

Kurume History Walks

No.3 Remains of Chikugo-Kokubun-ji Temple Chikugo Kokubunji Ato 筑後国分寺跡



The remains exist in the precincts of the Kokubumachi-Hiyoshi Shrine.

Current circumstances of the remains

About 2.5 kilometers south-east of the Nishitetsu Kurume Station, the remains of the Chikugo-Kokubunji Temple are in the present's precinct of the Kokubumachi-Hiyoshi-jinja Shrine. Many old roof tiles and large stones (probably used as foundation stones) are still scattered there.

The area around the shrine got flourished as a shrine town until the end of World War II . It is always active today with crowded houses, the shopping area including large stores.

Establishment of Temple

In 741, Emperor Seimu issued the imperial edict for establishing provincial temples (*kokubun-ji*) in each province of Japan.

An imperially commissioned Japanese history text (*Shoku-Nihongi*) noticed Chikugo-Kokubun-ji with other *kokubun-jis* of twenty-five provinces: In 756, these temples got the ritual decorations for the Buddhist service from the Imperial Court. We suggest that our *kokubun-ji* should have had some remarkable edifices, which were appropriate for the imperial gift.

Edifices

The temples have principal buildings such as tower (*tou*), main hall (*kondo*), lecture hall (*kodo*), bell-tower (*joro*), scripture house (*kyozo*), inner gate (*chumon*), corridor (*kairo*), and southern large gate (*nandaimon*). Also, there were residential facilities, in which monks lived, such as lodging house (*sobo*), dining hall (*jikido*), office (*jimusho*) and kitchen (*kuriya*).

Excavation research of remains

After the first in 1952, we had conducted forty excavations from 1968 to 1996. And we verified the remains of the lecture hall, the tower, and the roofed mud walls (northern, eastern, and southern side).

-Lecture hall

On the west side, there are the foundation stones with the grooves oriented to north and south, and with the stanchion sockets of some 65 centimeters across. Also, around these stones, the trace of foundation stones exists. We guess that the central area of the lecture hall measured approximately 22.5 meters long and 6.6 meters wide, surrounded by the corridor of approximately 29 meters long and 13 meters wide.

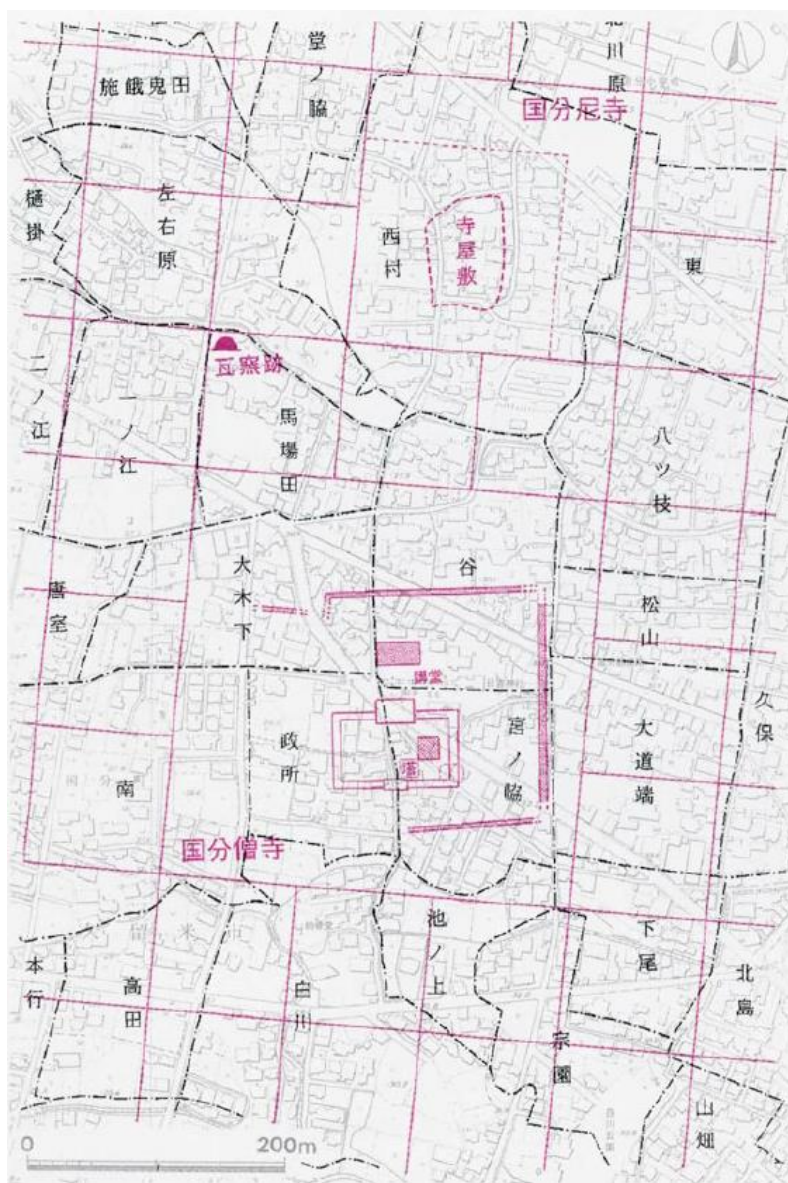


Fig.1: The estimated locations of the temple ground and the buildings layout

-Tower

Across the road on the south side, there is the trace of the foundation stones that makes us guess that a building of 9 meters long on a side existed, and that it was a tower.

-Roofed Mud Walls

The remains of the walls on the three sides partially exist. Although the northern and southern walls are not parallel, these are neither diagonal nor at right angles with the eastern. The ground was likely trapezium.

Layout of buildings

The layout of the kokubun-jis were based on that of the Todai-ji Temple, which was the grand head temple.

As for the Chikugo-Kokubun-ji, according to the above layout and the results of the excavation, we made a hypothesis that the main hall had existed where there used to be reportedly a mound. Then we estimate that that mound was a stylobate of the main hall. The mud walls should have surrounded those principle buildings as shown on Fig.1.

The layout of the Chikuzen-Kokubun-ji is similar to ours and was probably based on the same plans.

*Chikuzen and Chikugo are two of three provinces that consist of Fukuoka Prefecture.



Foundation stones of lecture hall



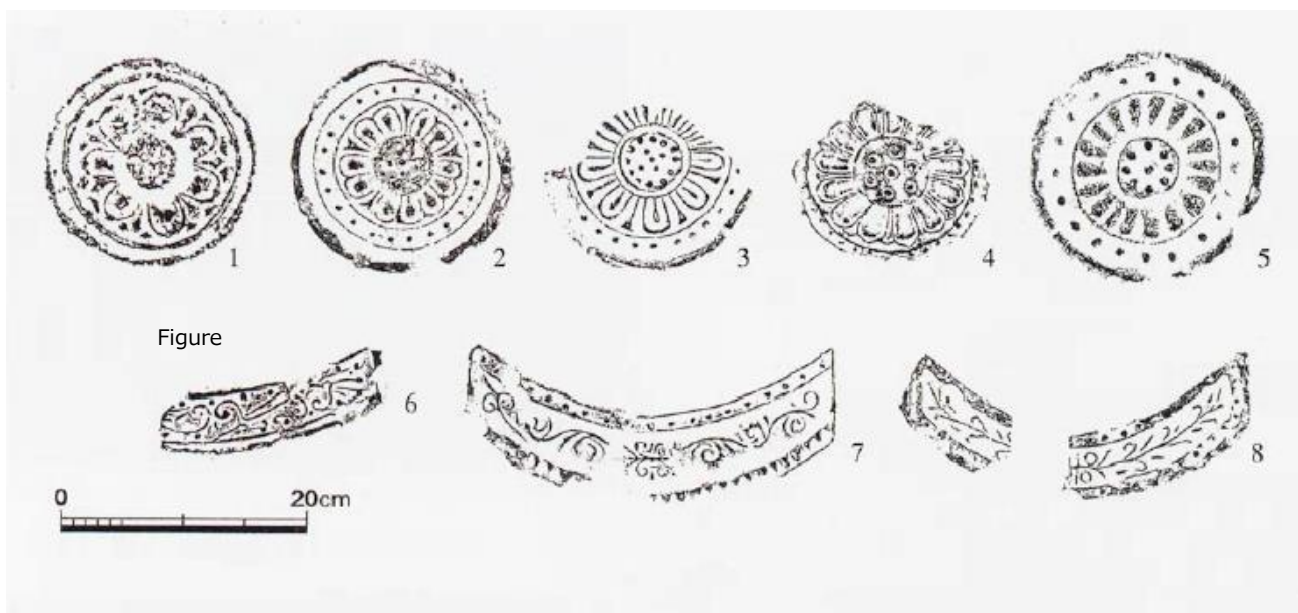
Remains of tower



Remains of roofed mud walls

Old roof tiles

Since ancient times, it has been famous that the old roof tiles were scattered in the Kokubunji area. These tiles were various: round-shaped, flat, gargoyle, ridge, etc. The round-shaped has a lotus flower pattern and had been one of the main tiles used for the temples and the government offices. Figure 1 is the same as excavated tiles at the Inoue-hai-ji temple ruins in Ogori City. Figure 4 is the same as the one discovered at the Dazaifu Government remains. Besides, other (Figure 2, 3, and 5) should be original of the Chikugo Province. The flat has with arabesque. Figure 6, 7, and 8 are also unique, and have not been found in the other provinces.



ACCESS: 100 meters east from the bus stop "Kokubu" of the Nishitetsu Bus

Cultural Properties Protection Department of Kurume
 Address 15-3 Jonan, Kurume, Fukuoka Japan 830-8520
 Tel 0942-30-9225
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