

# *Originality and its Connotation in the Architecture of Japanese Ancient Capitals —Palace City and Imperial Palace*

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**Abstract:** In this paper, the originality and the connotation in the architecture of Japanese ancient capitals are discussed. It is widely revealed by the literature that there are the long term of friendly exchanges between China and Japan, especially in the Sui-and-Tang-Dynasties. From the perspective of the planning of ancient capitals, Japan's ancient capital construction absorbed the ideas of Chinese counterpart, while keeping its own unique characteristics. Taken as an example, the Palace City and Imperial Palace of ancient capital Chang'an of the Sui-and-Tang-Dynasties are investigated to compare with the counterparts of Japanese cities.

## **1. Introduction**

China and Japan are friendly neighbors with a strip of water, and Sino-Japan friendship has a long history. In the long term of friendly exchanges between China and Japan for more than two thousand years, the Sui-and-Tang-Dynasties is an important period of vigorous development and great prosperity. Sending Sui and Tang envoys marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Sino-Japan friendly and cultural exchanges. The ancient capital Chang'an of the Sui-and-Tang-Dynasties, as well as the Japanese cities of Fujiwara, Pingcheng, and Heian are examples of Sino-Japan friendship.

From the perspective of the planning of ancient capitals, Japan's ancient capital construction absorbed the ideas and concepts of ancient Chinese urban planning. It is no doubt that Japanese and Chinese architectural planning belong to the Oriental urban planning category represented by China. However, while Japanese architectural culture focuses on absorption, it still retains its own unique characteristics; while Japan imitates and learns from China, it is not a blind move, and the Japanese

capital is not a simple reduction and copy of Chang'an City. Based on the real situation in the country, it has carried out transformation and innovation tailored to local conditions.

Therefore, in this paper the author wants to take the differences between the planning and layout of the ancient capitals of China and Japan as examples, and synthesize the relevant records in various sources to explain the flexibility and originality in the development of Japanese architectural culture. It is probably an important opportunity to change from "Tang Style Culture" to "National Style Culture" in the history.

## 2. Overall Urban Layout

The Chang'an City of the Sui-and-Tang-Dynasties was composed of Palace City, the Imperial City and the Bulwarks City. Regarding the Bulwarks City, there is a special\* section detailed below, not to mention here. Chang'an City of Sui-and-Tang-Dynasties can be regarded as a large-scale, strict layout of the capital in China's capital development history. The construction was initiated in the second year of Emperor Sui (AD 582) and completed in 5th year (AD 654) of Emperor Gaozong of the Tang Dynasty. It took more than half a century for the construction of the city.

As shown in Figure 1: Palace City is the place where the emperor handles dynasty politics and the royal family's residence, and it is also the core part of the city. It has a pivotal position in the whole city. The Palace City of Chang'an City was located in the middle of the north and had a regular rectangular shape. According to the Chang'an Zhitu record, "Palace City is 4 Lis long from the east to the west, 2 Lis and 270 steps long from the north to the south, and its perimeter is 13 Lis and 180 steps." Archaeological data are as follows: Palace City is 2820.3 meters long from the east to the west, and 1492.1 meters long from the north to the south, its perimeter is 8.6 kilometers and its area is about 4.2 square kilometers [1-3]. The central part of Palace City is Tai Chi Palace, the East Palace is the Palace of the Crown Prince, and the West Palace is the court house where the Royal Concubines live. Among them, the Tai Chi Palace is the largest, followed by the Garden Palace, and the East Palace is the smallest. There are three gates on the north side of Palace City, i.e., Xuande Gate, Anli Gate, and Xuanwu Gate. There are five gates on the south side of Palace City, and the main gate is the Chengtian gate. The New Year's Day and Winter Solstice celebrations on the first month of the year, the issuance of amnesty orders, and the announcement of the removal of the old and the new as well as interviews with tributary envoys from all over the world were all done here. The south of Chengtianmen is called the "outer dynasty". There are 16 main halls in the Tai Chi Temple, of which the main hall is the Tai Chi Hall. The morning meeting would be held here on the first and 15th day of each month, it is also the center of politics called "the central dynasty" in the early Tang Dynasty. The Liangyi Hall in Taiji Palace is the venue where the emperor handles government affairs daily except the New Year's Day and the Winter Solstice. The emperor also held celebratory banquets here for foreign guests and officials with more than five products, so it is called "Inner Dynasty".

The Imperial City is also known as the sub-city. As shown in Figure 2, it is the seat of feudal government agencies. Its purpose is to list the "Beauty Department" among them and play the role of guarding the Imperial City. Especially outside the south gate of Miyagi. It is separated from the Imperial City by a "Hengjie". This "Hengjie" is better known as a square than a street, it strictly distinguishes Miyagi from the Imperial City. The shape of the Imperial City Like the imperial palace, which is rectangular. According to literature records, the Imperial City is "one hundred and fifty steps from east to west, one hundred and forty steps from north to south, and one hundred and fifty steps from seventeen to seven weeks. [4]" The archaeological measured length is 2820.2 meters from east to west, 1843.6 meters from north to south, perimeter is 9.2 kilometers, and the area is about 5.2 square kilometers [5]. The Imperial City has three gates in the south where Suzaku

Gate is in the middle, Anshang gate is in the east, and Hanguang gate is in the west. Two gates are in the east where Jingfeng gate is in the south, and Yanxi gate in the north. Two gates in the west where Shunyi Gate is in the south and Anfu Gate is in the north. All the gates of the Imperial City are connected to the inner city street. The Suzaku Gate is in the center of the southern side of the Imperial City, the Chengtian Gate is the main gate of Miyagi, and the Mingde Gate of Waiguo City are all in a straight line from north to south. This straight line from north to south through the whole city. The central axis is called “Suzaku Street”, also known as “Sky Street”.

While studying and imitating China’s legal system, Japan also made certain amendments and improvements based on the actual conditions of the country and society in which it was located at the time. This is obviously reflected in the layout of Miyagi and Imperial City[6-8]. Chang’an City in the Sui and Tang Dynasties of China used the city walls to separate the emperor’s Palace location —the palace city and the government office location-in the Huangcheng District; Japan is different, as shown in Figure 3: its Palace and the Imperial City are not distinguished Its main gate, Suzaku-mon, can be called either the Miyagi Gate or the Imperial City Gate.

The palace is located in the center and various official offices are set up around it. This actually reflects the differences between the development stages of China and Japan’s bureaucracy [9-11]. China developed from the stage before the Sui and Tang dynasties where government offices were located outside Miyagi, and ordinary residences were mixed with government offices to gradually integrate them. Stage, and Japan is a leap from the old ministry system to the new bureaucratic system [12].

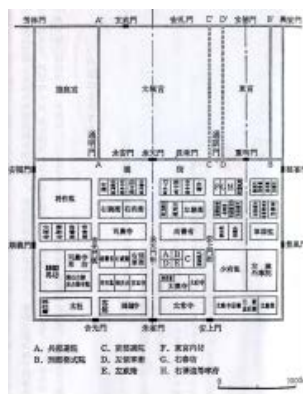


Figure 1: Measured Map of Chang’an City.

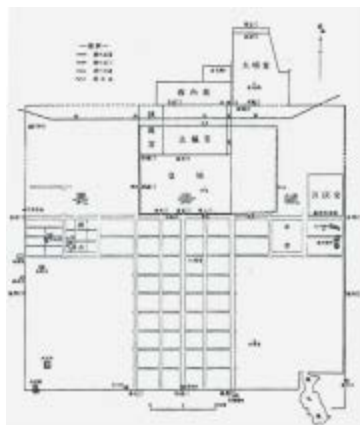


Figure 2: Imperial Palace Layout Chang’an City of Tang Dynasty.

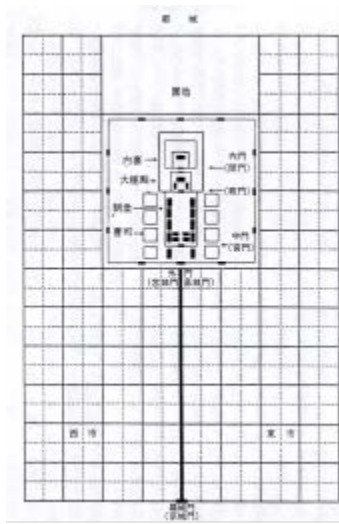


Figure 3: The Palace and Capital City Pattern of Japan.

### 3. Conclusion

The exchanges between China and Japan in the perspective of the planning of ancient capitals is discussed in this paper. The Palace City and Imperial Palace of ancient capital Chang'an of the Sui-and-Tang-Dynasties has been compared with the counterparts of Japanese cities to show the difference between the culture of Chinese and Japanese.

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