

Formation and Structure of Kokufu (Provincial Capitals)

YAGI Atsuru

Kokufu (Provincial capital) is an executive body and space of the governor assigned by the central government and is the principal base of seven provinces of the area controlled by eight ministries of the Cabinet, the centralized management organization in the ancient statutory state of Japan. Therefore, provincial capital could be said to have been made in the process of a phased formation along with the original emergence of province and its governor. The formation of province and its governor have often been discussed in the academic world so far, but rarely has the formation of provincial capital itself been taken up.

Province and its governor were established in the sixties as the upper district organization which started to be set up after the Reformation of the Taika era in the middle of the 7th century, after the model of Chinese local system following the defeat in the war against Silla and Cathay. However, it was after the implementation of the first administrative code of Japan in the nineties when the district organization was systemized from the state to province to village with the state at the summit and the bureaucracy was put into effect where the governor was organized by Shito-kan (fourth-grade service officials). On the other hand, following the governor's attendance in the province, an executive building was constructed for his duties to be performed. It was after the erection of the Fujiwara-kyō, the first Chinese style castle town at the end of the 7th or the beginning of the 8th century, that provincial capital was designed and realized throughout the country with the same arrangement of office buildings with that of Chōdōin in the Imperial Palace of the castle town. Moreover, the consolidation of provincial capital has deeply affected the expansion and reinforcement of the governors' privileges on their local reign at the beginning of the 8th century. Particularly the provincial capital with the Chōdōin style buildings with the office surrounding are considered to be identically equipped and completed to the construction of Heijō-kyō.

The present general theory is that an area of approximately two square blocks surrounding the government office, the site of executive institute for the state affairs, is called the provincial authority and a spread of few square blocks outside the area is the provincial capital; the provincial authority is equivalent to the Miya (Palace) of the castle town, while provincial capital to Kyō (the Capital). I cannot agree with this theory as far as it is based on the documentary materials. Provincial authority has the implication of extension of an area mainly composed of government office buildings in the centre, while provincial capital

originally means government agency, then to include buildings and space, eventually leading them to correspond to each other.