

KANEKO Juri 金子珠理

## Can Tenrikyō Transcend the Modern Family? From a Humanistic Understanding of *Hinagata* and Narratives of Foster Care Activities

Conservative tendencies, based on the concept of the modern family, can be observed in the view of the family advocated by Tenrikyō in recent years, but this is not necessarily the case when looking at the actual activities of the group. Actually, the foundress Nakayama Miki (*Hinagata*, “divine model”), who did not have an ideal family in the worldly sense, as well as Miki’s youngest daughter Kokan and Ueda Naraito, both also *hinagata* who were given the role of *miko*, are sources of spiritual strength for followers who have deviated from the framework of the ideal image of the family. In addition, meanings attached to the stereotypical precept of Tenrikyō related to the family, “women are pedestals,” were formed and changed within the historic context of the modern age. With the present decline of the modern family, the actual practice of *otasuke* (salvation work) presents a new image of the family, which can be examined through the “church family” of those living together in Tenrikyō churches, especially those involved in foster care activities. I will demonstrate that these activities of the church are connected with the empowerment of women, and by focusing on the narratives of women active in foster care I will point out the postmodern (going beyond blood relationships), modern (based on a sexual division of labor), and premodern (retaining a household *ie* 家 consciousness) nature of the church.

KEYWORDS: Tenrikyō – modern family – social welfare – foster parent – Japanese new religion – Nakayama Miki – feminism

Kaneko Juri is a member of the Oyasato Institute for the Study of Religion, Tenri University.  
Translated by Kayama Toshimasa.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES from a feminist perspective strive above all for research that contributes to the empowerment of religious practitioners, particularly women and other minorities. For this reason research should, first of all, give voice to these practitioners; however, even if it is done by outside researchers these researchers need to be conscious and reflective of their own positionality and seek to contribute towards the empowerment of the practitioners.<sup>1</sup> Recent research along these lines on the Shinto-related new religion Tenrikyō—research that could be called “Feminist Tenrikyō Studies”—is steadily producing good results.<sup>2</sup> This is not just an arbitrary process of seeking to produce a model useful to the construction of the researcher’s own gender theory, based on texts such as the records of the foundress’s words and actions, but rather, it contributes to the understanding and presentation of the *Hinagata*—a concept that directly implies the way of life of the foundress, Nakayama Miki—as a living precept or model for present-day women followers, released from a sexual division of labor.

In this paper I will first of all take a humanistic approach to the foundress as *Hinagata* from the perspective of the family, while also demonstrating how “the Young God,” Miki’s youngest daughter Kokan and Ueda Naraito, the *ninsoku yashiro* 人足社 (someone who complies with God’s commands and performs God’s work with devotion), can also be spoken of as *hinagata* for women in a broad sense of the word. Moreover, through the narrative of women involved in foster care activities—an attempt to enliven the church through engagement in social

1. In regard to this point, see specially KAWAHASHI 1997. Kawahashi’s work inspired the author with the idea of positionality. The author is in the marginal position of being a follower/non-follower who feels sympathy for the foundress, Nakayama Miki, through the influence of her husband, who is a Tenrikyō follower.

2. See, for example, HORIUCHI 2003, KANEKO J. 1995, KANEKO A. 1991, and so forth. In April 1998, a forum called “Women’s Theory: Religion, Gender, and ‘The Truth of Origin,’” sponsored by the Tenri Yamato Culture Congress, was held. On July of the same year, an international symposium “Women and Religion” was held, sponsored by the Tenri Yamato Culture Congress and the Center for Women and Religion at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California (TENRI YAMATO CULTURE CONGRESS AND THE CENTER FOR WOMEN AND RELIGION 2003). In addition, related essays are included in “In Commemoration of the 200th Birthday of the foundress of Tenrikyō: Tenri International Symposium ‘98 Awards Select Papers on Women and Religion, Bioethics and Environmental Ethics” (TENRI YAMATO BUNKA KAIGI 1999). In 1999 at the Oyasato Institute for the Study of Religion (Tenri University), a Center for Gender and Women’s Studies was established, where feminist research with a view towards religion is conducted. In March 2002, this Center held an international symposium, “Towards Ecofeminism: Feminism, Ecology, and Religion.”

activities—I will examine a practical example of contemporary family in the church from a feminist and modern-family-theory perspective.

### *The Tenrikyō View of Family*

A superficial reading of recent official viewpoints leads one to the conclusion that the contemporary Tenrikyō view of family has distinct conservative inclinations. The headquarters of the Catholic Church, the Vatican, is at present actively involved in interreligious dialogue, and among the Japanese new religions it has selected Tenrikyō as its first dialogue partner, with a dialogue held in Rome in 1998.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this symposium, the “Tenrikyō-Christian Dialogue,” a joint statement on the family based on their teachings, “The Healthy Family is the Foundation of Society,” was adopted, and this message was broadcast throughout the world through the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for the Family. Faced with the crisis of the family in the contemporary world, the statement, based on the common perception that “a faith that is not swayed by this rapidly changing world is indispensable” and that “husband and wife must settle their minds in unity,” emphasizes the significance of the function of the family, which is the “foundation of society” and “the center of the culture of life” (TENRI UNIVERSITY 1999, pp. 519–21). Particularly in Tenrikyō the married couple is seen as the basic unit of human creation, and harmony between husband and wife is not only the foundation of peace in the family but is also the principle of salvation for all people of the world, for it is proclaimed that, “I have created husband and wife as representative of heaven and earth, this is the beginning of the world” (*Mikagura-uta*, verse two). However, present social trends, such as the increase in young unmarried men and women, the rise in divorces and single-parent families, the presence of couples who choose to remain childless, and forms of love that deviate from the heterosexual norm, cannot be changed by the mere intensification of faith, but, rather, what is needed is a new type of *tasuke* (salvation), based on a historicity and context that can immediately respond to these phenomena.

In regards to the concept of “gender,” which is deeply related to the view of family, Tenrikyō seems to harbor a sense of crisis regarding the concept of “gender free,” the foundation of the government-promoted “gender-equal society.” In “Perspectives” in the 25 August 2002 edition of *Tenri Jihō* (the Tenrikyō weekly newspaper), it is claimed that gender equality “does not discriminate between men and women, but rather differentiates between the two based on the sexual distinction of the two,” whereas “gender free” is regarded as “a special concept that denies sexual distinction and even dismisses differentia-

3. In September 2002, a sequel to the dialogue, on the subject of “family,” was held at Tenri University.

tion.” As we can see from this interpretation, there is a tendency in Tenrikyō towards the presumption of a sexual distinction between men and women that transcends that of individual personal distinctions. A similar tendency can be discerned in the monthly magazine of the Tenrikyō Young Men’s Association, *Arakitōryō*, where the views of right wing critics outside of Tenrikyō who maintain that the social advancement of women is the cause of the breakdown of the family are introduced in nearly every issue. There it seems that no room is left for seriously considering homosexuality, transgender issues, or even gender identity disorders. In this way, it is easy for us to identify a type of “fundamentalism” in Tenrikyō.<sup>4</sup> However, as I will point out shortly, a look at the specific individual practice of *otasuke* (salvation work) indicates that such a tendency is not the whole story. At any rate, we are left with the question as to why husband and wife are identified as the basic unit of Tenrikyō. To answer that it is necessary first to take a humanistic approach to the state of the family experienced by the foundress.

#### THE HINAGATA OF THE FOUNDRESS REGARDING FAMILY

The foundress herself did not have an ideal family, from a human or worldly perspective. Miki married into the prosperous Nakayama family, and there, blessed with a good relationship with her mother-in-law (Miki’s aunt on her father’s side of the family), she assumed control of the family as a hardworking wife, but she also faced adversities, such as her husband Zenbei’s problems with women and the misconduct of her only son, Shuji, as well as his leg ailment. For this reason harmony between husband and wife was undoubtedly an important concern throughout Miki’s life. Unlike in the samurai class, in farming communities at that time the bride did not have a minor status in the family—as long as she was a “healthy bride”—and, in fact, the foundress was entrusted with the family affairs of the Nakayamas and had already assumed control of the family at the age of fifteen. After Miki became the “Shrine of God” in 1838, Zenbei was unable to divorce Miki, not because he was cowardly, but rather, because the foundress was already the center of the Nakayama family and had assumed a powerful role in the family. Here, Helen Hardacre’s interpretation of Zenbei’s diminishing “masculinity” is off the mark (HARDACRE 1994a, pp. 138–39). To the farming class the bride was an important part of the labor force, and harmony between husband and wife was a matter of life and death. In light of this situation, the importance placed on the concept of harmony between husband and wife found in the *Mikagura-uta* and *Ofudesaki* is only natural.

4. Hardacre suggests that the new religions of Japan are suppressive of women in relation to interpersonal relationships and in their view of the family, and that this type of sexism is of the same nature as fundamentalism (HARDACRE 1994b). However, there are innovative movements that overcome sexism in certain situations.

Oral tradition has it that the foundress said, “At the age of forty-one I was called by God, and from the age of sixty-seven I became the household of God. Therefore, you must have patience” (KAJIMOTO 1954, p. 70). Although Miki became the “Shrine of God” with the founding of the teachings in October 1838, within her own family she was not yet recognized as the “Household of God.” From the moment God entered her body until the beginning of the construction of the *tsutome basho* (place for the conducting of services) in 1864, a span of twenty-six years, members of her family were only gradually convinced of her call, and the “Incident of Miya Pond,” an attempted suicide by the foundress witnessed by her eldest daughter Masa, can be interpreted in this context.<sup>5</sup> The *Ofudesaki* was written between 1865 and 1879, which corresponds to around the time from when Matsue, who was favored by the foundress, married Shuji, her delinquent eldest son, until the year of Matsue’s death. It is possible, therefore, to conclude that the *Ofudesaki* was written with the desire to promote harmony between husband and wife, with the intention that it be read by the promising bride, Matsue (KANEKO A. 1999, p. 111). However, the foundress outlived both her eldest son and his wife. When the foundress was eighty-five years old, only the foundress and her granddaughter, Tamae (the mother of the late second *shinbashira* [head of the Tenrikyō Church], Nakayama Shozen) were left in the Nakayama family. Her eldest son and his wife had died, two of her daughters (Kokan and Oharu) had also passed away, and the only surviving member of her family, the eldest daughter Masa, was going through a divorce with her husband. Therefore, from a human point of view it is difficult to say that the foundress’s family was blessed, but especially under these circumstances she was seen as a model, a *Hinagata* who persevered on the “path of single-hearted salvation.” For example, Matsumura Yoshitarō (the first minister of Takayasu Grand Church), who actually had met the foundress and had made significant contributions to the administration of the Tenrikyō organization during the Meiji (1868–1912), Taisho (1912–1926), and early Showa (1926–1989) periods, expressed his deep admiration for the foundress when comparing the latter years of his life with the latter years of the foundress in his autobiography (MATSUMURA 1950, p. 4).

#### THE TWO MIKO: KOKAN AND NARAITO

Helen Hardacre, in her exploration of transformations in the gender relationship of *miko* 巫女 (female) and *saniwa* 審神者 (male) from the age of Himiko to that of Nakayama Miki, says that we can see in Miki “a female figure who com-

5. Miya Pond (or Mirror Pond, Kagami Ike) of Mishima Shrine, situated directly east of the Tenrikyō Church Headquarters, was reclaimed in March of 1999 and no longer exists. The Mishima Shrine itself has been transferred to within the city limits of Tenri.

pletely embraces within herself the role of the male *saniwa*” or rather “a *miko* who did not accompany a *saniwa*” (HARDACRE 1994a, pp. 135, 146). In fact, female members of the Nagao family, that is, Miki’s mother’s side of the family, had for generations been *miko* of the Yamato Shrine,<sup>6</sup> so it can be presumed that Miki also had the aptitude for becoming a *miko*. In fact, on the day of the founding of the teachings, during the *yosekaji* 寄加持 (“incantation,” a prayer ritual designed to invoke God’s compassion), which was scheduled to be led by the *shugenja* 修験者 Ichibei, and a *miko* from Magata village, Soyo, Miki served as a last-minute substitute for the latter. Miki’s fulfilling of the role of a *miko* served as nothing more than the opportunity for God’s spirit to enter into Miki and she became the “Shrine of God.” Hardacre also indicates that Miki had a profound relationship with Isonokami Grand Shrine (HARDACRE 1994a, p. 134), but in fact, the relationship was only a negative one, involving a compromise with State Shinto that can be termed *ōbō* 応法, or a compromising of the teaching in order to conform with the law. Furthermore, the accounts of her sexual relations after the period when the foundress became a medium for God is merely a reading into the situation of Hardacre’s own understanding of *miko*. I might add that even after the founding of the teachings the foundress did become pregnant and had a miscarriage.

On the contrary, it is common within Tenrikyō to view the foundress’s youngest daughter Kokan and Ueda Naraito as individuals who assumed the role of *miko*. (Although he was a married man, it is also possible to say that Iburi Izō, Miki’s leading disciple who later was recognized as *honseki*, was a *miko*-like or rather *saniwa*-like presence.) *Honseki*, which literally means “main seat,” refers to the individual who, after the passing of the foundress, continued to transmit the word of God [through the *osashizu*; divine directions] and bestow the *osazuke* [divine grant]. As I will explain later, it can be said that these two *miko* also served an important role as *hinagata*, in the broad sense of the word, for Tenrikyō followers. First, let us briefly retrace their background.

Kokan, born in 1837, the year prior to Miki’s first possession by God, truly shared in the hardships of the foundress, and from the days of her infancy she was raised as the foundress’s successor. Shortly after her father Zenbei’s death in 1853, the seventeen-year-old Kokan departed for Osaka to do missionary work, and first recited the name of God, Tenri-Ō-no-Mikoto, at Dōtonbori—an event known as *kamina nagashi* (spreading the name of God). When the *tsutome basho* was finally completed by Iburi Izō in 1865, Kokan sat beside Miki on the dais and alternated with Miki to mediate the word of God the Parent to the followers. Kokan was called “The Young God” by the followers and was revered second only to Miki.

6. The Yamato Shrine was located near Sanmaiden village, where Miki’s parents, the Maegawa family, lived. The name of the famous battleship, Yamato, is derived from this shrine.

Miki viewed the role of *ichimigurashi* 一身暮らし, that is “living on one’s own,” or being single—specifically being a single woman single-heartedly devoted to God—as the *innen* (causality) of the soul of Kokan, so she said, “She will go through life on her own,” and did not intend to have her married. However, Kokan’s will to get married was strong, so when she turned twenty-two, Miki reluctantly accepted a groom for her; it ended unsuccessfully, however, during the early stages of the *muko-iri* (the ceremony or process of having the groom move into the family of the bride). Afterwards, in 1872, Kokan’s older sister, Oharu (Miki’s third daughter), who had married into the Kajimoto family of Ichinomoto (present-day Ichinomoto village of Tenri City), passed away after giving birth, and left behind five children, including an infant. When Kokan found out about the sudden death of her sister, she felt sorry for the children and took care of them. Although Miki objected, she later consented, saying, “I will lend her to you for only three years” (MOROI 1988, pp. 109–110). However, three years passed and Kokan still did not return to Miki, and although she participated in the divine ritual of the *jiba sadame* (the identification of the *jiba*)<sup>7</sup> she returned to Ichinomoto afterwards. Shortly after that she was stricken with an illness and died at the age of thirty-nine.

After the sudden death of Kokan, focus was switched to Miki’s leading disciple, Iburi Izō. After Miki passed away in 1887, Izō, who received instructions from God, attained recognition as the *honseki*. For the next twenty years he transmitted the *osashizu* and relayed the *osazuke* to the followers. Izō passed away in 1907 and his role was succeeded by Ueda Naraito.

In life, Miki acknowledged Naraito as the *ninsoku yashiro* of God. Naraito was born in 1863 in Sonohara village, located next to Shoyashiki village, home of the Nakayama family. She began to exhibit symptoms of nervous disorder in 1876, after having the mysterious experience of seeing the Furu no Iwagami, the tutelary god of Isonokami Grand Shrine, or, according to one explanation, Miki herself. Her father Kasuke (who later changed his name to Kajiro), sought prayers everywhere for her recovery, but to no avail. Finally, through a Tenrikyō follower in the neighboring area, Nishiura Yahei, he appeared before Miki. When first meeting Naraito, Miki said, “I was waiting for you. Five lifetimes ago, you were my aunt who personally saved my life. In this life, I will return the favor by allowing you to play eternally in paradise” (UEDA 1987, p. 4). The illness was cured immediately and after a brief moment, Miki said to Kasuke, “I would like to have Naraito be an *ichimigurashi*.” As mentioned above, *ichimigurashi* means to lead a single life. Perhaps Miki thought that the role of being a single woman, like a *miko*, was appropriate to Naraito, who she

7. In Tenrikyō doctrine, the place of origin for humankind and the central place of salvation for humankind is called *jiba*. *Jiba* is presently in the Tenrikyō Church Headquarters and is also called *ojiba*. *Jiba sadame* refers to the identification of the *jiba*.

intended to raise on her own as her “protective core” (one who plays a central role in serving God). Therefore, in 1879, when Naraito was seventeen, she practically became Miki’s adopted daughter. When Miki passed away shortly in 1887, Naraito returned to her parent’s home, but sometime later the “divine direction” that Naraito should return to the *jiba* was given repeatedly by the *honseki*, Iburi Izō. However, like Kokan, Naraito was torn between God and humans, and as a result her family finally decided to move to the *ojiba* in 1900. In 1907, the *honseki* ordered the construction of a house for Naraito, and on June 6 it was also announced that Naraito was to officially take over as the successor of the *honseki*. From this night forth, Naraito bestowed the *osazuke* to the followers. The *honseki*, who made sure that Naraito safely inherited his duties, passed away three days after the succession. Naraito was forty-five years old at this time. With the arrival of the Taisho period Naraito began to suffer from severe mental and physical problems, and she finally stopped bestowing the *osazuke* in 1918. The role of bestowal of *osazuke* was inherited by Nakayama Tamae, but it now became a mere ritual. Although she lived until 1937, Naraito would never again bestow the *osazuke*.

#### ONE MORE HINAGATA

Although Miki respected maternity, as we can infer from the example of Kokan, she did not consider marriage and giving birth to children the only way of life for women. Miki admonished her youngest child, Kokan, who had the aptitude for becoming a *miko*, to lead the life of a single woman, as she did likewise with Naraito. In regards to Naraito it is worthy to note that she told her, “In return I will allow you to play in paradise,” indicating a life of *ichimigurashi* freed from the anxieties of having a family. This can be interpreted to mean that not only is unmarried status advocated simply as a requirement to be a *miko*, but that being single has rewarding implications for becoming a highly virtuous individual. Although her family circumstances led to her preaching of the teaching of harmony between husband and wife, she did not necessarily proclaim that ordinary married life and the creation of children was the proper path for all people. Certainly the joy that Miki exhibited when her eldest son, the heir to the Nakayama family, finally married a lawful wife, Matsue, did indicate, as Hardacre says, that she “did not challenge the roles provided by the family system constructed at that time” (HARDACRE 1994a, p. 147). On the other hand, the foundress never proclaimed “Marriage at any cost,” or, “It is only natural to have children if you marry.” Although “Causality Admonitions,” such as “The Causality of Childlessness” and “The Causality of Adoption,” are still conducted in a part of Tenrikyō, Miki personally never taught anything of that nature. From the beginning, the foundress herself was a *Hinagata*, or model, of



someone who deviated from the common role of wife and mother, and women missionaries who followed the example of the foundress were the same.

In actual *otasuke* situations, involving married couples troubled with sterility, single women, or homosexuals (related with the *otasuke* of AIDS), a church minister might well believe it important to use the figure of Kokan, who is in the broad sense of the word another *hinagata*, and the example of the foundress's family, which was by no means blessed from a human point of view. Next, let us consider discourse related to Tenrikyō's view of family within the historical context of modernity.

### *Modern Family and Tenrikyō*

Tenrikyō, whose foundation spans the end of the Tokugawa regime and the Meiji Restoration, developed along with modernity in Japan. The principle of harmony between husband and wife, which Miki advocated, conformed to the "one husband, one wife system" set down in the Meiji Civil Code of 1898, and the teachings of Tenrikyō no doubt had a truly "modern" sound to the people and served a role in helping them in their desire to keep up with modernization.

On the other hand, the conventional teaching in Tenrikyō that "women are pedestals," although it reminds us of the admonition of the famous Edo period book *Onna Daigaku* (Greater learning for women) of the "Three Subordinate Precepts" (Obey your father during your youth; obey your husband when you are married; obey your son when you grow old), can also be linked with modernization. Morals such as the "Three Subordinate Precepts" that were formerly understood as pertaining to the samurai class—although they were not unknown among the general populace—became part of the Meiji Civil Code and thus spread among the general populace as well, and we can assume that this had an influence on Tenrikyō doctrine. Although the Meiji Civil Code was taken as a sign of modernity, it also served to introduce the premodern household system of the samurai to the general populace.

The phrase "women are pedestals" cannot be found in the original Tenrikyō texts. It is believed that the phrase has its roots in the *osashizu*, where the expression "the pedestal [that is, foundation] of the path," appears nine times. However, this phrase served to raise the religious consciousness of women who were relegated to subordinate positions, and contained the radical idea that women should be at the forefront of missionary work and faith. The original meaning that "women and men are equally qualified in being the pedestal [foundation] of the path [Tenrikyō]," was gradually changed to "women are pedestals," in the sense that women are the foundation of the household and should remain at home to support their husbands and children (KANEKO J. 1995). In addition, we cannot overlook the fact that the formation of this stereotypical meaning of "women are pedestals" developed along with modernity,

which replaced the Edo-period idea that women are merely *karibara* (借り腹, a borrowed womb) with a sexual division of labor that assigned the active role of “good wife, wise mother” to women. During World War II the meaning of “protecting those left on the home front” was added to this concept, illustrating how the motif of “women are pedestals” has gradually changed under the influence of various ages.

#### MODERN FAMILY PERSPECTIVES AND “WOMEN ARE PEDESTALS”

It is said that the so-called “modern family,” with children as the focus and husband and wife, parent and child united by deep emotional bonds, appeared in Japan among the urban middle-class working families around the Taisho period. Due to the transformation of the market and industry, families were cut off from the former social order of neighbors and relatives, the domestic order was separated from the public order, and the modern family was born. The birth of the modern family led to a sexual division of labor, where women administered the family domain and men the public domain. Although these characteristics are generally seen as universal essential qualities of the family, modern family theory claims that they are nothing more than characteristics of the historical period called modernity, that they have caused a paradigm shift in various fields, and that they have especially contributed significantly to theory construction in feminism (OCHIAI 2002).

This modern family was popularized after World War II, during the period of high economic growth. In the postwar period, the public use of the phrase “women are pedestals” disappeared in Tenrikyō and on the surface the idea of a “pedestal for the husband” gave way to the image of “the pedestal of birth and nurturing,” emphasizing maternal qualities based on a theory of special female characteristics, promoted by the Women’s Association and the second *shinbashira*.<sup>8</sup> According to this theory, the meaning of the words of the foundress that “there is no distinction between the female pine and male pine” was that although male and female are equal, men and women have different roles. This interpretation conformed to the concept of the sexual division of labor spread by the popularization of the modern family at that time, and as a result the original and radical meaning of “women are the pedestals of the path” got lost. In due course, the “modern family” in Japanese society began to show its limits, and is now on its deathbed. The rise in divorce rates, increase in single-parent families, limits of a childcare

8. Josei no arikata o kangaeru: Kokusai fujin kaigi ni okeru kakkoku no shuchō no naka kara kangaete mitai koto 女性のあり方を考える——国際婦人会議における各国の主張のなかから考えてみたいこと [Reflection upon the state of women: Thoughts on the views expressed by each country in the International Women’s Conference] and Tenrikyō ni atte no jousei no tachiba ni tsuite 天理教にあっての女性の立場に就いて [On the position of women in Tenrikyō], a paper presented by the second *shinbashira*, Nakayama Shozen, at the 25th International East Asian Studies Conference. Both articles can be found in the Tenrikyō Women’s Association magazine, *Michi no dai* 62 (1975).

system that binds mother and child too closely, child abuse, the rise in working women (although mostly irregular work such as part-time jobs), and rising unemployment for heads of families—all of these indicate the imminent collapse of the modern family.<sup>9</sup> In the next section, we will examine some practical examples of *otasuke* by the church in trying to deal with these social conditions.

*From Criticism to Reform: The Church Family and Tasuke*

The main theme of Instruction (*yutatsu*) Two, issued by the fourth *shinbashira*, Nakayama Zenji, in October 2002, was none other than *tasuke*. For Tenrikyō followers *tasuke* is an important priority. The foundress's narrative regarding salvation, *Ōkina tasuke* 大きなたすけ (the great salvation; TENRIKYŌ KYŌKAI HONBU 1977, pp. 144–48) is a valuable guide for believers in following the *hinagata*, especially those who participate in foster care activities. In this collection, there is an anecdote about when a woman named Shina (Okamoto Shina, the wife of the first head minister of the Asahi Grand Church) who was commissioned to care for the infant of a married couple afflicted with poor breast feeding, but she could not produce enough breast milk herself so she humbly asked the foundress for guidance. The foundress responded, “No matter how much money you may have, or how much rice you may have in the storehouse, it cannot be given to the infant now. There is no greater salvation than to care for and raise another person's child.” A young minister who resided in Tokyo, thought, “If I receive contributions from followers and live without doing salvation work, then it is practically donation theft.” One day he read this anecdote from the foundress's life and decided, “Let's start foster care activities at my church. This is precisely the salvation work that is most needed now.” Through this kind of attempt to connect church and society the perspective of believers who have kept away from the church can also be changed (TENRI YAMATO BUNKA KAIGI 2001).

There are many Tenrikyō activities that seek to answer the needs of society, such as social welfare work and disaster relief.<sup>10</sup> Foster care activities is one of these. In 1981 Tenrikyō became the first religion in Japan to establish a society for foster parents, and it still continues to exist under the name of the Tenrikyō Federation for Foster Parents. Although it is known only among those with some connection to the foster care movement, especially among nurturing foster parents (foster parents who do not seek to adopt), Tenrikyō followers have a near monopoly (TENRI YAMATO BUNKA KAIGI 2001). Due to the increase in child abuse in recent years, mainstream nurturing institutions in Japan are unable to keep up with demand both in terms of the number of children served

9. In the view of the Tenrikyō Women's Association, which emphasizes motherhood even today, it is necessary to add the concept of class to the viewpoint of gender.

10. See, for example, KISALA 1992 and KANEKO A. 2002.

and the quality of the care given, and the government has even founded professional foster care systems to deal with the rising need for nurturing foster parents. When considering the pressure that young mothers with childcare responsibilities face under changing social conditions and often without the presence of a father, foster care activities are directly connected to gender issues. Although we have critically examined discourse regarding family, especially the sexual division of labor attached to the concept of “women are pedestals” in the previous section, we can see that Tenrikyō feminist studies have already gone beyond the level of criticism and have entered the phase of searching for reform.

#### THE ACTIVITIES OF A CHURCH FAMILY

Although the foster care system was established legally in 1948, it can be argued that Tenrikyō had already developed the foundations for “foster care” at its regional churches by this time. From some time back the church had accepted people who were socially ostracized and helped them attain independence while living with each other, and there must have been a good number of children among this group (WAKASA 2001, p. 34). In reality, while officially supporting the concept of the modern family, the church accepted people who strayed from this concept, and, depending on the circumstances, occasionally cared for them throughout their lives. This was seen as the true nature and mission of the church. Care of foster children can be seen merely as one part of this *otasuke*.

In this way, we can see that the vision of the modern family and its foundation in a sexual division of labor that became attached to the teaching of “women are pedestals” was merely conforming to trends in society in general at a particular time, whereas in reality the church expressed a style of family not based on bloodlines and quite different from the “modern family,” what we might call the “church family” or “extended family.” In Branch Church A where I did fieldwork, a single mother, who was a high school student, and her child lived with the church minister as his foster children. When the high school student found out that she was pregnant she was encouraged by the church minister, “Do what needs to be done for the sake of the child. I will take all responsibility to help you,” and so she made the difficult choice of becoming a single mother. This is indeed a very bold act of deviating from the framework of the modern family, both for the church and the mother and child, who will eventually leave the church to live independently.

A man who was being pursued by gangsters for an enormous debt and even a murderer on parole lived in this church, and they supported the lives of the foster children (the mother and her baby) by helping out with the chores, for example, preparing meals when the minister and his wife were absent. Since the

presence of “lodgers” such as these is a long-standing custom in the church, it is apparent that it is easier to engage in foster care activities in a church setting than in a common household. Although foster care activities have been quietly pursued for some time, with the church’s desire to respond to the increase in child abuse in recent years such activities are increasingly under focus both within and outside of the church.

The “church family” goes beyond the limits of the modern family in that it is composed of various people living together without blood ties. The above-mentioned mother and baby, both foster children, also stray from the framework of the modern family. But this does not mean that the church has resolved the contradictions of the modern family, or that it presents us with the latest model of the ideal family. In many churches traditional ideas of the household *ie* persist, and practices that have nearly disappeared in wider society, such as having large families and the custom of sending boys born after the first son to other families for adoption, can still be found here. In addition, the jobs assigned to the foster father (minister) and foster mother (wife of the minister) in many churches is reminiscent of the modern sexual division of labor. This is expressed, for example, in the following statements: “Ultimately, it is the minister’s wife who is actually responsible for caring for the foster children,” and “That’s because the minister is out doing PR work for the foster care activities.”<sup>11</sup> In view of this, perhaps we can say the church is at the same time post-modern in its movement beyond blood relations, modern in its continuation of a sexual division of labor, and premodern in its household consciousness.

#### THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH FAMILY

In November 2002 the Tenrikyō Federation for Foster Parents celebrated its twentieth anniversary and held a ceremony to commemorate the event, and what is especially noteworthy is that a symposium was held for foster mothers, whose voices had not previously been heard. These women have quietly taken care of foster children for many years, facing the difficulties of trying to raise their foster children as well as their own children, and although their way of speaking was simple and the content of their stories did not go beyond the boundaries of the theme “great salvation” (*ōkina tasuke*), it is worth focusing on the fact that it was the foster mothers themselves who were finally given the stage. The chair of the symposium was a young woman in her thirties, the minister’s wife of Branch Church A mentioned previously. She herself came from outside the church, and from that perspective she has tried to institute various

11. From the results of a survey focusing on foster care that appeared in the Tenrikyō Federation for Foster Parents’ journal *Tenrikyō satooya renmei 20-nen no ayumi* 天理教里親連盟20年のあゆみ [Tenrikyō foster care association: A 20-year history] (November 2002).

reforms in the church she married into, one of them being the establishment of nurturing foster parent activities with her husband.

There is the common image that in a conventional Tenrikyō church there are no days off throughout the year, and although the burden of housework is lightened by the help of people who live in the church, hospitality must be provided from morning until night for the great many people who come to the church throughout the day. Consequently there is no privacy. However, shortly after her marriage to the church's minister this woman established the practice of taking a day off to go shopping downtown or partake in other activities to relax. Unlike many other Tenrikyō churches, her household has only two children, as is now the average in Japan, and both are girls. With regards to who will inherit the responsibility for the church, she says, "This is a major problem in our house. One way to handle it would be to find a groom for our daughter and accept him into the household, but the minister [her husband] is also now talking about assigning the boy of the single mother who has been raised as a foster child at our house as the successor. It is still subject to change." Although she does not challenge the idea that the successor must be a man,<sup>12</sup> she says, "Rather than maintenance of the church, working for *otasuke* is what is most important, and as long as that's being done it doesn't really matter what happens to the church."

This kind of attitude can be called *otasuke* fundamentalism, in a positive sense. The image of church family presented by this woman, is not limited to the idea of *ie*—that the eldest son must succeed the church, for example—and is grounded solely in the spirit of *otasuke* preached by the foundress. It aims towards a church open to society through foster care activities, and gives great hope for the future as a model for other churches that struggle with the social presence and perception of the church. It is also a model that does not limit women to subordinate roles but rather provides a place for them in the administration of the church along with their husbands.

### Conclusion

When dealing with people who strayed from the ideal image of the modern family, the *otasuke* of the church did not force them to conform to this ideal. In addition, the foundress (*Hinagata*), who struggled in her relationship with her family, and Kokan and Naraito (*hinagata*), who were *miko*-type figures, provide spiritual support to followers who never were bound by the image of the modern family. Giving precedence to *otasuke*, the very meaning of the church, it is our task now to overcome the sexual division of labor and the household consciousness that still remains in the church.

12. Although there are a number of female church ministers in Tenrikyō, most of them attain the position to fill the gap after the death of the husband and until the eldest son is able to succeed them.

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