**HAA 18j: Japanese Architecture**

Lecture 5: Imperial Capitals

**Principles of the East Asian Imperial Capital**

・Based upon ancient Chinese cosmology and imperial symbolism as recorded in *Rites of Zhou*

and other early texts

・Square or rectangular grid plan with imperial city enclosure (J. Daidairi) and imperial palace

(J. Dairi) in the north-center; axial with southern orientation

・Sited accorded to principles of Chinese geomancy (*feng* *shui*)

・The Chinese capitals at Luoyang and Chang’an were the most influential for the establishment

of capitals throughout East Asia, including the Silla kingdom of Korea (Kyongju)

・Best surviving example is the Forbidden City in Beijing, constructed between 1406 and 1420

**Japan’s Imperial Capitals**

• Fujiwara (694-710): Founded by Emperors Tenmu and Jitō, first Chinese-style capital in Japan

• Heijō (Nara, 710-794)

• Heian (Kyoto, 794-1868)

• During the 8th century a number of capitals were begun and quickly abandoned

• Japan’s capitals characterized by lack of city walls, large extensions and urban drift

**Architecture in the Heijō Capital (Nara)**

Yakushiji, East Pagoda, 730

Tōdaiji, Great Buddha Hall (Daibutsuden), ca. 757 (Great Buddha consecrated in 752)

Tōshōdaiji, Golden Hall (Kondō), circa 780s (built for the Chinese monk Jian Zhen)

\*Also showed Hōryūji, Hall of Dreams (Yumedono), 739, Eastern Precinct

**Names and Terms**

Emperor Shōmu (701-756)

Ritsuryō Codes: Japan’s legal and penal codes adopted circa 700 CE

Vairocana Buddha, the protagonist of the Flower Garland Sutra (J. Kegonkyō)

Jian Zhen (known in Japanese as Ganjin, 689-763)

Imperial Palace (Dairi) and Great Imperial Enclosure (Daidairi)

Great State of Hall (Daigokuden)

Mt Wakakusa, a mountain to the northeast of Heijō capital where Tōdaiji is constructed

**Further Reading**

Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped* (Bulfinch, 1993)

Nancy Steinhardt, *Chinese Imperial City Planning* (U of Hawai’i Press, 1999)

Azby Brown, *The Genius of Japanese Carpentry* (Tuttle, 2014)