

Kurume History Walks

No.18 Remains of Chikugo Kokufu Chikugo Kokufu Ato 筑後国府跡

■ About

In the late 7th century, the Chikugo provincial capital (Chikugo Kokufu 筑後国府) was established in Kurume. Until that time, Chikugo and Chikuzen Province were governed as a single province called Chikushi, which is the western area of the present-day Fukuoka Prefecture. The Chikugo Kokufu seems to have existed for about five centuries, changing places three times.

A provincial capital had specific facilities such as central building (kokucho 国庁) in which the provincial governor conducted the political affairs and the ceremonies, government offices (soji 曹司), residences for the officials, and artisan's workshops.

In the Nara period (710-794), Japan of that time was divided into 66 provinces, which were classified into four classes by its scale: large (大), high (上), middle (中), and low (下). Chikugo Province, which had 10 districts, used to be high-classified. The law prescribed the number of officials and the workers. The high-classified province had to have 437 people of senior officials, who were dispatched from the national capital, junior officials, and other laborers.



The ancient provincial capital had expanded in the above area.

■ Excavation

In the early 19th century, Yano Kazusada, a feudal retainer of Kurume Domain, and a historical researcher estimated that the *Chikugo Kokufu* had been around the area of Edamitsu, Aikawamachi, according to the place-name and the scattered old roof tiles.

In 1961, the University of Kyushu undertook a full-scale excavation and research at Amida, Aikawamachi. In just one week, they achieved significant results by finding many roof tiles, the remains of the roofed mud wall, and the traces of fire. As a result, it proved that *Kokucho*, the central facility of the provincial capital, had existed around there and that the estimation of Kazusada was accurate.



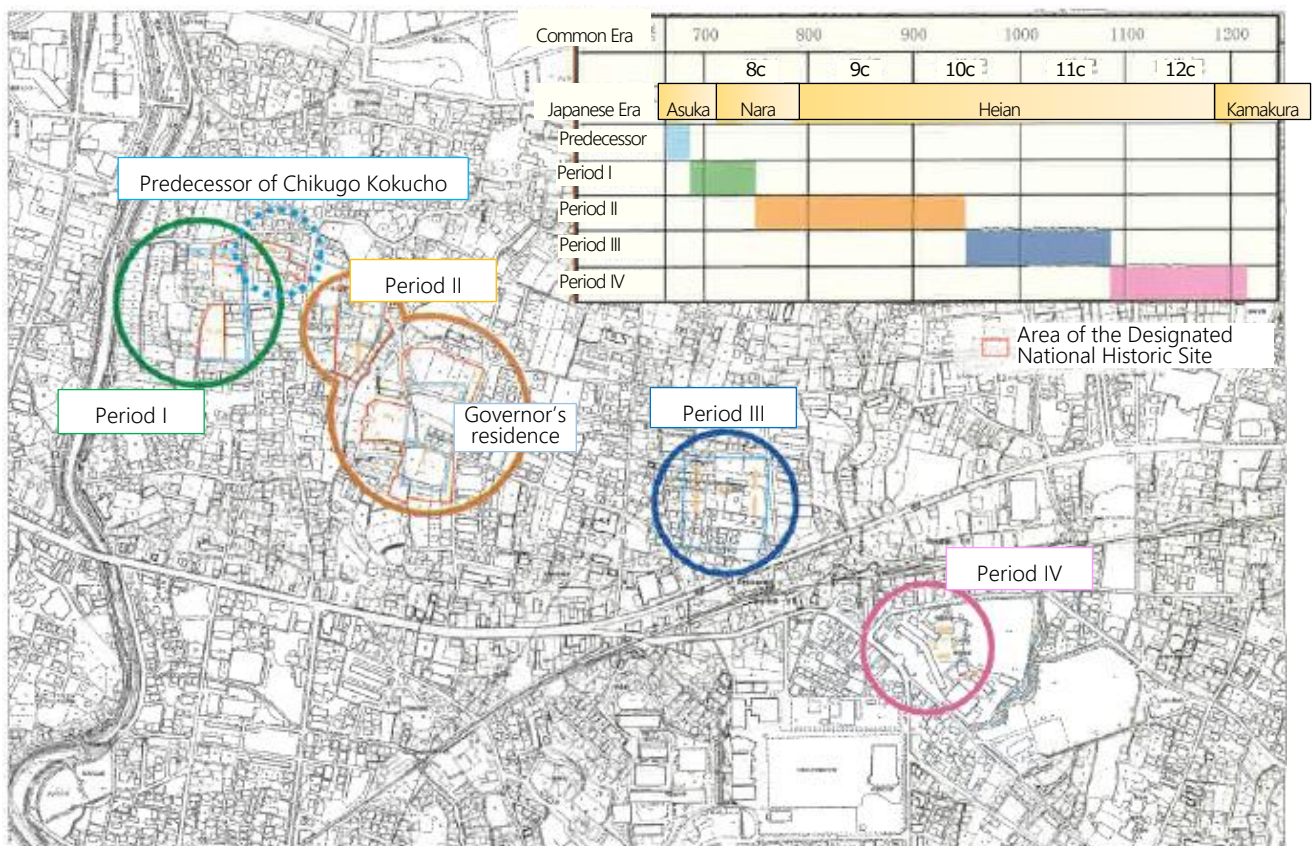
Remains of a large building

In 1972, the City of Kurume took over the excavation. Since then, we have continued the research. It came to light that the *Chikugo Kokufu* changed the place with the time.

■ Relocation

➤ Predecessor of *Chikugo Kokucho* (at Tashiro, Aikawamachi); the late 7th century

In the middle of the 7th century, the conflict among the kingdoms on the Korean peninsula influenced the politics also of China and Japan. Then, the military base was installed in Kurume to protect an Imperial Palace and Dazaifu (the regional government for all of Kyushu and nearby islands) on the Chikugo plain.



The land was surrounded by the rivers (north and west side), large moat (east side) and fortified by mud walls. As a result of the excavation, we discovered the remains, including a large, probably central, building, which seemed to have been constructed based on some layout planning.

➤ **Chikugo Kokucho Period I (at Furugo, Aikawamachi);** the late 7th - the middle 8th century

The provincial first capital was constructed on an elevated ground facing the Kora River at the end of the 7th century. It measures 180 meters by 80 meters, surrounded by the mud wall of 4-6 meters thick. As same as the predecessor, the buildings should have been disposed on some layout plan.



Mud wall



During the excavation

➤ **Chikugo Kokucho Period II (at Amida, Aikawamachi);** the middle 8th - the middle 10th century

It was constructed about 200 meters east from the first site. The ground was surrounded by the mud wall, over 75 meters by 67.5 meters. Buildings with tiled roof and stone foundation clustered within the wall. The disposition of the buildings was a copy of the Dazaifu Government which presided over the Kyushu. The lined-up buildings with the tiled roof should have displayed the authority because they had been very rare. However, these buildings seemed to be burned down due to a revolt led by a warrior in 941.



Traces of the pillars



Excavated incense burner from the governor's residence

➤ **Chikugo Kokucho Period III (at Asazumamachi);** the middle 10th - the late 11th century

The third was built about 600 meters east from the second site. It was surrounded by a wide moat about 140 meters long on each side. We excavated the remains of a building which was the largest scale among others. We conclude that it was the central building (国庁) of the capital. In the middle 10th century, the legal system was collapsing and the provincial capitals were decaying. We are not sure why such a large building was built in Chikugo Province.



And we determined that its abolition period was in the late 11th century by the result of the excavation and an ancient documents of the Kora-taisha Shrine.

➤ **Chikugo Kokucho Period IV (at Yokomichi, Miimachi);** 11th - the late 12th century

The above document described that in 1073 the capital moved to Imanofu, of which the place-name means present government office, from Furufu or Kofu, of which the name means old government office.

We presume that “*Imanofu*” was at the schoolyard of today’s city high school, because the remains of buildings were discovered. That declined in the late twelfth century.

The figure below depicts the *Chikugo Kokufu*, drawn by Mitani Yushin based on the estimation in a history book of Yano Kazusada. In the center, it shows “Mikurazono 御藏園”. It remains as the area name around the Aikawa elementary school.



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