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-shi) (table 4.1).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); Ōnokatomi 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; Tajihi 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.2 It was the largest construction

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1 SN Enryaku 3/6/10. In contrast with other capitals, the Shoku Nihongi makes no clear distinction between the construction agencies of the palace (miya) and the city (miyako/kyō) of the Nagaoka capital. The name of the construction agency refers only to the Nagaoka palace, but the agency is believed to have also been in charge of supervising construction work on the capital area.

2 SN Enryaku 3/12/2. Further support for the assumption that Takashino no Hironami belonged to the agency can be found in an entry dated 790, where it is stated that he held the office of associate director of the Carpentry Bureau (moku no suke) when he was appointed vice-governor of Suruga province [SN Enryaku 9/3/10]. He must have risen to this post during the previous four years, because in 786, Okinaga no mahito Kiyotsugu still served as associate director of the Carpentry Bureau [SN