

## Inscribed Sue Ware

### [表のキャプション]

As one of the largest producers of the valuable stoneware pottery known as Sue ware, the Ushikubi area paid its taxes to Dazaifu in the form of these vessels. Historical records mention this practice, but the tax notations inscribed on these pieces are physical proof, giving further insight into the taxation system of the eighth century.

### [裏の解説]

Excavations at the Ushikubi Sue Ware Kiln Ruins have produced pieces of Sue ware inscribed with the taxpayer's name and town of residence, the year of remittance, and notations pertaining to tax amounts. Such vessels are called *heragaki sueki*, or “spatula-inscribed Sue ware,” as the artisans used sharp-edged, wooden pottery spatulas to etch Chinese characters into the clay before firing.

The high-quality Sue vessels, with their smooth, less-porous surfaces, represented a major advance in Japanese ceramics. Sue ware craftsmen paid their taxes in pottery to Dazaifu officials, who collected and recorded them before sending the vessels on to the imperial capital.

The government offices at Dazaifu managed taxes in what is now Kyushu as a part of a wide-reaching administrative organization called the *ritsuryō* system: a series of legal codes implemented in the mid-seventh century in imitation of the rigorous political administration of Tang-dynasty China (618–907). The new codes established a Ministry of the Treasury that oversaw taxation of the provinces and tribute to the emperor. The discovery of *heragaki* Sue ware in Dazaifu is tangible evidence that this system operated just as the records indicate.

The inscriptions on the vessels also hint at the cultural exchange that led to the development of Sue ware itself. Some of the makers' names recorded on the vessels are thought to be those of immigrants from the Korean Peninsula.

*Heragaki* Sue ware and many other artifacts uncovered in the area are on display at the Ōnojō Cocoro-no-furusato-kan City Museum.