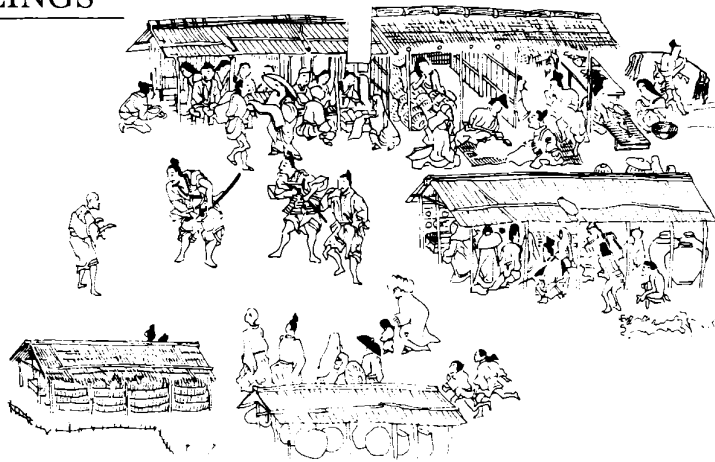
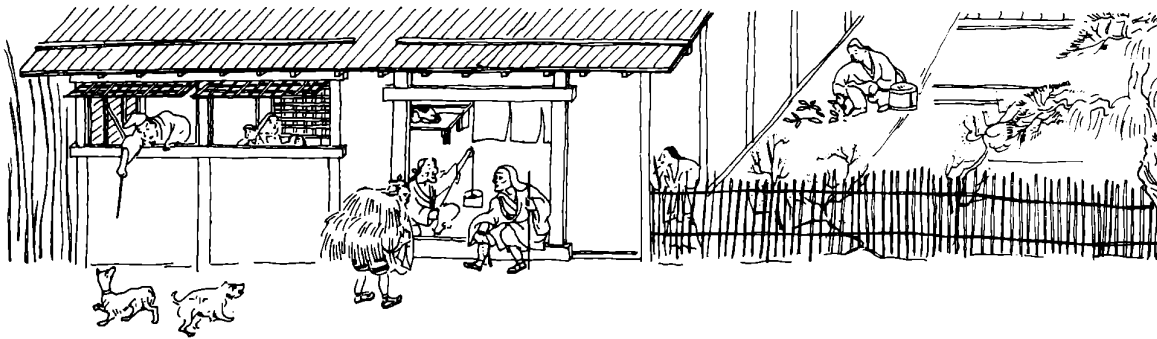


## COMMONERS' DWELLINGS



125. The town of Fukuoka

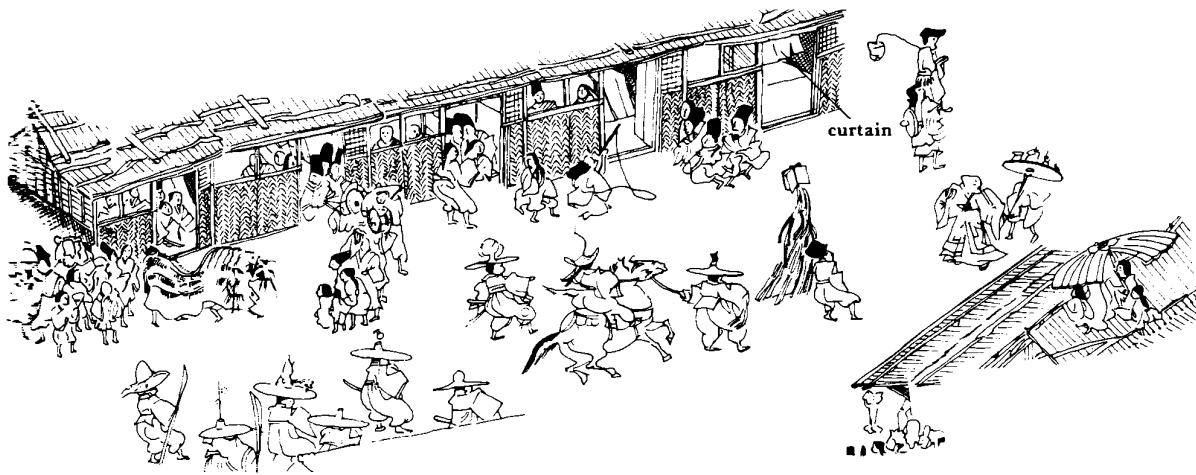


**Urban Row-Houses** If we know little of aristocratic residences in premodern Japan, we know less about the homes of the lower levels of society, and what information we do have is limited entirely to pictorial sources. The *Picture Scroll of Annual Rites and Ceremonies* is helpful not only for the aristocratic dwellings previously introduced but also for depictions of how the rest of society lived in the late Heian period, on the verge of Japan's middle ages.

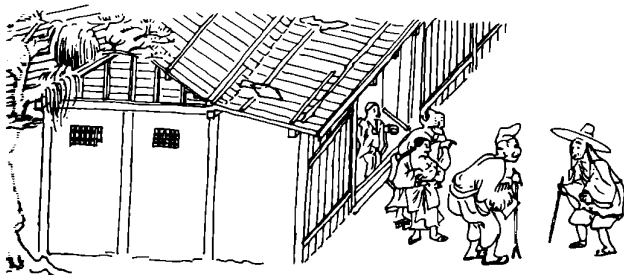
The city dwellings illustrated in the scroll are of the row-house type, with the facade of each unit divided in half, the right side with a door and the left with a wall and a window above (fig. 126). Walls are made of woven strips of bamboo or thin wood, and partially planked. Short curtains (*noren*) hang over the entrance at the far right. Inside is an earth floor, though one section at the back not visible in the illustration was probably raised and floored with planks. The roofs are also of planks, reinforced by logs.

**Provincial Towns** Houses in towns further from

the Heian Capital were even simpler in construction. One example is the town of Fukuoka in present-day Okayama Prefecture, depicted in the *Picture Scroll of the Monk Ippen* (*Ippen Shōnin eden*), painted in 1299 (fig. 125). Ippen (1239–89) was a traveling priest who preached a new doctrine, that of the Ji sect, to the common folk. In the section illustrated, Ippen has arrived on market day and is being challenged by a burly samurai who is about to draw his sword. The houses of the residents are little more than huts, with posts sunk in the ground and simple plank roofs. Rooms are separated by plank walls. The people are selling cloth, rice, fish, ceramic pots, and other such basic commodities. In the fish stall (top, far right), the vendor has laid a fish on a cutting board and seems about to slice some sashimi for a customer. Behind, a man walks away carrying more fish suspended from the ends of a bamboo pole resting on his shoulder. The adjoining shop appears to be that of a rice vendor, who measures out his goods in a square wooden cup. The shops are so simple one



126. A street in the Heian Capital



127. A town in the suburbs of Nara

might take them for temporary huts set up just for market day, but many provincial towns were most likely built this way permanently. Another section of the *Picture Scroll of the Monk Ippen* depicts the outskirts of Kamakura, the city serving as the headquarters of Minamoto no Yoritomo's shogunate. It is a very quiet place despite its political importance, underscoring the fact that all cities were in no way the bustling commercial centers that the Heian Capital was.

The suburbs of Nara are portrayed in another famous work, the *Picture Scroll of the Legends of Mt. Shigi* (*Shigisan engi*), believed to have been made in the twelfth century (fig. 127). In the section illustrated, we see at the far right the gable end of a row-house, with people issuing from the entrance on to the street. The back yard is reserved for trees and a garden. The side view of the house is convenient for showing its construction, which consists of a central two-bay section (*moya*) surmounted by a steep, plank roof and flanked by one-bay subsidiary spaces (*hisashi*) to the

front and rear, both with roofs of shallow pitch.

The house to the left, viewed from the front, shows an entry with *noren* curtains and an earth floor behind. In the rear, a cat sleeps on the step leading to the raised-floor section of the house. Beside the door, a man bends over a windowsill to drive off a pair of dogs. The windows are fit with small reticulated shutters propped up temporarily, and in the back of the room is a latticelike partition. As in the case of the houses in the other picture scrolls, the posts of these structures are sunk directly into the ground, the roof is of wooden planks, and the walls are wattle and daub.

The houses portrayed in these three city scenes are far removed from the luxurious *Shinden*-style residences of the aristocracy. It is important to remember too that many of the more outlying towns were even more crude, not to mention the houses of the poorer rural districts.