

Revelatory Experience in the Female Life Cycle: A Biographical Study of Women Religionists in Modern Japan

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INTRODUCTION

Modern Japan has seen the emergence of many so-called “new religions” since the end of the last century. One striking feature of this movement in general is the fact that women have often initiated and/or contributed significantly to the development of many of these religions. I have stated on another occasion that this phenomenon does not imply female dominance of the Japanese new religions and that the pattern of strong female leadership is sporadic, generally limited to the founder’s own lifetime; the women likewise have never advocated dramatic changes in sex roles or in the power relationships between women and men (Nakamura 1980, p. 175 and p. 188).

This paper is an attempt to examine the revelatory experience in the female life cycle and to assess the influence of traditional morals on the women religionists who are listed in the table. Although this is by no means an exhaustive list of modern Japanese women religionists it is, I believe, a good representation.¹

The women listed in the table are all known for their extensive spiritual influence. They represent a wide variety in terms of life span, locality, social status, religious background, education, degree

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1. My original intention was to include more women, but I was forced to give up some cases because I could not obtain dependable sources on the deceased or interviews with the living.

TABLE
Women Religionists in Modern Japan

Name	First Revelation	Marriage (Termination)	Children	Education (Years)	Organization (No. Members)
NAKAYAMA Miki 中山みき (1798-1887)	1838	1810-1833 (death)	6	0	Tenrikyō 天理教 (2,573,709)
DEGUCHI Nao 出口ナオ (1837-1918)	1892	1855-1887 (death)	8	0	Ōmoto 大本 (165,264)
MIZUNO Fusa 水野房 (1883-1970)	1911	1901 (divorce) 1905-1912 (divorce)	0	6	Kannagarakyō 神ながら教 (26,493)
FUKATA Chiyoko 深田千代子 (1887-1925)	1919	1907-1908 (death) 1909-1922 (divorce)	1	0	Ennōkyō 円応教 (329,887)
NAGANUMA Myōkō 長沼妙伎 (1889-1957)	1939	1914-1925 (divorce) 1930-1944 (divorce)	1	6	Risshō Kōseikai 立正佼成会 (5,412,461)
MIZOGAMI Eshō 溝上恵照 (1892-)	1930	1915-1950 (divorce)	1	12	Nanayōkai 七曜会 (no membership)
KITAMURA Sayo 北村サヨ (1900-1967)	1944	1920-1967 (death)	1	6	Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō 天照皇大神宮教 (404,369)
MIYAMOTO Mitsu 宮本ミツ (1900-)	1932	1918-1945 (death)	3	6	Myōchikai 妙智会 (695,729)
KOTANI Kimi 小谷喜美 (1901-1971)	1929	1917 (death) 1926-1929 (death)	0	5	Reiyūkai 霊友会 (2,932,300)
HOZUMI Hisako 保積史子 (1907-)	1933	1934-1961 (divorce)	6	12	Taiwa Kyōdan 大和教団 (56,800)

Note: Membership according to the statistics in *Shūkyō nenkan*, 1980 (Tokyo: Bunkachō, 1981).

of religious influence, documentation, and so forth. Nakayama Miki, for example, is the founder of Tenrikyō, which boasts of more than two million followers, while Mizogami Ēshō, on the other hand, presides over Nanayōkai, a small group of followers she has made no effort to organize. Not all these women were founders of religious movements; some were co-founders. They have one thing in common, however: they all lived a life of religious devotion after their revelatory experience and did so in spite of the various hardships that resulted from discrimination and from the conflicting roles of wife, mother and religionist they were forced to assume. They believed in the spirit world of deities, buddhas, and the dead, and had a strong sense of mission to follow the divine dictates and advocate the divine messages they had received to the world.

I am fully aware of the dangers inherent in generalizing from biographical studies of such a limited number of cases. Each of these women led a unique life. Nevertheless, I would like first to discuss their socio-historical background, then to present their lives in general terms, and finally to offer one detailed example for illustration. In this way, I hope to clarify my findings as they pertain to my main thesis and the problems involved in such a study.

TRADITION AND ITS EFFECTS ON WOMEN RELIGIONISTS

Women in the service of the divine. In ancient Japan women served as medium and delivered divine messages during religious rituals carried out by families, clans, tribes and so forth.² Historians may differ in their views of the position of women in ancient Japan but it is clear that women had a good deal of authority, especially in religious matters. As society became more complicated and bureaucracy and specialization developed under the heavy influence of Chinese culture, patrilineal families began to transmit their professions by heredity and women became powerless, giving place

2. The *Nihon shoki* gives many accounts of princesses and empresses who served the divine. See Aston 1956, Vol. 1, pp. 151-152; 192-193; 221-222.

to men in many of their functions. Both Buddhism and Confucianism introduced sexism and established a male-dominated hierarchy in religious organizations. After Buddhist monks gave up celibacy the clergy and official titles tended to be inherited in both Shinto and Buddhist establishments, a development which almost excluded women from service. Women were looked down on as being inferior to men in their ability to practice the disciplines that lead to enlightenment. Female protest against such prejudice can be found as early as the ninth century (see Nakamura 1973, p. 72).

The tradition of female mediums has persisted, however, in both local shrines and temples and in the imperial institution of the princess priestess³ at prestigious shrines in spite of feudalistic suppression and sexist prejudice.

Education in feudal society. In the Edo period, when the Tokugawa Shogunate ruled the country from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, the leading ideology of the government was neo-Confucianism, adapted to suit Japanese society. The institution of the *ie* was the primary political, economic, and social unit of static feudal society. By *ie* I mean the patrilineal household institution that includes family members, estate, social status, profession or trade, reputation, and so forth (Nakane 1970, p. 4). Spiritually, the *ie* is a historically extended commune consisting of ancestors and descendants all tied by karmic chains.

Education in this society aimed at maintaining and strengthening this institution. Thus the ruling class, that is, the feudal lords and samurai under the shogun, were eager to train their sons in the military arts, while merchants trained their sons in trade. In other words, boys were expected to uphold their *ie* through their family profession, that is, through their political, economic, and social activities. Their mental and moral education consisted of studying the Chinese classics.

3. I am referring here to the institution of *saigū* (see Ellwood 1967).

Girls, on the other hand, were taught to adjust themselves to anything, as they would eventually have to leave their family and marry into another family. In marriage they had to transform themselves in order to perform their roles in their husband's family. It was necessary for them to devote themselves to the service of this new family and to give birth to an heir. Female education in these centuries, therefore, was aimed at cultivating the feminine virtues, at refining speech and behavior, and at imparting skill in the traditional arts.

In the seventeenth century such Chinese texts as *Nü hsiao-ching* ("The classic of filial piety for women"), *Nü lun-yü* ("Analects for women") and *Lieh-nü-chuan* ("Biographies of exemplary women") were used for girls' education. In the following centuries, however, a series of manuals for the instruction of women was composed by Japanese authors who essentially imitated the Chinese models. These were called *onna daigaku*, which literally means "great learning for women." These manuals were not only studied by the girls, but were also copied for the sake of learning Chinese characters and practicing calligraphy. Consequently, they became very popular, and during the Tokugawa period the general morals they advocated permeated deep into the hearts of women. This moral teaching was a cornerstone of support for the feudal system. Women were supposed to serve their husbands and to manage the household, men to serve their masters and lords, and the lords to serve the shogun, or the ruler.

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, when the feudal government toppled and modernization was instituted, new manuals were composed to introduce Western rationalism and liberalism into female education. Although the modernists were mostly critical of feudalistic sexism, the general tenet of the earlier texts, they did not abandon the discriminatory principle in girls' education. Therefore, we may regard them as being all fundamentally in the same vein as the feudalists.

Onna daigaku on religion. Most of the works in the *onna daigaku*

series contain references to the religious activities of women. Kaibara Ekiken (1630–1714), a neo-Confucian scholar and educator, gave, in his *Wazokudōjūkun* (“Instructions on the education of Japanese children”) a classic set of instructions to parents on how to ready their daughters for marriage. In reference to women’s religious activities he says:

16-vii. Women should always be careful to guard themselves . . .

They should not be fond of diversion. They should not frequent shrines and temples which draw crowds of visitors while they are still under the age of forty.

16-viii. Women should not be deluded by the arts of male and female mediums, and should not pollute, approach, pray or flatter deities and buddhas at will. They should concentrate on performing human duties. They must not divert their attention to invisible spiritual beings (Ishikawa 1977, pp. 20–21).⁴

All the later feudal manuals were modeled after this, repeating Kaibara in words and phrases. One such manual, which became quite popular at the time, was *Onna daigaku takarabako* (“Treasury of women’s great learning”), first published in 1836 (See Ishikawa 1977, pp. 27–60).

Modernists and rationalists were all critical of the prohibition laid out in Kaibara’s seventh item. Fukuzawa Yukichi (1834–1901), for example, was extremely critical of the existing feudalistic social structure, which included inequality between the sexes. In his *Onna daigaku hyōron: Shin onna daigaku* (“A critical essay on the *onna daigaku*: New *onna daigaku*”)⁵ he first quotes from *Onna daigaku takarabako*, then expounds his criticism of each item. Concerning the passage that corresponds to Kaibara’s seventh item, Fukuzawa points out the inequality between men and women and

4. This work was written in 1710 but its date of publication is unknown.

5. It is worthy to note that this was written and published in 1899 and was his last work. He apparently meant it as a manual to guide Japanese women to the coming century.

says it is unjust for men but not for women to be free to behave as they wish. He discusses the following item as well:

11. "You should not pollute, approach, or pray to deities and buddhas at your will, or be deluded by the arts of female and male mediums. If you perform human duties well they will protect you without prayer."

I agree with the first sentence. . . . Generally speaking, such delusion is due to a lack of learning and speculation. If we ask now which is more easily deluded, man or woman, and find out that there are more women deluded than men, it is because women are less well educated than men. This is why I do not blame women for their superstitious beliefs, but encourage their civilized education, so that they may eradicate the fundamental cause (Ishikawa 1977, p. 233).

Both feudalists and modernists were thus critical of women's involvement in the spirit world. It seems that they were afraid that superstitious women would pollute deities and buddhas, the "authentic" religion. Fukuzawa failed to recognize any religious meaning in their activities, seeing only superstition; he trusted rationalistic education to remove its real cause, ignorance. One modernist went so far as to say that the authentic way of the *kami* was the worship of Amaterasu Ōmikami, the ancestral deity of the Imperial family, and her subordinate deities (Ishikawa 1977, p. 101). Beliefs in other supernatural beings were rejected as superstition.

The passages quoted above reveal the two prohibitions on women's religious activities: first, women were not allowed to visit shrines and temples, not to mention the theaters and gay quarters, particularly when they were under forty years of age; and second, women were warned against involvement in spiritualism because they were thought to be so superstitious that such involvement would be dangerous. One commentary says women should not be allowed to leave home, since they should always be ready to serve their families; another says that women might meet men other than their own husbands during such excursions. These fears are

understandable if we remember that the pilgrimage was often abused by men as an excuse to buy nights with prostitutes. Men wanted to keep their wives at home and to prevent them from participating in any social or religious activities in their maturity, for men were afraid that women would get out of their control if they became devout, numinous, or possessed—if they became, in other words, devoted to a cause other than the *ie*.

One might well assume that the lower class women were excluded from such education because their lives were hard and they were forced to labor for the sake of supporting the family, and had no time to sit for indoctrination in the traditional morals for women. The entire society, however, was based so strongly on these morals that no one was free from them. Rather, it seems that both natal and marital families took advantage of such morals to make lower class women work hard for their livelihood.

LIVES OF THE WOMEN RELIGIONISTS

Social status and education. As can be seen from the table, the length of formal education of the ten women religionists who form the core of this study varies from zero to twelve years. Generally speaking, social strata and education correspond in Japanese society, and this is also true of this group of women. But there are some facts to remember when studying this table.

First, universal elementary education was decreed in Japan in 1886, and it was not until 1900 that four-year compulsory education was enforced in the public schools. In 1907 the four years were extended to six. Nakayama and Deguchi, the first two women on the list, should thus be excluded from our comparison, for no formal education was available when they were of school age. Second is the negative attitude of most parents concerning female education. Many fathers have been quoted as saying that girls do not need any education or that knowledge would be an obstacle to a happy marriage. Even if the parents could have afforded to give their daughters a formal education, therefore, they often did not do so. Third, many people preferred private lessons

in the traditional arts and crafts to formal education. Since parents did not encourage intellectual achievement in girls there were, and still are, many private establishments offering courses on such subjects as housekeeping, sewing, knitting, weaving, and cooking, as well as the more artistic fields such as flower arrangement, music, calligraphy and the tea ceremony. Many women doubtless spent more time in such private lessons than in formal school education.

Japanese feudal society consisted of four social strata: the samurai, farmers, artisans and merchants. These were not so rigidly set and it was not difficult to cross lines through adoption or marriage. Mizogami and Hozumi came from families with samurai lineages and were well educated for the standard of their days. Mizogami taught at a high school before marriage. Fukata, on the other hand, had no formal education. The extreme poverty of her family and early death of her mother forced her into childhood service as a babysitter for a wealthy neighbor. Her master was kind enough to teach her how to read and write.

Except for Fukata, Deguchi, Mizogami and Hozumi, the women on the list came from families of farmers and peasants. Most of them had an elementary school education; Mizuno spent five years and Kitamura three in private lessons while helping their fathers farm after graduation, and Naganuma and Kotani began working immediately. Nakayama was taught how to read and write by her father and studied in a private seminary for two years although she had no public school education. Nothing is known of Deguchi's education. She began working in childhood and was praised as an exemplary filial daughter. She was said to be illiterate but was probably self-taught, for she suddenly began writing down divine messages in her later years. We may thus conclude that all of the women were literate, even those with no formal education, and that the length of their formal education roughly corresponds to their social status.

Marital status. Without exception all of these women married:

six one time (Nakayama, Deguchi, Mizogami, Kitamura, Miyamoto and Hozumi), and four twice (Mizuno, Fukata, Naganuma and Kotani), and all but two (Mizuno and Kotani) gave birth to children.

Many suffered from unhappy marriages, diseases or poverty. Some made marriages of consent, as was common among the lower classes, and thus were unprotected legally as well as socially. The women in this group show an unusually high divorce rate, due mainly to the conflict between their roles of wife and religionist.

Revelatory experience. Revelatory experience came to some of these women as a bolt out of the blue, while the upholders of the *Lotus sutra* (Naganuma, Miyamoto and Kotani) and some other women (Kitamura and Hozumi) carried out ascetic practices for some years, gradually achieving their revelations. Some were conscious of their innate psychic power even before their divine calling, but many admitted that they had not been religious at all. By “religious” they meant doing ascetic practices, being devoted to a particular deity or buddha, leading a disciplined life, and the like. The revelatory experiences were given to them at various stages of life, but excepting the case of Hozumi they all came during marriage.

Hozumi is a unique case. Both her parents had spiritual powers of their own and thus respected her potentiality. She began leading an ascetic life at the age of eighteen. She spent several years as a devoted ascetic until her revelatory experience. Her parents—who, one suspects, were worried about her having a child to succeed her—were afraid she would never get married and have children. After her revelatory experiences she married an ascetic, following her father’s counsel that marriage would guard her from groundless gossip. She gave birth to six children, who were brought up by her mother, while she continued to devote herself to ascetic practices. Though she was not very interested in marriage the couple was legally married for twenty-seven years, during which time her husband had a number of love affairs. It was she who took the initiative in divorce.

Three of the women experienced revelation in their twenties (Mizuno, Kotani and Hozumi), three in their thirties (Fukata, Mizogami and Miyamoto), two in their forties (Nakayama and Kitamura), and two in their fifties (Deguchi and Naganuma). We may safely state, therefore, that women can be possessed at any stage of life.⁶

At the time of their first possession the women would try to identify the divinity by asking its name. They were normally guardian deities of the Dharma, universal gods, cosmic deities or spiritual beings from the folk tradition. Although Nakayama and Deguchi revealed their unique cosmology and mythology the others did not talk much of the divinities but concentrated instead on their messages. Many of them spoke in a strong masculine manner when delivering the divine messages because the revealed and identified divinities were often male or neuter. There are conspicuous differences between masculine and feminine speech in the Japanese language, the former being powerful, commanding and authoritative and the latter gentle, emotional, euphemistic and indirect. Well-educated women were generally more constrained in speech, meaning that they spoke in a feminine way and were fully conscious of the content and manner of their speech even during possession. On the other hand, there are some instances of women who spoke while they were unconscious, and in these cases education is irrelevant.

Besides speaking divine words they had visions, heard strange music and could gain command of spiritual beings. They could appease those spirits of the dead believed to cause troubles, diseases, calamities and the like if left unappeased. The whole life of these women was devoted to the divine; many drastically cut down their sleep to three or four hours, some kept vigils or performed special midnight practices such as cold water ablution or paying tribute at a shrine, some made pilgrimages all over the country and even

6. Carmen Blacker (1975, chapter 7) notes that most shamanistic religionists experienced so-called arctic hysteria in their early years.

went abroad. Their spiritual and biological functions were also closely related, and in one case menstruation ended even though the woman was still in the prime of her life, while in another menstruation began after the women had gone through the strictest ascetic practices.

Vocation and marriage. Since the numinous power of these women was overwhelming, their husbands and children responded to the divine words and were the first to become followers, either willingly or out of resignation. When the initial shock was over, in a few months (Mizuno), several years (Fukata and Naganuma), or two decades (Mizogami), the husbands realized that their wives were no longer theirs and many finally choose divorce and remarriage. One husband (Mizogami) escorted his wife on pilgrimages for years, giving up his fortune, career, social status and everything he had. At the end of thirty-five years of marriage, however, he left his wife and a grown-up daughter, apparently having decided to wait until he was relieved of parental responsibilities in order to choose his own life. In most cases the children stayed with their mothers, supporting them financially, organizing their followers or managing the household.

These children were endowed with hereditary charisma and often succeeded their mothers as leaders of the movements. It is generally easier for a son to succeed the founder than a daughter, for this is more socially acceptable, but nevertheless some of the women insisted on female succession to the head of the organization. Deguchi chose her daughter (Deguchi K. 1975), and Kitamura her granddaughter as heiress (Nakamura 1980, pp. 179-180). Mizuno, who had no children, elected her niece as heiress. Marriage seems to be necessary for an heiress to be sanctioned as mature and to insure succession. These younger women often choose marriage at the risk of charisma and devotion, remaining only as nominal head and being assisted by capable men, including their husbands.

TRADITIONAL MORALS IN THE LIFE OF FUKATA CHIYOKO

It is obvious that traditional morals had an extensive effect on the women included in this study. Fukata Chiyoko is a good example of this influence and I will now discuss her life to show how it was present.⁷

Fukata Chiyoko (census registration name, Ichi) had revelatory experiences at the age of thirty-one, in 1919, and passed away unexpectedly at the age of thirty-seven. Her father was unsuccessful in trade and fond of drinking, and her family was in great need. Thus she was not sent to school at all, but rather went to a well-to-do family in the village as a babysitter at the age of nine. Two years later her mother died in poverty and she came home to take over the family responsibilities. She had two younger brothers to take care of and worked in a snack bar run by her father, who was addicted to alcohol, the cause of her family's constant poverty. Her father was himself an illegitimate son and consequently suffered from social discrimination.

Her father was extremely strict with her moral education during her childhood, probably because he was conscious of being looked down on himself. He taught her to be humble, to respect men, to work diligently, to be ready to serve all members of the family, and so forth. Later in her autobiographical writings she recalled her father telling her not to visit temples and shrines. He added, "If you are very sick and want to pray very badly, you may pay tribute to the divine but only secretly, after dark" (Fukata 1965, Vol. 1, p. 136). Since she was a bright and pretty girl, her father expected her to be a well-qualified bride for a promising young man. Her father's counsel mirrors the prescriptions laid out in the *onna*

7. The primary source on her life is Fukata 1965. This was edited by Chiyoko's only son Chōji, who was the first president of Ennōkyō, which was organized immediately after the founder's death, dissolved by decree during the Second World War, and recognized again in 1948. I have written her biography in English to be included in a forthcoming book on the lives of Japanese women.

daigaku manuals.

Contrary to his expectations she was flatly refused as a bride for a respectable family. A young man proposed to her, but they were forced to make a marriage of consent because of his family's objection to a legal marriage with a woman of low birth. A baby was born to them before very long, but when this baby was only one month old her husband was murdered by robbers and she was left a widow. She had to support her baby as well as her father and younger brother, and ran the snack bar by herself while her father took care of the baby.

In the meantime she had become acquainted with an actor from an itinerant troupe and remarried without registering. In order to support her father, to whom she had entrusted her baby, she worked hard at sewing and knitting, but only when her husband was out; the rest of the time she was a devoted wife who lived up to the ideal of the traditional teachings for women. She never thought of going out, partly because she had been taught that wives should not leave home, and partly because her labor left her no time of her own. She was content to be at home and work day after day.

Once one of her friends asked her to go and pay tribute at the shrine with her, but Chiyoko declined, saying that she was not interested in deities or buddhas. Her friend did not give up, however, but asked her again and again, until Chiyoko went to visit the shrine for the first time since her marriage. Afterwards she made it a rule to pay tribute at the shrine once or twice a month with candles bought with the small change she had saved. By April of 1919 she had begun to foresee the future and to predict the exact course of events but she did not think of this as a sign of further development, and kept quiet about the change.

The first time she was possessed she spoke these divine words: "This woman has been destined and prepared as an instrument of the world to serve God at the age of forty, but the rapidly changing world has shortened the time span by seven years . . ." (Fukata 1965, Vol. 1, p. 57).

Her successors and followers interpreted this message as a prediction of her predestined span of life. She had her first revelation at the age of thirty-one. By the traditional age count in which one is two years old on the first New Year's Day after birth, however, she was thirty-three. She died, likewise, at the age of thirty-nine according to the traditional age count. Her followers took her clairvoyant power as proof of the divinity of the possessor and it seemed that she acknowledged that herself.

I would like to suggest another interpretation, though I do not mean by so doing to deny theirs. To my mind, Chiyoko was so heavily indoctrinated by the traditional morals for women that she felt some justification was necessary for her rather untimely involvement with spiritualism. The age of forty had been a demarcation line, after which women were given more freedom than before. A housewife would be a mother-in-law herself by forty during the Tokugawa period and even into the Meiji period.

Chiyoko showed through her entire life how heavy was the pressure of the traditional women's morals, although she may not have been conscious that she was doing so. She was an ideal filial daughter to her father, an ideal devoted wife to her husband, and an excellent mother to her son. She suffered immensely from the conflicts between the old values and the new ones after her revelatory experiences, and eventually her faith and sense of mission overwhelmed the rest. She then devoted herself to ascetic practices, preaching, healing and traveling for retreats with her followers in the service of God.

TO SUM UP

These women religionists represent Japanese society from the lower to the middle classes. In spite of the differences in their socio-historical backgrounds, they were tied by the common moral code for women. There was only one life pattern open to them: they should marry, serve their husbands, give birth to and rear children. It was only after these experiences that women were accepted by society as mature. Although they were not allowed to have their

own pursuits during their childbearing years, they were grudgingly allowed to participate in socio-religious activities after forty, an age of transition from housewife to mother-in-law in the past centuries.

One can say that women can be possessed at any stage of their life, but in traditional Japanese society they had to wait until middle age to be sanctioned as mature religionists. Marriage might even be seen as a disciplinary practice for women, for in marriage women had to cultivate feminine virtues such as selflessness, devotion, humility, fortitude and the like, and thus their mundane life prepared them to be divine vessels even though they might have had no ascetic practices.

When these women were possessed and became totally devoted to the possessor, they naturally quit serving their families and stopped working for a livelihood. Such changes often caused the breakup of their marriages; conjugal relations ended and often the biological generative function did as well. These women, however, did not leave their families, but first tried to make their husbands and children disciples. At the first divine calling the men found it difficult to resist the numinous power endowed to their wives and followed their directions, providing for their needs. But the men turned to divorce and remarriage when they could no longer stand the discipline of humility, fortitude, devotion—the traditional feminine virtues.

In all cases the children supported their mothers, taking over the household and financial responsibilities if they were old enough. Accordingly, middle age had yet another advantage for the socio-religious activities of the women because it meant their grown-up sons and daughters could assist them in every way. They therefore did not have to struggle with the problems that might have caused a charismatic woman to have a breakdown during adversity. We can imagine how difficult it was for these women to undergo revelatory experiences, to abandon the traditional life pattern for women and to devote themselves to spiritual quests. These who had been able to lead a life of devotion from an earlier period were

blesed with encouraging families. There have been some cases of very young mediums, but these were not able to develop themselves into religionists partly because they did not want to keep up their tense, exhaustive life, and partly because social mores and the traditional moral code intimidated them in their choice of ways of life. Above all, some of them lacked a sense of mission.

If the husbands accepted the reverse status in the conjugal relationship the wives became the household heads spiritually. Revelatory experience made them for the first time daring and independent and often androgenous, transcending social mores. Nevertheless, they did not transcend the *ie*, the household institution, but tried to transform it into a spiritual commune which could serve as a core of the developing religious movement. Consequently, charisma and vocation were inherited in the families of these women as they were elsewhere in Japanese society.

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