Kyoto

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1

Heian-kyō

The Ideal

When Emperor Kanmu (737–806) founded Heian-kyō in 794, the new capital was meant to be the permanent bureaucratic and ritual seat of a strong, centralized, Chinese-style state. The scale and opulence of the plan was grand and ambitious, in fact probably too much so. Some of the key traits meant to define Heian-kyō's appearance were never entirely realized, while many of those that were rapidly disintegrated. Not only did the Japanese polity function very differently from its Chinese prototype, real power, even from the outset, rested more with private political actors than the state. Before examining how these factors contributed to Heian-kyō's failure to materialize as planned, we must begin by exploring the plan itself as well as its founding principles and prescriptions. As we shall see, these principles retained their relevance with remarkable resilience well into the succeeding eras, long after the city and its polity had changed dramatically. To be sure, for those who sought to possess the kind of orthodox authority the capital was meant to represent, Heian-kyō's founding ideals remained more than relevant. They were elemental to their engagement in the pageantry of legitimized power.

Heian-kyō's urban plan and architecture have been examined previously in English, and Japanese scholarship on the topic is vast.[1] While some detail can therefore be abbreviated, the broad outlines need to be drawn in order to set the stage for the narrative of change that follows.

The statutory government that Heian-kyō was built to accommodate was based on a body of criminal (*ritsu*) and administrative (*ryō*) codes adapted from Tang China in stages leading up to formal codification in the eighth century. The so-called "Ritsuryō" system defined the institutions of imperial government and created an official hierarchy composed of formal status ranks (*kurai*) and bureaucratic posts (*kanshoku*). As a supreme sacerdotal ruler, the emperor was at the top of the Ritsuryō system, but it was a narrow population of high-ranking civil aristocrats who administered the institutional organs of the statutory state. Access to high office was a matter of rank, and in Japan (unlike China), rank was a matter of birth rather than merit. In striking detail, Ritsuryō codes advised on a sweeping repertoire of elite customs, practices, and rituals, as well as the material infrastructure necessary to realize them. The numerous events that punctuated the official calendar—including such things as the bestowal of ranks and posts, new year's celebrations, ablutions, prayers for the protection of the body of the emperor and state, and a plethora of additional "annual observances"—were all carefully scripted affairs, following a strict regime of codes, customs, and precedents that dictated what people did, how, and in what setting. It was the strong relationship between function and form as first codified in Ritsuryō laws that made the capital and its official architecture elemental to the infrastructure of the classical state system.

Heian-kyō was conceived as an inert venue of Ritsuryō statecraft. It was to be a capital in the purest sense of the word: the seat of the statutory government, home and ritual center of the emperor and the civil aristocracy, and the location of numerous official buildings and monuments that facilitated imperial pageantry, bureaucratic administration, and diplomacy. Buddhist temples and shrines were excluded, and the presence of warriors in the city was, in principle, taboo. Due to their polluting effects, killing and burial were also formally proscribed.[2] Commercial activity was limited, while farming was generally not allowed. All land within the capital's formal boundaries was planned for urbanization. Heian-kyō was meant to be a mononuclear capital: the imperial institution was the political, economic, and social center of gravity, and every constituent element of the city was oriented—physically and philosophically—around a single, unified, public core embodied in the emperor and his palace compound. Formal codes and indelible social customs dictated everything from the location of the city itself to the width of its roads and the styles of

official architecture. Where people lived, what they built, and how they interacted with the cityscape were guided by principles of status, propriety, and precedent.

As the seat of a large and complex government bureaucracy, Heian-kyō became home to a diverse population of officials numbering between five and seven thousand. Estimated allowances for their families and household servants put the number of people whose full-time presence was justified through an affiliation with the state near seventy thousand.[3] For the dozen or so individuals who constituted the highest echelon of the civil aristocracy, residence in Heian-kyō was more than a convenience; it was an obligation. From the foundation of the Japanese imperial polity, a key objective of those seeking to make the state and emperor the sole sources of political legitimacy was to sever the ties that bound the regional, landed elites to their provincial bases of private wealth and familial influence. Nationalizing all land through the Taika reforms of 646 was one important step. Physically removing those regional elites from the provinces, endowing them with public ranks and posts, then compelling them to live permanently in the capital were others.[4] It was because of this basic principle of mandatory residence that, for much of Kyoto's premodern history, a sudden and unsanctioned departure from the city was interpreted as an unambiguous act of rebellion. In sum, housing the aristocracy was not just one of Heian-kyō's functions, it was one of the primary reasons for establishing a permanent capital in the first place.[5]

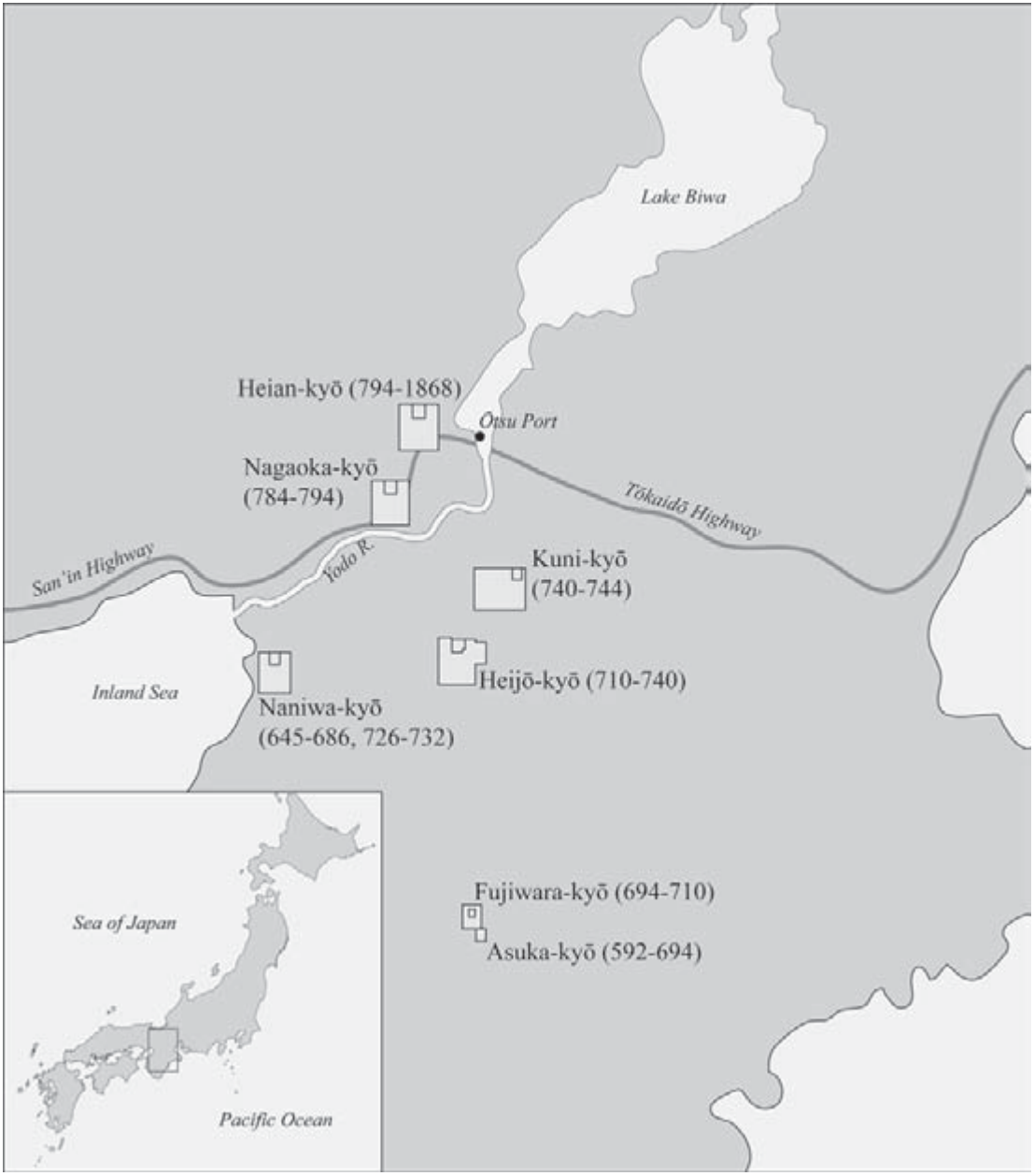
And yet residence in the capital city was also a privilege. As Spiro Kostof has shown, throughout history and in various settings, the "luck of first ownership" served to reinforce aristocracy through the concentration of property rights.[6] The relationship between physical space and the aristocracy was on ubiquitous display in Heian-kyō because the aristocracy—who were the only ones initially permitted to engage in a real estate market—frequently took family names from the locations of their first official urban residences. It is for this reason that the documentary record is replete with mention of such people as the "Lord of Sanjō" (Sanjō-dono) or the "Lord of Kyōgoku" (Kyōgoku-dono). While the Japanese aristocracy was not unlike its European counterparts in this respect (the Duke of Orange Nassau or the Prince of Wales are just two of many examples), it is unique that in the Japanese case so many family names come from the names of roads in the classical capital.

The Location

Emperor Kanmu's decision to establish Heian-kyō might have appeared rash and impulsive to contemporaries. Just ten years earlier, he had undertaken the monumental task of moving the capital from Heijō-kyō (contemporary Nara) to Nagaoka-kyō (see Figure 1.1). That costly endeavor was justified, in part, on the grounds that it was to be the last time such a transfer took place. Nagaoka-kyō, indeed, was supposed to be Japan's "eternal capital" (*eien no miyako*).[7] Not only was the move to Heian-kyō soon, it was rapid. Only a few months separate Kanmu's decision and the move itself. Scholars have sought to explain why Nagaoka-kyō failed or why the Heian transfer became necessary. Some cite malevolent spirits haunting Nagaoka-kyō; others write of political and material incentives pulling Kanmu and his court to Heian. The most recent scholarship, however, finds that the single most important factor was Nagaoka-kyō's perennial and catastrophic problem with flooding.[8] The site, which construction had rendered a steep and badly denuded slope, was simply not viable as the venue of a densely built environment, let alone a capital with eternal ambitions.

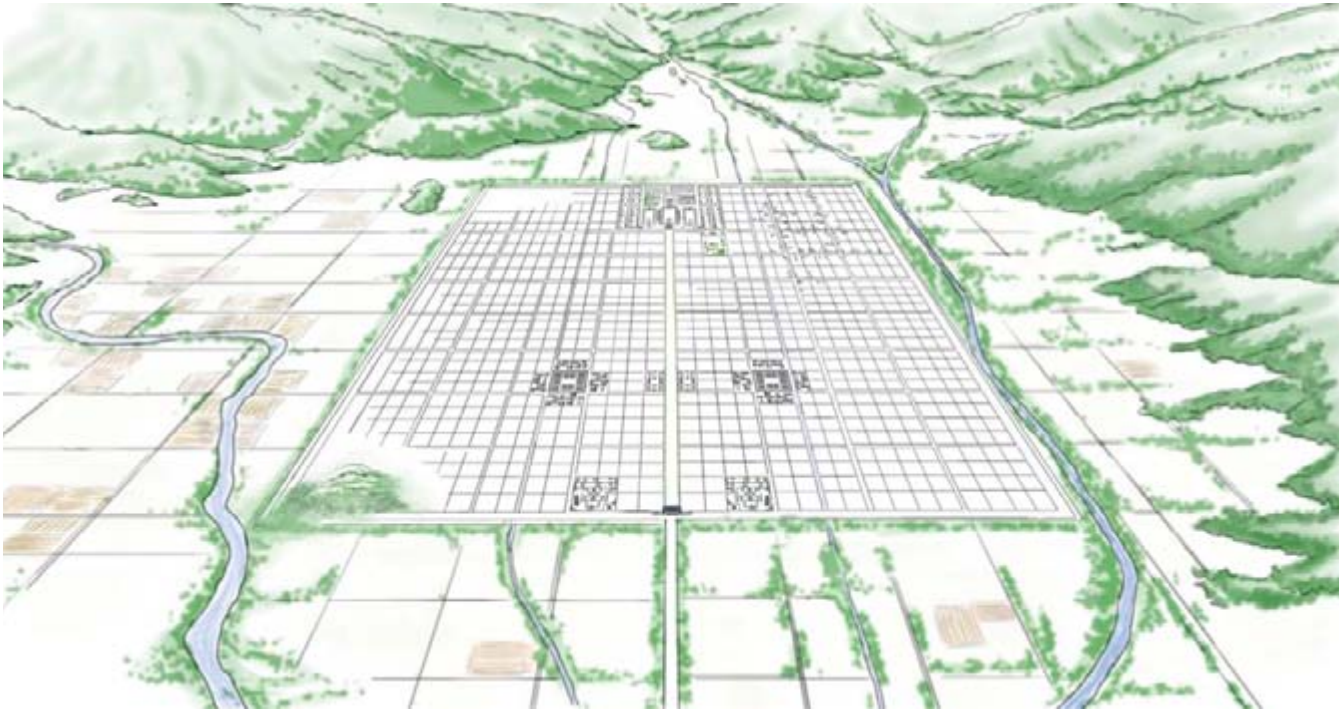
The site of Heian-kyō, the Uta basin located immediately northwest of Nagaoka-kyō, was a vast improvement over its predecessor, not only in terms of topography but also matters of defense, transportation, and geomancy (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2). The cultivated fields of Uta were broad and flat with only a gentle slope from north to south. Low mountains that surrounded the greater basin in the north, east, and west supplied the land below with abundant fresh water via two major rivers, the Katsura in the west and the Kamo in the east. Due to these favorable circumstances and in contrast to Nagaoka-kyō, the whole of the new capital could be planned and constructed without any major hydraulic undertakings. Besides supplying water, the surrounding mountains were rich sources of timber. They also functioned as a natural line of defense against potential assailants. Despite the relative peace enjoyed by the region where Heian-kyō and earlier capitals stood, imperial campaigns against the "barbarian" tribes of the Emishi in the archipelago's northeast were common prior to the tenth century. Such circumstances might help explain not only the attention given to defense but also the impulse to embed peaceful aspirations into the new capital's sobriquet. The following verse, the first text to mention Heian-kyō by name, conveys this impulse precisely:

1.1. Map of central Japan indicating locations of Chinese-style capitals established during the sixth through eighth centuries.


Lake Biwa
Heian-kyō (794-1868)
Ōtsu Port
Nagaoka-kyō
(784-794)
Tōkaidō Highway
San'in Highway
Yodo R.
Kuni-kyō
(740-744)
Heijō-kyō (710-740)
Inland Sea
Naniwa-kyō
(645-686, 726-732)
Fujiwara-kyō (694-710)
Asuka-kyō (592-694)
Sea of Japan
Pacific Ocean

> Enclosed collar-and-sash by mountains and rivers, the province here makes a natural citadel. Because of that configuration, we devise a new designation for it: let this Postmontaine Province [Yamashiro 山背] be renamed the Province of Mountain Citadel [Yamashiro 山城]. Moreover, the joyfully flocking people and singers of praise raise their different voices in identical words, naming this "Heian-kyō," The Capital of Peace and Tranquility.[9]

Kanmu's government during this period was seeking to exert greater centralized control over the provinces, even those not occupied by Emishi. Being based at Heian helped facilitate this goal because the site was located at a key transportation crossroads near the intersection of the Tōkaidō and San'in highways, the major overland routes connecting the eastern and western parts of the country. The Yodo River, immediately to the south, provided easy access to the Inland Sea



1.2. Heian-kyō bird's-eye representation from the south. Illustration by Yoriko Igari

while the freshwater port at Ōtsu connected the capital to several key provinces to the north and east. Finally, Heian-kyō's location had certain metaphysical significance. According to geomantic theories imported from China, a site considered favorable for capital construction needed to meet specific topographic criteria indicative of harmonious coexistence with the forces of nature and the universe (Jp. *ki*, Ch. *chi*). To ensure good government, a capital was to be guarded in the cardinal directions by four gods whose presence was represented in the topographic landscape by three mountains encircling the site in an inverted "U" formation. A fourth mountain was to be well removed to the south.[10] Heian-kyō met these criteria perfectly, a condition cited by many over the centuries as the reason the city endured and flourished.

The Plan

The simple rationality of Heian-kyō's urban grid belies the complexities involved in creating a master-planned city that looked and functioned as intended. Before examining the details, let us begin with some broad brushstrokes and a disclaimer that, due to early deviations from the idealized plan and a paucity of reliable historical sources, postulating on Heian-kyō's "original" appearance is problematic. Scholars who collaborated to create a one one-thousandth scale model of Heian-Kyoto to mark the twelve hundredth anniversary of the capital's establishment in 1994 compressed accounts from the city's first four hundred years to manufacture a composite historical profile. Such a method might be the only effective way to create a viable picture of the classical city.[11]

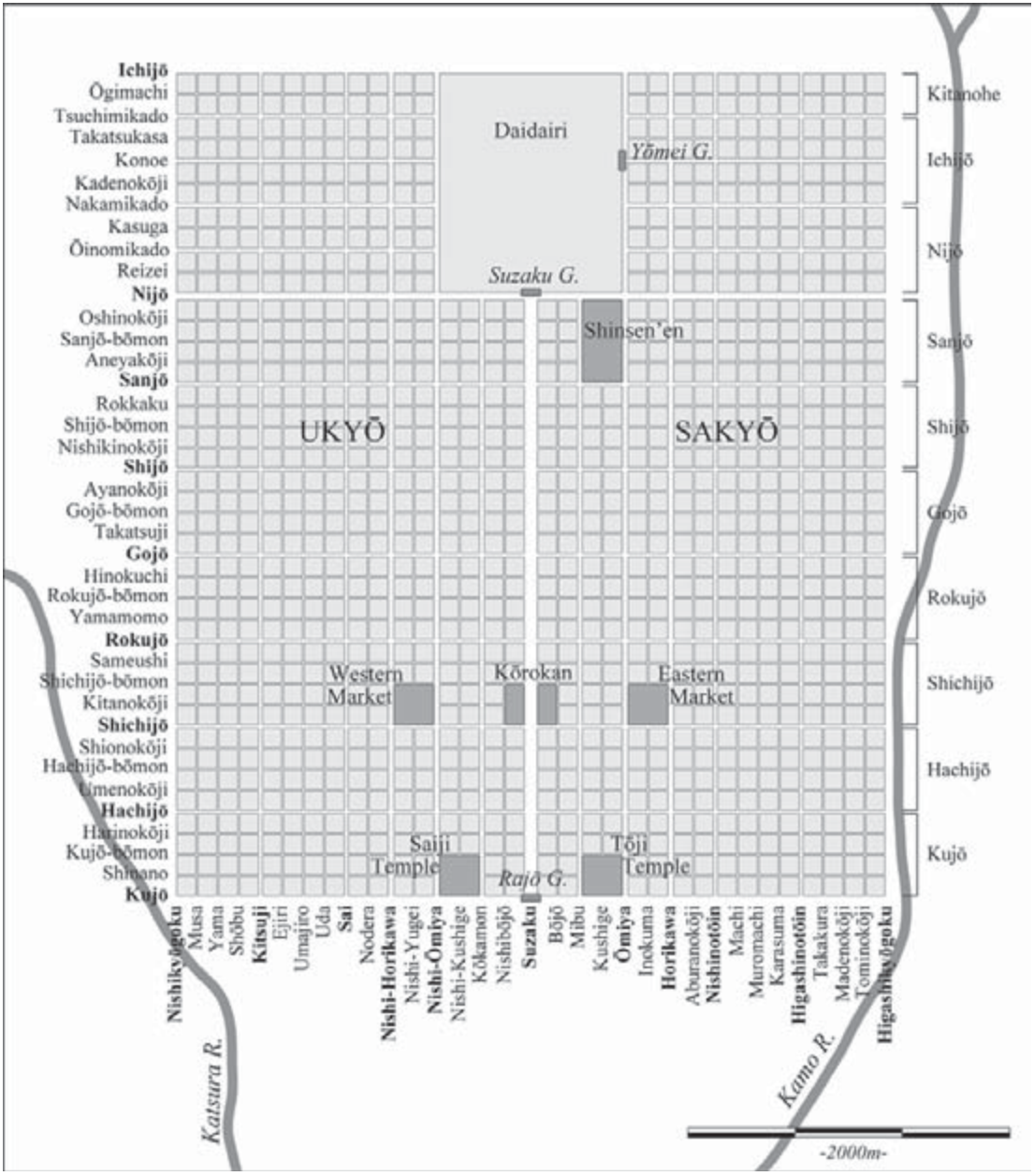
The basic structural plan upon which Heian-kyō was based was, like the Ritsuryō codes, imported from the continent in the seventh century as part of a multifaceted campaign to adopt the technologies, institutions, and ideas indicative of a modern, "civilized" society. Adopting the Chinese capital model was important to the emerging Japanese imperial state because it provided the material infrastructure necessary to engage in "proper"—meaning Chinese-style—government, ritual, and international diplomacy. There is debate on the extent to which certain continental elements were adopted and adapted, but most scholars agree that the Japanese sought to mimic the majestic imperial cityscapes of Chang'an and Luoyang, the dual capitals of the Sui (581–618) and Tang (618–907) dynasties.[12]

Just like other cultural imports, once in Japan, the Chinese model

changed significantly, not only to accommodate domestic circumstances, but also because frequent relocations during this early period might have accelerated material evolution. When Heian-kyō was founded in 794, it was the sixth Chinese-style city built in Japan in just over a century (see Figure 1.1).[13] Despite adaptations and evolution, most of the basic continental attributes remained intact. Among these, the most defining was the geometric grid plan (Figure 1.3). Oriented from north to south, Heian-kyō's grid covered a rectangular area 4.4 kilometers wide and 5.2 kilometers tall.[14] A massive, walled imperial enclosure, called the Daidairi, was located at the top center of the cityscape, a position indicative of the emperor's place at the top of the polity and the center of society. Extending south from the Daidairi and connecting that enclosure to the capital's formal entrance gate of Rajō (Rajōmon) to the south was Suzaku Road. At a staggering eighty-five meters in width and lined on both sides by lush willow trees spaced at exact intervals along the 3.8-kilometer-long route, Suzaku was monumental in scope and design. It served to inspire awe among visiting foreign dignitaries, many of whom would see the capital, its great gates, and official buildings as tangible evidence of Sinification.[15] Suzaku also partitioned the city into two symmetrical halves: Sakyō, meaning the "Left Capital," in the east, and Ukyō, meaning the "Right Capital," in the west. From the perspective of the emperor—which was the only perspective that really mattered—this "left" and "right" distinction was not backward because the sovereign looked down on the city from his palace located in the north. To him, east was left and west was right. Sakyō and Ukyō were considered discrete institutional units and each possessed its own executive officers (*kyōshiki*).

1.3. Heian-kyō grid plan, depicted after a two-block expansion to the north created the "northern zone" (*kitanohe*) in the ninth century.

In stark contrast to its continental forebears, Heian-kyō possessed no city wall. There is early textual and archeological evidence of an earthen bulwark that extended out from both sides of the Rajō Gate, but the rest of the city was surrounded by little more than a low embankment and shallow drainage ditch, perhaps only vaguely resembling a moat. These apparatuses appear infrequently in early texts, but their complete disappearance from the documentary record by the tenth century suggests none were particularly important nor functionally significant.[16] Traditionally, historians have pointed to Heian-kyō's lack of defenses as proof of the era's relative stability and the absence of domestic threats. It was, after all, the "Capital of Peace and Tranquility." This view, however, is unsustainable.[17] While it is true that the


Ichijō
Ōgimachi
Tsuchimikado
Takatsukasa
Konoe
Kadenokōji
Nakamikado
Kasuga
Ōinomikado
Reizei
Nijō
Oshinokōji
Sanjō-bōmon
Aneyakōji
Sanjō
Rokkaku
Shijō-bōmon
Nishikinokōji
Shijō
Ayanokōji
Gojō-bōmon
Takatsuji
Gojō
Hinokuchi
Rokujō-bōmon
Yamamomo
Rokujō
Sameushi
Shichijō-bōmon
Kitanokōji
Shichijō
Shionokōji
Hachijō-bōmon
Umenokōji
Hachijō
Harinokōji
Kujō-bōmon
Shiōno
Kujō
Daidairi
Yōmei G.
Suzaku G.
Shinsen'en
UKYŌ
SAKYŌ
Western Market
Kōrokan
Eastern Market
Saiji Temple
Rajō G.
Tōji Temple
Kitanohe
Ichijō
Nijō
Sanjō
Shijō
Gojō
Rokujō
Shichijō
Hachijō
Kujō
Nishikyōgoku
Musa
Yama
Shōbu
Kitsuji
Ejiri
Umajiro
Uda
Sai
Nodera
Nishi-Horikawa
Nishi-Yugei
Nishi-Ōmiya
Nishi-Kushige
Kōkamon
Nishibōjō
Suzaku
Bōjō
Mibu
Kushige
Ōmiya
Inokuma
Horikawa
Aburanokōji
Nishinotōin
Machi
Muromachi
Karasuma
Higashinotōin
Takakura
Madenokōji
Tominokōji
Higashiyōgoku
Katsura R.
Kamo R.
-2000m-

immediate capital region was tranquil during most of the early Heian period (794–1180s), the same cannot be said of previous Japanese capitals built in the Chinese style, which, despite being plagued by intermittent warfare, likewise possessed no city walls. Most noteworthy about the omission, besides the apparent necessity, is that a wall was the defining material trait of the Chinese capital model, a model the Japanese sought so vociferously to mimic in other respects.[18] They were clearly aware of the convention, even going so far as to use the word "*tojō*" in reference to their own capitals, the term similar to that used in China to signify a walled environment.[19]

In the final analysis, the construction of a city wall was probably not feasible in Japan. Circumstances surrounding the creation of Heian-kyō offer a possible explanation for why. At the end of the eighth century, the failure of imperial troops to vanquish the Emishi cast a pall over central politics and, in the end, stymied progress on the new capital's completion. The central government was forced to exact high taxes from the provinces and conscript people for both the war effort and the capital's construction.[20] Petitions complaining of overwork and overtaxation poured in from all directions; even members of the aristocracy, who had private provincial interests themselves, began lobbying the emperor for relief. Forced to make a decision between completing the capital and continuing the war, Kanmu chose the war, dissolving the Office of Palace Construction (*zōgū-shiki*) in 805, thereby formally halting, albeit only temporarily, Heian-kyō's construction. What is most striking about this turn of events is that they came to pass during a time when the power of the central government was expanding dramatically under the rulership of a powerful and charismatic emperor. Presumably, if Kanmu was unable to rally resources and political support sufficient to complete a Chinese-style capital even while waging a protracted war, then none of his predecessors would have either. Perhaps from the outset, the bar on capital construction was set lower in Japan than in China. After all, building a city wall on the scale of those that surrounded Chang'an and Luoyang—standing over eight meters high, made of stone and rammed earth and wide enough to allow troops to move about freely atop—would have required a level of sustained resource and labor management we have no reason to believe existed in Japan until perhaps the late sixteenth century, when warlords began building early modern castles and castle-towns. Maybe the Japanese never tried, instead excluding that particular trait from their

own capital plans from the outset in the name of expediency. This argument, if correct, also helps explain why Japanese capitals were substantially smaller than their continental counterparts, instead of assuming that the salient factor was a smaller population.

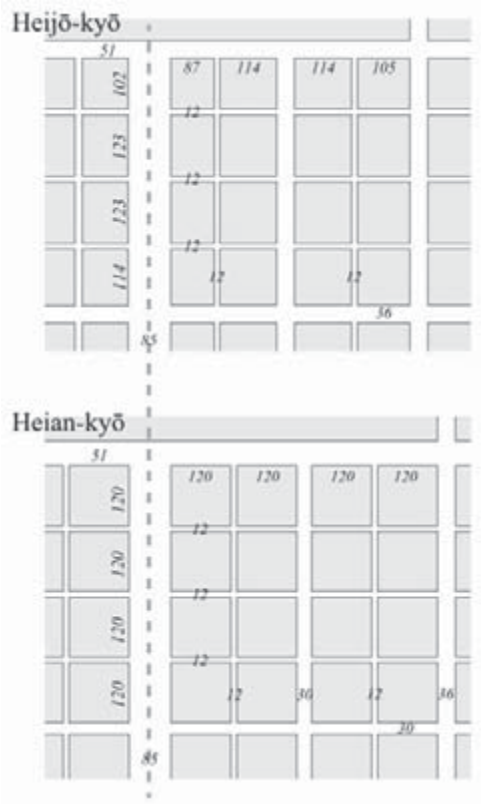
More important than the reasons behind why no wall was built is consideration of the long-term ramifications of there never having been a wall. As we shall see in later chapters, it was, in part, the capital's inextricable connection to the surrounding hinterland that fueled the rapid and dramatic urban expansion of the succeeding era.

Machi: The Essential Urban Building Block

Heian-kyō's most immediately recognizable physical trait was its supremely rational and geometrically symmetrical grid pattern. Indicative of a strong, centralized, and Sinicized polity that ruled the city (and the state) from the top down, the capital's urban grid possessed certain symbolic significance. The roads that made up the grid, however, also fulfilled an important practical, albeit performative, function as the venues of highly scripted and grandly orchestrated public processions carried out by the emperor, the court aristocracy, and other members of elite society. In a theater state such as the Heian polity, capital roads sometimes served as the stage.

When discussing the grid, it is critical to avoid the impulse to characterize the creation of city blocks, first called *machi*, as the incidental result of laying roads perpendicularly in a crisscross pattern.[21] In the case of Heian-kyō, such a description would not only be incorrect, it would misrepresent a critical spatial trait that not only made this Japanese capital essentially different from its predecessors but likely contributed to the city's long-term viability. Fatal flaws in earlier urban plans resulted in the creation of blocks of various sizes, a circumstance that had led to elite infighting over residential land. To understand this problem and explain how it was solved in Heian-kyō, let us first explore how earlier Japanese capitals were planned and how residential land was distributed.

When the Japanese first attempted to mimic the Chinese urban model in places such as Fujiwara-kyō and Heijō-kyō, planners privileged the core significance of an idealized grid pattern. They most likely began the planning process by marking out a site using long strands of cord



1.4. Grid plans of Heijō-kyō (Nara) and Heian-kyō compared. Note cases of irregular blocks in the former. Numbers indicate widths of blocks and roads in meters.

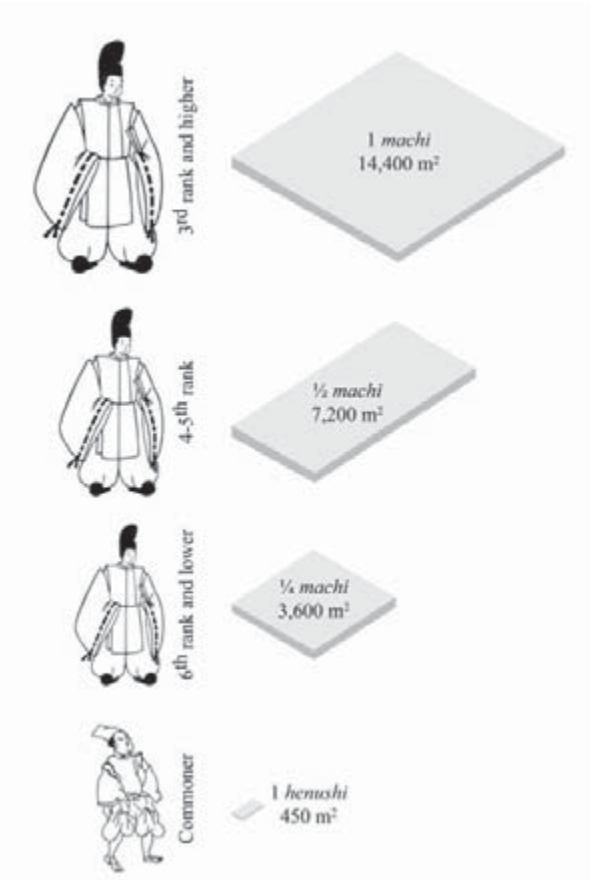
that, through their intersection at equal intervals, created a grid pattern of perfect equilateral squares.[22] A problem emerged, however, when roads were subsequently superimposed over this ideal grid, because the creation of roads itself required the shaving away of land on all four sides of nascent blocks. Since roads had various widths, the blocks, or *machi*, that took shape around them ended up having various sizes (see the case of Heijō-kyō illustrated in Figure 1.4).

This physical complication led to social strife due to the nature of the land allocation system. Lower-ranking members of the aristocracy, sixth rank and below, were allocated one-fourth of a *machi*, upon which they were expected to built an official residence. Mid-ranking aristocrats, those of fourth and fifth rank, were given a half *machi*. And finally, whole *machi* were allocated to the highest members of the court aristocracy, third rank and above. As straightforward as this scheme was, problems arose prior to the Heian period because the sizes of *machi* were not tied to an absolute geometric measurement and, as a result, ended up being all different sizes. And due to an elite preference for residential land along major (and wider) roads, those with higher formal statuses often ended up with plots significantly smaller than those of their social inferiors. The resulting inverse relationship between status and residential land size was a grave social problem; the highest elites railed against a system that seemed unquestionably inappropriate.

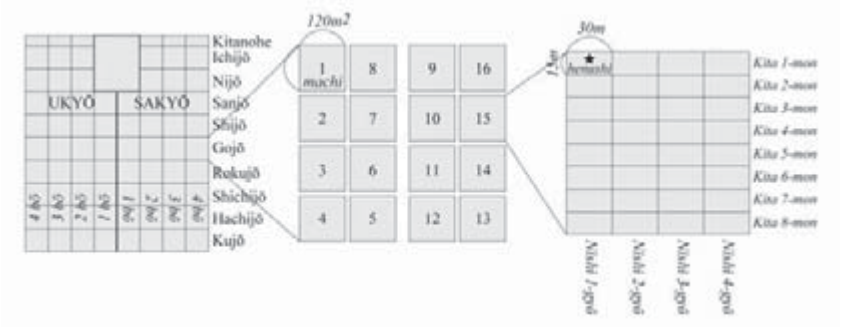
Heian-kyō's planners sought to correct the flawed *machi* system by reversing the planning process. They started not with the master grid plan but rather with the single unit of the *machi*, making it the essential urban building block. They first set the specific size of *machi* at 40 *jō* to a side, a length of about 120 meters. This made every block a perfect square with an inviolable area of about 14,400 square meters, or 3.6 acres. Planners then arranged those blocks into rows and columns, leaving set spaces between each to create roads of different widths. It should be understood, therefore, that Heian-kyō's roads materialized

incidentally, through the strategic arrangement of *machi*, not the other way around.[23] As mentioned, members of the aristocracy were granted residential plots ranging in size from one-fourth to a whole city block (see Figure 1.5). The majority of the capital's residents, however, were not so fortunate. *Machi* were partitioned into much smaller administrative units for allocation to low-ranking officials and eventually to commoners. Arranged into a system called "four columns–eight rows" (*shigyō-hachimon*), each unit, called *henushi*, was just less than thirty meters from east to west and fifteen meters from north to south (see Figure 1.6). At 450 square meters, a plot such as this would be large by modern Japanese urban standards, but in Heian-kyō it was the paltry allotment of the lowest members of capital society.

In yet another departure from the continental model, Heian-kyō's planners did not create walls around each individual *machi.* While aristocrats certainly did use walls to surround their homes, some of which covered a whole block, the Japanese capital was not a "container city," which, as defined by Lewis Mumford, exhibits a series of nested



1.5. Heian-kyō residential land allocation.



1.6. Heian-kyō block division and organization.

enclosures.[24] As we shall see, the generally open relationship between blocks and the roads that surrounded them was to have a profound impact on Kyoto's history, both materially and socially.

Roads and Addresses

The planning of *machi* took priority over roads in the construction of Heian-kyō, but roads were no less important. In addition to facilitating movement around the city, including the elite processions mentioned above, they divided the capital into a rational matrix of formal and informal zones. The names of each indicated their locations and their locations became functions of status (in the discussion that follows, refer to Figure 1.3).

In the broadest terms, there were two distinct types of roads in Heian-kyō: "great roads," called *ōji*, and "minor roads," called *kōji*.[25] The most important of the great roads, and by far the capital's widest thoroughfare, was Suzaku. As the formal approach to the Daidairi imperial enclosure, its use was reserved exclusively for the emperor, the highest members of the imperial court, and official emissaries visiting from abroad. As mentioned, Suzaku also divided the capital into the symmetrical left-right administrative zones of Sakyō and Ukyō.

Nijō, meaning something akin to "Second Road," was the one other "great road" that deserves special mention. It ran east-west along the southern face of the Daidairi, providing another passage to and from the imperial enclosure. At fifty-one meters in width, Nijō was significantly narrower than Suzaku, yet still much wider than all other Heian-kyō roads, which measured, on average, about eighteen meters.[26]

In addition to Nijō, there were eight other sequentially numbered east-west "great roads" that together divided the city into nine laterally oriented administrative zones, called *jō*. Some confusion is possible because the east-west great roads and the zones immediately north of each shared the same names. For example, the "ninth zone," called Kujō, included all the land from Kujō Road, north to Hachijō Road. The "eighth zone," called Hachijō, included all the land from Hachijō Road, north to Shichijō Road, and so on, up the grid. Because of the similarities in names, there can sometimes be ambiguity in the documentary record about such things as, for example, whether someone lived *in* Sanjō (the zone) or *on* Sanjō (the road).

There were also longitudinal "great roads" that divided the capital

into columnar zones called *bō*. Sakyō and Ukyō had four *bō* each that were numbered from inside out, the first being closest to Suzaku and the fourth being closest to the capital's eastern or western boundaries respectively (see Figure 1.6).

Using these overlapping zone names together with a system for numbering and subdividing *machi*, it was possible to pinpoint specific locations within the capital grid with extraordinary accuracy. Figure 1.6 illustrates how groups of sixteen *machi* were numbered boustrophedonically (as in the route of an ox plow) and how blocks themselves were divided into thirty-two smaller *henushi* units, each existing within a matrix of row and column coordinates. Using this system, administrators could, for example, signify the single *henushi* plot indicated with a star in Figure 1.6 as follows:

ORIGINAL: 左京五条四坊十五町西一行北一門
TRANSLITERATION: Sakyō, Gojō, Shibō, Jūgo-machi, Nishi-ichi-gyō, Kita-ichi-mon
TRANSLATION: Left capital, fifth lateral zone, fourth columnar zone (of Sakyō), fifteenth block, first column from the west, first north row

Location in Heian-kyō was determined in absolute terms and each institutionally recognized unit of space had a name indicative of its place within the whole. The addressing system illustrates well the strength of the top-down planning regime and, more important, the capital's physical and philosophical organization under a strong, centralized polity.

In the classical city, not unlike today, one's address said something about who they were. While we know of no explicitly codified system, empirical evidence suggests there was a relationship between residential location and status. In general, the further north one lived, the higher one's status. Some scholars have argued that the northeast in particular, where the highest concentration of development occurred in the succeeding era, was favorable because it was higher, cooler, and drier than the rest of the city. Others have suggested that proximity to the emperor was the most cogent factor. Chapter 3 will explore this topic in depth, but for now it should suffice to say that whatever the guiding principle, the relationship between location and status seems to have been reflected in land prices. A low-ranking official writing in his diary in about the year 1000, for example, lamented that, after a

long and distinguished career serving the palace, he was only able to afford his maximum allowed residential plot of one-fourth of a *machi* within the area of Rokujō, well removed from the upscale district north of Nijō where he had worked most of his life.[27]

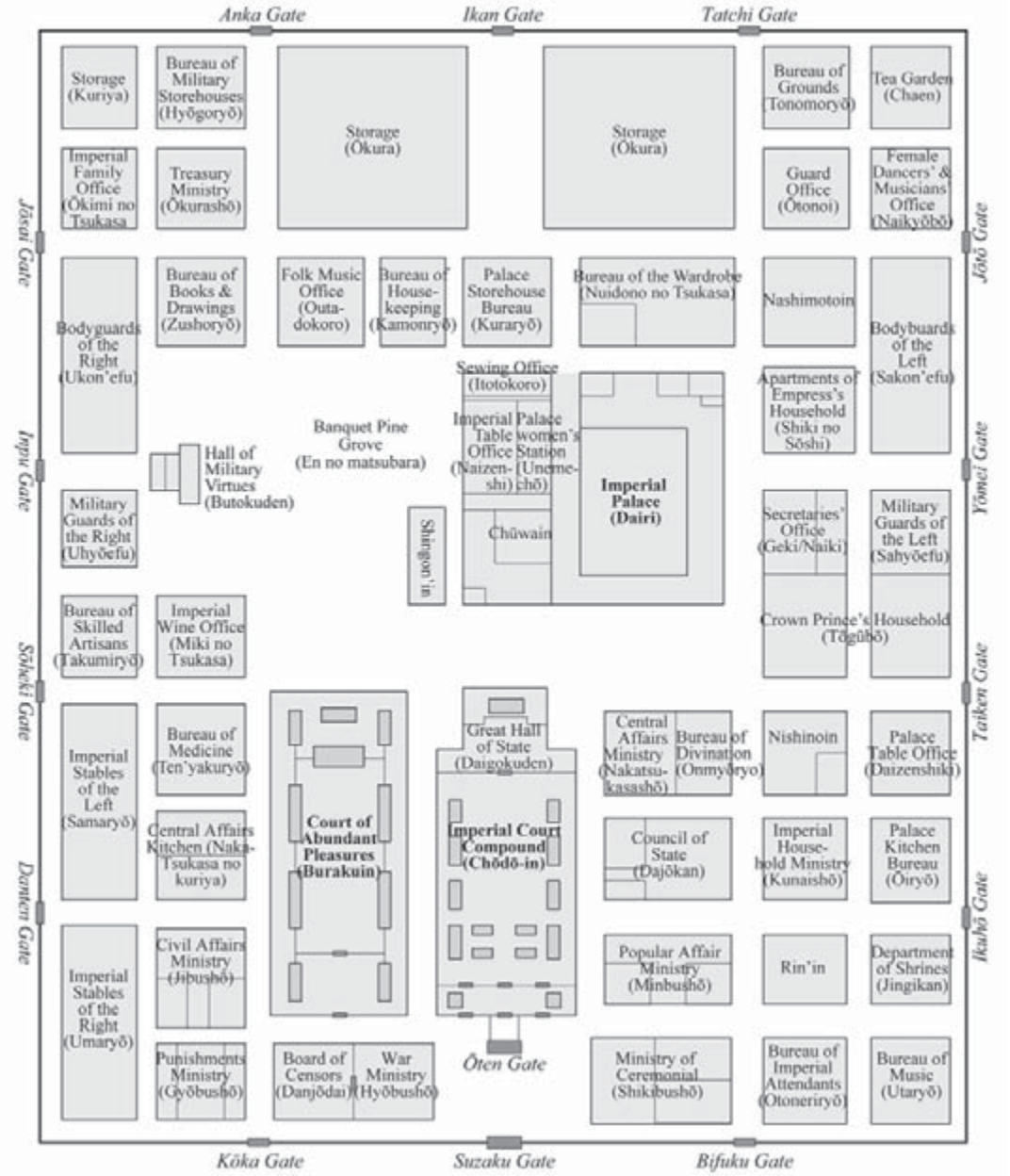
The Daidairi Imperial Enclosure

The Daidairi was a large, walled compound that housed the ministries, bureaus, and offices of the imperial government, the most important venues of state ritual, and the Imperial Palace. The word Daidairi is customarily rendered in English as the "Greater Imperial Enclosure." The literal meaning, however, "Great Penetralia," better exemplifies both the physical and political centrality of the imperial state and the emperor's status as a sacerdotal ruler.

Unlike the capital itself, the Daidairi was surrounded by a formidable wall punctuated by fourteen gates.[28] The most important of these was Suzaku in the south, which, like the great road onto which it opened and with which it shared a name, was reserved for use by the emperor and only the most special of guests on rare occasions. The second most important gate, located on the eastern face of the Daidairi, was called Yōmei (Yōmeimon). It was the exclusive egress used by government officials when commuting to their palace offices from their homes, which were located on the outside. It was also the gate closest to the Imperial Palace (see Figure 1.7).

Inside the Daidairi stood eight ministries (*shō*), ten bureaus (*ryō*), six offices (*shiki*), and a handful of other specialized institutions such as the imperial police (*kebiishi*) and chamberlains' office (*kurōdo-dokoro*).[29] These imperial organs were staffed by seven to eight thousand employees who together conducted the day-to-day business of national and capital administration. Despite their critical functions, these institutions were overshadowed by the symbolic importance and material opulence of the Daidairi's two main venues of state ritual, the Chōdō-in (Imperial Court Compound) and the Buraku-in (Court of Abundant Pleasures) (see Figure 1.11). The latter, located just inside the Suzaku Gate and oriented along the capital's central axis, was the formal venue of imperial statecraft, a highly ritualized kind of political pageantry that drew heavily on the emperor's sacred status. Early in the morning, six days a week, court nobleman would file ceremoniously into the Chōdō-in's vast courtyard. There, each would take up a

1.7. Daidairi imperial enclosure. The Jōsai and Jōtō Gates were created in the ninth century. Translations from McCullough, "The Capital and its Society," 110


Anka Gate
Ikan Gate
Tatchi Gate
Jōsei Gate
Jōkō Gate
Inpu Gate
Yōmei Gate
Shōseki Gate
Taiken Gate
Donken Gate
Ikuhō Gate
Kōka Gate
Suzaku Gate
Bifuku Gate
Storage (Kuriya)
Bureau of Military Storehouses (Hyōgoryō)
Storage (Ōkura)
Storage (Ōkura)
Bureau of Grounds (Tonomoryō)
Tea Garden (Chaen)
Imperial Family Office (Ōkimi no Tsukasa)
Treasury Ministry (Ōkurashō)
Guard Office (Ōtonoi)
Female Dancers' & Musicians Office (Naikyōbō)
Bodyguards of the Right (Ukon'efu)
Bureau of Books & Drawings (Zushoryō)
Folk Music Office (Outa-dokoro)
Bureau of House-keeping (Kamonryō)
Palace Storehouse Bureau (Kuraryō)
Bureau of the Wardrobe (Nuidono no Tsukasa)
Nashimotoin
Bodybuards of the Left (Sakon'efu)
Sewing Office (Itotokoro)
Banquet Pine Grove (En no matsubara)
Imperial Table Office (Naizen-shi)
Palace women's Station (Uneme-chō)
Imperial Palace (Dairi)
Apartments of Empress's Household (Shiki no Sōshi)
Hall of Military Virtues (Butokuden)
Shōgon'in
Chūwain
Military Guards of the Right (Uhyōefu)
Secretaries' Office (Geki/Naiki)
Military Guards of the Left (Sahyōefu)
Bureau of Skilled Artisans (Takumiryō)
Imperial Wine Office (Miki no Tsukasa)
Crown Prince's Household (Tōgūbō)
Great Hall of State (Daigokuden)
Central Affairs Ministry (Nakatsu-kasashō)
Bureau of Divination (Onmyōryo)
Nishinoin
Palace Table Office (Daizenshiki)
Imperial Stables of the Left (Samaryō)
Bureau of Medicine (Ten'yakuryō)
Court of Abundant Pleasures (Burakuin)
Imperial Court Compound (Chōdō-in)
Council of State (Dajōkan)
Imperial House-hold Ministry (Kunaishō)
Palace Kitchen Bureau (Ōiryō)
Central Affairs Kitchen (Naka-Tsukasa no kuriya)
Civil Affairs Ministry (Jibushō)
Popular Affair Ministry (Minbushō)
Rin'in
Department of Shrines (Jingikan)
Imperial Stables of the Right (Umaryō)
Punishments Ministry (Gyōbushō)
Board of Censors (Danjōdai)
War Ministry (Hyōbushō)
Ōten Gate
Ministry of Ceremonial (Shikibushō)
Bureau of Imperial Attendants (Otoneriryō)
Bureau of Music (Utaryō)

1.8. Great Hall of State (Daigokuden) during a new year's ceremony (*gosai-e*), in *Nenjūgyōji emaki*. Courtesy of Kyoto University Faculty of Letters

spot in front of the Great Hall of State (Daigokuden) corresponding to his—and it was always "his"—court post and rank. The emperor would sit upon a raised dais within the Great Hall, facing his courtiers to the south. From there, he would issue decrees, promotions, and public pronouncements, all while remaining concealed from direct view by a rolled bamboo blind. An occasion such as this is depicted in an illustration of the Great Hall reproduced in Figure 1.8. The stone staircases and liberal use of vermillion paint are indicative of strong Chinese influence. As remains the case in Beijing's Forbidden City, the greenish celadon tiles symbolized imperial status. Although the original no longer exists, visitors to Kyoto today can see a five-eighths replica of the Chōdo-in in the form of the Heian Shrine (Heian Jingū, pictured in Figure 1.9). Built in 1894 on the occasion of the city's eleven hundredth anniversary, the Shinto complex enshrines the spirit of Heian-kyō's founder, Emperor Kanmu.

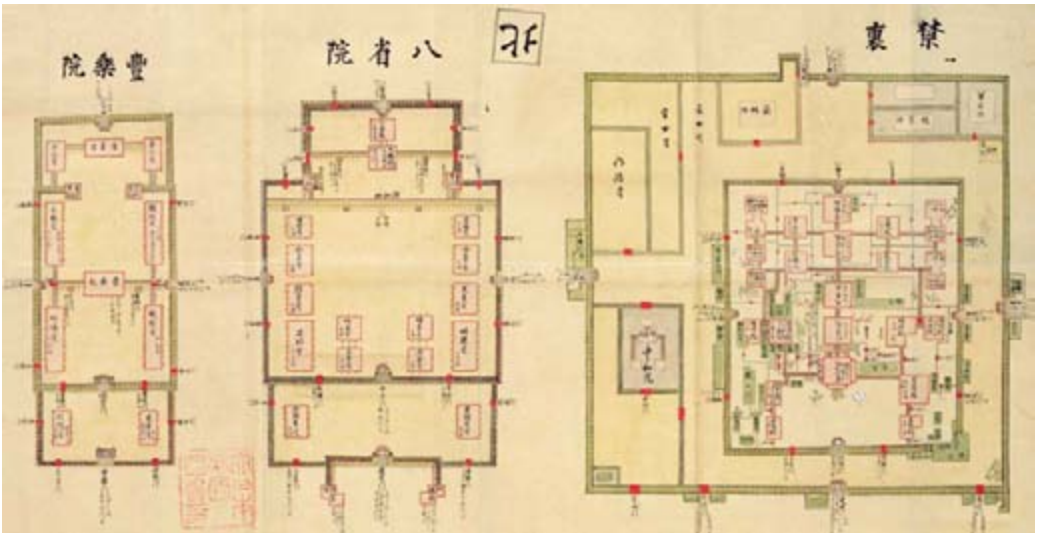
The Court of Abundant Pleasures, or Buraku-in, which stood to the east of the Chōdō-in, was the principal imperial banquet venue. It was the setting of numerous festivals and many of the annual observances

1.9. Heian Shrine (Heian Jingū), a five-eighths replica of the Chōdō-in, built in 1894.

1.10. Kyoto Imperial Palace today, showing juxtaposition of Chinese and Japanese styles.

that punctuated the official calendar. The little information we have on this compound suggests that it too followed a fundamentally Chinese model.

The Imperial Palace, located just east of the very center of the greater enclosure, was called Dairi, or, literally, "Penetralia." While functioning primarily as the official residence to the emperor, the compound was also an important venue of imperial pageantry and ceremony. The buildings that faced the south, in fact, were dedicated exclusively for ritualized public events. Over time, the ritual repertoire expanded, eventually inheriting many of those activities native to the Chōdō-in and Buraku-in. The structures that occupied the "back" or northern side of the compound were more private in nature, used mainly to house the emperor, his family, and a usually large retinue of chamberlains and ladies-in-waiting. Textual and pictorial evidence confirms that the Dairi departed from continental styles in several key ways.[30] Cypress-bark roofing and the scant use of paint throughout gave the compound a distinctly subtle, earth-tone complexion. Retrospectively, the appearance has been called more "Japanese." If, therefore, we back up to think of the Dairi as the physical and political center of the much larger imperial enclosure, we notice what might be described as a Japanese nucleus surrounded by a Chinese shell. In this respect, the Daidairi enclosure was a potent metaphor for the early Japanese polity itself: a large and complex institution that, while taking cosmetic cues from China, was different on a fundamental level (see Figures 1.10 and 1.11).[31]



Corridor of Public Pageantry

1.11. Dairi, Chōdō-in, and Buraku-in (from right to left), illustrated by Mori Kōan, 1750. The absence of symmetry in the Dairi is itself a departure from the continental model. National Archives of Japan

Not all venues of government activity were secluded behind the walls of the Daidairi. Almost all that were not, however, shared a basic functional similarity in that they facilitated some form of direct and usually ostentatious interaction between the imperial institution and the outside world, including foreign dignitaries, members of the Buddhist establishment, and, usually only incidentally, commoners. These several sites were primarily located within a strip of land that extended south from the Daidairi toward the capital's southern boundary (between the roads of Nishi-Ōmiya and Ōmiya). This thick band of space on either side of the great Suzaku Road might be considered a sort of "corridor of public pageantry" (see Figure 1.3).

Because of the strong relationship between status and the built environment in Heian-kyō, some of these external venues can be considered as functional sets. For example, we might treat as a single set the capital's formal entrance gate of Rajō, Suzaku Road, and the Daidairi's main gate of Suzaku. Each was reserved for use by the emperor, the highest members of the court, and foreign ambassadors who, traveling in long processions—sometimes stately, sometimes festive—would pass through each on their way to or from the palace.[32] Together they provided for the public display of elite pageantry while, in a material sense, making a statement about Japanese imperial efficacy through

their close adherence to Sinocentric models. The two great gates and the format of the city itself would have been immediately familiar to visitors from China and Korea, reminiscent of corresponding features in their own capitals. Two other facilities that might be added to this set are the twin Eastern and Western Kōrokan, diplomatic compounds built to receive, entertain, and lodge foreign visitors.[33] Located on either side of Suzaku Road, just north of Shichijō, these compounds were also part of the infrastructure of imperial pageantry in that they, through their use of Chinese-style architecture and gardens, provided a venue for the Japanese to demonstrate their attainment of continental-style civilization.

Just south of the Daidairi, but removed by several blocks from Suzaku Road to the east, was Shinsen'en. Covering eight city blocks, this sprawling, walled garden was the emperor's exclusive nature reserve. A natural spring irrigated a large pond around which stood palatial structures built in a continental style. What little we know about Shinsen'en suggests that while it may not initially have had a public function, it soon became a venue for high-profile divination rituals, particularly those related to rainfall.[34]

All commercial activity in Heian-kyō was meant to take place within two publicly sanctioned markets planned symmetrically on either side of the city between Rokujō and Shichijō Roads. Walled and gated, the Eastern and Western Markets operated on an alternating basis, and what took place within each was under the close scrutiny of imperial administrators and police.[35] Besides being a place where goods were bartered, bought, and sold, the markets also served as the capital's execution grounds.[36] On set days of the month, criminals were marched into the market en masse. After being publicly condemned for their crimes, they were either taken away to meet their ends or—in an apparently sanctioned exception to the rule against killing within the capital—executed on the spot.[37] The markets also fulfilled some of the functions of a modern town square or public park. They were, for example, choice locations for the activities of proselytizers and prostitutes. Among the former, the most famous is the monk Kūya (903–972). Referred to as the "market saint" (*ichi no hijiri*), Kūya gained notoriety for preaching the principles of Amida worship to commoners and later founding the temple of Rokuhara Mitsuji southeast of the city.[38] Although these sites were closely controlled, it appears that urban planners were keenly aware of their importance to the city's long-term

viability. The official markets were among the earliest institutions transferred from Nagaoka-kyō when the new capital was founded.[39]

Perhaps the most important of the public institutions located outside the Daidairi were the two great temples of Tōji and Saiji.[40] Their names, meaning East and West Temple respectively, were informal appellations ascribed to each based on their locations vis-à-vis the Rajō Gate. Tōji and Saiji were built at government expense and placed under direct court supervision. The monks were charged with the task of ensuring divine protection for the state, the capital, and the body of the emperor. Besides standing as grand symbols of imperial wealth and moral veracity astride the capital's "front door," the physical infrastructure of the two temples themselves might have had cosmological implications. Geomancy experts have argued that contemporaries envisioned the five-storied pagodas adorning each of the temple grounds as serving to trap positive celestial energy (*ki*), thereby preventing it from leaking out of the city to the south.[41] Such a capacity would have been important to the overall geomantic fitness of a capital built to harness the forces of the universe and apply them to the execution of virtuous government.

Tōji and Saiji were exceptional because they were the only two temples that stood within Heian-kyō's official boundaries. It is a widely repeated notion that Emperor Kanmu banned temples from the capital because he sought to divorce imperial politics from the influence of the powerful Buddhist sects, such as those whose temples dominated the landscape of the earlier Heijō-kyō. But not only has the notion that Kanmu had an aversion to Buddhism been successfully challenged in recent scholarship, we actually have no historical evidence that temples were formally banned from Heian-kyō during Kanmu's lifetime. A paucity of textual evidence, of course, does not mean there was no ban and, to be sure, the extreme rarity of temples within the city remained real and conspicuous well into the fifteenth century.[42] Nevertheless, the many textual sources that refer to temple proscriptions use language that suggests a "custom" or "tradition" rather than a law. It is likely that this particular taboo belonged to a distinct repertoire of capital customs that, although perhaps never inscribed into law, were nevertheless followed assiduously and remained valid over time. Because of its importance, this theme will be discussed in much greater detail later in this study.

The most important government offices and ministries maintained

detached facilities outside the Daidairi. With a name that might be rendered in English as "dormitory blocks of the various offices" (*shoshi-kuriya-machi*), these numerous yet unremarkable compounds occupied blocks throughout Heian-kyō's urban landscape.[43] Each employed and housed hundreds of workers who, conscripted from the provinces on a rotating basis, performed duties related to the functions of the ministries or offices to which their respective compounds were affiliated. Some were highly skilled tradesmen such as architects, accountants, potters, weavers, and metalworkers. Most, however, fulfilled more menial tasks as guards and laborers. Almost all their "dorms" were located north of Nijō in close proximity to the Daidairi, and a majority were clustered on the enclosure's eastern side, an area that would eventually become, for reasons not unrelated to the dorms themselves, the center of elite society.

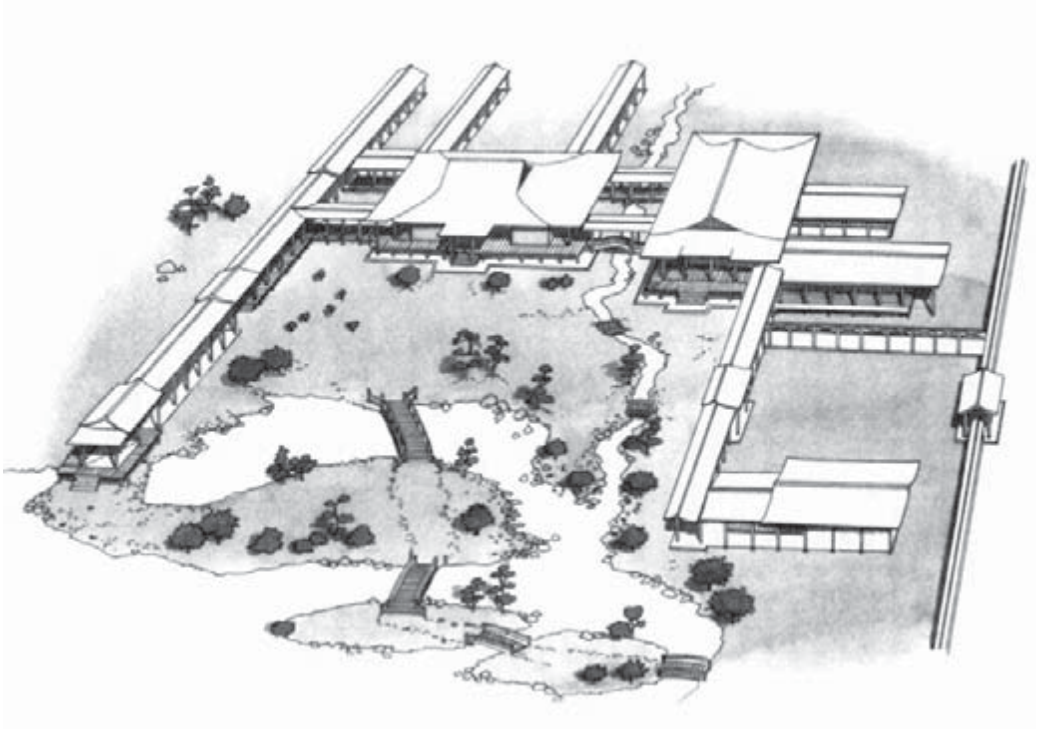
Shinden Style: The Residential Architecture of the Ruling Elite

The residential architecture of Heian-kyō's ruling elite was based on the ritual state shrines of the Tang capital. Referred to today as *shinden* style (*shinden-zukuri*), its adoption by the Japanese imperial family from about the eighth century was part of the broader project of importing Chinese things and ideas. The style was initially implemented in the building of the imperial palace in Heijō-kyō as well as state-sponsored Buddhist temples.[44] Despite *shinden* style being poorly suited to residential uses, its adoption was related to the ruling elite's objective of reifying a ritualized form of statecraft based on the Ritsuryō codes. It was envisioned that the emperor would justify and perpetuate his virtuous rule through an almost continuous repertoire of carefully scripted rights and rituals, all of which adhered to strict codes of precedent and pageantry. Everything from clothing and gestures to architecture and interior décor (*shitsurai*) were meticulously prescribed. Starting with the Imperial Palace, *shinden*-style complexes were a key part of the formalized paraphernalia of classical authority. This fundamental correspondence between form and function, according to William Coaldrake, "reveals the adoption of an official architectural vocabulary based on Tang usage, and makes an equation between government by virtue, a fundamental Confucian tenant, and appropriate physical form." On the relationship between Ritsuryō government and *shinden* style, Coaldrake observes

that "it is the same type of equation that we accept exists between democratic governments and Greek Classical architecture."[45]

"*Shinden-zukuri*" refers both to a prescribed grounds plan and building style.[46] In terms of the former, the earliest fully mature *shinden*-style palaces consisted of a conglomeration of as many as fifteen discrete structures arranged symmetrically along a north-south axis and enclosed within a rectangular earthen wall (see Figure 1.12). At the center, traditionally standing to the north of a garden or pond, was the compound's most important structure, the central *shinden* (lit. "sleeping palace"). Serving both as the primary ritual venue and the main residential quarters of the master of the house, the south-facing *shinden* was connected to surrounding subsidiary structures via a network of covered corridors (*rō*).

Perhaps the most noticeable structural trait of *shinden*-style architecture was the almost complete absence of fixed interior walls and, as a result, the nonexistence of discrete rooms (see Figure 1.13). Reticulating wooden shutters (*shitomido*) served to close buildings off from the outside, but inner chambers remained open, partitioned only by folding screens, curtains, or bamboo blinds. Such temporary



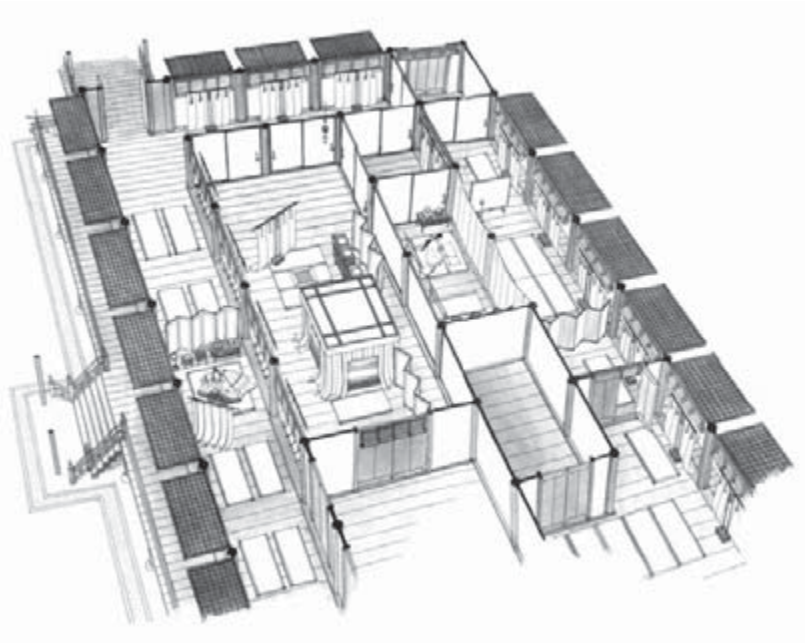
1.12. Typical *shinden*-style complex, bird's-eye representation from the south. Courtesy of Richard Bowring

fixtures were used on an occasional basis to accommodate specific activities such as eating, sleeping, or the holding of particular events or rituals. Once their purpose was served, they were generally either rearranged or stowed.[47] It would be incorrect, therefore, to think in terms of the existence of "living rooms" or "bedrooms" within early *shinden*-style palaces. Interior space was definitively non-function-specific. This key characteristic was related to an impulse to preserve the original architectural ideal to the point where any alterations made to accommodate non-Ritsuryō functions (including daily life) were to be minimal and, most important, temporary. This tendency helps explain the overall austerity of *shinden*-style interiors. Straw mats known as *tatami* were used on occasion to facilitate sitting or reclining, but otherwise the wooden plank floors remained bare throughout. Without walls or any variations in floor level, large wooden pillars were the only permanent structural elements that interrupted interior space.[48]

Shinden-style palaces (or their prototypes) began to proliferate from about the late eighth century when members of the aristocracy started mimicking the forms of the Imperial Palace when building their own official urban residences. The broad adoption of the style was related to the aristocracy's increased employment of rituals based on the imperial model as a means of demonstrating their membership in the Ritsuryō hierarchy. Possessing the necessary architectural components endowed the elite with the physical infrastructure to hold those rituals. As time went by, a definitive grammar of architectural comportment emerged in which building elements and décors were, like the sizes of residential plots, closely mapped to formal statuses. The style of a nobleman's primary gate, for example, was a function of his rank and imperial post, as were his roofing tiles and the patterns and colors used in the edgings of his *tatami* mats.[49] Even the orientation of an entire complex became a function of status, with only those of the third rank or higher permitted to build primary gates that opened onto "great" roads (*ōji*).[50]

Conclusion

Heian-kyō might be characterized as a physical metaphor for a strong, centralized, Chinese-style government, organized around a supreme sacerdotal ruler, governed by laws and a rigid status system. Land was divided up systematically, roads were laid out rationally, and a top-down addressing scheme defined every fragment of the urban



1.13. Typical central *shinden*, cutaway illustration.

landscape as an elemental part of the whole. The emperor and his governmental offices occupied a large, exclusive enclosure at the top center of the city, but also employed facilities on the outside to put imperial pageantry on regular public display. The elite lived in homes that, while generally large and luxuriant, were first and foremost symbols of formal status. As the power of central authority grew during the ninth century, it became increasingly clear that, through Heian-kyō's success, Emperor Kanmu would achieve his lifelong dream of establishing an eternal capital. When a challenge emerged shortly after the emperor's death in 806, the suggestion to move the capital yet again was summarily dismissed on the grounds that Heian was geographically ideal and, as a place to live, left its residents "wanting for nothing."[51]

In closing, it should be emphasized that the narrative thus far has described how Heian-kyō was *meant* to be; how it was planned; how it was idealized. The reality, however, is that the city never lived up to the grand vision of its founders. The area was too broad for convenience. Roads were too wide and too far apart for practicality. Public facilities were inordinately grand and numerous. And finally, the system for distributing land was simply incompatible with material necessities. Heian-kyō did indeed become Japan's eternal capital, but the city envisioned by Kanmu never fully materialized.