Brief Chronology

694 Founding of the Fujiwara Capital
708 Decision to move the capital again is made
710 Founding of the Heijō (Nara) Capital
714 Kōfukuji is founded
716 Gangōji (Hōkōji) is moved to Heijō
717 Daianji (Daikandaiji) is moved to Heijō
718 Yakushiji is moved to Heijō
741 Shōmu orders the establishment of a national system of monasteries and nunneries
743 Shōmu vows to make a giant gilt-bronze statue of the Cosmic Buddha
747 Casting of the Great Buddha is begun
752 Dedication of the Great Buddha
768 Establishment of Kasuga Shrine
784 Heijō is abandoned; Nagaoka Capital is founded
794 Heian (Kyoto) is founded

Yakushiji
First established at the Fujiwara Capital in 680 by Emperor Tenmu on the occasion of the illness of his consort, Unonosarara, who later took the throne as Empress Jitō. Moved to Heijō in 718.

Important extant eighth century works of art include:

Three-storied Pagoda
Main Image, a bronze triad of the Healing Buddha, ca. 725

Kōfukuji
Tutelary temple of the Fujiwara clan, founded in 714. One of the most influential monastic centers in Japan throughout the temple's history. Original location of the statues of Bonten and Taishaku ten in the collection of the Asian Art Museum.

Important extant eighth century works include:
Statues of the Ten Great Disciples of the Buddha
Statues of the Eight Classes of Divine Protectors of the Buddhist Faith

**Tōdaiji**

Temple established by the sovereign, Emperor Shōmu, and his consort, Empress Kōmyō as the central institution of a countrywide system of monasteries and nunneries. Site of the official Buddhist sculpture workshop and a scriptorium. Home to the Great Buddha, the largest Buddhist image in Japan, cast between 747 and 752. The statue and the hall that house it have burned twice in the temple’s history.

Important extant eighth century works include:

- Great Buddha (only part of the pedestal and lower torso date from the original casting)
- Statues of the Four Divine Kings housed in the Ordination Hall
- Painting of Śakyamuni Preaching on Vulture Peak, originally from the Sangatsudō and now in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

**Tōshōdaiji**

Temple established by Jianzhen (J: Ganjin; 668-763), a Chinese monk versed in Buddhist precepts who was invited to Japan by Emperor Shōmu to strengthen the Japanese Buddhist community. Completed by his disciples after his death. Site of an important sculpture workshop in the late eight century.

Important extant eighth century works include:

- Main Image Hall
- Statues of the Cosmic Buddha, the Healing Buddha, and Thousand-armed Kannon in the Main Image Hall
- Portrait of Jianzhen
- Statue of the Healing Buddha carved from a single sold block of wood

**Kasuga Shrine** (Kasuga Taisha)

Tutelary shrine of the Fujiwara clan and protective shrine of the Heijō Capital. Established at the foot of Mt. Mikasa at the eastern edge of the Heijō capital in 768. The present shrine structures are of later date, however, they reflect shrine architectural styles of the early Heian period. Closely affiliated with Kofukuji.

**Major Patrons**

Fujiwara no Fuhito (659-720), patriarch of the clan and father of Kōmyō.
Shōmu (701-756; r. 724-749), 45th emperor of Japan.
Kōmyō (701-760), consort of Shōmu, member of Fujiwara clan.
Kōken (718-770; r. 749-758 and 764-770), daughter of Shōmu and Kōmyō,
46th monarch.

Sculpture Techniques
Bronze (lost-wax)
Clay
Hollow dry-lacquer
Wood

Suggested Reading