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**Fujiwara Michinaga — the Most Prominent Man
of the Heian Period**
(a Short Biography)

I. Michinaga in his prime of youth (966—987)

Fujiwara Michinaga emerges into the official world of the Court aristocracy, and consequently into the History, in the year 987. In this year his name appears for the first time in the *Kuge-bunin*¹. We can learn from it that Michinaga started his career in 980 at the age of 14 when he got his first rank, the Junior Fifth, Lower Grade (on the seventh day of the first moon). Four years later on the first day of the second moon he was nominated to the post of *Uhyōe-no gon-no suke*². In 986 on the twenty third day of the seventh moon he was promoted to the Fifth Rank, Upper Grade and at the same time nominated *Kurandobito*³. In this year he was further promoted in his rank: on the twenty seventh day of the seventh moon to the Senior Fifth, Lower Grade, and on the eighteenth day of the eleventh moon to the Junior Fourth, Lower Grade. On the fifteenth day of the eighth moon he was nominated *Shōnagon*⁴ and on the fifteenth day of the tenth moon nominated addi-

¹ The *Kuge-bunin* (read also *Kugyō-bunin*) is a historical compilation giving exact dates of nominations to the highest offices at the Imperial Court and promotions in court ranks from the third rank up. It is not clear when the work was started. It was closed in the first year of the Meiji era (1868). Up to the reign of the 41st ruler, Empress Jitō (687—696), it deals almost exclusively with the emperors from the first (legendary) ruler Jimmu Tennō. In this earliest part of the *Kuge-bunin* the names of the ministers and Imperial advisers are very few. From the 42nd reign (Mommu Tennō, 697—707) the work takes shape of a chronicle carried on year after year. The facts and names of ministers and Court aristocracy (from the Third Rank up) become more and more abundant. In most cases, when a person is introduced into the chronicle, there is given a short personal history.

² The Acting Vice-commander of Military Corps of the Right.

³ An official of the *Kurandodokoro*. It was an office which managed administrative matters of the Palace. One of the most important functions of the *Kurandodokoro* was preparing Imperial Decrees.

⁴ A Lesser Adviser to the Throne.

tionally *Sakon'e-no shōjō*⁵. In 987 on the seventh day of the first moon his rank was raised to the Junior Fourth, Upper Grade, and on the twentieth day of the ninth moon to the Junior Third. On the twenty seventh day of the first moon he was nominated Vice-governor of Sanuki, on the eleventh day of the seventh moon Vice-governor of Bizen, and on the fourth day of the ninth moon *Sakyō-no daibu*⁶.

Besides, from this first item on Michinaga we can learn that he was admitted to the Palace in 982. In the next year he served as a page. In 984 he was the leading rider in the Kamo procession⁷ and got permission to dress in forbidden colours⁸. In the same year he was admitted to the Palace of the Crown Prince and in 986 he was twice admitted to the Imperial Palace and served before the Throne. In 987 he served before the Empress and was permitted to dress in forbidden colours.

This dry recital of not many advancements and few public appearances sums up almost all known facts about the first 21 years of Michinaga's life. It does not mean that it exhausts his public and social activities in his prime of youth. Certainly not. He was born to a powerful and immensely wealthy family traditionally connected closely with the Court. And so, his were all the entertainments and elegant pastimes of the Heian period. It was in his youngest years that he acquired his skill as a horseman and bowman, as a dancer and poet. Looking at his father Kaneie and his companions he had plenty of opportunities to observe how to behave among highbrows in difficult or delicate situations. Thanks to his father, he had a lot of chances to develop his talent for court intrigues. When at last he emerges into the world enough to be noted by various diarists and chroniclers, we can see him as a presentable young man of many accomplishments, bold and daring above his age. After the year 987 Michinaga becomes somebody who counts in the bureaucratic and fashionable circles of the Capital, and so facts concerning his person become more and more plentiful. Before this year there are only two incidents noted down in the *Ōkagami*⁹,

⁵ The Lesser Commander of the Left Imperial Bodyguard. There were two Lesser, two Middle, and two High Commanders: of the Left (*sa*-) Imperial Bodyguard and of the Right (*u*-) Imperial Bodyguard.

⁶ The Master of the Left Side of the Capital.

⁷ The festival of the Kamo Shrine celebrated in the fourth moon of every year was the most important and the most magnificent of all annual ceremonies.

⁸ According to ancient regulations still valid in the Heian era there were strict rules concerning colours of costumes worn by the Court officials. Some colours were reserved for the Imperial Family and forbidden for commoners.

⁹ The *Ōkagami* (The Great Mirror) belongs to the literary kind of, so called, *rekishi-monogatari* or historical tales. There are eight existing historical tales written in different periods and by different authors. All of them taken together relate the Japanese history in the narrative form from the legendary age of gods until the beginning of the Tokugawa era (XVII century). The *Ōkagami* covers the period between 850 and 1025. The authorship and the date of composition are still discussed. It gives records of fourteen reigns (from Montoku *Tennō* to Goichijō *Tennō*) and biographies of twenty Fujiwara ministers. The biography of Michinaga is the longest one. Even if there are some errors in dating and a few factual discrepancies, the *Ōkagami* is considered a credible source of historical information.

two in the *Shōyūki*¹⁰, and one in the *Eiga-monogatari*¹¹. Most of the data must be, therefore, taken from the *Kuge-bunin*.

But, to begin from the beginning: Michinaga was born in 966 as the fifth son of Kaneie and Tokihime (de domo Fujiwara). Two of his elder brothers, Michitsuna and Michiyoshi, as sons of secondary wives were not in a position to rivalize with Michinaga in his later ambitious aims. But it was not the case with Michitaka and Michikane. Both of them had a good head-start on Michinaga, Michitaka being 14 years and Michikane 6 years older, and both of them were born by Tokihime, the principal wife of Kaneie. There was no love lost among the three brothers and Michinaga was lucky enough to survive his elder brothers while he himself was quite young.

Michitsuna and Michiyoshi had no claims to be in line for succession to the office of *Kampaku*¹² or to the position of *Uji-no chōja*¹³. Michitaka and Michikane were, and thus Michinaga, being the third in line, had to outwit or outlive them. In the *Eiga-monogatari* there is given a short introductory characteristic of the three rivalizing brothers¹⁴. The opinion concerning Michitaka is rather indifferent, with some slight emphasis put on his principal wife's learning. Michikane is described as a very bad-looking and bad-tempered man¹⁵. Michinaga is much praised, his apparition as well as his character. He is then a 20 years old youth of clear mind and pious heart, not avoiding love affairs but not thinking about marriage either.

¹⁰ The *Shōyūki* (read also *Ouki*) is the diary of Fujiwara Sanesuke (957—1046) written between the years 978—1032. Sanesuke was a cousin of Michinaga. He was a man of upright character, very serious-minded, and with the makings of an excellent historian. He watched Michinaga's career with a wary and often critical eye and noted down his observations in the diary. Thanks to it, the *Shōyūki* forms a very important source of facts and opinions on Michinaga.

¹¹ The *Eiga-monogatari* (The Tale of Splendour) is another of historical tales. Similarly to the case of the *Ōkagami* the authorship and the date of composition are not clear. It covers a period of about 200 years from the reign of Uda Tennō (887—897) to the year 1192. The main purpose of the *Eiga-monogatari* was praising Michinaga's power and prosperity of his family. But there are also many side-issues dealing with various aspects of Court life. The story is rather verbose, the dates often not clear or incorrect. In comparison with the *Ōkagami* it gives a more vivid picture of everyday life, but as a historical material it should be treated with the greatest caution.

¹² The Regent after a reigning Emperor had attained maturity. It was the most desirable and lucrative office. In the Heian period it was traditionally occupied by a member of the Fujiwara clan.

¹³ The head of a clan. This position was much desired because precious heirlooms were being handed to each respective *Uji-no chōja*.

¹⁴ It is in the chapter "*Samazama-no yorokobi*" which covers the years 985—991.

¹⁵ "*Sesshō-dono [Kaneie]-no jirōgimi Saishō-dono [Michikane]-wa onkaoiro ashū, kebukaku, koto-no hoka-ni minikuku owasuru-ni, onkokorazama imijū rōrōjū-o oshū, ke osorosiki-made wazurawashū saganau owashite...*", The *Eiga-monogatari*, Iwanami-shoten, 1964, V.I, p. 105.

This opinion expressed by the *Eiga-monogatari*, written years after death of the brothers, could be treated with some hesitation as influenced by their respective positions at their more advanced ages. But it does not disagree with all known facts, the only doubt being Michinaga's supposedly pious heart. In this respect the chronicler in his (her?) eagerness was taken too far. In his young years Michinaga participated in many festivals, pilgrimages, and other religious observances which were fashionable and formed a part of social life, but were remotely connected with the spirit of religion. Michinaga's interest in religious matters came very late in his life and even then it is rather difficult to appraise its depth.

The episodes in the *Ōkagami* referring to years before 987 are intended to show Michinaga not only as a daring and courageous man but also as a man superior to his elder brothers Michitaka and Michikane. The first episode is not dated at all but it is safe to assume that it refers to Michinaga's early years since it is said that "he (Michinaga) was very young in age and appearance"¹⁶. One day father Kaneie spoke highly about his nephew Kintō's talents and he expressed his regret that none of his own sons would step on Kintō's shadow.¹⁷ Michitaka and Michikane listening to father's bitter words did not even try to protest. They "looked ashamed as if really they believed that it was just as Kaneie had said, and they did not say a word"¹⁸. But Michinaga protested at once and promised to step not only on Kintō's shadow, but on his face as well: "Not stepping on his shadow how would I be able to step on his face?"¹⁹

The next episode is placed at the time of Kazan Tennō's reign²⁰. One rainy night in the fifth moon the Emperor appeared in the *Denjōnoma*²¹ where many of his courtiers and attendants were gathered. The conversation turned to ghosts and other fearful stories. When the Emperor judged that the mental atmosphere had thickened enough he asked if there was anybody who would go to a distant, lonely place? In answer there was a chorus of protesting voices. But then a solo voice was heard,

¹⁶ "Kono Nyūdō-dono [Michinaga] ito wakaku owashimasu o-karada-nite" ... *Ōkagami*, Iwanami-shoten, 1967, p. 217.

¹⁷ "Waga kodomo-no kage-dani fumubeku-mo aranu-koso, kuchioshikere" *ibid.*, p. 217. The expression „kage fumu” — “to step on one's shadow” is translated here literally. It is an idiom, but its meaning seems to be quite obvious: “to overtake”, “to be equal to”.

¹⁸ "Naka-no kampaku-dono [Michitaka], Awata-dono [Michikane]-nado-wa, ge-ni samoto-ya obosuran-to hazukashigenaru o-keshiki-nite, monomono tamawanu-ni..." *Ibid.*

¹⁹ "Kage-o-ba fumade, tsura-o-ya-wa fumanu", *ibidem*. Michinaga used here the same expression that had been used by Kaneie: “kage fumu”, but he made it more emphatic promising to step on the face, meaning that he would not only be equal to Kintō, but he would outmatch him. Mrs. Yoneyama Chiyoko interpretes this passage as an evident sign of Michinaga's cruelty (*Ōchō-no onnakeizu*, Kawajima-shoten 1966, p. 158).

²⁰ 984—986.

²¹ A chamber in the Inner Palace (*Dairi*) where Emperors often repaired for informal chatting and amusements.

that of Michinaga who told that he would go to any place chosen by the Emperor. The Emperor, who was a mere boy himself (not more than 17 years old), took the initiative enthusiastically and ordered Michitaka, Michikane and Michinaga to leave at once and go to three different pavilions: Michitaka to the Burakuin, Michikane to the Jijūden, Michinaga to the Daigokuden²². The three young men left the *Denjō-noma* together and separated outside. Both elder brothers very soon were back, shaken and frightened, without reaching their destinations. The night outside was full of supernatural phenomena and they were not prepared to fight with them... Only Michinaga's absence was prolonged so much that they began to wonder. But at last he appeared, calm and unruffled, and brought with him a piece of wood which he had carved off from a pillar of the throne standing in the Daigokuden. His boldness was so incredible that the next day Kazan *Tennō* sent somebody to the Daigokuden with an order to compare the piece of wood with the hole in the pillar. They matched perfectly.

Thus both, the *Ōkagami* and *Eiga-monogatari*, are in harmony in their treatment of Michinaga's early years. Their purpose is clear: to show Michinaga's superiority over his elder brothers from the very beginning.

There is still one more episode in the *Ōkagami* which may be assigned to the same period, but as it is not dated and the internal evidence is contradictory, there is no agreement among the researchers. It is a story of an archery contest held in front of the Southern Pavilion of Michitaka's Tōsanjō Mansion. There were some courtiers shooting arrows, among them Michitaka and his favourite son Korechika. Suddenly Michinaga appeared and challenged Korechika. The latter was shooting badly and his arrows missed the target going completely astray, while Michinaga's arrows hit exactly the same spot one after another and with such terrible force that the target-board was almost pierced. Before shooting each arrow he challenged loudly the Fate: "If Emperors and Empresses are to be born to Michinaga's family, let the arrow hit!"²³ and then: "If I am destined to become Sesshō²⁴ and Kampaku, let the arrow hit!"²⁵ The effect of his vows and hits was tremendous. Michitaka in the state of hysterical excitement interrupted the game.

The story looks like a piece of embroidery typical for a paean of the *Ōkagami* sort. But even if we are to believe that it had happened just as it was narrated, and if further we are to believe that the contest was held in 987, then there is no special credit in it for Michinaga. It was quite natural for Korechika to be beaten. He was at the time a boy of 12, while Michinaga was 21 and, as *Sashōjō* and *Sakyō-no daibu*, he had had plenty of opportunities to practice archery. As for his vows, there was nothing extraordinary about them since such and similar mystic declarations were

²² The Burakuin, Jijūden and Daigokuden were pavilions on the Palace grounds. The Daigokuden was furthest from the *Denjōnoma*.

²³ "*Michinaga-ga ie-yori mikado, kisakitachi tamaubeki mono naraba kono ya atare*", *Ōkagami*, p. 222.

²⁴ A Regent during an Emperor's minority.

²⁵ "*Sesshō, Kampaku subeki mono naraba kono ya atare*", *Ōkagami*, *ibid.*

very fashionable at the time. And as the contest story opens a sequence of incidents concerning rivalization between Michinaga and Korechika the emphasis is put not on the vows but on Michinaga's victory over his nephew. It is, perhaps, one more argument against assigning the story to the year 987 or an earlier one. Up to that time Korechika was simply too young to be a serious rival for Michinaga.

That Michinaga participated in archery contests there is at least one factual, not legendary, evidence. *Fujiwara Sanesuke* describes in his diary such a contest under the date of the eighteenth day of the first moon of 987 and notes that *Sashōjō* Michinaga was present. But Michinaga's rôle was a very subordinate one and no dramatic story was connected with the event.

From the year 987 the story of Michinaga's life begins to unfold itself briskly. Materials are more and more plentiful. The plot thickens. Michinaga becomes a mature man.

The year 987 was important for Michinaga in two respects. By receiving the Junior Third Rank he entered the narrow circle of *kuge*,²⁶ and after being promoted to the post of *Sakyō-no daibu* he married Rinshi, his first and principal wife.

Rinshi was a daughter of *Sadaijin*²⁷ Minamoto Masanobu and Fujiwara Bokushi. She was older than Michinaga by two years. Nothing is known about the period of courtship and when finally the marriage was concluded. Probably the ceremony took place in the last moon of 987. The *Eiga-monogatari* is the only chronicle which gives account of Masanobu's unfriendly attitude toward Michinaga's matrimonial plans. He was against it, considering Michinaga to be too insignificant a person for his daughter. Besides, he cherished a plan of marrying Rinshi to one of Imperial princes. But at last he yielded to his wife's persuasions and gave his consent. We may suppose that he never regretted it (even if he did not live long enough to see his daughter's happiness at its fullest, as he died in 993) because, thanks to Michinaga, Rinshi became the first lady of the nation. She lived in luxury and elegance not surpassed by anybody and reached the age of 90, which at the time was rather exceptional. She was a lady of cheerful disposition and her relations with Michinaga were harmonious and fruitful — she gave birth to six children. Both her sons became *Kampaku*, and all her daughters were married into the Imperial Family. As a mother-in-law and grandmother of emperors she was the most successful of all the other ladies, before and after her. There was, indeed, nothing lacking in her prosperity and personal happiness. Michinaga was conscious of the fact and, as a man of not very modest disposition, he publicly expressed his satisfaction. Lady *Murasaki* noted in her diary²⁸ that on the 50th night ceremony after Prince Atsuhira's birth Michinaga, being completely intoxicated, boasted loudly how good a husband he was and what a happy woman was Rinshi! This vigorous but incoherent speech forced the good lady to leave the chamber. She was followed by her pompous husband, not very steady on his legs.

²⁶ The highest court aristocracy from the Third Rank up.

²⁷ The Great Minister of the Left.

²⁸ *Murasaki-Shikibu-nikki*, Iwanami-shoten, 1958, p. 472. The same episode we may find in the *Eiga-monogatari*, Iwanami-shoten, 1964, v. I, p. 273.

II. Michinaga's career — the competitive years 988—996

The year 988 saw Michinaga engulfed in his private affairs. He was not promoted in his rank, but on the twenty ninth day of the first moon he was nominated *Gonchū-nagon*²⁹.

On the same day he probably resigned his previous office of *Sakyō-no daibu* (the *Kuge-bunin* notes that on this day Minamoto Yasukiyo got the office).

Being father in spe did not prevent Michinaga from another amorous, and, as it turned out, serious engagement. There was Meishi, a young princess at the Court of Empress Senshi. The Empress was Michinaga's elder sister and consort of ex-Emperor En'yū. Princess Meishi, as a special favourite of kindhearted Empress Senshi, was brought up in the atmosphere of palatial luxury with other princesses of royal blood, although she herself was an orphan and there was a cloudy reputation surrounding her father Minamoto Takaaki³⁰. Empress Senshi took care of the girl's education and proper marriage. Since Michinaga was a favourite brother of the Empress, she pursued him to take Meishi as a secondary wife. Michinaga consented gladly. His decision could have been prompted by the fact that his brother Michitaka wanted to win Meishi for himself.

It is not known when he visited his new bride and when she was proclaimed to be his wife. In the *Eiga-monogatari* the description of his liaison with Meishi is put after the description of Rinshi's happy delivery of her first child. But it seems to be more probable that the new marriage preceded Rinshi's delivery by some two or three months. The conclusion is not based on any evidence (which does not exist) but on the principle of human behaviour. A man of Michinaga's temperament would seek an escape from his wife deformed by pregnancy and look elsewhere for a more attractive woman. Besides, could he after the birth of his first child have enough spare time for visiting Meishi, composing necessary poems, writing love-letters, and for other time-consuming activities leading to a properly concluded marriage?

The first child born by Rinshi was a girl, Shōshi. It is not clear in which moon she was born. The *Eiga-monogatari*, avoiding the date, gives a vivid picture of joy and festivity in the Tsuchimikado Mansion, where Rinshi lived. Messengers from Kaneie and Empress Dowager Senshi had been coming one after another to ask the news. When, at last, Kaneie was informed about the happy event, he was overcome with joy and pronounced his belief that the girl would become an empress some day. He was not mistaken in his prophecy. Shōshi turned out to be a true "*medetaki onna*" — "blessed girl" (this term was applied if the first-born child was a girl. It meant that she had a chance to become an empress).

²⁹ There were three grades of *Nagon* or Counsellors: *Shō*- the Lesser. *Chū*- the Middle, and *Dai*- the Great. *Gon* in this case means acting or vice-.

³⁰ Minamoto Takaaki in 969 was suspected of plotting to install Tamehira Shinnō on the throne. As a result he was banished to Tsukushi. Meishi was then adopted by his brother Moriaki Shinnō.

The third night's ceremony³¹ was performed in the Tsuchimikado, the fifth night's ceremony in the *Sesshō* Kaneie's Mansion, and the seventh night was celebrated by Empress Dowager Senshi.

As for Michinaga's personal career the next year (989) was almost uneventful, his only nomination being that of *Uemon-no kami*³². And yet, from his egoistic point of view, the year was not quite lost: on the twenty sixth day of the sixth moon died *Dajōdaijin*³³ Yoritada and few months later, on the twentieth day of the twelfth moon the office was taken by Kaneie. The results of that were evident soon: on the seventh day of the first moon of 900 Kaneie's sons were promoted. Michinaga got the Senior Third Rank.

Thus the beginning was good, but the rest of the year was full of grief and disappointment.

Ichijō Tennō³⁴ underwent the ceremony of attaining manhood (*gempuku*) on the fifth day of the first moon and soon after the ceremony Michitaka's daughter Teishi was installed in the Palace. On the eleventh day of the second moon she was made *Nyōgo*³⁵ and after a few months interval she was raised in rank again.

Meanwhile Kaneie fell ill and resigned his offices of *Dajōdaijin* and *Sesshō* (on the fifth day of the fifth moon). The same day he got an Imperial Decree nominating him *Kampaku*. On the eighth day of the same moon he shaved his head³⁶ and passed the office to his eldest son Michitaka. He was preparing himself for death. The Nijōkyōgoku Mansion was transformed into a temple (named Hōkō-in) and Kaneie repaired there. His position of *Uji-no chōja* was transferred to Michitaka, too (on the thirteenth day of the fifth moon).

Kaneie died on the second day of the seventh moon.

The chronology of events concerning Michitaka and Teishi between the fifth moon and the end of the year is somewhat confused. According to the *Eiga-monogatari*, on the eighth day of the fifth moon Michitaka got the *Sesshō-no senji*³⁷. According to the *Kuge-bunin* and *Nihon-kiryaku*³⁸ on that day he was given the title of *Kampaku* which, at the first sight, looks more probable since it was the title inherited from his father after the latter's resignation. Besides, *Ichijō Tennō* was already after

³¹ It was customary to celebrate the third, fifth and seventh nights after a child was born. Sometimes the fiftieth and hundredth nights were celebrated, too.

³² The Vice-Commander of the Gate Guards of the Right.

³³ The Prime Minister, the President of *Dajōkan*.

³⁴ Ichijō Tennō — son of En'yū Tennō and Empress Senshi, born 981, ascended the throne in 986.

³⁵ An Imperial Consort of low rank.

³⁶ Shaving one's head was the first (often the only) ritual when one wanted to become a Buddhist monk (or nun).

³⁷ *Senji* — an Imperial Decree.

³⁸ *Nihon-kiryaku* (The Abbreviated Chronicles of Japan) — a historical work describing the Japanese history from the legendary period of gods until the reign of Goichijō Tennō (1017—1036). It is unknown when and by whom the work was compiled.

the *gempuku* ceremony and the office of *Sesshō* could have been changed to that of *Kampaku*. But no. In the same sources (the *Kuge-bunin* and *Nihon-kiryaku*) under the date of the twenty sixth day of the fifth moon there is an entry stating that on this day Michitaka was nominated *Sesshō*, which was a strange happening, as the reigning Emperor was the same all the time — Ichijō Tennō. To be nominated *Kampaku* after serving as *Sesshō* it was a natural thing to happen. But to be re-named *Sesshō* after being *Kampaku* that was a strange event, indeed. In this case there would be two explanations possible: 1) both titles, *Sesshō* and *Kampaku*, colloquially had the same meaning and could be used interchangeably 2) the nomination of Kaneie, and subsequently Michitaka, to the office of *Kampaku* had been too hasty and later on it was corrected by re-naming Michitaka *Sesshō*. He was finally made *Kampaku* three years later, on the twenty second day of the fourth moon, when the Emperor was 13 years old.

The other tangled chronology concerns Michitaka's daughter Teishi. According to the *Eiga-monogatari* and *Ōkagami*, she was raised to the rank of Empress with the title of *Kisaki*³⁹ on the first day of the sixth moon. The sources are both contradicted by the *Nihon-kiryaku* and *Ōkagami-uragaki*, where the date as well as the title are different. It is noted there that Teishi's title was changed from *Nyōgo* to *Chūgū* on the fifth day of the tenth moon. It is supported by the *Kuge-bunin* under the entry *Michinaga*: "...On the fifth day of the tenth moon nominated additionally *Chūgū-no daibu*⁴⁰ (the day of Teishi's promotion)..."

In the *Eiga-monogatari* version the nomination of Michinaga to the office of *Chūgū-no daibu* is inserted between the date of Teishi's promotion to the rank of *Kisaki* (which lacks logic) and the date of Kaneie's death. It is incorrect, but it may be understood as a simple consequence of the first error (the date of Teishi's promotion). But we may assume that the *Eiga-monogatari* is not in error describing Michinaga's disappointment and complete lack of enthusiasm for his new office. One of the duties of *Chūgū-no daibu* was that similar to the present day's publicity agent. How could Michinaga like such a function? He himself had ambitious plans of establishing the *gaiseki*⁴¹ relations between the Imperial Family and his own. At the time he was very young and his first (by then — the only) daughter Shōshi was just two years old. He had to wait a long time yet — so far it was quite obvious. But to serve as *Chūgū-no daibu* at the Court of his disliked brother's daughter — that was, certainly, too much for him...

Even, if that was a bitter pill to swallow, it was not the end of Michinaga's displeasure... After all proper ceremonies and observances following Kaneie's funeral had passed, Michitaka began to govern the country, triumphant and full of energy. It became evident soon what his course was. He did not concentrate on public matters so much as on his own family. The tendency itself was neither new nor strange in

³⁹ *Kisaki* and *Chūgū* were Imperial Consorts of higher rank than *Nyōgo*.

⁴⁰ The Master of the Empress (*Chūgū*) Household.

⁴¹ Relations with the Imperial Family through ladies of one's household.

the Heian period. But from Michinaga's point of view Michitaka's behaviour became intolerable.

In the next year (991) Michitaka's favourite son Korechika advanced to the office of *Sangi* (a Counsellor), Junior Third Rank. It was on the twenty seventh day of the first moon. Korechika was then only 17 years old. On the twenty second day of the seventh moon Michitaka's father-in-law, Takashina Naritada, was raised to the Junior Second Rank overstepping the Senior Third Rank. There were precedents of such a rapid advancement, but in this case it was symptomatic of Michitaka's policy.

On the seventh day of the ninth moon Korechika was nominated *Gonchūnagon* while Michinaga advanced to *Gondainagon*. Michitaka resigned his office of *Naidaijin*⁴² and passed it to Michikane. The office of *Dajōdaijin* was taken by Fujiwara Tame-mitsu, former *Udaijin*⁴³ (the vacated office took Minamoto Shigenobu). Shūshi, daughter of Fujiwara Naritoki, Michitaka's friend and companion of drunken escapades, was introduced to the Crown Prince (later Sanjō *Tennō*). Naritoki himself was promoted to the office of *Dainagon* (he had been *Gondainagon*), Senior Second Rank.

The years 990—994 were the happiest and most prosperous for Michitaka's family and friends, but Michinaga's career which had been progressing so swiftly at the beginning, at that time received a check. And not only that. It was a crescendo of severe blows against his ambition and pride. On the twenty eighth day of the eighth moon of 992, when the summer list of promotions was proclaimed, Michinaga found himself in the same category as his nephew Korechika, who was 8 years younger. There was still a difference in rank (Michinaga since the fourth moon had the Junior Second, while Korechika the Junior Third), but Korechika advanced to the office of *Gondainagon*, the same as Michinaga, and what was more, on the seventh day of the twelfth moon he was promoted to the Senior Third Rank.

The year 992 was full of bitterness for Michinaga as he had to look at Michitaka's prosperity, Empress Teishi's glory and Korechika's fast rise in the world. But the year was also full of other more pleasant emotions: both wives of Michinaga were pregnant, and after a period of anxious expectation and earnest prayers, both of them gave birth to boys. Rinshi bore Yorimichi, and Meishi — Yorimune.

In the next year (993) Michitaka decided that Ichijō *Tennō* was a mature man and, consequently, on the twenty second day of the fourth moon he changed his own title from *Sesshō* to *Kampaku*. According to the *Eiga-monogatari*, about that time he installed his second daughter, Genshi, at the Court of the Crown Prince and the fourth daughter in the Imperial Palace, where she was employed as the lady in charge of the Imperial Wardrobe. She was called *Mikushige-dono*. The third daughter became a concubine of Atsumichi *Shinnō*⁴⁴. Thus Michitaka's position as a potential grandfather of future emperors seemed to be secure.

⁴² The Great Minister of the Middle.

⁴³ The Great Minister of the Right.

⁴⁴ *Shinnō* was a title given to Princes of blood.

The next blow fell on Michinaga in 994. Young Korechika was nominated *Nai-daijin* on the twenty eighth day of the eighth moon overstepping three other men⁴⁵, Michinaga among them, and becoming Great Minister at the age of 20! This sudden stroke of luck for Korechika was possible as a result of chain reaction caused by death of Minamoto Masanobu, who had been *Sadaijin*. On the twenty sixth day of the seventh moon of 993 he shaved his head and on the twenty ninth day he died⁴⁶. In 994 for the office of *Sadaijin* was chosen the former *Udajin* Minamoto Shigenobu. The vacated office took Fujiwara Michikane, who had resigned the office of *Nai-daijin*, which subsequently was given to Korechika.

Takaie, a younger brother of Korechika (of the same mother), then 15 years old boy, was promoted to the Junior Third Rank, Michiyori, the first son of Michitaka (but born by a Tachibana lady), who had not been loved much by his father and had been adopted by Kaneie, now advanced rapidly overstepping five other men, from *Gonchūnagon* to *Gondainagon*, and he became equal to Michinaga in office, although not in rank (he had the Senior Third Rank, age 23).

Michinaga reacted to the news by closing himself at his home. We may suppose that his voluntary retreat was not an unpleasant one, as Rinshi in the third moon bore a girl, Kenshi. In the same year, on some later date Meishi bore a boy, Akinobu. Besides, it was much safer to stay at home. In spring the Capital was attacked by smallpox and great many people were dying in the streets. They laid there, not buried after death, and dogs and birds ate the bodies spreading the epidemic. There were special measures taken. All monks and priests were busy with prayers, incantations, reading sutras etc., and an amnesty was proclaimed. But everything in vain. The epidemic increased rather through the summer taking more and more victims from all strata of society.

In the midst of this misery and public unrest there was a period of festivity, too, when Lady Shūshi gave birth to the Crown Prince's first son, Prince Atsuakira, on the ninth day of the fifth moon. The infant's grandfather Naritoki was in excellent spirits. He could not suppose then that his span of life was to be ended abruptly. He fell a victim to the epidemic and died in the fourth moon of the next year.

At the end of 994 *Kampaku* Michitaka fell ill. His illness was not caused by the epidemic, it was the result of excessive drinking. At the beginning of 995 (on the twenty sixth day of the second moon) he submitted to the Throne his resignation of the office. The resignation was not sanctioned by the Emperor, but Michitaka could not appear at Court. On the ninth day of the third moon he caused an Imperial

⁴⁵ *Dainagon* Asateru, the Senior Second Rank (age 43), *Dainagon* Naritoki, the Senior Second Rank, (53). *Gondainagon* Michinaga, the Junior Second Rank, (28). All of them were Fujiwaras.

⁴⁶ There is in the *Eiga-monogatari* ("Mihatenu yume") a strange commentary concerning his death: knowing about Rinshi's pregnancy he wanted to die in order to secure a happy delivery for her. Rinshi, indeed, gave birth to a girl in the third moon of the next year. It means eight or nine months after Masanobu's death. How could he have been so anxious about her?...

decree (*senji*) to be issued according to which the title of *Nairan* was conferred upon Korechika. It was written in the *senji* that Korechika was to perform his duties "during the *Kampaku*'s illness". In this manner it was still an open question who would succeed Michitaka after his death. The word *Nairan* colloquially was used as a title, but strictly speaking it was a privilege to look into the Emperor's private and official documents. A man invested with the privilege was expected to perform the duties reserved for *Kampaku*, but informally.

On the third day of the fourth moon Michitaka finally resigned his office and three days later "entered religion". The same day his principal wife shaved her head, too. It was rather evident that entering religion Michitaka did not enter the spirit of religion. Lying on his death-mat he refused to pray to Amida but asked anxiously, if he would meet his old cronies, Naritoki and Asateru⁴⁷, in the other world. In such a hopeful state of mind he died on the tenth day of the fourth moon.

The days which followed Michitaka's death were full of suspense and mixed emotions in every quarter. Korechika, without any regard for proper observances connected with mourning, took over the reins of government. Judging by his selfish and high-handed behaviour he was sure to succeed his father as *Kampaku*. It was quite a reasonable expectation. Michitaka was the eldest of Kaneie's sons and Korechika was recognized as the eldest son of Michitaka. Besides, he had been really a very popular person at the Court. He was a favourite brother of *Chūgū* Teishi and he was liked much by the Emperor himself. Michitaka had not spared any effort and had not wasted any chance to speed Korechika's rise in the court hierarchy. And yet, during his father's illness and in the period following his death, Korechika was too eager to grasp the authority and made some heavy blunders. Perhaps he was simply too young and careless, but in consequence there were some critical voices raised doubting his competency. Grandfather Naritada, who had become a monk⁴⁸, being probably in doubt himself, was spending days and nights on prayer for Korechika's nomination, proving by it that he was not completely indifferent to mundane affairs. Korechika was all for it and incited grandpa to still bigger efforts in his pious activities.

At the same time Michikane was living in the state of mental torment. In his opinion, he was the man to succeed brother Michitaka. But he considered Korechika's position as a claimant to be strong as well. He was torn between hope and distress. One night he had an ominous dream. Masters of *Ōmmyō-ryo*⁴⁹ were engaged to interpret it and they advised Michikane to change his living quarters. Michikane obeyed and moved to the mansion of Sukeyuki, a former governor of Izumo. To this mansion was brought the Imperial Decree nominating Michikane to the much desired office of *Kampaku*. It was on the twenty seventh day of the fourth moon. The

⁴⁷ Asateru died on the twentieth day of the third moon. The last of the three celebrated drunkards, Naritoki, followed soon: he died on the twenty third day of the fourth moon of 995.

⁴⁸ In the tenth moon of 992.

⁴⁹ The Department of Divination in the Ministry of Central Affairs.

next day Michikane was made *Uji-no chōja*. He returned to his Nijō Mansion in triumph.

Korechika was defeated and sunk into the state of depression.

Michinaga, who had been on tenterhooks like everybody else, was now satisfied that the office had not gone to his nephew. Besides, on the twenty seventh day of the same moon he was nominated *Sadaishō*⁵⁰. The office had been vacated after Naritoki's death.

Michikane gave the customary banquet, but it was a very sad affair as the host himself could not participate in it. He had been taken ill and his condition was growing worse and worse. He died on the eighth day of the fifth moon. Posthumously he was made *Dajōdaijin*, Senior First Rank, but popularly he was called "*Nanuka-no Kampaku*", i.e. "The Seven Days' *Kampaku*" because so long (or rather so short) lasted his triumph⁵¹.

The pendulum swang again. Again there came a period of suspense. The fast change of scenery in the official world made Michinaga dazed. He felt as if he was walking in a dream (the *Ōkagami* and *Eiga-monogatari* both use the same metaphor). Now the situation was for him much more interesting than it had been after Michitaka's death. Then he had not had any chance, while at present it was an even bet who would get the *Kampaku-no senji*: he himself or Korechika?

Korechika was again full of hope and Naritada was again absorbed in pious prayers.

The time was a truly hectic one. A new wave of epidemic was swallowing one victim after another. During the fourth, fifth, and sixth moons died: *Kampaku* Michikane, *Sadaijin* Minamoto Shigenobu, *Dainagon* Fujiwara Naritoki, *Dainagon* Fujiwara Asateru, *Dainagon* Fujiwara Michiyori, *Chūnagon* Minamoto Yasumitsu, *Gon-chūnagon* Minamoto Koretaka, the former governor of Izumo Sukeyuki, and many others.⁵² Thus by this horrible turn of events the highest offices of the State had been vacated and waited to be filled again under a new authority.

There was every indication that Korechika was stronger as a candidate. But in the most critical moment there appeared on the scene the ex-Empress Dowager Senshi, who had become a nun⁵³ and under the name of Tōsanjō-in lived in Michinaga's mansion. She stormed to the Palace and entered the bedchamber of her son, Ichijō Tennō. When she left it, her eyes were reddened with crying but her lips were smiling. She announced that the *Nairan-no senji* was issued in favour of Michinaga.⁵⁴ Michinaga got it on the eleventh day of the fifth moon.

Korechika and his family were crestfallen. Especially, as Michinaga's fortune took now quite an obvious turn. He was nominated *Udaijin* on the nineteenth day of the sixth moon and on the same day the dignity of *Uji-no chōja* was bestowed

⁵⁰ The High Commander of the Imperial Bodyguard of the Left.

⁵¹ The banquet marking the installation into the office took place on the second day of the fifth moon. Thus actually Michikane was *Kampaku* for seven days.

⁵² Michitaka is not listed here, because his death was not caused by the epidemic.

⁵³ On the sixteenth day of the ninth moon of 991.

⁵⁴ This version is given in the *Ōkagami* only, but it sounds quite plausible.

upon him. On the twenty eighth day of the seventh moon he became additionally nominated *Kurandodokoro-no bettō*⁵⁵.

Thus for Michinaga the year 995 was, perhaps, the most important one. What had been a calamity for other families, for him became an unexpected stroke of luck. Thanks to many factors crowded in a relatively short space of time, he could have been raised to such a position that his authority almost could not have been threatened seriously. Almost, but not quite...

There was still unfortunate Korechika, a popular man-about-town who, in spite of his rash behaviour after Michitaka's death was still liked at Court and was still favoured by his sister, *Chūgū* Teishi. And Teishi, in turn, was still the most dearly loved of all Emperor's ladies. It was a strong combination in times when relations through women of the household with the Imperial Family were more important than anything else, when a poem or a phrase nicely coined could open the way to the highest offices easier than practical skill in administration.

As it was stated at the beginning, there was no love lost between Michinaga and his elder brothers. But various suggestions scattered in the *Ōkagami* about enmity and rivalry between Michinaga and Korechika prior to Kaneie's death seem to be rather farfetched. Until Kaneie's death there was no reason to fear or to be jealous of each other. Even, if they disliked each other, they had no opportunity to be rivals in the official world. But the situation changed when Michitaka became *Kampaku* and began his vigorous action of promoting his sons and friends. It was an insult for Michinaga, and for Korechika it was opening new, attractive perspectives which he would not like to give up. In such a set of circumstances a development of bitter hostility was inevitable. As a result two fractions were formed. In one of them was Korechika and Takaie supported modestly by *Chūgū* Teichi (she was a modest and shy lady) and her Court. In the other was Michinaga and his elder sister, the powerfully operative nun Tōsanjō-in. Above them stood much embarrassed Emperor Ichijō, torn between his consort and his mother.

The war did not stop after Michinaga's nomination to *Nairan* and *Udaijin*. On the contrary — it became more heated. Delicate palace gossips and harem intrigues were not enough. It came to open battles fought by men of both families in the streets of the Capital of Peace and Tranquility⁵⁶. One of Michinaga's men was even killed... The pious monk, Takashina Naritada, made use of the most, in his opinion, effective weapon and cursed Michinaga.

Of the two rivals Michinaga was more mature, more concentrated on his purpose and, perhaps, more patient. Moreover, luck played into his hands again.

Young Korechika, spoiled and reckless, was unable to behave unobtrusively and with some deliberation. He became soon entangled in a scandalous affair which was to finish his promising career suddenly and irrevocably.

Since the end of 995 he was visiting the third daughter of the late Fujiwara Tame-mitsu. There was nothing wrong in the fact itself. But after some time Korechika

⁵⁵ The Chief of the *Kurandodokoro*.

⁵⁶ Heian-kyō (the Capital of Peace and Tranquility) was an old name of Kyōto.

got an intelligence that there was some monk visiting the same house at night. There lived more than one lady, but Korechika being of jealous disposition suspected the lady of his heart. After consulting the matter with Takaie he decided to scare the mysterious intruder away. One night (on the sixteenth day of the first moon of 996) they both lay in ambush waiting for the monk. And, indeed, he came lurking in the shadows of the night. Both young gentlemen shot arrows at him. The philandering monk turned out to be nobody else but Kazan *Hōō* — the Retired Priestly Emperor Kazan. His sacrosanct flesh was not injured, only a sleeve of his priestly robe was pierced.

Shooting at an Emperor and a monk in one person was a double bad luck, because all offences against persons of both categories were treated as sacrilegious deeds. This affair of the Fujiwara brothers became soon a cause célèbre exciting public attention and inducing all kinds of gossip and comments.

It is not quite clear if Korechika and Takaie had known the identity of the romantic monk. At any rate the bare facts were against them. Some people were sympathizing with them, others were condemning, while a council of learned lawyers was debating about a proper punishment.

It may be supposed that Michinaga and Tōsanjō-in did not pour oil on the waters. For Michinaga the affair opened an excellent chance to get rid of the rival and he had, in accordance with the rules of political game of the period, to catch this chance. From his point of view, he had to sink Korechika as deeply as possible. So far, there can be no doubt. But one may find it hard to believe that Michinaga was the master-mind behind the plot. There exists such a suggestion expressed by some modern authors. Perhaps they follow a passage in the *Ōkagami* where Shigeki⁵⁷ relates a conversation of Michinaga and Takaie. Michinaga protested against accusing him of deliberate manoeuvre preceding the brothers' affair. And then Shigeki comments: "Indeed, he (Michinaga) could say so because it was this gentleman (Takaie). But would he have spoken in such a manner to *Sochidono* (Korechika)?"⁵⁸, implying by it that Michinaga tried to utilize Takaie's naiveté and told a bare-faced lie.

The affair happened in real life, not in a detective story, where a diabolical criminal plots his crimes with a superhuman ability to foresee every reaction of his opponents. Michinaga was clever but, even if he had passed the information about the visiting monk to Korechika, he could not have counted on Korechika to be crazy enough to shoot arrows.

Nevertheless Michinaga had not been so innocent as he wanted to persuade Takaie. Learned jurists, discussing the matter, were inclined to put the blame on servants and by this stratagem to save faces of Korechika and Takaie. In this phase of discussion Michinaga's fraction found out other charges, namely, that Korechika had put a curse on the ex-Empress Dowager Tōsanjō-in (she was seriously ill in the third moon), and that he had performed rites forbidden for the laity.

⁵⁷ Shigeki is one of the narrators in the *Ōkagami*.

⁵⁸ "*Sore-mo kono tononi owasureba sayō-ni-mo ōseraruru-zo. Sochidono-ni-wa sa-made-mo-ya kikoasetamaikeru*", The *Ōkagami*, p. 189—190.

At last both unfortunate brothers were sentenced to banishment from the Capital: Korechika was sent to Dazaifu, Takaie to Izumo as vice-governors. They left Heian-kyō sunk in deep despair in first days of the fifth moon. *Chūgū* Teishi was greatly depressed, too, especially, as she was pregnant at the time. Her distress influenced Emperor Ichijō, who sent messengers after the banished brothers with Imperial Rescripts changing their destinations- Korechika to Harima, Takaie to Tamba. But later on Korechika secretly visited the Capital and, in consequence, he had to go to Dazaifu according to the first decision.

With the removal of the only serious competitor Michinaga could begin to prosper. On the twentieth day of the seventh moon he was nominated *Sadaijin*, Senior Second Rank. As there was no *Dajōdaijin* nor *Kampaku* at the time his office was the highest one. And yet he could not be completely easy in his mind. He had to be on alert, because he had not formed the *gaiseki* relation yet. And meanwhile his cousin Akimitsu, who had succeeded him to the office of *Udaijin*, introduced his daughter Genshi to the Emperor. Another cousin, Kinsue, gave his daughter Gishi to the Emperor, too. Here was imminent danger for Michinaga whose daughters were still too young to be installed in the Palace.

But after all, the year 996 was a good one for Michinaga in every respect. Not only did he make the next big step in his official career but he was also fortunate in his family life. In both his mansions two healthy boys were born: Norimichi by Rinshi and Yoshinobu by Meishi.

III. The years of consolidation 997—1011

In the next year (997) Michinaga's sister Tōsanjō-in fell ill and on behalf of her recovery an amnesty was proclaimed on the twenty fifth day of the third moon. Thanks to it, both banished brothers, Korechika and Takaie, could return to the Heian-kyō. Michinaga, who at that time was already at the top of the official hierarchy, welcomed them in a friendly manner. According to the *Ōkagami* he was even making great efforts in order to befriend Takaie, who was rather wild and openly ill-disposed toward Michinaga (and no wonder!). After some time both brothers were at last captivated by a steady stream of charm and benevolence flowing from Michinaga. At least they could not show their enmity toward somebody standing so high.

In 998, according to the *Kuge-bunin* and *Nihon-kiryaku*, Michinaga three times submitted to the Throne memorials, in which he asked to be dismissed from his office and stated his will of entering religion because of bad health. The only description of this illness we can find in the *Gonki*⁵⁹, where it is noted that Michinaga suffered severe pains in his hips, his face was contorted and, in his bad moments, he used rude and vulgar language.

The first of his memorials Michinaga submitted on the fourth day of the third moon, the last one in the seventh moon. We may suppose that, together with his recovery, his will of entering religion completely evaporated from his heart. We can

⁵⁹ A diary of Michinaga's cousin Fujiwara Yuki-nari.

see him during this year immersed in various activities not even remotely connected with renouncing the world: promoting his wife Rinshi to the Junior Third Rank (on the twenty ninth day of the tenth moon: she had been promoted to the Junior Fifth, Upper Grade on the tenth day of the first moon), introducing his eldest son Yorimichi to the Palace as a page, giving a party in order to celebrate his second son Yorimune's dressing a *hakama*⁶⁰, participating in a picnic at Uji-san, looking at a horse-race at Murasaino, and so on.

On the ninth day of the second moon of 999 there was in the Tsuchimikado Mansion a splendid celebration: Michinaga's daughter Shōshi underwent the ceremony of putting on a *mo*⁶¹, which meant that she was considered to reach maturity. She was then 11 years old. Michinaga wanted to hasten her going to Court. He was eager to form the *gaiseki* relation, and it was evident that he would spare no effort in order to make the event a memorable one. Among other items forming Shōshi's dowry there was a *byōbu* (folding screen) of great fame. Michinaga had asked Asukabe-no Tsunenori, a prominent painter, to decorate it with pictures in the *Yamato-e* style and Fujiwara Yukinari, the best calligrapher of the period, painted on it the congratulatory poems which had been sent to Shōshi.

Shōshi was installed in the Palace on the first day of the tenth moon and the splendour displayed by Michinaga at this occasion was an unparalleled one. The girl was given 40 ladies-in-attendance, and pages, and other servants — all of them chosen for their good looks, and all of them more than handsomely dressed and supplied sumptuously with elegant accessories and utensils. As the *Dairi*⁶² at that time was under construction, Shōshi and her cortège were installed in the temporary *Dairi* (Ichijō-in) in a pavillion called Fujitsubo. At once it became the center of attention of the Palace life. The Tokaden, quarters of *Chūgū* Teishi, looked poor and subdued in comparison with the resplendent Fujitsubo. But just at the time *Chūgū* Teishi could not see it because she was staying in the house of Taira Narimasa in her last days of pregnancy⁶³. She had left the Palace in the seventh moon in a rather pitiful state of mind since nobody of importance had accompanied her. Everybody had gone to attend a big party given by Michinaga at Uji. According to *Sei Shōnagon*, conditions in Narimasa's house were not proper for an Imperial Consort. Teishi had to suffer many inconveniences. She gave birth to a boy, Atsuyasu *Shinnō*, on the seventh day of the eleventh moon. On the same day Shōshi was raised to the rank of *Nyōgo* and at that night the Emperor visited her for the first time. The event was celebrated by an elegant banquet.

⁶⁰ A long splitted skirt worn by boys and girls. The ceremony of dressing a *hakama* for the first time was performed when a child was 3 or 5 years old.

⁶¹ A long skirt worn by ladies.

⁶² The *Dairi* was a set of buildings in the Greater Palace Enclosure (the *Daidairi*) where the Emperor was living. If the *Dairi* was destroyed, the Emperor and his Court were transferred to one of, so called, temporary palaces.

⁶³ For ritual reasons pregnant women were forbidden to stay in the Palace.

From then on there was rivalry between both courts, but it was rather obvious which was the winning party. Shōshi was a beautiful and, in spite of her extreme youth, serious-minded and refined lady. The Emperor was much attracted by her personal charm as well as by luxurious furnishings and many interesting objects she had around her. Besides, she was strongly favoured by Tōsanjō-in and she had the most powerful protector in the person of Michinaga.

Chūgū Teishi was not so well equipped, she was older than her rival, saddened and embittered by the fall of her own family. She had nobody to back her up and could depend only on the Emperor. Even the fact of being mother of a royal prince did not make her position much stronger. Ichijō *Tennō* himself was rather worried about the boy's future. He loved him dearly and tried to bring Michinaga over on the boy's side, knowing only too well that without a strong patronage the boy would be helpless. Michinaga met Atsuyasu *Shinnō* and got to like him. But subsequent events showed clearly that the liking was strictly personal and did not let Michinaga to forget his own selfish interests for the boy's sake.

In the next year (1000) on the twenty fifth day of the second moon *Nyōgo* Shōshi was raised to the rank of *Chūgū*, while the former *Chūgū* Teishi became *Taikō*⁶⁴. Even if Ichijō *Tennō* was attracted by Shōshi he was not estranged from Teishi. The latter, after a short stay in the Palace, had to leave it again, being again pregnant. On the fifteenth day of the twelfth moon she gave birth to a girl, Bishi *Naishinnō*⁶⁵, but she died in labour. Korechika and Takaie, who had been slowly regaining their social positions, now were sunken in despair again. Emperor Ichijō was moved so deeply that for some time he stopped his visits to Shōshi.

Tōsanjō-in took care of Teishi's daughters⁶⁶. Little Atsuyasu *Shinnō* was taken by *Mikushige-dono*. After her death Fujiwara Yukinari took charge of all the matters concerning the Prince's welfare, while the boy himself led a nomadic kind of life staying for some time with *Chūgū* Shōshi, or in one of Michinaga's mansions, or visiting Korechika and Takaie.

The year 1000 was not quite good from Michinaga's point of view, in spite of the fact that his daughter Shōshi became *Chūgū* and his wife Rinshi was promoted to the Junior Second Rank. After the period of exhausting activity leading to Shōshi's promotion, there came an exciting and unpleasant affair of his sister Yasuko⁶⁷, who had been given to the Crown Prince and after a few years of staying at his Court, forgotten and abandoned, she had an affair with Minamoto Yorisada. The Crown Prince had heard a rumour about it and asked Michinaga to investigate. Michinaga

⁶⁴ An Empress. When there were two Empresses: *Chūgū* and *Taikō*, the latter took precedence of the former.

⁶⁵ *Naishinnō* — a title given to princesses of blood.

⁶⁶ Ichijō *Tennō* had two daughters and one son born by Teishi.

⁶⁷ Yasuko was the daughter of Kaneie and a lady called Tai-no Kimi (in the *Eiga-monogatari*) or Ōmi (in the *Kagerō-nikki*), who was Fujiwara Kuniaki's daughter. Yasuko was given to the Crown Prince on the night of his *gempuku* ceremony in 987.

rushed to Yasuko's chamber and in a short but drastic scene he confirmed his worst suspicions⁶⁸. He reported it to the Crown Prince.

The story is noted in the *Ōkagami* and in the *Eiga-monogatari*, but both sources give no exact date. In the *Eiga-monogatari* it is reported just before the paragraph concerning Michinaga's illness which, in turn, is prior to illness and death of Michitsuna's wife. She died on the second day of the seventh moon of 1000. Since this date is verified by the *Gonki* it puts all this part of the relation in the year 1000. But the dating in the *Eiga-monogatari* is often erroneous and in this case there is a further discrepancy concerning the illness between the *Eiga-monogatari* and the *Midōkampaku-ki*⁶⁹. For this reason it is not sure if Yasuko's affair happened just prior to this Michinaga's illness and if there was any cause-and-result connection (which is suggested by some authors). It is not impossible. At least it is certain that a few days before falling ill, Michinaga met the Crown Prince (on the fourteenth day of the fourth moon) and together with Atsuyasu *Shinnō* and Akimitsu spent one day on a sight-seeing tour. On the twenty third day Michinaga reported in his diary that he had begun reading sutras at home and that he had not been well. The next entry is about a horse-race in the Tsuchimikado (on the twenty fifth day). Nothing about his illness. Under the dates: the twenty seventh and twenty eighth days of the fourth moon and the first, second, third days of the fifth moon he noted down (with slight variations) that from the Palace and from the Crown Prince they sent inquires about his illness.

In the *Eiga-monogatari* it is said that he fell ill while visiting the house of Minamoto Sukekata, which does not agree with the entries in the diary. Perhaps it was another relapse of disease? The *Kuge-bunin* states that "because of illness on the eighteenth day of the fifth moon he resigned the office of *Sadaijin* (the third time). Request refused. After his recovery he holds the office as before".

According to the *Gonki* evidence, the illness was a very serious one and lasted until the end of the sixth moon. Again *Yukinari* noted down (with satisfaction?) that Michinaga looked horribly with his eyes bulging and his mouth open. The cause of illness was not recognized and people wondered if it was a manifestation of avenging Michikane's ghost.

It is not clear when Michinaga recovered, but in next years we can see him busily consolidating his power. Being *Sadaijin*, while there was neither *Dajōdaijin* nor *Kampaku*, he had nobody above him on the official ladder. His family was growing stea-

⁶⁸ Michinaga twisted Yasuko's breast and then the milk squirted on his face. Mrs. Yoneyama Chiyoeko treats this incident as an evident sign of Michinaga's cruelty.

⁶⁹ *Midōkampaku-ki* (The Diary of the *Kampaku* of the Honourable Hall) — the diary of Michinaga written between the years 998—1021 (after 1019 there are only a few entries during two years). There exist 16 scrolls of the original, each scroll covering a half of a year. Besides, there exists, so called, the Old Copy (*Koshahon*) which fills some gaps. The original and/or the Old Copy are missing for the years: 1001, 1002, 1003, 1014.

dily⁷⁰ and his main concern was to give a proper start to his children's careers. Until they were too young he could concentrate on the state's affairs and enjoy life, which he was doing thoroughly. Nothing of importance from his point of view happened to his personal career in the next three years filled with various court ceremonies, many pilgrimages and elegant banquets. In 1001 Michinaga gave a big party in honour of Tōsanjō-in commemorating her 40th birthday. But soon after that she fell ill and died on the twenty second day of the twelfth moon.

When Yorimichi was 11 years old (in 1003) he underwent the ceremony of *gem-puku* and on the same day (the twentieth day of the second moon) he was given the Senior Fifth Rank, Lower Grade. Eight days later he was nominated *Ushōjō*⁷¹. Quite a start for a person in the ripe age of 11!

In this year *Chūgū* Shōshi adopted Atsuyasu *Shinnō*. So far she had no children of her own and, perhaps, she felt uneasy about the last years of Teishi so much darkened by her own triumphant entry to the Palace. Perhaps she wanted to repay posthumously the sad decline of Teishi. Besides, *Mikushige-dono*, who had been taking care of Atsuyasu, at that time could not dedicate her time to the boy's education since she was honoured by the Emperor's attention. As the result she died on the third day of the sixth moon of 1004 being pregnant.

It was one more severe blow for Korechika and Takaie. During the ten years since their father's death they lost their mother (in 996), they suffered banishment and social ostracism, and then they lost three sisters: Teishi in 1000, Shigeisha in 1002, and *Mikushige-dono* in 1004⁷². Korechika was embittered by it and envious of Michinaga's good fortune. But Takaie, according to the *Eiga-monogatari*, had abandoned his grudge for Michinaga and about this time they became closely attached to each other.

In 1004 Yorimichi was promoted to the Junior Fourth Rank, Lower Grade on the seventh day of the first moon, and a few days later he was nominated *Ōmi-no suke* (the vice-governor of the Ōmi province). On the fifth day of the second moon he acted as an Imperial Envoy to the Kasuga Shrine. In the seventh moon Yorimune was introduced to the Palace and acted as a page at the Court of the Crown Prince. He was given the Junior Fifth Rank, Lower Grade on the sixteenth day of the twelfth moon (age 12). Kenshi was installed in the Palace as *Naishi-no kami*⁷³ on the twenty

⁷⁰ By the year 1000 Michinaga had five sons and three daughters: Yorimichi, b. 992, Yorimune, b. 992, Akinobu, b. 994, Yoshinobu, b. 996, Norimichi, b. 996, Shōshi, b. 988, Kenshi, b. 994, Ishi, 999. Besides, there was one adopted child: Narinobu, who was a son of Atsuhira *Shinnō* (grandson of Murakami *Tennō*).

⁷¹ The Lesser Commander of the Imperial Bodyguard of the Right.

⁷² Shigeisha (her name was Genshi), the second daughter of Michitaka, was a concubine of the Crown Prince. There was a rumour going at the time of her death that she was poisoned. *Mikushige-dono* was Michitaka's fourth daughter. There was the third daughter still living but she was abnormal. She had been given to Atsumichi *Shinnō* as a concubine, but he had left her for Izumi Shikibu.

⁷³ The Chief of the Palace Attendants.

seventh day of the eleventh moon and on the seventeenth day of the twelfth moon she was given the Junior Third Rank.

From then on every year brings new nominations for Michinaga's sons. All of them, one after another, are introduced into the Court and serve in various offices, civil as well as military ones. One may get such an impression that Michinaga was growing impatient and pushed the children by force, against their natural childish inclinations. All his sons were initiated into the Court life between 10 and 12 years of age. The following table shows clearly the early start of Michinaga's sons.

	Mother	Age	Intro- duced at Court	The first rank	The first office
Yorimichi	Rinshi	11	1003	1003 — Senior 5th, Low. Gr.	1003
Yorimune	Meishi	12	1004	1004 — Junior 5th, Low. Gr.	1005
Akinobu	Meishi	11	1005	1006 — Junior 5th, Up. Gr.	1006
Norimichi	Rinshi	10	1006	1006 — Senior 5th, Low. Gr.	1007
Yoshinobu	Meishi	10	1006	1006 — Junior 5th, Up. Gr.	1007
Nagaie	Meishi	12	1017	1017 — Junior 5th, Up. Gr.	1017

It is worth noting that Rinshi's sons for their first Court rank were given the Senior Fifth, Lower Grade, while sons born by Meishi had one or two grades lower: Junior Fifth, Lower or Upper Grade.

Generally speaking, in early 1000's Michinaga had few passions. One of them was promoting his children. Another one revealed itself in his architectural projects. All the time there was some work going on in one or more of his mansions (he had three big ones at the time: the Tsuchimikado, Biwa-dono and Tōsanjō). New buildings were under construction, old ones were being reconstructed or renovated. Besides, he erected the Sammaidō temple on the grounds of Jōmyō-ji at Kowata (1005), where the tombs of the Fujiwara family were. All the works were being done on a grand scale. Michinaga's taste for grandeur also manifested itself in all kinds of celebrations and feasts he was giving.

Michinaga's mansions were inferior to none but the Palace. When the new *Dairi* went down in conflagration on the fifteenth day of the eleventh moon of 1005, the Emperor and *Chūgū* Shōshi moved into the Tōsanjō, which had been finished at the beginning of the year. The Holy Mirror picked up from the *Dairi* ashes was taken there, too. As it was badly damaged, special envoys were dispatched from Michinaga's mansion to inform the Deity at Ise.

There were often fashionable Buddhist masses, carnivals and all kinds of contests and competitions organized in one of Michinaga's mansions, which were frequented by the cream of aristocratic society including personages of the Imperial

Family. Many a time they stayed for longer visits receiving gratefully Michinaga's lavish hospitality.

In the seventh moon of 1008 *Chūgū* Shōshi with her Court moved to the Tsuchimikado. She was pregnant and next months were full of excitement, expectation and animated activity. Many Buddhist monks were summoned to the mansion. Special messengers were sent to temples and shrines ordering prayers and masses. Masters of the *Ommyō-ryō* were busy interpreting all earthly and heavenly omens. No expense was spared in order to secure a peaceful delivery. The nearer the day of confinement was coming the more heated excitement and confusion were growing. Judging by the account given by *Murasaki Shikibu*, the only calm person was *Chūgū* Shōshi herself. The whole Tsuchimikado resounded with loud prayers and incantations and with feverish bustle of ladies-in-attendance and servants. In the narrow space of Shōshi's chamber about 40 persons were gathered: chosen monks, ladies, Michinaga, Rinshi, high Court officials. The monks were yelling at the top of their voices in order to scare away evil spirits. Behind partitions surrounding the chamber laid ladies serving as, so called, substitutes. Their rôle was to bring on themselves demons which might have infested *Chūgū* or the infant. They were also attended by monks roaring sutras.

The birth pains began on the tenth day of the ninth moon. During the hours preceding the delivery among all the persons surrounding Shōshi rank distinctions, proper manners and the Court etiquette were all forgotten. Ladies-in-attendance, their robes rumpled and faces unpainted, rubbed elbows with courtiers. Officials of lower ranks stood crowded arm to arm with their seniors and could not even make obeisances. Ladies did not even try to hide themselves behind their fans. Gentlemen were not ashamed to be seen weeping. Some persons of low rank and not related to *Chūgū* came to peep at her through the curtains.

Chūgū was in danger, we may suppose, since her head was partly shaved, so that she might enter the other world as a nun. But at last, on the eleventh day she gave birth to a boy, Prince Atsuhira. Anxiety and suspense gave place to the utmost joy and relief. The third, fifth and seventh nights ceremonies were performed with extravagant splendour. Lavish gifts were distributed among monks, priests, soothsayers and all the ladies and courtiers who had attended the *Chūgū*.

On the sixteenth day of the tenth moon the Emperor visited the Tsuchimikado and bestowed ranks and honours on persons related to the *Chūgū* and on officials connected with her Court and the Court of the infant Prince. Among thus honoured were: Rinshi — raised to the Junior First Rank, Yorimichi — to the Junior Second, Norimichi — to the Junior Fourth Rank, Lower Grade.

Michinaga, who for many years had waited anxiously, at present was almost intoxicated with joy. He devoted his time and energy to the welfare of Prince Atsuhira. He even personally inspected the breasts of the wet-nurses. *Murasaki Shikibu* noted down that one day when the infant wet Michinaga's clothes, he exclaimed happily drying himself behind a screen: "Ah, what a joy to be wet by

this Prince! Drying myself I feel, indeed, that all my expectations have been fulfilled”⁷⁴.

But it did not mean that here was the limit of his ambitions. Far from it!

In the next year (1009) he married Yorimichi to Takahime, a daughter of Tomohira *Shinnō*, who was a son of Murakami *Tennō*. It formed a nice family connection for Yorimichi. As the first and most favoured son of Michinaga he was a young man with exceptionally bright prospects.

In the same year Michinaga had further reasons to rejoice. On the nineteenth day of the sixth moon *Chūgū* Shōshi, pregnant again, again repaired to the Tsuchimikado. On the twenty fifth day of the eleventh moon she gave birth to Prince Atsuyoshi. Incomparable joy for Michinaga! Again all the proper ceremonies were observed with sumptuousness and grandeur and again Michinaga's sons and friends were raised in their ranks.

On the fifteenth day of the first moon of 1010 there was performed in the Tsuchimikado the ceremony of distributing rice-cakes.

It was made in a grand style and everybody seemed to be happy. But not so far away from the happy household there was a broken and embittered man lying on his deathbed. It was Korechika, who a year ago prompted by jealousy had tried to put a curse on Prince Atsuhira. He should have known better! His grandfather Naritada tried once this method on Michinaga, but to no avail! In Korechika's case, too, the family of Michinaga seemed to be impregnable to curses. All of them were in excellent spirits, while Korechika was ill and deserted by everybody save his immediate family. And to top it all, in his last moments of life Korechika had to ask Michinaga for a favour. He had called many monks to come to read sutras for him, but none had come. Then Korechika sent his son Michimasa to Michinaga to ask his help. In spite of the fact that it happened at night Michinaga arranged the matter, summoned monks and showed a great concern for the ill man. Korechika died on the twenty ninth day of the first moon.

On the twentieth day of the second moon Michinaga's daughter Kenshi was installed at the Court of the Crown Prince as a concubine. The fact caused some critical or sympathetic remarks, because the Prince was more than twice the age of his new bride⁷⁵. Even if Kenshi felt any embarrassment being married to a man who undoubtedly seemed old to her, she could not protest. Besides, Michinaga did everything possible in order to sweeten her new life giving her an excellent dowry, which was admired and envied by the whole Court. She was nicely welcomed by her predecessor Shūshi, mother of Prince Atsuakira. This Prince, who was then 16 years old, had been married to Enshi, the second daughter of *Udaijin* Akimitsu (younger sister of Genshi, Ichijō *Tennō*'s concubine).

On the seventeenth day of the seventh moon Prince Atsuyasu passed the cere-

⁷⁴ “*Aware, kono miya-no o-shito-ni nururu-wa ureshiki waza-kana. Kono nuretaru aburu-koso omou yō naru kokochi sure*”, *Murasaki-Shikibu-nikki*, pp. 460—461.

⁷⁵ At the time she was 16, the Prince was 34 years old.

mony of *gempuku*. All the matters connected with the event were generously arranged by Michinaga.

Michinaga was busy this year, but most of his work of a joyous kind. The next year (1011) was more upsetting, with sorrow and joy mixed together. And it was the year which settled finally good fortunes of Michinaga's house.

About the fifth moon the Emperor's health began to fail him and he was thinking seriously about his abdication. The Crown Prince, Isada *Shinnō*, was to ascend the Throne. But who was to become the next Crown Prince — it was a matter not settled yet. According to the *Eiga-monogatari* and *Shōyūki*, the Emperor expressed his wish to designate Atsuyasu *Shinnō*, and this wish was shared by *Chūgū* Shōshi. Isada *Shinnō* held the same opinion. The only man who protested against it was Michinaga. And it was he, who won.

He arranged a meeting of Ichijō *Tennō* and the Crown Prince. At this meeting the matter was decided according to Michinaga's desire. Atsuyasu *Shinnō* was disregarded, and as the candidate for the next Crown Prince was chosen Atsuhira *Shinnō*, Shōshi's first-born son. Shōshi herself did not feel happy about it, but Michinaga was completely satisfied.

The *Eiga-monogatari* tries to show the incident in the best light for Michinaga — that he was surprised hearing the decision because he had not expected it.

In the *Midōkampakū-ki* the first mention about the Emperor's illness is under the date: Kankō 8 (1011), the twenty third day of the fifth moon. The next one is on the twenty sixth day of the same moon, and on the twenty seventh day Michinaga noted down that the Emperor had asked him to arrange the meeting with the Crown Prince in order to talk over the problems connected with his intended abdication and to select the next Crown Prince.

The meeting was realized on the second day of the seventh moon and on the same day Michinaga had a conference with the Emperor, which was later on reported in his diary. It is an interesting piece of Michinaga's prose. We may suppose that he was in a state of excitement when writing it because his style, never perfect, is worse than ever. There is *hiragana* intermingled with *kanji* and the last sentences of the entry are written more in Japanese than in Chinese. The entry portrays Michinaga's feeling of suspense before he was informed about the results of the meeting, and then it reports in a rather matter-of-factly manner his conversation with the Emperor about securing the future of Atsuyasu *Shinnō*.

Judging by the pertinent entries in the *Midōkampakū-ki*, Michinaga had had enough time and opportunity to speak with the Emperor before the meeting. He could have expressed his will and convinced the Emperor to choose his own grandson in preference to Atsuyasu *Shinnō*, who had no protector strong enough to compete with Atsuhira. *Murasaki Shikibu* in her diary sympathizes with Atsuyasu *Shinnō* and points out that with Michitaka and Teishi dead, the boy had nobody to depend on. Her opinion is repeated almost word by word in the *Eiga-monogatari*.

It is a matter of opinion, if there was a reason to sympathize with Atsuyasu *Shinnō*, or rather to congratulate him. But in the sympathetic words of *Murasaki Shi-*

k i b u there is an interesting point emphasized. In the *sekkon-seiji* period⁷⁶, if an ambitious man wanted to secure the highest offices of the state, he had to form the *gaiseki* relations with the Imperial Family. But in the case of Atsuyasu *Shinnō* (and later on, of Atsuakira *Shinnō*) it became flagrantly evident that the reverse was also true: the Imperial Family was entangled with the Fujiwaras so far that the Emperor could not act at his will, he could not choose a Crown Prince, if the candidate's maternal relatives were uninfluential or dead.

At the time of Ichijō *Tennō*'s abdication Atsuyasu *Shinnō* was 12, while Atsuhira was 3 years old. Besides there was Atsuakira *Shinnō*, son of Isada *Shinnō* and Shūshi. He had no chance at all at the time. His father was not an emperor yet, and his mother's family, since Naritoki's death, had faded into complete insignificance.

Ichijō *Tennō* performed the abdication ceremony on the thirteenth day of the sixth moon. On the same day the new Emperor, Sanjō *Tennō*, ascended the Throne and the designation of Atsuhira *Shinnō* was proclaimed.

The ex-Emperor's illness was rapidly growing worse. On the nineteenth day he shaved his head and 3 days later he died. When all the proper observances connected with burial and mourning were finished the widow Shōshi left the Palace and made her residence at the Biwa-dono. She was then 23 years old.

The months following the abdication and death of Ichijō *Tennō* were extremely exhausting for Michinaga. On the 23rd day of the eight moon he got again the *Nairan-no senji*. He had to reorganize the Court, to make all the arrangements connected with the enthronement ceremony (which took place on the sixteenth day of the tenth moon), and to take care of the late Ichijō *Tennō*'s legacy.

On the same day when he got the *Nairan-no senji*, his daughter Kenshi and the other Imperial concubine Shūshi were given the title of *Nyōgo*.

IV. Michinaga at the summit of power 1012—1019

At the beginning of 1012 Michinaga had an unexpected and frustrating event in his family. His 18 years old son Akinobu, who had been the *Uma-no kami*⁷⁷, quite suddenly decided to become a monk. And so he did at dawn of the sixteenth day of the first moon. His mother Meishi and his old nurse were so much griefstricken that they could not look at him during the ceremony of "entering religion". Michinaga could and did, but judging by the entries in the *Midōkampakū-ki*, he was not happy about it either. He could not eat nor sleep. The *Ōkagami* suggests that after the first shock Michinaga was rather pleased to have one of his children dedicating itself to religion. The *Eiga-monogatari* expresses quite a different opinion and it is, in some degree, supported by the *Midōkampakū-ki*. In the *Eiga-monogatari* it is told that Michinaga was completely broken and in his desperation tried to guess what had been the reason behind Akinobu's decision. He climbed Mount Hiei to meet his son⁷⁸

⁷⁶ The *sekkon-seiji* means the rule by *Sesshō* and *Kampaku*.

⁷⁷ The Chief of the Bureau of the Horses of the Right.

⁷⁸ In the *Midōkampakū-ki* there is a note about a meeting with Akinobu at Hiei-zan under the date: the fifth day of the fourth moon.

and asked him whether he had been not satisfied with his office? Or perhaps he had been crossed in love? He took with him some dresses and small personal belongings — just like would do a father worried about his child's welfare and comfort. On the twenty third day of the fifth moon he climbed Hieizan again in order to witness the solemn confirmation of Akinobu. Soon after that he fell ill. It was probably a prolonged and serious illness. There is a gap in his diary between the twenty seventh day of the fifth moon and the fifth day of the seventh moon. And meanwhile, according to the *Kuge-bunin*, he submitted a memorial to the Emperor stating that he could not perform his duties on account of illness. It was on the fourth day of the sixth moon. The second memorial he submitted on the eight day of the same moon, and the next one on the eighth day of the seventh moon. But we may suppose that at this time he was already recovering (or had recovered) as from then on we can observe him participating in normal Court proceedings.

About that time the Emperor's illness took a bad turn. He had been suffering from some kind of eyes disease. There are many mentions of it in the *Nihon-kiryaku* and diaries of the period. There were periods when the Emperor was almost well but from time to time there would come a relapse and he would be blind. In spite of that he took a vigorous interest in the matters of State, which was rather displeasing for Michinaga.

From the beginning Michinaga was not very cordial for the new Emperor and Sanjō Tennō, in this turn, did not like Michinaga too much. According to the evidence of Saneuke, the Emperor tried to avoid a close contact with Michinaga, but favoured Michitsuna and Sanesuke himself — both men of mild and modest dispositions. Perhaps the dynamic personality of Michinaga and his overgrown ambitions were too tiresome for the Emperor, and he had his own private ambition: to curb them.

Sanjō Tennō, ill as he was, had enough will-power to disregard Michinaga's wish in the matter of Kenshi's nomination, and the incident was not without influence on further relations between the Emperor and his first minister.

On the fourth day of the second moon the ex-*Chūgū* Shōshi was nominated *Kō-taikō*⁷⁹ and the title of *Chūgū* was bestowed on Kenshi. From this moment Michinaga began to press the Emperor to raise Kenshi in her rank. On the fourth day of the third moon he ordered priests of the Kōfuku-ji and Ninna-ji temples to pray for her nomination. But to no avail. On the seventh day of the same moon the other Imperial Consort Shūshi got the *Kōgō-no senji*⁸⁰. Her father Naritoki was posthumously raised to the office of *Udaijin*. It was not to Michinaga's liking but he could not even protest because the matter had been decided behind his back and he was informed post factum. According to the *Eiga-monogatari*, Michinaga took the news with a good grace and expressed his joy of Shūshi's happiness. But, even if he did so, was it sincere? His subsequent behaviour shows clearly what was his true feeling in the

⁷⁹ The Empress Dowager.

⁸⁰ The Empress of higher rank than *Chūgū*.

matter. The ceremony of Shūshi's enthronement had been fixed for the twenty seventh day of the fourth moon. Michinaga perversely set the same date for his daughter Kenshi's return to the Palace from the Tōsanjō Mansion. This latter ceremony drew people away from the enthronement. Michinaga naturally accompanied his daughter. *Udaijin* Akimitsu diplomatically avoided both ceremonies under the pretext of illness. *Naidaijin* Kinsue sent his apologies, too, but he could not participate because of a strict abstinence. In this manner the three highest functionaries excused themselves and the task of conducting the enthronement fell on *Dainagon* Sanesuke. Thus, in consequence of Michinaga's strategem, it became a very simple and rather sad affair. Besides Sanesuke there were *Chūnagon* Takaie, *Sangi* Fujiwara Kanehira and Fujiwara Michitō. All other people of importance joined Kenshi's cortege. Later on Michinaga carefully noted down in his diary the names of men who had not participated in the ceremony of Kenshi's return to the Palace.

The year 1012 was a very peculiar one in Michinaga's life. Superficially he was the most successful man in the Empire. The highest functionary of government whose grandson was the Crown Prince, whose eldest daughter became the Empress Dowager, the second daughter an Imperial Consort, and the third daughter (Ishi, age 13) on the twenty first day of the eighth moon was installed in the Palace as the *Naishi-no kami* with the bright perspective of becoming one day an empress, too.

But, at the same time, this year was full of distressing, irritating, or even threatening events. There was the Akinobu affair. There was the failure of making Kenshi the *Kōgō* instead of Shūshi. And then, there was a series of strange happenings which, however unrelated to each other, all taken together had to make a profound impression on Michinaga and his contemporaries. A little sinister atmosphere was forming itself around the most successful man in the Empire.

In the *Ōkagami* or *Eiga-monogatari* there is nothing about the events. Two of them we can find in the *Midōkampaku-ki* and some more in the *Shōyūki*.

On the tenth day of the fourth moon there was seen a *hitodama* (will-o'-the-wisp) above the Tōsanjō Mansion. It was considered a bad omen for Michinaga. On the same day in the well of the mansion there were found *mochi* (heavy rice cakes) mixed with human hairs. Michinaga at once consulted Abe Yoshihira, a Master of *Ommyō-ryō*, who told that somebody had cursed Michinaga in order to harm him. The next day Masters of *Ommyō-ryō* performed the rites of exoneration in the Tōsanjō Mansion.

On the day of Akinobu's confirmation Michinaga with many courtiers and attendants on horsebacks climbed Mount Hiei. When passing the grounds of the Danna-in temple they were attacked by monks and servants of the temple. Stones were thrown at them. They protested that it was His Excellency passing. The monks answered that they did not mind who was going as long as he behaved properly, but on the grounds belonging to the temple it was forbidden to go on horseback. Michinaga and his high-brows were at last forced to walk.

Soon after the incident Michinaga fell ill. Since the twenty seventh day of the fifth moon there are no entries in his diary until the fifth day of the seventh moon. But judging by the *Shōyūki* evidence, the illness did not keep him at home permanen-

tly. On the eight day of the sixth moon there was again a *hitodama* seen above his mansion. After that, feeling worse, he behaved in a very rude manner shocking his attendants. At dawn of the next day he went in his carriage to the house of Kamo Kōei, a Master of *Ommyō-ryō*. Just when he was going to enter the house a dead rat fell at his feet. A terrifying event! And then, the next day he went to the Hōsshō-ji temple and at the entrance to the fane a snake fell in front of him.

Such a sequence of bad omens had to shake him and awake some reflections. He was superstitious like everybody else at the period, but he was not blind. He had to see that there was hatred in the air, that it was a human hand which put *mochi* in the Tōsanjō well. Perhaps he even could not believe in dead rats and snakes falling like rain from the high Heaven... At any rate, there had to be found at least a scapegoat, because the situation was beginning to be rather dangerous to Michinaga's prestige, if not to him personally. And the scapegoat was found in the person of Fujiwara Tametō who was connected with Empress Shūshi. On the seventeenth day of the sixth moon it was proclaimed that Tametō had put a curse on Michinaga.

What a pity that there is no written evidence of Michinaga's feelings during this period punctuated by his memorials to the Throne. Only the third memorial is mentioned in his diary and there is nothing to indicate what state of mind was Michinaga in. What prompted him to forward his memorials? Was it fear or a fit of hysterics? Or was it simply a kind of diplomatic manoeuvre? It leaves a wide field for speculation, but we shall never know with any degree of accuracy how Michinaga's mind worked during these two months packed with tension and ominous events.

Anyhow, since the seventh moon he seemed to be perfectly normal and the rest of the year he spent on usual court activities.

On the tenth day of the first moon of 1013 *Chūgū* Kenshi retired to the Tōsanjō Mansion. Six days later there was a fire there and she was transferred to the house of Fujiwara Tadanobu. On the thirteenth day of the fourth moon she moved again, this time to the Tsuchimikado. On the sixth day of the seventh moon she gave birth to a girl, Teishi. The third, fifth, seventh and fiftieth nights' ceremonies were performed with the usual for Michinaga's family display. But the Emperor was not eager to see his new-born daughter. He visited the Tsuchimikado on the sixteenth day of the ninth moon. We may suspect that he did not like his young consort very much. She had left the Palace in the second month of pregnancy — rather early — and then the Emperor was not in a hurry to have her back. She returned to the Palace in the eleventh moon.

Is not it possible that the Emperor's reserve toward Michinaga was transferred to the daughter, too? It was an interesting sort of relation existing between the two men. Michinaga was ambitious and impatient. As time went on and he was getting older, his impatience and tyrannical streak were getting more pronounced. He wanted the Emperor to be a mere instrument in his hand. In the last years of Ichijō *Tennō*'s reign Michinaga had been accustomed to force his will. He had had every reason to expect that it would be easy with physically weak and not so young Sanjō *Tennō*. But here was a surprise for him. Sanjō *Tennō* had his ambitions, too. He wished not

only reign but rule as well. Besides he was always much more influenced by Shūshi than by any other of his ladies. And it is worth noting that Shūshi was the late Nartoki's daughter. Her family had been in friendly relations with the sadly declined family of Michitaka. At the time of Korechika's affair she had already been married to the then Crown Prince (Sanjō *Tennō*) and it is reasonable to suppose that they sided with the Korechika-Takaie party. Sanjō *Tennō* had been the Crown Prince for 25 years. During that time he had had an easy access to all matters of State, but he himself had not been actively engaged in them. He had been an observer rather than participant. Thanks to it, he could have watched from some distance the spectacular rise of Michinaga's house on the ruins of Michitaka's family. Not being directly interested he could have scarcely liked it. And yet, after ascending the Throne he could not disregard Michinaga completely, because he had to keep in mind the future of his own children.

During the years 1014 and 1015 the Emperor and Michinaga were not on good terms, but both of them kept appearances and were careful to observe all proprieties in public. But in the *Shōyūki* there are many notes about Michinaga's disloyal behaviour, his bland refusals to the Emperor's requests, and his lack of respect for the sacrosanct person. The Emperor was much troubled with his illness. In the third moon of 1014 he became temporarily blind and deaf. After that there were periods when he could see and hear but the relapses were getting more frequent and more prolonged. Nevertheless he tried bravely to participate in the Court affairs. After a fire in the Palace he made his residence in the Biwa-dono (on the ninth day of the fourth moon) and in the fifth moon he visited Michinaga in the Tsuchimikado.

According to the *Shōyūki*, Michinaga began to insist on the Emperor's abdication in the eighth moon of 1015. At first the Emperor was reluctant in spite of his illness. In the tenth moon he proposed to Michinaga to contract a marriage between his daughter Jishi and Yorimichi. Michinaga consented gladly but, unexpectedly, he met with resistance from Yorimichi. The latter was obviously scared of his principal wife Takahime. It was quite proper then to have a passing affair with another woman. But to marry the Emperor's daughter — it was a different matter. Takahime would not like it... It was a difficult predicament. To refuse flatly the Emperor's proposition was, mildly saying, improper. What to do? The answer came from the other world: Yorimichi fell seriously ill and it was promptly interpreted as an intervention of the enraged spirit of Tomohira *Shinnō*, Takahime's father, who had died in 1009. The spirit was obstinate and it was impossible to pacify it by prayers, offerings and reading sutras. He withdrew only after Michinaga's assurance that the marriage with Jishi *Naishinnō* would not be contracted. Yorimichi recovered soon.

Just at that time the Emperor decided to resign the Throne. On the twenty seventh day of the twelfth moon Michinaga wrote with satisfaction in his diary that the abdication would be conducted on the twenty ninth day of the first moon of the next year... And indeed the ceremony was performed according to schedule in the Biwa-dono. Atsuhira *Shinnō* ascended the Throne (Goichijō *Tennō*) and for the next Crown

Prince was designated Atsuakira *Shinnō*, who had been the *Shikibukyō*⁸¹. The vacated position in the Ministry took Atsuyasu *Shinnō*. On the same day Michinaga was formally nominated *Sesshō*⁸².

On the tenth day of the sixth moon Michinaga got the *Jusangū*, *nenkan* and *nenshaku*⁸³. He got an additional sustenance fief of 3000 households. It was a new source of considerable income. On the same day Rinshi received the *Jusangū*, *nenkan* and *nenshaku*, too, and a fief of 300 households⁸⁴.

This year Michinaga resigned the office of *Sadaijin* on the seventh day of the twelfth moon. According to the *Kuge-bunin*, his request was accepted after submitting the second memorial to the Throne.

The resignation caused a carousel on the highest level in the official hierarchy. On the fourth day of the third moon of 1017 the vacated office took Akimitsu, and to his former office of *Udaijin* was transferred Kinsue. To thus vacated office of *Naidaijin* was raised Yorimichi who had been *Gondainagon* and *Sadaishō*. There was still the reorganization going on, when Michinaga caused a new stirr. On the sixteenth day of the same moon he gave up the office of *Sesshō* which at once was transferred to Yorimichi. In this manner 25 years old Yorimichi became a Great Minister overstepping *Dainagon* Michitsuna (age 61), *Dainagon* Sanesuke (59), and *Gondainagon* Tadanobu (49). And a few days later he became additionally a Regent of his nephew, the Emperor. On the twenty second day he resigned his post of *Sadaishō*, which soon passed to Norimichi.

At that time the ex-Emperor Sanjō's illness was progressing rapidly. On the twenty ninth day of the fourth moon he took his tonsure and ten days later he died.

Atsuakira *Shinnō* did not feel well in the rôle of Crown Prince. After his father's death he was deserted by everybody. Courtiers and attendants stopped visiting him for fear of angering Michinaga. The atmosphere surrounding the Prince became so oppressive that, after turning the problem in his mind for some time, he decided to resign the honour of being the Crown Prince. The story is reported in the *Eiga-monogatari* and *Ōkagami* at some length and with very slight variations. Both reports are supported by the *Shōyūki* and, scantily, by the *Midōkampaku-ki*.

On the fourth day of the eighth moon Prince Atsuakira summoned Yoshinobu (Michinaga's son) and through him informed Michinaga about his wish to resign. Yoshinobu at once passed the news to Michinaga, who went to talk the matter over with Atsuakira *Shinnō*. Empress Shūshi protested and asked Michinaga for inter-

⁸¹ The Head of the Ministry of Ceremonials.

⁸² He acted as *Sesshō*, but without a formal nomination, since the twenty seventh day of the tenth moon of 1015.

⁸³ *Jusangū* means "Equal to the three Empresses". It was a privilege to receive income equal to the Empresses' income. It was a kind of salary paid according to the tables of offices (*nenkan*) and ranks (*nenshaku*).

⁸⁴ The number 300 households is given in the *Shōyūki* (Chōwa 5, the tenth day of the sixth moon). In the *Ōkagami* the number is given as 1000 households. The *Shōyūki* is a more credible source, because Sanesuke was always well informed and very scrupulous in his notes.

vention, which was not the most logical thing to do, because the Prince's resignation opened new, attractive perspectives for Michinaga and so, he was the last man to agree with distressed Shūshi. Nevertheless, according to the *Ōkagami*, Michinaga at first disagreed vehemently with the Prince's wish and hotly supported his mother's protestations. But when the Prince threatened to enter religion Michinaga reluctantly yielded to his will. Atsuakira *Shinnō* was determined to resign, but he wanted to get an assurance that his future would be secured. Michinaga was only too eager to assure him. On the ninth day of the eighth moon the resignation was proclaimed and the next day the new Crown Prince was designated. It was Atsuyoshi *Shinnō*, the second son of Ichijō *Tennō* and Shōshi, full brother of Emperor Goichijō.

Michinaga was as good as his promise. He and Yorimichi took care of Atsuakira *Shinnō*'s welfare. The Prince received the name Koichijō-in, like a retired emperor and like a retired emperor he was given fiefs, *nenkan*, *nenshaku* and so on. And on the twenty second day of the eleventh moon Michinaga's daughter Kanshi⁸⁵ went to him as a concubine.

On the fourth day of the twelfth moon Michinaga was nominated *Dajōdaijin*, Junior First Rank. On the twenty seventh day he took his seat for the first time. On the same day his daughter Ishi advanced in the Palace hierarchy to the office of *Mikushige-no bettō*. But both nominations were not to last long.

On the ninth day of the second moon of 1018 Michinaga resigned the office. He did not feel well and, perhaps, he concluded that he had reached the height of his personal ambition. He could not go further because he had climbed to the top. It was the proper time for him to retire and watch his children's prosperity.

On the fourth day of the third moon he ordered Buddhist monks and shintoist priests to pray for the intention of Ishi being received by the Emperor. Obviously the prayers were effective and on the seventh day of the third moon Ishi was installed in the Palace, on the twenty eighth day of the next moon she became *Nyōgo* and, finally, on the sixteenth day of the tenth moon she was given the title of *Chūgū*⁸⁶. On the same day her sister Kenshi (the ex-*Chūgū*) was raised to the rank of *Kōtaikō*⁸⁷.

Michinaga had every reason to rejoice. Three of his daughters were already made Empresses. During a banquet commemorating this great occasion, being in an exultant mood, he composed his most famous poem:

*Kono yo-o-ba
waga yo-to-zo omou,
mochizuki-no
kaketaru koto-mo
nashi-to omoeba.*

⁸⁵ It is not known when she was born. Probably around 1000.

⁸⁶ The Emperor was a nephew of his new consort. He was then 10, Ishi 19 years old.

⁸⁷ The former *Taikōtaikō* (The Great Empress Dowager) died on the first day of the sixth moon of 1017 and her title was passed to Shōshi on the seventh day of the first moon of 1018.

([Today] this world I do believe is mine, when I even think that the full moon will never wane)⁸⁸.

On the twenty second day there was a unique celebration in the Tsuchimikado: the Emperor and the three Empresses came to visit Michinaga. The description of the event is one of the longest in the *Midōkampaku-ki*.

On the fifteenth day of the eleventh moon Michinaga's daughter Kishi became the *Naishi-no kami*, while his granddaughter Seishi (Norimichi's daughter) was nominated *Mikushige-no bettō*. Michinaga was a thorough man and did not waste time promoting his family. Kishi at the time of nomination was 11, Seishi 4 years old.

According to the *Eiga-monogatari*, around this time Michinaga began to think seriously about becoming a lay monk. It is probable. He had reached the summit of power and glory. Besides in the last years his health was failing him. In the *Midōkampaku-ki* (and in other diaries) there are many entries about his illness and about special masses, prayers and offerings for the intention of his recovery. In the diary sometimes sore eyes are mentioned, sometimes only an unspecified illness is recorded, and since the fourth moon of 1018 there begin to appear notes about a heavy pain in the chest.

The *Ōkagami* emphasizes the fact that the decision to enter religion came suddenly. On the eighteenth day of the third moon of 1019 he felt pain in his chest. He stayed in bed until the twenty first day when he got up and went to a corridor. There he stood facing south, toward the Kasuga shrine⁸⁹, and informed the clan gods about his intention to retreat from secular life. On the same day he took his tonsure. The *Ōkagami* gives a vivid picture of confusion and bewilderment that seized the whole Michinaga's family. He himself had to borrow a *kesa* (a priestly robe) from a monk because he had not prepared one. On this day he took a Buddhist name Gyōkan, which later on was changed to Gyōkaku.

In the fourth moon there was a special amnesty proclaimed for his intention. In the *Shōyūki* we can find many mentions about Michinaga being ill in the period from the fourth until the sixth moon. Later on, feeling better, he undertook with great energy a construction of a temple in the Nakagawa district. He was impatient with the works and, through *Sesshō* Yorimichi, he was putting pressure on provincial governors in order to obtain laborers, timber and equipment for his great project. The works took precedence over all the other State's undertakings. There is a paragraph in the *Ōkagami* concerning this, which is often interpreted as a criticism of Michinaga's ruthlessness. He was ruthless, indeed. In his impatience to have the buildings finished and well furnished he demanded everything in big quantities and in the

⁸⁸ The poem was composed one night after full moon. Mr. Yamagiwa gives a different translation, namely: "This world I do believe is mine, when I think that there is nothing broken from the full moon", E.O. Reischauer and J. K. Yamagiwa, *Translations from Early Japanese Literature*, Harvard University Press, 1951, p. 273.

⁸⁹ Kasuga *jinja*, the family shrine of the Fujiwara clan is located south of the Capital.

best quality. Inspecting personally the building yard he sped up the works and forced laborers to the utmost efforts. And yet, in the same paragraph of the *Ōkagami* it is said that he treated the laborers well, clothing them and feeding and distributing *sake*. It is perhaps ironical, because such things were simply a part of duties of anybody employing laborers.

For the solemn confirmation Michinaga went to Nara. The confirmation took place on the twelfth day of the ninth moon in the Tōdaiji temple. It was a ceremony performed in a grand style, conducted by the highest dignitaries of Buddhist clergy, and attended by countless monks and Court officials. Michinaga left his Court life in a usual for him, sumptuous manner.

After the ceremony Michinaga made a pilgrimage to Kōfuku-ji, which was the temple of the Fujiwara clan.

V. The last years of Michinaga 1020—1027

The Hōjō-ji temple, which Michinaga had ordered to build, was popularly called *Midō* (The Honourable Hall) and hence Michinaga, after he made his residence there, was called *Midō-dono* or *Midōkampaku* (the Lord of the Hon. Hall or the Regent of the Hon. Hall). The temple was located in the north-eastern part of the Capital, just to the east of the Tsuchimikado Mansion. One of the first buildings to be finished was a hall called Muryōju-in. On the twenty second day of the third moon of 1020 the first solemn mass was celebrated there. The three Empresses were present.

From then on, Michinaga was getting more and more absorbed in various matters connected with religion. His main interest was focused on his new project, the Hōjō-ji temple, but in addition to it he participated in masses, reading sutras and religious discussions in Enryaku-ji, Hōkō-in, Ishiyama-dera and other temples. But still he was not able to cut out mundane sentiments. He took lively interest in his family. He visited his children, grandchildren and wives.

On the first day of the second moon of 1021 Michinaga's daughter Kishi was married to the Crown Prince⁹⁰. It was again a splendid ceremony performed according to the best tradition of her family. Rinshi had supervised all the preparations and when at last her daughter was happily married and the excitement died out, she became a nun in the Muryōju-in (on the twenty eighth day of the second moon).

On the twenty fifth day of the fifth moon died *Sadaijin* Akimitsu. Like most dignitaries of the period he had wished to form the *gaiseki* relations with the Imperial Family. In 996 he gave his daughter Genshi as a concubine to Ichijō Tennō, and in 1010 he gave his second daughter Enshi to Atsuakira Shinnō, while the latter was the Crown Prince. But both the daughters were pushed aside by Michinaga's daughters. Especially Enshi nursed a grudge against Kanshi. This feeling was shared by Akimitsu as well. When Enshi died (on the tenth day of the fourth moon of 1019), Akimitsu swore Michinaga. And yet, he still had some hope to make one of Enshi's

⁹⁰ Kishi was an aunt of her bridegroom. She was at the time 14, he 12 years old.

sons a Crown Prince. *Sesshō* Yorimichi himself, being polite for the old man, incited the hope but other people laughed at Akimitsu. He died as a disillusioned and embittered man.

In the 1022 the *Kondō* (Main Hall) of Hōjō-ji was finished and on the fourteenth day of the seventh moon the opening ceremony was performed. Nothing could be compared with the splendour and magnificence of this occasion. Diarists and chroniclers of the period went into ecstasies describing the event. The whole Michinaga's family⁹¹ attended the ceremony, including the three Empresses, his daughters, the Crown Prince, his grandson, and the Emperor himself, also Michinaga's grandson.

Michinaga cried looking at the Emperor praying before Buddha. Perhaps this moment was the happiest one in whole his life. The sight he had before his eyes was an affecting one, and for him it had a special, deep meaning. There was the Emperor, his own grandson, kneeling in front of the image of Buddha which he had caused to be made, in the magnificent hall, which he had caused to be built. Behind him there sat in dazzling brilliance of their costumes all his daughters, and his son Yorimichi, the first subject of the Emperor, and his other sons, ministers and councillors. The first family of the land. There was nobody to be compared to them. And all this splendour and magnificence were of his own making. How proud he must have been! ...

One may wonder, if standing then on the top of the world had he a presentiment of his future? Was some inner voice telling him that from now on it would be only stepping downhill? ...

In his declining years Michinaga was getting more and more unsociable and hysterical. It was easy to move him to tears or to rouse his anger. He dedicated a lot of his time to religious observances and spared no expenses for constructing new halls in the Hōjō-ji, and for making Buddhist images and other masterpieces of sacral art. Nevertheless, his secular bounds were still strong enough. When his wife Rinshi celebrated her 60th birthday in the tenth moon of 1023, he composed a poem which, perhaps, was the best illustration of his state of mind:

Arinareshi
chigiri-wa taede
imasara-ni
kokorokegashi-ni
*chiyo-to iuran*⁹²

⁹¹ According to the *Ōkagami*, Yoshinobu did not attend because of a strict abstinence.

⁹² This transliteration follows the *Ōkagami* text. In the *Eiga-monogatari* there is given a slightly different version which, however, does not change much the interpretation of the poem. The *Eiga-monogatari* version runs as follows:

Arinareshi
chigiri-mo taede
kokorokakeji-ni
imasara-ni
chiyo-to iuran.

“While the ties to which we were used are not extinguished, I will tell «long life to you», even if it soils my heart”⁹³.

In 1024, on the twenty seventh day of the third moon, the youngest daughter of Michinaga, Sonshi⁹⁴, was married to Minamoto Morofusa. According to the *Ōkagami*, people wondered at the time, why Michinaga had not married her to the Emperor or the Crown Prince. It is explained there by Michinaga’s liking for the Minamotos and his foresight of Morofusa’s splendid career. It is true that Michinaga liked to have the Minamotos around him — both his wives were of the Genji stock⁹⁵ and many of his friends. But in the case of Sonshi not being given to the Palace, the deciding factor was rather her ugliness. In comparison with her elder sisters she had not had any chance.

The beginning of the year 1025 was good for the Michinaga family. On the tenth day of the first moon a long desired son of Yorimichi was born. Yorimichi’s principal wife, Takahime, was barren and until then he had no children⁹⁶. At present, he and his parents were happy even if the boy, Michifusa, was born by a concubine and Takahime was very angry. Michifusa’s mother was a lady called Tai-no kimi. She was closely related to Takahime being a granddaughter of Tamehira *Shinnō* (brother of Tomohira *Shinnō*). After her father Norisada died she and her sister were taken up by Takahime. The latter perhaps regretted bitterly her good deed.

In the third moon Kishi, the Crown Prince’s Consort, left the Palace being pregnant. She repaired to the Ichijō Mansion, from where she was transferred to the Tsuchimikado (on the sixteenth day of the fourth moon) in order to be nearer to her father, who stayed in the Hōjō-ji.

The first half of 1025 must have been the last cloudlessly happy period in Michinaga’s life. Soon he was to meet with misery and disaster.

His favourite daughter Kanshi fell ill. On the eighth day of the seventh moon her condition became critical and she sent an urgent message summoning Michinaga. He himself was not well at that time, but he came at once and found Kanshi very weak and miserably thin. She complained that her illness was a result of the curse put by Akimitsu and Enshi. Michinaga and Kanshi, both cried in their grief to complete exhaustion (the *Eiga-monogatari*). She died the next day. Michinaga was crestfallen and could not even attend the mourning ceremonies.

There was an epidemic of smallpox raging in the Capital at that time. Kishi caught the infection, too, but her illness was ascribed to the activity of vindictive spirits of Akimitsu and Enshi. With great suffering she gave birth to a boy (later on Goreizei *Tennō*) on the third day of the eighth moon. The next day she even got up and walked

⁹³ Both of them, Michinaga and Rinshi, had entered religion, and so the “ties” were supposed to be extinguished.

⁹⁴ It is not known when she was born. The ceremony of putting on a *mo* she passed in 1017. She was adopted by Yorimichi.

⁹⁵ Genji — the Sino-japanese name of the Minamoto clan.

⁹⁶ He had one in 1015 with the daughter of Nagayori but both, the mother and the child, died in labor.

a little, but then she became very weak and her strength was gradually ebbing away. Michinaga in floods of tears sat at her side trying to comfort her. She died on the fifth day of the same moon. She was then 18 years old. The infant was taken at first by Yorimichi, later on he was transferred to the Tsuchimikado (on the ninth day of the eleventh moon).

The epidemic touched also the Emperor and the Crown Prince, but they both recovered without complications.

In 1026 *Taikōtaikō* Shōshi decided to enter religion. She was 38 years old, but looked young and beautiful. She shaved her head on the nineteenth day of the first moon and took the name of Jōtōmon'in.

On the second day of the ninth moon *Chūgū* Ishi repaired to the mansion of Fujiwara Kanetaka and on the tenth day of the twelfth moon she gave birth to a girl, Shōshi. She returned to the Palace on the third day of the first moon of 1027 and in the next moon the little girl was given the title *Naishinnō*.

On the twenty third day of the third moon of 1027 Teishi *Naishinnō* was introduced to the Crown Prince as a concubine. She was then 14 years old and was not eager to be married so early. Especially, as her mother, *Kōtaikō* Kenshi, was ill at that time and could not take care of all the necessary preparations.

The illness, at first, did not impress anybody as a fatal one. Kenshi was weak and feverish, but it looked like a cold. Prayers and special masses were ordered. The Biwa-dono (Kenshi's residence) was in constant uproar of sutras being read and exorcisms being recited. But all this did not help. Again the malevolent spirits of Akimitsu and Enshi hovered over the sick-bed.

On the fourteenth day of the fifth moon died Akinobu. Michinaga, with no regard to his own illness, climbed Hieizan in order to assist his son on his death-bed. Akinobu was then 33 years old — the same age as Kenshi.

Kenshi was not told about the death of her brother. On the thirteenth day of the eighth moon she was transported from the Biwa-dono to the Hōjō-ji, where Michinaga surrounded her with assiduous care. On the fourteenth day of the ninth moon, being already in agony, she called Michinaga and gave him a gestured instruction to cut her hair. Michinaga, sobbing heart-rendingly, obeyed the instruction. Soon after that Kenshi died.

This last blow broke Michinaga down. Feeling old and invalid, he closed himself in the Hōjō-ji. He was even not eager to meet members of his family when they came to visit him. In the eleventh moon his illness took a bad turn. On the eighth day there was a special amnesty declared for his sake. For his sake, too, one thousand men entered religion. Monks and priests in big numbers were summoned to pray for his recovery. The annual festival of the Kamo shrine was stopped because of his illness.

Describing the last days of Michinaga, the *Eiga-monogatari* paints a picture of a Buddhist saint entering nirvana. According to it, on the twenty fifth day Michinaga retired to the Amida Hall of the Hōjō-ji expressing his wish to commune with Amida only. Until the day of his death he was like in a trance, so deeply absorbed in medi-

tation and prayer. He ordered a string to be attached to the image of Buddha. Holding it in his hand he repeatedly whispered “nembutsu”⁹⁷.

Scrupulous notes of *Sanesuke* give a little different picture. Not so exalted, but much more probable. It is worth while giving the gist of the *Shōyūki* entries in their chronological order:

The eleventh moon

10th Michinaga defecated on his mat.

13th A great amnesty was proclaimed for Michinaga's sake.

14th Jōtōmon-in ordered 100 monks to read sutras in the Hōjō-ji.

21th Michinaga stopped to take meals. He looked like drunk with his eyes blear. On his back suppurating abscesses erupted. This day Jōtōmon-in and *Chūgū* Ishi came to visit him, but they were not allowed to go near the bed because of filth.

24th The abscesses became much bigger. Michinaga's head trembled on his neck. Yorimichi, mistakenly informed about his father's death came in great distress to the Hōjō-ji. Yielding to monk Ingen's insistence Michinaga was transported to the Amida Hall.

26th Emperor Goichijō came to visit Michinaga and brought with him a gift for the Hōjō-ji: a fief of 500 households.

29th The Crown Prince came to visit Michinaga. A *hitodama* was seen. People wondered that perhaps it was Michinaga's soul leaving his body.

30th It seemed that Michinaga was a little more peaceful. Doctors fixed the date of probing the abscesses with a needle: the fourth day of the next moon. Yoshinobu told that 2—3 days' delay did not matter

The twelfth moon

2nd At Michinaga's demand doctor Tamba Tadaaki cut the abscesses. A lot of blood mixed with pus flowed out. During the operation Michinaga roared of pain.

3rd The agony began. Michinaga at night had convulsions. His lips moved as if he were saying “nembutsu”.

4th Michinaga died before dawn at the hour of the Tiger (It means at 4 o'clock in the morning).

According to the Western calendar, it was January 3, 1028⁹⁸. Michinaga was buried in the family cemetery at Kowata.

⁹⁷ A Buddhist invocation. Abbreviated form of “*Namu Amida Butsu*” (“Homage to the Buddha Amida”).

⁹⁸ For the sake of clarity all the dates, except the last one, follow the generally accepted system of giving days and moons according to the lunar calendar and converting lunar years to their Western equivalents. This system is far from precision and many errors are possible, especially with the first and twelfth moons. There exist tables facilitating the computation of corresponding dates in the lunar and Western calendars, but all of them are under discussion yet (the *Dainippon nempyō* by *Tsuji*, *Japanese Chronological Tables* by *Bramsen*, *Japanese Chronological Tables* by *Tsuchihashi* and others).