On the Influence of the Lindedian Pavilion, Daminggong Palace, Tang Chang'an City, Upon the Design of Palaces in the Japanese Capitals Heijokyō and Heiankyō

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In architectural form and layout, both the Japanese capitals Heijokyō 平城京 of the 8th century and Heiankyō 平安京 of the final stage of this century imitated the Chinese capitals Chang'an and Luoyang of the Tang dynasty, especially the former. The Palace City of either Japanese capital was in the center of the north with the Dairi Palace 内裏 and Daigokuden Pavilion 大極殿 within it corresponding to the Taijigong Palace 太極宮 of Chang'an City.

Nevertheless, in the third year of Gaozong's Longsū reign (AD 663), the Tang emperor moved from Taijigong to the new palace Daminggong at the eastern end of the north of Chang'an City. From then on the latter replaced the former as the national political center. Thus the palace architecture of Heijokyō and Heiankyō, Japan, actually followed the example of the Daminggong Palace in the Tang Chang'an City. Although the main pavilion in the Palace City of either Heijokyō or Heiankyō bore the name “Daigokuden 大極殿” essentially identical with the Taijidian 太極殿 of the Taijigong Palace in Chang'an, in fact it was built in imitation of Hanyuandian 含元殿, the main pavilion of the Daminggong Palace. On this problem I have made an elaboration in my treatise “On the Ryūbūdo Dragon-tail Platform of Daigokuden Pavilion in the Palace of Ancient Japanese Capitals” published in Kaogu 考古 1999. 3. As a continuation of that article, the present paper will argue the influence of the Lindedian Pavilion 麟德殿, Tang Daminggong Palace, upon the Burakuyin Palace 豊楽院 in the Palace City of Heiankyō, Japan, and also upon the Saigu Palace (West Palace) 西宮 in that of Heijokyō, the Japanese capital in the preceding period.

The Lindedian Pavilion constituted an important building in the Daminggong Palace of the Tang dynasty. It began to be constructed in the third year of Gaozong's Longsū reign (663) and was completed in the Linde reign (664–665), hence the name “Lindedian.” Since 1957, scholars of the Institute of Archaeology, CASS have excavated on its site and carefully reconstructed its form and structure.

The platform-foundations of the Lindedian Pavilion measure 130 m in length from the north to the south and above 80 m in width from the west to the east. They constituted the bases of an anterior, a middle hall and a rear one, all facing due south and structured symmetrically. The anterior was the main hall with western and eastern flights of steps attached to the front for going up and down. The middle hall functioned as a breezeway with the doors leading to the anterior and rear hall and with the second floor extending backward to cover a part of the rear hall and becoming a spacious room called “Jingyuange Tower 景雲閣.” On its two sides were the East and West kiosks 东亭 西亭. The rear hall was flanked by two storied buildings called Yuyilou 郁仪楼 and Jielinhou 绥邻楼 respectively. The whole pavilion was surrounded by a winding corridor and occupied an area of 12,300 sq m in total (Figs. 1 and 2). Consisting mainly of the anterior, middle and rear halls, it was also called “Three-hall Pavilion 三殿” at that time.

The Hanyuandian Pavilion was the main building of the Daminggong Palace and functioned as the place for grand ceremonies and important
meetings of the court. The Xuanzhengdian 宣政殿 and Zichendian 紫宸殿 pavilions were for the emperor supervising government affairs and holding court audiences respectively. They were located behind Hanyuandian and, along with it, on the central axis of the whole Daminggong Palace. The Linedian Pavilion was in the west of this palace. It can be rated to have been the largest banquet hall of that time as the Tang emperor often tendered banquets to his senior, meritorious and favorite officials, high-ranking military officers and local chief executives, and even his relatives and their children. These people could be sometimes as many as 200—300, even 3,500. To liven things up, music, songs and dances, and acrobats were often performed and various treasures were granted during the feasts.

Apart from domestic officials, the emperor often banqueted envoys from protectorates largely in the Linedian Pavilion. These states made embassies to the Tang court so frequently that the total of their missions was almost uncountable. According to historical records, the envoys and their entourage from protectorates and foreign countries the Chinese emperor banqueted in Linedian include those from Tobo, Huihu, Nanshao, Kunming, Zangke, Xi, Qidan, Shiwei, Bohai, Silla and Japan. Their number ranged from several or over 10—20 to above 30—50 persons, who were accompanied by Chinese high-ranking officials, influential eunuchs and many relevant figures. This indicates that the feasts were rather grand. Usually when a mission reached the capital Chang'an, it would first make an obeisance to the emperor in the Xuanzhengdian Pavilion, and then be received and banqueted by him in the Linedian Pavilion. Some envoys came especially for extending New Year greetings and were bound to attend the court celebration held in the Hanyuandian Pavilion on the lunar New Year Day. Others happened to be in the capital of China on this day, and so also attended the celebration in Hanyuandian (Fig. 3).

From 630 through 894, Japan planned 18 times of sending its envoys to the Tang Empire. Of them the 12th (761), 13th (762) and 18th (894) were canceled shortly after the matter who were to be

sent had been decided. The 11th (759) was for meeting the mission returning from China, and the 15th (779) was for accompanying the Tang envoys departing from Japan, so both should not be taken as regular embassies of the Japanese government. What is important is that from the 630s through the 830s, altogether 13 full Japanese missions visited China, and six of them entered the Daminggong Palace completed in the 660s. These were the 7th mission (702) headed by Awada-no Mahito and the later 8th (717), 9th (733), 10th (752), 14th (777), 16th (804) and 17th (838).

Based on records in Chinese and Japanese historical books it can be ascertained that the Japanese missions to China, coming to the capital Chang'an, would first make an obeisance to the emperor in the
Xuanzhengdian Pavilion of the Daminggong Palace. Then it would be received by him in Lindedian or Yanyingdian 延英殿 and banqued in Lindedian or Zichendian, and would attend the court celebration of New Year Day in Hanyuandian if they happened to be present in Chang'an on this occasion (Fig. 3). It can be imagined, by sending its missions to Tang China, the Japanese court learnt of the form, size and function of major pavilions in the Daminggong Palace and followed their example. The 7th Japanese mission headed by Awada-no Mahito, upon returning from China in 704, gave an account of the shape and size of the Hanyuandian Pavilion. As a result, the first Daigokuden Pavilion in the Palace City of Heijokyo of the earlier 8th century was built on the Ryubido Dragon-tail Platform in imitation of the Hanyuandian Pavilion. Later, the Japanese court got information of the Lindedian Pavilion from its missions to China, as well as the message of how the envoys from Bohai and other foreign countries were received and banqued in this pavilion. In the light of these accounts, it constructed the Chodojin

Palace 朝堂院 in the Palace City of Heiankyo of the late 8th century and after, with the Daigokuden Pavilion as the main building, a structure on the Dragon-tail Platform in imitation of the shape of Hanyuandian. Moreover, to the west of Chodojin, the Japanese government built another palace called Burakuyin 豊楽院, a complex with the Lindedian Pavilion as its example in function and with the Burakuden Pavilion 豊楽殿 as the main building (Fig 4).

In the 13th year of his Enryaku reign (794), the Japanese emperor Kanmu moved the capital to Heiankyo, i.e. the present-day Kyoto. Heiankyo was the Japanese capital of the Heian period (794-1192) lasting for about 400 years from the 790s to the 1190s, while Kyoto was the succeeding capital lasting down to the Edo period (1603–1867) of modern times.

It is difficult to survey and excavate the ruined city of Heiankyo as a lot of its vestiges are buried under the ground of present-day Kyoto proper. Fortunately various ancient books and architectural drawings with detailed evidence on the form and layout of Heiankyo have been left over from the

Fig. 3 Layout of Tang Chang'an City and location of the Taijigong and Daminggong Palaces

Fig. 4 Layout of Heiankyo and location of the major palaces in Heiankyo, Japan
Heian period and later Kamakura times (AD 1192—1333). So the appearance of this capital can be learnt by reconstructing its general layout and specific structures, such as palaces, pavilions and government offices.

The Palace City of Heiankyo lay in the north of the center of the capital, with its southern, main gate Suzakumon 朱雀門 as the starting point of Suzukyo Road 朱雀大路 that passed through all the city from north to south. Its main part consisted of three most important palaces. The first was the Chodoyin Palace right in the center of the Palace City. Its main pavilion Daigokuden corresponded to the Hanyoandian Pavilion of Daminggong Palace of Tang China and functioned as the place for the Japanese emperor to hold enthronement, court celebration and other grand ceremonies. The second was the Dairi Palace to the northeast of Chodoyin and was the emperor’s living area, with the Shishinden Pavilion 紫宸殿 as the hall for the emperor to handle everyday government affairs, like the Zichendian Pavilion in the Daminggong Palace of the Tang Empire. The third was the Burakuyin Palace standing to the west of Chodoyin and corresponding to the Lindedian Pavilion of Daminggong Palace (Fig. 4).

The Burakuyin Palace was completed in the 19th year of the emperor Kanmu’s Enryaku reign (800). Among its builders were workmen from Hida known as matchless skilled artisans. The ruins of the main pavilion Burakuden were fortunately revealed through excavation in 1987, which made it possible to reconstruct its architectural form. The unearthed owl-tail ridge decorations, tile-ends and other roof members, excellent in workmanship and largely with coatings of colored glaze, show the splendor of the building.

As many Japanese historical books state, with Burakuden as its main pavilion, the Burakuyin Palace was a building complex very important in function, where most of the court banquets were held during the Heian period. Every year, in the middle or last ten-day period of the 11th month, there was the grand ceremony “Toyonoakari 豊明会” to celebrate a bumper harvest and for the emperor to examine new grain. It was followed by the “Aouma 白馬” on the 7th day of the first moon for examining horses of fine breed, the “Toka 踏歌” of the 16th day, first moon, i.e. song and dance perfor-
and more (Fig. 5). The Bohai mission to Japan included the ambassador, vice-ambassador and assistant, clerks, interpreters, and even artisans, servants and seamen, usually numbering 105 persons in total. Of them the mission members attending the banquet in Burakuyin reached 20, really a considerable number. From this it can be inferred that in the 7th Japanese mission to Tang China, apart from Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Awada-no Mahito, those banqueted by Empress Wu Zetian must have include: Ambassador Sakaaiibe-no Oita, Vice-ambassador Kose-no Oji, Senior Assistant Kamo-no Kibimaro, Junior Assistant Kamimori-no Akaru, Senior Clerk Nijigi-oribe-no Michimaro, Junior Clerks Shirai-no Amaro and Yamanoue-no Okura, Senior Interpreters Tarumi-no Hirohito and Iki-no Komaro, and even Doji, the monk studying in China at that time, and other retinues such as Mino-no Okamaro. The other Japanese missions to China were granted feasts in the Lindedian or Zichendian Pavilion of the Daminggong Palace, and there must also have been roughly such a large attendance.

To sum up the above-stated, the Lindedian Pavilion of China and the Burakuyin Palace of Japan were identical with each other in function as either of them was the greatest building for the ruler of the country to grant magnificent banquets to his officials as well as to foreign envoys. The Lindedian Pavilion was built in the middle 660s, whereas the Burakuyin Palace in the early 9th century, so it can be ascertained that the latter was set up in imitation of the former.

In the 710s—780s, the Japanese capital was Heijokyo of Nara (Fig. 6), and this period of time is called Nara period (710—784). According to results of archaeological excavation and records in historical books, during the early Nara period, the Daigokuden Pavilion and Chodoyin Palace of Heijokyo sat right in the center of the Palace City, just opposite to the Suzakumon, the main, southern gate of the Palace City. They were the so-called first Daigokuden and Chodoyin, while the emperor’s living palace Daiji was located to the east of Daigokuden (Fig. 7, left). From the mid Nara period, however, the former two complexes were moved to the plot south of Dairi in the eastern flank and called second Daigokuden and Chodoyin. The site of the first Daigokuden was transformed into the new complex called Saigu Palace (West Palace), which was mainly for festival-celebrating ceremonies and banquets. These include the Toyonoakari ceremony held in the middle and last ten-day period of the 11th moon for the emperor to examine new grain (Fig. 7, right). It indicates that the Burakuyin Palace in the Palace City of Heiankyo of the early 9th century was constructed, on the one hand, by following the example of the function of the Lindedian Pavilion in
the Daominggong Palace, Tang dynasty. On the other hand, it was built under the influence of the Saigu Palace existing in the Palace City of Heijokyo of the middle and late Nara period in the 8th century. But the Saigu Palace must also have set up in imitation of the Lindedian Pavilion.

Although the transformation and addition of palaces in Heijokyo of the middle 8th century were necessary, they greatly disturbed the general layout of the Palace City and even the whole capital. This is first shown in the location of the second Daigokuden Pavilion and Chodoyin Palace, both main complexes in the Palace City. Although constituting the political nucleus of the court, they stood not in the center of the Palace City but in the eastern flank. Moreover, the Saigu Palace (West Palace) mainly for banqueting, although sitting to the west of Dairi, second Daigokuden and Chodoyin as reflected in its name, actually was located right in the center of the whole Palace City. In addition, Suzakunomon, the main southern gate of the Palace City, was blocked, which made Suzaku Road, the central axis of the whole city of Heijokyo, lost its starting point, and the southeastern side gate Mizumon 千生门 of the Palace City, instead, became the most important palace city entrance leading right to the second Daigokuden and Chodoyin (Fig. 7, right). In the 13th year of the Enryaku reign (794), the emperor Kanmu made Heiankyo the capital. According to the design and plan worked out around the capital moving, a modification was made to the above-described disturbed layout of Heijokyo and its Palace City. As a result, this great city and its palace complexes became the most perfect capital and palace city in ancient Japan.

References Cited


Note: The original paper was published in Kaogu 2001. 2: 71—85, along with nine figures, and authored by Wang Zhongshu 王仲殊. The English version is abridged in Chinese by the author himself and translated by Mo Runxian 莫润先.