

Why Did the Eastern Half City (Left Capital) of Tang Chang'an City and Japanese Heijokyo and Heiankyo Capitals Become More Prosperous?

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I

In the second year of Kaihuang 开皇 reign (AD 582), Sui Dynasty Emperor Wendi 文帝 issued the decree of constructing a new capital, which was called Daxing 大兴. After the founding of the Tang Dynasty in the first year of Wude 武德 reign (618), this city remained the capital but was renamed Chang'an. The whole plan of Chang'an was a regular rectangle, measuring 8.6 km from the north to the south and 9.7 km from the west to the east. The palace city and the imperial city to its south, where the emperor residence and government offices were located respectively, stood right in the middle of northern Chang'an. Starting from the main gate Zhuquemen 朱雀门 on the southern side of the imperial city, a wide street, called Zhuque Dajie Street 朱雀大街, ran straightly southward. As the central axis of Chang'an, the street divided the city into two halves: the eastern and the western. The two parts were equal in area and in the number of blocks and markets, and conformable in the planning of roads. This exactly symmetrical arrangement was just the continuation of the original layout of Sui Dynasty Daxing City.

Regarding the planning of Daxing, although it was based on the principle of strict symmetry, still a bias to the eastern half city may hardly be overlooked under careful examination. Here are some examples. First, the residence of Prince Jinwang 晋王 (later Emperor Yangdi 炀帝), next only to the emperor and crown prince in political status and position, was placed on the eastern side of Zhuque Dajie Street, in the Kaihuafang Block 开化坊. Second, as Buddhism held a higher position than

that of Taoism in the early Sui period, the Buddhist temple Daxingshansi 大兴善寺 was built on the eastern side of Zhuque Dajie Street, in the Jingshanfang Block 靖善坊, whereas the Taoist temple Xuanduguan 玄都观 was arranged on the western side, in the Chongyefang Block 崇业坊. Third, as the important place for the emperor to conduct the grand ceremony of sacrificing to Heaven, the round mound first built by Sui Emperor Wendi was located on the eastern side of the main road beyond the Mingdemen Gate 明德门 in the middle of the southern section of the outer city-wall.

Among the suburbs of Tang Chang'an City, the eastern was the best in terrain, landscape and communication condition, which made the eastern city gates Tonghuamen 通化门 and Chunmingmen 春明门 the busiest in traffic. Inside the two gates, near the main streets, there lived a number of Tang Emperor Taizong 太宗's close and trustful officials. For example, the residence of Zhangsun Wuji 长孙无忌 was in the Chongrenfang Block 崇仁坊, that of Fang Xuanling 房玄龄 in Wubenfang 务本坊, and that of Wei Zheng 魏征 in Yongxingfang 永兴坊. These blocks were all in the north of the eastern half city and close to the imperial and palace cities. Within the palace city, in the middle was the emperor's Taijigong Palace 太极宫 with Taijidian 太极殿 as the main pavilion; in the east, the crown prince's East Palace 东宫; and in the west, the Yetinggong Palace 掖庭宫 for imperial concubines and maids. It is obvious in contrast that the heart was so inclined to the east that the Yanximen Gate 延喜门 on the eastern side of imperial city functioned as an important palace-gate in addition to the southern, main gate

Zhuquemen. It facilitated the above-mentioned senior officials to enter the imperial palace and attend the court conveniently through Yanximen though the Zhuquemen Gate kept its leading position.

In the second year of Longshuo 龙朔 reign (662), the new palace Daminggong 大明宫 was completed. It was located at the eastern section of the northern outer city-wall of Chang'an and thus called "Dong Nei 东内," or "East Palace." In the next year, Emperor Gaozong 高宗 moved into the palace, which, therefore, replaced the Taijigong Palace in the palace-city and became the new political center in the capital. This made the city heart much further inclined to the east half city. From the fourth year of Kaiyuan 开元 reign (716), Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 often held court in the Xingqinggong Palace 兴庆宫 newly built to the south of the main street inside the Tonghuamen Gate and to the north of that inside the Chunmingmen Gate, in a district close to the eastern city-wall, and the residences of the emperor's premier, influential officials and relatives and other noblemen were concentrated round here. All these brought an unprecedented heyday to the area of the two main streets in the north of the eastern half city.

Moreover, Emperor Xuanzong built the eastern outer city-wall into a double one with an intermediate road as wide as about 50 m. By this way he could secretly go northward to the Daminggong Palace and southward to the Furongyuan Park 芙蓉园, averting both traffic jams and the divulgence of the matters. The Furongyuan Park was a famous public garden in the southeastern corner of Chang'an City, with a charming scenery round the Qujiangchi Pool 曲江池. At festivals, it would be visited by large numbers of citizens from the emperor and senior officials to the common people, adding still more prosperous sights to the eastern half of Chang'an City (Fig. 1).

II

Japan knew Chang'an well through sending missions to China, or the so called envoys to the Tang Dynasty, and highly admired this city. During the 630s–640s and after, the main pavilion in the Japanese palace was named after the Taijidian Pavilion 太极殿 (Daigokuden 大極殿 in Japanese) in the palace city of Tang Chang'an. In the 690s, during Empress Jito's reign, Japan built its first regular capital Fujiwarakyo 藤原京 with the palace city called Fujiwarakyo 藤原宫. This capital was evenly divided into an eastern and a western halves by the central axis Suzakuoji 朱雀大路 extending straightly southward from the southern gate

of palace city. The two halves were called Left and Right capitals respectively. Equal in area and in the number of blocks, they heralded the construction of ancient Japanese capitals in imitation of Tang Chang'an City.

In the first year of Emperor Monmu's Taiho reign, Japan sent to China the seventh mission headed by Awatanomahito, which left Japan and arrived Chang'an in the next year. Awatanomahito was granted an interview and a banquet by the Chinese emperor in the Daminggong Palace, and attended the great ceremony of court celebrating New Year's Day in the main pavilion Hanyuandian 含元殿. His return to Japan helped to bring about the completion of the new capital called Heijokyo 平城京 by Empress Genmei in the third year of Wado reign (710). This capital further followed the example of Tang Chang'an City in architectural form and layout. It was grand on scale, the main part having a regular rectangular plan and measuring 4.8 km from the north to the south and 4.3 km from the west to the east. The palace city Heijokyu was located in the middle of the northern part. Its main pavilion was still named Daigokuden 大極殿, but in shape it was an imitation of the Hanyuandian Pavilion, having the ascending ramps called Liubido 龍尾道 at both ends of the front side. The whole capital was evenly divided into an eastern and a western halves by Suzakuoji Road extending southward from the southern, main gate Suzakumon 朱雀門 of the palace city. The two halves were called Left and Right capitals respectively. In the southeastern corner of the former was the pool named Echidachi 越田池, which was evidently built in imitation of the Qujiangchi Pool in Tang Chang'an City.

As the Daminggong Palace, or "Dong Nei," lay at the eastern end of the northern side of Tang Chang'an City, the "Dairi 内裏" of Heijokyu was located in the east of the palace city, which heightened the importance of the Mibumon Gate 壬生門 in the eastern section of the southern wall of the palace city. The residences of noblemen and senior officials, such as those of Fujiwaranofuhito and Nagayao and even the Tamuranodai Mansion 田村第 of Fujiwaranonakamaro were built in the north of the Left Capital, near the palace city, so as to facilitate their owners to enter the palace through the Mibumon Gate.

Following the example of Tang Chang'an City that had enlarged by building the Daminggong Palace at the eastern end of the northern side, the capital Heijokyo was also added with the "Outer Capital 外京" in the east. Important Buddhist monasteries, such as the

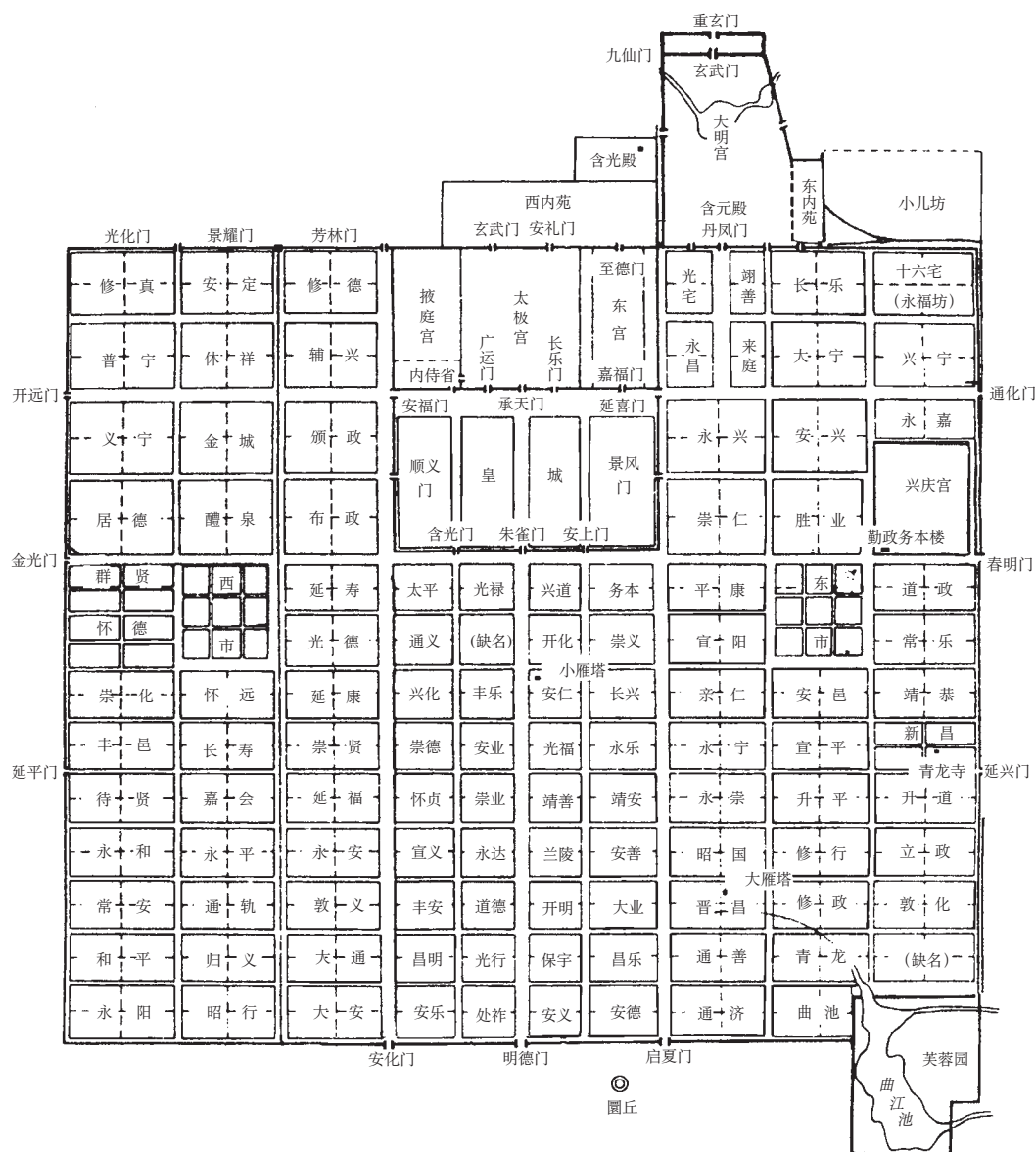


Fig. 1 Plan of Tang Chang'an City

Kofukuji 興福寺, Ganguji 元興寺 and Todaiji 東大寺 temples, were all built in the "Outer Capital," i.e. the eastern Left Capital, like the Daxingshansi 大兴善寺, Ci'ensi 慈恩寺, Jianfusi 荐福寺 and Qinglongsi 青龙寺 temples constructed in the eastern half of Tang Chang'an City. In the sixth year of Tenpyoshoho reign, the eminent monk Jianzhen 鉴真 came from China Yangzhou City 扬州 far away from Japan, and initiated Empress Koken and others into Buddhist commandments in the Todaiji Temple. The ceremony was so grand that it could match and even exceeded the scene in which Tang Prince Li Daozong 李道宗, by order of Emperor Taizong, welcome Xuanzang 玄奘 into the Ci'ensi Temple with the highest-rank *Jiubuye* 九部乐 (Nine Tunes) upon this master's returning from India

with Buddhist scriptures. In short, in the Japanese capital Heijokyo, the Left Capital was far higher than the Right Capital in prosperity, the main cause of which consisted exclusively in the fact that Heijokyo was built in imitation of Tang Chang'an City with the already added Daminggong Palace (Fig. 2).

III

In the third year of Enryaku reign (784), Emperor Kanmu moved his capital from Heijokyo to Nagaokakyo 长冈京 and, ten years later, again to Heiankyo 平安京, the location of present-day Kyoto City 京都市. From this year (794) to the third year of Emperor Gotoba's Kenkyu reign (1192), Heiankyo functioned as the Japanese capital for nearly 400 years.

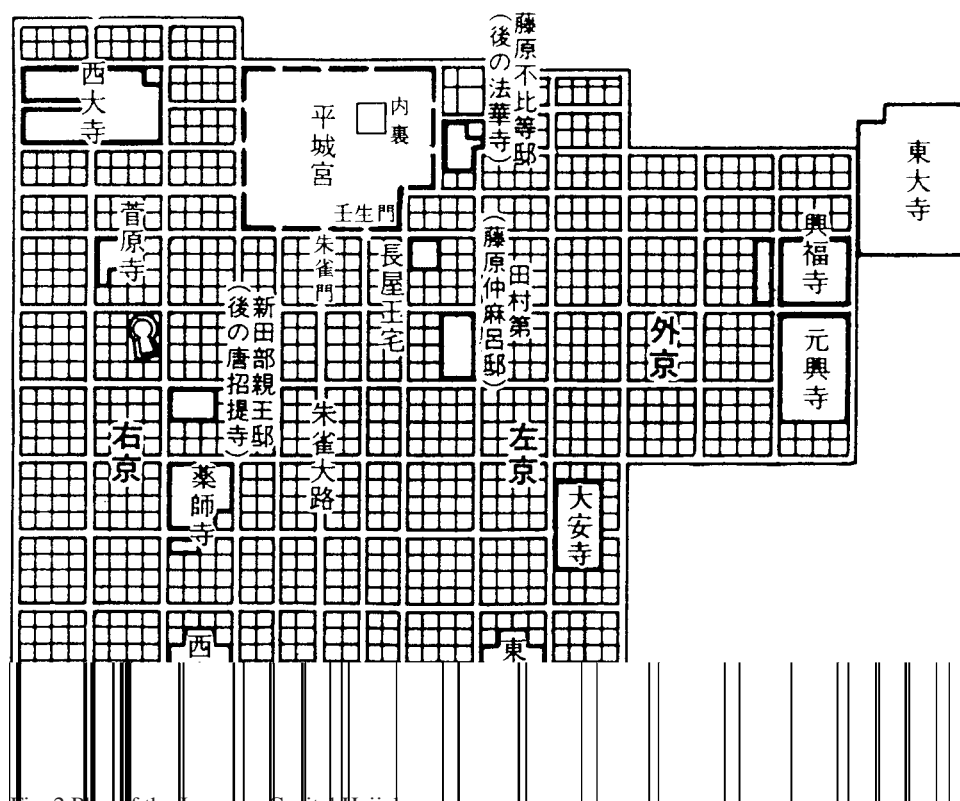


Fig. 2 Plan of the Japanese Capital Heijokyo

This capital measured 5.2 km from the north to the south and 4.5 km from the west to the east, being a regular rectangle in plan. Its palace city Heiankyu 平安宮 was located right in the middle north, and the whole city was divided into the Left and Right capitals by Suzakuoji Road extending southward from the Suzakumon Gate on the southern side of the palace city. The two halves were equal in area, in the planning of streets and in the number of blocks. In the south of the capital, the East and West markets were symmetrically located, and the East and West temples were homologous without any deviation. The Korokan Hall 鴻臚館, a building complex for foreign envoys' accommodations, was divided into two parts disposed respectively on the eastern and western sides of Suzakuoji Road. It is essential that Heiankyo was laid out completely in imitation of Tang Chang'an City, with symmetry between the left and right as the basic principle.

Nevertheless, despite this symmetrical planning for the city of Heiankyo, the Left Capital in the east became greatly more prosperous than the Right Capital in the west. In the *Ancient Map of Kujoke* 九条家古図, a plan of Heiankyo drawn in the early 13th century, the Left Capital is densely marked with the Chinese-character-written names of more than two dozens imperial and

aristocratic palaces and pavilions and the emperor's relatives-in-laws' and influential officials' mansions. There appear the signs of Reizenyin 冷泉院, Kayanoyin 高陽院, Kanyin 閑院, Horikawayin 堀河院, Komatsudono 小松殿, Sanjoyin 三条院, Oidono 大炊殿, Mikohidaridai 御子左第, Tsuchimikadodono 土御門殿, Tsuchimikadodairi 土御門内裏, Gojodairi 五条内裏, Konoedono 近衛殿, Rokujodairi 六条内裏, Nishihachijodono 西八条殿 and so forth. But in the zone for the Right Capital, we read none of such marks. This is very expressive of the uneven development.

Then why did the Left Capital flourish higher than the Right Capital, and especially why did its north become the area where imperial palaces and pavilions and influential officials' residences were concentrated? This, to sum up in a word, rooted in the pattern that the emperor's residence Dairi in Heiankyu was located to the east of the central axis, which resulted just from the influence of the "Dong Nei," i.e. Tang Dynasty Daminggong Palace, lying at the eastern end of the northern side of Chang'an City.

As the location of the political center Dairi was inclined to the east of the palace city Heiankyu, noble-men and senior officials preferred to build their mansions in the Left Capital so as to enter the palace and

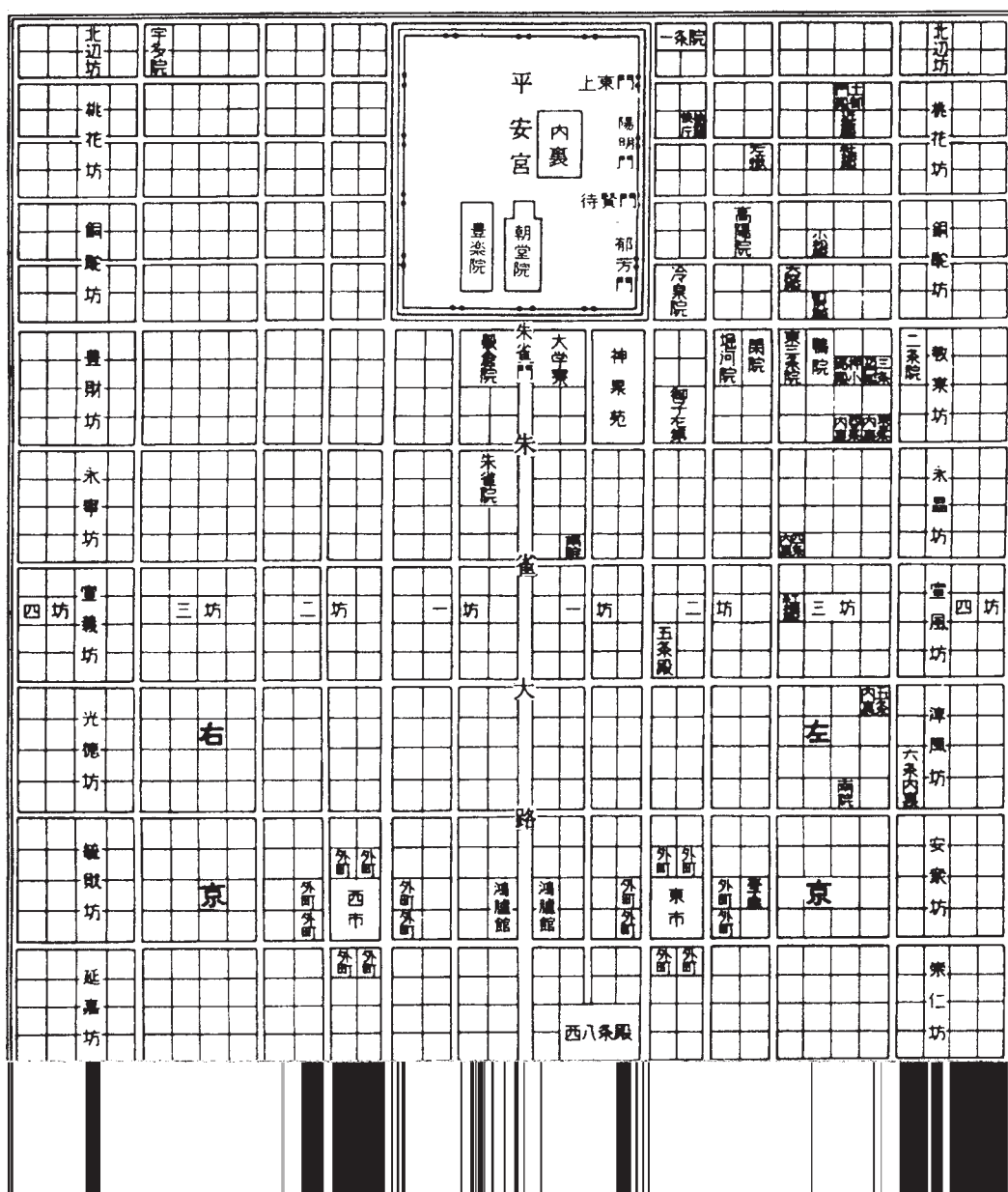


Fig. 3 Plan of the Japanese Capital Heiankyo

attend the court more conveniently. For the same sake some emperors who abdicated in favor of their successors would get residences in this area to facilitate their links with the palace. From the middle ninth century onward, accidents happened from time to time in the Dairi of the palace-city. So the emperors on the then throne had to move to and live temporarily in their relatives-in-law's or influential officials' mansions, i.e. the so-called "Satodairi 里内裏 (the "Sato 里" means blocks). This can be exemplified with the above-mentioned "Sanjoyin," "Oidono," "Tsuchimikadodairi," "Gojodairi" and "Rokujodairi." As the emperor's relatives-in-law's and influential officials' residences

were largely in the northern Left Capital, naturally the "Satodairi" were correspondingly concentrated in this area. Thus among the 14 palace-gates of Heiankyu the four eastern ones, especially the second from the north, i.e. the Yomeimon Gate 陽明門, became important palace-gates, through which influential aristocrats passed most frequently (Fig. 3).

IV

According to textual records, at the latest in the 780s, the Left and Right capitals of Heijokyo received the alternative names "East Capital" and "West Capital" respectively. From the later 790s, the Left

Capital of Heiankyo began to be called “East Capital” while the Right Capital “West Capital,” which came into prevalence rapidly and soon became a convention. In China, starting as early as 2000 years ago, from the Han period, especially in the Tang Dynasty from the seventh century, Luoyang City was alternatively called East Capital and Chang’an City, West Capital. Therefore, it is completely reasonable and not at all surprising that in the Heian period (794–1192) featuring a great favor of Tang style and a vigorous spread of Sinicization, the names of the Left and Right capitals of Heiankyo were changed into the “East Capital” and “West Capital” respectively. As early as the earlier ninth century, under Emperor Saga’s promotion, the palaces, pavilions, gates, towers, blocks, houses, etc. of Heiankyo assumed largely Chinese-style names. Take block names for example. Altogether there were 17 block names in this capital, with each four or six adjacent blocks sharing the same name. Of them “Doda 銅駝,” “Kyogyo 教業,” “Senfu 宣風,” “Jynfu 淳風,” “Anshyu 安眾,” “Toka 陶化,” “Hozai 豐財,” and “Ikuzai 毓財” were adopted from Luoyang 洛陽 of Tang China, and “Eisho 永昌,” “Suijin 崇仁,” “Einei 永寧,” “Sengi 宣義” and “Kotoku 光德” from Tang Chang’an, which indicates that Luoyang already surpassed Chang’an in this aspect. From the middle ninth century onward, as the Left Capital flourished day by day, while the Right Capital, by comparison, tended to depression, the name “Choan 長安” faded from people’s memory, whereas “Rakuyo 洛陽” prevailed further and at the latest in the early 10th century became the pronoun of all Heiankyo. Traveling from various areas of Japan to this city was called “joraku” (上洛, literally “going to Rakuyo”) or “nyuraku” (入洛, “entering Rakuyo”). This convention survived for a long time and has handed down even to the present. It offers a piece of good evidence that the Left Capital of Heiankyo was far more prosperous than the Right Capital.

It is generally believed that the geographical environments of the area where Heiankyo was located featured highlands and bright and clean weather for the northeast and lowlands and damp for the southwest. It is said that just these phenomena resulted in the top prosperity of the northern Left Capital (northern East Capital) and the greatest depression of the southern Right Capital

(southern West Capital). Actually it should be fully understand that the geographical condition was only a partial factor but absolutely not the total cause of this development.

As mentioned above, in the early period of the construction of Heiankyo, two Buddhist monasteries, i.e. the East and West temples, were built on the eastern and western sides respectively of Suzakuoji Road in the south of the city, inside the Rajomon Gate 羅城門. They were symmetric in location, equal in area, and similar in planning as known from excavations and surveys of their remains. In the seventh year of Emperor Saga’s Konin reign, the monk Kukai, returning from visiting China along with a Japanese mission, preached Buddhist doctrine on Koyasan Mountain 高野山 in the area of present-day Wakayama Prefecture 和歌山縣, and, with the emperor’s approval, built here the Kungubuji Temple 金剛峰寺. This was followed by the event that in the 14th year of Konin reign the emperor granted the monk the East Temple in Heiankyo, which made it a famous monastery with long prosperity. On the contrary, the West Temple declined rapidly soon after and became unknown in the world. Thus it can be seen that as early as the earlier ninth century, the Japanese court with Heiankyo as its capital showed the tendency of paying more attention to the Left (East) Capital than to the Right (West) Capital. It resulted definitely not from the geographical environments that the two temples close to each other developed so divergently that one highly flourished while the other declined day by day (Fig. 3).

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Note: The original paper is published in *Kaogu* 2002.11: 69–84 with five figures, written by Wang Zhongshu 王仲殊. The present version, an abridgment from the original, is prepared by the author himself and English-translated by Mo Runxian 莫润先.