CHAPTER TEN

THE FUJIWARA SOVEREIGN

To the great command of the heavenly sovereign who rules the Great Land of Eight Islands as a manifest god, those who are gathered to serve, princes, lords, hundreds of officials, and subjects of all under heaven, let all of you listen.¹

Monmu’s accession edict, 697

In the context of the imperial history of Volume I of the *Man’yōshū*, Hitomaro’s Ruined Ōmi Capital Poems begin the Fujiwara palace section by memorializing Tenchi’s reign while at the same time defining the Ōmi capital as the past. After two poems by Tenchi’s children Prince Kawashima and Princess Ahe (mother of the future sovereign Monmu), there follows a celebration of the “present” reigns of Tenmu and Jitō, with Hitomaro’s Yoshino Praise Poems and a sequence of poems on Jitō’s imperial visit to Ise. These poems combine to form a genealogical argument that points to the conclusion of the first half of Volume I of the *Man’yōshū*, in which the last of Hitomaro’s chōka sequences, a long poem with four accompanying tanka commonly known as the Aki Fields Hunting Poems, suggests the future accession of Tenmu and Jitō’s grandson Prince Karu as the sovereign we call Monmu 文武 (r. 697–707). This historical plot then culminates with two long poems that celebrate the establishment of the new Fujiwara palace (MYS I: 50–54).

In this chapter I examine the *Man’yōshū* representation of Prince Karu as heir to the imperial realm conquered and founded by his grandfather Tenmu. As I will show, there are aspects of this portrayal that suggest an early expression of the relationship between the imperial lineage and the Ise cult of Amaterasu that would be developed and institutionalized more fully in the eighth century. Given that the Fujiwara palace sections of Volume II of the *Man’yōshū* also conclude with poems dated to the end of Jitō’s reign and that the *Nihon shoki* ends with Jitō’s abdication in Monmu’s favor, Monmu’s reign appears to have been widely perceived as marking the conclusion of the establishment of the Yamato court as an

¹ 稼御神止大八嶋國所知天皇大命良麻止詔大命乎、集侍皇子等・王等・百官人等・天下公民、諸聞食止詔. See SNKBt *Shoku Nihongi* 1: 2–5.
imperial state and the beginning of a new imperial era, as announced by
the promulgation of ritsuryō codes and the inauguration of the first impe-
rial reign name, Taihō, in 701.

Ise and the Sun Prince

The connection between the imperial lineage and the Ise cult of the sun

goddess is a familiar one to even the most casual student of Japanese

history. The mythical foundations of this relationship are described in

both the Nihon shoki and the Kojiki narratives, where the sun goddess is

portrayed as the ancestor of the imperial house in the myth of heavenly
descent\(^2\) and in the legend of Jinmu’s first conquest of Yamato.\(^3\) In the

Nihon shoki Sujin chronicle, which for the most part focuses on the story

of the origins of the Miwa cult, the worship of Amaterasu is removed from

the sovereign’s palace to another location in Yamato, and in the follow-
ing reign of Suinin (r. 29 BCE–70 CE), the shrine to Amaterasu moves
to Uda, then Ōmi, then Mino, before finally arriving in Ise.\(^4\) Amaterasu
and the Ise shrine appear again in the Keikō volume in connection with
Yamato Takeru’s pacification of the East, and also in the Jingū volume,
where Amaterasu is revealed to be the leader of multiple gods who advise
the Empress in her conquest of Silla and the other Korean kingdoms.\(^5\)
There is a reference to the Ise shrine in Nintoku’s reign and mentions of a

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\(^2\) As I noted in chapter 3, there are important differences between Amaterasu’s role in
the Kojiki, where she is the supreme arbiter of both heaven and earth, and the main text
of the Nihon shoki, where her role in the heavenly descent episode is secondary to that of
the god Takami musuhi.

\(^3\) In the Jinmu chronicle of the Nihon shoki, one of Jinmu’s men has a dream in which
he witnesses Amaterasu instructing the god Take mikazuchi to assist Jinmu in the con-
quering of Yamato. Take mikazuchi sends down the sword with which he subdued
the earth before Ninigi’s descent and in the dream tells Jinmu’s man where to find the sword.
Shortly afterward Amaterasu appears to Jinmu in another dream to announce that she will
send him the Yatagarasu crow that will lead him to Yamato. Jinmu refers to her as “my
sovereign ancestor the great god Amaterasu” (我皇祖天照大神). See SNKZ Nihon shoki 1,
202–5. The Kojiki narrative is similar. See SNKZ Kojiki, 145–149.

\(^4\) At Ise, Amaterasu speaks to the priestess Yamato hime and informs her that she
wishes to dwell there because “the land of Ise is a land of divine winds, a land where the
waves of the eternal realm incessantly return” (神風伊勢國、則常世之浪重浪歸國也).
According to the Nihon shoki text, Ise is the place where the “great goddess Amaterasu
first descended from heaven” (始自天降之處也). See SNKZ Nihon shoki 1, 318–21. Note
the similarity between Amaterasu’s route from Yamato to Ise and the route of Tenmu’s
eastern campaign in the Jinshin Rebellion.

\(^5\) The Kojiki references follow a similar pattern, with the name “Amaterasu” appearing
only in the mythical sections and the reigns of the first emperor Jinmu and the narrative