

INVITATION

The Heijo Palace Site Museum



The World Cultural Heritage ; Heijo Palace Site

Nara National Cultural Properties Research Institute

To the readers

This brochure is a manual for the volunteer guides at the Heijo Palace Site Museum when they receive the foreign visitors.

Not only the descriptions of the displayed artifacts but also the explanations about what the ancient Heijo capital was like, and how the people in the ancient Nara era spent their daily life are included in this manual.

Some photos are inserted in the explanations to help you understand the situation easier.

We hope this brochure will be interesting and be helpful to deepen your understanding of the ancient Japan.

この冊子は、平城宮跡資料館を英語で説明するためのマニュアルです。
奈良文化財研究所平城宮跡解説ボランティアガイドの有志が作成しました。

実際のガイドに役立つように、資料館のスナップ写真を添え、
それを見ながら説明するといった状況を再現しています。
なお不十分な点については、今後改めていきたいと思っています。

この冊子が、実りある国際友好に資することができれば幸いです。

2002年10月

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なお、本書における「平城」の英訳は、現在一般に通称されている「Heijo」とした。
奈良時代における「平城」の「nara」という読みにもとづき、「Nara Palace」、
あるいは「Nara Capital」と呼ばれることもある。

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1 Aerial View of the Heijo Capital ; 平城京鳥瞰図



Good afternoon. Welcome to the Heijo Palace Site Museum. It is my pleasure to show you around this museum.

This Museum is owned by the Nara National Research Institute of Cultural Properties, an affiliated organization of the Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Japanese government. The Heijo Palace was originally 131ha. Over 80% is now owned by the federal government and preserved as the special historic site since 1963.

As you may know, Nara was the capital of Japan 1300 years ago, from 710 to 784, for 74 years. In the early 8th century, Japan established very powerful centralized bureaucratic government by learning and borrowing highly developed Chinese constitution.

This photo is an aerial view of Nara city taken in 1962.

This place is where the Palace of the Heijo capital was located.

This is where we are.

The ancient Heijo Palace was located in the northern center of the capital. It was surrounded by the 5-meter-high earthen walls.

In the Palace, there were the Imperial domicile and the government administrative office buildings. The blue lines drawn on the photo show the streets laid out in the ancient Heijo capital.

The Heijyo capital was modeled after Chang'an, the capital city of the Chinese Tang dynasty.

The Capital was 6km east to west and 5km north to south.

The east end was at the foot of the mountain over there where the Great Buddha is located.

These yellow-painted places are where the Buddhist temples were located in those days. The capital moved to Kyoto in 784, but those temples have been maintained there for more than 1200 years. These temples and the Palace Site have been inscribed on the World Heritage List of UNESCO since 1998 in terms of history of the ancient capital of Japan in the 8th century.

The population of the ancient Heijo capital is estimated 100,000. The total population of Japan at that time is estimated around 6 million. Today, Nara city has around 400,000 population.

The main gate of the Palace was located in the south wall, called Suzaku Gate. Suzaku or a phoenix is an imaginary bird to protect the southern direction according to the Chinese thought. The Suzaku Gate was restored in 1998.

This is the main street of the ancient capital called Suzaku Street and 74m wide. The VIPs from the foreign countries came into the city from Rajyo Gate located here and proceeded to the Suzaku Gate to enter the Palace.

After the capital moved to Kyoto in 784, the Palace site changed to the rice fields. The rice fields lasted for more than 1200 years. You can see the paddy fields in this picture taken in 1962. Today, most of these areas have become residential and commercial towns except the Heijo Palace Site.

2 Topographical Model ; 明治末年平城宮跡地形模型



This is a topographical model of the Heijo Palace site around 100 years ago.

You can guess the area of the Heijo Palace in the ancient days by following the foot-paths between the rice fields. The real Heijo Palace had rested in peace under these paddy fields for more than 1200 years.

Let me add a little explanation about the farmers who used to own their farming land at this site. After the Japanese government bought this land in 1963 in order to preserve it as the special historic site, the government agreed to hire the former landowners at the excavation site. This is a kind of compensation from the government to the former farmers for their cooperation in selling their land to the government.



3 Diorama of Archaeological Excavation ; 発掘ジオラマ模型



This is a kind of diorama of archaeological excavation procedure.

This model shows that the carpenters are disassembling the buildings of the Palace to transfer the capital from Nara to Kyoto in 784. The building materials such as pillars and roof tiles were carried to the new capital to be used again.

After the capital moved to Kyoto, the Palace site changed to the rice fields. This model shows that they are preparing for excavation. They have been excavating this site since 1955. But they completed only one third of the total site here by now.

Many artifacts are found, such as post holes, ditches, potteries, roof tiles, wooden tablets with inscriptions, and so on. Those artifacts tell us various kinds of historical facts. For instance, when the buildings were built and what the daily life of the people at that time was like.

After the excavation is over, they take the precise records of the results. Then, they refill the site with soil again, because this is the best way to preserve the remains.

This is a way to display the excavated site outdoors. These stones and trees show the spots of the pillars of the buildings underground. By reconstructing the walls or ditches in a real size outdoors, they help visitors understand what the ancient Heijo Palace originally looked like.

4 Conservation of Unearthed Artifacts ; 金属と木材の保存



These artifacts were all excavated at this site. These are the coins 1300 years old, the leaves of trees, a basket made of bamboo, and jute cloth. The basket and the jute were plastered before they were taken up from the underground as they are usually found in a heavily degraded state.

Nails were also excavated. These are with rust and these are after the rust is removed using a supersonic grinder.

Acrylic resin was applied afterward so that they will never be corroded again.

The waterlogged archaeological woods were kept in good shape underground in case there was enough water. These are PEG-treated, so they are fit to be displayed even in the air, like this.

Precisely speaking about PEG-treatment, wood consists of the resin part and the water part. Wood buried in the humid underground for many years contains 4 to 20 times more water than natural wood. Although the resin part becomes fragile by corrosion underground, the water part of the wood holds the shape of the wood as it was. Soon after it is unearthed, the water flies off quickly from the wood, that makes it shrink, and collapse the shape of itself like these woods.

Therefore, in order to keep the original shape even in the air, the water contents of the wood must be exchanged by PEG or polyethylene glycol. These excavated woods are PEG-treated, so they can be displayed even in the air.

PEG method is disadvantageous in a sense, however because the wooden objects turn blackish when treated.

Another way to conserve the unearthed wooden artifacts is the vacuum freeze-drying method, like the one to produce instant coffee.

The whitish wooden artifacts are freeze-drying treated.

The water contents are instantly frozen and dried off using such special apparatuses as in the photo.

The conservation works of wooden artifacts are one of the important functions of this institute.

Japan is an advanced country in the world in terms of conservation of the waterlogged archaeological wooden artifacts. This institute has been playing a key role in developing conservation science for archaeological artifacts in Japan.

有機遺物	organic materials such as wooden artifacts, lacquer ware, textiles, seeds of fruits
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無機遺物	inorganic objects such as earthenware, stone tools, glass, metal objects
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木製品の組成は空気中で著しく変形する。

The wooden structure contracts greatly through natural drying.

化学的保存処理	chemical conservation treatment
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非破壊分析	non-destructive analysis (using X-ray was introduced)
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PEG 溶液	PEG solution (be replaced with PEG solutions)
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金メッキ	gilded objects
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さび	corrosion products
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含浸させる	be impregnated
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真空凍結乾燥機	vacuum freeze-drying apparatuses
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超音波研磨機	precision grinders ; supersonic grinders
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5 How to Estimate the Time ; どのように年代を決めるか



Chronology

Dendrochronology

Parts of wooden pillars, roof tiles and earthenware are often found in the excavation research. These are the keys to estimate when the buildings were built.

年輪年代法 Firstly, dendrochronology tells us the time when a wood was cut down by its annual rings. The widths of the annual rings of a wood differ from each other because the weather is different each year.

The thick line is the master graph of the annual rings of the Japanese cypress which was established by examining huge amount of data.

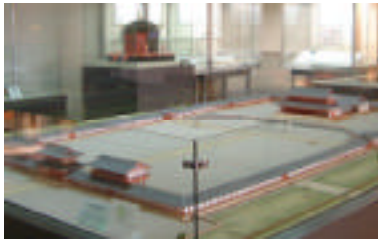
If you want to know the time when a certain wood was cut down, you may as well draw a graph of the annual rings of the wood by a dotted line, then make it correspond to the master graph, you can get an exact year when the tree was cut down.

We can count back to 3000 years from now if it is the Japanese cypress or the Japanese cedar. In Japan, most of the buildings of the ancient days were built with either of these two kinds.

出土遺物 Another way to estimate the approximate construction time of the excavated buildings is by the patterns of the roof tiles or the shapes of the earthenware excavated at the same place. The patterns of all roof tiles and the shapes of the earthenware excavated by now are standardized and placed in a chronological order.

6 Models of the Ancient Buildings ; 建物模型

The Imperial Audience Hall ; 第一次大極殿



This is a model of Daigokuden or the Imperial Audience Hall located in the Palace. The size of this complex was 318m north to south and 177 m east to west.

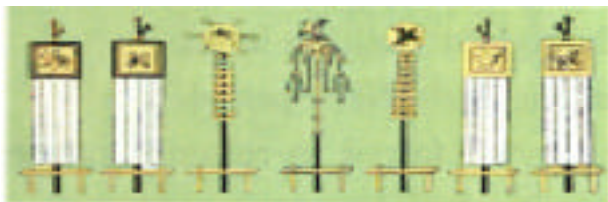
In the Nara era, the emperors and the empresses conducted various affairs at this hall. The Imperial Audience Hall was the symbol of the emperor's or empress's power.

The name of Daigokuden is derived from the North Star.

In the ancient Chinese thought, the North Star standing still in the north sky was assumed to be the center of the universe. So are the emperors and empresses.

The Imperial Audience Hall is going to be restored by 2010 in commemoration of the 1300th anniversary for the foundation of the ancient Heijo capital.

Seven Banners ; 七本の幢と幡



Seven banners were set up on the important ceremonial occasions of the State.

The center banner depicting the crow with three legs is a symbol of the Imperial status. Two banners next to it represent the sun and the moon. The rest of the four banners depict the phoenix, the blue dragon, the white tiger, and Genbu, which are the four imaginary animals to protect the cardinal points according to the ancient Chinese thought. It was considered that these animals gathered here to guard the emperor or empress on the ceremonial occasions. The banners were taken down when the ceremonies were over.

The Imperial Throne ; 高御座



This is a model of the Imperial throne. The shape of it is octagonal. The emperors or empresses were seated inside of the throne on the ceremonial occasions. Even today, the emperors keep the same tradition.

The Roof of the Imperial Audience Hall ; 大極殿の屋根



This is a part of the roof of the Imperial Audience Hall in actual size. Some of the roof tiles are from the excavated ones.

The East Palace Garden ; 東院庭園



This is a model of the garden located in the southeastern corner of the Palace Site. It is said the aristocrats enjoyed various banquets at this place. This garden was excavated and restored in 1998 on that spot.

The Residence of Prince Nagaya ; 長屋王邸



This is a model of the residence of Prince Nagaya who was in the highest position in the government in the early Nara period. Unfortunately, he was forced to commit suicide after all by a political plot.

The actual size of the residence was 270m by 270m.

His residence happened to be found in 1985 at the preliminary excavation research for the construction of a department store located near here.

The Imperial Assembly Hall ; 朝集殿



This is a model of the Imperial Assembly Hall in the Palace compound. This building was moved to Toshodai-ji temple and converted into a kodo, lecture-hall.

7 Construction of the Heijo Capital ; 大変だった都の建設

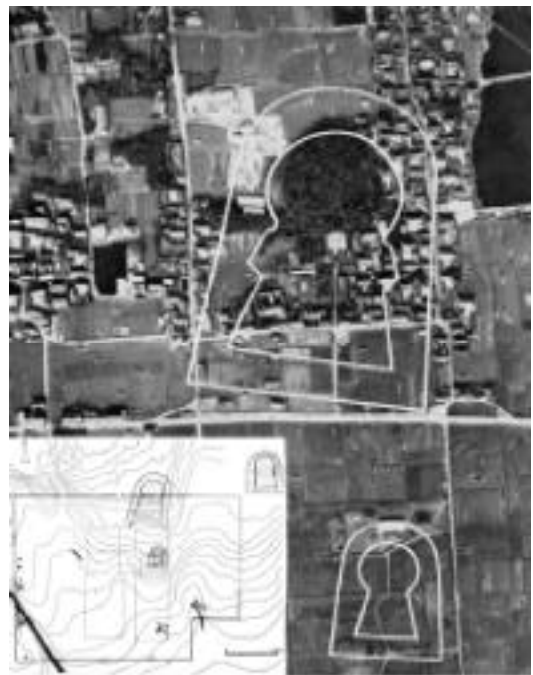
Haniwa - The Clay Images ; 埴輪



These are the clay images unearthed from the burial mound for a powerful person around the 5th century located just in the north of the Palace Site.

These images were recently discovered in the prior excavation of a road construction. They were lined up on the outer bank of a moat surrounding the mounded tomb. It is considered that these images were placed in order to distinguish the sacred tomb from the outer world. There are such a large scale of burial mounds near here.

Some of the other burial mounds were destroyed when the Heijo Palace was constructed in the early 8th century. Those ruins were also discovered at the excavation site.



緊急調査	rescue excavation	円筒埴輪	cylindrical haniwa
墳墓	mounded tomb	形象埴輪	representational haniwa
墳丘	burial mound	動物埴輪	animal-shaped haniwa
群集墳	cluster of mounded tomb	水鳥埴輪	waterfowl haniwa
前方後円墳	keyhole-shaped mounded tomb	家型埴輪	house-shaped haniwa
周濠	moat surrounding a mounded tomb		
陪塚	satellite burial mounds around a large mound		

Wooden Building Materials ; 建物の部材



These are the excavated building materials in the Nara period. All the wooden artifacts were PEG treated. In those days, there were two construction methods. One is to embed a pillar directly into the ground. The other is to stand a pillar on a foundation stone, which is the method come from the continent.



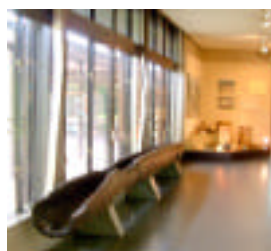
Prior to the construction they usually made one - tenth trial model of a building. This is such a model of the Imperial Audience Hall. The black color parts are the excavated real ones.

Log-storehouse (azekura - zukuri) ; 校倉造



The cross sections of these two lumbers are triangle. These lumbers were used for the walls of storage houses. This construction method is called azekura-zukuri in Japanese ; a kind of log-storehouse. It is considered that this method is fitted to protect the goods stored inside from the hot and humid weather outside, and is widely adopted in the monsoon area in the East and the South East Asia. Shosoin treasure house in Todai-ji temple inscribed in the World Heritage List of UNESCO is famous for the azekura-zukuri building. Such construction method was in common in the Nara era. Unfortunately, only a few exist today.

Wooden Drain ; 木樋



This is one of the wooden drains excavated at this Site. This lumber used to be a pillar. Several holes you can see indicate that history. The holes were fixed and reused as a drain.

Tools for Construction ; 建設道具



These are the tools that were used for construction in the Nara period. Today some of the tools are no longer in use. We admire the ancient technology as they built huge buildings using only these kinds of handy tools.

8 Transfer of the Capitals ; 移りゆく都



The capital of Japan was moved to Heijo in 710 from Fujiwara-kyo. It was moved to Nagaoka-kyo in 784 and to Heian-kyo 10 years later. Heian-kyo, the present Kyoto had been the capital for more than 1000 years until Tokyo became the capital in 1868.

As you can see on the picture, during the 5 years between 740 and 745, Emperor Shomu changed the capital frequently.

The political situation was unstable then. Wishing the peace of the State, in 743 he issued an Imperial edict to build a Great Buddha. Two years later, the capital was returned to Heijo and the people became calm. The construction of the Great Buddha was completed in Todai-ji temple in 752.

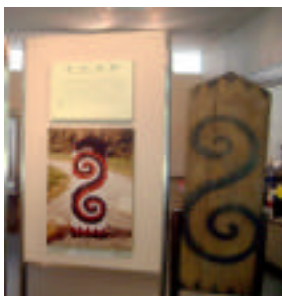
9 The Stable Compound ; 馬寮



This is a model of the excavated ruins located underneath this museum.

This place was identified as the stable compound. A number of horses were trained here mainly for military purpose.

10 The Hayato's Shield ; 隼人の楯



This is a replica of one of the shields called Hayato's shield. The shields were reused as the well frames.

The Hayato tribe came from the southern Kyusyu Island to serve the emperors or empresses. They often attended the State ceremonies carrying these shields. This was a way of expressing their political obedience toward the Imperial power. Colored picture is the one restored to its original state according to the old documentary records.

11 Roof Tiles and Potteries ; 鬼瓦・軒瓦・墨書土器・三彩など



These are the roof tiles and the potteries excavated from this site. Only small portion of this institute's possession is displayed here. Some are glazed or colored.

The demon tiles have the expressive faces. They are to cover and decorate the ridge ends of the roofs and were placed wishing for the security of the buildings. The design of round eaves tiles is the lotus flower pattern and that of the flat eaves tiles is the arabesque pattern.

You can see the Chinese characters written on the potteries in Indian (Chinese) ink. They are the names of a person or a ministry, and indicates the owners of the potteries. These potteries provide us very interesting historical information.

12 Utagaki ; 朱雀門と歌垣



Utagaki is the entertainment held in front of the Suzaku gate. People gathered in front of the Suzaku Gate at the festivals and enjoyed to see the performances.

13 Toilet ; トイレ



By analyzing the soil, ruins of toilets are sometimes found. They used a piece of wood instead of today's toilet paper.

14 Stationeries and the Efficiency Rating for Bureaucrats ; 役人の勤務評定



About 7000 people were working in the government offices in the Heijo Palace. These are the stationeries that they used : inkstone, inkstick, pitcher, writing brush, and small knife.

These tablets show us the efficiency ratings for the governmental workers. Their performance was regularly evaluated mainly by the number of days they worked. Paper was very valuable in those days, so they used wooden tablets to write on in their daily duties.

They shaved the wooden tablets with a knife to erase the letters and used the tablets many times. Sometimes a slice of shavings of wooden tablets brings us unexpected and important historical facts.

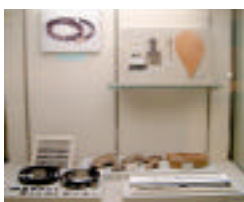
15 Kitchen Utensils ; 食膳



Two meals a day were given to the office workers in the Palace. Chopsticks and rice scoops (a large wooden spoon for scooping the boiled rice) were excavated. These are the seeds of fruits they ate. Potteries and jars. That round box is probably a rice tub, a wooden container for boiled or steamed rice.

Meals for people of the lower class were very poor. Wooden tablets with the inscription of a demand to improve their daily meals were excavated.

16 Officers ' Ornaments ; 服飾



Officers' dresses and their ornaments were essential for the bureaucratic system. For instance, whether the material of the buckles was gold, silver, or copper showed their political position and status. Footwear and accessories were also excavated.

They were probably worn out and thrown away or were lost properties.

17 Prayers and Purifications ; 祈りと祓い



In those days, they often prayed deities for mercy to keep them away from bad fortunes, unhappiness, natural disasters, or astronomical mishaps.

Earthenware miniature horses are considered to have been thrown into water when they prayed for rain or for stopping rain.

Human-shaped figures were rubbed by people's body and then thrown into a stream.

Potteries on which the human faces were drawn were also thrown into a stream with their breath enclosed. It was believed that one's impurity was ritually transferred to an object by contacting it.

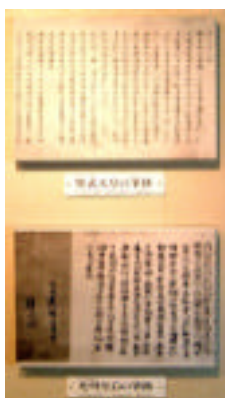
18 The Great Thanksgiving Service Hall ; 大嘗宮



The Enthronement Ceremonies were held at the Great Thanksgiving Service Hall built in the Hall of State Compound, located in front of the Imperial Audience Hall.

Whenever the Enthronement Ceremonies took place, the buildings were constructed newly. This Enthronement Ceremony is considered to have originated from the thanksgiving festival for the agricultural harvest in the primitive age.

19 Calligraphy ; 書風



These are the two pictures of the handwritings of Emperor Shomu and his wife, Empress Komyo.

It is said that the style of calligraphy reflects the writer's personality. It is interesting to imagine the characters of the two people by their writings.

20 The Governmental Workshop ; 官営工房



These are tools to produce metal objects, wood-works, and lacquer wares excavated from the workshop ruin at this site. Judging from these artifacts, a large number of engineers (technical experts ; technologists) organized by the government were working here.

They must have been skillful because, for instance, it is necessary to make fire at 1500 degrees centigrade to melt iron in a blast furnace. Shown in the photo are hyakuman-to kept in the Horyu-ji temple. Hyakumanto, or one million wooden stupas, were made under the government command in the latter Nara period and delivered to the temples nationwide praying for the State peace.

Since one of the unfinished stupas was unearthed from this site, they were surely manufactured in this Palace site compounds.

21 Tax in Kind ; 集められた税



Taxes in the Nara period were basically paid in goods. All the way from each territory of Japan, various kinds of products were carried to the Heijo capital. This map shows the kinds of goods, and from where they were brought. It also indicates the government's sphere of influence.



Wooden tablets were attached to goods of taxes as labels to show the contents. They were thrown away in the end, and were found by the excavation.

This panel shows the names of foodstuffs offprinted from wooden tablets of tax labels.

22 Coins and Shipping Labels ; 木簡と銭



Japan entered into the monetary economy in the early 8th century.

According to records, fake money was rampant in those days in spite of repeated official notices with the maximum penalty. These are replicas of wooden tablets of labels attached to the goods of taxes.

23 Funeral ; 都人の祈り



The Buddhism was introduced to Japan in the middle of the 6th century.

But the cremation funeral, which is the Buddhistic funeral, was firstly adopted in the early 8th century among people of the upper class such as emperors, aristocrats, and priests.

Many others were buried in the ground.

In an urn, inksticks, writing brushes, coins, and pearls were sometimes contained. It was prohibited by the law to make any grave in the city limit. A placenta was buried in the ground near an entrance of people's house to pray for the prosperity of a family and the happiness of their child.

24 Markets ; 市



There were two markets in the ancient Heijō capital operated by the government, one in the east and the other in the west of the city. Various kinds of commodities were sold there.

Today, the activities in the markets have partly become clear through the excavation. Criminals were punished in the markets.

Sometimes, capital punishments were carried out in the open square in the market. But the nobility criminals were allowed to kill themselves in their own houses.

25 Temples in the Heijo Capital ; 都の寺々

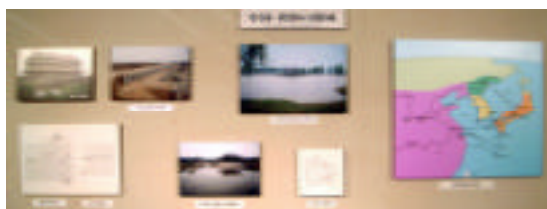


The actual figure of the Buddhist temples in the ancient Heijo capital has gradually become clear by the excavations.

After the capital moved to Kyoto, the major temples remained in Nara and have been sustained by the aristocrats and the belief of the public. The artifacts excavated from these temples tell the high level of cultural achievements attained during the Nara period.

26 The East Asian Countries ; 東アジアの国際関係

Japan is a part of the East Asian zone of civilization, which centered around China. In the beginning of the 8th century, Japan established the very bureaucratic centralized government learning from the Chinese constitution.



This map shows the sea routes to Korea and China from Japan in the 8th and the 9th century.

In the ancient times, the Tang dynasty had the most highly civilized governmental organization in the world.

Therefore, despite geographic isolation from the continent, Japan had continued ambitious efforts to send missions to learn and adopt the Chinese system to rule the country.

The Garden in Kyonju, capital of Silla, had a great influence on the gardens built in our country in the ancient days. The Daming Palace in Chang'an affected the planning of the Imperial Audience Hall in the Heijo Palace.

Japan also imported advanced culture through the Korean peninsula. Between Korean peninsula and Japan, envoys and traders had gone back and forth from old times. It is not too much to say that the continental civilization was brought to Japan practically through the Korean peninsula.

The Buddhism is said to have been officially introduced to Yamato court, an old name of Japanese dynasty, in 552 from a kingdom in southern Korea. The Buddhism was originated in India and spread to China and to Korea and from there to Japan. Buddhism served as an important vehicle for the transmission of Chinese culture to Japan.