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A Social History of the Ise Shrines

Divine Capital

Mark Teeuwen and John Breen

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A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE ISE SHRINES

Bloomsbury Shinto Studies

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The Shinto tradition is an essential component of Japanese religious culture. In addition to indigenous elements, it contains aspects mediated from Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, and, in more recent times, Western religious culture as well – plus, various forms of hybridization among all of these different traditions. Despite its cultural and historical importance, Shinto studies have failed to attract wide attention not least because of the lingering effects of uses of Shinto in the ultranationalistic propaganda of Japan during WW II. The Series makes available to a broad audience a number of important studies that help to problematize the widespread misconception that Shinto is intrinsically related to Japanese nationalism, and at the same time promote further research and understanding of what is still an underdeveloped field.

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PROLOGUE

This book is the fourth volume on Shinto history co-authored, co-edited or co-translated by John Breen and myself. The need to write a history of the Ise Shrines occurred to us while we were finishing *A New History of Shinto* (2010). In that book, we investigated the implications of the recent understanding of the concept of 'Shinto' as much less ancient than the shrines, myths and rituals on which it draws. This insight raised many questions. What were shrines, myths and rituals about before they were incorporated in Shinto? Who and what made the conceptualization of Shinto possible, and ultimately successful? What did 'Shintoization' entail in actual practice, and what were the dynamics behind that process?

In *A New History of Shinto*, we chose to analyse Shintoization by focusing on an important yet not too central shrine – Hiyoshi Taisha, near Kyoto. Our reasoning was that the history of a somewhat peripheral shrine would give a clearer picture of the changes that occurred when shrines were redesignated as sites of Shinto in early modern and modern times. We assumed that the Ise Shrines would be less representative, because Shintoization was, we believed, a process of assimilation to Ise. That choice served its purpose, but, as John once put it, it also left an 'Ise-shaped hole' in our account. What was the status of the Ise Shrines in different periods of its history? Did Ise indeed function as the reference point of Shinto, and if so, what did that notion of Shinto entail? Was Ise a driving force of Shintoization, or rather a passive object, itself Shintoized by outside forces? These were the key questions that launched this book.

As we were writing this book, however, our focus soon moved away from a narrow focus on Ise's relation to Shinto. There were two reasons for this. First, the history of Ise proved to be what we had anyway expected: one of extraordinary interest and daunting complexity. To get at the dynamics of thirteen centuries of crisis and reinvention, we needed to hone in on the people who had made and remade Ise Japan's pre-eminently significant sacred site. It soon became apparent that there was a frequent turnover of the human agents who shaped Ise. As agents changed, so did the shrines – physically, economically, socially and theologically.

Second, we found that while categories like Shinto played an important role in this history at various junctures, most notably from the seventeenth century onwards, the forces that prompted historical change lay beyond Ise. It is now less obvious to us that shrines were assimilated to Ise on a wide scale, although there is no doubt that Ise was often held high as a model of Shinto in its purest or most original form. Perhaps Ise was, and is, too different from other shrines for such assimilation to work in practice. Also, the notion of a pure Shinto was not applied to Ise itself until early modern and modern times. Like other shrines, Ise 'became'

Shinto late in its history, and a narrative that depicts Ise as the cradle and timeless mainstay of Shinto has no roots in historical fact.

Thus it is that the book spotlights the people who made Ise 'work' at different stages of its history, while the questions of Shinto's conceptualization and the Shintoization of shrines remain on the periphery of our account. Rather than tracing the history of Shinto through Ise, we put Shinto issues to one side to get a clear vista of Ise's social history. We hope this approach enables us to explore the major turning points in Ise's remarkable story without stumbling into the pitfalls of Shinto ideology and nostalgia.

This book is co-authored. I wrote Chapters 1–6, and John wrote Chapters 7–10. The Introduction and Conclusion are the result of a cooperative effort. The maps are drawn by Kirsten Berrum of the Faculty of Humanities, Oslo University. We could not have written this book without the help of numerous friends and colleagues over many years. I would like to thank Mayumi Tsunetada, Sakurai Haruo, Nitta Hitoshi and Murei Hitoshi (formerly) of Kōgakkan Daigaku for making my research on Ise possible in the first place, for many stimulating discussions about aspects of Ise's past and present and for practical assistance of many kinds. Through channels unknown to me, but no doubt involving the late Sakurai Katsunoshin, I was allowed to witness the Outer Shrine *sengyo* in 1993; more than anything else, this experience has sustained my fascination with Ise through all these years. Yahata Takatsune, formerly of Jingū Bunko, was very helpful in unlocking the secrets of that great archive, and Kurata Katsuhiko of the Jingū Shichō forestry division gave me a full-day guided tour of the shrine forests. Nitta Shigemi, Tanaka Kazunori and Tanaka Masae have been extremely kind to me and my family in a thousand ways. Steven Trenson has given me helpful comments on Chapters 4 and 5.

John would first like to extend his gratitude for all sorts of help and advice to a cluster of people in Ise. Foremost among them are Otowa Satoru of Jingū Shichō; Ishikura Mami of Ise's municipal library; Iwasaki Miki, formerly of NHK's Tsu bureau; and the local historians Iida Yoshiki, Seko Tomiho and Akita Kōji. He benefited greatly from the advice of Kōgakkan historians Sakurai Haruo, Shirayama Yoshitarō and Taura Masanori. No one was a more interesting or enthusiastic correspondent than Chieda Taishi, once of Kōgakkan, now of Chūkyō Daigaku in Nagoya. He also wishes to thank Takagi Hiroshi for two opportunities to speak on Ise at Kyoto University's Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūjo. The research John conducted on modern Ise was funded by a Japan Society Promotion of Science grant. A week-long visit to Oslo was supported by the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages of Oslo University.

Further thanks are due to the institutions and individuals who gave us permission to use the images included in this volume: Jingū Shichō, Nikkōsan Rinnōji, Waseda University, Iida Yoshiki, Saigū Rekishi Hakubutsukan and Meiji Jingū.

Both John and I presented our findings on different periods of Ise's history in a range of forums over the last years, and we would like to record here our debts to those who took the trouble to interrogate us. A particularly stimulating

event was the international conference *Tenkanki no Ise*, held at Nichibunken in July 2013; a book based on this conference has been published as John Breen, ed., *Hen'yō suru seichi: Ise* (2016). We would finally like to express our thanks to all others who showed an interest in our work and inspired us to think with greater clarity.

Mark Teeuwen

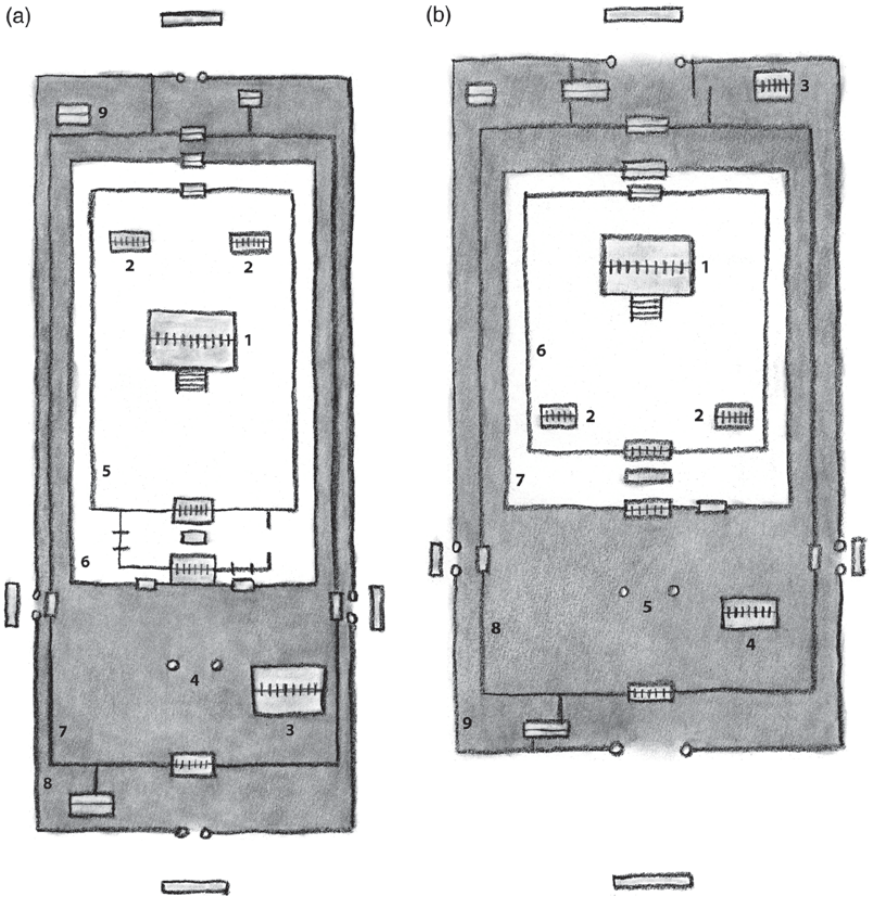
NOTE TO THE READER

This book follows the standard convention of giving Japanese names in Japanese order, with the family name followed by the given name. Pre-1873 dates are given according to the lunisolar calendar used in the sources. At times, lunisolar dates are cited in the abbreviated format day.month.year, for example, 19.6.1031. Note that this date does not correspond to 19 June 1031 according to the Gregorian calendar; in fact, it fell on 14 July of that year.

A number of conventional period names are used in the text. For easy reference, their dates are listed here:

Nara	710–794
Heian	794–1185
Kamakura	1185–1333
Muromachi	1336–1568
Edo	1600–1867
Meiji	1868–1912
Taishō	1912–1926
Shōwa	1926–1989
Heisei	1989–

The Nara and Heian periods are at times referred to as the ancient or classical period, Kamakura and Muromachi as the medieval period, Edo as the early modern period and Meiji and beyond as the modern period.



Map 1 The compounds of the Inner and Outer Shrines

1a: Inner Shrine

1. *Goshōden* (main hall)
2. *Hōden* (treasure halls)
3. *Shijōden* (pavilion)
4. Inner torii
5. *Mizugaki* fence
6. Inner *tamagaki* fence
7. Outer *tamagaki* fence
8. *Itagaki* fence
9. Okitama no Kami Shrine

1b: Outer Shrine

1. *Goshōden* (main hall)
2. *Hōden* (treasure halls)
3. *Mikeden* (hall of divine food)
4. *Shijōden* (pavilion)
5. Inner torii
6. *Mizugaki* fence
7. Inner *tamagaki* fence
8. Outer *tamagaki* fence
9. *Itagaki* fence

Introduction

Divine Capital: Ise and its Agents

There can be little disputing that Ise is the most prominent shrine complex in Japan. Ise has enjoyed a unique social status since ancient times, and in the post-war period it has held an unassailable position as the supreme sanctuary of Shinto, as defined by Jinja Honchō, the Association of Shinto Shrines. In the early years of Japanese state formation, the imperial court invested heavily in the Ise cult. In later centuries, Ise won the sponsorship of military warlords, and in modern times the state radically redesigned the shrines for the purpose of nation-building. But it was not only the wielders of power for whom Ise was beyond compare. From the late medieval period onwards, Ise acquired renown as a site of popular pilgrimage, and in subsequent centuries it grew into an unrivalled national centre of worship and entertainment. The Ise Shrines experienced many ups and downs in the course of their long history, but they never fell into obscurity. They have consistently been among the most prominent symbols of Japanese identity.

The Ise Shrines are located in what is now Ise City, a modest town with a dwindling population of 130,000 inhabitants on the southern edge of a plain that stretches northwards along Ise Bay. It is an hour and a half by train from Nagoya and just over two hours from Osaka and Kyoto. Ise consists of no less than 125 shrines, spread out over a large area; many of the smaller ones are local shrines administered by the Ise Shrine Office (*Jingū shichō*), which runs the entire complex. At its core are two main shrine precincts, located some five kilometres apart in what, until 1889, were two separate towns called Uji and Yamada. The main site today is the Inner Shrine, situated at the entrance to a scenic valley, with a backdrop of heavily forested hills that rise up to almost 500 metres. The slightly smaller Outer Shrine precinct, closer to the city centre, is located in a forested area with steep hills of up to 100 metres.

The main kami halls of the Inner and the Outer Shrine look remarkably similar. Both are constructed from untreated *hinoki* wood, roofed with *kaya* thatch, and surrounded by multiple wooden fences that hide the most sacred structures from view.[1] Before reaching these fenced-in kami halls, visitors cross bridges, regarded today as borders between secular and sacred spaces, and walk through artfully designed gardens. They pass by so-called Kagura halls, where they can sponsor specially staged performances of sacred dance (*kagura*), and purchase amulets, kami shelves, scrolls and other goods. Beyond these buildings, visitors encounter

Figure 0.1 Aerial view of the old and new Inner Shrine compounds (summer, 2013).
Source: *Mizugaki* 225, 2013.

a number of minor shrines and other structures that serve various ritual purposes, before reaching the fences that mark out the Inner and Outer Shrine compounds. Normally, prayers are offered in front of curtained gates in the second fence, at a respectful distance from the halls where the kami reside; only their thatched roofs are visible. The main kami of the Inner Shrine is the Sun Goddess and imperial ancestor Amaterasu; the Outer Shrine accommodates a kami now identified as Toyouke, kami of food. The Ise Shrines employ 120 priests and over 350 others, including administrators, craftsmen, foresters, museum curators and guards. In addition to the shrines and their grounds, Ise comprises large forests, sacred rice fields, a site for drying abalone, a saltern, two weaving halls, a timber yard and factory, stables, four museums, a training facility for Shinto priests (*Jingū dōjō*), offices, residences, an archive, a kindergarten, and the spacious headquarters of the Association of Ise Worshippers (*Ise Jingū sūkeikai*).

The 2013 Rebuilding

The Ise Shrines are first and foremost ritual sites. Shrine priests perform daily and annual rites, mainly focusing on the preparation and presentation of food and other offerings to the kami. Unique to Ise is a sequence of rituals that takes place on a twenty-year cycle. These rituals revolve around the construction, on adjacent plots of land, of exact copies of Ise's two main and fourteen subsidiary shrines;

solemn progresses of the kami from the old sites to the new; and, finally, the dismantling of the vacated shrine halls and their gates and fences.[2] This elaborate (and phenomenally expensive) process of construction, progress and dismantling is known nowadays as *shikinen sengū*, where *shikinen* refers to the twenty-year cycle and *sengū* the physical relocation of the sanctuary.

The most recent *sengū* took place in 2013 after eight full years of preparations. These involved the felling of 14,000 trees, their transport to Ise and their processing before the construction work could begin. Then there was the manufacture, by first-rate craftsmen from around the country, of some 2,500 precious offerings of gold, lacquer and silk. When all this highly ritualized production work was complete, the Sun Goddess was the first kami to move into her new abode in a rite known as *sengyo*, the 'transfer of the kami body'. On the night of 2 October 2013, that body, a mirror, was carried out of the old kami hall. Wrapped in silk and encased in a golden box and a wooden chest fashioned anew out of cypress wood, the kami body was borne by multiple priests. The chest's bearers were surrounded by more priests holding up silk curtains, impregnable even to infrared cameras. All lights were extinguished before the procession departed from the fenced compound. A select audience was seated on folding chairs along the route between the old and the new compound, from where they observed the progress in reverent silence. In this manner, Amaterasu made her stately way through the night to her new abode.

A brief discussion of the distinguishing features of the latest *sengū*, and especially of its climax in the *sengyo* rite of progress, will illustrate one of the central arguments of this book: namely, that while there is ritual continuity in Ise history, there have also been vital ruptures. The *sengū* itself has been an occasion for negotiation and innovation every time it has been performed. The 2013 *sengū* differed from those of 1993 and 1973 in at least two ways: one relates to politics and the other to pilgrimage.

In the realm of politics, the Inner Shrine *sengyo* of 2013 saw the unannounced participation of Prime Minister Abe Shinzō and eight members of his cabinet (Figure 0.2). They took their place in the escort that followed the Sun Goddess as she made her way to her new sanctuary. The only precedent for this form of political representation was set in 1929 by Prime Minister Hamaguchi Osachi. Abe's conspicuous presence gave to Ise and its *sengū* a public quality they had not enjoyed since the 1920s. There was potential for controversy here, because legally the Ise Shrines are a private religious charity, and their rites are private religious events. Article 20 of the Constitution forbids the state from engaging with them. And yet here was the prime minister playing an active ritual role. Strikingly, however, Abe's participation elicited very little criticism, even in the left-leaning press.

The public character of the 2013 *sengū* was further underlined by the participation of the emperor. Amaterasu's progress started at 8 p.m., on a signal from an imperial envoy. At precisely that moment, the emperor faced Ise from his Tokyo palace, prostrated himself and performed 'worship from afar' (*yōhai*). His remote presence was thus pivotal to the progress. He was represented in Ise during the

Figure 0.2 Prime Minister Abe Shinzō at the Inner Shrine (2 October 2013).
Source: *Mizugaki* (226), 2013.

sengyo progress not only by the envoy but also by his second son, Prince Akishino no Miya. The imperial house was intimately involved in other ways as well. The date of the *sengyo* had been determined by the emperor, who also contributed to the rebuilding fund with annual donations (*gonaidokin*), paid from moneys defined as 'private' so as to avoid a breach of article 20. Some of the furnishings of the new shrine hall contained silk woven by the empress; she had raised silkworms for this purpose in the palace. This was a new initiative in 2013, duly commented upon in the televised broadcast of the event, which treated viewers to expert commentary and glimpses of the *sengyo* progress. Finally, the emperor and empress made a 'private' three-day pilgrimage to Ise in late March 2014. Of symbolic significance was the fact that the emperor brought with him two of the regalia, the sword and the jewel. The third treasure of the regalia is Amaterasu's mirror, enshrined at the Inner Shrine. The emperor customarily travelled in the company of the sword and jewel before 1945, but after the war this practice was revived only in 1974, on the occasion of the imperial Ise pilgrimage following the 1973 *sengū*. The practice underlines the significance of Ise as a national sanctuary of imperial Japan, and undermines the official definition of the emperor's visit as private.

These intrusions of officialdom and politics were particularly striking in 2013, but no less conspicuous was the sheer number of pilgrims who flooded into Ise in the run-up to the *sengyo*, and beyond. The Ise Shrine reported that 8.8 million pilgrims visited the Inner Shrine in 2013, compared with the previous record of 5.5 million in 1993.[3] More Japanese visited Ise in 2013 than at any time in its history. What struck locals, beyond the sheer size of the crowds, was the number

of young people, especially girls. They also remarked on the extent to which people dressed up for their shrine visit, and on the new norm of turning to bow towards the main kami halls at every *torii* gate within the precincts.

Local businesses made good use of this wave of new customers. At the time of the 1993 *sengū*, the area in front of the Inner Shrine was given a major facelift at the initiative of the Ise Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with significant input from the Akafuku company that has sold its rice-and-adzuki confections to pilgrims since the eighteenth century. In 2013, however, investment was concentrated on the approach to the Outer Shrine, especially the newly pedestrianized street that leads directly to that shrine from Ise City Station. A 'Sengū Pavilion' (Sengūkan) was built on the banks of the Outer Shrine's Magatama Lake. It displays copies of the kami treasures and offerings presented to Ise's kami, and there is a life-size reproduction of the gable of the Outer Shrine's main hall. The area between Ise City Station and the Outer Shrine precinct had decayed steadily since the 1960s as the flow of traffic shifted to the Inner Shrine, largely due to improved access. The closure of the nearby Jusco and Sanco department stores in 1996–2001, after the 1993–94 boom had turned into a post-*sengū* slump, did not help. Ise businesses worry now that there will be a similar price to pay for the huge visitor turnouts of 2013–15. They also worry about losing out to non-local businesses; many of the shops near the Inner Shrine have been taken over by large corporations from Osaka and elsewhere, which can afford higher rents than Ise's smaller entrepreneurs. Ise City already started planning for the next twenty-year cycle in 2014, anxious to avoid an intervening collapse.[4]

In 2013, then, the general public visited Ise in greater numbers than ever before. The public were involved in other ways too. In 2006 and 2007, some 200,000 people participated in log-pulling (*okihiki*) rituals, ferrying logs into the Inner and Outer Shrine precincts in elaborate parades. Then in August 2013, 230,000 people from across Japan entered the new shrine precincts for the pebble-laying rite. They covered the Inner and Outer Shrine compounds with white and black pebbles drawn from the Miyagawa River. These events allowed people to participate directly in the building work itself, giving them a sense of 'ownership' of the new shrines. This was important because the entire cost of the rebuilding, around 57 billion yen, had to be raised from the public. The imperial contributions were of great symbolic value, but they did not stretch far in footing this impressive bill.[5] More than half was paid for by the shrines themselves, principally from the sale of amulets and performances of *kagura* dance – both defined as religious, charitable transactions, and therefore exempt from taxation.[6] The remaining 22 billion was raised, with apparent ease, from companies and individuals, by the 'Association for Support of the 62nd Ise *Sengū*' (*Dai62kai zaidan hōjin Ise Jingū shikinen sengū hōsankai*). This Ise Supporters' Association was chaired by none other than Toyoda Shōichirō, retired president of the Toyota Motor Corporation and former chairman of the Japan Business Federation (*Nippon Keidanren*). The fact that the Ise Shrine Office now depends entirely on charitable donations has a great impact on the way it presents the shrines to the media, and influences the way it manages the *sengū* in many subtle ways.

Meanings and Agents

The 2013 rebuilding saw a multiplicity of agents, all converging on this sacred site at this critical moment in Ise's post-war history. We have already noted the priests and administrators in the Ise Shrine Office, members of the imperial family, the government, the Ise Supporters' Association, and local and not-so-local businesses. To this list we might add the national and international media, local authorities of Ise City and Mie Prefecture, Jinja Honchō, transport companies like Kintetsu Railways and, not least, the general public, who were free to make whatever they wished of all the noise about Ise. If the Ise Shrines had a particular meaning, it was in the crossfire between all these agents that it was constructed.

That the meaning of Ise and its ritual performances is changing, however subtly, is beyond doubt. When one compares the 2013 *sengū* with its 1993 predecessor, the participation of the prime minister and eight members of his cabinet constituted a critical difference; at no time under the post-war Constitution had the state performed such an active role in the *sengū* proceedings. In general, the 2013 version had a more disciplined feel than that of 1993. There were stricter rules of etiquette for visitors, who were often asked by priests and guides to remove overcoats as they approached the shrines' compounds or when an imperial emissary passed by. A new formality was noticeable elsewhere, too, with some people stopping to bow at every *torii* and insisting on worshipping from the centre of the shrine gate, causing long queues. New developments pointed in other directions, too. Both shrines had acquired new 'power spots', places claimed to radiate a particularly powerful spiritual energy. The most conspicuous among Ise's power spots were two sets of stones that had never before enjoyed any special attention. The notion that these stones emitted numinous powers spread through the media and the internet, beyond the control of the Ise Shrine Office. Priests were initially puzzled by the crowds of worshippers who gathered around these stones, stretching out their hands to soak up the energy. They did not necessarily approve, but neither did they interfere, other than by roping the stones off for the sake of pilgrims' 'safety'.

In publicity disseminated both by the shrine and by Jinja Honchō, Ise was in 2013 often presented as a symbol of the blessings of nature. Nature had been an emerging issue back in 1993, but it was subordinate to other themes such as 'national renewal'. In 2013 nature was ubiquitous. The new Sengū Pavilion treated the visitor to beautiful images of rice fields and forests, expressing Ise's sacredness in terms of harmonious coexistence with the natural environment. Jinja Honchō produced a commercial to promote Ise amulets that featured a woman in white, roaming through a pristine forest and giving thanks to nature for the gift of 'life' (*inochi*). Posters, too, expressed gratitude to the sun, the rain, the earth, the forests, the ancestors and 'my life'.[7] Nature, or the natural, also met those who visited the retro shopping area called Okage Yokochō near the Inner Shrine. Across the street, Akafuku sponsored an exhibition of Mori Takeshi's nature photographs titled 'The Ise shrine forest: the heart of the Japanese'. A 2014 documentary film titled *Umi yama aida* ('In between mountains and oceans'), directed by Miyazawa

Masaaki with active cooperation from the Ise Shrine Office, likewise stressed 'the holistic co-existence between humans and nature' as Ise's message to the world. In the same year, Jinja Honchō, in partnership with the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, hosted a major conference in Ise on 'Culture, Faith and Values for a Sustainable Planet', featuring '700 Shinto priests and international environmental and religious figures'.[8] Fearful perhaps that imperial themes might be losing their pulling power, Ise has been actively redefining itself as a site of scenic beauty where the Japanese can rediscover ancestral traditions of harmonious coexistence with nature.

The Purpose of This Book

In a recent article, Fabio Rambelli posed the question of whether Ise is a 'more or less stable unit . . . endowed with its own set of meanings', or a mere 'combination of forms . . . that can be associated with any kind of meaning'.[9] Rambelli answers his own question by arguing that Ise has been so ubiquitous in Japanese discourses of cultural identity precisely because it has *not* conveyed a stable meaning. Rather, it has functioned as a 'floating signifier' that could be reconfigured whenever circumstances demanded it. New narratives, whether they concern the notion of Japan as an imperial state or as a culture of natural harmony, could be applied to Ise with ease, precisely because Ise was 'empty'. When new discourses were grounded in Ise, they gained coherence, authority, an aura of ancient truth and an emotional power. Also, 'emplacing' such narratives in a concrete site has enabled people to participate physically in what otherwise would have remained a mere abstract idea.

Rambelli leaves untouched the question of how these reconfigurations of meaning have worked in practice. It is this question that occupies us in this book. To answer it, we must focus on interactions between the multiplicity of agents who have had some stake in Ise, and resist the temptation to ascribe such reconfigurations to an abstract 'Ise', as though the site had a will of its own. Agents, we insist, are the key to unlocking Ise's past. As we seek to identify these agents, we look beyond the obvious Ise 'insiders': priests and their institutions. There is always the temptation to stress the agenda of such insiders, as though they have ruled the ground alone. It is a palpable fact that they have not. The Ise Shrine Office, for example, has had limited influence on the meanings Ise has developed over time. New innovations, be it power spot spirituality or the recent ecological turn, originated elsewhere. The former developed predominantly in women's magazines and on the Internet; the latter impacted on the Ise Shrine Office's strategy only after it had first become well established in society at large and had, then, begun to engage the Jinja Honchō leadership.[10] These examples remind us that Ise's priests have only ever been one among many groups of Ise agents, and never the most powerful.

This is even more obvious when it comes to Ise's relationship with emperor and state. Jinja Honchō and the Ise Shrine Office have strong opinions on this, and as we shall see in Chapter 10, throughout the post-war period they have worked

consistently to recover a public role for the Ise Shrines. Negotiating this agenda, however, is extraordinarily complicated and involves navigating an ever-changing political and legal landscape with an endless number of agents and as many pitfalls.

This book is a social rather than an intellectual history of Ise. Its focus falls not on the abstract meanings attributed to the Ise Shrines, but rather on the social influences that have structured and restructured them over time. We seek to trace when, how and why new groups of agents gained influence over the shrines, often reshaping conceptions of Ise and its meaning radically in the process. We show that Ise has changed hands at multiple turning points in its 1,300 years of history, and seek to pinpoint when this happened, why it happened at a particular time and what the repercussions were. We study those multiple moments when new meanings were projected onto the site of Ise, but our starting point is always the question of who was doing the redefining, whom they were addressing, and how new meanings emerged out of their endeavours.

This approach will lead us beyond questions of meaning to more tangible problems of power and funding. Ise was always a very costly project in need of constant investments, and by the same token a form of 'divine capital' that could be exploited in ever new ways. The history we tell is that of the people who invested in Ise, either by making the shrines the basis for their livelihood, or by making donations, pilgrimages or other kinds of contributions to it. We argue that the question of Ise's signification was closely tied up with the economic and political models of the agents who dominated Ise in different periods. The failure of one model usually condemned one group of agents, but Ise has remained a treasure trove of 'divine capital'. Time and again, new agents emerged to take over and develop alternative models, each creating a new Ise with a new profile. As it happens, one such model involved rebranding Ise quite literally as Japan's 'Divine Capital' (*Shinto*) in the early twentieth century.

In this book, we set out to challenge a number of very common assumptions. Ise, we argue, does not have 'two thousand years of unbroken history', as pamphlets and speech-makers tirelessly profess, but was created rather abruptly in the late seventh century. It was not always an imperial institution, nor did it become a site of 'Shinto' until late in its history. For many centuries, the shrines did not form a single sacred complex in any meaningful sense, and as often as not, their priestly communities had little control even over goings-on within the shrine precincts. By shedding these and other modern assumptions about Ise and paying close attention to social, economic and political changes on the ground, we hope to give the reader a sense of the real-world dynamics behind Ise's numerous reinventions. Our aim is not to 'debunk' the mythologies that have given Ise meaning at different times, but rather to explore Ise's remarkable appeal. We hope that this book bears ample witness to the endless creativity of the people who have shaped and reshaped this most enduring of sacred sites.

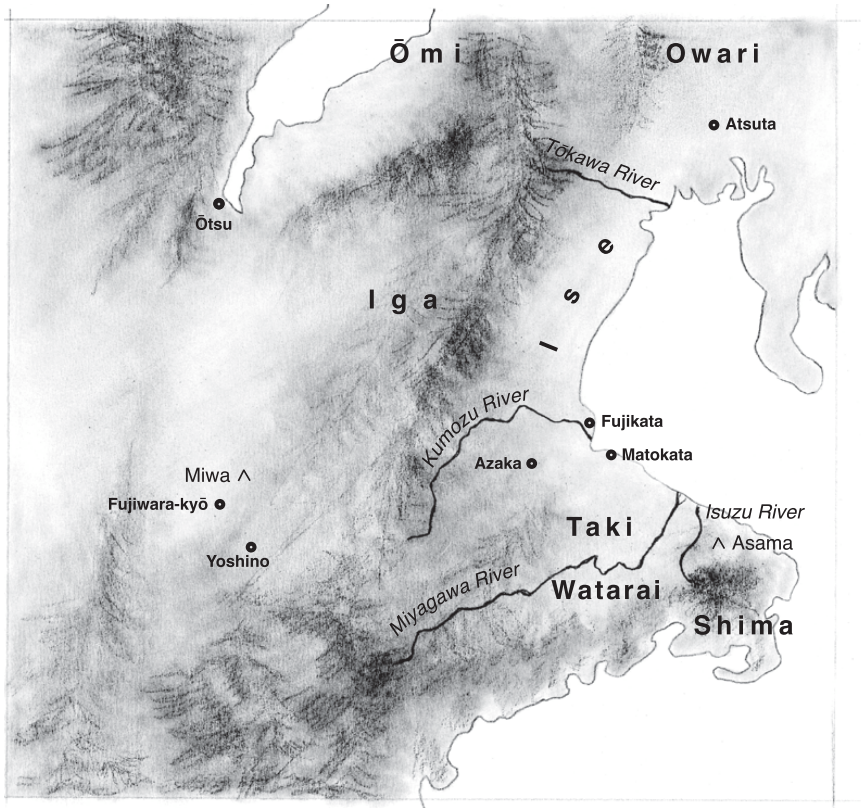
Chapter 1

Ancient Ise: Divine Wrath and Court Politics

Who founded the Ise Shrines? When did this happen, and why? What was the nature of the Ise kami at that initial moment? All these basic questions have been the topic of intense debate since, at least, the 1920s.[1] There is an enormous amount of literature on Ise's ancient beginnings, and yet the issue remains clouded in a mist of fundamental uncertainty. This chapter is a preliminary attempt to navigate this mist and locate some solid ground.

The main reason why we are condemned to uncertainty is the simple fact that the single source that history has left us on Ise's earliest days, *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan, 720), is riddled with contradictions and resists reduction to a single, coherent story. Ise, *Nihon shoki* notes, is the place 'where Amaterasu first descended from heaven' and to which this supreme deity eventually returned in the age of Emperor Suinin, tens of imperial generations before *Nihon shoki* was written.[2] Extending the history of sacred places into primeval times is a universal characteristic of the process of myth-making. So is the obfuscation of human agency: Ise is where it is and what it is, the myth says, because that is the will of the gods. Searching for cracks in this mythical account, while holding it up against the scant archaeological record, is the only method available to those who want to reconstruct Ise's early history and answer some of our very human questions.

Despite the overwhelming volume of writings on the topic of Ise's beginnings, there are few signs that a consensus is emerging. The official line propounded by the Ise Shrine Office today takes *Nihon shoki* literally and dates Amaterasu's arrival in Ise to 4 BC (Suinin 26). Among scholars, the main divide runs between those who date the origins of Ise and Amaterasu to the fourth or fifth century, well before the establishment of the Ritsuryō state, and those who see Ise as a product of the process of state formation that culminated in the decades around 700.[3] This divide is ultimately based on differing understandings of the nature of *Nihon shoki*. 'Early' scholars assume that *Nihon shoki* entries reflect events that occurred during the reigns under which they are filed. While few give credence to the traditional Suinin dating, they do have faith in references to Ise in the chronicles of Emperors Yūryaku or Keitai, or Empress Suiko. 'Late' scholars treat *Nihon shoki* as a document that reflects the time in which its final redaction took place: the reigns of Emperor Tenmu and Empress Jitō in the early eighth century.



Map 2 Ise in ancient Japan

They assume that little stopped the editors of this work from inserting later (or even completely fictional) events in early chapters whenever they felt a need to create ancient precedents for innovations.

Emperor Tenmu and the 'Shrine of Amaterasu'

Both the 'early' and the 'late' camps agree that the so-called Jinshin coup of 672, in which Emperor Tenmu (formerly Prince Ōama) took the throne by defeating his nephew Ōtomo, represents a watershed in Ise's early history. What they do not agree about is whether this episode marked the very origin of the Ise cult, or merely represented a new development in a long-established practice. Either way, few dispute the fact that references to Ise in the *Nihon shoki*'s account of this coup must have had some root in actual history. Here, perhaps, is our first spot of solid ground.

The year 672 was one of political and military drama. Emperor Tenji died in the last month of 671 in his Ōtsu palace after having passed the throne to his son,

Prince Ōtomo. Prince Ōama, who was Tenji's brother and Ōtomo's uncle, had left the palace when Tenji fell ill in the tenth month of 671. Pretending to renounce the world, Ōama retired to the mountainous region of Yoshino in southern Yamato and bided his time. On 24.6.672, Ōama left Yoshino in great haste with a small band of followers. Picking up horses as they went, they passed through Uda into Iga where they torched a post station and took command of local troops. On the 25th they crossed the mountains into Ise Province under the cover of night. Pelted by a thunderstorm, they finally reached the relative safety of Asake in Ise the next morning, where they set fire to a building to warm the drenched men. At sunrise Ōama's party went down to the bank of the Tōkawa River, 'turned their faces towards Amaterasu Ōkami, and did worship'.[4]

It soon became clear that Ōama had a great many allies, and by the end of the year, Ōtomo was dead and both Ōtsu and Yamato had fallen into Ōama's hands. On 27.2.673 Ōama assumed the position of emperor in his new palace, Kiyomihara in Asuka, on the southern edge of the Yamato Plain. In this new capacity, he would later be given the posthumous name of Tenmu. For the month following Tenmu's enthronement, *Nihon shoki* records a number of highly symbolic events: so-called cap-ranks[5] were awarded to those who had served him well; a white pheasant was discovered in a distant province and offered to the palace; and scribes were gathered to copy the entire Buddhist canon. Finally, there is a reference to Ise:

> 14.4.673: The Imperial Princess Ōku is ordered to stay in an abstinence hall in Hatsuse, so that she may be dispatched to the shrine of Amaterasu Ōkami. In this hall she will purify her body before approaching the place of the kami.

What was the historical context of the Ise cult in this setting? Tenmu's Jinshin coup was a landmark in the history not only of Ise, but of the early Japanese state. It was probably Tenmu who introduced the title of *tennō* or 'heavenly sovereign' and gave the country the new name of *Nihon*, 'Origin of the Sun'. These acts of renaming signalled the transformation of the 'great kings' (*ōkimi*) of Yamato into 'emperors' of Japan. Tenmu ordered that 'imperial chronicles and ancient words held by the various houses' be corrected and edited so as to 'establish the true' once and for all.[6] With this he initiated the compilation of *Kojiki* (Record of ancient matters, 712), the oldest extant chronicle of Japan and its ruling lineage. This text gives a central role to the sun goddess Amaterasu in the history of imperial rule: *Kojiki* states that this kami (together with the male Takami-musubi) sent her grandson down from the Plain of High Heaven to the Japanese islands to establish an everlasting celestial dynasty there. The significance of Tenmu's involvement with Ise must be understood against the background of all these innovations.

Tenmu launched his visionary reforms in a time of political chaos and military disaster. Only nine years before the Jinshin coup, in 663, Yamato troops had suffered a crushing defeat in an attempt to stop the Korean kingdom of Silla from obliterating its neighbour Paekche with the assistance of the mighty Tang dynasty of China. Fear of a joint Silla–Tang invasion may have been one reason behind Tenji's decision, in 667, to move his palace away from the coast and the Yamato

Plain to the more sheltered site of Ōtsu. No invasion materialized, but in the 670s the situation was still unclear and threatening. Not least, an influx of Korean refugees, immigrants and prisoners of war had to be managed without upsetting the balance of power in the court's network of supporters and allies. Tenmu had succeeded in defeating Ōtomo because of widespread dissatisfaction with Tenji's attempts to centralize power in the hands of the Yamato court at the expense of local elites. If Tenmu was to maintain his grip on that power, he needed to devise new ways to restrain the same chieftains who had supported the coup. Moreover, if his endeavours were to last beyond his own lifetime, he had to build a dynasty with less leeway for struggles about the succession, and also present a convincing argument as to why that dynasty should hold power. Finally, Tenmu had to deal with a spate of calamities and the social unrest they generated: disease, drought and famine.

Herman Ooms (2009) has made a detailed analysis both of the problems Tenmu faced and of the political and 'symbolic' solutions he pioneered. Some of Tenmu's strategies are reflected in the *Nihon shoki* entries that we just saw. By awarding and withholding cap-ranks, Tenmu manipulated the balance of power among his allies. When he staged the discovery of an auspicious white pheasant, he drew on Chinese techniques of legitimation by producing evidence of heaven's approval. By having the Buddhist canon copied, he created a large store of merit and represented himself as a Dharma king, a benevolent ruler who assists the Buddha in transforming the land into a realm of enlightenment and prosperity. Finally, by sending one of his daughters to 'the shrine of Amaterasu Ōkami', he asserted a special relationship with a kami whose name means 'Great Deity who illuminates heaven'. Even these first few entries of Tenmu's reign demonstrate that he felt free to utilize any available stratagem or discourse that could help him in his quest to create a new kind of authority.

Among these strategies, Tenmu's worship of Amaterasu may at first sight appear to be the most traditional; after all, it followed the ancient custom of legitimizing political power in terms of kami worship. In fact, however, the opposite was true. Tenmu's devotion to Amaterasu was a radical departure from the kami cults of his predecessors. The question is, how is this fact to be interpreted? Does it mean that Ise and Amaterasu were 'invented' by Tenmu? Or did he 'merely' adopt and adapt an earlier established tradition that had been temporarily neglected?

An insurmountable problem, once again, is the complete lack of contemporary sources. *Kojiki* may well have been the result of Tenmu's own initiative, but this text ends with the death of Empress Suiko in 628, long before the Jinshin coup. *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* underwent their final redactions in 712 and 720, respectively, twenty and twenty-eight years after that coup. Strikingly, the compilers of *Nihon shoki* not only contradicted the *Kojiki*'s account on many points, but chose to ignore it altogether. The significant differences between these sources, and between different versions of the same episodes recorded side by side in *Nihon shoki*, show that there was ample scope for adapting the narrative to new circumstances. It is no easy task to determine what agenda, and of what age, is reflected in any particular detail reported in *Kojiki* or *Nihon shoki*. At the very least, the variety of

accounts they contain warns us against drawing quick conclusions about ancient events on the basis of these eighth-century sources.

This is also true, of course, of *Nihon shoki*'s account of the Jinshin coup. A closer look at the *Nihon shoki* passage that has Tenmu worship Amaterasu on the Tōkawa riverbank calls up plenty of questions. A common interpretation of this passage is that Tenmu attributed his victory over Ōama to Amaterasu. This is then adduced as the main explanation for the subsequent rise in status of Amaterasu's Ise Shrine, to become the highest protector of the imperial lineage.[7] Yet *Nihon shoki* does not in fact mention a single instance of divine assistance from Amaterasu or Ise in the course of its account of Tenmu's campaign. Instead, the chronicle focuses on other kami. We read that Kotoshironushi of Takechi Shrine, Ikumitama of Musa Shrine and Miho-tsu-hime of Muraya Shrine protected Tenmu at key moments. These kami, all from Yamato Province, were rewarded with offerings and high ranks. Amaterasu, in contrast, remained silent, and *Nihon shoki* makes no mention of any promotion.

The oldest source to link Amaterasu to Tenmu's victory is a poem in the imperial poetry collection *Man'yōshū* (Collection of ten thousand leaves), compiled a generation or two after *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. *Man'yōshū* includes a lament by the court poet Kakinomoto no Hitomaro, composed on the occasion of the death of Tenmu's son, Prince Takechi, in 696. Takechi, who played a prominent role in the Jinshin campaign, was in line for the succession, which explains why Hitomaro's lament sets out by recalling Tenmu's reign and describing his death. This section of the poem includes the following reference to the campaign:

> As they struggled like zooming birds, the divine wind from the hall of abstinence in Watarai blew confusion upon them, hiding the very light of day as clouds blanketed the heavens in eternal darkness.[8]

In 696, then, a court poet ascribed Tenmu's triumph to the divine powers of the 'hall of abstinence in Watarai', the district of the Ise Shrine – presumably a hall where the imperial priestess lived a life of abstinence from impurity and worshipped Amaterasu. However, Hitomaro's description of that hall hardly fitted the situation of 672, a quarter of a century earlier. It was only in 673, well after the end of the campaign, that Princess Ōku was 'ordered to stay in an abstinence hall in Hatsuse, so that she may be dispatched to the shrine of Amaterasu Ōkami'; she did not reach Ise until 674. *Nihon shoki* gives us little reason to believe that there was such a hall in Ise before Ōku's arrival. Tenmu's predecessor, Tenji, showed no interest whatsoever in either Ise or Amaterasu; the same applied to the four 'great kings' and 'queens' who preceded him. Even if there was an abstinence hall in Ise in 672, it had stood empty for half a century at least. All this leaves us with a chicken-and-egg conundrum: allegedly, Tenmu won victory because of his worship of Amaterasu, and he worshipped Amaterasu because this kami helped him to victory.

The *Nihon shoki* account of Tenmu worshipping Amaterasu at the Tōkawa riverbank post-dates Hitomaro's poem by another twenty-four years.[9] There is no

way to determine whether this tale reflects a genuine interest in Amaterasu on the part of Tenmu; if it is a made-up episode added by the final editors to reflect later practices, it would not be the only such fiction in the chronicles. Tenmu's dispatch of Ōku to Ise is less easily dismissed, however. A fragment of a *mokkan* (a document written on a strip of wood) carrying Ōku's name has been excavated in Asuka, at the site of Tenmu's court,[10] and archaeologists have uncovered a large complex west of Ise (in Taki,[11] rather than Watarai District) that served as the quarters of the so-called abstinence princesses (*itsuki no miko* or *saiō*) of Ise. The oldest finds at this site are dated to Tenmu's time, although it developed into a full-fledged compound only in the course of the eighth century.[12] Taken together, these finds add credibility to the account of Ōku's dispatch to Ise.

Why, then, did Tenmu choose to resurrect, or invent, the practice of sending imperial princesses to Ise soon after the Jinshin coup? Both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* mention princesses who served at Ise long before Ōku. *Kojiki* names three such princesses, *Nihon shoki* eight:

Reign	*Kojiki*	*Nihon shoki*
10. Sujin	Toyosuki-bime	Toyosuki-iri-bime
11. Suinin	Yamato-hime	Yamato-hime
12. Keikō	--	Princess Iono
21. Yūryaku	--	Princess Takuhata
26. Keitai	Princess Sasage	Princess Sasage
29. Kinmei	--	Princess Iwakuma
30. Bidatsu	--	Princess Uji
31. Yōmei – 33. Suiko	--	Princess Sukate
40. Tenmu	--	Princess Ōku

In *Kojiki*, the Ise Shrine is mentioned *only* in short notes to the names of these princesses as they occur in genealogical lists, typically recording that '[this princess] worshipped the Great Kami of Ise'. *Nihon shoki*, too, mostly mentions the Ise princesses in passing, with a similar wording: '[This princess] worshipped the shrine of the Great Kami of Ise.'[13] But as we shall soon see, this chronicle also includes a few longer episodes featuring some of them. How can these references to ancient Ise princesses be interpreted? If at least some of them are historical, as many of the 'early' scholars believe, the origins of Ise worship by Yamato kings must go back to the sixth, fifth or even third century. 'Late' scholars, on the other hand, argue that most or even all these references to Ise princesses were inserted into the chronicles in the eighth century, to create a precedent for Tenmu's dispatch of Ōku.[14]

These entries present further vexing problems. Much discussed is the question of what kind of shrine and deity these princesses may have served in Ise, if that is

what they did. Is there a difference between 'the shrine of the Great Kami of Ise' mentioned in the earliest entries, and the 'shrine of Amaterasu Ōkami' served by Ōku? Most entries up to Princess Uji state that these princesses served the 'Great Kami of Ise'; Sukate is said to have served the 'sun kami'. Amaterasu is mentioned by name only in Iono's entry, and then again in the quoted passage about Ōku. Are these all the same deity, or do the name changes indicate a change of deity? Moreover, at least in Tenmu's time, no other shrines were worshipped through the medium of an abstinence princess. What does this title mean, and why did this 'Great Kami of Ise' require such a peculiar form of worship?

Nihon shoki contains some tales about the earliest abstinence princesses that shed light on their nature, and, by extension, on the character of the early Ise cult. Especially remarkable is an episode featuring Princess Takuhata, found in the chronicle of Yūryaku's reign. In a close paraphrase, it runs as follows:

> A certain Kunimi spread the rumour that an officer of the baths, Takehiko, was sleeping with Takuhata. Takehiko's father feared this would bring disaster upon his house, and he took his son to the Ioki River and killed him there.[15] Questioned by imperial messengers, Takuhata denied the rumours. Then she took the kami mirror and left for the upper reaches of the Isuzu River, where she buried the mirror and hanged herself. The emperor sent officials to look for her, and when they came to the Isuzu River they discovered 'a rainbow similar to a snake of four or five *jō*' (twelve to fifteen metres). They dug a hole at the spot where the rainbow rose from the ground, and recovered the mirror. Takuhata's body was discovered nearby. When they opened her belly, they found 'a water-like substance' containing a stone. This proved Takehiko's innocence, and Takehiko's father took revenge by killing Kunimi.[16]

At the core of the Ise cult, as it emerges from this tale, were a maiden princess, who was expected to remain untouched,[17] a kami mirror and a sacred site 'on the upper reaches of the Isuzu River'. The mirror contains a kami who manifests itself in the form of a snake-like rainbow. Takuhata's name, moreover, identifies her as a 'weaver of mulberry cloth'. This combination, of a virgin, a snake and weaving, echoes with Ise's origination myth.

Ise's Origination Myth

Both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* mention Toyosuki-iri-bime and Yamato-hime as the first princesses to serve the 'Great Kami of Ise'. *Kojiki* merely records their names; *Nihon shoki* is alone in explaining how these 'maidens' contributed to the founding of Amaterasu's shrine in Ise. The tale is somewhat long-winded and confusing, but it is our only clue as to the nature of the Ise cult in its earliest phase.[18]

> In the fifth year of Sujin's reign, the land was struck by an epidemic that killed 'more than half the people', triggering a wave of 'vagabondage' and a violent

rebellion. In response the emperor 'enquired of the gods of heaven and earth about his sins', wondering what had caused the wrath of the kami. Especially, he feared the presence of two kami in his palace: Amaterasu Ōkami and Yamato Ōkunitama, the 'Great Spirit of the land of Yamato'. He entrusted these kami to two of his daughters, Toyosuki-iri-bime and Nunaki-iri-bime. Toyosuki-iri-bime took Amaterasu to the village of Kasanui in Yamato, near the foot of Mount Miwa, to be worshipped there.

Still the pestilence showed no sign of abating, and Sujin assembled the 'eighty myriad kami' on the plain of Kamiasachi to gauge their will through divination. At that time the kami Ōmononushi of Mount Miwa took possession of yet another maiden, Yamato Totohimomoso, and revealed through her that the emperor's failure to offer him proper worship was the cause of the country's calamities. Not much later, Ōmononushi appeared to Sujin himself in a dream and revealed that he would stop his harrying of the country if only he was worshipped by his own descendant, a man by the name of Ōtataneko. When this man was found, Sujin prepared offerings and appointed Ōtataneko as 'master' of Ōmononushi's worship. At the same time, he transferred the worship of Yamato Ōkunitama to a man called Nagaochi.

With this, the emperor deemed that it was now propitious for him to worship the eighty myriad kami. He 'decided which were to be heavenly shrines and which earthly shrines' and allotted land and service households to them. With that, the epidemic finally gave way, peace was regained, and the five grains once again yielded abundant harvests.[19]

Amaterasu Ōkami	Yamato Ōkunitama	Ōmononushi
Toyosuki-iri-bime ⇒ Yamato-hime	Nunaki-iri-bime ⇒ Nagaochi	Yamato Totohimomoso ⇒ Ōtataneko
Palace ⇒ Kasanui ⇒ Ise	Palace ⇒ ?	Miwa

This tale about Amaterasu, Yamato Ōkunitama and Ōmononushi is often pried apart as though it were a coincidental combination of a set of unrelated origination myths, relating to dissimilar sites and different kami.[20] In the narrative of *Nihon shoki*, however, these events clearly form a unified sequence with a single plot: Sujin's efforts to stem kami-induced calamities, culminating in his ordering of the kami realm by introducing a system of 'heavenly and earthly shrines'. The two main protagonists of this tale are the kami of Miwa and Ise.[21] Tenmu's predecessor on the throne, his brother Tenji, had given special importance to the kami of Miwa, installing the Miwa kami in Ōtsu when he moved his capital there in 667.[22] When Ise rose to prominence in the years that *Nihon shoki* took its final form, this was at Miwa's expense. The juxtaposition of Miwa and Ise in *Nihon shoki*'s myth of Ise's origin indicates that these two kami were once seen as similar in character and function; this must have facilitated the transition of court worship from one to the other.

The Sujin chapter includes a further famous tale about the 'maiden' of Miwa, Yamato Totohimomoso, which by association also allows us to speculate about the cultic backgrounds of Ise's system of abstinence princesses:

> As the wife (*tsuma*) of Ōmononushi, Yamato Totohimomoso was not unhappy with the fact that Ōmononushi never showed himself to her in the light of day. She begged him to allow her to see his true form, and Ōmononushi agreed on the condition that she would not be appalled at his appearance. He hid in her comb box until morning. When Yamato Totohimomoso opened the box at dawn, she found a beautiful small snake. In fright she let out a cry, and at this Ōmononushi felt put to shame. He changed into human guise and said to his wife: 'You have thrown shame over me; now I will shame you.' With these words he disappeared in the direction of Mount Miwa. Yamato Totohimomoso sat down in shock, a pair of chopsticks pierced her genitals, and she died on the spot.[23]

This tale shows that kami maidens were regarded as 'wives' of the kami they served. They reflect the recurring mythical motif of maidens who became pregnant after sleeping with kami, and/or who had their genitals pierced by kami. Such kami shared a number of traits. Many were associated with snakes and arrows; others with the sun. Another *Kojiki* episode about Miwa's Ōmononushi relates how this kami transformed himself into a red arrow and impregnated a beautiful maiden while she was defecating in a ditch. As a result of her 'marriage' with Ōmononushi, this maiden gave birth to a girl who was later chosen as one of the wives of Emperor Jinmu, the first human emperor and original conqueror of Yamato.[24] We also learn that this kami fathered Ōtataneko by entering a maiden's sleeping quarters through the keyhole in the guise of a snake.[25] Yet another *Kojiki* tale relates how a ray of the sun, similar to a rainbow, shone on the genitals of a poor girl in Silla, Korea. As a result she became pregnant and gave birth to a red jewel.[26] This jewel was later taken by the Silla prince Ame no Hiboko. When this prince lay down in his bed with the jewel, it transformed into a beautiful maiden and became his wife. The Takuhata episode at Ise, featuring a snake-like rainbow, a mysterious pregnancy and a 'stone', clearly reflects the motif of kami-impregnated maidens.

A very similar motif can also be found in the main story about Amaterasu in both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, which tells of Amaterasu's confrontation with her brother Susanowo. Susanowo misbehaved so badly that Amaterasu felt forced to retire into a rock-cave, plunging the world into darkness. Susanowo's final misdeed was to throw a flayed horse into Amaterasu's weaving hall. The weaving maiden – or, in some versions, Amaterasu herself – was so shocked that she pierced her genitals with her weaving shuttle. The shuttle, incidentally, is called *hi*, a homonym of the word for 'sun'. Different versions of this central myth construe the relationship between Amaterasu, the weaving maiden and the shuttle in different ways. In *Kojiki*, the weaving maiden kills herself with the *hi* shuttle, while in the main version of *Nihon shoki*, it is Amaterasu who 'injures herself' with it.

Taken together, all these myths present the image of maidens who are 'married' to a special type of kami. Such kami are snake-like and dangerous, capable of causing epidemics and, in some instances, of controlling thunder and lightning.[27] It is the maiden's task to serve as the kami's wife and bear his child. The position of Amaterasu within this group of myths is both ambiguous and puzzling. Amaterasu creates children in her confrontation with Susanowo, and subsequently she (or her weaving maiden) has her genitals pierced by the *hi* shuttle due to Susanowo's wild raging. All this offers a striking parallel to the fate of Yamato Totohimomoso. Why, however, the need for Amaterasu to be served by a 'princess' of jealously guarded virginity if she is herself a maiden? Might Amaterasu once have been a snake-like male kami, whose image was at some later stage reconfigured by identifying this kami with the maiden who served 'him'? Of course, there was never such a thing as an 'original' Amaterasu; deities do not have solid identities, but manifest themselves as shifting clouds of meaning that take on different forms in specific historical situations. All we can say is that snakes, thunder and epidemics are among the more obvious ingredients of the cloud in which Amaterasu is hiding.

Another ingredient is the motif of the weaving maiden, represented both by Takuhata ('mulberry cloth weaver') as a mythical prototype of the abstinence princess, and by Amaterasu herself. The link between Ise and silk is confirmed by an entry in *Nihon shoki* recording that in 692, the 'Great Kami of Ise' addressed Empress Jitō in an oracle, asking that the year's tribute of silk thread should be exempted from a tax relief granted in that year.[28] In his investigation of the place of weaving in early Japanese cultic life, Michael Como (2009) sees Tenmu's worship of Amaterasu at Ise as a variant on East Asian royal weaving cults that can ultimately be traced back to the Chinese cult of the Queen Mother of the West (Ch. Xiwangmu). Legends related to the Queen Mother of the West contain many motifs that reappear in the figure of Amaterasu.[29] Como places heavy emphasis on the role of Korean lineages in the formation of Japanese court myth and ritual, but this appears unnecessary in the light of his own convincing argument that Japan's cultic traditions were continuous with those of Korea and China at all levels, both at court and in village life. The cult of Amaterasu was a product of this environment, and thus naturally shared many traits both with continental myths and practices, and with the cults of other lineages close to the court, whether they were 'allochthons', in the terminology of Ooms (2009), or 'autochthons'.

While Como focuses on the motif of weaving, others have concentrated on Amaterasu's connections with metalworking.[30] Ise's Amaterasu was not the only deity with this name; at least ten other shrines were dedicated to kami called Amateru or Amaterasu, mostly located in the wider Yamato region, but some as distant as Kyushu and Tsushima. Nine of these shrines were dedicated to an ancestor deity of the Owari lineage (Ame no Hoakari), a deity closely connected with ironworking. That these Amateru/Amaterasu cults cannot be isolated from Tenmu's cult of Ise is all the more obvious because the Owari fostered Tenmu as a child and were among the main supporters of his Jinshin coup.

The number of kami connected with weaving or with the craft of smiths is endless; so are the kami of the sun or the sea, two other obvious aspects of

Amaterasu. Rather than venturing into this mythical hall of mirrors, I will stay as close as possible to the legend of Ise's origins as recounted in *Nihon shoki*. The tale of Amaterasu's removal from the palace reveals that this kami was at one point seen as a dangerous force rather than a benevolent ancestor and protector. Amaterasu may at first sight appear to be a kami of a radically different calibre than the likes of Ōmononushi: not male but female, not an earthly but a heavenly deity, and not associated with snakes and thunder but with the sun. However, a closer analysis of the myths, and indeed the very nature of the abstinence priestess, shows that a more Miwa-like Amaterasu is hiding behind this 'classical' image of the heavenly sun goddess. The question that we need to consider next is whether it was Tenmu who gave Amaterasu her new identity, and whether this was related with the events of 672–3.

Amaterasu as the Leader of the Heavenly Deities

Amaterasu's journey from Yamato to Ise takes up much space in the myth of Ise's origin. In contrast to Tenji's removal of the Miwa deity to Hie near Ōtsu, Amaterasu's resettlement was imagined as a multistage trek and forms the topic of a long passage in *Nihon shoki*. We have already seen that Sujin placed Amaterasu in the care of Toyosuki-iri-bime. This princess, we read, never left Kasanui in Yamato. She was relieved of her duties eighty-seven years after her appointment, and Amaterasu was now entrusted to a daughter of Emperor Suinin, Yamato-hime. Yamato-hime set off in search of a new place to enshrine Amaterasu. First, she travelled to Uda in the mountains to the east of Miwa; then, she headed north for Ōmi. Taking an eastward turn through Mino, she then proceeded towards the south and entered Ise Province. Here she was 'instructed' by Amaterasu, who said: 'Ise, this land of the kami wind, is the land whither repair the waves from the eternal land, the successive waves. It is a secluded and a pleasant land. I wish to dwell in this land.' Thus Yamato-hime built a shrine to Amaterasu in Ise and founded an 'abstinence palace' on the upper reaches of the river Isuzu, called the Iso or 'beach' palace. With this, Amaterasu had returned to 'the place where [she] first descended from heaven'.[31]

This account is followed by a variant in which Amaterasu's final dwelling place is identified as the palace of Watarai in Ise. This variant is of special interest because it tells of an oracle inspired by Amaterasu's old companion, Yamato Ōkunitama, addressing Sujin's successor Suinin. Yamato Ōkunitama pronounces that Amaterasu has always governed heaven; now, her imperial descendants have assumed absolute authority over the 'eighty [myriad] spirits and kami'. With this, Yamato Ōkunitama announces that his tenure as the ruler of the land has come to an end. Finally, he warns that Sujin died an early death because this emperor had not worshipped him in a satisfactory manner. Heeding these words Suinin takes action, establishes a 'kami site' for Yamato Ōkunitama and transfers his worship from Nunaki-iri-hime to Nagaochi.[32]

Yamato Ōkunitama's oracle reveals another aspect of the Ise cult's significance. As soon as Amaterasu had returned to her proper place, it was time for the old