

Site of the Tsuchimikado Residence

The Tsuchimikado Residence was the home of Fujiwara no Michinaga (966–1028), who served as regent and prime minister in the mid-Heian period. The estate extended two blocks to the north and south and was also known as Joutomon-tei or Kyogoku-tei. Michinaga's eldest daughter, Shoshi (988–1074), became empress when she married Emperor Ichijo and made this building their imperial residence. Their sons, Emperor Go-Ichijo (1008–1036) and Emperor Go-Suzaku (1009–1045), were both born here. On the auspicious occasion of Michinaga's third daughter becoming empress, he composed a famous *waka*:

Just as there is not
the slightest dent
in the full moon,
so this whole world
is gloriously mine!

(*Kono yo o ba / waga yo to zo omou / mochizuki no / kaketaru koto no / nashi to / omoeba*)

(From the 11th century *Shoyuki: The Records of Fujiwara no Sanesuke*)

The composition of Japanese *waka* poetry played a central role in the cultural life of the nobles who lived in and around the palace. While little remains of the residences in which they lived, the poems they wrote open an enduring window onto their elegant world. Many of the poems dwell on the suffering of love and the impermanence of life. Michinaga's poem about taking delight in his own power is unusual in its forthright admiration of more tangible rewards.