

It happened recently that I attended an enlightenment sermon at the Urin'in,¹ where I witnessed an encounter between three people of extraordinary and disturbing antiquity—two graybeards and a crone, who had, it seemed, sat down in the same place by chance. How strange that such a trio should have come together! As I stared, they laughed and exchanged glances.

"For years now, I have been wanting to meet someone from the old days with whom to discuss what has been going on in the world, and especially to talk about the fortunes of our present Novice Excellency,"² one of the old men said. "This happy meeting reconciles me to the thought of dying. A person feels stuffed when he can't get things off his chest. No wonder the man of old dug a hole and talked into it when he had a piece of news to pass along."³ It's delightful to see you. Tell me, what is your age?

"I don't know," said the other, "but I am the Ōnumaro who acted as page to the late Chancellor, Lord Tadahira, when he was a Chamberlain Lesser Captain."⁴ You are the famous Ōyake no Yotsugi who served

¹ See Appendix A for identification of persons and places. Enlightenment sermons (*bōdaikō*), delivered by a Buddhist preacher who used the *Lotus Sutra* as a text, were designed to assure rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land. The ones at the Urin'in took place annually in the Fifth Month. Hosaka 1974, 2.18.

² *Tadama no nyūdō denka*. Fujiwara Michinaga, probably so called to distinguish him from his father, Kaneie. Novice (*nyūdō*) was a courtesy title for an official of Third or higher rank who had taken the tonsure; Excellency (*denka*), a term of respect applied to Princes and Regents. For general information concerning Court ranks and titles, see McCullough and McCullough 1980, Appendix A.

³ Possibly an allusion to Ovid's story of the barber who discovered King Midas's jackass ears when the monarch's turban was removed: "Saw, dared not tell, and wanted to, and could not/ keep matters to himself . . . and so he dug a hole/ deep in the ground, and went and whispered in it/ what kind of ears King Midas had." Translation from Ovid 1955, p. 265. *Saigyak yusa*, a Buddhist-oriented Korean history of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, contains an adaptation of the anecdote, which may have entered a Buddhist text and travelled via Central Asia and China to Korea, and ultimately to Japan. Ōkagami, p. 437, s.n. 4; Hosaka 1974, 2.20-21.

⁴ Conjectured to have been around 895—i.e., 130 years before 1025, the Ōkagami narrative present. If Shigeaki was 180 (*sai*) in 1025, as the author indicates

the Empress Mother in that reign, aren't you? You must be much older than I am. You were a man of twenty-five or twenty-six when I was only a boy."

"Yes, yes," Yotsugi agreed. "That's right. What is your name?"

"Lord Tadahira asked about my surname when I went through the capping ceremony⁵ at his mansion. I answered, 'Natsuyama,' and he named me Shigeki on the spot."

It was an astonishing dialogue. All the intelligent members of the congregation were watching from their seats or edging closer. A man of about thirty made his way to a nearby spot—an attendant from a noble household, by the look of him. "Really, now, you old people are saying some interesting things, but who is going to believe you?" he asked.

The two men looked at one another, laughing scornfully.

"You say you don't remember how old you are," said the attendant, fixing his eyes on the one who called himself Shigeki. "I wonder if this old gentleman might know?"

"Of course," said Yotsugi. "I turned 190 this year,⁶ which makes Shigeki 180; it's just that he is too modest to say so. I was born on the Fifteenth of the First Month in the year of Emperor Seiwa's abdication [876], so I have seen the reigns of thirteen sovereigns. That's not a bad age, is it? People may not think I am telling the truth, but I had a father who served a young university student, and it was a case of 'humble but near the capital.' He learned to read and write, and he recorded my birthdate on a set of swaddling clothes, which has survived to this day. It was the *hinoe saru* year."⁷ He made it all sound perfectly natural.

below, he was far too old to act as a page in 895. The vulgate texts give his age as 140. Hosaka 1974, 2.21.

⁵ *Genpuku*, a ritual in which a boy formally became an adult. The central act was the ceremonious placing of a man's cap on his head. McCullough and McCullough 1980, s.n. 13.

⁶ In 1025, a man born in 876 would have been 150 (*sai*), the age attributed to Yotsugi in the vulgate texts. For discussion of this and other inconsistencies concerning the old men's ages, see *Okagami*, p. 438, s.n. 6; and Hosaka 1974, 2.33. As Hosaka points out, the author seems to have been interested not in stressing the specific ages of his raconteurs but in presenting them as old enough to give firsthand accounts of the events described.

⁷ Presumably a proverb to the effect that even humble folk pick up city ways and city accomplishments—in this case, literacy—when exposed to life in the capital.

⁸ Like others of the ten stems and twelve branches, *hinoe* and *saru* occur in combination at sixty-year intervals; 876 was in fact a *hinoe saru* year. For information about the sexagenary cycle, see Webb and Ryan 1963, pp. 23-25.

The attendant turned to the other old man.

"I should still like to ask your age," he said. "Do you know your birth year? If so, we can easily calculate it."

"I was not reared by my own parents," Shigeki said. "Somebody else took care of me until I was twelve or thirteen. My foster father never mentioned my exact age. He just said, 'I didn't have a family, but once I happened to take along ten strings of my own money when my master sent me to market. I met a woman carrying a pretty baby, and she said to me, 'I'm looking for someone to take this child. He is my tenth. His father was forty when he was born, and furthermore he even arrived in the Fifth Month.' I want to get rid of him." I traded my coins for him and took him home. When I asked about the family's name, the mother said it was Natsuyama.' I entered Lord Tadahira's service when I was thirteen."

"Well, well, I can't tell you how glad I am to meet you," said Yotsugi. "A buddha must have answered my prayers. Nowadays we are always hearing about sermons in some place or other, but I usually don't bother to go. It's a good thing I decided to attend this one. Is the lady someone you married in the old days?"

"No," Shigeki answered. "My first wife died young; I married this one afterwards. How about you?"

"My first wife and I are still living together. She got ready to come with me today, but she suffers from malaria, and it turned out to be one of her bad days, so she had to give it up." They seemed to be weeping, but their eyes were dry.¹⁰

Time passed while we waited for the preacher. We were all feeling bored when old Yotsugi spoke up again. "Well, since there's nothing else to do, what do you say? Shall I give you a story about the old days to let these people know what things were like?"

"By all means! That would be splendid," said Shigeki. "Do talk to us. I'll speak up once in a while if I have anything to add."

It looked as though they were eager to talk, and I for one longed to hear them. Many others in the crowd were probably determined to catch every word too, but I was struck most of all by the attitude of the attendant, who seemed bent on taking part in the conversation.

"The world is a fascinating place," said Yotsugi. "Yet it is only the old who have learned to understand it a little. In ancient times, wise sovereigns sought out the oldest men and women in the country, asked

⁹ It was believed that a child born when his father was forty would grow up to be a parricide, and that one born in the Fifth Month would harm his parents.

¹⁰ It is not uncommon for old people to lose the ability to shed tears.

them how various kinds of laws had worked in the past, and governed accordingly. The aged deserve your respect; don't look down on them, young people!" I watched in amusement as he gave a complacent cackle and hid his face behind his fan, which was made of yellow paper with nine black persimmon-wood ribs.

"I have only one thing of importance on my mind," he went on, "and that is to describe Lord Michinaga's unprecedented successes to all of you here, clergy and laity of both sexes. It is a complicated subject, so I shall have to discuss a fair number of Emperors, Empresses, ministers of state, and senior nobles first. Then when I reach Michinaga himself, the most fortunate of all, you will understand just how everything came about. They tell us that the Buddha began by expounding other sutras when he wanted to explain the *Lotus*, which is why his sermons are called the teachings of the five periods.¹¹ That is how it is with me, too; I need to 'expound other sutras' in order to describe Michinaga's successes."

In spite of this rather theatrical and pretentious prelude, I wondered whether he would have anything worthwhile to say, but he continued in a most impressive vein.

"I suppose you youngsters nowadays think every Regent, minister of state, and senior noble in history has been very much like Michinaga. That is far from true. Of course, they have all been descendants of the same ancestor and members of the same family,¹² but the family has

¹¹ In the *Lotus Sutra*, Śākyamuni explains that buddhahood is the only goal of Buddhism, and that his earlier preaching of other goals has been designed to encourage the weak and prepare them for the truth. The basic point is illustrated with a wealth of parables, and merit is repeatedly promised to all who revere and propagate the sutra. See Hurvitz 1976, pp. x-xv, for a convenient summary of the contents of this famous and immensely influential scripture, which was devoutly worshipped by Michinaga and his family. According to Tendai doctrine, the Buddha's fifty-year teaching career was divided into five periods: (1) three seven-day periods, immediately following his enlightenment, during which he preached the contents of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*; (2) twelve years of preaching Hinayāna scriptures in the Deer Park; (3) eight years of preaching a combination of Mahāyāna and Hinayāna doctrines (the *vajrapāya* period); (4) twenty-two years of preaching the *prajñā* (wisdom) sutras; (5) eight years of preaching the *Lotus* and, in a day and a night, the *Nirvāṇa Sutra*. Soothill and Hodous 1937, p. 119b.

¹² Members of other families actually received 42 of the 105 ministerial appointments made between 645 and 1025. From 899 on, however, the only non-Fujiwara ministers were Minamoto who were closely related to the Imperial house. By about the same time, every senior noble (*kugyō*, a term used of Consultants and holders of the three highest Court ranks) was either a Fujiwara or a Minamoto.

produced many different kinds of people in the process of branching out.

"The first Japanese sovereign after the seven divine generations was Emperor Jimmu; and there have been sixty-eight Emperors from Emperor Jimmu to our present ruler. I ought to discuss each of them in turn, from Emperor Jimmu on, but that would take us far back into unfamiliar history, so I had better confine myself to the recent past.

"There was an Emperor called Montoku. From that Emperor to the present, there have been fourteen reigns. To put it in terms of years, 176 have elapsed since the accession of Emperor Montoku in the third year of Kashō [850]. Awesome as it is to speak the names of those august sovereigns . . ."

And he went on to tell the following story.

THE FIFTY-SIXTH REIGN

EMPEROR SEIWA

The next sovereign, Emperor Seiwa, was Emperor Montoku's fourth son. His mother, Grand Empress Meishi, was Chancellor Yoshifusa's daughter. The Emperor was born in the Koichijō residence of his maternal grandfather, Yoshifusa, on the Twenty-Fifth of the Third Month in the third year of Kashō [850], which is to say on the fifth day of his father's reign—a happy and auspicious season.

Emperor Seiwa was a man of splendid character and appearance. I believe he was the one who competed with Prince Koretaka for the heir appanage. He became Crown Prince very quickly—on the Twenty-Fifth of the Eleventh Month in the year of his birth—and ascended the throne at the age of nine, on the Twenty-Seventh of the Eighth Month in the second year of Ten'an [858]. He performed the capping ceremony at fifteen, on the First of the First Month in the sixth year of Jōgan [864], abdicated at the Samedono Palace after a reign of eighteen years, on the Twenty-Ninth of the Eleventh Month in the eighteenth year of Jōgan [876], and entered holy orders on the Eighth of the Fifth Month in the third year of Gangyō [879]. He is called the Mizunoo Emperor. The members of today's warrior house of Minamoto are his descendants. Need I say that they serve as guardians of the Court!

Emperor Seiwa's mother gave birth to him in her twenty-third year. She rose to the position of Empress on the Seventh of the First Month in the sixth year of Jōgan [864], and enjoyed Imperial status for forty-one years. She is called the Samedono Empress.

The Imperial Exorcist¹³ during that reign was Great Teacher Chishō.¹⁴ He returned from China in the second year of Ten'an [858].

was paying secret visits to a lady in the eastern Gojō area. He had no wish to be observed, so he could not enter through the gate, but came and went through a broken place in the earthen wall where some children had been playing. The spot was not much frequented, but his repeated use of it became known to the house's owner, who posted a night guard there. The man, when he came, was obliged to go home without having seen the lady. He composed this poem: *Hito shirenu! waga kayōji no/ sekimori wa/ yoiyoi goto ni/ uebi mo nenamu.* (Would that he might fall asleep every night—this guard at the secret place where I come and go.)" *Ise monogatari*, secs. 4-5; translation after McCullough 1968, pp. 71-72. The certain lady is said to have been Junshi's niece Kōshi, who later married the future Emperor Seiwa.

¹³ *Gojō*, a Shingon or Tendai monk who guarded the Imperial person by reciting prayers at night in the Seiryōden.

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THE FIFTY-FIFTH REIGN

EMPEROR MONTOKU

Emperor Montoku was the first son of Emperor Ninmyō. His mother, Senior Grand Empress Junshi, was a daughter of Minister of the Left Fuyutsugi, who was posthumously granted Senior First Rank with the title of Chancellor.

Emperor Montoku was born in the Eighth Month of the fourth year of Tenchō [827]. He was bright and a good judge of character. He performed the capping ceremony on the Twenty-Sixth of the Second Month in the ninth year of Jōwa [842], and became heir apparent on the Fourth of the Eighth Month in the same year, when he was sixteen.¹⁵ He ascended the throne on the Twenty-First of the Third Month in the third year of Kashō [850], when he was twenty-four, and reigned for eight years.

The Emperor's mother gave birth to him in her nineteenth year. She attained Imperial rank at the age of forty-two, in the Fourth Month of the third year of Kashō [850]; rose to the status of Empress in the first year of Sakō [854]; received the sacramental waters as a nun on the Twenty-Ninth of the Second Month in the third year of Jōgan [861]; and became Grand Empress on the Seventh of the First Month in the sixth year of Jōgan [864]. She is called the Gojō Empress. It was her residence about which Middle Captain Narihira composed the poem in *Tales of Ise*, "Would that he might fall asleep every night"—and also "The spring of old."¹⁶

¹⁵ Superscript figures in parentheses refer to translations in Appendix B.

¹⁶ *Tales of Ise* (*Ise monogatari*) is an anonymous tenth-century collection of anecdotes centering on poetry. "Once when the former Empress was living in eastern Gojō, a certain lady occupied the west wing of her mansion. Quite without intending it, a man fell deeply in love with the lady and began to visit her, but around the Tenth of the First Month she moved away without a word, and although he learned where she had gone, it was not a place where ordinary people could come and go. He could do no more than brood over the wretchedness of life. Poignant memories of the past drew him back to her old apartments when the plum blossoms were at their height in the next First Month. . . . He composed this poem: *Tsuki ya aramu/ haru ya mukashi no/ haru naranu/ waga mi hitotsu wa/ moto no mi ni shite.* (Is not the moon the same? The spring the spring of old? Only this body of mine is the same body. . . .) Once a man

THE FIFTY-SEVENTH REIGN

EMPEROR YŌZEI

The next ruler was Emperor Yōzei, the oldest son of Emperor Seiwa. His mother was Grand Empress Kōshi, a daughter of Provisional Middle Counselor Nagara, who was posthumously promoted to the office of Chancellor with Senior First Rank.

Emperor Yōzei was born in the Smedono Palace on the Sixteenth of the Twelfth Month in the tenth year of Jōgan [868]. He became Crown Prince during his second year, on the First of the Second Month in the eleventh year of Jōgan [869]; ascended the throne at the age of nine, on the Twenty-Ninth of the Eleventh Month in the eighteenth year of Jōgan [876]; performed the capping ceremony at the age of fifteen, on the Second of the First Month in the sixth year of Gangyō [882]; and reigned for eight years, after which he abdicated and went to live at the Nijō Palace. Since he was eighty-one when he died sixty-five years later, the supplication at the Buddhist services on his behalf said, "He was the elder brother of Sakyamuni by one year."¹⁰ That was a witty conceit, but someone was told later in a dream, "His Majesty is suffering in the next world because he was called the Buddha's senior."

Emperor Yōzei's mother was nine years older than Emperor Seiwa. She gave birth to him at the age of twenty-seven. She received the title of Empress at the age of thirty-six, in the First Month of the sixth year of Gangyō [882], and rose to the rank of Grand Empress at the age of forty-one, on the Seventh of the First Month in the same year. It is not clear to me how she happened to marry Emperor Seiwa, because she was the girl whom the Ariwara Middle Captain carried off and hid while she was still living a sheltered life at home. Her older brothers, Minister of State Mototsune and Major Counselor Kunitsune, who must have been very young at the time, went to fetch her back, and Narihira composed the poem, "... my beloved spouse is hidden here, and so am I."¹¹ (Much later the Middle Captain recalled those

¹⁰ Sakyamuni is said to have died at the age of eighty.

¹¹ "Musabino wa/ kyō wa na yaki so/ wakakusa no/ tsuna mo komoteri/ ware mo komoteri. (Do not set fire today to Musashi Plain, for my beloved spouse is hidden here, and so am I.)" The poem is actually an anonymous composition, attributed in *Ise monogatari* to a girl, abducted by her lover, who addresses their pursuers as the latter prepare to smoke them out. As Hosaka 1974 suggests, 169, the author, who undoubtedly knew better, has probably made Narihira the author in order to link episode and poem in the reader's mind with an *Ise* story about Narihira's abduction of Kōshi (sec. 6). *Ise monogatari*, sec. 12; *Kokinshū* 17, with Kasugano for Musashino. Translation after McCullough 1968, p. 78.

events in his poem, "What happened long ago in the age of the gods.")¹²

Under the circumstances, it would seem that Kōshi probably did not become an Imperial consort in the manner usual for carefully reared young girls. I suppose the Emperor must have met her when she visited the Smedono Empress, from whom she was inseparable.

It is presumptuous for a nobody like me to talk about such things, but they are all matters of common knowledge. Is there anybody nowadays who hasn't read the *Collection of Early and Modern Times*¹³ and *Tales of Ise*?

People say the Middle Captain's poem, "Someone not unseen, nor yet quite seen,"¹⁴ was also written during his affair with that lady. When we think of the poems he bequeathed to posterity, we can't help regarding him as an amazing gallant. Of course, the old times were more elegant and interesting than ours. (*This was said with a smile. He grew more and more impressive; I felt quite put to shame.*) She was the lady known as the Nijō Empress.

THE FIFTY-EIGHTH REIGN

EMPEROR KŌKŌ

The next ruler was Emperor Kōkō, Emperor Ninmyō's third son. His mother, Posthumous Grand Empress Takushi, was a daughter of Posthumous Chancellor Fusatsugu.

¹² "In the days when the Empress from the Second Ward [Kōshi] was still known as the Mother of the Crown Prince, she made a pilgrimage to the shrine of her ancestral deity. When presents were distributed to the people in her party, a certain elderly Bodyguards officer [Narihira] received his gift directly from her carriage. He composed this poem: *Ōhara ya/ Osbito no yama mo/ kyō koso wa/ kamiyo no koto mo/ omoizurame.* (On this auspicious day, the divinity of Mount Ōshio at Ōhara will surely remember what happened long ago in the age of the gods.) Perhaps she felt a pang of sorrow—but that is something we have no way of knowing." *Ise monogatari*, sec. 76; translation after McCullough 1968, pp. 120-121, which see for a discussion of the poem's possible levels of meaning. The poem also appears as *Kokinshū* 871.

¹³ *Kokinshū*, the first Imperial poetic anthology, compiled ca. 905.

¹⁴ "On the day of an archery meet at the riding grounds of the Bodyguards of the Right, a certain Middle Captain glimpsed a lady's face through the silk curtains of a carriage opposite him. He sent her this poem: *Mizu mo arazu/ mi mo senu hito no/ koibiku wa/ aya naku kyō ya/ nagamekuran.* (Bewitched by someone not unseen nor yet quite seen, must I to no purpose spend this day lost in melancholy reverie?)" *Ise monogatari*, sec. 99; *Kokinshū* 476. Translation from McCullough 1968, p. 137.

Emperor Kōkō was born at the Higashigojō Mansion in the seventh year of Tenchō [830], during the reign of Emperor Junna. He was granted Fourth Princely Rank at the age of seven, on the Seventh of the First Month in the third year of Jōwa [836], during the reign of his father, the Fukakusa Emperor. He became Minister of Central Affairs at twenty-one, in the First Month of the third year of Kashō [850]; advanced to Third Rank at twenty-two, on the Twenty-First of the Eleventh Month in the first year of Ninju [851]; assumed the additional office of governor of Kōzuke Province at thirty-five, on the Sixteenth of the First Month in the sixth year of Jōgan [864]; transferred to the post of Provisional Governor-General of the Daizaifu on the Thirteenth of the First Month in the eighth year of Jōgan [866]; advanced to Second Rank at forty, on the Seventh of the Second Month in the twelfth year of Jōgan [870]; became Minister of Ceremonial at forty-six, on the Twenty-Sixth of the Second Month in the eighteenth year of Jōgan [876]; advanced to First Rank at fifty-three, on the Seventh of the First Month in the sixth year of Gangyō [882]; assumed the additional office of Governor-General of the Daizaifu in the First Month of the eighth year of Gangyō [884]; and ascended the throne on the Fourth of the Second Month in the same year, at the age of fifty-five. He reigned for four years. He is called the Komatsu Emperor. I cannot say whether it is true, but I have heard that the Black Chamber next to the Fujitsubo Imperial Apartment was built during his reign.

THE FIFTY-NINTH REIGN

EMPEROR UDA

The next sovereign, the Teiji Emperor, was Emperor Kōkō's third son. His mother, the Grand Empress, was Princess Hanshi, a daughter of Prince Nakano, the Minister of Ceremonial of Second Rank, who was posthumously granted the title of Chancellor with First Rank.

Emperor Uda was born on the Fifth of the Fifth Month in the ninth year of Jōgan [867] and took the Minamoto surname at the age of eighteen, on the Thirteenth of the Fourth Month in the eighth year of Gangyō [884].²¹ He became Crown Prince on the Twenty-Sixth of the Eighth Month in the third year of Ninna [887], succeeded promptly to the throne on the same day at the age of twenty-one, and reigned for ten years. The first Kamo Special Festival was held during his reign, on the Twenty-First of the Eleventh Month in the first year of

Kanpyō [889], with Middle Captain Tokihira as the Imperial Messenger.²²

Emperor Uda became a monk on the Fourth of the Tenth Month in the first year of Shōtai [898]. Tachibana Yoshitoshi, a Hizen Secretary who had waited on him in the Courtiers' Hall, joined him in holy orders to serve as the sole companion of his religious practices. Once when the former sovereign was stopping at a place called Hine on the way to Kumano, Yoshitoshi recited, "That my home should thus appear in a travel-sleep dream at Hine."²³ It is only natural that those pathetic lines should still draw tears from our eyes.

It is hard to say how Emperor Uda happened to become a commoner; I don't remember much about it. His mother is known as the Tōin Empress.

People used to call the future sovereign the Princely Gentleman-in-Waiting, possibly because they were unaware that he had taken the Minamoto surname. While he was a courier under Emperor Yōzei, he served as a dancer during Imperial visits to shrines.²⁴ He once passed in front of the Yōzein after his accession, and the Retired Emperor said, "Isn't the present Emperor one of my men?"²⁵ What monarch ever had a retainer like Emperor Uda!

THE SIXTIETH REIGN

EMPEROR DAIGO

The next sovereign, Emperor Daigo, was Emperor Uda's oldest son. His mother, Grand Empress Inshi, was a daughter of Palace Minister Takafuji.

Emperor Daigo was born on the Eighteenth of the First Month in the first year of Ninna [885]. He became Crown Prince at the age of nine, on the Fourteenth of the Fourth Month in the fifth year of Kan-

²¹ "Furusato no tabine no yume ni/ mietsuru uza/ urami ya suramu/ mata to tozaneba. (That my home should thus appear in a travel-sleep dream at Hine: might they be angry with me because I have never returned?)" The poem, which puns on Hine and tabine (travel-sleep), reflects a contemporary belief that people who were thinking of one would appear in one's dreams. Yoshitoshi hints that his master's incessant travels are to blame if members of his household resent his prolonged absence. For an earlier version of this well-known anecdote, see *Yamato monogatari*, sec. 2, pp. 231-232; Tabara 1969, pp. 135-136.

²² A function routinely assigned to courtiers.

²³ The vulgar text continues, "He has no business riding past my house like that." Satō 1939, p. 45. Yōzei was unbalanced.

pyō [893]; performed the capping ceremony at eleven, on the Nineteenth of the First Month in the seventh year of Kanpyō [895]; and ascended the throne at thirteen, on the Third of the Seventh Month in the ninth year of Kanpyō [897]. On that very night, he suddenly emerged from the Bedchamber with the cap on his head and issued the proclamation. Some say he dressed himself, but I have no idea whether it is true or not.²⁴ At any rate, he reigned for thirty-three years.

That's right, it was during Emperor Daigo's reign that Middle Captain Korehira recited his poem when the rice cakes were brought into the Courtiers' Hall to celebrate the fiftieth day after the birth of a new Prince—I have forgotten whether it was Murakami or Suzaku. (*After making a show of searching his memory, he began to recite.*)

Hitotose ni	We shall behold
Koyoi kazouru	The light of the moon
Ima yori wa	For a hundred years
Momotose made no	From this night on which we count
Tsukikage o min.	Each day a year. ²⁵

His Majesty was graciously pleased to reply:

Iwaitsuru	If there be miraculous powers
Kotodama naraba	In your felicitations,
Momotose no	We shall indeed behold
Nochi mo tsukisenu	The moon undimmed
Tsuki o koso mime.	Even after a hundred years.

Emperor Daigo's collected poems are remarkably elegant. Even in that respect, he was an unusual man.

²⁴ Reliable sources indicate that Emperor Daigo performed the capping ceremony on the day of his accession in 897. (Hosaka 1974, 2:103, postulates an interpolation or corruption to account for the discrepancy.) He appears to have moved into the Seiryōden immediately after the ceremony, and to have come out that night, appropriately garbed, for the accession proclamation. The author's hints at haste and irregularity seem designed to suggest that Emperor Uda had been forced off the throne by the Fujiwara, presumably because they resented his patronage of Sugawara Michizane and his other efforts to curb their power.

²⁵ Moon is a metaphor for the Prince. As the text suggests, this poem and the Emperor's reply were actually composed on the tenth day after the birth of the future Emperor Murakami in 926, rather than on the fiftieth day. They appear as nos. 1052 and 1053 in the fourteenth Imperial anthology, *Gyokuyōshū*, where Korehira's reads: *Hi o tobi ni/ koyoi zo kauru/ ima yori ya/ momotose made no/ tsukikage mo mina*.

THE SIXTY-FIRST REIGN

EMPEROR SUZAKU

The next sovereign, Emperor Daigo's eleventh son, is known as the Suzakuin Emperor. His mother, Grand Empress Onshi, was Chancelor Morotsune's fourth daughter.

His Majesty was born on the Twenty-Fourth of the Seventh Month in the first year of Enchō [923]. He became Crown Prince at the age of three, on the Twenty-First of the Tenth Month in the third year of Enchō [925]. He ascended the throne at eight, on the Twenty-Second of the Ninth Month in the eighth year of Enchō [930], performed the capping ceremony at fifteen, on the Fourth of the First Month in the seventh year of Jōhei [937], and reigned for sixteen years.²⁶

THE SIXTY-SECOND REIGN

EMPEROR MURAKAMI

The next sovereign, Emperor Murakami, was Emperor Daigo's fourteenth son. He and Emperor Suzaku had the same mother.

Emperor Murakami was born in the Keihōbō on the Second of the Sixth Month in the fourth year of Enchō [926]. He performed the capping ceremony at the age of fifteen, on the Fifteenth of the Second Month in the third year of Tennyō [940]; became Crown Prince at nineteen, on the Twenty-Second of the Fourth Month in the seventh year of Tennyō [944]; ascended the throne at twenty-one, on the Thirteenth of the Fourth Month in the ninth year of Tennyō [946]; and reigned for twenty-one years.

Emperor Murakami's mother gave birth to Prince Yasuakira, the former Crown Prince, at the age of nineteen in the third year of Engi [903]. She was designated a Junior Consort by Imperial decree at the age of thirty-six, in the twentieth year of Engi [920]; gave birth to Emperor Suzaku in the twenty-third year of Engi [923]; and received Imperial status on the Twenty-Fifth of the intercalary Fourth Month in the same year, at the age of thirty-nine. (I wonder if the promotion

²⁶ In the *kohon* texts, the author devotes less space to Suzaku than to any other Emperor, probably because the two significant events of his reign, the revolts of Masakado and Sumitomo, were not directly connected with the story of the Fujiwara rise. Suzaku was a sickly man who failed to sire a son. For the well-known passage inserted at the end of this section in the vulgate texts, see Chapter 6, n. 8.

might have come during the month of the future Emperor's birth.) Emperor Murakami was born when she was forty-one.

On the day of the lady's elevation to the rank of Empress, everyone at her residence avoided mention of the former Crown Prince²⁷—all except a lady-in-waiting named Tayū no kimi, the daughter of the Prince's nurse.²⁸ Tayū composed a poem.

Wabinureba
Ima wa to mono o
Omoedomo
Kokoro ni minu wa
Namida narikeri.

Bowed down by grief,
I had resolved
To be moved no more—
But tears, it seems,
Are not like minds.

Again, on the day when people were leaving after the final Buddhist services, Tayū wrote:

Ima wa tote
Miyama o izuru
Hototogisu
Izure no sato ni
Nakan to suran.

In what villages
Will they cry,
Those cuckoos coming forth
From the deep mountains,
"Now that it is time"?

The month happened to be the Fifth.²⁹ It takes true elegance to compose poems so appropriate and moving that others will hand them on for generations.

The former Crown Prince's mother was inconsolable after his death, but she gave birth to Emperor Suzaku before the year was out, and she also acquired the title of Empress, so her lot seems to have been one of mingled sorrows and joys. She is the lady people mean when they speak of the Senior Empress.³⁰

²⁷ The Prince had died a month earlier. Mention of him would have been inauspicious.

²⁸ Tayū was actually the Prince's nurse. Hosaka 1974, 2.114.

²⁹ The Fifth Month was the one in which cuckoos traditionally emerged from the mountains to sing near human habitations. The cuckoos in the poem represent the mourners, who leave the mountain temple where they have remained during the forty-nine-day mourning period. Since the Prince had died on the Twenty-First of the Third Month, the forty-ninth day would ordinarily have fallen in the Fifth Month, as the author assumes was the case. In 923, however, the calendar included an intercalary Fourth Month.

³⁰ *Ōkiki*, an unofficial title.

THE SIXTY-THIRD REIGN

EMPEROR REIZEI

The next sovereign, Emperor Reizei, was Emperor Murakami's second son. His mother, Empress Anshi, was the oldest daughter of Lord Morosuke, the Minister of the Right.

Emperor Reizei was born on the Twenty-Fourth of the Fifth Month in the fourth year of Tenryaku [950], in the Gojō residence of Lord Arihira, who was then still vice-governor of Bizen with Junior Fifth Lower Rank. He became Crown Prince on the Twenty-Third of the Seventh Month in the same year, performed the capping ceremony at the age of fourteen, on the Twenty-Eighth of the Second Month in the third year of Ōwa [963]; and ascended the throne at eighteen, on the Twenty-Fifth of the Fifth Month in the fourth year of Kōhō [967]. He reigned for two years and died at the age of sixty-two, on the Twenty-Fourth of the Tenth Month in the eighth year of Kankō [1011]. Everyone said his death occurred at an awkward time, because it required the postponement of the Great Thanksgiving Services, which were supposed to take place after Emperor Sanjō's accession that year.

THE SIXTY-FOURTH REIGN

EMPEROR EN'YŪ

The next sovereign, Emperor En'yū, was Emperor Murakami's fifth son. He and Emperor Reizei had the same mother.

Emperor En'yū was born on the Second of the Third Month in the third year of Tentoku [959]. There were some unpleasant and scandalous happenings around the time when he became Crown Prince, but the story is so well known that I shall say no more.³¹ He ascended the throne at the age of eleven, on the Thirteenth of the Eighth Month in the second year of Anna [969]; performed the capping ceremony at fourteen, on the Third of the First Month in the third year of Tenroku [972]; and reigned for fifteen years.

Empress Anshi gave birth to Emperor Reizei and this Emperor in two successive years, when she was twenty-three and twenty-four.³²

³¹ A reference to the Anna incident of 969. See Appendix D.

³² Reizei was born in 950, when his mother was twenty-three; En'yū, nine years later.

What an incomparable karma! I have heard that her maternal grandfather, Fujiwara Tsunekuni, who had served as governor of Izumo with Junior Fifth Lower Rank, was posthumously elevated to the Third Rank through her intercession. Even though Tsunekuni was already dead, it was a great honor for him. She was the lady called the Middle Empress. His Majesty's grief is said to have been most affecting when she died after the birth of the Tenth Princess. Some of you have probably read the *Diary of Emperor Murakami*. It seems a pitiful and moving case, even to a humble fellow like me who has only heard vague rumors about his feelings. The Princess she left behind was none other than the Great Kamo Virgin.

THE SIXTY-FIFTH REIGN

EMPEROR KAZAN

The next sovereign, Emperor Kazan, was Emperor Reizei's oldest son. His mother, who is known as Posthumous Empress Kaishi, was Chancellor Koremasa's oldest daughter.

Emperor Kazan was born on the Twenty-Sixth of the Tenth Month in the first year of Anna [968], at his maternal grandfather's Ichijō residence, which I believe may have been what is now the Sesonji. (It was the date of Emperor Reizei's Thanksgiving Purification.)³⁵ He became Crown Prince at the age of two, on the Thirtieth of the Eighth Month in the second year of Anna [969]; performed the capping ceremony at fifteen, on the Nineteenth of the Second Month in the fifth year of Tengen [982]; and ascended the throne at seventeen, on the Twenty-Eighth of the Eighth Month in the second year of Eikan [984]. And to be sure, it was when he was nineteen, on the night of the Twenty-Second of the Sixth Month in the second year of Kanna [986], that he stole away without a word to become a monk at Hanayamadera—a shocking affair. He reigned for two years and lived twenty-two years longer.

A pathetic thing happened on the night of his abdication. As he was about to leave through the Fujitsubo Apartment's side door, he noticed the late moon flooding the surroundings with light.

³⁵ The Thanksgiving (*daijōsai*) was a harvest ritual performed by a new Emperor, ordinarily in the first or second Eleventh Month of his reign. The most important of its many preliminary events was the Imperial Purification (*gōkei*), which took place beside the Kamo River late in the Tenth Month. McCullough and McCullough 1980, s.n. 18.

"It looks so bright," he said. "What shall I do?"

Michikane urged him forward. "There is no reason why you should stop now. The Necklace and Sword have already been transferred," he said. He had personally delivered the Imperial Regalia to the Crown Prince while the Emperor was still in the Palace, so he knew it would never do for His Majesty to go back.

While the Emperor hesitated, not wanting to venture into the light, some drifting clouds dimmed the moon's radiance. "I shall be able to take the vows after all," he thought. But as he stepped forward he remembered a note from the Kokiden Consort, something he had saved and read over and over.

"Wait a minute," he said, starting back to fetch it.

"You mustn't think about things like that any more," said Michikane, pretending to weep. "Some obstacle is certain to come up if you don't take advantage of this opportunity."

Michikane got the Emperor out through Tsuchimikado Gate and took him toward the east. As they were passing Seimei's house, they heard the diviner clap his hands and utter an exclamation. "The heavens foretold His Majesty's abdication, and now it seems to have happened. I shall have to report to the throne. Get my carriage ready," he said. Even though it was the Emperor's own idea to become a monk, those words must have cost him a pang.

"One of you spirits had better go on ahead to the Palace," Seimei said. And they tell me that an invisible person pushed open the door and answered, "It looks as though His Majesty has just passed the house." (He may have seen the Emperor's retreating figure. Seimei's residence was at the intersection of Tsuchimikado and Machiguchi, so it was on the way.)

After the Emperor reached Hanayamadera and cut off his hair, Michikane spoke up. "I must leave you now. I want to let my father see me as my old self one last time, and I also have to tell him about my decision to become a monk. But I'll come back."

Tears filled the Emperor's eyes. "You have deceived me, haven't you?" he said. It was a pitiful scene. As far as I can make out, Michikane had been encouraging him for a long time by swearing to serve as his faithful disciple. What a terrible way to act!

To guard against the possibility that Michikane might actually take the tonsure, Kaneie had arranged for prominent Genji warriors to go with him—sensible men well along in years. They seem to have kept out of sight while the Emperor and Michikane were still in the city, and then to have come out into the open and joined them somewhere

near the Kamo River. They guarded Michikane at the temple with their hands on twelve-inch daggers, just to make sure that nobody would force him to cut off his hair.

THE SIXTY-SIXTH REIGN

EMPEROR ICHIJŌ

The next sovereign, Emperor Ichijō, was the first son of Emperor En'yū. His mother, Empress Senshi, was Chancellor Kancie's second daughter.

Emperor Ichijō was born in Kancie's Higashisanjō residence on the First of the Sixth Month in the third year of Tengen [980]. He became Crown Prince at the age of five, on the Twenty-Eighth of the Eighth Month in the second year of Eikan [984]; ascended the throne at seven, on the Twenty-Third of the Sixth Month in the second year of Kanna [986]; and performed the capping ceremony at eleven, on the Fifth of the First Month in the second year of Eiso [990]. He reigned for twenty-five years.

His mother, who gave birth to him in her nineteenth year, is known as the Higashisanjō Imperial Lady. Her mother was a daughter of Fujiwara Nakamasa, the governor of Settsu.

THE SIXTY-SEVENTH REIGN

EMPEROR SANJŌ

The next sovereign, Emperor Sanjō, was the second son of Retired Emperor Reizei. His mother, Chancellor Kancie's oldest daughter, is known as Posthumous Empress Chōshi.

Emperor Sanjō was born on the Third of the First Month in the first year of Jōgen [976]. He became Crown Prince on the Sixteenth of the Seventh Month in the second year of Kanna [986]; performed the capping ceremony at the age of eleven on the same day; and ascended the throne at thirty-six, on the Thirteenth of the Sixth Month in the eighth year of Kankō [1011]. He reigned for five years.

It was a great tragedy that this Emperor was troubled by failing vision after his abdication. His eyes looked normal, and so it was hard to believe that he was blind. His eyeballs were as clear as anybody's. Furthermore, there were times when he saw quite well. For instance, he once said, "I can see the cords on the bamboo blinds." On another occasion, Princess Teishi came to the palace with a nurse called Ben.

The nurse was wearing a comb on the left side of her head, and His Majesty said to her, "Why are you wearing your comb in that odd way?"

The Emperor was devoted to Princess Teishi. It was pitiful to watch him grope for her abundant hair, saying in a tremulous voice, "It hurts me so much not to be able to see those beautiful tresses."

Whenever the Princess visited him, he gave her a handsomeemento. One time she went home with the deed to the Sanjōin. "What a clever Princess!" Michinaga joked. "Most children would have thought it was an old scrap of paper and thrown it away, but you brought it home." "How he talks!" the nurses laughed.

Emperor Sanjō also gave the Princess the Reizeiin, but Michinaga returned it. "The Reizeiin has always been Imperial property," he said. "It would be improper for it to pass into private hands; let it stay where it is." So the Reizeiin, like the Suzakum, will probably be kept in the Imperial family.

His Majesty tried all kinds of ineffectual cures for his eyes. It was a sad case. In an effort to combat the nervous disorder from which he suffered so dreadfully, the doctors advised him to pour cold water over his head in midwinter.³⁴ The icy deluge made him tremble violently and change color, and I have heard that the witnesses all felt great sympathy and distress. He was also taking medicine for his ailment—a potion called the elixir of immortality. Some people said, "Anyone who drinks the elixir of immortality is bound to develop that kind of eye trouble," but as a matter of fact the blindness was caused by the spirit of a Chaplain³⁵ named Kanzan, who announced through a medium, "I sit on the former Emperor's head and cover his eyes with my wings. When I beat my wings he sees a little."

The Emperor's main reason for abdicating was that he wanted to make a pilgrimage to the Enryakuji Central Hall.³⁶ He did so, but nothing came of it in spite of his great sacrifice. What a tragedy! Even though he might not have been healed on the spot, surely there should

³⁴ "Nervous disorder" translates *kaze*, thought to have been a general term for a wide range of disorders which were predominantly ailments of the nervous system—lung, liver, and stomach trouble, paralysis, epilepsy, etc. McCullough and McCullough 1980, Chapter 1, n. 68.

³⁵ *Gubi*. Probably an abbreviation of *naigubu*, Palace Chaplain. The ten Palace Chaplains at the Heian Court performed religious functions in the Palace precincts, including night duty at the Seiryōden, played leading roles in the annual Savariprabhāsa services, and otherwise labored to protect the state.

³⁶ In order to pray for his eyes to be healed. The principal object of worship at the Central Hall was the Healing Buddha Yakushi.

have been some improvement. It was rumored that a goblin from Mount Hiei was persecuting him.

His Majesty also made a retreat to Uzumasa, where he lodged under a coffered ceiling, in quarters extending from the sacred image to the eastern eavechamber.

Emperor Sanjō was the very image of Kancie when he wore a soft hat. He was an engaging, gentle person, much loved by all. "After a sovereign has placed the comb of farewell in an Ise Virgin's hair, the two refrain from looking at one another, but for some reason Emperor Sanjō turned his head in her direction. I wondered about it," Michinaga is supposed to have said.³⁷

THE SIXTY-EIGHTH REIGN

EMPEROR GO-ICHIJŌ

Emperor Sanjō was succeeded by the present sovereign, who is Emperor Ichijō's second son. His Majesty's mother, Grand Empress Shōshi, is the oldest daughter of His Lordship the Novice. I am sure you know all about him, but I want to continue with my plan of discussing each Emperor.

Emperor Go-Ichijō was born at the Tsuchimikado Mansion on the Eleventh of the Ninth Month in the fifth year of Kankō [1008]. He became Crown Prince at the age of four, on the Thirteenth of the Sixth Month in the eighth year of Kankō [1011]; ascended the throne at nine, on the Twenty-Ninth of the First Month in the fifth year of Chōwa [1016], and performed the capping ceremony when he was eleven, on the Third of the First Month in the second year of Kannin [1018]. This is the second year of Manju [1025], so it would seem that he has been reigning for ten years.

Although His Majesty is an Emperor like any other, he enjoys unique security because of the many people who stand behind him. His grandfather is Michinaga, who looks after us all like a father, even though he has entered holy orders; his oldest uncle is Yorimichi, who rules the nation as Regent and Minister of the Left; his next uncle is Norimichi, the Palace Minister and Major Captain in the Bodyguards of the Left; and his other uncles include Yorimune, who is a Major

³⁷ The departing Virgin was Princess Tōshi, one of Emperor Sanjō's daughters. Michinaga suggests that the Emperor's unorthodox behavior was a bad omen, heralding his later misfortunes. For the Ise Virgin, see McCullough and McCullough 1980, s.n. 25.

Counselor and heads the Crown Prince's Household; Yoshinobu, the Provisional Master of the Empress's Household; and Nagaie, a Middle Counselor. In any era, even the greatest sovereign can be overthrown if enough of his subjects oppose him, and so His Majesty is fortunate indeed to enjoy the support of every influential figure in the land.

When Emperor Ichijō fell ill, he said, "I ought to make my oldest son Crown Prince, but he lacks powerful friends. What can I do? I shall have to nominate the Second Prince." (His second son was the Prince who is now Emperor.) He was quite right.

"You may wonder why I have talked about all these reigns," [Yotsugi said], "but how can I explain Michinaga's success without discussing the Emperors and Empresses who made it possible? A garden tree won't grow and bear fruit unless we feed its roots and take good care of it. That is why I thought I ought to give you a history of the throne before discussing the ministers of state."

"You mustn't apologize," Shigeki interrupted enthusiastically. "It has been splendid! Your descriptions of all those Emperors have been just like reflections in a mirror. Now that you are going to tell us about the ministers too, I feel like a man witnessing a glorious sunrise after years in the dark. My wife's mirror at home is terribly cloudy, and we never get around to polishing it, so she keeps it in her comb box, and we have learned to manage with nothing better. When I listen to you, I feel as I do when I catch a glimpse of my face in a bright, shiny mirror—it's embarrassing to see what I really look like, but the reflection is amazingly true to life. This is a wonderful experience for me! It's bound to add ten or twenty years to my life."

Shigeki's raptures struck the rest of us as rather comical, but Yotsugi's extraordinary narrative was hard to dismiss, and everyone continued to pay close attention.

"Listen to this," Shigeki said. "I've thought up a poem."

"Excellent! Let us hear it," Yotsugi said. Shigeki recited bashfully:

Akirakeki	Now that I have chanced upon
Kagami ni aeba	This clear mirror,
Suginishi mo	I can see the past,
Ima yukusue no	The present,
Koto mo miekeri.	And what is to come.

Much impressed, Yotsugi mumbled phrases under his breath and came out with a reply.

Suberagi no
Ato mo tsugitsugi
Kakure naku
Arata ni miyuru
Furukagami ka mo.

The old mirror!
Without concealment,
It reveals afresh
The deeds of sovereigns,
Each in his turn.

"Do you feel as though you were facing a stylish flower-shaped mirror in an inlaid lacquer box?" he asked. "No, such trinkets make a fine glitter, but they tarnish before you know it. I am a plain old-fashioned mirror from a bygone age, made of good white metal that stays clear without being polished." It would have been amusing to capture his complacent smile in a painting. His self-praise put one off a bit, but there was no denying the interest and novelty of his story.

"Enough of trivialities," he said. "I am going to discuss serious matters now. Pay close attention, everyone. Just as you must look on today's exposition of holy writ as an aid to enlightenment, so you should think as you listen to me, that you are hearing the *Chronicles of Japan*."³⁸

"We have heard plenty of sutra expositions and sermons, but nobody has ever told us such marvelous things," said the monks and laymen. Ancient nuns and monks touched their hands to their foreheads and sat listening with pious fervor.

"I am a remarkable old fellow. Wouldn't any honest soul feel embarrassed by comparison? I am an old man who has kept his eyes open and remembered every single thing. But of all the things I have seen and heard, Lord Michinaga's situation is what stands out. Whether we inquire about the past or look at the present, Michinaga is just like the dharna of the One Vehicle: there is 'not a second, not a third.'³⁹ His success is beyond comparison or calculation. What a magnificent career! It is no easy matter to go through life without problems, even for a Chancellor or Regent. The holy writings and sacred teachings say, 'There are many baby fish, but it is hard for them to reach maturity; there are trees called mangoes, but it is hard for them to bear ripe fruit.'⁴⁰ That is exactly how it is with this matchless lord; he is

³⁸ *Nihongi*. Another name for *Nihon shoki*, the first of the *rikkokushi* (six official Chinese-language chronicles), but here probably a general reference to all six. Hosaka 1974, 2.176.

³⁹ "One Vehicle" is a term used in the *Lotus Sutra* to identify the teachings that lead to enlightenment. "There is no other vehicle, not a second, not a third." Hurvitz 1976, p. 30.

⁴⁰ Said by *Okagami uragaki*, item 51, p. 308, to be a quotation from the *Nirena*

unique among the ministers of state and senior nobles of the nation. Who can hope to equal his good fortune in the future? It is not something that happens very often.

"Listen quietly, everyone. There is nothing I have not seen or heard. I think the things I am going to tell you will be new to many people."

All who were present paid close attention. "It is not for us to say anything at all," they agreed.

There have been ministers of state in all the reigns since the founding of our country (*Yotsugi said*). I can remember each of them—everyone who has served as Minister of the Left, Minister of the Right, Palace Minister, or Chancellor. From the founding of the state until the present, there have been thirty Ministers of the Left, fifty-seven Ministers of the Right, and twelve Palace Ministers. In the days of the early Emperors, a Chancellor was not lightly appointed; the occupants of the office were usually grandfathers or uncles of Emperors. Many grandfathers, uncles, and other male relatives looked after Emperors while serving as ministers of state or counselors, and a number of men seem to have been honored posthumously with the title of Chancellor. I believe there have been approximately seven such cases. But that office was difficult to attain, and few held it during their lifetimes.

I think it may have been during the reign of the Emperor known as Kōtoku, the thirty-seventh⁴¹ in Emperor Jinmu's line, that the Court first established the eight ministries, the civil posts, and the offices of Minister of the Left, Minister of the Right, and Palace Minister. The Minister of the Left was Abe no Kurahashimaro, and the Minister of the Right was Soga Yamada no Ishikawamaro, Empress Genmei's grandfather. I have heard that Ishikawamaro became Minister of the Right in the first year of Emperor Kōroku's reign, and that he was killed in the fifth year by the Crown Prince. That is a very old story. The Palace Minister was Nakatomi Kamako. Since there were no era names yet, I can't give you the dates. The thirty-ninth sovereign, Emperor Tenji, appointed the first Chancellor—his younger brother,⁴²

Sutra. It is not to be found in extant versions of the sutra, but does appear, in slightly different form, in *Ōjō yōshū* and other Buddhist texts. *Ōjō yōshū*, p. 45c; Hosaka 1974, 2.177.

⁴¹ Thirty-sixth, according to the modern method of calculation, which excludes Empress Jingū.

⁴² *Ōtoto no miko*, taken by Hosaka 1974, 2.185, to mean younger son. In any case, the author confuses Emperor Tenji's brother, Prince Ōama (later Emperor

Prince Ōtomo, who assumed office in a First Month and succeeded to the throne on the Twenty-Fifth of the Twelfth Month in the same year. He is known as Emperor Tenmu. He reigned for fifteen years. Another Chancellor—Prince Takechi, a son of Emperor Tenmu—was appointed by Empress Jitō, the forty-first sovereign in the line established by Emperor Jimmu. Of those two Chancellors, one soon became Emperor and the other, Prince Takechi, died in office.⁴³ For a long time after that, no further appointment was made. The *Personnel Code*⁴⁴ says, "Mediocre men are not to be appointed to the office of Chancellor. If there is no suitable candidate, the position is to remain vacant." This makes it seem that the office is no ordinary one.

During the reign of the forty-second sovereign, Emperor Monmu, an era name was selected. The year became known as the first of Taihō [701].

Late in the reign of Emperor Montoku, on the Nineteenth of the Second Month in the fourth year of Saikō [857], the title of Chancellor was conferred on the Emperor's uncle, Minister of the Left Fujiwara Yoshifusa of Junior First Rank. He was fifty-four. Yoshifusa was also the first subject to serve as Regent. From his day to that of the present Kanin Minister of State, there have been eleven successive Chancellors. If we add the earlier cases of Prince Ōtomo and Prince Takechi, we see that a total of thirteen persons have held the office. Men who have become Chancellors are always given posthumous names. However, Prince Ōtomo became an Emperor very soon, so he lacks one, and I am not sure about Prince Takechi. Also, a Chancellor does not receive a posthumous name if he has taken religious vows, which was true of two of the eleven.⁴⁵ I intend to tell you all about those eleven Chancellors in the order of their succession.

Since they tell us to "scoop up the water and investigate the source,"⁴⁶ I ought to begin with Kamatari, but that would be going too far back. I have no wish to slight anybody, but it could be that you would not understand me. Also there would be so many things to talk about that the preacher might come, and it would be a pity to have to leave off

Tenmu), with Tenji's son, Prince Ōtomo (Emperor Kōbun). See Appendix A, Kōbun and Tenmu.

⁴³ The translation emends the text, which reads, "As regards these two Chancellors, [they] soon became Emperor[s]. Prince Takechi died while he was still Chancellor."

⁴⁴ *Shikimuryō*, a part of the Yōrō Code. See *Ryō no gige*, p. 30.

⁴⁵ Kaneie and Michinaga.

⁴⁶ Probably a popular saying: To understand everything about a river, we must not only sample the waters downstream but also trace out the source.

in the middle. So since I began my account of the sovereigns with the reign of Emperor Montoku, I shall start with that Emperor's grandfather, the one we call Fujisashi—in other words, with Minister of State Fuyutsugi, Kamatari's descendant in the sixth generation. But of all those ministers, Michinaga is the one who stands out.

chika took a group of friends out onto the river beach for a party, which he held inside a cluster of flat-topped tents, erected by his servants. While he was there, Michinaga arrived to perform his own lustration. Observing that his men were guiding the carriage close to the tents, he told them not to be rude; they must leave more space. "What's His Lordship saying?" grumbled one of his attendants, whose name was Something-or-other-maro. "That kind of talk just invites bad luck." Uttering a disgusted exclamation, he beat the ox and shifted the carriage even closer to the tents.

"The fellow gave me quite a dressing down," Michinaga said later. He was partial to the man afterward, and took a benign interest in his affairs.

Those were the kinds of things that caused bad feeling between Michinaga and Korechika.

Because Michinaga was Senshi's favorite brother, Korechika treated the Imperial Lady with distant formality. He also seized every opportunity to malign her and Michinaga to Emperor Ichijō, whom he saw at all hours because of the Emperor's great affection for Empress Teishi. Senshi naturally heard about his remarks and found them offensive. Meanwhile the Emperor was feeling grave doubts about entrusting the government to Michinaga.

Empress Teishi was concerned about her own position after Michitaka's death, which is why Michikane's appointment was delayed.¹⁸ But Senshi believed in the principle of seniority, and she also disliked Korechika. Although Emperor Ichijō was very hesitant about appointing Michinaga, she pleaded her brother's cause with tireless persistence. "Why do you feel that way?" she asked. "It was bad enough for Michinaga when Korechika became a minister of state ahead of him, but there was nothing you could do about that, because the boy's father was bent on promoting him. If you pass over Michinaga now, after having already appointed Michikane, people will spend more time criticizing you than pitying him."

The Emperor, who may have felt beleaguered, stopped visiting his mother, who then proceeded to take possession of one of the Imperial Apartments. Instead of asking him to call, she invaded the Bedchamber, armed with a new store of tearful expostulations, while Michinaga

first Day of the Snake in the Third Month—for capital dwellers, usually, as here, at the Kamo River. The individual's defilements were transferred to a doll, which was sent downstream. McCullough and McCullough 1980, Chapter 21, n. 35; Hosaka 1974, 3.298.

¹⁸ The author implies that she was trying to secure the regency for her brother, Korechika.

waited in the room she had left. After an interval long enough to excite painful misgivings, she opened the door and came out, wearing a triumphant smile on her flushed, tear-stained face. "At last! The decree has been issued!" she told him.

Even the most trivial happenings result from the karma of a previous life, so I need hardly say that such an important event did not come about through the good offices of a single individual. Yet how could Michinaga fail to feel gratitude toward Senshi! He more than repaid the favor, and it was he who carried her ashes to the burial ground after her cremation.

I was both surprised and worried when Michinaga assumed power after the successive deaths of Michitaka and Michikane. How it may have been in remote times I cannot say, but there had been nothing within my memory to compare with Michinaga's long tenure. Indeed, no recent Regent except Tadahira and Sancyōri had survived for as long as ten years. So I wondered how it would be with Michinaga—but his fortune could hardly have been more auspicious. I feel sure that his high destiny was responsible for the early deaths of his older brothers. Such prosperity can only be the result of a special karma. But I think people are inclined to believe that all the Fujiwara have been equally blessed, so I had better say a little more about some of the others.

[TALES OF THE FUJIWARA FAMILY]

Aside from the seven divine generations, our first ruler was Emperor Jinmu. And it was during the reign of the thirty-seventh sovereign, Emperor Kotoku, that ministers of state were first designated. In that reign, Nakatomi Kamako no muraji, a native of Hitachi Province, became the first Palace Minister; and in the reign of the thirty-ninth sovereign, Emperor Tenji, Kamako's surname was changed to Fujiwara. We regard him as the founder of the Fujiwara family—the ancestor of all those Emperors, Empresses, ministers of state, and senior nobles.

Kamatari enjoyed Emperor Tenji's special esteem. The Emperor gave him one of the Imperial consorts, intending that the child she was carrying should be Kamatari's if it were a boy and his own if it were a girl. "If it is a boy, he shall be your son," he promised Kamatari. "If it is a girl, she shall be mine." The baby turned out to be a boy, so they made him Kamatari's son.

Kamatari was already the father of a son and a daughter, and the

former consort later bore him two girls and two boys. One after another, the two girls became consorts of Emperor Tenmu—that is, of Emperor Tenji's son, Prince Ōrōmo, who became Chancellor and ascended the throne in the course of a single year.¹⁹ Kamatari's oldest son, Nakatomi-Ōminaro, progressed as far as the office of Consultant, and the first son by Emperor Tenji's consort became a Minister of the Right. That was Fujiwara Fuhito, who was posthumously granted the title of Chancellor. Kamatari's third and fourth sons, Umakai and Maro,²⁰ got as far as the Consultant level or thereabouts.

Kamatari died during Emperor Tenji's reign, in the year in which he received the Fujiwara surname. He had been Palace Minister for twenty-five years. Although he never became Chancellor, he was given a posthumous name, Tankaikō, in recognition of his illustrious status as founder of the house of Fujiwara.

"It is wrong to call Kamatari Tankaikō,"²¹ Shigeki interrupted. "Your eloquence is like the swift flow of the River of Heaven,"²² but an occasional mistake does creep in. Still, who else could talk so well? You remind me of the layman Vimalakīrti, who lived during the Buddha's lifetime."

"Long ago in the land of T'ang," Yotsugi replied, "a sage named Confucius said, 'A wise man is sure to make one mistake in a thousand thoughts.'²³ Everything I have been telling you comes out of my own head, and since I am well over a hundred—closer to two hundred—I think the fact that I have got this far makes me compare rather well with men of earlier times."

"Oh, of course, of course. It is all too entertaining and interesting for words," Shigeki wiped away a tear of emotion. And indeed one could not help feeling that the most extravagant praise would have been inadequate.

¹⁹ As in Chapter 1, the author confuses Emperor Tenji's son with his brother. See Chapter 1, n. 42, and Appendix A.

²⁰ Actually sons of Fuhito.

²¹ Tankaikō was Fuhito's posthumous name. The objection is followed by a sentence, omitted in the translation, which seems to be an inept interpolation: "Kamatari served as a minister of state for twenty-five years and died when he was in his fifty-sixth year."

²² The Milky Way.

²³ This saying, incorrectly attributed to Confucius by Yotsugi, appears in *Shibubhi*, biography of the Marquis of Huai yen, Watson 1961, 1.218.

Kamatari's son Fuhito, the Minister of the Right (*Yotsugi resumed*), was actually Emperor Tenji's child, but he became Kamatari's second son. There was nothing ordinary about him—not even his name, which means "unequaled." He had two sons, of whom the older, Muchimaro, rose to the office of Minister of the Left, and the second, Fusasaki, to that of Consultant. He also had two daughters: Empress Kōmyō, Emperor Shōmu's mother, and the lady who gave birth to a Princess as Emperor Shōmu's Junior Consort.²⁴ That Princess, placed on the throne by Emperor Shōmu, was called the Takano Empress. She ascended the throne twice.

Each of Fuhito's two sons and two younger brothers established a separate branch of the family. Of the branches, which are called the Four Houses, Muchimaro's is known as the Southern House, Fusasaki's as the Northern House, Umakai's as the Ceremonial House, and Maro's as the Capital House. Those are the Four Houses of the Fujiwara, from which many a sovereign, minister of state, and senior noble has come forth to flourish. Today it is Fusasaki's line that resembles a tree's spreading branches, so I shall confine my remarks to its members, passing over the lines that have ceased to prosper. (Obscure people who bear the Fujiwara surname are probably latter-day descendants of those houses.)

From Kamatari to the present Regent, there have been, I believe, thirteen generations. Please listen while I tell you about them. Some of you may think all the Fujiwara are members of a single family, which is true enough. But it is no easy matter to separate the lines.

Kamatari Palace Minister Kamatari died on the Sixteenth of the Tenth Month in the year during which he was granted the Fujiwara name. He was fifty-six, and had served as a minister of state for twenty-five years.

When a certain member of the Ki family heard that Kamatari had received the name Fujiwara, he said, "A tree [*ki*] dies when a wisteria vine [*fuji*] twines around it. This will be the end of the house of Ki." How right he was!

Kamatari fell ill once. Buddhism had not yet spread throughout the country in those ancient times, and so it must have been hard to find monks to perform healing rituals. (In spite of Shōtoku Taishi's efforts, there are still people today who fail to read the *Lotus Sutra*, which even new-born babes supposedly lisp.) But Kamatari commissioned a

²⁴ Empress Kōmyō was Shōmu's consort and the Takano Empress's mother. It was another of Fuhito's daughters, Kyūshi (d. 754), who was Shōmu's mother.

Korean nun to celebrate a *Vimalakīrti Sutra* offering, and the single service cured him. He thus became a devout believer in the sutra, which is how we happen to have the *Vimalakīrti Service*.²⁵

Fuhito Kamatari's second son, Fuhito, the Minister of the Left of Senior First Rank, was a minister of state for thirteen years and a posthumous Chancellor. He served during the reigns of Empresses Genmei and Genshō.

Fusasaki Fuhito's second son, Fusasaki, was a Consultant for twenty years. He received the posthumous title of Chancellor on the Seventh of the Eighth Month in the fourth year of Tenpyō hōji [760], during the reign of Emperor Junnin. He served Empress Genshō and Emperor Shōmu.

Matate Fusasaki's fourth son, Major Counselor Matate, died at the age of fifty-two, on the Sixteenth of the Third Month in the second year of Tenpyō jingo [766], during the reign of Empress Shōtoku. He was a posthumous Chancellor, and a senior noble for seven years.

Uchimaro Matate's second son was Uchimaro, the Minister of the Right of Junior Second Rank and Major Captain of the Left Bodyguards. He died at the age of fifty-seven. He was a senior noble for twenty years, a minister of state for seven years, and a posthumous Minister of the Left with Junior First Rank. He served during the reigns of Emperors Kanmu and Heizei.

Fuyutsugi Uchimaro's third son, Fuyutsugi, rose to the office of Minister of the Left and was a posthumous Chancellor. Since I have already told you about him and his successors, I shall not go into detail now.

After having prospered ever since Kamatari's time, the family had gradually begun to lose ground, and by Fuyutsugi's generation its members had found themselves in a shaky position. In those days, it was only the Minamoto who became ministers and senior nobles.²⁶ Then Fuyutsugi built the Nan'endō and enshrined a sixteen-foot Fūkū-kensaku Kannon in it.⁽¹⁷⁾

²⁵ *Yuinai*, an annual series of lectures delivered at the Kōfukuji, the Fujiwara family temple, from the Tenth to the Sixteenth of the Tenth Month. The topic was the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, which centers on a discussion of Mahāyāna doctrine in the form of a conversation between Vimalakīrti (J. Yuima, a rich lay disciple of the Buddha) and the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.

²⁶ While it is true that the Fujiwara were far from enjoying a monopoly on senior Court positions in the Nara and early Heian periods, *Kugyō bunin* shows not a single Minamoto minister of state or senior noble prior to Fuyutsugi's death in 826. The Minamoto surname does not antedate the reign of Emperor Saga (r. 809-823).

Nagara Fuyutsugi's oldest son, Middle Counselor Nagara, became a posthumous Chancellor.

Mototsune Nagara's third son, Mototsune, became a Chancellor.

Tadahira Mototsune's fourth son, Tadahira, became a Chancellor.

Morosuke Tadahira's second son, Morosuke, became a Minister of the Right.

Kancie Morosuke's third son, Kancie, became a Chancellor.

Michinaga Kancie's fifth son, Michinaga, became a Chancellor.

Yorimichi Michinaga's oldest son, Yorimichi, is the present Regent and Minister of the Left.

It is splendid that a son²⁷ has been born to Yorimichi, who was childless until very recently. Although I have not been telling you about mothers,²⁸ I must mention that the lady comes of excellent stock. While not himself a prominent figure, her father, Norisada, the late Commander of the Military Guards of the Left, could boast of the highest lineage. It is wonderful for Norisada to have such an important grandson, even though he has not lived to see him.

Michinaga sponsored the Seventh Night celebration.²⁹ He sent Yorimichi this poem:

Toshi o hete

Machitsuru matsu no

Wakaeda ni

Ureshiku aeru

Haru no midorigo.

Spring's green child

We have found to our delight

On the young shoot

Of the pine that has waited

Year after year.³⁰

His Lordship gave the boy the childhood name Osagimi, Leader, because he was his first grandson, except for the Emperor and the Crown Prince.

So now I have shown you which of the Four Houses' many descendants, past and present, have been the ones to survive and prosper.

In recognition of the fact that Hitachi was Kamatari's birthplace, the family enshrined its tutelary god at a place called Kashima in that

²⁷ Michifusa.

²⁸ Presumably those who, like Michifusa's, were not recognized as wives. Hosaka, 3346.

²⁹ Chapter 4, n. 27.

³⁰ Pine (*matsu*) and young shoot (*wakaeda*) are metaphors for Michinaga and Yorimichi. The last line puns on spring green (*haru no midori*) and infant born in the spring (*haru no midorigo*). The baby was born on the Tenth of the First Month in the second year of Manju (1025), i.e., in what was regarded as the first month of spring.

province; and from Kamatari's time to the present, messengers have been sent there with offerings whenever a new Emperor, Empress, or minister of state has emerged from the house of Fujiwara. After the Court settled at Nara, Kashima was thought to be too distant, so they moved the shrine to Mount Mikasa in Yamato, styling the god the Bright Divinity of Kasuga. Official envoys of both sexes are sent to that god, the present tutelary deity of the house, who is worshipped by imperial consorts, ministers of state, senior nobles, and other family members. It is a great occasion when all the messengers start out for one of the shrine's festivals, which fall on the first Day of the Monkey in the Second and Eleventh Months.

When the Court moved to the present capital, the god was again transferred to a convenient location, at a place called Oharano. Two annual festivals are held there, on the first Day of the Hare in the Second Month and the first Day of the Rat in the Eleventh. Imperial messengers attend, and all the Fujiwara nobles present offerings and Ten Racers.³¹ The god has also been installed even closer, at Yoshida. It was Middle Counselor Yamakage who enshrined the Bright Divinity of Yoshida, whose festivals take place on the last Day of the Rat in the Fourth Month and the last Day of the Monkey in the Eleventh. "If Emperors and Empresses arise from my family," he vowed, "I shall see that these become official festivals." And so it is that the festivals have been sponsored by the Court ever since Emperor Ichijō's day.³²

Kamatari's family temple is at Tōnomine in Yamato. His bones are interred in its precincts, and samādhi services are still held there.³³ Fuhito founded Yamashinadera, where prayers are recited on behalf of the family. Whenever there is an unusual or strange occurrence at Yamashina or Tōnomine, or at Kasuga, Oharano, or Yoshida, the monks or priests report it to the Court. The head of the Fujiwara house instructs diviners to determine its meaning; and, should caution be required, he sees to it that ritual seclusion tags are distributed to family members who are vulnerable that year.

The services that are held two or three times a year probably originated at Yamashinadera.³⁴ From the Eighth to the Fourteenth of the

³¹ See Chapter 4, n. 45.

³² Emperor Ichijō's grandmother, Tokihime, was Yamakage's granddaughter.

³³ The services, centering on the *Lotos Sutra*, were designed to expunge the sins of the deceased and ensure his enlightenment.

³⁴ Service translates *bōle* ([dharma] assembly), a general term for a Buddhist convocation. As the author indicates below, the reference here is to a specific group of great annual events, of which the one with the longest history was the Vimalakīrti Service at the Kōfukuji (also called Yamashinadera; see n. 25).

First Month, Nara monks conduct the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* Service at the Court of the Eight Ministries, and the Court and all the Fujiwara gentlemen make offerings.³⁵ And then there are the Yakushiji *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* Service, beginning on the Seventeenth of the Third Month and lasting for seven days,³⁶ and the Yamashinadera Vimalakīrti Service, beginning on the Tenth of the Tenth Month and also lasting for seven days. Imperial messengers are sent with gifts of bedclothes on every such occasion, and Fujiwara gentlemen of Fifth and higher rank also send presents. When Nara monks have lectured at all three of those services, they are called Past Lecturers, and they received the three highest titles in the Buddhist hierarchy,³⁷ each in his turn. You can see that Yamashinadera is an awesome and holy temple. Even the worst outrage is condoned if the temple is involved; people simply dismiss it as "Yamashina propriety." It merely goes to show what an incomparable position the house of Fujiwara enjoys.

Repetitious as it may seem, I think I probably ought to continue a while longer. Let me tell you about the men who became fathers of Empresses and grandfathers of Emperors.

~~Kamatari~~ Both of Interior Minister Kamatari's two daughters were presented as brides to Emperor Tenmu. They bore children of both sexes, but neither seems to have produced an Emperor or Crown Prince.

Fuhito One of Posthumous Chancellor Fuhito's two daughters, a Junior Consort during Emperor Monmu's reign, bore the Prince who became Emperor Shōmu. She was called Empress Kōmyō.³⁸ The other was married to her nephew, Emperor Shōmu, and gave birth to a daughter who ascended the throne—the Princess known as the Takano Empress, who was our forty-sixth sovereign. The Takano Empress abdicated, but she returned to the throne after an intervening reign to act as the forty-eighth sovereign. Her mother is called the Posthumous Empress. Thus both of Fuhito's daughters were Empresses, but the Takano Empress's mother did not receive the title until after her death.

³⁵ The *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* Service (*misite*) at Court consisted of an annual series of lectures on the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sutra* (J. *Konkomyōkyō*). Dating from the eighth century, it was held at the Daigokuden in the Imperial presence, with the aim of ensuring peaceful conditions and bountiful crops during the coming year. The honor of serving as Lecturer was reserved for monks who had previously expounded the *Vimalakīrti Sutra* at the Kōfukuji. "Nara monks" here means Kōfukuji monks.

³⁶ Seventeenth should read Seventh. The purpose of the service was to pray for peace and Imperial longevity.

³⁷ See n. 2.

³⁸ See n. 24.

Fuhito was the father of Empress Kōmyō and the Posthumous Empress, and the grandfather of Emperor Shōmu and the Takano Empress. (According to one book, the Takano Empress's mother was made an Empress before her death, and was called Empress Kōmyō; also, Emperor Shōmu's mother received the title during her lifetime rather than posthumously.)

Fuyutsugi Posthumous Chancellor Fuyutsugi was the father of Senior Grand Empress Junshi and the grandfather of Emperor Montoku.

Yoshifusa Chancellor Yoshifusa was the father of Grand Empress Meishi and the grandfather of Emperor Seiwa.

Nagara Posthumous Chancellor Nagara was the father of Grand Empress Kōshi and the grandfather of Emperor Yōzei.

Fusatsugi Posthumous Chancellor Fusatsugi was the father of Posthumous Grand Empress Takushi and the grandfather of Emperor Kokō.

Takafuji Palace Minister Takafuji was the father of Grand Empress Inshi and the grandfather of Emperor Daigo.

Mototsune Chancellor Mototsune was the father of Empress Onshi and the grandfather of Emperors Suzaku and Murakami.

Morosuke Minister of the Right Morosuke was the father of Empress Anshi and the grandfather of Emperors Reizei and En'yū.

Koremasa Chancellor Koremasa was the father of Posthumous Empress Kaishi and the grandfather of Emperor Kazan.

Kaneie Chancellor Kaneie was the father of Grand Empress Senshi and Posthumous Empress Chōshi, and the grandfather of Emperors Ichijō and Sanjō.

Michinaga Chancellor Michinaga is the father of Senior Grand Empress Shōshi, Grand Empress Kenshi, Empress Ishi, and the Crown Prince's consort Kishi, and the grandfather of the present Emperor and Crown Prince.

Of all our many Fujiwara ministers of state, only Michinaga has made three daughters Empresses at the same time. Furthermore, he is the father of a Regent Minister of the Left, a Palace Minister, two Major Counselors, and a Middle Counselor. That is the truth! Compare him with anyone! He stands alone and unrivaled in Japan.

Michinaga's Buddha Hall, the Murōgūin, is far superior to Kama-tari's Fotomine, Fuhito's Yamashinadera, Mototsune's Gokurakuji, Tadahira's Hōshōji, and Morosuke's Ryōgon'in—and even to Emperor Shōmu's Tōdaiji, in spite of the enormous size of the Tōdaiji-buddha. Of course, ordinary temples are not worth mentioning in the same breath! The Daianji is not its equal today, though it is a Japanese sov-

reign's imitation of the First Cloister of the Hsi-ming ssu in China, which is patterned after the Jetavana-vihāra in India, which in turn depicted the First Cloister of the Tusita Heaven.³⁹ Nor can any of the innumerable other temples in Nara approach it. It surpasses both Tamemitsu's Hōjūji and the Naniwa Tennōji, the latter of which was built by Shōtoku Taishi in return for divine assistance; and when one compares it to the Seven or Fifteen Great Temples of Nara, it is so much more splendid that the Pure Land seems to have manifested itself on earth.⁴⁰ Surely such a glorious hall must have been built because of a vow, just as the Jōmyōji was.

People say Michinaga conceived the plan for the Jōmyōji when he went along on the visit of thanks Kaneie made to Kohara after he became a minister of state. "What a shame that no holy bells ring in a place where so many of our ancestors' bones lie," His Lordship thought, looking about him. "I shall make it my business to erect a Samādhi Hall⁴¹ if I have a successful career."

Of numerous similar events in earlier days, probably the most notable were the ones that led to the founding of the Gokurakuji and the Hōshōji. It seems extraordinary to me that Mototsune should have made up his mind to erect a temple when he was only a child. I have not been able to find out exactly who was on the throne at the time, but I think it may have been Emperor Ninmyō. At any rate, Mototsune accompanied the sovereign as a page on an excursion to the Seri River. His Majesty played the seven-stringed koto, and, as was customary, he used special finger picks. To his great distress, he lost one of the picks in the set he had brought along. There was no way of devising a substitute, so he told young Mototsune to find it for him. (I suppose it was fated that he should have thought of asking the boy instead of one of the adults.) Mototsune turned his horse around and headed back. Where should he go? How could he possibly ferret it out? But it was out of the question to return empty-handed. He made a silent vow to build a temple where he found it. The pick came to light, and it is on that very spot that the Gokurakuji now stands! How could such an idea have entered a child's head? It must have

³⁹ The Tusita Heaven (*J. tozotuten*) is the fourth of six heavens in the realm of desire, Maitreya, the buddha of the future, dwells in its innermost precinct, the First Cloister.

⁴⁰ Seven Great Temples of Nara: Tōdaiji, Kōfukuji, Gangōji, Daianji, Yakushiji, Saidaiji, Hōryūji. Fifteen Great Temples of Nara: the preceding plus Shinyakushiji, Okisakidera, Futaiji, Hokketsuzaiji, Chōshōji, Tōshōdaiji, Sukeiji, and Gufukuji. *Ōkagami uragaki*, item 45, p. 393; *Shūkatsibō*, p. 433. Pure Land: Amitābha's paradise.

⁴¹ A mortuary chapel. See n. 33.

been predestined that the pick should get lost, and that the Emperor should command Mototsune to find it.

After Mototsune became a great man, he drove out in a carriage to lay plans for building his temple, taking little Tadahira with him. As they passed the present site of the Hōshōji, Tadahira piped up, "This looks like a good place for a temple, Papa. Build it here." Mototsune wondered what had possessed him. He got out of the carriage, looked around, and saw that it was indeed an excellent site. How could the boy's young eyes have appraised it so well except through the workings of karma? "You are right; it looks like a fine place," he said. "But you had better be the one to build here. I have a reason for going elsewhere." And that was how Tadahira happened to found the Hōshōji.

"What about Morosuke and his Imuro Hall?" said Shigeki. "I was with him when he climbed Mount Hiei to visit the Yokawa Senior Archbishop's cloister."⁴²

"I know of many such cases," Yotsugi answered, "but, after all, Michinaga's is in a class by itself. He is a man who enjoys special protection from the gods of heaven and earth. Winds may rage and rains may fall day after day, but the skies will clear and the ground will dry out two or three days before he plans anything. Some people call him a reincarnation of Shōtoku Taishi; others say he is Kōbō Daishi, reborn to make Buddhism flourish. Even to the censorious eye of old age, he seems not an ordinary mortal but an awesome manifestation of a god or buddha.

"A nation is bound to be perfectly happy with a ruler like Michinaga in the old days, cattle drivers and horse herders in the employ of noblemen and Princes were always dunning us for coins, paper, and rice, which were needed, they claimed, to pay for festivals and spirit services."⁴³ They wouldn't even let anyone cut grass in the fields and hills. But now the minor functionaries of the great no longer seize a man's belongings, and there is no more talk of local headmen and village magistrates who pester people to defray the expenses of fire festivals and so forth. "Can we ever hope to enjoy such safety and peace

⁴² It was as a result of that visit that Morosuke decided to build the Imuro Hall. Hosaka 1974, 3:85.

⁴³ Spirit services (*goryōe*) were designed to placate pestilence gods, cursing spirits of the dead, and other supernatural troublemakers.

⁴⁴ Fire festivals (*hinatsuri*) are conjectured to have been folk events held for the purpose of preventing fires. "The minor functionaries of the great" translates *jichō omonomochi*. *jichō* was a term used of low-ranking men in the service of

again? I unfasten my belt and collar in my cottage, stretch out my legs, and go off to sleep without bothering to lock up. That's how I happen to have preserved my youth and lived so long.

"Look at the beans, cowpeas, melons, and eggplants that people grow at Kitano and the Kamo river beach. There was no way of protecting them not so long ago, but the yields have been wonderful during the past few years. Of course, nobody steals the vegetables, and they aren't even eaten by cattle and horses, so people simply leave them unguarded. It's just like Maitreya's blessed era!"

"People seem to be doing a lot of complaining nowadays about Michinaga's incessant demands for laborers to work on his temple," said the other old man. "Haven't you heard about it?"

"Yes, he does issue a call every two or three days," Yotsugi answered. "But when you go, it's not bad. If a man bears in mind that he is being called on to help build an earthly paradise, he will be glad to go if he can, and he will hope for rebirth as a shrub or tree at the Buddha Hall. Right-thinking people ought to be anxious to contribute their services. I have never evaded a summons, because I know I will never have such an opportunity again. And when a man does go, there is nothing bad about it at all. They are always handing out food and wine, and sometimes we get fruit and other dainties, which have been brought in as offerings. For workers who keep going back, there are even presents of clothing. So it seems that the lower classes scramble to join the levies."

"That's right," Shigeki said. "But I have thought of an even better plan for myself. In all my long life, I have never been forced to wear rags or suffer from lack of food or drink, but if a time should come when I was unable to put my hands on such necessities, I would look for three pieces of paper on which to write Michinaga a petition. And in the petition I would say, 'I was a page in the late Chancellor Tadahira's day. Now that I am old and destitute, I look to you as my lord because you are his descendant. I hope you will grant me a few things.' I know he wouldn't refuse me some trifles, so I feel as secure of them as though they were in my storeroom."

the Court, government, and noble houses. The meaning of *omonomochi* is unknown. Hosaka speculates that it may be another name for *shibu*, minor functionaries in the Palace Table Office, where *jichō* are also known to have been employed. He tentatively derives the term from *omono*, food (as in *omonodana*, food shelf, and *omonoyadori*, food repository, two names associated with the Palace Table Office), and *motu*, hold. The men were presumably supplying the Imperial Table at the expense of the common folk. Hosaka 1974, 3:394.

"I am sure you are right," Yotsugi agreed. "My wife and I have often said we would submit a petition at the temple in case of distress. Well, well, I am so happy to have met you. It has been like taking a bag out of storage, opening it up, and slitting it to let the air in! But tell me, how many times have you visited the famous Muryōjin?"

"When they dedicated the Great Buddha Hall⁴⁵ that year, people said ordinary spectators would be driven off on the day of the ceremony, so I went to the dance rehearsal they held three days in advance."

I have gone a number of times (*Yotsugi said*). Of course, the splendor of the dedication was beyond description. I went back again the next day, hoping to get a closer view of the images before the decorations were taken away, and I saw the Imperial ladies making a tour of the halls. It seemed to me that I had stayed alive just to witness that spectacle! Never since reaching the age of discretion have I seen the like! There were four ladies in a hand-drawn carriage. Senior Grand Empress Shōshi and Grand Empress Kenshi sat in front, letting a fraction of their sleeves show, and Kenshi's hair trailed the ground in a most marvelous manner. It seemed that only the persons of Empress Ishi and Principal Handmaid Kishi must be inside the carriage at the back, because all their robes were billowing out, and, in fact, trailing to the ground. A gentleman was following along with some garments in his arms, so Princess Teishi may have been seated in the middle. She was probably just wearing an unlined inner robe.⁴⁶

The carriage was being drawn by men of Fourth and Fifth Rank. Behind it walked the Regent Yorimichi, Michinaga's other sons, and other senior nobles and courtiers, all dressed in informal cloaks. What a magnificent sight! The only missing face was that of Yoshinobu, the Provisional Master of the Empress's Household, who was having to observe strict ritual seclusion. He had supplied the Empress's costume, which looked gorgeous. "I had something to tell Her Majesty on the dedication day," he said later. "When I went to see her, I found all five of the ladies seated together. It seemed to me that her costume was quite perfect—but I suppose I may have thought so because I was the one who prepared it."

⁴⁵ The Golden Hall of the Hōjōji.

⁴⁶ *Hito no mizu*, part of a lady's formal costume. Heat and cramped quarters had probably dictated the removal of the Princess's voluminous outer robes. The Golden Hall was dedicated in the Seventh Month of 1022, when she was nine years old.

Though I rattle on with an air of authority, I am really only an ignorant lower-class fellow. The colors of the ladies' costumes have completely left my mind after all this time. Perhaps it is because Empress Ishi looked so splendid that I do seem to recall her wearing a double unlined inner robe of red gossamer. I can't remember her outer robe, but she had on a stunning triple-layered lespedeza bombazine jacket, embroidered or painted with an autumn field design.⁴⁷

People said the other Imperial ladies' costumes were also provided by gentlemen of the family. Shōshi wore quantities of double-pattered silk, and Kenshi was dressed entirely in Chinese stuffs. Yorimichi, who had prepared Kishi's attire, had hastily added a foil design after learning that the other ladies were to wear dresses decorated with pictures. Michinaga laughed when he saw it. "It would make a good costume for a *shushi* actor,"⁴⁸ he said.

Michinaga waited for the ladies with the hall doors open. I was overjoyed to witness the scene at all, even from a vantage point as remote as the Great South Gate, but I heard later that three nurses watched from a gallery opening as the ladies descended from the carriage and inched forward respectfully on their knees.⁴⁹ They were Ben and Tayū, both in Princess Teishi's service, and a person called Chūjō or something of the sort. All three were trembling with fright, but they told themselves that nobody would give them too severe a scolding on such a day. High as their expectations were, they found each of the Imperial personages so beautiful that it was impossible to prefer one above the others. Shōshi's hair trailed beyond her skirt hems, Ishi's was just a little more than full length, Kenshi's fanned out a foot beyond the edge of her costume, and Kishi's brushed the floor with seven or eight inches to spare. They were hiding their countenances behind fans, held a short distance away.

"Why are you sitting there?" Michinaga asked Princess Teishi.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ The jacket harmonized with the autumn season, which had begun on the First of the Seventh Month. The lespedeza (*hagi*) fabric weave, named after one of the Seven Plants of Autumn, is thought to have employed a green (*ao*) warp and a reddish brown (*ruō*) woof. For bombazine (*orimono*), see Chapter 4, n. 39.

⁴⁸ A precursor of the Nō actor. The first *shushi* were Buddhist monks, who used simple dramatic performances to convey the significance of their esoteric rituals. The plays were later presented by professional actors, attached to temples, who wore gorgeous costumes and were accompanied by musical instruments. O'Neill 1956, p. 6.

⁴⁹ The ladies had left the carriage at the edge of the veranda.

⁵⁰ The Princess, unaccustomed to moving long distances on her knees, was probably stopping to rest.

"Come along." The nurses were quite overcome to see him take her hand and help her over the thresholds.

Although the three were doing their best to stay hidden, Michinaga caught a glimpse of them. Could anything have been more dreadful? Faint with apprehension, they gave up hope of ever serving at Court again. But he spoke to them with a smile and went on, making no attempt to get the ladies out of sight. "Have you seen Their Majesties? How did you like them? They're not so bad, do you think, considering that they are this old monk's daughters? Please don't be too hard on them." They gazed at one another like souls returned from the dead, speechless with joy. Of the three carefully painted faces, the first was as green as a leaf, the second had turned red, and the third was dripping with perspiration. "Even in less exalted circles, it is considered very wrong to spy on people for fun," one of them said later. "We decided that His Lordship must have overlooked it because he was carried away by the extraordinary splendor of the occasion, but we did feel a bit proud."⁵¹

Sights like that, which fill our minds with the spectacular flowering of Michinaga's fortunes, are likely to multiply our worldly attachments and dampen our impulse toward the religious life. But a certain Buddhist ascetic who lives somewhere in Kawachi Province—a man who ordinarily refuses to leave his hermitage—came to the capital for the Golden Hall dedication, thinking he might be punished in the next life if he failed to attend a sacred event of such magnitude. When he saw the Regent arriving and the people being chased away, he thought, "That must be the greatest personage in the country." Then Yorimichi seated himself in front of Michinaga, and he saw that Michinaga was superior. Next came the Emperor. The music blared, and the monk saw the manner in which Michinaga and Yorimichi waited, and the reverent postures of the gentlemen as they watched the litter approach. "It is the sovereign who is foremost in Japan," he thought. But when His Majesty descended and sat in respectful prayer before the central image of the Amitābha Hall, the holy man realized that it was, after all, the Buddha who was supreme. "I have formed a precious tie at this service," he said. "At last, my faith is unshakable." Do I know all this because he was sitting near me? I find that I don't remember.

Senior Grand Empress Shōshi is to enter religion, it seems, and to become an Imperial Lady with the same status as a Retired Emperor. People say that she will receive the commandments at an ordination

⁵¹ The last phrase hints at Michinaga's partiality for the nurses' charge, Princess Teishi, which they take to be the real reason for his leniency.

platform erected at the Hōjōji, and that other nuns are eager to come and receive them with her. When my wife heard the news, she said, "That is when I will crop my white head. Don't try to stop me."

"I won't," I said, "but you must find me a young woman afterward."

"I'll have a talk with my niece right away to fix it up," she answered. "There might be problems if we brought in a complete stranger."

"No, it wouldn't work," I said. "At my age, I can't be saddled with someone I'm not used to, whether she's a relative or not."

We went right out after that, and got her a *biki*⁵² or two of good silk to make her a skirt and surplice. (*He was putting on a show of levity, but there was a sad expression on his face—a sign, it seemed to me, of the sorrow his wife's decision must have caused him.*)

Strange celestial phenomena have been frequent this year, and ominous rumors seem to be circulating in a most inauspicious manner. It frightens me to hear talk of Kishi's pregnancy, and also of the illness of Koichijōin's consort Kanshi, who has had no respite this year from her old affliction.⁵³

"Well, well," Yotsugi said, "the past seems only yesterday when I go on like this." He exchanged glances with Shigeki, who responded, "I have seen and heard all kinds of splendid things, too, and have often been deeply moved, but there has never been anything to compare with the misery I felt when my dear master died. It was an especially sad time of year, just after the Tenth of the Eighth Month. I couldn't help thinking of the poem 'Any season would have done.'"⁵⁴ He blew his nose several times, speechless with grief, looking very much as he must have when Tadahira died. "At the time," he continued, "I had no desire to go on living and mingling in society—no, not for a day or an hour. I think the reason I have lingered so long is probably that Tadahira's spirit wants me to see and praise the constant increase and prosperity of his descendants. Emperor Reizei was born on the Twenty-Fourth of the Fifth Month in the following year. I was terribly sorry that my master had not lived to see the baby, but his birth made me happier than I can say."

⁵² A unit of measurement, equivalent to about twenty-one meters.

⁵³ Kanshi's poor health was attributed to the persecutions of the spirits of Akimitsu and Enshi.

⁵⁴ *Kokinshū* 839, composed by Mibu no Tadamine after the death of Ki no Tomonori: "Toki shi mo are/ aki ya wa bito no/ wakarubeki/ aru o miru dani/ koshiki mono o. (Any season would have done. Is it right for someone to go in autumn, when the heart aches even to see the living?)"

"I can well believe it," Yotsugi said, beaming with sympathetic pleasure. "And how did you feel when Emperors Suzaku and Murakami were born, one after another?" It was eerie to listen to them.

"I have something on my mind," Yotsugi continued. "It may sound shameless, but who knows whether I will be alive tomorrow? I'm going to speak out. I don't feel ready to die yet because I want to see what the future holds for Princess Teishi. I had a splendid dream before her birth, exactly like my dreams before Senshi and Shōshi were conceived, and so I think we can predict great things for her. I am anxious to let Grand Empress Kenshi know about it, but I have not succeeded in meeting anyone close to her. I mention the matter partly in the hope that there may be some such person in the congregation. People in the future will realize what a good prophet I was."

I felt like coming forward and saying, "Here I am!"

CHAPTER SIX

Chancellor Michinaga: Part Two

[Tales of the Past]

The attendant interrupted this remarkable dialogue. "We are learning some fascinating things," he said. "What are your earliest memories? It would be especially interesting to hear about them. Won't you please give us a few?"

I have a clear recollection of the things I have seen and heard since the age of six or seven (*Yotsugi said*). There would be no way of proving I was telling the truth about trivial incidents, so let me speak of an important happening when I was nine.

You all know the place where Emperor Kōkō lived while he was a Prince. My father's house was north of Ōnomikado and west of Machijiri, right next door. I always went over there to play, and I knew that the Prince lived a very quiet life.

The first Day of the Horse¹ fell on the Third of the Second Month, which chanced to be the lucky *kinoe uma* day. Everybody made an even greater point of going to the Inari Festival than usual, and my father took me with him. The steep climb was exhausting for a child, so we were not able to go home on the same day. Father arranged for us to spend the night at the lodgings of one of the shrine priests, a man of Fifth Court Rank whom he had often helped out, and whom he knew well. The next day, as we headed north along Higashinotōin on our way home, we were startled by the sight of a noisy mob streaming westward on Ōnomikado. When we got to the intersection, we saw swarms of people milling around our house. Our first fear was of fire, but there was no smoke in the sky, so we wondered if the police might be making a big arrest. Our heads spinning with conjectures, we went along to the neighborhood of the Ononomiya Mansion, and there, to our amazement, we saw senior nobles' carriages, saddled horses, and gentlemen wearing formal caps and Court cloaks. We begged the

¹ In the Second Month of Gangyō 8 (884), Yotsugi's ninth year, the regular day of the Inari Festival. A *kinoe uma* day was considered particularly auspicious for visits to shrines. *Shūkaishō*, p. 510; Chapter 1, n. 8.