

Heian Jingu and the Revitalization of Kyoto

Heian Jingu Shrine is a symbol of the revitalization of Kyoto following the decline of the city after the capital was transferred to Tokyo after 1868. The shrine's construction was one of several large-scale projects aimed at stimulating economic growth and celebrating the city's legacy as an ancient capital.

Kyoto was founded as Heiankyo in 794, when the capital was transferred from Nara. It remained the seat of the emperor for more than a thousand years until the Meiji era (1868–1912), when Tokyo became the new capital. It was at that time that the old imperial capital was officially renamed Kyoto.

The transition from the Edo period (1603–1867) to the Meiji era (1868–1912) was accompanied by social and political upheaval. This, and the moving of the imperial court to Tokyo, significantly weakened the economy of Kyoto.

In the 1870s, the government provided financial support to promote new industry and encourage revitalization. One of the key projects was the construction of a canal between Lake Biwa in nearby Shiga Prefecture, and Kyoto. The creation of the canal in 1890 provided electric power generation and enabled the transportation of goods by water. New industries developed in Kyoto and hydroelectric plants opened that later provided the power for the city's trams and for factories.

The city held expositions and fairs to showcase Kyoto's developing industries. The biggest of these, the Fourth National Industrial Exhibition, was held in 1895. Businesses showcased new technologies, and the city installed a tramline to transport visitors between the event venue and Kyoto Station. Heian Jingu and two of its four gardens opened near the exhibition site in the same year.

Heian Jingu is a lasting symbol of Kyoto's revitalization and a celebration of the city's legacy as a thousand-year capital.