



Oodaira Mika 小平美香, *Josei shinshoku no kindai: Jingi girei, gyōsei ni okeru saishisha no kenkyū* 女性神職の近代—神祇儀礼・行政における祭祀者の研究

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THIS BOOK WAS published in 2009, and is an edited version of the manuscript, “A Study of Female Shinto Priests in the Religious Service of the Deities of Heaven and Earth: Concerning the Birth of the Modern Shinto Priest,” which the author, Oodaira Mika, submitted as a doctoral thesis to Gakushūin University in 2007. Oodaira is a Shinto priest as well as a researcher. As such, the author’s study of the work and roles of female Shinto priests throughout history is, in many ways, a particularly personal one.

This book addresses the issue of such women who, in the study of the history of female Shinto priesthood, have been confined to and understood within the category of *miko* 巫女 (medium), and considers them instead from the point of view of *jingi saishi* 神祇祭祀 (the religious services performed for the gods of heaven and earth), and *jingi gyōsei* 神祇行政 (the administrative duties concerning the gods of heaven and earth). Oodaira adopts this alternative approach in order to explain the cause of the abolition of female Shinto priests from the Meiji period onward. The author regards the recent and extremely frequent use of the word *miko* as problematic. She attempts to reconsider the role of the female Shinto priest within the context of the whole program of *jingi saishi*, deeming as one factor in the difficulties attendant to her subject “the [Chinese] graphic character of ‘woman = *miko*.’” (7). In addition, the author mentions the fact that within the Meiji system of the administration of the gods of heaven and earth,

the positioning of Shinto shrines as *kokka no sōshi* 国家の宗祀 (public facilities to which a nation should pay respect), was a major factor in the abolition of female Shinto priests at that time. Therefore, she emphasizes the need to examine this abolition from the point of view of *Jingi gyōsei*. Odaira presents the aim of this book as a reevaluation of the history of Shinto priests, primarily the female ones, from the early modern times to the modern period, a history that she considers to have been accorded insufficient attention.

The book is comprised of the following sections.

Introduction: The Theme of the Book

Chapter 1: The Presentation of the “Shinto Priest” in the Early Modern Period:
What is a “Shinto Priest”?

Chapter 2: *Kan'nagi* 巫 in Religious Services for the Gods of Heaven and Earth: The *Jingikan* 神祇官 and the Post of *Miko*

Chapter 3: The Work of Women in the Religious Services for the Gods of Heaven and Earth: The Form of Religious Services and the Succession Process

Chapter 4: Female Shinto Priests in the Meiji Administration of the Gods of Heaven and Earth: The *Mikan'nagi* 御巫 in the Modern Period

Closing Chapter: The Birth of the Shinto Priest in the Modern Period

Chapter 1 clarifies the ways in which Shinto priests at the close of the early-modern period were recognized as such, based on the views of the priesthood written by Shinto priests of the time like Kodera Kiyoyuki (of the fief of Fukuyama) and Oka Kumaomi (of the fief of Tsuwano), along with descriptions indicating notions of what qualified a Shinto priesthood written by the Shirakawa and Yoshida families of Shinto priests. According to her readings of these historical documents, the author concludes that Shinto priests at the end of the early-modern period categorized *mikos* who were affiliated with the Imperial Court and to Shinto shrines as Shinto priests while distinguishing them from *minkan fugeki* 民間巫覡 (private or “popular” mediums) who were not affiliated with those institutions. Yet there were many types of “popular” religious people who administered services to the gods, and they were active without any clear distinction from the Shinto priests.

Chapter 2 compares the *mikan'nagi* of the Imperial Court's *Jingikan* (bureau in charge of the administration of Shinto worship that was established based on the Ritsuryō system) with the *mikan'nagi* of Jingū 神宮 (Ise Shrine), or *mikan'nagi uchindo* 御巫内人, all of ancient times. This comparison is drawn from an analysis of the interpretation of *mikan'nagi* by Mikanagi Kiyonao 御巫清直 who was actively involved as a Shinto priest of the Outer Shrine (外宮) of Ise from the late Tokugawa period to the Meiji period. The *mikan'nagi* of the Imperial Court's *Jingikan* was in the position of *zōshiki-nin* 雑色人. This was a position of low

rank within the Ritsuryō system; such women were designated clearly as neither Shinto priests nor as court ladies. Similarly, the *mikan'nagi* of Jingū was also in the position of *zōnin* 雑任, which was much like that of *zōshiki-nin*. However, the case of the *mikan'nagi* at Jingū was different. Unlike a *mikan'nagi* at the *Jingikan* of the Imperial Court, she was incorporated into the local, land-specific, Shinto priest organization. However, a common point was that both types of *mikan'nagi* performed religious services for public and low-ranking gods that were positioned in relation to realm-wide religious services centered on Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大神.

In chapter 3, Odaira considers the work of women in *jingi saishi* before modern times. The author focuses more closely on gender than on age, positioning her discussion of the female children who played important roles in religious services in an examination of the significance of being female. Such females participated in *jingi saishi* such as the *sakakko* 造酒兒 or the *monoimi* 物忌 at Jingū. *Sakakko* focused on the production of new grain necessary as a tribute to the emperor at the Daijōsai 大嘗祭 (the Great Harvest Festival after an emperor's enthronement). The former took place in the *saiden* 齋田, a field designated for the cultivation of cereals for use as offerings at the Daijōsai. The author points out that the *mikan'nagi* female Shinto priests in the *sakakko* and *monoimi* participated in the most important religious functions, the *kamiaraware* 神顕れ or *kōshin* 降神 (calling down of the gods) and *shizume* 鎮め or *shōshin* 昇神 (the elicitation of the gods' withdrawal). This function, of welcoming and dispatching the gods, overlapped with a function of the female god Ame-no-Uzume-no-Mikoto 天鈿女命, who performed it for Amaterasu Ōmikami in the myths that appear in the early chronicles, *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. Moreover, the author suggests that the function of *naishi* 内侍 (the lady-in-waiting) to the emperor resembles that of the function of the female god Ōmiya-no-me-no-Kami 大宮売神 who served as an attendant to Amaterasu Ōmikami in the new shrine (*shinden* 神殿), and that the duties of the *naishi* were related to the invocation and dispatch of the gods. In short, the author proposes that the sacred duties of *kamiaraware* and *shizume* derive from the work of female gods, and that there were old customs that dictated its succession down a female line.

Chapter 4 considers the nature of the changes in the religious services offered by Shinto shrines and the roles of the female Shinto priests that developed in the *jingi gyōsei* of the Meiji period when the systems concerning the administration of shrines were restructured. According to the author, *shizoku* 士族 (samurai families), which became central leading components in the *jingi gyōsei* of the time, heavily utilized the Confucian notion of *kō* 公 (public). Under the ideology of "State Shinto," *shizoku* reformulated Shinto as "*kōteki*" *na* "*daidō*" 「公的」な「大道」, the public and correct course of conduct that a person should follow. This was intended to eliminate the "personal" or "private" aspect from Shinto

shrines and the Shinto priest under the ideology of *Kokka no sōshi* (national/state worship). Such shifts from “personal” to “public” excluded female priests since they were placed into the category of the “personal.” The Council of the Left (a legislative body of the time) ruled out appointments of female Shinto priests in shrines because a Shinto priest was now considered “a national public employee,” a position that was to be occupied only by a male.

On the basis of the above-mentioned four chapters, the author concludes in the closing chapter that until at least early modern times, the existence of female Shinto priests was recognized. However, because of the attempt to distinguish between a Shinto priest from a *fugeki* 巫覡 (a male medium) associated with the character of 巫, and because of the Meiji period *jingi gyōsei* based on the idea of *kō*, the Shinto priest came to be considered a “national public employee,” a role reserved for men. As a result, female Shinto priests were no longer acceptable and this led to their abolition. In other words, the abolition of the female Shinto priest in modern times was not caused by religious reasons concerning the avoidance of *kegare* 穢れ (impurity), which is the conventional explanation, but was a consequence of new state policy.

The above gives a summary of the constitution of this book and an outline of each chapter. The aims are consistent throughout: to clarify the nature of women’s roles in *jingi saishi* before the modern period, and to present the background to the abolition of female Shinto priests in the modern period through a careful reading of historical materials. The most interesting aspect of this study is the repositioning of *miko*. *Miko* have conventionally been understood as *minkan shūkyōsha* 民間宗教者, a practitioner of private (or “popular”/“folk”) religion) based on the interpretation of shamanism in relation to the “Shinto priesthood.” In addition, the consideration accorded by the author to the views about *miko* expressed by early modern (male) Shinto priests through an analysis of their previously neglected writings is very interesting because it is not observable in any theories of *miko* so far. Furthermore, the significance of the emphasis laid on *kō* by the *shizoku*, whose members were among the central leading figures of the *jingi gyōsei* of modern times, is demonstrated persuasively through the analysis of historical materials.

In addition, this book challenges the viewpoint that “the gradual disappearance of women from religious services in the ancient times and the abolition of female Shinto priests in modern times are different problems that should be examined as separate matters” (6). Rather than understanding the disappearance of female Shinto officiants from various shrines in the early Meiji period as related to concepts of *kegare*, it should be interpreted as connected to the administrative moves toward state worship, “something that was part of the creation of a modern Shinto priest suitable for the Meiji world” (253). Odaira’s work must be

commended, for there are few studies that have analyzed *miko* within the context of changes in social structure and thought.

However, even though the author asserts that paying attention to changes in social structure and considering the appointment of female Shinto priests of modern times “clarify not only the problem of Shinto priests but also the view of women, occupations, and family required for the construction of a modern nation and a new kind of citizen” (253), theories of gender and the term “gender” itself go unmentioned. In the period of modernization, however, it was the result of the influence of Confucian thought on the *shizoku* and their emphasis on *kō* that marginalized female Shinto priests, who had come to be considered part of the “personal” realm. This is connected to a well-trodden issue that has been identified and explored for a long time in gender studies: men occupy the social “public domain,” and women the “personal domain” (such as family life). In addition, if the abolition of the appointment of female Shinto priests in the modern period is reflective of the contemporary view of women and family, it is surely necessary to consider the issues that have been so frequently discussed in gender studies, including those of the establishment of the modern family, and the system of *ie* and the patriarchy. Therefore, if the viewpoints offered by studies of gender are added to the analyses of historical materials in this book, the exclusion of female Shinto priests may be considered not only from the perspective of the concepts of “personal” and “public” domains but also that of developments in dynamic social structures. On the other hand (and this is a caution I try to exercise in my own research), conventional studies on *miko* in the fields of religious studies and folklore have not analyzed the changes in the situations of *miko* in each period through close readings of historical materials, such as found in this book. For example, here the *miko* undergoes various changes even during the same “ancient times.” This book reveals the need for studies of religion, folklore, and gender in religion to engage historical materials and to also thoroughly investigate the changes in society and its systems as context to the topic.

The study of this book is organically united with other research fields, and it leaves the author of this review with the expectation of an emergence of further progressive studies on female Shinto priests and female religious figures in Japan.

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