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## Religion and the Good Life Motivation, Myth, and Metaphor in a Tokugawa Female Lifestyle Guide

This article examines the uses of religion in a popular female lifestyle guide, the *Onna chōhōki*, which was originally published in 1692 and geared toward daughters of rising commoner families. The text's author employs religion to intensify the sense of ultimate importance at which his project aims: namely that the good life to be found in adopting his guide's recommendations of idealized behaviors and elite customs is one that is transformative and resonates with the divine actions of Izanami and Amaterasu. I argue that the author employs religion through the three modalities of motive, myth, and metaphor, and further that by being attentive to such uses of religion in popular texts we are able to appreciate the active construction of religious sensibilities, stories, and symbols in Edo period culture outside of organized religious groups.

KEYWORDS: *Onna chōhōki* – Namura Jōhaku – Itō Jinsai – Tokugawa religion – *jokun* – virilocal household – Kōshin – Kaibara Ekiken

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THE 1692 LIFESTYLE guide for women, the *Onna chōhōki* 女重宝記, on first reading may seem to offer little toward the study of religion in Japan. Its immediate value is the window it offers on the construction and popular diffusion of elite female culture in the Tokugawa period (1600–1867). However, key parts of the guide are explicit in their reliance on religious concepts and symbols to amplify the importance of why women ought to comport their behavior and conduct their lives in order to gain the text’s vision of the good life: a solid personal reputation, possession of a cultured sense of style, a successful marriage, children, and bodily health. The author’s use of religion is critical to note not only as a manifest example of the often “diffused” nature of religion in Japan—that is the presence of symbols and the practice of ritual in daily life apart from organized religious institutions—but also of “infused” religion—that is the human construction of sacred referents in life by actively infusing religious symbols and ideas in the articulation of particular concerns. “Diffused” is the passive voice in our conceptualizations of religion; “infused” is the active. The former speaks of religion as an unambiguous if varied category of history and experience readily recognizable, if not easily definable, and existing for the worldly and spiritual needs of humanity. The latter reminds us that religion is also an activity of human manufacture, constantly being brought into varied forms in the attempt to make it responsive to the contemporary concerns of its human makers. From the conceptual view of infused religion, the *Onna chōhōki* is a text that tells us as much about the construction of popular religion in the Tokugawa as about the construction of popular female culture.

Comprising five illustrated chapters, the guide describes a variety of categories considered definitive of feminine knowledge and practice in the light of elite warrior values. These chapters cover the fields of 1) the historical and contemporary position of women, illness, notes on behavior and refined speech, makeup and hair, 2) marriage rites, 3) pregnancy, pre-natal care, and birth, 4) the culture of modesty, caring for the home, and the ordering and arranging of seasonal clothing, and 5) the correct use of language and styles of wrapping objects. The *Onna chōhōki* and similar guides were based in part on the etiquette and ceremonial codes of samurai families that developed in the Ogasawara 小笠原 and Ise 伊勢 houses during the Muromachi period (1338–1573). Representative of the explosion of Japanese scripted books that pushed the Tokugawa publishing boom,<sup>1</sup> such guides were written and produced for bourgeois commoners eager

1. As a sign of the text’s popularity throughout the Tokugawa period, it was republished in 1700

to model their daughters' lives along the idealized values, lifestyle ceremonies, and customs of warrior women. Publication and purchase of such texts evidence a concrete and important means by which commoners became cultural consumers and disseminated warrior values and cultural practices among their ranks. This process of dissemination and adaptation contributed toward greater cultural uniformity in the Tokugawa period by producing among economically secure and culturally motivated groups of commoners the "samuraization" of their social world (HANLEY 1991, p. 704).

Namura Jōhaku 苗村丈伯 (ca. 1748), a physician and student of the Confucian scholar Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁斎 (1627–1705), authored the *Onna chōhōki*.<sup>2</sup> Writing under the penname of Sōden Tadakishi 艸田寸木子, Namura, in the spirit of his famous teacher, sought to valorize the world of commoners as one that could be exemplary of a morally grounded, culturally knowledgeable, and healthy life lived in full.<sup>3</sup> His text aims to make sure commoner families and their daughters have a chance to possess the same ritual skills, lifestyle practices, and social values previously deemed the cultural property of elite samurai. Namura describes the practices and virtues he desires women to make their own, and so doing he reveals attitudes and assumptions coloring much of the text's portraiture of women as daughters, daughters-in-law, and wives. For him nothing is more critical in this portrait than the event that implicates all three identities in the life of an individual woman: the warrior-based virilocal pattern of marriage. For Namura, marriage marks the tipping point between how a daughter is raised in her natal home and how effectively she carries out her duties as a daughter-in-law and wife in her husband and parents-in-law's home. He is not unique in this view. Recognition that a woman's experiences and rearing as a daughter profoundly influenced her spirit and capabilities as a member of another household is of great concern for Tokugawa-period authors of the genre known as *jokun* 女訓, which, like the *Onna chōhōki*, comprises texts advising women on their moral development and lifestyle education. Namura, in advising daughters and their families on the significance of this tipping point in defining the quality of female life, infuses several points of his text with religion.

To be more precise, I interpret Namura as employing three modalities of religion—motivation, myth, and metaphor—in order to intensify for his female audience the gravity of marriage and the concern of whether a young woman thrives or withers in living up to matrimony's promises and facing its challenges.

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with extensive commentary by the author, and published in a new edition at least once more in 1847.

2. His date of birth is unknown and there are problems in dating his biography, which is meager. For this brief biography and some of the dating problems, see NAMAE 1985, pp. 220–21.

3. The use of pennames was ubiquitous among Tokugawa writers, some of whom employed more than one. Although he published the text under his Soden penname, throughout this article I refer to the author by his given family name, Namura.

These modalities are neither expressive of any one religious tradition nor doctrine; the text denies characterization as Buddhist, Shinto, Confucian, or Daoist. Yet Namura infuses into these modalities symbols and constructs that he pulls from the storehouse of the Tokugawa symbolic and intellectual universe to articulate to his and his target audience's satisfaction their shared concern toward marriage. This concern for the tipping point of marriage, upon whose fulcrum an incoming bride balances, sees in a bride's move to her groom's house the hope for generational re-creation of his and his parents' household and the setting of a tone of either harmony or discord, success or failure, in the lives of the household's members and the management of its resources. In light of these hopes and anxieties, popular *jokun* guides like the *Onna chōhōki* sound a "righteous and urgent tone," to borrow Laurel Kendall's fitting phrase describing the discourse surrounding Korean weddings (KENDALL 1996, p. 10). It is through Namura's infusion of religion that this tone pierces the seemingly profane experience of marriage and home life to ring out its sacred import.

#### *Investments, Social and Sacred*

Before discussing the use of motivation, myth, and metaphor in the *Onna chōhōki*, it is important first to consider the notion of motivation in general and in specific reference to Japanese religion. Wendy Holloway proposes the notion of "investment" to understand what motivates a person to take up a particular identity and role in her life. A sense of economic security and social status, and whatever emotional contentment these things may bring, largely defines a person's decision to invest her identity in a specific discourse (HOLLOWAY 1984, p. 238). The institution of the virilocal household, its idealization of female obedience, loyalty, and purposeful fertility, and its need for a female outsider to act in multiple capacities as wife, daughter-in-law, and mother offered hierarchy and social position within its walls to women for use in establishing security and status. With this investment in another's household procured through marriage, there was also a hope, as Holloway's term suggests, of gaining something in return, such as the relative prestige and authority that long-term commitment to the roles of daughter-in-law and wife could bring to an incoming bride: household (co-)manager and the potentially powerful position of mother-in-law. Indeed, the *Onna chōhōki* was directed toward wealthy peasants and economically secure urban commoners with just such a keen sense of social investment. They invested significant time and resources to cultivate in their daughters' basic education skills, moral training, and knowledge of etiquette and lifestyle; a family improved its own standing and the marrying potential of its daughter by preening her in the ways of elite culture (WALTHALL 1991, pp. 48–49).

Motivation to marry was not only rooted in social investment, but it could also be driven in part through a "proactive" investment in one's bodily and spiri-

tual health by being attentive to opportunities of moral behavior and ritual practices indicative of Japanese religion. Winston Davis is helpful on this point with his discussion about two types of motivation people bring with them in varying degrees to the maze of institutions, sacred services, and practical actions and assumptions religion in Japan makes available. He calls these “in order to” and “because” motives. The former cover a range of actions people may initiate in order to gain or secure something beneficial in the near or long-term future; the latter type emphasizes responsive actions people may perform because feelings and convictions such as gratitude, guilt, and fear encourage them to do so (DAVIS 1992, p. 17).

Such motivations are exemplified in the rite of *kōshin machi* 庚申待. This was a defining practice among people belonging to religious co-fraternities (*kō* 講) dedicated to the deity *Kōshin* 庚申, which experienced great popularity as a devotional cult during the Tokugawa period.<sup>4</sup> Originally a Daoist divinity, the god and his nocturnal ritual, along with many other Daoist symbols and practices, likely entered Japan in the eighth and ninth centuries through the influence of diviners (*onmyōji* 陰陽師) familiar with Daoist rites and texts. *Kōshin machi* has deep roots in early Daoist internal alchemical practices that experimented with pathways toward immortality. In its popular Tokugawa form, *kōshin machi* was a vigil requiring members to stay awake for the entire night of days of the monkey (*saru* 申) designated as *kōshin* 庚申 by the sexagenary calendar.<sup>5</sup> On this night, members of the *kō* believed that three worms (*sanshi* 三尸) existing in the body, and capable of producing great harm if one let down her moral and spiritual guard, reported the person’s past conduct to *Taishakuten* 帝釈天, the deity charged with guarding the integrity of the Dharma and judging people’s behavior as being in compliance or not with the moral injunctions of the Buddha’s teachings. If the worms freed themselves and reported misconduct, then the person suffered the consequences of her actions. Punishment often was meted out as physical illness. By staying awake to wait for the dawn and purifying herself through listening to sutras, observing taboos, and making offerings to *Kōshin*, however, a person could keep the worms from departing her body.

Divine punishment borne as physical malady was often understood in terms of a variety of diseases, including respiratory ailments. Further, illness of the lungs was considered a particular concern for women, and thus the prevention of such problems became one motive for practicing *kōshin machi* and blunting

4. *Kōshin* is often depicted as a frightening and protective deity. As the second character of *Kōshin*’s name may also be pronounced *saru*, meaning monkey, the term also designates a day of the monkey according to the sexagenary calendar. This connection has led the deity to be frequently depicted in statuary and other visual forms with three monkeys. Typically one monkey covers its eyes, another its mouth, and the other its ears. Together the three represent the avoidance of evil and vice. As popular faith in *Kōshin* rose throughout the Tokugawa period, worship halls and stone markers engraved with images of the deity and the three monkeys were erected in large numbers.

5. A *kōshin* day occurs once every cycle of sixty days as configured by the sexagenary calendar.

the disabling effect of the three worms. The *Fujin yashinaigusa* 婦人養草 (1689), another *jokun* text and a contemporary of the *Onna chōhōki*, describes this preventive aspect of *kōshin machi* in the following manner. “As women may fall into a state of severe melancholy, they are vulnerable to lung disease. For ages it has been a tradition for women to observe the rites of *Kōshin* so as to avoid such sickness. They stay awake until the cock crows so the three worms will not leave their bodies to report misbehavior to Taishakuten and appeal to the deity to take action against their hosts” (quoted in MIYATA 1981, pp. 19–20). Sexual abstinence was the prominent act of purity and devotion meant to protect the bodily health of worshippers on this night. Other taboos such as pregnancy, menstruation, people in mourning, and the consumption of certain foods were maintained on this night, too. Trespassing against taboos opened up a woman to the possibility of punishment in her future. Breaking the taboo on sexual abstinence, for example, not only put a woman’s health at risk but also her long-term happiness: sex on this night was thought to lead to conceiving a child fated to become a notorious criminal (MIYATA 1981, p. 20).

Women thus brought to their practice of *kōshin machi* a mixed bag of motivations. Some were future-oriented and geared toward obtaining a desirable state; they exemplify “in order to” motives. Investment against the possibility of future illness or future heartache—in order to remain free of sickness or a thuggish child—acted as a motivating factor in participating in the vigil and its demands for abstinence. Other motives also drove the practice of *kōshin machi*. They were “because” motives. Past experiences and concerns animated them. One participated in the rite both to avoid punishment for past moral lapses—by obstructing the worms from freeing themselves and reporting—and to atone for them. Importantly, both “in order to” and “because” motives in *kōshin machi* were linked to one’s participation with and behavior towards others. Through the fear of worms set free, illness, and sexual taboos, the nocturnal practice stressed reflection on and improvement of moral behavior in one’s human associations.

Like the observance of *kōshin machi*, Tokugawa virilocal marriage was an investment in which both types of motivations came into play and were linked to behavior in human associations. These motives were inseparable from a woman’s inclusion and conduct in the new complex of human relations dictated by marriage. A critical motive for marriage was that of a woman’s duty toward fulfilling her obligation as a daughter and daughter-in-law. While both “because” and “in order to” motives are very active in the Japanese religious experience, “because” motives incorporate a range of virtues central in Japanese society such as duty, loyalty, gratitude, and selflessness. These virtues are expressed best through the idea of obligation, which is captured in various terms incorporating the character *on* 恩. Acting on this sense of obligation, typically termed “return of benefits or favors” (*hō on* 報恩), is at the center of much religious activity (DAVIS 1992,

pp. 17–18). This type of religious motive centers on people acknowledging and acting on a host of obligations to both humans and spirits they understand as having played a role in making them persons in the fullest sense: created beings having some relative degree of social identity, economic position, knowledge, skills, and health. Conversely, overcoming a paucity of some of these things also leads to actions that find stimulus under “in order to” or “future-oriented” motives. The relative success or failure of a woman to act on these forms of motivation tipped her and her marriage toward either enjoying the rewards of a wise investment or feeling the burdens of an unwise investment. The *Onna chōhōki* and many other representatives of *jokun* centered their value as moral literature on encouraging young women to act well on such motives for their own sake and that of their marriages.

#### *Motive, Myth, and Metaphor in the Onna chōhōki*

An outstanding debt of gratitude that has historically shaped family relations in Japan is that exhibited by children toward parents. Acknowledging and acting on this debt has been considered the basis of filial piety and the root of moral centeredness. In the Edo period, the *jokun* genre intensely focused on a woman’s need to pay off this debt through her choices and behavior in life. The *Onna imagawa* 女今川 (1700), an exemplar of *jokun* literature, includes the following on its list of twenty-two admonishments it advises women to heed: “You forget the deep debt of gratitude (*fukaki on* 深き恩) you owe your father and mother, and you are negligent in the way of filial piety” (SAWADA 1993, p. 207).<sup>6</sup> For *jokun* writers, the path of marriage and becoming a good wife and mother was the typical way for a daughter to repay this *on* and express gratitude toward the life and rearing her parents had given her. Marriage through the warrior-inspired virilocal pattern, which had become normative for many Tokugawa commoners, required on the woman’s part a very complex exercising of this gratitude. She was to show identity and loyalty to her parents and natal family by affiliating with a new family and providing that family with her children. Further, she was to perform various actions within the hierarchy of this new family as a daughter-in-law as a way to express gratitude to her parents for being their daughter. Uesugi Yōzan 上杉鷹山 (1746–1822), in an epistle style of *jokun* ostensibly written to his granddaughter as a wedding gift to guide her in her new married life, taps into this complex maneuver when he attempts to assure the

6. The *Onna imagawa* takes its title and writing style from a genre of educational text widely disseminated throughout Tokugawa society called *Imagawa*, which denoted a textbook of morals often structured around maxims and admonitions. The original *Imagawa*, attributed to the warrior-scholar Imagawa Ryōshun 今川了俊 (1325–1420), was directed toward sons of warriors and commoners in the Tokugawa period and centered on matters of just behavior, wise counsel, and introspection and self-correction of flaws. The *Onna imagawa* is an adaptation for girls designed to enhance their moral education. For a history of *Imagawa* as educational text, see STEENSTRUP, 1973.

young woman that her parents' happiness is in her own hands. "Your father and mother will undoubtedly be happy and content in their hearts if they see upon your marriage into another household that you look after your parents-in-law, affectionately tend to your relationship with your husband, and prosper with children" (UESUGI 1910, p. 7).

The surest means to satisfy this duty of expressing gratitude to two families as both daughter and daughter-in-law/wife was to provide the husband's natal family with loyalty, for the benefit of harmony, and an heir, for the benefit of household continuity. Fulfilling this expression of gratitude through cultivating identification with her husband's family and providing it with the productive use of her fertility was one factor that could motivate a woman to enter into marriage; for *jokun* writers, it was the motivational wellspring of the wedding ceremony itself. The 1847 edition of the *Onna chōhōki* includes a posthumous preface by its editor, Takai Ranzan 高井蘭山 (1762–1838). "The wedding ceremony is, in both Japan and China, a weighty affair. A life-long spouse is decided upon and the man and woman make a vow to grow old together, prosper with children for the sake of posterity, and succeed the household's mother and father as they, too, become mother and father. The ceremony expresses appreciation and recognition about the start of a new generation" (TAKAI 1915, p. 13).

Although weddings formally bound men and women in mutual obligation to continue family lines as their parents had done before them, *jokun* literature typically focused on women and their special obligations to this exercise of *on*. Women were not only the fertile carriers of a new generation, they were also new members entering into homes dependent on their obedience and loyalty to household authority and traditions. Uesugi stresses in his letter that keeping peace with her new husband and his parents and avoiding resentful legal action (*fun-do sōshō* 憤怒争訟), by which he probably means attempts to gain a writ of divorce, was part of her debt of gratitude. "Intimacy between a husband and wife," he writes, "comes through devotion to harmony and through taking pleasure in one's debt of gratitude. Resentful legal action is no way of fulfilling that debt. When spousal devotion to their debts of gratitude (*ongi* 恩義) collapses, then the moral order of husband and wife is also rent asunder" (UESUGI 1910, pp. 8–9). Note that he acknowledges that damage to the moral order comes about through mutual abandonment of a couple's duty to *on*. The implication is that moral order is still salvageable through the wife holding fast to her fulfillment of debt as daughter and daughter-in-law, even in the midst of her spouse failing in his debt as son and husband. The "because" motive for marriage put forth in duty to one's parents and parents-in-law through the obligations of *on*, then, was satisfied most fully through exercising values and behaviors centered on giving birth to an heir and being obedient to one's husband and parents-in-law.

The act of marrying also carried "in order to" motives. The possibility of sickness, again including respiratory illness, may have flickered in the conscious-



ness of some women entering into marriage, as it clearly did with the author of the *Onna chōhōki*. As with one of the motivations of *kōshin machi* discussed above, marriage was also one means of warding off the danger of lung disease. Namura, the physician, argues that one reason for what he understands to be the early marriage age of Japanese (sixteen and seventeen for boys and thirteen and fourteen for girls) is due to parental anxiety concerning the moral and bodily wellbeing of children. He argues that because parents worry about their children's moral improprieties (*fugi* 不義) that lead to sexual misbehavior, which in turn may make young people vulnerable to depression and respiratory disease, they tend to marry them at early ages so as to put them in a behaviorally structured environment that acts to curb improper social and sexual activity (NAMURA 1989, p. 57). Although he is critical of this practice, as he thinks such young parents give birth to weak children who are vulnerable to early death, the logic of his explanation grounds one aspect of the practice of marriage in future-oriented motives. Like the sleepless rite of *kōshin machi*, entering into marriage fixes one's identity and behavior in relation with others to a larger moral universe with potentially grave implications. Failure to participate in the behavioral norms of either the nocturnal ritual or marriage may culminate in attacks on the body as a form of extracted justice. Further, just as *kōshin machi* articulated ethical behavior in women's sexual relationships, which concretely was expressed through practices of abstinence and purification, marriage in the virilocal household articulated the values of obedient behavior and purposefully productive sexual activity over and against willfulness and concupiscence.

Namura considers parents responsible for instilling these values in girls. It is their task to make sure their daughters secure the status of position as well as gain some security against sickness and ill luck, both of which marriage can provide. This was one set of future-oriented motivations that led daughters and their parents toward marriage. Failing in this responsibility, however, could have grave consequences. Parents not preparing their daughters well for marriage put the young women at risk of undermining her health. A mother and father can spoil their daughter throughout her girlhood, he cautions, by giving her more affection (*chōai* 寵愛) than their son. But then when she matures and reaches marrying age, those once doting parents, now realizing that time is no longer on their side and much still needs to be done, "suddenly attempt to teach her the arts of proper womanhood (*gei o oshie* 芸をおしえ), straighten her nature (*sei o tame* 性をため) and depress her high spirits (*ki o utsushi* 気を鬱し)" (NAMURA 1989, p. 8). Such hectic instruction, however, is sure to fail. After too much coddling and too little training the young woman enters her husband's household, a strange world for which she is not prepared, and is unsure how to respond to her new responsibilities as a daughter-in-law and wife. She may feel constrained by her parents-in-law (しうと・しうとめの心をかね) and, exacerbating this, act too eagerly to please her husband (*otto no ki o toru* 夫の気をとる).

If she is young enough, such an environment of social failure and chronic emotional discomfort may sap her of strength and encourage lung disease such as tuberculosis (*rōgai* 劳咳). Late or poor training of a daughter for the duties of a wife may actually bring about the very problems—the failure of health and the lack of social status—marriage is meant to parry.

The flip side of the criticism Namura raises, however, is that good training started early should successfully satisfy the “in order to” motivations of parents and their daughters. Further, the “in order to” motives play back on the “because” motives producing a cycle of motivation acting ideally to propel women into marriage and dictate their conduct in the household. The future-oriented motives of gaining status and avoiding sickness through marriage and correct comportment in the house of one’s in-laws begin, as the *Onna chōhōki* stresses, with the early training a girl receives in her natal home. It is that rearing and following the wishes of her parents to marry that motivate a daughter to express her obligation of gratitude to her parents through leaving her home and becoming a bride.

Kaibara Ekiken 貝原益軒 (1630–1714) is acutely aware of this cycle and recognizes a daughter’s parents as key to her success or failure in marriage. The *Onna daigaku* 女大学 (ca. early 1700s)—the standard bearer of all *jokun* literature and that to which Kaibara’s authorship is traditionally ascribed—concludes by admonishing parents to stop overspending on their daughters’ dowries in preparation for their weddings. “Parents today give their daughters so many articles of clothes, furniture, and such when sending them off into marriage. It is better instead that parents teach well every article of this moral primer because it is treasure that will serve their daughters throughout their lives” (KAIBARA 1970, p. 205). Parents should not, Kaibara insists, prove their love and concern for their daughters through expenditures of money and precious materials, but rather through moral lessons and example. Elaborate outlay for a wedding is proof positive that a daughter has not received the proper motivation for becoming a bride. How laughably ironic—that is if it were not so treacherous to a young woman’s long-term well being—his admonishment suggests, that parents place a daughter on the path of marriage and while being so mindful to supply her life’s journey with finery and furniture neglect to give her a moral compass by which to guide her heart and behavior. Without the “because” motivation—repaying the debt of gratitude for properly raising her with moral values from which she will profit throughout her life—a young bride may well be hampered in her “in order to” motivation to comport herself correctly for securing social and physical well being as a daughter-in-law and wife.

The significance of creating correct human relations in marriage with one’s husband and in-laws also finds expression in metaphor. Metaphor serves well the task of intensification of significance because it establishes correspondence between things of different classification and kind and intimates their similitude

in terms of identity, certain qualities, or function. It is from this correspondence that ideas may be meaningfully and immediately comprehended through the power of metaphor. As Suzanne LANGER aptly puts it, metaphors are “our readiest instruments for abstracting concepts from the tumbling stream of actual impressions” (1942, p. 145). Amidst a tumbling stream of actual (and conflicting) impressions concerning women and their socio-sexual relations in the Tokugawa period—such as earthy, less morally bounded relationships enjoyed by many lower class commoners, sexual play of prostitutes and their clients in the urban pleasure quarters, and the celibacy of Buddhist nuns—*jokun* authors relied on certain metaphors upon which to signify their vision of proper relations.

Heaven and earth (*tenchi* 天地) and yin-yang (*in yō* 陰陽) were two such critical metaphors. Their ubiquity in the literature suggests that the ideal arrangements involving the respective position, privilege, and role of husbands and wives is that of a hierarchical and complementary unit. As metaphors they primarily responded to the need to articulate the sacrality of structure that framed the marriage relation by making a correspondence between principles of human association in this world and the cosmic principles of yin and yang that gave rise to and maintain the universe. The *Onna imagawa* states the interpretation unequivocally. “Heaven is the yang principle and is strong; it is the way of man. Earth is the yin principle and is passive; it is the way of woman. The yin principle follows the yang, and as this is the true principle underlying the universe, it stands to reason that the way of husband and wife, when compared to the order in the universe, is that the husband is like heaven and is revered” (SAWADA 1993, p. 209).

In manuals of marriage and lifestyle other metaphors appear, which are marked by an individual unilateralism focused squarely on the promise and threat of woman as bride. Namura takes the goddesses Izanami and Amaterasu and turns them into key metaphors for the opening section of the *Onna chōhōki*. This introduction to his guide marks the author’s own mythic re-creation story. His myth is the sacred history of womankind, by which he ties contemporary Tokugawa women to the primordial woman, Izanami, and the most important of her children, Amaterasu. Like the dramatic structures of many sacred histories, his story of womanhood marks its mythic vision with a pristine beginning, inevitable stumbles and challenges, and the promise of redemption.

Namura’s introductory passage to his guide, entitled “Woman is the Beginning of Humankind” (*Onna wa hito no hajimari no koto* 女は人のはじまりの事), commences with an abridged and highly selective retelling of Japan’s mythical origins. In other words, Namura is not simply the author of a guide but also the author—the producer—of a myth. As producer he chooses particular metaphors and narrative to amplify his concern and that, he hopes, of his female audience, the consumers of his myth: guiding women toward the good life. Producers of myths, as Roland BARTHES noted, approach any potential metaphor as

an “empty signifier” (1972, p. 128). Creative control over mythological storyline demands that an author choose well metaphorical form and content in order to create an immediately persuasive metaphor that convincingly speaks an instinctive truth to the consumers of the myth.<sup>7</sup> For Namura, the metaphorical form is the life-giving goddess and the content is the need to cultivate a proper feminine lifestyle in marriage. How well his metaphors signified concerns perceived as instinctively true by commoner daughters and their families is a query for another examination focusing on the consumption side of myth. On the production side, however, his choice of Izanami and Amaterasu as metaphors and the redacted narrative in which he employs them leave little doubt as to what he hopes his audience will take away from reading the myth. Contemporary women ought to enter into marriage in the spirit of the original, divine women from whom all blessings flow.

Namura’s story of womankind shares many narrative similarities stressed in the myths of Ise Shintō 伊勢神道 theology. The redactions of Ise Shintō, taken largely from the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (720) were incorporated into the well-known historical writings of Kitabatake Chikafusa 北畠親房 (1293–1354), particularly the 1343 revision of *Jinnō shōtōki* 神皇正統記 (VARLEY 1980, pp. 12–15). Given Namura’s breadth of cultural knowledge and his Confucian education, it is unlikely that he was not familiar with the narrative assumptions of these earlier, influential writings, which, like his own, were forms of myths themselves amplifying the particular concerns of their producers.<sup>8</sup> With his own myth and specific concern, however, Namura at the outset introduces Izanami and her male consort, Izanagi, as the first kami in a line of seven generations to possess distinct genders (*Izanagi Izanami no mikoto no futahashira yori otoko onna to wakarete* 伊弉諾伊弉冉のみことの二神より男女とわかれて). The gendered kami enter into sexual union from which Izanami produces a daughter and three sons (*mitonomaguwai shite ichinyo sannan o umi tamau* 婚合して一女三男をうみ給う). Namura leaves absent the names of the sons, but immediately identifies the daughter as Amaterasu, which he pens as あまてる (Amateru) using kana script.<sup>9</sup> He acknowledges her as the mother of all earthly deities (*chijin no mioya* 地神の祖) and a goddess still honored in the present world by all who are wise (NAMURA 1989, p. 5). He also leaves absent from his myth the demise of Izanami upon giving birth to the fire god, Izanagi’s descent to the underworld to reunite with her, the spontaneous and asexual birth of Amaterasu from Izanagi’s act of

7. For his discussion on producing, interpreting, and consuming myth in terms of how one “reads” symbols (what I term metaphors), see BARTHES 1972, pp. 128–31.

8. Ise Shinto sought through myth to privilege the priesthood and primary divinity (Toyouke 豊受) of the complex’s outer shrine (*gekū* 外宮) over that of the inner shrine (*naikū* 内宮) and Amaterasu. Kitabatake used myth to forward his ideas on proper imperial succession and Japan’s position in the world as a divine country.

9. The three brothers, in order of their appearance after their sister’s birth in the *Nihongi* (*Nihon shoki*), are the moon god or Tsukiyumi, the leech child, and Susanoo. See ASTON, 1956, pp. 18–19.

ritual purification upon his escape from the underworld, and his charge to Amaterasu and her brothers, Tsukiyumi and Susanoo, to rule their respective realms. The signification of these metaphors (establishment of the imperial cult) and the particular narrative into which they are embedded (removing Amaterasu's birth from sexual activity and linking such activity to death and pollution) complicate Namura's task as producer of his own myth and master of his own metaphors. His particular task of signification is to privilege a vision of female lifestyle crafted on purposeful fertility: productive, fixed within marriage, and, importantly, epitomizing a woman's larger sense of moral clarity in offering her body and mind in obedience to the needs of her husband and in-law's household.

Toward this task, Namura uses the term *mitonomaguwai* to identify the creative sexual activity of Izanami and Izanagi from which Amaterasu has her birth. The word appears in the *Nihon shoki* to describe the sexual union that culminates a circumambulation rite Izanagi and Izanami perform around a pillar. In the *Nihon shoki* account, *mitonomaguwai* comprises two characters meaning to meet and join together (遭合). Physical, productive union establishes the kami as *ōtome* 夫婦, husband and wife (SAKAMOTO et al., 1967, p. 81). In his *Onna chōhōki*, Namura keeps the same reading but replaces the first character meaning "to meet" with one denoting "to marry" (婚), explicitly linking productive sexuality with the act of coming together in marriage (婚合). This word play and use of divine metaphors is the first intimation the text gives that women's sexual activity, when practiced within the obedient strictures of marriage, becomes purposeful action like that of the kami and their creation of the earth and its multitude of gods. Productive sexual activity becomes sacred in its correspondence to the mythological kami in that it is both definitive of and defined by marriage.

In Namura's myth, however, time has taken its toll on the will and competency of women to act with moral purpose in regards to their sexuality and behavior toward others. The farther one lives downstream from the mythic wellspring of the original mother and daughter, Izanami and Amaterasu, the more difficult it is to identify with their divine standards. Mortal women of the ancient age (*jōdai no onna* 上代の女), while not quite measuring up to the kami in the earlier time of the gods (*kamiyo* 神代), were still close enough in terms of time to the wellspring that their minds were obedient by nature and their hearts free of vice (*sono kokoro sunao ni shite yokoshima narazu* その心すなほにして邪ならず). For contemporary women, though, he is convinced that they must swim far upstream against the current of this sacred and distant heritage. Further, they must do so without possession of the behavioral skills and moral rectitude necessary to succeed in a life venture already made difficult by the degradation of time (NAMURA 1989, p. 5).

To amplify this point, he abruptly changes metaphors in his narrative. He infuses his myth with Buddhist suggestions of last days and baleful beings. With the passing of time women's hearts have become evil. Unlike when the world

was new and women divine, the present world is one grown old and reaching into its last age (*yo no sue ima no yo ni oyobi* 世の末今の世におよび). In such a morally exhausted age women become wicked day by day (*onna no kokoro hibi ni ashiku nari* 女の心日々にあしくなり). Far removed from the pure spring of their divine origin, the *Onna chōhōki* portrays contemporary women as sloshing in the stagnant waters of moral and spiritual bankruptcy. Seeking to link his contemporary interpretation of the fallen state of women with the perspicacity of the past, Namura asserts that Confucius warned in his wisdom not to allow women to draw too close to one endeavoring on the path of self-perfection. To create particular effect on this point concerning the fall of women, Namura redacts into his myth a well-used quote from the Hossō text *Jōyūishiki ron* 成唯識論.<sup>10</sup> “Women are messengers from hell, and have cut themselves off from the seed of the Buddha; they have the countenance of a bodhisattva and the heart of a fierce demon” (NAMURA 1989, p. 5).

Buddhist demonology offers a plethora of otherworldly miscreants, and Namura’s choice of a “fierce demon”—*yasha* 夜叉—is apt given the values of purposeful fertility and harmonious obedience that comprise his central concern for women entering into marriage. Although one class of *yasha* represents fierce but protective deities of Buddhist law, particularly once they have been converted to its message of compassion and wisdom, another class comprises demons possessing a wild and brutal nature. They are the unconverted. Roaming freely outside the borders of compassion and wisdom, their restless stalking looms as an indicator of life outside social and moral order; they have a particular craving for human flesh. Few metaphors are as appropriately demonic for advancing an apocalyptic vision in terms of Namura’s sacred story of womanhood: the *yasha* lurks in stark contrast to his goddess metaphors and the human order to which Izanami and Amaterasu are mothers. As an outside, uncontrollable force crouching to pounce from the shadows to tear apart and consume the flesh of human beings, it threatens the continuation of human life—both physical and social. An incoming bride, as Namura’s *yasha* signifies, is just such a hazard as she steps onto the tipping point of marriage. She enters the given order of her groom’s household as an outsider with the potential to bring disorder to the home and extinction to the household line through threats of poor behavior and social skills, indifference toward her reputation, and low fertility or infertility. Nevertheless, she is a necessary risk as demanded by virilocality. As the counter metaphors of life-creating kami suggest, she may equally bestow upon her new home the promise of harmonious order and generational continuity.

10. Namura places the passage in quotes, which suggests its status as a popular trope for writers and readers such as the good doctor himself and his audience. It is virtually identical to one found in a 1687 moral and lifestyle guide for women, with which he may have been familiar, called *Joyō kunmō zui* by Okuda Shohakken. See ARIMA et al., 1989, pp. 4–5. For Okuda’s use of the quote see OKUDA, 1970, p. 283

What can parry the threat of the demon bride and pursue the promise of the goddess bride? For Namura, hope lies in a correction of a woman's mind to a state of integrity and honesty like that of the kami (*shinryo no shōjiki* 神慮の正直) of the mythic past. Such a state of mind is the great heritage of women, albeit one that has atrophied with time. Correcting the female mind to something closer to its original state requires cultivating the qualities of *tashinami* (嗜み), which for Namura are best represented by prudence, modesty, social refinement, and etiquette. Of course, these are the very attitudinal and behavioral indices to which his guide directs women in each of the sections and chapters following his introductory myth. Development of these ideals of *tashinami* establishes a mind of integrity (*kokoro shōjiki* 心正直) by which to live harmoniously in the world with others. In a mind fully attentive to the qualities of *tashinami*, “the jealous spirit is no more, desires are few, and sympathy with others runs deep” (NAMURA 1989, p. 8).

Guiding one's life by a mind-set and behaviors patterned on *tashinami* does not come naturally or easily in an age so distant from the time of the goddesses. It must be learned, and learning must not be delayed. Once a girl so untutored becomes a woman, free from the moral restraints of humility and shame, she thinks she has the world in her pocket and inevitably cleaves to wickedness. Moral decline left unchecked over years of marriage will make a woman the target of taunts and gossip; years of selfish behavior toward her husband and neighbors will only gain her whispered names such as *kasha* 火車, which is short for *kasha baba* 火車婆 or “burning cart hag” (NAMURA 1989, p. 8). Here Namura is alluding to a Buddhist hell in which sufferers must travel around in a vehicle constantly in flames. Interestingly, this insult also was applied to older, powerful women in the urban Tokugawa pleasure quarters such as prostitute managers and wives of bordello owners—especially if they had reputations for driving hard their young, female charges—as it was believed this burning hell awaited them as just punishment for being harsh overseers (ARIMA et al., 1989, p. 5). Perhaps on this point of older, established women running roughshod over female underlings, Namura's use of *kasha* is not coincidental but quite intentional. A young woman stepping into the roles of wife and daughter-in-law, yet who is morally illiterate in the behavioral ideals of *tashinami* due to poor parenting, is entering marriage not by the way of the goddesses but by the path of the *kasha baba*. With age and good fortune she may well rise to the strong household position of mother-in-law and even de facto manager of the household, but years of self-centered behavior will surely bring, Namura may be suggesting, unhappiness to all with whom she associates—and especially at some point in time, her own daughter-in-law.

With a mind of integrity forged in a firm sense of *tashinami*, however, then even in a degenerate world a well-trained daughter upon marriage may become more like a goddess of yore than a demon of the present day. This sacred story of

womanhood, which opens the *Onna chōhōki*, closes appropriately on this note of redemptive hope for gaining the good life through the right attitude and actions. The good life the text promises in this myth and outlines throughout the rest of its pages is a woman's to earn and enjoy so long as she is guided by an honest mind and correct deportment on the path blazed by Izanami and Amaterasu.

### *Conclusion*

As within any form of historical genre, some representatives engage our contemporary attention more than others. Certainly among the varied examples of Tokugawa *jokun* some texts seem now to amount to little more than formulaic hectoring at women for their supposed inadequacies as human beings. This is in part the nature of the genre: its male authors were thoroughly convinced that they knew what was best for the moral and social cultivation of their female audience. Namura's *Onna chōhōki* is not completely free of this tone. It is predictably and patently patriarchal, patronizingly worrisome about the presumed state of women, and confident in its diagnosis and prognosis of that state; in this it is clearly definitive of its age and literary type. However, since it is a guide that promises to lead women to the good life through marriage—giving detailed information within its chapters on lifestyle matters, social etiquette, and bodily health critical to women in fulfilling their roles as wives, daughters-in-law, and mothers—it tends to read differently than the mere moralizing comprising lesser examples of *jokun*.

It reads differently not only because it offers practical steps for commoner women to gain lifestyle knowledge historically associated with the warrior class, but also because Namura chooses to infuse his guide with modalities of religion. Through this infusion—explicitly exemplified in his myth prefacing the guide—he amplifies to his readership that matters of home and multiple roles that marriage intensifies in the lives of women are far from mundane, but actually quite extraordinary. By being attentive to the extraordinary in her existential midst, he hopes each of his readers lives out her marriage as a type of “religious experience.” In other words, she orients her identity toward a community that defines itself by values and behaviors set apart and idealized through association with a sacred referent.

For Namura, there are two communities intersecting at the point of marriage toward which a woman must fully orient herself. One is the virilocal household, with its sacred referent being its own continuity as epitomized by the ancestors. This orientation is one of mind, body, and soul. In mind she is obedient toward her husband's family; in body she provides children as household heirs; in soul she joins her husband's ancestors to be worshipped by the heirs she brings into the world. Orientation toward a woman's individual marriage household points to a larger community, which for Namura is primary in its timelessness and pri-



mordial truth. It is the community of all women, and its sacred referent is the original women: Izanami and Amaterasu. Although this community has known better times, its truth borne of the goddesses still stands, if too often ignored. Thus in gaining the good life through marriage each woman faces the unique challenge of her gender, which is living up to the spirit of the goddesses in the creation and betterment of her own sacred microcosm: the marriage household. This is the timeless message Namura hopes his female readers take to heart as they also take as their own the day-to-day contents of his guide.

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