Formation of Capitals in the Japanese Archipelago (part 2)
—Focusing on the Restoration of Ōmi-kyô—

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In the ancient states of Eastern Asia, the center of power was placed in the capitals, which were institutionalized as capital cities surrounded by various buildings based on an ideology and heavy ramparts. It was after the 7th century that a state with a centralized government was formed in the Japanese Archipelago.

The capital is known to have undergone transition 10 times or more. According to common opinion, these capitals, like other Japanese cities, did not have effective city walls; capitals after the final period of the 7th century were constructed under grid plans called the 'jôbô' system; and gates and ramparts were constructed around the Suzaku-Ôji which ran down center of the city, and on which foreign missions passed; but these constructions were not maintained after international exchanges went on the decline. That these cities were insufficient as capital cities have been pointed out; but what was the real state of these capital cities, including their defense facilities? In this paper, the author attempts to make clear the actual state and effectiveness of the defenses of Japanese capitals, as a sequel to his previous paper, which mainly dealt with the external fortifications of Dazaifu in Kyûshû. With regard to defense, Chinese capitals were guarded by ramparts, while capitals mainly defended by mountain–castles are known in the Korean Peninsula. In Japan, the tradition was for moated circular settlements and residences of the chief class. In Dazaifu, in the latter half of the 7th century, the mountain castle and external fortifications were combined, and a large-scale city with grid-planned 'jôbô' was established. In Yamato capitals in the Kinai District, there are signs that mountain castles, etc. were added in the latter half of the 7th century to reform the cities, but the real situation is not clear. Ōmi-kyô, which was established in Ōmi Province, to the east of the Kinai District, was a capital with a brief lifespan (667 to 672). From its restoration, it is known that this capital was composed of a grid-planned long, narrow city area of 5 km from north to south on the western shore of the Lake Biwa; a valley–holding–type mountain castle of the largest scale, in the western mountains; and a line of defense and facilities linked with this. The grid plan of Ōmi-kyô has been reconstructed only through geographical methods. However, grid–planned structural remains on a similar standard have been excavated, though only partially, from the preceding Naniwa–kyô. It has been proved that there existed, in the latter half of the 7th century in Japan, an age of fullscale capitals equipped with mountain castles and other facilities.