received the junior fifth rank upper grade.\textsuperscript{30} At the end of the month, messengers were again dispatched to these four shrines to announce that repairs would be made to them.\textsuperscript{31} Then again one month later, the rank of Sumiyoshi no kami, one of four deities worshipped in the Sumiyoshi shrine in the Sumiyoshi district, the southernmost district of Settsu province, was raised to the junior second rank.\textsuperscript{32} Interestingly, no messengers were sent to the Ise shrine, nor was the transfer announced to the ancestral tombs.

In addition to rewarding and satisfying the various local Shintō deities, edicts were issued excusing provinces that had sent labourers from paying this year’s rice-paddy taxes, and rewarding with court ranks and gifts those officials and commoners who had given lumber, food, and other supplies for the construction of the palace and capital.\textsuperscript{33}

The historical records show that construction on several parts of the capital was already completed by mid-785. On the first day of that year, Kanmu held the new year celebrations (chōga) “as usual” in the new imperial audience hall and invited court officials of the fifth rank and above to a banquet in the imperial residence. In the third month,

\textsuperscript{29} The move to the Heian capital, ten years later, also took place on a kanoto-tori day [SN Enryaku 3/11/17, SN Enryaku 3/11/24; NKi Enryaku 13/10/22].

\textsuperscript{30} SN Enryaku 3/11/20.

\textsuperscript{31} SN Enryaku 3/11/28.

\textsuperscript{32} SN Enryaku 3/12/29.

\textsuperscript{33} SN Enryaku 3/12/2 and SN Enryaku 3/12/29. Besides the known and presumed members of the construction agency, several other names, among them those of three princes, appear in the first of those two edicts. Though these people may not have been part of the official construction agency, they seem to have made contributions to the construction sufficient to deserve an increase in rank of one grade. Tajihi no Hitotari and Kamitsukeno no Ōkawa probably were promoted because they served as governor and vice-governor of Yamashiro province at that time. The only member of the construction agency not mentioned in the list is Unakami no Mikari. From an entry in the Shoku Nihongi dated Enryaku 4 (785) 5/20, it is known that at that time he still held the junior fifth rank upper grade. It is not clear why he was not rewarded for his contribution to the construction. Furthermore, although Saeki no Imaemishi was not awarded a higher court rank, he did enter the ranks of the high court nobles (kugyō) with his appointment to imperial advisor.
a winding waters party was held in the completed Shima Compound (Shima no in). The existence of this complex is further confirmed by the discovery of an inscribed wooden tablet in the Left Capital of Nagaoka (mokkan). Two months later, the historical records mention a red bird that stayed for over ten days in the Consort-empress’s Palace, indicating that construction was completely finished there also. The state halls were mentioned in the sixth month, and by the eighth month the wall around the state halls compound was completed.

Thus, if the court annals are to be believed, a mere six months separated the start of construction from the move of Kanmu and his retinue; and after approximately one year the essential residential quarters and government structures were completed. This was much faster than had been the case for other capitals and palaces. Yet, the question of how this tour de force was achieved remains unanswered in the historical records.

The construction team was faced with the following practical problems. First, the area where the new capital was planned had been inhabited for hundreds of years and was dotted with tumuli (kofun). Therefore the site needed to be levelled before construction could even begin. Even more importantly, a large part of the capital and the entire palace area were to be constructed on the eastern slopes of Mt. Nishiyama and Nagaoka hill (now Mukō hill), resulting in a 25 m difference in height between the highest point of the Nagaoka capital

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34 According to this partially preserved tablet, which mentions the name of the Shima Compound, a custodian (azukari) requested three shō (approximately two litres) of rice as provisions for one person.
35 SN Enryaku 4/1/1; SN Enryaku 4/3/3; NS Enryaku 4/5/19; SN Enryaku 4/6/18; and SN Enryaku 4/8/23. The Shoku Nihongi actually refers to the wall of the ‘daijōkanin’ instead of that of the ‘chōdoin’. However, Asano Mitsuru has argued that the two words were synonyms during the Nara period and that ‘daijōkanin’ was used for the state halls compounds of the Later Naniwa and Nagaoka palaces. See Yamanaka, Nagaokakyo kenkyū jōsetsu, 25.
36 A comparison of the time needed for the construction of the various capitals is offered by Kobayashi Kiyoshi in Nagaokakyo no shinbenkyū: zen, 47.
37 To name but a few of the larger tumuli located within the confines of the capital: the Imazato kurumazuka tumulus, the Imazato ōtsuka tumulus, the Tsukamoto tumulus and the Igenoyama tumulus. Some of these tumuli, such as the Igenoyama tumulus, were left undisturbed, while others were destroyed. Research on the tumuli destroyed during the construction of the Nagaoka capital is available in Okamura, “Nagaokakyo no zōei ni yotte kowasareta kofun”. In some cases, tuff from certain tumuli may have been reused for construction during the Nagaokakyo era. Kyōto shinbunsha (ed.), Kyōto no roman, 15–6.
in the northwest corner and Lake Ogura in the southeast (figure 4.1).\footnote{Nakatsuka, “Iseki no ichi to kankyō”, 14.} Even though the Nagaoka palace was not unique in being located on a slope,\footnote{Palaces were never constructed in low-lying areas; the palace areas at Naniwa, Nara, Ōtsu, Shigaraki, and later Heian, were also located on a plateau. Nakayama, “Kodai teito no shizen kankyō to Nagaokakyō ni tsuite”, 27.} it is now clear that instead of creating one smooth, even slope for the whole palace area, the areas for the various government facilities and residences were levelled separately.\footnote{See chapter 8, “The Nagaoka Palace Enclosure” for further information on the levelling work.} As a result, terraces varying in their respective heights were created, which somewhat limited the amount of levelling work needed.

The second problem facing the construction workers involved the lumber required for the various structures within the new palace and capital. Kobayashi Kiyoshi has calculated that a total of 75,000 cubic metres of wood, an amount similar to that needed for the construction of the Nara palace, was required for the construction of the Nagaoka palace.\footnote{Kobayashi, Nagaokakyō no shinkenkyū: zen, 119.} Based on the number and weight of the roof tiles for the various buildings, supporting pillars for the audience hall should have been between 70 and 80 centimetres in diameter, and those for the other halls between 60 and 70 centimetres.\footnote{Kobayashi, “Yōzai kansō mondai kara mita Nagaokakyō no zōei”, 88.} It is unlikely that logs of such a large size were laying somewhere ready to be used. In addition, freshly cut trees needed to dry out for approximately two years before the wood was usable for construction purposes; otherwise, the timber would warp, twist or crack.\footnote{Based on four entries in the Nihon sandai jitsuroku that concern fires destroying parts of the Heian palace in the second half of the ninth century, Kobayashi concludes that it took at least one year and eight months between the felling of a tree and the beginning of construction [NS] Jogan 8/6/3; NS] Jogan 10/2/13; NS] Jogan 18/4/28; NS] Gangyō 2/4/25]. Kobayashi, “Yōzai kansō mondai kara mita Nagaokakyō no zōei”, 88.} Therefore, it must be concluded that Kanmu mainly relied on dismantling existing buildings and transporting these recycled materials to the construction site.\footnote{This reuse of wooden structures was not unusual. The Shoku Nihongi informs us that, at the end of 743, parts of the Nara palace were transported to construct the audience hall in Kuni [SN Tenpyō 15/12/26].} Excavations carried out in the Left Capital of Nagaoka in 1987 yielded hundreds of inscribed wooden tablets and wood shavings (kezurikuzu), some of them referring to government offices, personal names, and court ranks...
Figure 4.1  Topography of the Nagaoka Capital  
and—salient to the present discussion—a number of tablets about the transportation and receipt of logs, as well as requests for workers and various construction tools. One inscribed wooden tablet attests to the fact that these consignments did not merely concern the delivery of rough construction materials. The shipment and receipt of an exposed tie beam (nageshi) indicates that in some cases, logs were processed and finished before shipping (mokkan 5).

A third problem facing the construction team was the fact that millions of tiles were needed for the roofs of the continental-style buildings. It is estimated that approximately five million tiles were required for the structures in the Nara palace. However, because excavations at the Nagaoka palace have revealed that there was a larger proportion of continental-style buildings in the Nagaoka palace than at Nara, significantly more roof tiles may have been used. On average, twelve to fifteen round and thirty-five to forty flat tiles were needed per square metre of floor area. This number must be supplemented with various other types of tiles, such as the flat eave tiles (noki hiragawara), the round eave tiles (noki marugawara), the terminal ridge-end tiles (omigawara), the ridge tiles (tsutsumigawara), and the filler tiles (mendogawara). Given these circumstances, it is reasonable to estimate that between eight hundred thousand and nine hundred thousand tiles were needed for the buildings in the state halls compound of the Nagaoka palace, and another four hundred thousand were needed to tile the roof of the tamped-earth wall (tsuiji) surrounding the imperial palace area. This, too, indicates reuse, because it would be impossible to fire so many roof tiles in such a short time.

45 L 203; for inscribed wooden tablets concerning construction materials, see mokkan nos. 17–20, 295 in Nagaokakyō sakyo shutsudo mokkan I, 93–4, 121; for construction tools that were sent as tribute (shinmotsu) to the capital, see mokkan nos. 36, 37, 39, 40 in Nagaokakyō sakyo shutsudo mokkan I, 98–9. For a discussion in English on the mokkan connected to the first phase of construction, see Van Goethem, “The Construction of the Nagaoka Palace and Capital—Mokkan as a Historical Source”, 143–51.

46 Kobayashi, Nagaokakyō no shinkenkyū: zen, 120; Nakayama, “Nagaokakyō kara Heiankyō e—kōtō to chikei”, 242. For detailed research on the various foundation-stone construction techniques used in the Japanese Chinese-style capitals, see Kunishita, “Kisokōzō kara mita kodai tojō no soseki tatemono”.

47 In 1966, Ōkawa Kiyoshi published his research on roof tiles used at the Köfukuji. Ōkawa, Kawara no bi—Unoreta Nihon kodaishi. A few years later, Kobayashi Kiyoshi arrived at similar figures by counting the roof tiles of the lecture hall (kōdō) of the Tōshōdaiji in Nara. Kobayashi, Nagaokakyō no shinkenkyū: zen, 120.
After more than a decade of excavations on the site of the Nagaoka palace, the roof tiles did indeed provide the key to solving the riddle of how Kanmu could construct his new capital at such high speed. They reveal that the Nagaoka construction agency had found a ready supply of construction materials in the secondary capital located at Naniwa. At Naniwa, the agency also found the cooperation of Wake no Kiyomaro, an eager government official in charge of administering the area.

4.1 The Importance of the Secondary Capital at Naniwa

Excavations have revealed that more than three quarters of the roof tiles for continental-style buildings in and around the Nagaoka audience hall and the state halls compound (area 1 in figure 4.2), the first structures to be completed, were identical to tiles used for the Later Naniwa palace (kōki Naniwa no miya) constructed at the order of Shōmu. Typically the round eave tiles found in that section of the Nagaoka palace have a concentric circle pattern (jūkenmon) or a lotus motif (rengemon) and the flat eave tiles have an arabesque pattern (karakusamon), as was the case in the Later Naniwa palace. Therefore, the people in charge of construction must have obtained the tiles for these first structures at Naniwa and transported them to Nagaoka.

However, they recycled more than roof tiles from the Later Naniwa palace in the new capital’s construction. Years of excavations have revealed that, in both size and composition, the Nagaoka state halls compound and the audience hall were largely identical to those of the Later Naniwa palace. It is therefore fairly certain that entire buildings were dismantled after their pillars and beams had been carefully marked. The construction material was then quickly rafted up the Yodo River to

48 The Later Naniwa palace was constructed in 726 [SN Jinki 3/10/26]. It functioned as the auxiliary capital of the state from then on, except for a brief period in 744, when it served as the main capital [SN Tenpyō 16/2/26].
49 For a detailed study on the clay tiles unearthed in the Nagaoka palace and capital before March 1983, see Mukōshi kyōiku inkai, Nagaokakyo koga shūsei (MMBC, vol. 20). For clay tiles excavated between March 1983 and March 2004, see Nakajima, “Nagaokakyo koga shūsei (hōken) zenen” and Nakajima, “Nagaokakyo koga shūsei (hōken) kōhen”. An early publication on Nagaoka roof tiles is Ueda, “Nagaokakyo ato kinpen shutsudo no kōga ni tsuite”.
50 See chapter 8.2, “Government Offices and Other Administrative Structures” for further details.
Figure 4.2  Schematic Rendering of the Nagaoka Palace with Eave Tile Percentage per Sector

This figure is a revised version of Nakajima Nobuchika’s research. It is revised in the sense that both Nakajima’s table listing the typology of all the unearthed clay eave tiles and his graphs are flawed. The table is flawed because it does not distinguish between zones 5a and 5b, which date from two distinct construction periods. His graphs do not represent the full picture, because roof tiles that could not be categorised were not taken into account. Nakajima, “Nagaokakyō shitsudo nokigawa shūsei: keishiki to bunpu kara”.
the construction site in Nagaoka. The extensive reuse of wooden pillars probably explains why the percentage of buildings with foundation stones at the Nagaoka capital is higher than at previous capitals. When an embedded-pillar building was torn down, many supporting pillars may have shown rotting at their bases. Cutting the bases off and erecting the pillars on foundation stones instead of setting them directly into the ground made it possible to rebuild the structure using the old pillars. Other building materials, such as foundation stones and the tuff used to cover the earthen platforms on which government structures were erected, must also have been transported to Nagaoka.

The differences in layout between the Later Naniwa and Nagaoka palaces help to explain why close to 16 percent of the clay tiles discovered in this sector are connected to the Nara capital style or the Nagaoka palace style. For the first time, a rear hall (kōden) was added to the audience hall, a characteristic that was later used for the Heian palace too. The total area of the precinct was also enlarged, necessitating the construction of a longer wall. To compensate for clay tiles that might have been broken during the dismantling and transfer of the Naniwa structures and to cover the added roof surface, tiles produced in the Tanida kiln for the Saidaiji in Nara were used for the roofed tamped-earth wall. This was possible because the Saidaiji had been completed shortly before the transfer of the capital to Nagaoka and Saeki no Imaemishi, ranked second in the Agency for the Construction of the Nagaoka Palace, had served as head of the Saidaiji Construction Agency (zō-Saidaiji-chōkan).

Because approximately 55 percent of the roof tiles discovered in the areas west and northwest of the central compound (areas 5a, 6 and 8) were also Naniwa palace-style roof tiles, these structures presumably were also brought here from Naniwa. A final area with a large percentage of Naniwa palace clay tiles is the sector south of the

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51 The first person to suggest that the audience hall and the buildings of the state halls compound of the Later Naniwa palace were brought to Nagaoka was Kobayashi Kiyoshi. Kobayashi, “Yōzai kansō mondai kara mita Nagaokakū no zōei”.

52 This type of clay tile is known as type 6732Q of the Nara palace style. The Tanida kiln is actually a group of kilns consisting of the Ōedayama kiln (Ōedayama gayō) and the Kawaradani kiln (Kawaradani gayō), located in what is now Nagaokakō city. Nagaokakōshi shi hensan iinkai (eds.), Nagaokakōshi shi: shiryō hen, 1: 435–85.

53 SN Jingo keiun 1/2/28.
state halls compound, the presumed location of Crown Prince Sawara’s Eastern Palace Agency (area 2).  

4.2 Wake no Kiyomaro and the Settsu Office

Ever since the publication of Kita Sadakichi’s *Teito*, most scholars assume that Wake no Kiyomaro was opposed to the move to the Nagaoka capital and that he was one of the driving forces behind carrying out the later move to Heian. However, Kiyomaro seems to have been closely involved in the construction of the Nagaoka capital. Saeki Arikiyo has suggested that because Kiyomaro was mentioned among those people involved in the construction of the Nagaoka capital who received rank six months after the initiation of construction work, he probably supported Fujiwara no Tanetsugu. Saeki attributed this support to a feeling of obligation Kiyomaro might have felt toward the Ceremonial House of the Fujiwara family and which stemmed from the following events.

In 769, Kōken/Shōtoku had entrusted Kiyomaro with verifying an oracle from Hachiman, the deity of the Usa Hachiman shrine in Bungo province, to appoint the monk Dōkyō as her successor in order to restore peace to the country and avoid calamities. However, Kiyomaro reported back that the throne should never be occupied by someone who was not a member of the imperial family. This answer infuriated Dōkyō, and he had Kiyomaro exiled to Ōsumi province. Dōkyō then sent men to murder Kiyomaro on his way to his place of exile, but they failed to do so and, impressed by Kiyomaro’s loyalty, Fujiwara no Momokawa—Tanetsugu’s uncle—offered Kiyomaro the proceeds of twenty sustenance households (*fuko*) in his domain in Bingo province. Upon Kōken/Shōtoku’s death and the enthronement of Kōnin, Kiyomaro was called back to court and given the hereditary title of *ason*.  

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54 On the Eastern Palace Agency, see chapter 8.2, “Government Offices and Other Administrative Structures”.
Kiyomaro seems to have been close to Kanmu too.\footnote{Kiyomaro held the junior fifth rank lower grade for a long time, but after Kanmu’s enthronement he suddenly rose to the junior fourth rank lower grade. At the end of 784, Kiyomaro was appointed to the Office for the Order of the Imperial Procession (shidaishi) when Kanmu’s principal consort and his mother moved from the Nara capital to Nagaoka. Takahashi Tōru assumes that Kiyomaro belonged to the small group of Kanmu’s trustees because he, just like Tanetsugu and the Emperor himself, had a deep understanding of Taoist philosophical ideas. Takahashi, Dōkyō to Nihon no kōkyū, 206–8.} In 783, Kiyomaro was appointed director of the Settsu Office and was thus responsible for the area where the Later Naniwa palace was located.\footnote{The importance of the Naniwa area was recognized in the codes that provided for a Settsu Office responsible for Naniwa’s administration. Naniwa was a key node in diplomatic contacts with the continent. Emissaries from China and the Korean peninsula were welcomed to its harbour and lodged at the Foreign Envoy’s Quarters (kōrokan). The Kyūshū frontier guards (sakimori) and the envoys dispatched to the continent by the Japanese emperor also boarded their ships here. Naniwa was also a very important intermediate port for tax goods on their way to the capital because it was the harbour where the commodities were trans-shipped onto smaller boats. However, Naniwa port was in decline from mid-eighth century onwards. In 762, mention is made of a new ship from Aki province coming to Naniwa to pick up the envoys to the Tang, but the ship ran aground in Eguchi [SN Tenpyō hōji 6/4/17]. It is safe to assume that the port continued to silt up during the following decades. Early in 785, it is recorded that water works were carried out in several villages in Settsu province [SN Enryaku 3/5/13]. By connecting the Yodo River to the Mikuni River—the present Kanzaki River—ships coming from the Dazai Headquarters in Kyūshū, the Sun Route, or the South Sea Route via the Inland Sea no longer had to pass through Naniwa port on their way to the Nagaoka capital.} In 784, three days prior to the appointment of the officials dispatched to inspect Nagaoka village, the Shoku Nihongi mentions the following report sent by the Settsu Office:

> On the seventh day of this month, in the Hour of the Rabbit [around 6 a.m.], approximately 20,000 toads, four bu [ca. 1.2 cm] in length and [covered with] black spots, left the stagnant water south of the southern road of Naniwa, and [made a] line, approximately three chō [ca. 327 m] long. They headed south along the road and entered the precincts of the Shitennōji. At the Hour of the Horse [around noon], they all dispersed.\footnote{SN Enryaku 3/5/13.}

This event is also recorded in the Mizu kagami, where it is specified that this was an omen announcing that “the capital must be moved”.\footnote{The Mizu kagami makes mention of 30,000 toads instead of 20,000. Mizu kagami, 91.} The migration of animals as an auspicious omen for relocating the capital is frequently mentioned in ancient historical records. Migrating rats
announced the transfer of the capital from the Asuka region to the Nagara Toyosaki palace (Nagara Toyosaki no miya) in Naniwa in 645, and back to Asuka’s Kawabe palace (Asuka no Kawabe no karimiya) in 654, and from the Asuka plain to the Otsu palace in Omi province in 666.62 However, these migrations always originated in the current capital and the animals headed in the direction of the future capital.63

About a week after sending out the survey team, another auspicious omen was reported by the Settsu Office when Takefu no muraji Saio, one of the office’s clerks, caught a white swallow.64

In addition to the omens, some other entries in the historical records around the time of the transfer of the capital indicate the close connection between Settsu province and Nagaoka. Eight days before the appointment of the construction agency, Sumiyoshi no kami received the Third Order of Merit.65 A few weeks after Kanmu moved to the Nagaoka capital, the same deity was promoted to the junior second rank.66 This promotion was granted three weeks after court ranks were given to the various members of the construction agency and Wake no Kiyomaro was promoted to the junior fourth rank upper grade. Rank was probably bestowed upon Sumiyoshi no kami for several reasons: to ask permission for tearing down the buildings of the Later Naniwa palace, to ensure smooth transportation of the recycled construction materials, and to compensate for the loss of importance of the province due to the fact that the secondary capital was torn down.67

Thus, judging from the close connection between the construction of Nagaoka and the dismantling of Naniwa shown in the previous

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62 NS Taika 1/12/9; NS Hakuchi 5/1/1; NS Hakuchi 5/12/8; NS Tenji tennō 5/winter.
63 Kishi, “Nagaokakyo to Nihon no tojo”, 93; and Kishi, Nihon kodai kyōto no kenkyū, 225.
64 SN Enryaku 3/5/24.
65 SN Enryaku 3/6/2.
66 SN Enryaku 3/12/29.
67 In 789, the importance of Naniwa port and the Settsu Office was further reduced when its function as checking station ceased [SN Enryaku 8/11/mizunoe-uma]. Four years later, on the command of Minister of the Right Fujiwara no Tsugutada, the Council of State issued a directive stating that the Settsu Office was renamed the Settsu Provincial Office (Settsu-no-kuni-no-isukasa), for by that time “the great Naniwa palace had already been suspended” and the area was no longer considered to be the site of an alternate capital [NKō Enryaku 12/3/9; RSK 5 Enryaku 12/3/9]. A final reference is made to Naniwa in 804, when Kanmu went to Izumi province and spent the night in the temporary Naniwa palace (Naniwa angū) [NKō Enryaku 23/10/3]. For recent studies on the development of Naniwa as a port and capital, see Tsukada (ed.), Osaka ni okeru toshi no hatten to kōzō; and Sakaehara and Niki (eds.), Naniwa no miya kara Osaka e.
section, it seems likely that Kiyomaro was appointed director because Kanmu already had a transfer of capitals in mind and wanted to ensure the full cooperation of the officials of the Settsu Office during the move. In fact, Kiyomaro’s selection was not the only strategic appointment to the Settsu Office. Just a few months earlier, Kanmu had appointed Ki no ason Mahito associate director of the Settsu Office (Settsu no suke). The Ki family was originally based in Kii province, the only province that sent ships as tribute (kōshin). From this and other documents, it is believed that the Ki family was closely involved in shipbuilding, navigation on the Inland Sea, and travel to the Korean peninsula. Because water transport played such an important role in the construction of Nagaoka, the cooperation of the Ki family was more than welcome. Furthermore, Funamori, another member of the family, was appointed to the Nagaoka construction agency (table 4.1).

The rapid construction made possible by transferring building material from the Later Naniwa palace to Nagaoka village had two advantages. By reusing existing structures, Kanmu could move a lot sooner and thus reduced the opposition to his plans. By saving labour and keeping the production of new construction materials to an absolute minimum, he also limited the strain on the treasury.

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68 SN Enryaku 2/3/12. Takinami, Heian kento, 27.
69 SN Enryaku 3/4/2.
70 Engi shiki, bk. 23, 807.
71 Kishi, Nihon kodai seiji shi kenkyū, 116–34.
72 Fujiwara no Tanetsugu also had ties to the Later Naniwa palace because his grandfather Umakai had been involved in its construction. In 726, Umakai had been appointed by Shōmu as head of the Naniwa Palace Construction Office (zō-Naniwagūshi) [SN Jinki 3/10/26].