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Seen and Not Seen: The Architecture of the Shintō Shrines at Ise

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The Shintō Shrines:

Ise Jingū (Ise Shrine), Mie Prefecture (rebuilt since 7th century - last rebuilding 2013)

Ise contains 125 shrines and sanctuaries in two main complexes

Main Sanctuaries at the Inner Shrine and Outer Shrine

Izumo Taisha (Izumo Shrine), Shimane Prefecture (dating to 7th century (?) -
last rebuilding 1744)

Main Sanctuary

Dramatis Personae:

Amaterasu Omikami (sun goddess enshrined at the Inner Shrine at Ise)

Susanoo no Mikoto (Amaterasu's disruptive brother)

Ōkuninushi no Mikoto (A descendant of Susanoo; his palace was said to
be the forerunner of Izumo Shrine)

Historical Sources:

Kojiki (compiled 712 AD) and *Nihon shoki* (compiled 720 AD)

Selected Architectural Terms For Ise Shrine:

Chigi: Finials that were originally extensions of bargeboards
extending above the roofs of aristocratic houses and some Shintō shrines

Shōden or seiden: Term for the main sanctuary building at Ise

Katsuogi: Roof billets - log-like objects placed on early aristocratic
houses and prominent Shintō shrines

Muchikake: "Whip-racks" - pieces of wood that stand perpendicular to the bargeboards
on main sanctuary at Ise Shrine

Munamochi bashira: Columns on the gable ends of a building which
support the ridge of the roof

Shin no mi hashira: "Heart-pillar" - the central pillar placed below the
main sanctuaries at Izumo and Ise.

(for these definitions, I am indebted, in part, to the glossary at the end on Tange Kenzō, et al, Ise: Prototype of Japanese Architecture)

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