From Wa-Kyō to Fujiwara-Kyō
—The Ritsuryō State and Castle City System—

Nirō Atsushi

A castle city is established to realize the despotism of an Emperor (Tennō), and it is nothing other than a demonstration of the national power structure in a certain form within defensive facilities. The formation of a castle city and the establishment of the ancient state can be considered to be in a direct correlation. According to common opinion, the first Chinese style castle city was established in 694 (the 8th year of Empress Jitō) by the transfer of her capital to Fujiwara-Kyō. At present, the opinion of Mr. Toshio Kishi on the restoration of ‘jōbō’ (grid-map street plan of a city) is predominant. Excavation has more or less its validity for the interior of the ‘Kyō’ (capital). However, the discovery of precedent grid streets in the Palace area and grid streets in the outskirts of the capital have posed another question. A new hypothesis on “Greater Fujiwara-Kyō”, which is based on the supposition of a larger ‘jōbō’ capital area than the common opinion, has been proposed. Analysis is now required on the process by which the castle city system was formed, based on the results obtained from these recent excavations.

This paper analyzes the castle city system from the angle of the requirements necessary for its establishment: which are, the Capital offices, execution of ‘jōbō’ system, East and West Markets, temples in the capital area, Imperial Prince’s Palace, etc., and discusses the transition from Wa-Kyō to Fujiwara-Kyō, via Niiki and Shinyaku-no-miyako, supposing that it has a close relation with the process of the formation of the ancient state. A palace town like Wa-Kyō showed a landscape in which palaces of princes and residences of powerful families lay scattered around the Emperor’s palace, reflecting the situation in the Yamato Court, which was based on the personal relationship between the Emperor and the imperial and other powerful families. Since the capital city was based on personal domination by the Emperor, a “transfer of Palace” was required corresponding to the reorganization of the ruling structure at every change of ruler.

The characteristics of the castle city system under the Ritsuryō regime, on the other hand, were as follows: the Imperial Residence became an entity separated from other residences in the capital city, and a rank system, from imperial families and nobles down to common farmers, was realized in the form of a plan called ‘Kyō’ (capital city). In the capital city under the Ritsuryō regime, officials, who were separated from connections with their provincial homes, were provided with housing sites at a specified location and scale in accordance with their rank in the artificially planned space, which was laid out on a grid pattern. The capital city was a place which intentionally produced the concept of a place ruled by the Emperor, and which allowed its inhabitants to feel the identity, equality, and superiority complex of the ‘kyōko’ (households in the capital).