The Formation of Capital Town
in the Japanese Archipelago

——Centering on the Restoration of Dazaifu Town——

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The country of Wa, in the central part of the Japanese Archipelago, developed into a nation called Nippon, with a centralized authority. In this process, this single nation formed more than 10 capitals or capital towns, and experienced repeated transfers. Five of the capitals had square grid planning, called the Jōbō style. These were established in imitation of the Chinese capital town system. Then, how about the other towns, and how was a whole town formed? In some cases, a town with a non-Jōbō system preceded that with the Jōbō system. In other cases, both systems were developed in parallel. Non-Jōbō type towns have been long regarded as secondary, but it may be thought that they indicated the actual power of the national authority, or the framework of the Japanese cities.

The formation of non-Jōbō type cities started with the Yamato-no-miyako (Japanese capital) which was established at Asuka in the Country of Yamato in the 7th century and lasted for 100 years.

The palace, residences of powerful chiefs, temples, gardens and ponds for banquets, and defense facilities occupied a wide area. After the 650s, main defense facilities including mountain castles seem to have been established in the territory.

The most typical town equipped with these defensive facilities is Dazaifu in Kyushu. Dazaifu, taking on the important features of castle towns in three countries in the Korean Peninsular, was constructed under the guidance of exiled Baekje people. The great wall (Mizuki), small wall (Shō mizuki), mountain castle, government office, and town area have so far been excavated. However, only the western part of the rampart has been discovered, and its full outlines have not been clarified. Thanks to the discovery of the Tōregi earthwork, which corresponds to the southern part of the rampart, it was found that the rampart could be restored on the eastern side as well as the western side. The inside of the rampart was called Kaku, and was divided into the left, right and south sections, facing to the north direction of the
town. In the southern section, the allotment system was adopted. In the first half of the Nara period, Suzaku-Ōji (Main Street) was established. Then in the central part of the city, a large-scale redevelopment plan was carried out in the 10th century. Since Dazaifu had a larger structure than the castle towns of the Korean Peninsular, it can be evaluated as a kind of a castle town, though it is not called a capital because the imperial court was not based there. This form of city, which made the best use of natural topography, can be used as a standard to check the non-Jōbō type castle towns in the Kinai area. It makes us reexamine the history of Japanese cities, which have been regarded as not having city walls.