

## **Revisiting Ancient Dazaifu**

Dazaifu was once a key center of government administration and international diplomacy. The area had strong cultural links with the Asian mainland and was a hub of new ideas and cultural developments. However, as control of the country fell into the hands of samurai and feudal lords in the twelfth century, the city's influence waned. Excavations over the past five decades have revealed the scale of ancient Dazaifu, and archaeological digs and aerial photos provide a much clearer idea of Dazaifu's former design and organization.

After sites are excavated, they are filled-in and covered with grass to protect the remains, and the area is marked to show what lies beneath. This post-excavation process has the dual role of preserving the natural landscape and highlighting the history of the area. A few examples of the finds are deliberately left visible, such as this drainage ditch. The ditch dates to the early eighth century and has been preserved in its original location. The walls of the Exhibition Hall were built around it.

The large rock seen here is another notable item. This foundation stone is of the wrong size for the ruins here. The stone's origins and purpose are an enduring mystery, one that it is hoped will be solved by future excavations.

The museum works closely with the local community, listening to concerns and ensuring the ongoing excavation work does not disrupt residents. It involves local residents in volunteer projects to help preserve and convey information about Dazaifu's rich heritage and role in Japanese history.