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**An Analysis and Interpretation of Shamanism  
and Spirit Possession in Selected Works  
by Enchi Fumiko**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Arts in Japanese  
at Massey University**

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## Abstract

The *miko* (shamaness) has played an important role in the mythology and history of Japan and in the life of the people up until recent times. Critics have commented on the development of *mikoteki* (shamanistic or mediumistic) abilities in characters in fictional works by Enchi Fumiko (1905-1986). In works written in Enchi's middle years, such abilities arise in and empower suppressed, unfulfilled women who are motivated by revenge.

This thesis extends the existing analysis of Enchi's depiction of shamanistic women, investigating and interpreting her use of *mikoteki* abilities in women in four works by Enchi written during the 1950s, her middle years: *Onmazaka* (*The Waiting Years*), "Yō" ("Enchantress"), "Mimiyōraku" (The Earring) and *Onnamen* (*Masks*). The analysis of "Mimiyōraku" is the first to have been completed by a Western scholar. For all four works, a synthesis of the anthropological, sociological and historical studies on shamanism and the *miko* in Japan provides a basis for analysis.

*Onmazaka* contains allusions to latent shamanistic abilities in women and has links with spirit possession and shamanism in *The Tale of Genji*. Symbols, myths and elements of shamanism play an even more important role in the three other works. The development of shamanistic abilities in the main characters enables them to develop links with the spirit world, to empower and heal themselves and to effect changes in their own lives. While the manifestation of shamanistic abilities is connected to the need for revenge, more importantly, through such abilities Enchi connects the women to the creative force of life in these works.

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## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>Introduction</b>  | 1  |
| Purpose and Focus of the Thesis  | 3  |
| Selection of Works Studied   | 5  |
| Review of Literature   | 6  |
| Structure of the Thesis  | 11 |
| <br>   |    |
| <b>CHAPTER ONE Enchi Fumiko: Her Life and Writing</b>                          | 13 |
| <br>   |    |
| <b>CHAPTER TWO Shamanism, Spirit Possession<br/>and Japanese Women's Power</b> | 23 |
| <br>   |    |
| Shamanism and Spirit Possession  | 24 |
| The Pre-Buddhist Shamaness   | 28 |
| Archaeological Evidence  | 30 |
| Queen Himiko   | 31 |
| Izanami and Izanagi  | 32 |
| Amaterasu Ōmikami  | 33 |
| Ame no Uzume   | 34 |
| The Powerful <i>Miko</i>   | 35 |
| The Snake Woman  | 36 |
| Other Evidence of Women's Power  | 37 |
| The Decline of the <i>Miko</i>   | 38 |
| Spirit Possession in the Heian Period  | 39 |
| The Folk Shamaness   | 41 |
| The Shamaness and Spirit Possession Today                                      | 42 |
| The Foundresses of the New Religions   | 46 |
| Shamanism and the Arts   | 48 |
| Discussion   | 51 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| CHAPTER THREE <i>Onnazaka (The Waiting Years)</i>                       | 52  |
| The Plot of <i>Onnazaka</i>   | 53  |
| Toshi   | 55  |
| Tomo  | 56  |
| Suga  | 63  |
| Links with Spirit Possession in <i>The Tale of Genji</i>                | 65  |
| <br>  |     |
| CHAPTER FOUR “Yō” (“The Enchantress”) and<br>“Mimiyōraku” (The Earring) | 67  |
| “Yō”  | 67  |
| Plot Outline  | 67  |
| Chigako   | 69  |
| “Mimiyōraku”  | 75  |
| Plot Outline  | 75  |
| Takiko  | 77  |
| Discussion  | 84  |
| <br>  |     |
| CHAPTER FIVE <i>Onnamen (Masks)</i>                                     | 85  |
| Plot Outline  | 85  |
| “Nonomiyaki”  | 87  |
| Mieko   | 89  |
| Yasuko  | 97  |
| Harume  | 100 |
| Female Spiritual Power and Androgyny                                    | 102 |
| <br>  |     |
| <b>Conclusion</b>   | 105 |

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| <b>Bibliography</b> | 111 |
| Sources in Japanese | 111 |
| Sources in English  | 113 |

## Introduction

Japanese women writers...are undeniably serving as the most articulate and influential leaders not only in updating female cosmology but also in awakening men to reassess the male paradigm as they have never done before. In this sense, contemporary Japanese women are fulfilling their sacerdotal role as effectively as their shamanistic ancestors.<sup>1</sup>

Japanese women have traditionally possessed the ability to become *miko* (shamanesses), divinely inspired by gods and spirits. This ancient and powerful figure of the *miko*, who acted as a bridge between the gods and humans by summoning gods or spirits into herself for the benefit of the tribe or community, has existed in the Japanese consciousness since prehistoric times. Over time as the male-dominated ideologies from the continent increased in influence the power of the shamaness waned. Nonetheless, descendants of these powerful women exist in the present day, not only in the increasingly rare *kuchiyose* (mediums) or the foundresses of New Religions, but also in the figures of some women writers, whose writing resembles the *katari*, narrative of the shamaness. The writer Enchi Fumiko<sup>2</sup> (1905-1986) is one such example; not only does she herself perform a shamanistic function in her writing, but she brings to life in her stories and novels shamanistic women who draw on a spiritual energy which links them to their forebears and enables them to empower themselves within a patriarchal society. Enchi had a great interest in Japanese female shamanism and spirit possession and her writing reveals her depth of scholarship in this area.

Enchi's place as one of modern Japan's finest writers is unquestioned. The Japanese critic Takami Jun spoke of her in the highest terms of praise and called *Onnazaka* (*The Waiting Years*) an unprecedented masterpiece among contemporary literature.<sup>3</sup> S. Yumiko Hulvey states that Enchi "made an enormous contribution to the literary

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<sup>1</sup> Chieko Mulhern, "Japan" in *Longman Anthology of World Literature by Women 1875-1975*, ed. M. Arkin and B. Shollar, p. 1161.

<sup>2</sup> This thesis follows the Japanese practice of writing the surname first followed by the given name for Japanese names.

<sup>3</sup> Mentioned in Naoko Rieger, *Enchi Fumiko's Literature: The Portrait of Women in Enchi Fumiko's Selected Works*, p. 90.

tradition she inherited from the premodern writers and established a modern tradition of excellence that will be hard to surpass".<sup>4</sup> Hulvey further notes that Enchi is the "harbinger of ideas of vital concern to postmodern women writers" and that her themes involving supernatural events occurring in dream-like mythical settings are influential and discernible in texts by women writers of the next generation such as Yoshimoto Banana and Tsushima Yūko.<sup>5</sup> C. Van Gessel asserts that Enchi is the "first woman to establish a clear, sustained literary voice for herself in almost seven centuries" and that she was one of a group of writers who were instrumental in overthrowing the "narratorially strangled" genre of autobiographical fiction created and maintained by male writers in the early twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> Enchi is also praised for her deep knowledge of Japanese classical literature and for the unique way she incorporated elements of the classics into her works.<sup>7</sup>

Several critics have commented on Enchi's own shamanistic role as a writer in bringing to life the women writers of the past and in telling the previously untold stories of ordinary Japanese women. Gessel writes that:

Reading works such as *Onnazaka...* or *Onnamen ...* one gets the strong impression that the living ghost (the *ikiriyō*) of a Heian woman writer has found lodging within the withered, tormented body of a contemporary shamaness, and that the voice which speaks to us through Enchi's narrators is filled with strength, passion and fury.<sup>8</sup>

Wayne Pounds claims that Enchi's concern is "to bind the fragmentary history of women into a single continuum", to resurrect the past for the nourishment of the present.<sup>9</sup> Hulvey notes that Enchi played the role of medium in conjuring up the women writers of the Heian period in her works, often universalising or subverting

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<sup>4</sup> S. Yumiko Hulvey, "Enchi Fumiko" in *Japanese Women Writers: A Biocritical Source Book*, ed. C. Mulhern, p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> S. Yumiko Hulvey, "The Intertextual Fabric of Narratives by Enchi Fumiko", in *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives*, ed. C. Wei-Hsun Fu and S. Heine, p. 169.

<sup>6</sup> Van C. Gessel, "Echoes of Feminine Sensibility in Literature", p. 411.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Rieger, *Enchi Fumiko's Literature*, p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> Gessel, "Echoes of Feminine Sensibility in Literature", p. 412.

<sup>9</sup> Wayne Pounds, "Enchi Fumiko and the Hidden Energy of the Supernatural", p. 169.

the original message to fit the needs of women in the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> She regards Enchi as an author who “elected to ‘write wrongs’ in the world of literature”.<sup>11</sup>

This Introduction firstly outlines the purpose and focus of the thesis and the reasons for the selection of the sample of works studied. This is followed by a review of the literature on the topic. Finally, a brief outline of the structure of the thesis is provided.

### **Purpose and Focus of the Thesis**

This thesis focusses on the shamanistic aspect of Enchi’s literature. It attempts to analyse and interpret the nature of the shamanistic abilities of women depicted in a selection of works by Enchi: *Ommazaka* (literally Woman’s Slope, 1957, translated into English as *The Waiting Years* in 1971), “Yō” (1956, translated into English as “Enchantress” in 1961), *Mimiyōraku* (The Earring, 1957) and *Onnamen* (literally Female Masks, 1958, translated into English as *Masks* in 1983). The thesis provides a synthesis of work by scholars on the shamanistic nature of Enchi’s characters and adds to the understanding of Enchi’s works by providing an in-depth study of the shamanistic characters in these four works and of how Enchi creates an atmosphere in which shamanism and spirit possession occur.

Enchi’s characters have frequently been described as *mikoteki* (shamanistic or mediumistic). Several critics have discussed the connections these women, often born into the pre-Second World War patriarchal Japanese society, have with women living in the polygynal Heian society, particularly the vengeful Rokujō lady depicted in Murasaki Shikibu’s *The Tale of Genji*, whose spirit leaves her body to possess others. The development of the shamanistic qualities of such characters has been linked to women’s obsession (*shūnen*), deep-seated grudge (*omen*) and karma (*gō*).

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<sup>10</sup> Hulvey, “Enchi Fumiko”, p. 46.

<sup>11</sup> Hulvey, “Enchi Fumiko”, p. 51.

A *mikoteki* (shamanistic or mediumistic) woman is one who has links with the spirit world through spiritual possession during trance. Traditionally the *miko* was a shamaness, however her role degenerated to that of a medium over time and the shrine *miko* of today has no shamanistic function at all. The shamaness is able to control her trance at will. However, before she becomes a shamaness she will probably have experienced a period of ‘spirit sickness’ during which she may be subject to uncontrolled involuntary possession. Women who do not graduate to become shamanesses may also be assailed by involuntary spirit possession during a trance. The nature of shamanism and spirit possession will be examined in depth in Chapter Two.

In order to understand fully Enchi’s view of shamanism and the depth to which she incorporated it into the works under consideration, the thesis also explores some of the literature available on the role of the shamaness in Japanese society in mythical, historical and contemporary contexts. Involuntary spirit possession among Japanese women, from that described in the aristocratic Heian (794-1185) society, for example in Murasaki Shikibu’s *The Tale of Genji*, to the present time is also discussed. A study of this literature enables an examination of links between Enchi’s shamanistic characters and both the ancient and contemporary shamaness, including a study of Enchi’s use of symbol and myth.

This thesis furthermore contends that, although the shamanistic acts of the main protagonists of “Yō”, “Mimiyōraku” and *Onnamen* are motivated by revenge and unfulfilled desires, the shamanistic abilities which provide a link with the spirit world empower the women to find resources within themselves. These resources enable them to overcome crises in their lives, just as the shamaness of the past enabled communities to overcome crises through communication with the spirit world, and women of the Heian aristocratic society gained some measure of self-assertion and relief from suppression in their lives through spirit possession. The thesis examines how, through links with the spirit world, the main characters in “Yō”, “Mimiyōraku” and *Onnamen* are able to heal the wounds in their own psyches, and investigates the change in the role of these women through their shamanistic experiences.

### Selection of Works Studied

The four works: *Onnazaka*, “Yō”, “Mimiyōraku” and *Onnamen* were selected for study as the main characters are all middle-aged women who develop shamanistic abilities when the suppression of the self and of unfulfilled resentments and desires becomes unbearable. These works were all published in the 1950s when Enchi finally gained critical acclaim for her fiction.

While there has been considerable scholarly study of *Onnazaka*, *Onnamen* and “Yō”, there has been little discussion of “Mimiyōraku”. No English translation of this story has as yet been published. “Mimiyōraku” was one of the works recommended to Naoko Rieger by Enchi herself as appropriate to Rieger’s study of Enchi’s works on the theme of the suffering of Japanese women caused by their dependence on men and male-dominated norms and values<sup>12</sup>. It has also been referred to as one of Enchi’s works, including “Yō” and *Onnamen*, in which she depicted “women’s deep-seated grudge” (*onna no onnen*) which can be seen in “the slight smile like a woman’s mask” (*onnamen no yō na honoka na warai*).<sup>13</sup>

Apart from *Onnazaka* the texts all fall into both Sodekawa’s and Hulvey’s second stage of Enchi’s works as discussed below. Although Tomo, the main character of *Onnazaka*, manifests signs of shamanistic ability only on her deathbed, she exhibits many aspects of character and mien similar to those of the main characters of the other works. Moreover, as Pounds notes, “*The Waiting Years* ... in several respects reads like a preparatory study for *Masks*”<sup>14</sup>. It is therefore useful and revealing to begin an analysis of Enchi’s development of the shamanistic woman with a study of *Onnazaka*.

“Yō” portrays a woman who rises above the dreariness of her life and marriage through a combination of literature and spiritual power. “Mimiyōraku” depicts a woman who, having lost her female sexual organs, feels that she has lost her identity

<sup>12</sup> Rieger, *Enchi Fumiko’s Literature*, Note 5, p. 176.

<sup>13</sup> “Enchi Fumiko”, *Gendai Josei Bungaku Jiten*, p. 68.

<sup>14</sup> Pounds, “Enchi Fumiko and the Hidden Energy of the Supernatural”, p. 170.

as a woman and who is, like the characters in the other three stories, betrayed by men. The repressed sensual woman inside her is reawakened with dramatic results. Finally, she achieves both affirmation of herself as a woman, and of the value of life itself. *Onnamen* is a complex novel which depicts Mieko, a Rokujō-like woman who has developed powers far beyond those of the main characters of the other three stories, as existing in an environment where the world of the present and the spirit world seem to constantly overlap in a sphere of influence around her.<sup>15</sup>

### Review of Literature

The following books were particularly useful for general information on Enchi's background and writing: *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai* (1981) by Kamei Hideo and Ogasawara Yoshiko, *Haha Enchi Fumiko* (1989) by Fuke Motoko and *Enchi Fumiko's Literature: The Portrait of Women in Enchi Fumiko's Selected Works* (1986) by Naoko Alisa Rieger. In addition to an overview of Enchi's literature, Rieger examines the moral and psychological development of female protagonists in eight of Enchi's novels and short stories selected from different periods in her career, including "Yō" and *Onnazaka*. The following articles in journals and books also provided valuable information on Enchi's life and works: "Enchi Fumiko: 'A Writer of Tales'" by Juliet Winters Carpenter<sup>16</sup>, "Women Writers Past and Present: Murasaki Shikibu and Enchi Fumiko" by Chieko Mulhern<sup>17</sup> which provides a comparison of the lives and works of Murasaki Shikibu and Enchi, and S. Yumiko Hulvey's outline of Enchi's career and major works<sup>18</sup>.

The literature consulted for the exploration of shamanism, spirit possession and the history of the *miko* will be discussed in Chapter Two. Interviews by Kumasaka Atsuko<sup>19</sup> and Takenishi Hiroko<sup>20</sup> with Enchi provide valuable insights into the

<sup>15</sup> Apart from "Mimiyōraku", all texts are studied in both Japanese and English.

<sup>16</sup> In *Japan Quarterly* 37.3 (1990): pp. 343-55.

<sup>17</sup> In *Review of National Literatures*, Vol. 18, (1993): pp. 137-164.

<sup>18</sup> "Enchi Fumiko", in *Japanese Women Writers: A Bio-critical Source Book*, 1994, pp. 40-60.

<sup>19</sup> Kumasaka Atsuko, "Intabyū: Enchi-shi ni Kiku". *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to Kyozaï no Kenkyū*, Tokushū Vol. 21 (July 1976): pp. 26-38.

author's views on shamanism and spirit possession. Doris Barga<sup>21</sup> provides anthropological and literary evidence for her interpretation of spirit possession in *The Tale of Genji* as a strategy adopted by women, albeit unconsciously, for countering male power. This provides interesting parallels with Enchi's characters.

The following writers have also been influential in formulating the ideas in this study relating to the shamanistic women in Enchi's works. Ogasawara Yoshiko discusses how, when Enchi's women are betrayed in their wish to love and be loved, dissatisfaction awakens the *mikoteki josei* (shamanistic woman) inside the characters.<sup>22</sup> Through a strength which transcends reality, they try to achieve the impulse towards Eros.<sup>23</sup> With this shamanistic ability, which is connected to a woman's physiology and flows in her blood, they try to take back the lost strength of life.<sup>24</sup> Whereas in works such as "Yō" and *Onnamen* it is revenge in the present unfulfilled reality which awakens the *mikoteki josei*, in later works such as *Yūkon* (1970) it is the sense of deep isolation caused by the imminence of death which calls up the impulse towards Eros and causes a transformation in elderly women.<sup>25</sup> Ogasawara also discusses the fact that not only is Enchi's literary world imbued with Heian literature, but also with a theatrical world similar to that of late Edo literature, where repressed sex is diffused in a special dimension.<sup>26</sup>

Yoko McClain<sup>27</sup> discusses the nature of the sexual impulse as portrayed in some of Enchi's works which combine realism and fantasy. McClain comments that for Enchi "the world of love is often something apart from the real world"<sup>28</sup> and that

<sup>20</sup> Takenishi Hiroko, "Mikoteki na Mono 1" Rensai Taidan 11, "Mikoteki na Mono 2" Rensai Taidan 12, "Mikoteki na Mono 3" Rensai Taidan 13, in *Enchi Fumiko Zenshū*, 1978.

<sup>21</sup> Doris Barga, *A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in The Tale of Genji*, 1997.

<sup>22</sup> Kamei Hideo and Ogasawara Yoshiko, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, 1981, p. 72. All of the references in this chapter from this work come from the section by Ogasawara.

<sup>23</sup> *Collins English Dictionary*, 1991 defines Eros as "life instinct (in Freudian theory) the group of instincts, especially sexual, that govern acts of self-preservation and that tend towards uninhibited enjoyment of life" (p. 528).

<sup>24</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 58.

<sup>25</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 95.

<sup>26</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 75.

<sup>27</sup> Yoko McClain, "Eroticism and the Writings of Enchi Fumiko", *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 15, no. 1 (1980): pp. 32-46.

<sup>28</sup> McClain, "Eroticism and the Writings of Enchi Fumiko", p. 34.

“Enchi’s interest is more in the sexual impulse than the act itself”.<sup>29</sup> The mystery of the sexual impulse seems to be attributed to “a certain abstract power”<sup>30</sup> in a later novel *Saimu* (Glowing Fog/ The Mist in Karuizawa, 1975), which is based around an older *miko*-like figure. In “Nise no En – Shūi” (“Love in Two Lives, The Remnant”, 1957) the erotic impulse becomes reality. The protagonist, a young widow, is reawakened to her own sex and through her sex comprehends the male sex and life itself.<sup>31</sup> Enchi was searching for the origin of life through sex.

In a discussion of *Onnamen* and “Nisei no En – Shūi” Wayne Pounds<sup>32</sup> discusses Enchi’s use of the *miko*. He contends that Enchi’s calling a spirit which possesses or manipulates another a shamaness or *miko* is unconventional<sup>33</sup> and that she appropriates the image of the *miko* for the purpose of critique of society by forging an unconventional link between the shamaness and the traditional image of the woman possessed by vindictiveness and jealousy.<sup>34</sup> Pounds likens this unusual use of the *miko* to the function of Tokugawa ghost stories which may have appeared as a reaction to growing state authoritarianism. The supernatural aspect allows an area of freedom where a critique of the repressive state is possible.<sup>35</sup> Pounds maintains that the vengeful spirit of Enchi’s heritage is “first of all what men have made of women, and the attraction of the supernatural story is in part the opportunity to reclaim suppressed energies from the past, liberating them for use in the present”.<sup>36</sup>

However, Enchi herself did not view her shamanistic characters as being solely motivated by *shūnen* (obsession) and *gō* (karma). In an interview she said that she did not believe that women were eternally moved by these factors. She preferred her prototypes to be described as *mikoteki na mono* (shamanistic) and that rather than

<sup>29</sup> McClain, “Eroticism and the Writings of Enchi Fumiko”, p. 44.

<sup>30</sup> McClain, “Eroticism and the Writings of Enchi Fumiko”, p. 43.

<sup>31</sup> McClain, “Eroticism and the Writings of Enchi Fumiko”, p. 76.

<sup>32</sup> Wayne Pounds, “Enchi Fumiko and the Hidden Energy of the Supernatural”, *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 24, no.2 (1990): pp. 167-83.

<sup>33</sup> Pounds, “Enchi Fumiko and the Hidden Energy of the Supernatural”, Note 3, p. 180.

<sup>34</sup> Pounds, “Enchi Fumiko and the Hidden Energy of the Supernatural”, p. 167.

<sup>35</sup> The play “Yotsuya Kaidan” for example, which is performed during *Onnazaka*, where the ghost of the betrayed wife Oiwa wreaks revenge, has been critiqued as an extreme reaction to the repressed position of women in society. (Pounds, “Enchi Fumiko and the Hidden Energy of the Supernatural”, p. 168).

shamanism being the phenomenon of a certain age, she thought of it as something more *kongenteki* (basic, unchanging) in humanity.<sup>37</sup> Shamanism is not always related to revenge and lack of fulfilment in Enchi's works. In *Namamiko Monogatari* (1965, Tale of a False Shamaness), set in the Heian period, the living spirit of the Empress Teishi leaves her body to possess a false medium who claims that Teishi's spirit is responsible for the illness of Shōshi, daughter of the regent Fujiwara Michinaga and Teishi's rival for the affections of Emperor Ichijō. Faced with no other recourse, Teishi's spirit possesses the medium in order to successfully proclaim her innocence and her love for the emperor.<sup>38</sup> Gessel comments that this story illustrates Enchi's view of "the power of women and their love, and the ultimate powerlessness of the male-dominated world of politics".<sup>39</sup>

Sodekawa Hiromi<sup>40</sup> interprets the spiritual power Enchi's women develop as the twisted, drastic power the real, hidden self acquires when it is released. Sodekawa asserts that, for Enchi, this power is a hidden part of the inner world of all human beings, and part of essential femininity. It is a kind of spirit force, unresponsive to intellect, morals or common sense, over which woman has no control. The spirit force is awakened and stimulated to take action in the external world when the private self is thoroughly suppressed by the public self, and the desire for self-expression in the woman reaches a peak. The woman recovers her whole self when she expresses her inner self. When a character loses control of her inner self, she possesses a spirit force and this process is associated with the state of spirit possession as experienced by a spiritual medium.

Sodekawa divided Enchi's works into the following three phases: 1. Oppressed women who stoically endure painful lives are portrayed in early works, such as "Himoji Tsukihi" (Days of Hunger, 1953) and *Onmazaka* (1956); 2. Mysterious women realise their hidden real selves by employing their mediumistic abilities in

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<sup>36</sup> Pounds, "Enchi Fumiko and the Hidden Energy of the Supernatural", p. 179-180.

<sup>37</sup> Takenishi, "Mikoteki na Mono 3", p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> Hulvey, "The Intertextual Fabric of Narratives by Enchi Fumiko", p. 177.

<sup>39</sup> Van C. Gessel, "Echoes of Feminine Sensibility in Literature", *Japan Quarterly* 35, no.4 (1988): p. 413.

<sup>40</sup> Sodekawa Hiromi, "Enchi Fumiko: A Study in the Self-expression of Women", 1988.

works such as “Yō” (1956), “Nise no En – Shūi” (1957), *Onnamen* (1958), *Hanachirusato* (1957), *Namamiko Monogatari* (1965) and “Komachi Hensō” (Transformation of Komachi, 1965). Stories in this phase generally show a knowledge of and inclination towards the classics, especially *The Tale of Genji*, Edo fiction and *kabuki*; 3. In later works elderly women facing death, loneliness and despair struggle to express their femininity by using supernatural powers. Stories of this phase include the *Yūkon* trilogy (1969-1970), *Saimu* (1975-1976), and *Kikujidō* (The Chrysanthemum Child, 1982-1983).<sup>41</sup> Sodekawa concludes that the self-liberation, or the release of the hidden self, of the suppressed woman/vengeful woman, lovable woman and elderly woman facing aging and death is more or less connected with their mediumistic ability which, “in Enchi’s view constitutes the essential quality of femininity, the unity of spirit force and Eros”, and that the fantasies, dreams and salvations of Enchi’s heroines are all connected with the world of *The Tale of Genji*.<sup>42</sup>

S. Yumiko Hulvey, similarly to Sodekawa, posits three phases in Enchi’s development of the theme of *miko* as “a vehicle to explore realms of empowerment for women in alternate worlds created in fiction”.<sup>43</sup> The first stage includes works such as *Onnazaka* (1956), “Otoko no Hone” (1956, translated into English as “Skeletons of Men” in 1988), “Yō” (1956) and “Nise no En – Shūi” (1957). Hulvey claims that Enchi’s women in these works endure lives of subjugation and oppression in the patriarchal society with “the theme of *miko* discernible only in germinal form”.<sup>44</sup> As in Sodekawa’s second phase, the women in Hulvey’s second stage are mysterious middle-aged women who tap inner sources of strength through the shamanistic powers of the *miko*. Hulvey includes *Onnamen* (1958), *Namamiko Monogatari* (1965) and “Keshō” (Metamorphosis, 1962) in this stage. In the third stage, similarly to Sodekawa’s, elderly women “hover between illusion and reality in their endeavor to explore the nature of sexual desire”. This stage includes the *Yūkon*

<sup>41</sup> Sodekawa, “Enchi Fumiko”, p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Sodekawa, “Enchi Fumiko”, p. 124.

<sup>43</sup> Hulvey, “The Intertextual Fabric of Narratives by Enchi Fumiko”, p. 171.

<sup>44</sup> Hulvey, “The Intertextual Fabric of Narratives by Enchi Fumiko”, p. 172.

trilogy (1969-1970), “Hana Kui Uba” (1974, translated into English as “The Flower Eating Crone” in 1997) and *Saimu* (1975-1976).<sup>45</sup>

Finally, two works have proved particularly valuable in assisting in the interpretation of shamanistic elements in *Onnamen*. Doris Bargaen<sup>46</sup> has written a comprehensive and thought provoking analysis of the triangular *nō*-like structures and symbols in *Onnamen*, which attempts to discover the hidden meanings behind the text. The *nō* drama contains many elements of shamanism, and motifs from the *nō* provide a consistent motif in *Onnamen*. Bettina Knapp<sup>47</sup> provides a Jungian analysis of *Onnamen*.

The fact that Enchi developed shamanistic supernatural powers in some of her characters to empower them to gain a form of revenge against the dominant male and to enable them to express their sexuality and their repressed selves is thus well documented by critics, including Enchi herself. In Enchi’s works the latent shamanistic powers of the *miko* can be tapped by certain women in certain situations. This thesis aims to enhance the existing body of analytical literature and to increase understanding of Enchi’s works by detailed analysis and interpretation of the way in which the author incorporated elements of shamanism and spirit possession into the four texts, drawing on the *miko* of myth, history and the present day.

### Structure of the Thesis

The thesis takes the following shape. Chapter One provides a biographical outline of Enchi’s life and the influences on her writing, themes and style. Chapter Two “Shamanism, Spirit Possession and Japanese Women’s Power” is an overview of the nature of the *miko*, shamaness or medium, in Japanese history and prehistory. Chapter Three is an analysis of the shamanistic elements of the female characters

<sup>45</sup> Hulvey, “The Intertextual Fabric of Narratives by Enchi Fumiko”, p. 172.

<sup>46</sup> Doris Bargaen, “Twin Blossoms on a Single Branch: The Cycle of Retribution in *Onnamen*”, *Monumentica Nipponica* 46, no. 2 (1991): pp. 147-71.

<sup>47</sup> Bettina Knapp, “Fumiko Enchi’s *Masks*: A Sacred Mystery”, in *Women in Twentieth Century Literature: A Jungian View*, 1987, pp. 183-207.

discerned in *Onmazaka*. Chapter Four provides an analysis of the shamanistic aspects relating to Chigako in “Yō” and Takiko in “Mimiyōraku”. Chapter Five analyses and interprets the shamanistic elements in *Onnamen*. The Conclusion provides a summary of the major findings of the thesis. The Conclusion will demonstrate how this research has enhanced our understanding of the use of the *miko* by Enchi Fumiko as a literary device.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Enchi Fumiko: Her Life and Writing

Enchi Fumiko was born Ueda Fumi in Asakusa, Tōkyō, on October 2, 1905, the third and youngest child of Ueda Kazutoshi (also known as Mannen) and his wife Tsuruko (nee Murakami). Ueda Kazutoshi was a Tōkyō University linguistics professor who had studied with Basil Hall Chamberlain during the latter's tenure as Professor of Japanese at the same university. Ueda became famous for his theory of archaic phonetics as well as other publications. As his daughter Enchi grew up in a wealthy, privileged household. She was very close to her father and wrote of their relationship "Until I was about 20 my father was like the sun, living inside me".<sup>1</sup>

Enchi grew up as a precocious literary child. Her leaning towards literature was greatly influenced by her paternal grandmother Ine who lived with her son and his family. Ine, born into the Edo samurai class, told the little girl a vast variety of stories "from ghost tales and romances to Confucius' *Analects*"<sup>2</sup>. She introduced Enchi to late Edo literature and recited lines from *kabuki* and *jōruri* (ballad-dramas) to her from memory. Attending *kabuki* performances with her family even as a small child, Enchi grew up with a great love of the theatre and the worlds it created. The seeds of the special literary world she would create were sown during these years in the mixture of Edo ghost stories, legends, *kabuki*, *jōruri*, *ukiyo-e*, etc.<sup>3</sup> A sickly child, who was frequently away from school, Enchi immersed herself in reading books from her father's vast library including late Edo *gesaku* (popular fiction) and novels in contemporary magazines. At the age of just ten she began to read Murasaki Shikibu's *Genji Monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*). In her early teens Enchi was drawn to the works of the Japanese writers Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, Nagai Kafū, Izumi Kyōka and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke as well as works by Western writers such as Oscar Wilde and Edgar Allen Poe<sup>4</sup>, all of whom sometimes dealt with eerie supernatural themes.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Juliet Winters Carpenter, "Enchi Fumiko: 'A Writer of Tales'", p. 344.

<sup>2</sup> Carpenter, "Enchi Fumiko: 'A Writer of Tales'", p. 345.

<sup>3</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 108.

<sup>4</sup> Yoko McClain, "Enchi Fumiko" in *Encyclopedia of World Literature*, Volume 2, ed. L.S. Klein, p. 31.

After attending a grade school affiliated with the Tōkyō Ōtsuka Normal High School, Enchi attended the Women's High School, an affiliate of the Japan Women's University. She continued to immerse herself in reading, including stories by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, the plays of Goldsworthy and Hauptmann and works by Irish writers such as Yeats. Disillusioned by the teaching at the high school and supported by her indulgent father Enchi left school at the age of seventeen, a year before she was due to graduate. From then until her marriage in 1930 she studied at home: English and the Bible with a British Catholic missionary and French and classical Chinese with private tutors. During this period Enchi's interest in plays increased and she decided to become a playwright. She commuted to the Ueno Library to read Western plays in translation and attended *kabuki* and other plays with even greater passion.

In 1927 Enchi's play *Furusato* (Hometown) was published and won a prize. Enchi became the only woman to attend lectures by Osanai Kaoru, a leading force in the *shingeki* (modern drama-theatre) movement and was one of the first women to have three successful plays staged at his Tsukiji Little Theatre.<sup>5</sup> Enchi, whose plays were praised for their fine construction and psychological insight, thus achieved critical acclaim as a playwright at an early age. The *shingeki* movement attempted to turn away from the traditional, stylised world of *kabuki* and *nō* to create a modern form of theatre based on that of the West.<sup>6</sup> This theatre played a central role in the development of modern Japanese theatre and was also associated with leftist politics.<sup>7</sup> Sadly, however, Osanai died of a heart attack in 1928 at a celebratory banquet after the performance of Enchi's play *Banshun Sōya* (A Turbulent Night in Late Spring). Subsequently, the Little Theatre broke up.

In 1928 Enchi contributed to the magazine *Nyonin Geijutsu* (Women's Arts) as its leading female dramatist. Through this participation she became acquainted with important women writers of the proletarian movement, including Hirabayashi Taiko,

<sup>5</sup> S. Yumiko Hulvey, "Enchi Fumiko" in *Japanese Women Writers: A Bio-critical Source Book*, ed. C. Mulhern, p. 41.

<sup>6</sup> Carpenter, "Enchi Fumiko: 'A Writer of Tales'", p. 347.

who remained a life-long friend, and Hayashi Fumiko. In the same year she met and began an affair with Kataoka Teppei, a writer actively involved in the proletarian movement, who was married with children. The relationship was brought to a halt by Kataoka's arrest in 1930.

Enchi's play *Banshun Sōya* conveys her ambivalence towards the proletarian movement. It tells the story of two women: Hiroko who throws herself into the proletarian movement with her lover and Kayoko, an artist, who is at first envious but then holds back from active participation herself, sensing in Hiroko "*junkyōsha nioi hokori no kage*"<sup>8</sup> (the shadow of the pride and smell of a martyr). Like Kayoko, Enchi felt she could not throw away her own past and tradition so easily.<sup>9</sup> Enchi, however, interpreted her own acknowledgement and understanding of her actions in not participating actively in the proletarian movement as a lack of passion.<sup>10</sup> This view would affect her concept of herself and the direction of her future writing. However, for Enchi who already harboured a distrust in society, fuelled by the feudal period moral outlook described in the world of her grandmother's stories, her "*shakaishugiteki na senrei*" (socialistic baptism) helped her gain an understanding of the concept of 'society' in relation to humanity.<sup>11</sup>

In 1930 Enchi married Enchi Yoshimatsu, a journalist ten years her senior, who worked for the *Tōkyō Nichinichi Shimbun*. She saw marriage as a way of distancing herself from the proletarian movement, whose adherents were being persecuted by the government, and as a means of protecting her father's reputation. Enchi also saw marriage as a means of leaving the loving but stifling environment of her parents' home. However, Enchi's calculated choice of marriage proved to be a grave mistake. The marriage was an unhappy one although it continued until Yoshimatsu's death in 1972. Not only was there a great gulf between the personalities and backgrounds of husband and wife but Yoshimatsu was an *omazuki* (an admirer of women) who did not restrict his affairs to geishas but had relationships with ordinary women much to

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<sup>7</sup> Carpenter, "Enchi Fumiko: 'A Writer of Tales' ", p. 347.

<sup>8</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, pp. 18-20.

Enchi's chagrin.<sup>12</sup> Enchi had married with the understanding that she be allowed to continue her writing. Yoshimatsu however felt that wives ought not to work.<sup>13</sup> A daughter Motoko was born in 1932. Overwhelmed by the reality of married life Enchi wrote only two works in the first three years of her marriage. She later wrote: "The only reason I never divorced my husband was that I lacked the courage to make the leap and live on my own."<sup>14</sup> Once again she saw herself as having insufficient passion to initiate action.<sup>15</sup> Many of Enchi's works depict unhappy marriages between callous womanising husbands and wives who endure behind submissive masks.

In the 1930s Enchi determined to change course from writing plays to fiction. Although her book of collected plays *Seishun* (Passionate Spring) was favourably received in 1935, she was already finding the play, which did not allow her to express the psychological complexity of her characters as she wished, too restrictive as a medium.<sup>16</sup> It was also becoming more difficult for playwrights to have their works performed. After Kataoka's release from prison in 1935 they continued their relationship and he introduced her to the group of novelists known as *Nichireki*. Enchi endeavoured to study the art of short story writing through the group and learned a great deal from her friend and mentor Hirabayashi Taiko. In 1937 Enchi's father, the person who had understood her best and been her psychological support, died. Enchi immersed herself in writing and had short stories published in various journals. However she was still in the process of learning the craft of short story writing and her pre-war short stories have been criticised as immature.<sup>17</sup>

In 1938 at the age of 33 Enchi suffered from breast cancer. Recovering from a mastectomy operation she caught tuberculosis which she fought for half a year. At this point she permanently broke off with Kataoka when he did not come to visit her in hospital. Enchi continued to write short stories during this period. Her writing was moving from complexity to purity of form and the impression of immaturity

<sup>12</sup> Fuke Motoko, *Haha Enchi Fumiko*, p.24.

<sup>13</sup> Carpenter, "Enchi Fumiko: 'A Writer of Tales' ", p. 348.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Carpenter, "Enchi Fumiko: 'A Writer of Tales' ", p. 348.

<sup>15</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Yoko McClain, "Eroticism and the Writings of Enchi Fumiko", p. 31.

receded.<sup>18</sup> Many of her works used material from the classics such as *Hanagata*, published in 1942, the story of a man brutally branded on the face, based on an incident from *Heike Monogatari* (*The Tale of the Heike*, c. fourteenth century).

In 1941 Enchi went to South China and Hainan Island as a member of the Kaigun Bungei Imondan (Naval Consolation Literary Group). On her return she wrote *Kikō* (A Travelogue) and *Zuisōshū* (Occasional Thoughts). 1943-1948 was however a lean period for Enchi. Most avenues for publication closed during the war. Enchi had difficulty getting her work published and wrote stories for girls to assist the family's finances.

In 1945 Enchi's home in Tōkyō was bombed and she lost everything – her family goods and her book collection. She moved to the family villa at Karuizawa with her mother for a year. This gave Enchi a chance to become closer to her mother, to help define her own identity as a woman and to learn the stories of her mother's Kyūshū family. Enchi's maternal grandmother Kin who lived with her despotic husband in a household including two concubines was the model for Tomo in *Onnazaka* (*The Waiting Years*). After her return to Tōkyō the following year Enchi suffered from uterine cancer and, after a hysterectomy in 1946 at the age of 41, she lay close to death with pneumonia. She was unwell for nearly two years. This event had a deep effect on Enchi's attitudes and on her writing. Many of her subsequent works portray aging or sexually disabled women who hunger for sex and for life. Enchi commented that she became bold concerning sex after her life was saved by the operation and that from her time in hospital she threw away her pride and shame as a woman.<sup>19</sup> McClain comments that after her operation Enchi feared the possibility of losing her sexual desire and with it the will to live.<sup>20</sup> Enchi described two types of women writers who deal with sex from a woman's point of view since Japanese women became liberated from sexual taboos after the Second World War: authors who write

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<sup>17</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 74.

<sup>20</sup> McClain, "Eroticism and the Writings of Enchi Fumiko", p. 33.

about sex because of deep-seated inner needs, and those who write for the entertainment of readers. McClain maintains that Enchi belongs to the first group.<sup>21</sup>

After the war Enchi became acquainted with Tanizaki Jun'ichirō when she dramatized his work *Bushūkō Hiwa* ("The Secret Tale of the Lord of Musashi") and they remained friends until Tanizaki's death in 1965.<sup>22</sup> Enchi readily acknowledged that Tanizaki had a great influence on her work. She had begun reading his works as a girl and continued to read them throughout her life. The sensuality, the physical beauty of women and the searching for truth amidst suffering depicted in his works had a great influence on her.<sup>23</sup>

Although other writers such as Hirabayashi Taiko successfully had work published directly after the war, Enchi continued to have difficulties getting work published until the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1953 she finally received critical acclaim for her fictional writing with her short story "Himoji Tsukihi" (Days of Hunger) for which she was awarded the sixth Woman Writer's Prize. In this story the main character Saku is trapped in a miserable marriage with a boorish womanising husband. When her aging husband is debilitated Saku must nurse and clean him. When her son suggests they kill his father however Saku is appalled and from this time on is able to care for him with compassion despite his coarse and bestial nature.<sup>24</sup> Saku dies before her husband but just before her death she experiences a vision of great beauty and joy.

The 1950s was the period of Enchi's most prolific production of novels and short stories. In 1952 the first installment of *Onnazaka* (*The Waiting Years*) was published. This work took Enchi eight years to write and was printed as a book in late 1957. "Yō" ("Enchantress") and "Otokono Hone" ("Skeletons of Men", translated into English in 1988) were published in 1956; "Mimiyōraku" (The Earring) and "Nise no En: Shūi" (translated into English as 'Love in Two Lives: The Remnant' and 'Two Lifetimes – Gleanings' in 1983) were published in 1957. In 1958 *Onnamen* (*Masks*)

<sup>21</sup> McClain, "Eroticism and the Writings of Enchi Fumiko", p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> Fuke, *Haha Enchi Fumiko*, p. 109.

<sup>23</sup> Kumasaka Atsuko, "Intabyū: Enchi-shi ni Kiku", pp. 27-28.

was published. The same year, under the sponsorship of the Asia Foundation, Enchi travelled in the United States and Europe for three months with Hirabayashi Taiko. On her return to Japan she wrote a travelogue *Ōbei no Tabi* (Travels in the West) and a short story called "Shikago no Hito" (A Chicagoan). She returned to Europe again in 1965 with Hirabayashi.

Enchi, who gained distinction as a dramatist, a novelist and short story writer, and as a classical scholar, received many awards and honours during her long life. In 1957 *Onmazaka* won the Noma Literary Prize together with Uno Chiyo's *Ohan*. In 1958 Enchi took up the presidency of the Women's Literature Association for the first time and frequently filled this role over the next twenty years. In 1967 she received the fifth Women's Literature prize for *Namamiko Monogatari* (Tale of a False Shamaness). In 1967 Enchi was invited to translate *Genji Monogatari* into modern Japanese by the publishing company Shinchōsha. This took six years to complete. During the translation Enchi suffered major health setbacks, including two detached retinas from which her eyesight never fully recovered. This great achievement involved a weaving together of Enchi's various strengths: "her lifelong love of the classics and of *Genji* in particular; her understanding of the female psyche, and of female sexuality; her ability to bridge the gap between the Heian and the modern feminine psychic world".<sup>25</sup> In 1969 Enchi was awarded the fifth Tanizaki Prize for her semi-autobiographical trilogy *Ake o Ubau Mono* (That Which Steals Red, 1956), *Kizu Aru Tsubasa* (Wounded Wing, 1962) and *Niji to Shura* (The Rainbow and Carnage, 1968). In 1970 she was selected as a member of the Academy of Art. In 1970 Enchi gave a series of summer lectures on Japanese women's literature at the University of Hawaii. In 1972 she received the Grand Prize of Japanese Literature for *Yūkon* (Wandering Spirit). In 1985 Enchi received postwar Japan's highest award, the Order of Culture.

Enchi's fascination with possessing spirits may have begun with her reading of *Genji Monogatari* when she was fascinated by the fact that the Rokujō lady's spirit possessed other women and felt a special interest in the situation that occurs when a

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<sup>24</sup> Carpenter, "Enchi Fumiko: 'A Writer of Tales' ", p. 350.

suppressed will rises.<sup>26</sup> After the success of *Onmazaka* Enchi felt free to write what she wished without worrying about how her work would be received by the readers.<sup>27</sup> Works depicting suppressed women with shamanistic abilities appear from this time. Mieko's essay "Nonomiyaki" in *Onnamen* shows Enchi's fascination with, and extensive knowledge about, the *miko* and shamanism. She read *Nihon Fujo Shi* (History of the Japanese Shamaness) with great interest.<sup>28</sup> Enchi saw the profession of writing itself as having a spirit possessing effect (*hyōrei sayō*)<sup>29</sup>. Through the process of writing, which is an unveiling of the ego, something which is of oneself becomes something not of oneself and through this process something inside the writer melts. Enchi stated that she was driven to write through psychological hunger and commented that if everyday life satisfied, there would be no need to write.<sup>30</sup> Not belonging to the 'action clique' (*kōdō ha*) she was filled with curiosity and unfulfilled desires which gave her a longing for the shamanistic.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Enchi saw Japanese women who experienced life in the repressive Japanese society before the defeat of Japan at the end of the Second World War as possessing elements of *kamigakari* (being possessed by gods or spirits).<sup>32</sup>

Enchi continued to develop the portrayal of shamanistic abilities in the elderly women she depicted in later works. In *Yūkon* (Wandering Spirit), the spirit of the elderly heroine Suo wanders as did the spirit of the Rokujō lady, not, however, out of jealousy or spite, but on erotic missions. Enchi wrote:

I have no understanding of existentialism or mysticism, but for the past several years I have started forming the supposition that my other self and my partner's other self exist outside our own bodies ... *Yūkon* is my experiment to make this supposition into a literary work.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Carpenter, "Enchi Fumiko: 'A Writer of Tales'", p. 355.

<sup>26</sup> Takenishi Hiroko, "Mikoteki na Mono 3", pp. 3-4.

<sup>27</sup> Kumasaka, "Intabyū: Enchi Fumiko ni Kiku", p. 36.

<sup>28</sup> Takenishi, "Mikoteki na Mono 1", pp. 2-3. Enchi is probably referring to *Nihon Fujo Shi* by Nakayama Tarō, mentioned by Horii Ichirō in "Shamanism in Japan", p. 279.

<sup>29</sup> Takenishi, "Mikoteki na Mono 3", p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Takenishi, "Mikoteki na Mono 3", p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> Takenishi, "Mikoteki na Mono 3", p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Takenishi, "Mikoteki na Mono 2", p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> McClain, "Eroticism and the Writings of Enchi Fumiko", p. 40.

The motif of *Saimu* (Glowing Fog) written in 1975 is based on Enchi's interest in and research on the *miko* as the shamanistic holy maiden in the service of a shrine.<sup>34</sup>

In 1972 Enchi lost three people who had been close to her – her two friends, Hirabayashi Taiko and Tsuda Setsuko, and her husband Yoshimatsu. She wept at the death of her estranged husband. As Ogasawara comments, marriage had been the biggest influence on Enchi's life and literature.<sup>35</sup> Many of Enchi's works from this time on, such as *Neko no Sōshi* (The Cat Storybook, 1974), deal with the loneliness and isolation of characters living through old age and confronted by death.

In addition to her many fictional works Enchi produced a great amount of non-fictional work which showed the depth of her scholarship and her familiarity with contemporary Japanese literature, Japanese classics and the theatre. These works include critical writing such as eulogies for Hirabayashi Taiko, reminiscences about Kawabata Yasunari and scholarly articles on *Genji Monogatari* and women writers of the Heian period. Throughout her life she wrote translations, introductions and commentaries on the Japanese classics, including Heian classics such as *Taketori Monogatari* (*The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*) and *Kagerō Nikki* (*The Gossamer Years*), medieval tales such as *Gikeiki* (The Yoshitsune Chronicle) and *Soga Monogatari* (The Tale of the Soga), Edo period masterpieces such as *Ugetsu Monogatari* (*Tales of Moonlight and Rain*) and *Harusame Monogatari* (*Tales of Spring Rain*), and selected pieces of *nō*, *jōruri* and *kabuki* plays.<sup>36</sup>

Immersed in the world of literature and plays from childhood, Enchi found in the writing to which she devoted her life a means of transcending and transforming the tribulations of her life – her marriage and illnesses and the infirmities and fears of old age. Drawing on the threads of Edo literature, of *kabuki* and other forms of theatre, of contemporary Japanese and Western literature and of the classics, Enchi created her own literary world in which she transformed and retold her own stories and the

<sup>34</sup> McClain, "Eroticism and the Writings of Enchi Fumiko", p. 42.

<sup>35</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 101.

<sup>36</sup> Hulvey, "Enchi Fumiko", p. 46.

stories of other women whose lives are frequently transformed through shamanistic ability.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Shamanism, Spirit Possession and Japanese Women's Power

This chapter provides a background to the nature and history of Japanese female shamanism and spirit possession on which Enchi drew for her stories. It attempts to outline the changing role of the Japanese shamaness and medium over time. The chapter thus provides a basis for the subsequent analysis of Enchi's use of aspects of shamanism and spirit possession in the works selected for study.

Throughout history and prehistory Japanese women have shown a tendency to become *kamigakari* – divinely inspired, or possessed by gods and spirits. The Japanese shamaness was an important and powerful figure religiously and politically in pre-Buddhist Japan. Archaeology provides glimpses of her nature and function. Passages in the eighth century *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* describe shamanistic women rulers. The myths and legends contained in these texts as well as stories in oral folk traditions provide insights into the power and pervasiveness of the figure of the shamaness. However, with the introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century and the development and implementation of the Chinese based *ritsuryō* legal system in the seventh and eighth centuries the power of the centrally based *miko* (shamaness) began to decline. In the Heian period (794-1185) she lost her governmental function and was relegated either to Shintō shrines or to becoming an *arukimiko* (itinerant *miko*), wandering from village to village, serving the needs of the people. In the increasingly patriarchal society of the Heian court, the centre of political control, woman's ability to become divinely inspired was reduced to the role of a medium for exorcism during spirit possession. Buddhism adopted some aspects of shamanism but it was now the male who played the dominant role.

The *arukimiko*, whose role often incorporated prostitution, played a significant role in the popular folk religion, summoning deities and spirits of the dead and attending to the needs of the populace until recent times. However, policies of the Meiji

government (1868-1912) hastened the decline of the role of the folk shamaness. The decline has continued within modern urban society although women exhibiting aspects of the role of the ancient *miko* still exist in parts of Japan. More strikingly the figure of the shamaness as a charismatic *mikogami* (living goddess) has also returned in recent times in the form of the foundresses of some of the New Religions such as Nakayama Miki (1798-1887), the founder of the Tenrikyō faith, and Kitamura Sayo (1900-1967), founder of the Tenshō Kōtai Jingū Kyō.

### Shamanism and Spirit Possession

Hori Ichirō, a leading scholar on Japanese shamanism, taking his lead from Mircea Eliade's synthesis of shaman research, defines shamanism as:

the general name given that magical, mystical, often esoteric phenomenon that has taken shape around the shaman, a person of unusual personality who has mastered archaic techniques of ecstasy (trance, rapture, separation of the soul from the body, etc.)<sup>1</sup>

Shamanism, which is generally found coexistent with other forms of magic and religion, has been studied in many parts of the world including Siberia, Central Asia, North America, Indonesia, Oceania, and Japan. The central shamanistic act is the ecstatic trance by means of which the shaman acts as a mediator between the human world and the world of the spirits. The shaman<sup>2</sup> thus serves her community. I.M. Lewis views shamanism as an attempt by a community to enrich its spiritual armoury in a world beset by chronic environmental uncertainty or rapid and inexplicable environmental change. He states that shamanism asserts dramatically that the gods are not only with humans but in them. In a central possession religion such as existed in Japan in pre-Buddhist times the establishment shamans, who are attempting to deal with acute pressures external to their society such as natural disasters and

<sup>1</sup> Hori Ichiro, "Shamanism in Japan", p. 245.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'shaman' as used here includes both male and female shamans.

epidemics, treat the powers which control the cosmos as equal.<sup>3</sup> The shaman is thus a symbol of independence and hope working for the good of the community.

Mircea Eliade distinguishes the shaman as an ecstatic who “specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld”.<sup>4</sup> Moreover Eliade claims that the shaman controls her spirits, being able to communicate with the dead, “demons”, and “nature spirits” without becoming their instrument.<sup>5</sup> Nevill Drury distinguishes between shamanism and mediumism. While both involve trance states he considers, like Eliade, that shamanism involves an active going forth of the spirit. Whereas the shaman is fully conscious of her altered state and has responsibility for what occurs on her visionary journey, the medium has a passive function during the coming in of the divine force and does not recall her visionary episodes.<sup>6</sup> For other scholars however the defining feature of shamanism is the controlled trance. In an analysis of the study of shamanism in forty-two societies, Peters and Price-Williams found that the universal defining factor was the shaman’s control of her trance.<sup>7</sup> Lewis compares ‘uncontrolled’ and ‘controlled’ possession and concludes that all shamans are mediums. The shaman incarnates spirits, becoming possessed voluntarily in controlled circumstances. All mediums, however, are not shamans although some may graduate to become controllers of spirits.<sup>8</sup>

William Fairchild states that shamanism is “an institutionalized, fixed-ritual bound ecstatic contact with transcendental beings in order to perform a social function. It is not a religion, but is a religious phenomenon which fits in different religions.”<sup>9</sup> The ecstatic experience involves a transformation into another personality. Fairchild asserts that the ecstasy may be either migratory, involving contact outside of the

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<sup>3</sup> I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism*, p. 176.

<sup>4</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Nevill Drury, *The Elements of Shamanism*. p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Discussed in Takiguchi Naoko, “Miyako Shamanism: Shamans, Clients and Their Interactions”, p. 82.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, pp. 51-57.

<sup>9</sup> William P. Fairchild, “Shamanism in Japan”, p. 2.

body, or possessive whereby transcendental beings enter the body. Therefore in his view there are two basic types of shamans: migrating and possessed.<sup>10</sup>

In her major study on Japanese shamanism Carmen Blacker maintains that the faculty of trance is central to the shaman's powers. The shaman can alter her consciousness at will in order to communicate with the inhabitants of the spiritual world. Blacker views both the medium and the ascetic as shamans.<sup>11</sup> Doris Borgen, in a discussion of the difference between shamanism, which she states was prevalent in pre-Buddhist Japan, and spirit possession, which became a complex form of interaction with the spirit world during the Heian period, emphasises the difference between the role of the shaman and the roles of the exorcist and medium. Whilst the shaman traditionally summons spirits into herself for the benefit of the tribe or community, the exorcist and medium work together to expel evil spirits from possessed persons.<sup>12</sup>

Thus while definitions may vary as to the exact nature of the shamanism and spirit possession, the essential feature of both is the trance whereby a bridge is formed between this world and the other supernatural or spirit world. The *Dictionary of Psychology* defines trance as "a state in which consciousness is fragile or missing, voluntary action is poor or absent and normal bodily functions are reduced, perhaps to the degree that the individual appears to be in a deep sleep."<sup>13</sup> During a shamanistic trance the personality of the shaman, medium or possessed person is replaced by the personality of the possessing spirit. The spirit is made flesh.<sup>14</sup> Thus the shaman is able to behave as both a god and a human.

Future shamans undergo a process that begins with a crisis, often an illness, which can be either mental or physical. The illness is often understood to be the call of the spirits who cure the future shaman when she accepts initiation. Other events which may be thought to reveal such a call are "surviving an unusual accident, the death of

<sup>10</sup> Fairchild, "Shamanism in Japan", p. 2..

<sup>11</sup> Carmen Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow: A Study of Shamanistic Practice in Japan*, p.26.

<sup>12</sup> Doris Borgen, *A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in The Tale of Genji*, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> *Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*, p. 805.

the shaman's child, undergoing an ordeal, strange and dramatic occurrences, or powerful and terrifying dreams"<sup>15</sup> During initiation the future shaman typically experiences a period of suffering during which her body is invaded as a vehicle for the spirit.<sup>16</sup> Shamans are "believed to die to their past life and become new, confident persons empowered by a powerful guardian spirit"<sup>17</sup> The shaman's separation from ordinary life is often further marked by a transition rite similar to marriage, which establishes a stable and dominant relationship between the shaman and the spirit/s.<sup>18</sup> The trance often has an erotic, sexual nature. Ecstatic possession seizures are frequently interpreted as acts of mystical sexual intercourse between the subject and her possessing spirit.<sup>19</sup>

Shamans enter their altered state of consciousness in various ways such as through drumming, dancing, or singing or by ascetic practices such as fasting, going without sleep, and meditation. Imbibing mind-altering substances may be involved. Many shamans who are healers have a deep knowledge of pharmacology.<sup>20</sup>

Much has been written this century about whether shamanistic behaviour is manifested by mentally ill or sane individuals. Jane Atkinson notes that recent scholarship maintains that the shifts in psychological states exhibited are within the behavioural range of normal human beings although some suggest that shamans are likely to be "fantasy-prone" individuals.<sup>21</sup>

Spirit possession, unlike shamanism, does not necessarily lead to the development of a powerful relationship with the spirit world. Lewis maintains, however, that possession generally expresses an aggressive self-assertion.<sup>22</sup> Possession may occur in individuals belonging to oppressed groups or in peripheral cults. In such cases the

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<sup>14</sup>Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, pp. 203-204.

<sup>15</sup> *An Anthology of Sacred Texts by and about Women*, ed. Serinity Young, p. 216.

<sup>16</sup> In some of Enchi's stories, a period of shamanistic seizures or trance-like states are preceded by a period of intense suffering or a traumatic event in the lives of her characters.

<sup>17</sup> *An Anthology of Sacred Texts*, ed. Young, p. 216.

<sup>18</sup> Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, pp. 189-190.

<sup>19</sup> Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, p. 58.

<sup>20</sup> *An Anthology of Sacred Texts*, ed. Young, p. 216.

<sup>21</sup> Jane Mannig Atkinson, "Shamanisms Today", p. 309.

pressure being exerted on the individual, which is revealed during possession, comes from within the society. Lewis describes instances of spirit possession among Moslem women in African tribes that have strongly patrilineal polygynal societies in which the women have little stability or security. Two cultures exist: the dominant world of men and the subordinate sphere of women. With no other means available for rebelling against suppression of the self, spirit possession may aid women to air their grievances obliquely and gain some satisfaction for neglect and injury. For example, among the Somali a woman's ailment may be interpreted by a female shaman as possession by a *sar* spirit, which demands material goods and luxuries from the husband.<sup>23</sup> The cult of amoral natural spirits led by possessed women in Burma complements the official Buddhist religion which is dominated by men and permits women to advance and protect their interests.<sup>24</sup> In such examples women are overcome involuntarily by arbitrary afflictions for which they cannot be held accountable. This situation enables them to protest indirectly against their oppressors without fear of retribution.

### The Pre-Buddhist Shamaness

In ancient Shintō, the indigenous Japanese religion which had its roots in the tradition of an agrarian society, women were thought to have a special power with which to communicate with the divine. In the earliest written records concerning Japan, the *Wei Chih* (History of the Wei Kingdom, c.297 AD), which covers the period 220AD – 265AD, a Chinese chronicler wrote that the Japanese “have profound faith in shamans, both male and female”.<sup>25</sup> However, the leading role in Japanese shamanism has been played by women. Hori states that the general term in Japanese for a shamanistic figure is *miko* with the explicit meaning of ‘a shamaness’ whereas there is no special term for a male shaman.<sup>26</sup> Sakurai Tokutarō notes that the *Nihongi* and other documents such as the *Zokunihongi* provide evidence that it was

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<sup>22</sup> Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, p.203.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, pp. 75-82.

<sup>24</sup> Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, p.85.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Joseph M. Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> Hori Ichiro, *Folk Religion in Japan: Continuity and Change*, p. 181.

women religious functionaries who originally held the role of those serving the gods.<sup>27</sup>

The *miko* or Japanese shamaness is of Fairchild's 'possessed' shamanism type. Sakurai states that *miko* ( 巫女 ) which can also be written with the characters

巫子 and 神子 is a general name for women possessing a magical religious quality who are divinely inspired and act as oracles to convey the will of the divine spirits.<sup>28</sup> There are various theories for the derivation of the word *miko*. Sakurai states that it is probably either an abbreviation of 神子 (*kamiko*, *kaminko*), those who had the miraculous ability to be possessed by divine spirits, or it is derived from the honorary title 御子 (*miko*) which indicates a person or child of high ranking birth with amazing spiritual powers.<sup>29</sup> Yanagita suggests that the word *miko* comes from 御子神 (*mikogami*), meaning "child of the *kami* [god]"<sup>30</sup>.

Ancient *miko* were possessed by, and related the oracles of, *kami*, the principal objects of worship in Shintō since pre-Buddhist times. Blacker notes that *kami* are essentially amoral and manifest benign or destructive influences in the human world depending on the treatment they receive.<sup>31</sup> Hori distinguishes two systems within Shintō: the *uji-gami* (tutelary or guardian shrine system), based on the family or clan system, and the *hito-gami* (man-god) system, based on the close relationship of a *kami* with a religious specialist. Charismatic, shamanistic leaders such as Queen Himiko<sup>32</sup> and their descendants entered into a special relationship with their *hito-gami* and built up a kind of *uji-gami* system independently during the period of small-scale united kingdoms that existed before centralisation.<sup>33</sup> As Hori notes, according to the *hito-gami* type of religion *kami* may take the form of charismatic human beings.<sup>34</sup> These shamanistic rulers were thus imbued with a divine power.

<sup>27</sup> Sakurai Tokutarō, "Miko" in *Kokushi Daijiten* vol. 13, p. 307.

<sup>28</sup> Sakurai, "Miko", p. 307.

<sup>29</sup> Sakurai, "Miko", p. 307.

<sup>30</sup> Discussed in Hori Ichiro, "Shamanism in Japan", p.232.

<sup>31</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, p. 41.

<sup>32</sup> See below.

<sup>33</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>34</sup> Hori, "Shamanism in Japan", p. 274.

Certain items were considered to be the temporary abodes of *kami*, after they were summoned by shamans, for example *mitogura* - an object held in the shaman's hand to induce divine possession, such as a branch, wand or marionette and *yashiro* - a variety of objects used as temporary vessels for the *kami*, frequently long and thin in shape, such as a tree, banner, wand or pillar. The earliest dolls and puppets were made for the sacred purpose of housing a divinity. Mirrors, swords and *magatama* (curved stones or beads) also served this purpose.<sup>35</sup>

### *Archaeological Evidence*

Archaeology provides some evidence of religious worship and of the figure of the prehistoric shamaness. Clay figurines, most of which represent mature women and some of which are thought to be shaped like pregnant women, have been excavated from the hunting and gathering Jōmon Period (c.10,000BC – c.300BC) sites. These may have symbolised fertility worship and a belief in an earth mother goddess.<sup>36</sup> Burials in which women's corpses, including those of older women, are decorated with innumerable shell bracelets, indicating a connection with magic, have also been found dating from this era.<sup>37</sup> During the Yayoi period (c.300BC - c.300AD) local chiefs imported metallic objects and materials from Korea which included weapons and religious treasures with which they consolidated their authority. Among these objects are mirrors found in the burials of northern Kyūshū chiefs. Mirrors were used for religious purposes by Japanese, Manchurian and south east Asian shamans.<sup>38</sup> Shell bracelets and jade and glass beads of various shapes were also prevalent in the Yayoi period.

Early tomb furniture from the Kofun (mound) period (c.300AD – 710AD) shows elements of a markedly shamanistic or religious character including mirrors, swords, jewellery, hoe shaped stones and stone whorls.<sup>39</sup> Two *haniwa* (pottery figures from the great tombs) found in Gumma Prefecture represent priestesses or shaman-like

<sup>35</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>36</sup> "The Origins of Shinto", p. 41.

<sup>37</sup> Miyagi Eisho and Oimi Minobu, *Shinkō Nihon Joseishi*, p. 16.

<sup>38</sup> Kakubayashi Fumio, "A study of the historical developments of the Yayoi period with special reference to Japanese-Korean relations", pp. 114-121.

figures. Both wear flat board-like headdresses and are adorned with jewellery. One wears a necklace, bracelets and anklets all made of round beads. From the sash round her waist hangs a representation of a round metal mirror with five small bells cast around the rim. The other wears earrings and a necklace of *magatama* (curved beads). She has a sash draped across her right shoulder. Both wear expressions of concentration and serenity.<sup>40</sup>

### *Queen Himiko*

According to the *Wei Chih* (History of the Wei Kingdom) a shamanistic queen called Himiko ruled the kingdom of Yamatai in the late Yayoi period (3<sup>rd</sup> century AD). Himiko is described as a shamanistic queen who was enthroned after years of disturbances and warfare and who apparently ruled Yamatai for more than half a century until her death in c.247. She became queen due to her shamanistic ability in a time of crisis.<sup>41</sup> Himiko occupied herself “with magic and sorcery, bewitching the people”.<sup>42</sup> The queen, who never married and remained childless, lived sequestered within her fortress-like palace, communicating with her brother who put her pronouncements into effect in society. Although Himiko had one thousand female servants, she had only one male attendant, who served her food and drink and acted as her medium of communication.<sup>43</sup> On her death Himiko was buried with more than one hundred attendants in a huge burial mound. After more warfare a thirteen year old girl Toyo, a clan relation of Himiko, became ruler.

Kakubayashi Fumio notes that the word *himiko* means literally ‘the successor of the spirit woman’ and was a title commonly given to rulers. Kakubayashi connects Himi (the deity Himiko worshipped, meaning ‘spirit woman’) with Hirume, the original name for Amaterasu, the supreme goddess in Japanese mythology, which has a

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<sup>39</sup> Kakubayashi, “A study of the historical developments of the Yayoi period”, p. 284.

<sup>40</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, pp. 104-105.

<sup>41</sup> Kakubayashi, “A study of the historical developments of the Yayoi period”, p. 235.

<sup>42</sup> Tsunoda Ryusaku et. al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> Tsunoda et. al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, p. 8.

nearly identical meaning. He argues that originally the goddess's name meant "great spirit woman" but that later it came to be misinterpreted as the "sun goddess".<sup>44</sup>

### *Izanami and Izanagi*

The *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters, 712AD) and *Nihongi* (Chronicle of Japan, 720AD), compiled during the Nara period (710-794), which are a mixture of myth and history, show shamanistic influences. In these texts nature is explained not through a process of creation but through the procreation of Izanagi and Izanami who gave birth to all natural objects including humankind. God and nature are therefore not regarded as different in essence and humans, who are born of the divine couple, are themselves divine.<sup>45</sup> Woman transfers power from the *kami* through birth. Nakamura Kyoko argues that the symbolism of woman as a mediator of such power helps explain the Japanese phenomenon of female shamans and priestesses. As woman was the source of life, she was thus a symbol of cosmic power.<sup>46</sup>

The goddess Izanami, however, is both the supreme mother goddess and a symbol of death and destruction. On giving birth to her last child, the god of fire, Izanami was burnt and died. She retired to the land of Yomi, the realm of death. Izanagi followed her. Although Izanami instructed him not to look upon her, Izanagi disobeyed her and saw that her body was already putrid and swarming with maggots. He fled but Izanami's anger was aroused and she sent the Ugly Females of Yomi to pursue and kill him. They failed and she pursued him herself. Izanagi stopped her, blocking the Even Pass of Yomi and divorced her. Izanami became the Great Deity of Yomi, a personification of death.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, early Shintō passed on a dual legacy in the religious view of women. Although some women were shamans, intermediaries between *kami* and the human world, women were also seen as a source of pollution, of menstrual blood, and of the blood which flows after childbirth.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Kakubayashi Fumio, "Amaterasu Ōmikami", in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 1, ed. Mircea Eliade, p.228.

<sup>45</sup> Kato Genchi, *A Study of Shinto: The Religion of the Japanese Nation*, p. 84.

<sup>46</sup> Nakamura Kyoko Motomochi, *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition: The Nihon ryōiki of the Monk Kyōkai*, pp. 74-76.

<sup>47</sup> William G. Aston, *Shinto: The Way of the Gods*, pp.93-94.

<sup>48</sup> Paul B. Watt, "Women and Asceticism in the Japanese Religious Tradition", p.2.

### *Amaterasu Ōmikami*

Amaterasu, the supreme deity in Japanese mythology and the ancestor of the imperial family, is traditionally identified with the sun and is considered to be the sun goddess but myths also reveal her aspect as the “priestess who serves the solar deity, or as a shamanistic woman possessed by the solar deity”.<sup>49</sup> Some scholars see the actions of Amaterasu as she prepared to meet her brother Susanoo in heaven as a reflection of the shamanistic performance of a priestess of the sun. Amaterasu put on a male hair-dress, wrapped *magatama* beads around her arms and donned military garb. Armed with quiver and arrows, she shook her bow and “stamping her legs up to her very thighs into the hard earth, and kicking [the earth] about as if it were light snow, she shouted with awesome fury, she shouted stamping her feet.”<sup>50</sup>

These masculine elements also give the figure of Amaterasu an aspect of androgyny. Eliade claims that “androgyny is an archaic and universal formula for the expression of *wholeness*, the co-existence of the contraries” which “symbolises the perfection of a primordial, non-conditioned state.”<sup>51</sup> Nakamura also emphasises that Amaterasu is associated with water - she was born from water, produced her offspring out of water and is ritually celebrated in close relation to water.<sup>52</sup> Water is the source of life and is one element in the popular symbolical orbit of fertility, closely associated with agricultural life.<sup>53</sup>

Amaterasu’s power is expressed in the mirror, the sword and jewels. The imperial regalia, that is, a sword, a mirror and a bead kept at the imperial shrine to Amaterasu at Ise, are said to have been bequeathed to the imperial line by Amaterasu, giving its members the right to rule. When Amaterasu sent her grandson Prince Ninigi to Earth, she presented him with the Divine Mirror and told him that when he gazed upon it he

<sup>49</sup> Nakamura Kyoko Motomochi, “The Significance of Amaterasu in Japanese Religious History”, in *The Book of the Goddess Past and Present*, ed. Carl Olsen, p. 176.

<sup>50</sup> *Kojiki*, trans. Donald L. Philippi, p. 75.

<sup>51</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>52</sup> Nakamura, “The Significance of Amaterasu in Japanese Religious History”, p. 177.

<sup>53</sup> Nakamura, “The Significance of Amaterasu in Japanese Religious History”, p. 178.

would behold her in it and must therefore worship the mirror as herself.<sup>54</sup> According to the *Kojiki* Izanagi bestowed a string of jewels from his necklace upon his daughter Amaterasu when he instructed her to rule the Plain of High Heaven. Amaterasu and her brother Susanoo gave birth to children by “inspiration” of each other, or by exchanging respiration and jewels.<sup>55</sup> After Amaterasu’s attendant<sup>56</sup> killed herself by striking her genitals against the shuttle with which she was weaving, Amaterasu hid herself inside the Rock Cave of Heaven, distraught at the destructive, sacrilegious acts of Susanoo. When the gods sought to entice her out a string of curved jewels eight feet long, a large mirror and fine cloth were hung upon a *sakaki* tree outside. The goddess Ame no Uzume then performed a divinely inspired dance and Amaterasu was lured outside. Kakubayashi states that the basic motif of this myth is the termination of reproduction through destruction of the female genital organs followed by the reappearance of the female, suggesting the resumption of reproduction and the seasonal agricultural cycle.<sup>57</sup> The motif of the rebirth of Amaterasu is woven into the background of Enchi’s short story “Mimiyōraku”.

### *Ame no Uzume*

The figure of the *miko*, who in times of trouble became divinely inspired and therefore had the duty to disclose the divine will to the people, is closely related to Ame no Uzume whom we have just mentioned. Her dance before the Rock Cave of Heaven is said to be the origin of *kagura* (classical religious and ceremonial dancing).<sup>58</sup> It is also the prototype of the *miko*’s inspired trance:

...AMĒ-NŌ-UZUME-NŌ-MIKŌTŌ bound up her sleeves with a cord of heavenly PI-KAGĒ vine, tied around her head a head-band of the heavenly MA-SAKI vine, bound together bundles of SASA leaves to hold in her hands, and overturning a bucket before the heavenly rock-cave door, stamped resoundingly upon it. Then she became divinely possessed, exposed her breasts, and pushed her skirt-band down to her genitals.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Herbert, *Shinto*, p. 361. Kato notes that the early Japanese believed that the mirror itself was a person’s soul or spirit. (*A Study of Shinto*, p. 35).

<sup>55</sup> Anesaki Masaharu, *History of Japanese Religion*, p. 28.

<sup>56</sup> The *Nihongi* contains accounts in which it is Amaterasu herself who is alarmed and injured (*Kojiki*, trans. Philippi, Note 9, p. 80).

<sup>57</sup> Kakubayashi, “Amaterasu Ōmikami”, p. 228.

<sup>58</sup> Herbert, *Shinto*, p. 175.

<sup>59</sup> *Kojiki*, trans. Philippi, p. 84.

During the dance Ame no Uzume thus exposed the parts of the female anatomy relating to childbearing and nursing. The laughter of the gods at this sight drew Amaterasu to open the cave door to look outside. Ame no Uzume thus wielded the feminine *kami* power to bring back Amaterasu and save the darkened dying world. Michael Czaja relates the shamanistic, erotic dance of Ame no Uzume to farmers' fertility dances during which the sun goddess is again asked to resume her function at the end of winter.<sup>60</sup> Ame no Uzume is one of the deities installed at the Fushimi Inari shrine near Kyōto and collectively worshipped as Inari-sama or Inari, the rice deity. She is a deity of both human fecundity and agricultural fertility.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, she is "the patron deity of all professional singers, dancers, musicians, and actors. Geisha and professional prostitutes, who seek to allure men by means of physical attractions, flock to her shrine".<sup>62</sup>

### *The Powerful Miko*

The *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* also tell of numerous charismatic god-like shamanistic women who wielded great religious and political power, sometimes as the *miko* of a male ruler. Yamato-to-tohi-momoso-hime-no-mikoto, aunt of and *miko* to Emperor Sujin (reigned 97-30B.C.), was possessed by the god Ōmono-nushi. Through her he revealed the cause of an epidemic and foretold an uprising.<sup>63</sup> She married the god but died after viewing him in his true form of a snake<sup>64</sup>. The imperial princess Yamato-hime of the time of Emperors Sujin and Suinin (reigned 27B.C.-70A.D.), in communication with the goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami, accompanied the Divine Mirror to its final dwelling place at Ise. She was known as *Kami no mitsue* (the August Staff of the Goddess).

The *Nihongi* tells of Jingō (or Jingū), the legendary consort of Emperor Chūai (reigned 192-200). Hamstra states that the name Jingō, given posthumously, which

<sup>60</sup> Michael Czaja, *Gods of Myth and Stone: Phallicism in Japanese Folk Religion*, p. 234.

<sup>61</sup> Czaja, *Gods of Myth and Stone*, p. 259.

<sup>62</sup> D.C. Buchanan quoted in Czaja, *Gods of Myth and Stone*, p. 259.

<sup>63</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, p.193.

<sup>64</sup> Herbert, *Shinto*, pp. 409-410.

means “merit of the gods” or “divine merit” indicates that she was either divine herself or that she conveyed divine commands.<sup>65</sup> In a trance Jingō was possessed by a god and delivered an oracle that the emperor should conquer Korea. Chūai ignored the advice and subsequently died. Jingō herself led the army to Korea on a successful campaign. On the journey, according to one version, the gentle spirit (*nigi-mitama*) of a god attached itself to her person to protect her and the rough spirit (*ara-mitama*) of the same god protected and guided her warships.<sup>66</sup> On her return to Japan Jingō gave birth to her son who became Emperor Ōjin (reigned 270-310 AD). She herself is said to have reigned from 201-269. Many empresses who acceded to rule were also high-class *miko*. Furthermore, during the process of centralisation of power, emperors needed *miko* to act as mediums with the *kami* of other clans and with various spirits.<sup>67</sup> There was also a group of *uneme* at the court, women belonging to provincial clans, who were originally members of a group of *miko* at the centre of religious court ceremonies. These women performed duties by becoming divinely inspired and acting as oracles for the deities.<sup>68</sup> There were also women performing shamanistic functions at the residence of the imperial princess and women attached to famous shrines.<sup>69</sup>

### *The Snake Woman*

Folk tales also contain evidence of the cult of the powerful shamaness. Carmen Blacker relates the snake woman, frequently found in Japanese myth and legend, to the ancient cult of the *miko*. The snake woman is found connected with water, with the sea, lakes or pools and appears as a bringer of enhanced life. There are stories of a beautiful lady, sometimes described as the daughter of the Dragon King, in a magical palace beneath the sea. (The dragon itself is seen as a dispenser of fertility in a wet rice growing community.) In most of the legends the true form of this woman is that of a snake. Blacker contends that stories of marriage between the supernatural

<sup>65</sup> J.H. Kamstra, “Jingō”, *Encyclopedia of Religion* Vol. 8, ed. Mircea Eliade, p. 92.

<sup>66</sup> Herbert, *Shinto*, p. 63.

<sup>67</sup> Kitagawa, *Religion in Japanese History*, p. 20.

<sup>68</sup> Sakurai, “Miko”, p. 307.

<sup>69</sup> Sakurai Tokutarō, “Fujo”, *Nihon Minzoku Jiten*, p. 617.

shape-changed snake (who may live for years unrecognized in a human community) and a human are the residue of an ancient shamanistic cult.

There are also links to the figure of the *miko* in stories in which a woman is either sexually possessed by a snake or drowned as a sacrificial offering to a snake. In one legend the name of the girl seduced by the supernatural snake is Tamayorihime. Yanagita Kunio argued that this was a generic name for a *miko* - a girl (*hime*) possessed (*yoru*) by the spirit of a god (*tama*). He claimed therefore that the story pointed to a cult in which a *miko* was chosen to serve a deity connected with water and serpents. There are also legends in which women, frequently *miko*, were sacrificed to prevent a dam or bridge from collapsing and tales of *miko* being sacrificed to the snake guardian of the water supply. These tales have been interpreted as reflecting a lost ancient cult in which a woman was offered as 'living sacrifice' to a water snake deity. She was pressed into a sacred calling, becoming the bride of the deity and dying metaphorically to her old life. Blacker surmises that the snake paramour stories may post-date those in which the snake woman appears as a single being. Rather than feeling at one with the snake, the shamanistic woman may have come to feel herself possessed by it, perhaps against her will. Even in recent times Blacker notes that women who act as mouthpieces for gods through trance frequently told her that the gods who possessed them and acted as guardian spirits had the appearance of a snake.<sup>70</sup>

### *Other Evidence of Women's Power*

Aspects of matriliney and matriarchy which existed in the pre-Buddhist society further indicate the high position women held in society compared to later periods. For example, Miyagi and Oimi discuss obsolete words, such as *ukara* which means 'from the same mother' and denotes a small range kin group with the mother at the centre, indicating mother-centred families.<sup>71</sup> The history researcher Takamura Itsue deduced that originally clan names and surnames developed with the mother's name as the

<sup>70</sup> Carmen Blacker, "The Snake Woman in Japanese Myth and Legend" in *Animals in Folklore*, ed. J.R. Porter and W.M.S. Russell, pp. 122-124.

<sup>71</sup> Miyagi and Oimi, *Shinkō Nihon Joseishi*, p. 15.

basis and that it was the mother who gave her children personal names.<sup>72</sup> Miyagi and Oimi also assert that, although the marriage system was polygynal, in the duo-local system in which husbands visited their wives, which began to change only during the Heian period, the spouses had equality, and the wives were independent socially and financially.<sup>73</sup>

It thus appears that before the influence of Buddhism and Confucianism became widespread women could possess considerable religious, political and social power. The *miko*, in particular, played an important role in maintaining government, particularly in times of crisis, by revealing the will of the gods.

### **The Decline of the *Miko***

Buddhism was introduced into Japan from China c.538AD. Japanese rulers began to adopt Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and the Chinese legal pattern, culminating in the Taika reforms of 645-649 and the Taihō, the legal code which came into effect in 702. During the eighth century when the *ritsuryō seido* (a system of centralised patrimonial rule, informed by elaborate legal codifications called *ritsuryō*) was operating with the emperor as supreme head, the seat of imperial and governmental power was situated in Nara. The new order and social system, modelled on that of the T'ang dynasty, together with the adoption of the new religions and ethics from the continent meant that it was no longer possible for great shamanistic rulers to reign.<sup>74</sup> Society became increasingly patriarchal and patrilineal although conventions from the past, such as women-centred marriage patterns, persisted.

During the Nara period (710-794) shamanesses operated in official functions serving at the imperial court, at the imperial princesses' residence and some were attached to famous shrines as shamaness-priestesses, such as the high priestesses of the Ise and Kamo Shrines. Sakurai notes that the relatively few references to *miko* in the *Kojiki*

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<sup>72</sup> Discussed in Miyagi and Oimi, *Shinkō Nihon Joseishi*, p. 16.

<sup>73</sup> Miyagi and Oimi, *Shinkō Nihon Joseishi*, p. 23.

<sup>74</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, p. 198.

and *Nihongi* is probably due to the fact that the compilers took Chinese writers, who had a logical Confucian way of thinking, as their model and hence undervalued the importance of ancient shamanism.<sup>75</sup>

At the end of the Nara period when the national state and legal system began to crumble, the religious functions of the government *miko* declined.<sup>76</sup> Men were designated as the chief religious celebrants according to an edict of 868. Court *miko* and *miko* attached to shrines lost their original shamanistic functions and techniques and were reduced to subordinate roles such as music and dance and serving during certain Shintō rituals and festivals.<sup>77</sup> Many shrines and temples lost official patronage under the law during the Heian period (794-1185) and thus suffered financial difficulties. Consequently many *miko* were unable to continue working in exclusive service to shrines and moved out into towns and villages.<sup>78</sup> Some became *arukimiko* (wandering shamanesses) travelling from village to village, often combining their role with prostitution. This practice may have arisen through a degeneration of the practice of *ichiya tsuma* ('one-night wife') a religious rite in which men were given the opportunity to contact a deity through sexual intercourse with a shamaness.<sup>79</sup>

### *Spirit Possession in the Heian Period*

During the Heian period the belief in *hito-gami* (the special relationship between a human and a deity) was transformed into the belief in *goryō-shin* (angry souls of the dead).<sup>80</sup> Originally this consisted of a belief in malevolent spirits of nobles who had died in political intrigues. Their spirits were enshrined as *kami* in Shintō shrines and special festivals and memorials, which were a mixture of Shintō, religious Taoism and Buddhism, were performed in order to appease them.<sup>81</sup> One such spirit was that of Sugawara no Michizane (845-903), a leading court scholar, poet and powerful

<sup>75</sup> Sakurai, "Fujo", p. 617.

<sup>76</sup> Sakurai, "Miko", p. 307.

<sup>77</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, p. 182.

<sup>78</sup> Matsubara Hiroshi, "Women Who Serve the Gods", p. 12.

<sup>79</sup> Fairchild, "Shamanism in Japan", p. 104, Miyagi and Oimi, *Shinkō Nihon Joseishi*, p.46.

<sup>80</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, p. 71.

<sup>81</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, p. 71.

political figure. Falsely accused of plotting against the emperor by Fujiwara leaders, he was exiled to the government headquarters in Kyūshū, where he died two years later. After his death, various misfortunes were ascribed to his angry spirit. He was deified as Karai Tenjin and shrines dedicated to him were established in Kyōto and Dazaifu in Kyūshū.<sup>82</sup> The belief in *goryō* eventually spread to the rural areas. Documents from the time show that natural disasters and personal and social crises were all believed to be caused by the vengeance of angry spirits of the dead. Men and women could likewise be subject to malign spirit possession, causing illness and misfortune. It was also believed that misfortune could be caused by the angry or jealous souls of living men and women.<sup>83</sup>

Murasaki Shikibu describes episodes of spirit possession among Heian aristocratic women in her fictional masterpiece *The Tale of Genji*, written at the beginning of the eleventh century. In this novel, which continues to have a great influence on Japanese readers and writers, the jealous living spirit of the Rokujō lady possesses the principal wife of the hero Genji and perhaps causes her death. Later the Rokujō lady's dead spirit appears to possess and torment other women beloved by Genji. In a discussion about Murasaki Shikibu and *The Tale of Genji* Felice Fischer comments that some of the insights into the psychological factors contributing to health in the Heian period seem quite modern. "Heian beliefs in possession, for example, acknowledged the role that emotional stress can play in causing sickness"<sup>84</sup>. For example, the possession of the heroine Murasaki by the jealous spirit of the Rokujō lady occurs when Murasaki is suffering from emotional anxiety over Genji's relationship with the Third Princess. The Third Princess is also vulnerable to spirit possession after giving birth when she suffers great anguish due to Genji's knowledge that the child is not his.<sup>85</sup>

The fusion of esoteric Buddhism with shamanism changed the nature of Japanese shamanism with the emergence of *tsukari kitō* (possession through incantation) or

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<sup>82</sup> Robert Bagen, "Sugawara no Michizane", in *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, Vol. 7, pp. 256-257.

<sup>83</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, p. 72.

<sup>84</sup> Felice Fischer, "Murasaki Shikibu: The Court Lady", p. 119.

*yose kaji* (conjuring incantation). *Miko*, accompanied by *shugen-ja* (Buddhist mountain ascetics), identified the reasons for the hostility of the powerful spirits who were believed to cause natural catastrophes, diseases and difficult childbirth. The *miko*'s role was, however, secondary to that of the ascetic. During exorcism she acted as a vessel for the transfer of malignant spirits from the victim of spirit possession, entering a state of possession when the ascetic chanted incantations, and uttering oracles as the priest attempted to learn the names of the possessing spirits and their complaints and curses. Children, untrained girls and court ladies were also used at times as mediums for ascetic healers.<sup>86</sup>

### *The Folk Shamaness*

Hori argues that in time the *shugen-ja* type of shamanism discussed above degenerated into a pseudo-shamanism associated with the *kuchiyose miko* (spiritualist medium), who communicated with spirits of the dead.<sup>87</sup> Hori notes that, since the publication of Nakayama Tarō's *Nihon Fujo Shi* (History of the Japanese Shamaness), it has been standard to divide Japanese shamanesses into two types - *jinja miko* (shrine *miko*) and *kuchiyose miko*. However, he advocates a threefold division - 'shrine *miko*', 'authentic *miko*' and '*kuchiyose miko*'.<sup>88</sup>

Until the Meiji Restoration in 1868 there were bands of *miko* all over Japan. Many *miko* who were loosely affiliated to large shrines lived in enclaves called *miko-mura* (*miko* villages) from which they set out on long journeys at specified seasons, delivering prophecies and messages from the dead in the villages as they travelled.<sup>89</sup> They could become *kamikuchi* – possessed by gods or spirits in order to divine or heal the sick, *shikuchi* – possessed by the souls of the dead in order to report the desires of the dead and the conditions they faced, and *ikikuchi* – possessed by the souls of the living in order to obtain information concerning activities, locations or

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<sup>85</sup> Fischer, "Murasaki Shikibu: The Court Lady", p. 119.

<sup>86</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, p. 298.

<sup>87</sup> Hori, "Shamanism in Japan", p. 277.

<sup>88</sup> Hori, "Shamanism in Japan", p. 279.

<sup>89</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, p. 127.

thoughts of others at a great distance.<sup>90</sup> Their functions included divining and telling fortunes during trance, praying for the recovery of the sick and purifying new buildings, wells, stoves and hearths.<sup>91</sup> The *miko* serving the people had various names, some of which were local, such as *ichiko*, *itako*, *azusa-miko* (a shamaness who uses a catalpa bow to summon a god during her trance), *o-kami-sama*, *Shinano-miko*, *Agata-miko*, *yuta*, and *kankakarya*.<sup>92</sup>

These *miko* were, however, transients or semi-outcasts. Women who had once controlled religious ceremonies in the villages were now excluded from membership of the controlling group. The old Shintō rite of *takusen matsuri* (village oracles) in which a *miko* summoned the god with music and dance had been replaced by a Buddhist rite in which the ascetic has a key role.<sup>93</sup> The influence of the Buddhist concept of woman as inherently sinful spread as did Confucian notions of the inferiority of women.

### The Shamaness and Spirit Possession Today

The figure of the charismatic shamaness, communicating in a trance with the gods has all but disappeared in Japan today, in contrast to the situation in neighbouring Korea and Okinawa. Two directives from the Meiji government in 1873 and 1874, attempting to promote modern rational principles and to purge 'pure' Shintō of Buddhism and of ancient superstition, decreed that *miko* who deluded the people by professing to deliver messages from the dead were forbidden to practise.<sup>94</sup> This attitude continued into the Taishō Period (1912-1926). However, the people continued to place their trust in such women. In discussing the activities of an *itako* in Aomori Prefecture Ikegami notes "...even the possibility of official prosecution could not prevent the local people from continuing to place broad-based trust and

<sup>90</sup> Fairchild, "Shamanism in Japan", p. 55.

<sup>91</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, pp. 202-203.

<sup>92</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, p. 201-202, Sakurai, "Fujo", p. 617.

<sup>93</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, p. 278.

<sup>94</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, p. 127.

support in such *itako*".<sup>95</sup> Ikegami notes that there was an increase in incidents of prosecution from 1933 to 1937 as the government intensified its wartime control and began a period of all-out suppression of religious dissent.<sup>96</sup> However, during World War II *itako* and *kamisama* (mainly male shamans) who communicated with dead spirits in trances had many clients in families who lost sons in the fighting. There was also much demand for *ikiguchi* from *itako* – clairvoyant séances with the living spirits of loved ones in far-off locations.<sup>97</sup>

The Religious Bodies Law which was passed during the American Occupation in 1945 allowed the Japanese religious freedom. Blacker notes that many *miko* who had been practising in secret emerged back into the life of the folk religion in the countryside.<sup>98</sup> However, the nature of modern society has meant that the number of such women practising continues to dwindle.

Today's *kamiko*, virgins consecrated to deities, have no shamanistic function. Renouncing their selves in their service to the deities they assist Shintō priests, performing duties such as cleaning the shrine, making offerings of food and *sake* to the deities and serving worshippers. On some occasions they perform *kagura* dances and play the *koto* (Japanese harp) before the deities at shrines.<sup>99</sup> Some aspects of their long history do however prevail. Their red and white clothing, symbolic of those who serve Shintō deities, are also suggestive of the shamanistic tradition and the relatively heavy makeup of white face paint and rouge and hairstyle evokes a faint eroticism.<sup>100</sup>

Village shamanesses are still active in some areas. Blind mediums known as *ichiko* or *itako* are found in the Tōhoku (north-eastern) area of Honshū. The women undergo an apprenticeship to a mistress *itako* lasting from three to five years during which they undergo training discipline and are taught the techniques of trance, of

<sup>95</sup> Ikegami Yoshimasa, "Local Newspaper Coverage of Folk Shamans in Aomori Prefecture", p. 18.

<sup>96</sup> Ikegami, "Local Newspaper Coverage of Folk Shamans in Aomori Prefecture", p. 20.

<sup>97</sup> Ikegami, "Local Newspaper Coverage of Folk Shamans in Aomori Prefecture", p. 28.

<sup>98</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, p. 128.

<sup>99</sup> Matsubara, "Women Who Serve the Gods", p. 19.

<sup>100</sup> Matsubara, "Women Who Serve the Gods", p. 14.

communication with superhuman beings or spirits of the dead and of divination and fortune telling. They also learn the melody and intonation used in the chanting of prayers, magic formulas and liturgies, and *saimon* (special narratives and ballads).<sup>101</sup> At the end of training the novice undergoes an initiation ceremony which ends in apparent possession by a deity.<sup>102</sup> The ceremony is symbolic of both dying and being reborn and of marriage with the deity.<sup>103</sup> These women perform two duties: *kamioroshi* (bringing down *kami*) and *hotoke-oroshi* (summoning ghosts). However Sakurai notes that most are of the latter type who summon the spirits of the dead and speak for them. He distinguishes two types of ritual: *ikikuchi* ( 生口 ), during which the *miko* summons the spirits of missing people, and *shinikuchi* ( 死口 ), whereby dead spirits are summoned after the Buddhist funeral has taken place.<sup>104</sup>

Hori labels such women pseudo-shamanesses. He states that initiation of *kuchiyose miko* in the *itako* line is a completely artificial attainment.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, during her trance the *itako* does not invoke a particular deity who has elected her as its mouthpiece but usually invokes the guardian deity or tutelary deity, or the buddha or bodhisattva of her client.<sup>106</sup> Blacker also asserts that the decline of the truly shamanistic medium occurred in the north when the profession became the monopoly of the blind and was seen as a suitable vocation for blind girls.<sup>107</sup>

However, while Blacker states that the blind *itako* are not genuinely shamanistic persons, she contends that they perpetuate practices which have existed since antiquity.<sup>108</sup> For example, the final step in initiation is the transmission of the instruments of power with which the *itako* summons *kami* and ghosts and induces them to take possession of her. The instruments are of three main types: a bow or one stringed lute (which seems to have replaced the catalpa bow described in Edo

<sup>101</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, pp. 203-204.

<sup>102</sup> Kawamura Kunimitsu, "The Life of a Shamaness: Scenes from the Shamanism of Northeastern Japan", p. 4.

<sup>103</sup> Kawamura, "The Life of a Shamaness", p.4.

<sup>104</sup> Sakurai Tokutarō, "Kuchiyose", in *Nihon Minzoku Jiten*, p. 221.

<sup>105</sup> Hori, "Shamanism in Japan", p. 279.

<sup>106</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, p. 211.

<sup>107</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, p. 162.

<sup>108</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, p. 162.

literature) for summoning ghosts, a pair of puppets (*oshirasama*) for summoning *kami* and a rosary for summoning both types of spirit.<sup>109</sup> Blacker claims that the *itako* are now the only representatives left in Japan of the professional shamanistic medium who operates alone.<sup>110</sup>

Although most ascetics are men, there are some women who are shamanistic ascetics. Ascetics, who first appeared in Japan during the late Nara or early Heian period, are professional healers and exorcists. While some ascetics choose this way of life, some of the female ascetics interviewed by Blacker were forcibly chosen by a spiritual being, often after a prolonged period of suffering. This experience may be a supernatural dream in which a deity appears, a sudden divine possession or a mantic journey to other worlds. In each case the ascetic is in contact with a particular deity, with whom she will live in a special relationship from that time on and who is the source of her special power.<sup>111</sup>

Blacker describes how exorcism rituals dating from the Heian period whereby contact is made with the world of the spirits by the joint efforts of both an ascetic and a *miko* have survived in the Nichiren sect of Buddhism.<sup>112</sup> She observed that the overwhelming majority of patients affected by malignant possession who sought treatment in Nichiren Buddhist temples were women and most were housewives aged between twenty-five and thirty-five. The majority of the female ascetics' patients were also women. These women who suffer from possession come from an oppressed section of the population. Blacker surmises that a part of the psyche, too much repressed by the conventions of family and society, forces its way to the surface of the mind, upsetting the balance of the personality and behaving in a manner calculated to offend accepted convention. The minds of these Japanese women return to their former balance once the suppressed and neglected side is accepted and acknowledged.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, pp. 147-148.

<sup>110</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, p. 163.

<sup>111</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, p. 168.

<sup>112</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, p. 252.

### *The Foundresses of the New Religions*

Charismatic, shamanistic figures have emerged in Japan in recent times, just as in the past in times of crisis and change, in the form of the founders, often female, of some of the syncretic New Religions, which are a mixture of Shintō and Buddhism. Most foundresses have endured lives of both material and spiritual oppression. After a spiritual transformation, these women are either regarded themselves as human deities, or they act as mediums who deliver a divine message. They generally undergo their transforming experiences in their later years when they have experienced the whole life cycle of a woman, and they subsequently become the real heads of their families.<sup>114</sup> They may reinterpret the cosmogonic myths.<sup>115</sup> Successors to lead the church are generally chosen from the founder's family and may be female or male. Nakamura writes of three such foundresses, "They all transcended femininity through their revelatory experiences, living the rest of their lives in devotion to the divine".<sup>116</sup>

Hori notes five characteristics which are common to these founders: 1. An innately psychophysical disposition. In a manner similar to shamans in their preshamanistic life, they often suffer from debilitating illnesses, have an introspective character and a love of solitariness and may suffer from hallucination. 2. They experience an abnormal frame of mind, similar to shamanistic initiation, in a situation in which they have an overwhelming sense of individual crisis and may exhibit symptoms such as epileptic seizures, hallucinations, aimless wandering, frenzied dancing etc. 3. As a consequence, they experience being possessed by a spirit or *kami*, journeying to a different world, and undergoing a mystic ordeal. 4. Like shamans after initiation, they then undergo a complete personality change, have control over shamanistic techniques, attain unusual powers of self-control and spiritual concentration, know the causes and cures of illnesses and misfortunes, exorcise evil spirits, and overcome black magic. 5. They commonly write books about their teachings or revelational

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<sup>113</sup> Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*, p. 313,

<sup>114</sup> Nakamura Kyoko Motomochi, "No Women's Liberation: The Heritage of a Woman Prophet in Modern Japan", in *Unspoken Worlds: Women's Religious Lives in Non-Western Cultures*, ed. Nancy A. Falk and Rita M. Gross, pp. 186-187.

<sup>115</sup> See Nakamura, "The Significance of Amaterasu in Japanese Religious History", pp. 185-186.

literature based on their mystical experiences.<sup>117</sup> Mieko, the main character in Enchi's novel *Onnamen*, shares some of these characteristics.

A brief description of the experiences of two foundresses provides insights into the Japanese female shamanistic tradition. The shamanistic experiences of Nakayama Miki (1798-1887), the foundress of the Tenrikyō sect, began when, as a forty year old farmwife, she was acting as a medium in a healing rite for her son led by a *yamabushi* (Buddhist mountain ascetic). She was suddenly possessed by a deity who, identifying himself as the true and original god, announced that henceforth he wished to use Nakayama as a 'living shrine', his vessel in this world.<sup>118</sup> In her later years Nakayama became known as an *ikigami* ('living goddess'), powerful in matters of childbirth and healing. She developed new healing and divination methods.<sup>119</sup> Nakayama wrote the *Ofudesaki*, the major scripture of the Tenrikyō religion. She developed the Tenrikyō creation story which has similarities to the Shintō myths. Nakayama is viewed by her followers as a reincarnation of Izanami, the female primal parent according to both Shintō and Tenrikyō teaching.

Like Nakayama, Kitamura Sayo (1900-1967), the founder of Tenshō Kōtai Jingū Kyō, was a farmer's wife, who had suffered a great deal. A series of religious experiences in the early 1940s culminated with a direct revelation in 1944. The possessing spirit eventually identified himself as Tenshō Kōtai Jingū, whom Kitamura identified as the universal god. He had chosen Kitamura as his temporary abode.<sup>120</sup> Kitamura changed from being quiet and humble into a severe, critical and daring person and declared herself to be the saviour and redeemer of humanity, announcing that the Kingdom of God was being established here and now. At the end of the war she experienced adoption as heir to the Divine Couple of Tenshō Kōtai Jingū and Amaterasu Ōmikami.<sup>121</sup> Kitamura combined the roles of prophet and matriarch in her daily life. She rejected the old rites, insisting that faith in God,

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<sup>116</sup> Nakamura, "The Significance of Amaterasu in Japanese Religious History", p. 186.

<sup>117</sup> Hori, "Shamanism in Japan", p. 247.

<sup>118</sup> Robert S. Ellwood, *Tenrikyo: a pilgrimage faith*, pp. 30,38.

<sup>119</sup> Ellwood, *Tenrikyo*, p. 42.

<sup>120</sup> Nakamura, "No Women's Liberation", p. 176.

<sup>121</sup> Nakamura, "No Women's Liberation", p. 177.

prayer to God, and a God-centred life were the means of gaining the power to communicate with the psychic world and thus to redeem the malevolent spirits of the dead.<sup>122</sup> By acting as a temple for both a male and female divinity Kitamura transcended her female nature and became androgynous. She sometimes cultivated a more masculine style in her ways, such as sitting cross-legged.<sup>123</sup> However, although Kitamura taught women to speak frankly and directly, she did not challenge the old patterns of authority which had oppressed them. She taught the importance of the family and of maternal love and advocated that women obey their husbands and elders.<sup>124</sup>

### Shamanism and the Arts

Over time aspects of shamanism diffused into society in different ways, particularly into the performing arts and literature. The *nō* theatre, whose elements and symbols were used by Enchi in her works, is imbued with elements of shamanism and spirit possession. *Nō*, which developed in the fourteenth century, contains a mixture of Buddhist and Shintō elements. A sacred space is created into which the “other dimension” outside our time is projected.<sup>125</sup> The role of the *shite* (main character), who impersonates a supernatural being, derives from the *miko* during the *kagura* (sacred Shintō dance) who becomes divinely possessed and utters oracles. The role of the *waki* (secondary character), often a monk, derives from the role of the ascetic, who in many shamanistic rituals induces the *miko*’s possession. Possession may be by a god, a living human spirit or the ghost of a dead person. The first act may involve the incantation or conjuration of a spirit and the possession of a medium; the

<sup>122</sup> Nakamura, “No Women’s Liberation”, p. 181.

<sup>123</sup> Nakamura, “No Women’s Liberation”, p. 184. Androgynous elements can also be seen in the shamanesses of Korea and Okinawa. The shamaness of Korea receives male spirits inside her body. She wears layers of male clothing during rituals, symbolising the union of the sexes. Male shamans (*paksu*) exhibit aspects of femininity, usually wearing female clothing when dancing (Alan Carter Covell, *Ecstasy: Shamanism in Korea*, pp. 97-98). The four male shamans in Miyako, Okinawa, whom Takiguchi knew of all projected gentle, soft, affectionate feminine images (Takiguchi, “Miyako Shamanism”, p. 88).

<sup>124</sup> Nakamura, “No Women’s Liberation”, p. 186.

<sup>125</sup> Benito Ortolani, *The Japanese Theatre: From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism*, p. 92.

god, ghost or demon appears in its true form in the second act.<sup>126</sup> The *nō* masks themselves are viewed as having their own *kokoro* (mind or spirit). The mask 'possesses' the actor and replaces his personality with its own.<sup>127</sup>

Hori notes that 'pseudo-shamanism' was given aesthetic form in groups such as the Kumano *bikuni* (Mt. Kumano nuns) and *uta bikuni* (singing nuns, who converted people to Buddhism through singing). These forms of pseudo-shamanism were later absorbed into the ecstatic dancing *nenbutsu* (invocation of the name of Amidha Buddha in the hope of rebirth into Amidha's pure land).<sup>128</sup> The Kumano *bikuni* played an important role in the history of Japanese literature. From at least the mid-Heian period these women went out on missionary campaigns seeking donations. In addition to *uta bikuni* they were known as *etoki bikuni* (picture explaining nuns) and *kanjin bikuni* (money raising nuns).<sup>129</sup> The *bikuni* made picture scrolls, especially books in the form of *ehon* (picture books), familiar items to the Japanese people during the Muromachi period (1334-1573).<sup>130</sup> Like the props with which the *miko* summoned the *kami* the *bikuni* saw these books as possessing a magico-religious quality.<sup>131</sup> By taking their oral and written, religious and secular repertoires throughout the country the *bikuni* helped to contribute to the establishment of a national literature.<sup>132</sup>

By the end of the Muromachi period most magico-religious performers such as dancers, ballad reciters, singers and the Kumano *bikuni* had lost their official religious functions and were performers who used their art to make a living. Ruch notes however that the image of the Kumano *bikuni* as *miko* priestesses of the Kumano shrines continued to the extent that they were believed to bring good fortune to a house just by visiting.<sup>133</sup> *Goze* (blind women singers of tales) were also

<sup>126</sup> Ortolani, *The Japanese Theatre*, p. 91.

<sup>127</sup> Earle Ernst, "Nō", in *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, Vol. 6, p. 26.

<sup>128</sup> Hori, "Shamanism in Japan", pp. 277-278.

<sup>129</sup> Barbara Ruch, "Medieval Jongleurs and the Making of a National Literature" in *Japan in the Muromachi Age*, ed. J. W. Hall and Toyoda Takeshi, p. 300.

<sup>130</sup> Ruch, "Medieval Jongleurs", p. 302.

<sup>131</sup> Ruch, "Medieval Jongleurs", p. 305.

<sup>132</sup> Ruch, "Medieval Jongleurs", p. 304.

<sup>133</sup> Ruch, "Medieval Jongleurs", p. 305.

associated in their origins and stories with *arukimiko* so that they seemed to possess a magico-religious power.<sup>134</sup> Vocal literature was associated with a magical quality dating back to prehistory with the voice projection of reciters of *norito* (Shintō ritual prayers) and of *katari-be* (reciters of history).<sup>135</sup>

*Kabuki*, about which Enchi was passionate, developed in the early seventeenth century. Ortolani relates how the first documented performance of *kabuki* can be interpreted according to the scheme of a shamanistic ritual of *tama shizume*, appeasing a dangerous revengeful *onryō*. In 1603 the *miko* Okuni from the Grand Shrine of Izumo performed on a *nō* stage and conjured the *onryō* of a recently deceased eccentric anti-conformist *rōnin* (masterless *samurai*), who had been her lover. His grudges were revealed and finally removed and his spirit pacified.<sup>136</sup> Okuni's dances are said to have been a combination of *arukimiko* dances and Buddhist devotional dances.<sup>137</sup> Ortolani notes that still, in the present repertory:

In general, the bridging of the gap between the world of our experience and the "other dimension" - where divine powers, friendly and revengeful ghosts, and strange animal spirits influence the human condition - is essential to the determination of the course of events in numerous *kabuki* plays.<sup>138</sup>

The conviction persisted that the souls of deities or ancestors descended through the symbolic props that performers used such as fans, sticks, branches of *sakaki* tree, bows and clay dolls.<sup>139</sup>

Elements of the shamanistic function of the *miko* have thus persisted in the performance arts such as *nō*, *kabuki*, *jōruri* (ballad dramas) and *kagura* (sacred Shintō dances).

<sup>134</sup> Ruch, "Medieval Jongleurs", p. 305.

<sup>135</sup> Ruch, "Medieval Jongleurs", p. 305.

<sup>136</sup> Ortolani, *The Japanese Theatre*, pp. 163-164.

<sup>137</sup> Gunji Masakatsu, *Kabuki*, p. 20.

<sup>138</sup> Ortolani, *The Japanese Theatre*, p. 164.

## Discussion

Shamanism and spirit possession have empowered women in a range of societies. However, the shamaness has a long history in Japan, from the ancient, powerful mythological and historical figures such as the goddesses Amaterasu Ōmikami and Ame no Uzume, Queen Himiko, Jingū, and other powerful *miko* of the theocratic period which preceded the development of Buddhism in Japan, through to the foundresses of New Religions seen in recent times. The traditional ability of the Japanese woman to become possessed is also seen in the involuntary spirit possession of ordinary women and the voluntary possession of mediums such as the *kuchiyose miko* who still operate today. The contemporary shamaness in Japan, as a woman who communicates with the spirit world, is a person recognised as having power, but is also one who lives on the fringes of society.

Elements of shamanism and spirit possession played an important role in the development of Japanese art and literature and still exist in aspects of Japanese culture such as *kabuki* and *nō*, both of which Enchi was passionate about. Enchi had a rich tradition on which to draw when developing and weaving the motifs of shamanism and spirit possession into the lives of her characters.

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<sup>139</sup> Ruch, "Medieval Jongleurs", p. 305.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Onnazaka (The Waiting Years)*

*Onnazaka*, which is often acclaimed as Enchi's masterpiece, is based on the story of the married life of her maternal grandmother Murakami Kin. Enchi heard this story from her mother as a child and gained more insights into her grandmother's life during the time she lived with her mother at the end of the Second World War. *Onnazaka* had a long period of gestation and Enchi felt that the work was not hers alone. In an essay written after its completion she wrote:

Perhaps my works are haunted by the bitterness and resentment of Japanese women oppressed by men long ago, from the era of *The Waiting Years* and before... I cannot escape the feeling even now that this novel is not mine alone but was produced jointly with numbers of women who lived in the past, women having no connection to literature ... It is the secrets of Meiji women, passed on in a thin stream of hushed voices for dozens of years in novel form ... The spirits of women of long ago seemed to urge me on as I wrote, taking hold of the brush.<sup>1</sup>

*Onnazaka* describes the lives and psychological torments of women trapped in a polygynal household, which Meiji society with its double standards for men and women allowed. Parallels have been drawn between *Onnazaka* and *The Tale of Genji*, which depicts the lives and sufferings of Genji and his wives and concubines in the polygynal aristocratic Heian society. In both the Heian (794-1185) and Meiji (1868-1912) periods women were expected to sublimate their desires and needs to those of their men. In the Meiji period the patriarchal world view and family system had been further consolidated by Neo-Confucianism which permeated the Japanese society and psyche in the previous Tokugawa period (1600-1867). In the socially sanctioned view on the education and conduct of women published in *Onnadaigaku* (*The Greater Learning for Women*, 1716) women were admonished to distrust themselves and obey their husbands in all things. Such is the initial mindset of Tomo, the main character in *Onnazaka*.

After an outline of the plot of *Onnazaka*, this chapter provides a discussion and analysis of elements of latent shamanism and spirit possession discernible in the

novel. As Hulvey asserts, the theme of *miko* is “discernible only in germinal form”<sup>2</sup> in *Onnazaka*. Indeed, compared with Mieko in *Onnamen* (1958), the shamanistic qualities of the main character Tomo are latent rather than manifested until she lies on her deathbed. However, there are allusions to the shamaness of the ancient past and to mediums and spirit possession in the past and present.

A discussion of shamanistic elements pertaining to Toshi, a minor character, to Tomo, the official wife of the household and main protagonist, and to Suga, one of the concubines, is provided. This is followed by a discussion of links with spirit possession and shamanism in *The Tale of Genji*.

### **The Plot of *Onnazaka***

*Onnazaka* begins with the arrival in Tokyo of Shirakawa Tomo, the thirty-year-old wife of a wealthy, high level Meiji bureaucrat. Tomo, who was married at fourteen and is the mother of two children, has had to become accustomed to the philandering ways of her husband Yukitomo. Now, however, she finds herself on a mission that will test her endurance and control to the limit. She is to select a young girl to take home to be Yukitomo’s concubine. Tomo begins to climb in earnest the woman’s slope (*onnazaka*<sup>3</sup>) which will be her fate until her death many years later. Along this slope will lie the tribulations of the addition of another young concubine to the household and later the shame and humiliation of Yukitomo’s ongoing affair with his daughter-in-law Miya, the wife of Michimasa, the intellectually and emotionally retarded son of Tomo and Yukitomo.

After the introduction of the first concubine, the fifteen year old Suga, into the household Tomo finds herself physically and emotionally estranged from the

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Juliet Winters Carpenter, “Enchi Fumiko: ‘A Writer of Tales’”, pp. 352-353.

<sup>2</sup> S. Yumiko Hulvey, “The Intertextual Fabric of Narratives by Enchi Fumiko”, p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> Maeda Mutsuko notes that Enchi had already included a piece entitled “*Onnazaka*” in a collection of writing. In this story a seven year old girl, when discussing with her mother the two paths leading up to a shrine: the direct, steep *otokozaka* (male slope) in front and the long, winding *onnazaka* (women’s slope) at the side, declares that she would prefer the male slope. Maeda comments that Enchi must have already had the intention of using the *onnazaka* as a symbol of the submission and humiliation of a woman’s entire life (Maeda, “Enchi Fumiko Ron”, p. 64).

husband whom she still loves and whom she has been taught to love and serve by the Confucian moral code, which has been instilled in her since birth. Tomo is a highly moral and loyal person, symbolised by the character for her name 倫 meaning 'similar group'; 'friend'; 'order'; 'morality'.<sup>4</sup> Over the long years Tomo stoically conceals her longing for love and for physical intimacy, which are denied her, behind the slightly smiling mask of the submissive wife and obeys her tyrannical husband in all affairs. She stays in the marriage for the sake of her children and maintains her position as official wife through her skills as indispensable household manager and manager of the family estates. Managing the members of the household with an iron will, it is Tomo who maintains the *ie* (family/household) as a functioning unit. Behind Tomo's serene mask, however, emotions of jealousy and resentment and the unfulfilled desire for love continue to boil and fester. Over the years Tomo disobeys her husband only in one matter. After returning from Tokyo with Suga, instead of returning the balance of the money given to her by Yukitomo for expenses, Tomo sets it aside to gather interest over the years. Initially she keeps it as a safeguard for herself and her children in case she is ousted from her position as wife by Suga. Over the years the secret deposit remains both a source of guilt and of strength.

Eventually forced to watch her husband break the moral code with Miya, a code that she had still believed they shared, Tomo finds her own belief in it crumbling. She turns to Shin Buddhism for support and finds some measure of relief in believing that a great and unstoppable power beyond her control, rather than the code of conduct, is guiding events. However, rather than this belief enabling her to achieve peace and acceptance of her situation, Tomo finds herself sometimes repeating the name of Buddha until it burns her lips.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Sodekawa Hiromi, "Enchi Fumiko: A Study in the Self-expression of Women", p. 19. Sodekawa also notes that 'Tomo' is part of the name 'Yukitomo', symbolising the fact that Tomo is an accomplice to and part of Yukitomo, helping him to preserve the feudalistic morality still inherent in Meiji society.

<sup>5</sup> Enchi, *Onnazaka*, p. 189/188. The figure before the slash mark shows the location of the quotation in *Onnazaka* (Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, Shinchō Bunko, 1961). The second figure gives the page reference in *The Waiting Years* (trans. John Bester, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1980). English translations are from Bester's *The Waiting Years*, unless otherwise stated.

Ten years younger than her husband, Tomo had hoped for a form of revenge and a period of respite and contentment at the end of her long climb of the *onnazaka* by outliving Yukitomo. However, this is not to be. Only on her deathbed does her tormented spirit find an outlet for the expression of years of suppressed emotion and the desire for revenge against the injustices carried out against her by her husband.

### Toshi

Mysterious depths and abilities hidden within female characters, despite their subordinate state in society, are hinted at. Toshi, who appears on the first page of the novel, seems to possess divining skills akin to those of an *ichiko* (medium), an ability beyond the normal senses that suggests a link with another dimension. The lame daughter of the household where Tomo stays in Tokyo, Toshi seems to possess an ability to 'see' beyond the normal. Kin, Toshi's mother, sometimes finds it uncanny how her daughter's premonitions strangely come true.<sup>6</sup> When, just before Tomo's arrival, Toshi and Kin wonder at the purpose of her visit, Toshi is described, as she leans on the covered end of the brazier, 'with eyes as if divining' (*uranai de mo suru yō na me de*)<sup>7</sup>. Kin gazes at her daughter's face as if gazing at the utterance of a medium (*ichiko no kuchiyose de mo*)<sup>8</sup>.

Toshi is different from most women. She suffered a sickness that prevented her from marrying and has now passed the marriageable age. No doubt she has also suffered physically and psychologically because of her lameness. At an age where most women's energies are directed towards a husband and children, Toshi's are directed inwards. Leaning over the brazier she appears to be in a trance, communing with a mysterious source. Although she is unable to define her foreboding about the reason for Tomo's visit, it proves to be a valid one. By introducing such a tone at the beginning of the novel and using words such as *kuchiyose* and *ichiko*, which link Toshi to women who have traditionally acted as mediums for supernatural spirits for

<sup>6</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 9/9.

<sup>7</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 9/9. My translation. Bester translates this as "her eyes had a dreamy look as though gazing into the future".

<sup>8</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 9/9.

centuries, Enchi intimates that this ability to communicate with another dimension and a power beyond secular authority exists within some women.

### **Tomo**

It is the main character Tomo whose appearance most reminds the reader of the enigmatic, powerful shamanistic figures of old. When she is introduced at the beginning of the novel, Tomo, in whom Kin senses a certain remoteness, has full, drooping eyelids which seem to conceal her emotions.<sup>9</sup> As she asks Kin's assistance in searching for a young girl to act as maid and concubine, Tomo's face is likened to a *nō*<sup>10</sup> mask: "Again the smile, elusive as the smile on a *No* mask, played about the corners of Tomo's mouth"<sup>11</sup>. Tomo's expression is thus related to that of the essential female as portrayed in the *nō*. According to Etō Jun, Japanese women before World War Two, denied the expression of individuality available to Western women, lived behind masks.<sup>12</sup> The mask hides Tomo's pain and the battle within her between control and the expression of emotions that threatens to overwhelm her. She also represents the universal Japanese woman, forced to conceal her emotions behind a mask.

Like Toshi, Tomo has an intuition and an acuity beyond the normal. While Toshi's development of shamanistic skills may have arisen through physical pain and suffering, Tomo's supernormal intuition has developed through psychological and spiritual suffering. Toshi discerns that Tomo has gained a "distinction that comes through suffering"<sup>13</sup>. She has had to endure her husband's many infidelities, which have given her the ability to see through to the truth ("*shinjitsu o miyaburu*"<sup>14</sup>) of the girls she and Kin view as prospective concubines. In fact Kin is more "alarmed than

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<sup>9</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 10/10.

<sup>10</sup> Yoshimura Teiji states that "Nō masks .. have discarded emphatic facial expressions, pursuing deep facial expressions instead ... it is rather the accumulation of numerous emotions, extremely controlled and close to naught." ("*Nō: Drama and the Human Essence*", p. 45).

<sup>11</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 14/13.

<sup>12</sup> Etō Jun, "Kaisetsu" in *Yō*, Enchi Fumiko, p. 270.

<sup>13</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 18/17.

<sup>14</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 24/22.

impressed by the sensitivity and acuity of Tomo's judgment"<sup>15</sup>. Tomo is able to discern for example that a girl was older than the age she claimed to be and that she had already had a relationship with a man. With her ability to sense what is inside a woman, Tomo chooses Suga for her husband and the household. Suga is beautiful and pure and has striking features but is timid with a subdued spirit. Tomo sees Suga, with her lack of a forceful personality, as the ideal "*kage no onna*"<sup>16</sup> (woman of the shadows, concubine). As Yukitomo's concubine Suga will live in Tomo's shadow.

With the introduction of Suga to the household, Tomo's suffering increases greatly. Although still in love with Yukitomo who, like Genji, the hero of *The Tale of Genji*, is attractive to women and knows how to please them, Tomo must henceforth learn to suppress her sexual desires and her longing for the warmth of human contact and love. Tomo watches the play *Yotsuya Kaidan* as if possessed ("*tsukareta yō ni*"<sup>17</sup>) as she identifies with the betrayed wife Oiwa whose vengeful dead spirit exacts revenge. She vows, however, not to go the way of the madness that threatens to envelop her for the sake of her children.

Although steeling herself to avoid madness, one night before Suga has become Yukitomo's mistress in act as well as in name, Tomo, gazing at the light in the new wing where her husband and Suga sleep, suffers an experience similar to an involuntary possession. Suddenly she feels herself to be "a great snake rearing its hooded head out of the light to stare at him [Yukitomo] and Suga".<sup>18</sup> Like the *miko* of the past Tomo is possessed by a powerful supernatural snake. Another incident earlier in the marriage also connects Tomo to the snake and its strength. Although outwardly the perfect Meiji wife, smiling and submissive, Tomo has a great internal strength, a strength greater in fact than that of the male Yukitomo, who is the epitome of the Meiji autocrat whose right to strength and dominance is bestowed by the mores of the patriarchal society. Tomo had awoken one night at a cry from Yukitomo to find a snake lying on his shoulder. She instinctively grasped the snake and threw it outside before Yukitomo had time to act. Tomo protects the snake, a

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<sup>15</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 23/21.

<sup>16</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 28/27.

<sup>17</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 45/44.

symbol of her strength and jealousy, from Yukitomo, who would have killed it. At the same time she is protecting Yukitomo, whom she still loves, from the snake. At this glimpse of her passion and strength, Yukitomo is somewhat repelled and from this time on begins to find it difficult to see her as an object of desire.<sup>19</sup>

In suppressing her natural emotions and desires and not acting on them, Tomo fits Enchi's description of the female who, despite the fact she may be intellectual, is unable to lose herself in philosophy or religion, and who, unlike males whose natural way is to act, sits and broods and inside herself becomes possessed through intense emotion.<sup>20</sup> Tomo's intense, brooding figure inspires fear.

Something forbidding emanated from her as she sat there without speaking, something that spurned all lies and deception and inspired more fear than did Shirakawa himself.<sup>21</sup>

However, unlike in Enchi's subsequent stories, Tomo's supreme self-suppression does not lead to the unleashing of a supernatural force inside her which changes events.

Tomo is also a mother figure in the novel. In a later novel *Saimu* (The Mist in Karuizawa, 1975-76) Enchi wrote of the *miko*:

What is a high priestess? What is a medium? In the end, it is probably similar to the idea of the "original mother" in Chinese philosophy. It is deeply rooted in the earth and creates all nature, and it is the source of life which makes all nature live.. After all, perhaps men cannot conquer ..<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 49/48.

<sup>19</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 16/16. This incident has similarities with the legends of the snake-woman who leaves her water world to marry a man, a version of which appears in the *Kojiki*. When the husband peeps into his wife's parturition hut, he is horrified to see her in her true form of a snake and she returns to her home (Blacker, "The Snake Woman in Japanese Myth and Legend", p. 117). Years later Tomo's beloved grandson Takao will also turn away from her repelled by her shrewdness and strength (*Onnazaka*, p. 188/187). Sodekawa notes that Tomo's act of flinging the snake away expresses her deep conflict between her hidden desires and her sense of duty. In order to protect her husband, she has to throw the hidden desires away. Sodekawa also notes that the snake is a traditional symbol of the ideal wife in folklore ("Enchi Fumiko: A Study in the Self-expression of Women", p. 17).

<sup>20</sup> Takenishi Hiroko, "Mikoteki na Mono 2", p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 54/53.

<sup>22</sup> Translated in Sodekawa, "Enchi Fumiko: A Study in the Self-expression of Women", pp. 101-102.

An image early in the novel connects Tomo, suffering from Yukitomo's infidelities, to the mother goddess Izanami before her final separation from Izanagi.<sup>23</sup>

"Time and again the overwhelmingly joyful experiences of Tomo's younger years had turned sour as she was forced to watch with a helpless horror, as though her very flesh and blood were being devoured by maggots"<sup>24</sup>.

As well as sacrificing herself to stay in the marriage for her own two children, Tomo, on learning of Yukitomo's liaison with Miya, feels a great wrath towards Yukitomo as a male, distinct from feelings of love or hate for him as a husband and determines in her own mind to protect his other women, Suga, Yumi and even Miya.<sup>25</sup> Closeness to the concubines Suga and Yumi is denied her, as what she says to them is likely to be repeated to Yukitomo and used against her. However it is Tomo who organises the lives of the women in the household. Tomo arranges Yumi's marriage, ensures that Suga will remain in the household to care for Yukitomo and not leave with the weak and worthless student-houseboy Konno and later ensures that a maid who becomes pregnant with her grandson's child is cared for. For Yukitomo, as the years pass, Tomo becomes a strong, untouchable mother figure who keeps the household together, to whom he turns only when in need of a mother's solace and strength. It is to Tomo he turns for comfort after he has killed a member of the Liberal Party and has been wounded himself.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, while acting as a mother figure in the household, Tomo, who is denied physical love and compassion in her marriage, like the shamaness metaphorically 'dies' to her old life, becoming a living family ghost (*karei*<sup>27</sup>) in the household. After the introduction of Suga into the household Tomo would dream that she "was on a ship tossed in a violent storm, rolling about inside its hull, unable to breathe"<sup>28</sup>. The image is one of being buried alive in a coffin. Tomo is buried in her marriage, her

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<sup>23</sup> Dying after the birth of her last child, Izanami lay in the land of Yomi. After her husband pursued her, Izanami requested that he not look upon her. However, Izanagi gazed upon his wife's form as she lay rotting, putrid with maggots, and then fled in terror. See Chapter Two, "Izanami and Izanagi", pp. 32-33.

<sup>24</sup> Onnazaka, p. 37/35.

<sup>25</sup> Onnazaka, p. 103/105.

<sup>26</sup> Onnazaka, p. 45/45.

<sup>27</sup> Onnazaka, p. 75/75.

<sup>28</sup> Onnazaka, p. 50/48.

sexuality and her self smothered. However, unlike the shamaness, the moral and upright Tomo does not find another outlet for the expression of her sexuality. Suppressing her own Eros<sup>29</sup> Tomo takes on masculine characteristics as she, ironically, assists Yukitomo to preserve the patriarchal *ie* system. The power Tomo exercises in the household through strength of will is a secular power, which supports the male power inherent in the *ie*. She carries out the male functions in the household as the agent of authority and the person in charge of business affairs while at the same time becoming increasingly internally critical of the system<sup>30</sup>. Upon meeting Miya, a potential second wife for her son Michimasa, forty-year-old Tomo, whose code of morals would not allow her to take a male lover, is charmed by Miya's feminine wiles. She sees Miya not with a woman's eyes, but with those of a male desiring the softness of a woman.<sup>31</sup> Miya, however, due to the brutality of Michimasa and her own immoral nature, will not share warmth and compassion with Tomo, but is destined to become another of Yukitomo's concubines.

Tomo's revenge on the man who has betrayed and humiliated her all through their married life and who has forced her to suppress her true self comes only at the end of her life. Climbing the hill to their house for the last time, she realises that all her stoicism, her iron will and her energy, which have been devoted to maintaining her household and her place in it at the price of her suppression of her own desires and of her true self, have been for nothing. The only reason to continue to climb the final leg of her *onnazaka* is the hope of a brighter world waiting at the end.<sup>32</sup> Tomo's Buddhist faith has not given her a way to attain harmony and happiness in this life.

It is only the approach of death that frees Tomo of her mask and of her strict code of behaviour and unleashes, finally, her pent up emotions. When Tomo tells her daughter she is not well, Etsuko is startled at her mother's lack of customary reserve when she thrusts her leg out in front of her.<sup>33</sup> Summoning Yukitomo to her bedside,

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<sup>29</sup> See Introduction, Footnote 23 for a definition of 'Eros'.

<sup>30</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 91/92.

<sup>32</sup> *Onnazaka*, p.191/190.

<sup>33</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 195/194.

Tomo is at last able to gaze directly into his face.<sup>34</sup> She has Yukitomo read her will in which she has described how and why she has amassed savings that she wishes to be divided among their grandchildren, Suga, Yumi and other relatives. The will contains no word of accusation and reproach against Yukitomo for the way he has treated her, only an apology for having kept this secret from him. Yet the unspoken accusation contains a powerful force which causes Yukitomo to give the closest he is capable of to an apology by telling Tomo he understands. In Tomo's last days Yukitomo and his household care for her and honour her with the respect they had not given her during her life. Tomo drifts into a semi-coma during which, even when awake, her eyes are vacant and she scarcely speaks.<sup>35</sup> However one evening Tomo speaks to the two women nursing her as if in a trance. She speaks without a break in a voice filled with strength.

“Her eyes were alive and shining with excitement. Their gaze brimmed with feeling of such intensity that they were scarcely recognizable as the placid, leaden-hued eyes that normally looked out from under the heavily drooping lids.<sup>36</sup>

The words which come from the mouth of Tomo who was always decorous, who never let her emotions show up until then, shock the women:

Toyoko, will you go to your uncle and tell him something? Tell him that when I die I want no funeral. Tell him that all he need do is to take my body out to sea at Shinagawa and dump it in the water.<sup>37</sup>

As if in a trance, she appears not to hear their protests at her words. Despite the Buddhist piety she has developed over the years, her spirit now rejects the idea of a traditional Buddhist funeral and the accompanying pomp and ceremony befitting her position. She desires instead that her body be dumped in the sea.<sup>38</sup> The two women, both of whom have experienced unhappiness in their own marriages, are to act as her mediums although neither wishes to receive the burden of her suppressed emotions

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<sup>34</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 201/199.

<sup>35</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 203/201.

<sup>36</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 204/202.

<sup>37</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 204/201-202.

<sup>38</sup> The sea is the home of the mythological snake woman. Tomo is mentioned in connection with the sea in two other instances; she dreams of being trapped in the hull of a ship rocking on a stormy sea after Suga's arrival (*Onnazaka*, p. 50/48) and Yukitomo, when he likens Tomo to a family ghost in his

which have built up over long years. Toyoko had planned to relay the message as “the delirious nonsense of a sick woman, but when she spoke her voice came out serious and shrill, as though Tomo’s spirit had taken possession of her”.<sup>39</sup> The guilty Yukitomo reels as if seeing a ghost. He will deny Tomo’s request, but the cry embodying all the emotions which she has tried to contain within herself and has endured for forty years splits his proud ego in two.<sup>40</sup>

What is it that speaks through Tomo’s mouth and seems to leap from her and possess the two women? Enchi herself stated that Tomo was not possessing others, but that all that Tomo had endured and kept inside herself separated itself from her will and came out as what she wanted to say. While from the male point of view Tomo’s final words could be perceived as a fearful revenge, from the female point of view she was raving in a state of delirium and not specifically with the intention of causing fear.<sup>41</sup> The ‘ghost’ (*yūrei*<sup>42</sup>) which Yukitomo sees is his own guilt and fear of the jealous vengeful female. However Enchi also acknowledged that one could not say that this final event had nothing to do with the spirit woman (*ryō no onna*).<sup>43</sup>

Maeda<sup>44</sup> argues that it is the living vengeful spirit of the Rokujō lady<sup>45</sup> smouldering inside Tomo that speaks through her mouth. Indeed Tomo has been compared to Genji’s principal wife, the proud and aloof Aoi, whom he married when young.<sup>46</sup> Genji lived virtually estranged from Aoi during their marriage. Only when she lay near death did he stay by her side and give her the full honour she deserved as his lawful wife. During labour Aoi was possessed by spirits, the most persistent of which could not be transferred to mediums and identified. It was Genji himself who recognised the voice and manner of the Rokujō lady in his wife when she spoke directly to him from his wife’s mouth, “I had not dreamed that I would come to you

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mind, perceives her movements in the following way: “the indications of slow, heavy motion that were melancholy and monotonous yet powerful as the waves on the wintry sea” (*Onnazaka*, p. 75/75).

<sup>39</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 205/203.

<sup>40</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 205/203.

<sup>41</sup> Kumasaka Atsuko, “Intabyū: Enchi Fumiko ni Kiku”, p. 34.

<sup>42</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 205/203.

<sup>43</sup> Takenishi, “Mikoteki na Mono 2”, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Maeda, “Enchi Fumiko Ron”, p. 70.

<sup>45</sup> See Chapter Two, “Spirit Possession in the Heian Period”.

<sup>46</sup> See for example Gessel, “The ‘Medium’ of Fiction: Fumiko Enchi as Narrator”, p. 380.

like this. It is true: a troubled soul will sometimes go wandering off<sup>47</sup>. Doris Barga's argument that spirit possession for the women in *The Tale of Genji* is a form of oblique aggression, which involves the "death" of their male-constructed selves by becoming others temporarily<sup>48</sup> holds also for Tomo. Tomo, like Aoi, cannot reach Yukitomo except in an altered state of consciousness. Nearing death and freed by it of her normal restraints, Tomo herself becomes a living spirit, whose cry of rage and pain inflicts such damage on Yukitomo, as she was never able to do during her life.<sup>49</sup> As Sodekawa maintains, Tomo does not achieve the changes she desires through spirit force, but she is a prototype of the repressed woman who attains a powerful force of "spirit".<sup>50</sup>

### Suga

It is not only Tomo who must live with the demon of jealousy encased in her soul. Taken into the household while still a child, beautiful but with a passive personality, Suga is moulded by Yukitomo and lives in Tomo's shadow. She is barren perhaps due to the fact that Yukitomo took her physically before the onset of menstruation and, unlike the second concubine Yumi, is unable to leave the Shirakawa household and find a husband and family of her own. Her grudge is not only towards Yukitomo, who transfers his deepest affection and attention to Miya, but also towards Tomo whose strength of will, patience and efficiency oppress the passive Suga.

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<sup>47</sup> Murasaki Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji*, trans. E. Seidensticker, p. 168.

<sup>48</sup> Doris Barga, *A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in The Tale of Genji*, p. 204.

<sup>49</sup> The spirit of wronged women is also described in Enchi's short story "Otoko no Hone" which relates the story of Ritsu who, like Tomo, lived in a household with two concubines. Ritsu passed on her own suppressed emotions to future generations by sewing within her *obi* (sash), which she wore close to her body while she lived, a letter written in blood by one of her husband's mistresses. Her granddaughter discovers the letter in the *obi* and feels herself manipulated by the spirit of the sash and the emotions her grandmother had suppressed during her lifetime (Enchi, "Skeletons of Men", trans. S. Matisoff, *Japan Quarterly* (1988) 35: 417-426). Interestingly, Enchi's daughter writes of a letter that her mother kept hidden. The letter from a woman, which Fuke found after her mother's death, contained slander against her father and expressed jealousy and envy towards her mother (Fuke Motoko, *Haha Enchi Fumiko*, p. 29).

<sup>50</sup> "Enchi Fumiko: A Study in the Self-expression of Women", p. 27.

Suga's name suggests a link with the tenth century poet and counsellor Sugawara no Michizane<sup>51</sup> who became a *mono no ke*, a vengeful spirit, after his death. Suga, who like Tomo must suppress her jealousy and her unfulfilled desires, feels as if a devil has built a nest inside her but that if she had not fallen into this environment this would not have happened.<sup>52</sup> The strong-willed Tomo is, like Yukitomo, an oppressor who acts as a restraint on Suga's actions. Although Tomo does not interfere openly in the lives of the concubines, Suga feels her influence as a "thick layer of clouds lowering above her head"<sup>53</sup>. When she finds herself desiring Tomo's death, Suga tries to brush away the stickiness (*nebari*<sup>54</sup>) like spider's threads around her heart, woven by the demon of jealousy residing within her.

Demons of jealousy and hate thus exist within Suga's mind. When pondering the fact that the child in Yumi's womb could possibly have been fathered by Yukitomo and not Yumi's husband, the barren Suga "felt like laughing at Michimasa and the other husband, Iwamoto – laughing with the utterly cold and beautiful laugh of the harpy who rips open the bellies of pregnant women"<sup>55</sup>. Unlike the uncomplicated Yumi, Suga has a deep sense of karma. On hearing the idea that the retarded Michimasa has had to pay for all the women deceived by his father Yukitomo, the words persist "like evil spirits, with overtones of curses and unforgotten grudges"<sup>56</sup> in her mind.

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<sup>51</sup> See Chapter Two, p. 39.

<sup>52</sup> *Onnazaka*, pp. 120-121/121.

<sup>53</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 120/121.

<sup>54</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 10/121. Interestingly, similar words are also used by Ibuki to describe the relationship between Mieko and her medium Yasuko in *Onnamen*: e.g. *nebakkoi jōcho* ('sticky emotion', *Onnamen*, p. 104) and *nebakkosa* ('stickiness', *Onnamen*, p. 115).

<sup>55</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 127/127.

<sup>56</sup> *Onnazaka*, pp. 89/90-91. This idea reappears when Tomo attends a lecture on Lady Vaidehi, the first person to whom Buddha taught the Pure Land faith. Due to the evil act carried out by her husband, Lady Vaidehi gave birth to a savage, brutal son and her life became a living hell (*Onnazaka*, pp. 142-146/141-144).

### Links with Spirit Possession and Shamanism in *The Tale of Genji*

In *The Tale of Genji*, the gathering of his women around him by the shining Genji was unusual in the Heian aristocratic society where only the emperor lived surrounded by his wives and concubines. Genji can be seen as a symbol of the emperors of antiquity<sup>57</sup> who, as Origuchi Shinobu asserts:

acquired control over the land by pursuing, marrying, and gathering together women from distant provinces, particularly those who served as shaman-priestesses to the local or provincial deities.<sup>58</sup>

Origuchi claims that *The Tale of Genji* is a fictionalised account of the ancient Shintō tradition of gods appearing in the human world, with Murasaki as a shrine maiden who serves the gods.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, in *Onnazaka* Yunitomo is waited on by his wife and concubines, though he lacks the perfection of Genji. Without Tomo's support the dissolute Yunitomo would have been unable to maintain his position of power and without Suga he would have been deprived of affection and physical care. Moreover, the names of Yunitomo's two other concubines also hint at the role of the *miko*. One of the meanings of *yumi* is 'arrow' (the bow and arrow were sometimes used as *torimono*, objects held in the hand by *miko* and used to attract and house spirits). One of the meanings of the word *miya* is 'shrine'.

Suga shows many similarities to Genji's great love Murasaki whom he took in as a child and raised until she was old enough to take as a wife. Like Suga, Murasaki was barren. Although she was the great love of Genji's life, Murasaki suffered greatly due to his infidelities from jealousy and fear that she would be supplanted in Genji's affections. As expected of a woman of her time, she suppressed her feelings, until they became overwhelming when Genji took a new official wife, the aristocratic Third Princess. Murasaki then fell ill and, like Aoi, suffered spirit possession by the Rokujō lady's spirit which, although the Rokujō lady was now dead, was still tormented by jealousy and berated Genji through a medium<sup>60</sup>. Bergen argues that, like Aoi, Murasaki also unconsciously uses the figure and charisma of the Rokujō

<sup>57</sup> Yamamoto Tetsuji, "Japanese Pratique and *The Tale of Genji*", p. 81.

<sup>58</sup> Discussed in Shirane Haruo, *The Bridge of Dreams*, p. 79.

<sup>59</sup> Discussed in Yamamoto Tetsuji, "Japanese Pratique and *The Tale of Genji*", p. 73-74.

<sup>60</sup> Murasaki Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji*, trans. E. Seidensticker, pp. 617-619.

lady (the one woman who was too independent-minded to submit her own spirit to that of the man she loved) during the public spectacle of spirit possession as an expression of oblique aggression against Genji and an attempt at effecting some change in her situation.<sup>61</sup> In the Meiji period, however, despite the continuance of a polygynous system, spirit possession was no longer accepted as a public event. Only on her deathbed can Tomo's inherited *mikoteki* (shamanistic or mediumistic) ability manifest itself. Suga must keep her demons within. Inside her "the feelings that could find no relief lay dark, cold, and silent, like snow settled by night"<sup>62</sup>.

Just as in *The Tale of Genji* spirit possession does not afflict women in whom reason and emotion are relatively balanced, such as the Akashi lady, shamanistic abilities develop only in Enchi's women in whom there is an imbalance between emotion and reason, a build up of unsatisfied desire and hunger. Some of the other women in *Onnazaka* show no shamanistic traits – either they are not of the right personality type or they do not have to repress their own nature and desires. Yumi, the second concubine, has an "untroubled quality ... with no resentment in her heart"<sup>63</sup>. Not loved by Yukitomo to the same extent that Suga is, she is allowed to leave the household, marry and raise a family. The daughter Etsuko, protected during her childhood and later happily married, maintains her innocent nature. The immoral Miya, beloved by Yukitomo, feels no compunction at deceiving her brutish husband and, true to her nature, lives as Yukitomo's most desired concubine until her death.

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<sup>61</sup> Bagen, *A Woman's Weapon*, pp. 109-149.

<sup>62</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 121/122.

<sup>63</sup> *Onnazaka*, p. 121/122.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### “Yō”(“Enchantress”) and “Mimiyōraku” (The Earring)

The two short stories “Yō” (1956) and “Mimiyōraku” (1957) both portray women, no longer young, who are estranged from the ecstasy of sex. This loss is combined with a repressed vengefulness and resentment toward the male by the two women who are suffocating in loveless marriages. The combination of repressed desire and the need for revenge awakens shamanistic abilities in the women. In both stories a male assists in the awakening and the catharsis. In “Yō” factors in the environment link the main character Chigako to shamanistic figures and rituals in the past. Moreover, the spirits who seem to possess Chigako are women writers from the Heian period, women who have the ability to enchant through the written word. The awakening of the vengeful enchantress in Takiko in “Mimiyōraku” is aided by the jewellery made by a skilled artisan, reminiscent of the beads used by the *miko* to summon spirits. This chapter discusses first “Yō” and then “Mimiyōraku”. After a brief outline of the plot of each story, the development of the shamanistic traits in the two main characters and the consequences for them are discussed.

### “Yō”

#### Plot Outline

Kanzaki Chigako is a middle-aged woman who has passed the age of childbearing. Sexual relations with her husband, during which Chigako never achieved ecstasy, have ceased years ago. Chigako has, like Tomo in *Onnazaka*, suppressed her need for self-fulfillment and her desires as a woman in the environment of an arid, loveless marriage. She has lived through her two daughters, using them as a barrier between herself and her husband Keisaku, but her world suddenly changes when both daughters have left home. Although Chigako lives in the same house as Keisaku, they have little to do with each other. Keisaku’s callousness and selfishness have marred their relationship. In earlier years he spent money on his passion of collecting antiques, oblivious to the needs of his wife and daughters. During the

American occupation after the war, he would sell curios to Americans, often at fraudulent prices. Despite her distaste, Chigako was forced to entertain visitors to help with sales. One incident in particular has caused a festering resentment within Chigako. Keisaku refused to sell a treasured Ming vase in order to buy essential drugs for their sick daughter. In order to earn the money, Chigako was forced to accept the task of translating a pornographic work into English. Ironically, while translating this book Chigako, who had never known moments of happiness with a man in her own life, now sometimes sat “wrapped in a kind of ecstatic daydream” thrilled at the idea that such moments could arise “through an intercourse of the flesh”<sup>1</sup>. Her translation also led to further work translating Japanese classics and therefore to financial independence from Keisaku.

At the beginning of the story Chigako and Keisaku’s eldest daughter has just left Japan with her husband, leaving Chigako forced to confront life alone face to face with her husband in their empty house. In addition to this, the once beautiful Chigako is suddenly faced with the reality of her own aging face and body. Already forced to cope with the indignity of false teeth, the mirror reveals to her the thinning of her once abundant hair, thinning eyebrows and eyelashes and the “unwonted cold serenity” of middle age spread across her brow.<sup>2</sup>

Shifting her living quarters to the annex to maintain her separation from Keisaku and the hatefulness of growing old together, Chigako desperately attempts to regain her lost youth through the application of make-up and lotions. When not translating she spends her time day-dreaming outside on the hill or dreaming up stories of love. In one of these stories she achieves both erotic satisfaction with a young lover and revenge against Keisaku. Strangely, however, her dream also appears to have an effect on reality.

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<sup>1</sup> “Yō”, p. 89/78. The figure before the slash mark indicates the reference to the quotation in “Yō” (Enchi Fumiko, *Yō. Hana Kui Uba*, Tōkyō: Kōdansha, Bungei Bunko, 1977). The second figure gives the page reference in “Enchantress”, trans. John Bester (in *Modern Japanese Short Stories*, trans. E. G. Seidensticker et. al., Tokyo: Japan Publications Inc., 1997). English translations are from Bester’s “Enchantress” unless stated otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> “Yō”, p. 95/83.

## Chigako

Chigako's house is situated at the foot of a hill in Tōkyō. This in itself is significant: mountain worship has played an important part in both Shintō and Buddhism. The belief that mountains themselves have a mystical power to cause the birth or rebirth of human beings and animals probably originates from the belief of hunting tribes in ancient Japan in the Divine Mother of the Mountain<sup>3</sup>. Mountain deities are generally portrayed as female in ancient myths<sup>4</sup> and mountains are also worshipped as watersheds or sources of streams.<sup>5</sup> There is also a belief in the relationship between mountains and the souls of the dead. Hori notes:

The belief that mountains are the abode of the dead reflects the ancient custom of actual burial on the mountain, while the belief that mountains are merely the meeting ground between this world and the next is predicated upon the tradition that heaven or the other world exists some place beyond the mountains.<sup>6</sup>

With the arrival of Buddhism, pre-Buddhist beliefs concerning mountains and shamanistic cosmology and practice greatly influenced Buddhist mountain theologies.<sup>7</sup>

Chigako's annex is built against the flank of the hill. The annex becomes her stronghold in which she both works, translating classics into English, and sleeps. From this time on she starts to get to know the hill well. It becomes increasingly a place between worlds where Chigako senses that the boundary between past and present and the real and the supernatural can be broken. Chigako is in the habit of going outside on the hill when she has finished her work and gazing upwards at "the green of the grass and the shrubs that grew in profusion, as by a mountain path"<sup>8</sup>. The road, which bends in a curve at the foot of the hill and then proceeds upwards, forms a boundary between a large hilly area and the dwellings below.<sup>9</sup> This road resembles the streams which girdle the sacred mountains of Japan, which are

<sup>3</sup> Hori Ichiro, *Folk Religion in Japan*, p. 166-167.

<sup>4</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, p. 166.

<sup>5</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, p. 150.

<sup>6</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, p. 151.

<sup>7</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, p. 160.

<sup>8</sup> "Yō", p. 96/84.

“symbolic of the boundaries between the profane and sacred worlds, the human and divine worlds, this world and the other world”<sup>10</sup>.

At times when the atmosphere on the hill is deserted such as noon and dusk, Chigako is drawn out onto to it. Memories of scenes on the hill that she saw when playing there as a child many years ago come back to her, including scenes of death such as the beating to death of an overladen horse and funeral processions carrying the dead and mourners to the cemetery on the hill. Occasionally she would see the white pigeons which would be released by the grave, white funeral wreaths or the white silk sleeves of the robes of the dead within the palanquin.<sup>11</sup> When such scenes pass before her eyes, the aging Chigako has the illusion that she can go back and forth between the past and the present.

Chigako gazes into her mirror, driven in an attempt to restore her youth, applying make-up and lotions to her hair. She does not know why she is compelled to try to make herself young again but senses that if she does not try she will always reproach herself. She tells Tōno Shigeyuki, her translating assistant, that she feels as if the women writers of the Heian period, with whom she has become familiar through their discussions, have possessed her.<sup>12</sup> Significantly, the mirror was one of the objects used by the shamaness to attract and house spirits. It was also the means by which Amaterasu was lured out of the Rock Cave of Heaven so that life could begin again<sup>13</sup>. As Chigako gazes into the mirror “a different, younger face came floating up from beneath her old face”<sup>14</sup> which both flatters and appals her. Then, however, reality, in the form of the creaking of her false teeth tears away the younger face in the mirror.<sup>15</sup> Appalled at her strange metamorphosis, she wonders “What kind of creature was she?”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> “Yō”, p. 81/72.

<sup>10</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>11</sup> “Yō”, p. 96/84. White, the symbol here of death, is also the colour of the bride’s garment at a wedding (as well as a colour symbolic of shamanism in Japan). For Chigako, marriage has been a kind of death.

<sup>12</sup> “Yō”, p. 107/90.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter Two, “Amaterasu Ōmikami”.

<sup>14</sup> “Yō”, p. 96-96/83.

<sup>15</sup> “Yō”, p. 96/83.

<sup>16</sup> “Yō”, p. 99/86.

Lacking the energy to bring out and put away bedding each day, Chigako uses a sofa-bed that lies against the wall, pressing against the flank of the hill. Lying on the bed she feels herself to be “lying right inside the womb (*hara*) of the hill”<sup>17</sup>. This induces a strange peace in her as if she is sleeping inside a coffin.<sup>18</sup> Chigako lies in her bed, listening to the sounds of the people and vehicles on the hill, picturing them more clearly in her mind than if she could actually see them. Chigako, like Tomo, is as if buried alive in her marriage. The only rapprochement she and Keisaku have made is in eating the same types of food together due to the constraints of false teeth. Together they can eat foods they would not eat in front of others. Lying on her bed Chigako wonders despairingly, “Whatever contact she were to have with the man who lay upstairs amid his chilly antiques, what new hope now could ever be conceived of it?”<sup>19</sup>

Chigako has become familiar with women writers of the Heian period, such as the authors of *Sarashina Nikki* (*The Sarashina Diary*) and *Kagerō Nikki* (*Days of Gossamer*), through her work and discussions with Tōno. Tōno, a lecturer in classics, talks of these women as if they were his aunts or sisters and Chigako identifies with them as they crouched hidden behind their curtains, alleviating the tedium of their lives by writing a mixture of reality and fiction. Chigako too is drawn to dream up fiction. Tōno himself embroiders reality in his talks of episodes from his past which stimulate Chigako’s monotonous life. For example, a plain young girl from his past becomes a “beauty like Izumi Shikibu”<sup>20</sup>. Although aged only thirty-three or four,

<sup>17</sup> “Yō”, p. 98/85. My translation. Bester translates this phrase as “right up against the flank of the slope”. However, as the mountain has been viewed as a mother-goddess of death and rebirth and Buddhist mountain ascetics went through an initiation to become one with this divine spirit by entering into the womb-store world or womb of mother earth (Hori Ichiro, “Shamanism in Japan”, p. 267) the use of the term *hara* seems significant here, and is better translated literally.

<sup>18</sup> In another parallel, ancient rulers such as the shamanistic Queen Himiko (see Chapter Two, “Queen Himiko”) were buried inside *kofun* (great mounds).

<sup>19</sup> “Yō”, p. 98/85. Enchi uses the word *yume*, which has connotations of ‘dream’. Bester translates this as ‘hope’.

<sup>20</sup> “Yō”, p. 101/87. Bester’s translation reads “refashioning her quite arbitrarily into the world’s most ravishing beauty” and does not mention the name of Izumi Shikibu. Izumi Shikibu lived in the mid-Heian period. She is famous for her intense love poetry. She also wrote the *Izumi Shikibu Nikki*, a fictionalised version of the story of the love between her and Prince Atsumichi. Izumi Shikibu was brought up at court and twice married. Between her marriages she was the mistress of two imperial princes and may have had other lovers (Edward A. Cranston, “Izumi Shikibu”, *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, Vol. 3, p. 366). The mention of Izumi Shikibu’s name is particularly

Tōno had been a prisoner of the Soviets for a few years after the war. He is literally what Chigako becomes before the mirror, a strange combination of old age and youth: “In this man’s expression, there was both youth and old age, his own age was always lost”.<sup>21</sup> Chigako’s identification with women of the past is also enhanced by the text she and Tōno are translating at present – Chapter 63 of *The Tales of Ise*, the episode in which an old woman tells her three sons that she desires a lover. Her youngest son tells the hero of the *Tales* of her plight. The latter then takes pity on the old woman and sleeps with her. When trying to find a comparison for a word which describes the old woman’s hair, Chigako wonders if it was like the hair on her own forehead.<sup>22</sup>

In this cave-like environment, influenced by women from the past, the usually reserved and correct Chigako is changing and becoming less inhibited. When she asks Tōno a personal question about his marriage, Tōno tells her that she never used to say such things and has changed recently, “It frightens me. It comes so unexpectedly, like a flash of lightning”.<sup>23</sup> When Chigako tells Tōno that she finds translating boring and that she spends time lying on her bed, her body still as if in a coffin, but her mind working agilely on fictional romances, he presses her to continue both translating and writing fiction. After making this confession to Tōno<sup>24</sup>, “something indefinable that had been set rigid within Chigako began to melt”<sup>25</sup> as Chigako feels free to continue with her fictional writing. She also now goes out more often on to the hill, her make-up even thicker. The atmosphere of the rainy season makes the environment on the hill seem even more other-worldly. The light is

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interesting as she has a reputation, even today, as a *yōfu* (enchantress, Jezebel), probably due to the writings of the ruling Fujiwara clan, to whom the two princes with whom she had affairs belonged (Miyagi and Oimi, *Shinkō Nihon Joseishi*, p. 70).

<sup>21</sup> “Yō”, p. 102. My own translation. Bester omits this sentence in his translation.

<sup>22</sup> “Yō”, p. 102/88.

<sup>23</sup> “Yō”, p. 106/90.

<sup>24</sup> In his role as assistant in translation to Chigako and as a stimulant both to Chigako’s familiarity with Heian women writers and to her writing fiction, thus allowing her to free the repressed feelings inside her, Tōno resembles both the lone male servant who served Queen Himiko in her fortress (see Chapter Two, “Queen Himiko”, p. 31) and the *waki* (secondary character in a *nō* play) who draws out the true self of the *shite* (main character).

<sup>25</sup> “Yō”, p. 107/90. Chigako writes, as Enchi did, in order to satisfy a psychological hunger (see Chapter One, p. 20).

“opaque, frosted glass-like” in which Chigako’s made-up face seems to “blur into a strange, ageless youthfulness”<sup>26</sup>.

The story Chigako is writing in her room is a mixture of dream and reality. A music student, whom she hears singing as he descends the hill in the evenings, falls in love with a young wife living on the hill and secretly visits her in her room. Not only does the imagining of an affair, aided by Chigako’s memories of details from the erotic book she translated years ago, satisfy her unfulfilled desire to achieve ecstasy with a man, it is also a form of revenge against Keisaku. This revenge is manifested in the story when one night the wife takes her husband’s treasured Ming vase out to her lover on the hill so that he can sell it to support himself. As they embrace the vase falls to the ground and breaks in two. After working at her story, Chigako would lie still on her bed “the smile of the enchantress still playing around her eyes”<sup>27</sup>. Lying in her ‘coffin’, with the purifying rain often pouring down outside, Chigako effects both ecstasy and revenge by transforming herself into an enchantress.

One night, when it is raining wildly, Chigako lies in her bed listening to the sound of the waterfall, which is caused by rain spilling from the road above down beside her room. It feels as if she is physically immersed in the rain. “The rain beat down fiercely till it seemed to pierce through roof, ceiling and down into her very breast”<sup>28</sup>. When Chigako falls asleep, as she lies imagining the scene when the lovers break the vase, she is, trance-like, “fascinated by the sound of the rain”<sup>29</sup>. The sacred mountains of Japan have sacred waters which proceed from them. Hori notes “whoever wants to possess the divine power of the mountains or to communicate with the mountain deities must undergo some initiatory mysteries by these sacred waters”<sup>30</sup>. On the night of the heavy rain it appears as if Chigako has experienced contact with the divine. When she is awoken later in the night, when the rain has stopped, by the ringing of the doorbell, it is as if the fictional creation, of which she was dreaming in her ‘trance’, has come to life.

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<sup>26</sup> “Yō”, p. 107-8/90.

<sup>27</sup> “Yō”, p. 108/91.

<sup>28</sup> “Yō”, p. 109/91.

<sup>29</sup> “Yō”, p. 109/91.

<sup>30</sup> Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, p. 166.

Chigako and Keisaku are awoken when two lovers accidentally lean against the doorbell on the hill side of the annex as they embrace. The description of the unknown lovers' discovery and flight has an unearthly quality about it. In the dark the lovers are initially merely white shapes, who utter no words, only a "shrill female cry" is heard. Keisaku "could see two white things wriggling against each other". "The white mass twisted, then split in two and was off, running down towards the bottom of the hill."<sup>31</sup> The image is one of the physical essence of the sexual impulse between male and female. On her 'mountain' Chigako has touched the 'origin of life'.<sup>32</sup>

Chigako and Keisaku, awoken from sleep and dream, gaze after the disappearing couple "as if bewitched by a fox"<sup>33</sup>. Keisaku's initial anger at being woken has disappeared. As they look at each other, "a smile with a strangeness no words could describe hovered over both pairs of pousy, toothless lips".<sup>34</sup> Through Chigako's shamanistic experience the world of dream has penetrated the world of reality and Keisaku shares in the moment. The ending seems to intimate that perhaps there is a positive answer to Chigako's earlier desperate question of "what new hope?" could ever come of their relationship.

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<sup>31</sup> "Yō", p. 110/92.

<sup>32</sup> See Introduction, pp. 7-8.

<sup>33</sup> "Yō", p. 110/92. Bester translates this as "as if their wits had forsaken them".

The mention of the fox, however, enhances the sense of mystery. The fox is a creature which, in mythology, has the ability to take human form and trick humans.

<sup>34</sup> "Yō", p. 110/92.

## “Mimiyōraku”<sup>35</sup>

### Plot Outline

Marui Takiko, daughter and heir to the Marui wholesale business, like Enchi herself nearly died of uterine cancer at the end of the Second World War, and then lived with the knowledge that the cancer could return for two years after her hysterectomy until the all-clear was given. Having lost her reproductive organs Takiko felt herself to be dead as a woman, to have become a creature ‘neither man nor woman’. Unable to resume physical relations with her husband, her marriage which had never been a happy one, finally became a marriage in name only. Moreover, Takiko, carrying within herself the unbearable sadness of the knowledge that she would never bear a child, put all her energy into the family business.

Takiko’s husband Taiji, however, continued his affairs with women. In addition to casual relationships, he had a daughter with a woman named Shinako who used to work in the Marui shop and whom he had since set up in a beauty parlour. However, in his inferior position as adopted son-in-law, Taiji had never caused any open quarrels over affairs with women. The couple had an adopted daughter Taeko who, with Taiji’s nephew, helped with the management of the shop.

Some years later the sensual woman inside Takiko was reawakened by a man named Takanashi. Ostensibly an artist in the Western style Takanashi also designed women’s jewellery as a hobby. After Takiko was introduced to Takanashi, he undertook to design jewellery for the Marui firm and to have it made. On one of Takiko’s visits to his studio, Takanashi attempted to seduce her. The talkativeness and rough caresses of Takanashi, who assured Takiko that she was still a beautiful and desirable woman, aroused her from her long sexual slumber. However, finally

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<sup>35</sup> Enchi’s choice of the word *Mimiyōraku* for the title is significant. *Yōraku* alludes to the diadems worn by the Heian empress dolls displayed by girls during Hina Matsuri (Doll Festival, held on 3 March) in their homes. The *hina* dolls displayed represent the emperor, empress and their court attendants. They are thought to be a combination of the *katashiro* (scapegoat for the exorcism of ritual impurities dating from the Heian period) and the paper *hina* dolls with which Heian period girls played (*Kodansha Bilingual Encyclopedia of Japan*, p. 538).

she did not have the courage to give her body to Takanashi as he wished. After Takanashi suddenly desisted and from that time on avoided her, Takiko felt that the broken thing that was her body and feelings had been treated like a toy then discarded.<sup>36</sup> The sensual creature within Takiko had been awoken, but her needs left unsatisfied.

It was at that point, when Takiko was overwhelmed by a need to be loved and desired as a woman, that she lived through a strange episode in her life involving Jirō, a talented jeweller and semi-recluse. Like Takiko, Jirō, who had lost his wife and children in the bombing of Tōkyō at the end of the war, lived only through his work. Jirō produced jewellery for Marui and his high quality earrings brought considerable profit and prestige to the business. Takiko would visit Jirō's workplace on business and there play the role of seductress, delighting in tempting him with the closeness of her body. Tormented, Jirō would pant and shudder, but never declared his love, nor even clasped her hand. The "strangely serious game" or "pantomime"<sup>37</sup> ended suddenly with Jirō's untimely death. Shocked by Jirō's death, Takiko, as if awakening from a trance, was aghast at her own behaviour and, again suppressing all emotional and sexual passion, threw herself into her work.

Much of the above story is related in flashback. The narrative opens on New Year's Day, five years after Jirō's death. The Marui family is in mourning due to the death of Takiko's father the previous year. Unusually, Takiko and Taiji find themselves alone by the *kotatsu* (built-in foot warmer with a coverlet). Takiko senses a growing relationship between Taiji and Teruko, a lame woman who was adopted into the family by her father. Moreover, a New Year's card received from Takanashi contributes to a feeling of inexpressible wretchedness and of collapse, as if she could throw away all she has, house, property and business.<sup>38</sup> As a reason for getting out of the house, Takiko decides to pay a New Year's visit to the Asakusa Kannon at Senrōji, Asakusa. At the temple, twice Takiko feels as if she has glimpsed Jirō. After leaving the temple, Takiko visits the cemetery where her father and Jirō are both

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<sup>36</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 188.

<sup>37</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 191.

<sup>38</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 179.

buried and it is here that at last she finds forgiveness of herself, a joy and acceptance of life, and of her own identity and role as a woman.

### Takiko

The story opens with Takiko leaning over the *kotatsu*, day-dreaming, her cigarette smouldering<sup>39</sup> on the ashtray beside her. The scene is reminiscent of the opening of *Onmazaka* when Toshi, leaning by the brazier, appears to ‘divine’. Like Toshi and Tomo, Takiko appears to have an ability to ‘see’ beyond the merely physical. Recently she has obscurely discerned a kind of “warm, misty fog”<sup>40</sup> enveloping Teruko and Taiji as she senses a sexual relationship between them. Like Tomo, Takiko possesses an innate strength and is an astute businesswoman. She is also the main source of strength in her family. Takiko’s acuity and foresight saved the family business during the troubled time after the war by initiating a change in direction from selling Western style men’s goods to accessories such as earrings, bracelets and necklaces for young women. Her father used to tell her foster daughter that Takiko was the *chūkō no so* (ancestor who rejuvenated the family)<sup>41</sup>.

Takiko’s illness, the removal of her sexual organs and living for two years feeling as if death were “grasping her by the wrist”<sup>42</sup> have transformed her. She has become a creature akin to the watery snake woman of legend<sup>43</sup>. At the end of the two year period after Takiko’s operation, she and Taiji visited a hot spring resort. There Taiji felt a renewal of lust for Takiko, who seemed younger and slimmer than before her illness. However Taiji, who was both attracted and repelled by his wife’s body, was afraid of touching her. He felt as if she had “shed her old skin” and somehow become like “a mermaid with cold scales”.<sup>44</sup> In losing her female sexual organs Takiko likewise felt she had lost her identity as a woman: “I’m no longer a woman. I’m neither man nor woman, a strange creature”.<sup>45</sup> Any chemical attraction between the

<sup>39</sup> Smoke, in *Onnamen*, is sometimes associated with spiritual trance, as will be discussed in Chapter Five. Here the smoke also recalls the burning of incense as a ritual for the dead. The family is in mourning for Takiko’s father, and Takiko will presently visit the cemetery where both her father and Jirō are buried.

<sup>40</sup> “Mimiyōraku”, p. 173.

<sup>41</sup> “Mimiyōraku”, p. 173.

couple died out at this time. At the resort Takiko also told Taiji that she had learned from the gynaecologist at the hospital after her operation that the strange cavity inside her which had been hollowed out, the place where a child ought to be conceived, was called a *shinikuchi* ( 死口 <sup>46</sup>), a cavity of death.

Takanashi succeeded in doing what Taiji had not - in sensing and arousing Takiko's sensual spirit, which had lain dormant inside her. When Takanashi attempted to seduce her, Takiko told him that, like an aging prostitute, she felt her body to be obsolete and was unable to think of it as something beautiful. Takahashi, however, assured her of her desirability as a woman and replied that the beauty of her body, with its large hollow inside, appealed to him<sup>47</sup>. Takanashi's words and attitude seemed like proof to Takiko that she was still a woman, as if something lost had returned.<sup>48</sup> After this episode, for Takiko, the effect of Takanashi's touch and sweet words was the realisation that she was physically and emotionally still a woman. She felt as if her mind and body, like a field in drought, were blessed unexpectedly by beautiful rain.<sup>49</sup> Takiko saw herself as a canna lily, worn out after rain and storm, but still remaining and blooming scarlet red.<sup>50</sup> Takiko had been reawakened from the nightmare of living with death after her illness and operation and from the 'living death' of her loveless marriage.

<sup>42</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 174.

<sup>43</sup> See Chapter Two, "The Snake Woman", pp.36-37. Furthermore, the first character in Takiko's name 滝 is made up of the radicals for 'water' and 'dragon'. The reader is also reminded of the home of the watery snake woman, the daughter of the dragon king of the sea, by the image in Takiko's mind as she leaves home for her visit to Senrōji on New Year's Day and looks back at the shop. To Takiko the dimly-lit jewellery scattered about in the bottom of the glass cases resembles schools of fish and seaweed on the sea floor ("Mimiyōraku", p. 178).

<sup>44</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 175. The word "scales" (*uroko*) also associates Takiko with the *hannya* of the *nō* theatre, the ghost of a jealous woman who has become a demon and wears a robe with a triangular design representing a serpent's scales (Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, *Japanese Noh Drama*, p. x).

<sup>45</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 176.

<sup>46</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 176. These characters also link Takiko with the shamaness as they can also signify the medium who communicates with spirits of the dead (see Chapter Two, p. 44).

<sup>47</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 182.

<sup>48</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 181.

<sup>49</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 183. This evokes a link between the return of sexuality and the return of nature's fertility, of plants growing again after a period of drought. Takiko's story has other links with the myth of Amaterasu's 'death' on entering the Rock Cave of Heaven and 'rebirth' when she returned outside, which will be discussed presently.

Takiko was, however, betrayed and denied by Takanashi, who merely attempted to use her for his own selfish ends. Consequently, the sensual spirit within her, awakened but unsatisfied, seeking life and the fulfillment of sexual desire, developed a strange power and Takiko acted as if involuntarily possessed by it. The “unnaturally dissipated season” (*fushigini intō na kisetsu*)<sup>51</sup> which visited Takiko resembled the spiritual sickness that a shamaness undergoes during initiation when she is uncontrollably possessed by spirits. During this period Takiko was compelled to act as a seductress/enchantress tempting and tormenting Jirō in a strange hallucinatory world apart from, but overlapping, reality.

Jirō’s artistic talent was beyond the ordinary. It had been Takanashi who introduced Takiko to Jirō and suggested that he make *yōraku*<sup>52</sup> style earrings for the Marui business to sell. Although he rarely left his workshop and had little observation of young Tōkyō women, Jirō possessed “strangely a kind of intuition for what would be popular”<sup>53</sup>. His works invariably became the latest fashion and adorned the earlobes and breasts of young women.<sup>54</sup> Physically Jirō had developed eyelids thickened through gazing at detailed craftsmanship for long hours. His innate almost magical talent and ethos of hard work were symbolised in his *mamushi yubi* (‘viper fingers’)<sup>55</sup>.

The strange relationship between Takiko and Jirō began when, after Takiko had entered Jirō’s cave-like *doma* (dirt-floored room), he showed her a new earring he had designed consisting of a small brown/tea-coloured jewel similar to a Mexican opal set in copper-coloured oxidized silver.<sup>56</sup> The earring attracted Takiko, as if the

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<sup>50</sup> “Mimiyōraku”, p. 183. Flowers are a symbol of passion and of the transience of beauty, youth and spring. The colour red is also a symbol of passion, of blood and of womanhood. Takiko is reawakened to passion and to life.

<sup>51</sup> “Mimiyōraku”, p. 183. The unusual use of the word *kisetsu* (season) here again has connotations of the cycles of nature.

<sup>52</sup> See Footnote 35.

<sup>53</sup> “Mimiyōraku”, p. 188.

<sup>54</sup> “Mimiyōraku”, p. 188.

<sup>55</sup> The *Daijirin* defines *mamushi yubi* as “A finger in which the joint on the end of the finger has a shape like the head of a viper. It is said that people who have this finger have medicinal power and can cure stomach pain etc. and are hard workers.” (p.393).

<sup>56</sup> Jirō’s cave-like room suggests an allusion to the Rock Cave of Heaven in which Amaterasu hid herself from the world, horrified at the sacrilegious acts of her brother Susanoo. Among the objects which were used to lure her out so the cycles of life could continue were strings of jewels made by Tama no ya no mikoto (*Kojiki*, trans. Philippi, p. 82). Jewellery was also used by *miko* to summon spirits.

seductive female spirit within her was drawn to it. Sidling up to Jirō and suddenly thrusting her pink earlobe in front of him, she asked to try it on. “Takiko, who had come to have confidence in the coquetry of her own body since she had been aroused by Takanashi, filled this casual movement with voluptuousness”.<sup>57</sup> At her nearness, Jirō seemed attacked by a strange excitement. His hand, which clipped the metal ring onto her ear, trembled and his strained coarse breathing touched Takiko’s cheek. Declaring that Jirō must have a fever, Takiko artfully grasped his wrist to check his pulse, at which Jirō lost his habitual lack of expression and took on a cornered look, tearing his hand away as if afraid.<sup>58</sup> The more frightened Jirō became, the calmer Takiko remained.

From this time on whenever Takiko came to Jirō’s workshop with orders, a strange contest was played out. When Takiko’s slim figure appeared at the glass door and entered the room, Jirō emitted a low noise like a groan. Takiko, as she tempted Jirō with her body, gazed at his panting and shuddering “with a strange joy”<sup>59</sup>. She lured Jirō into a strange world.

The cruel torture and the world of dazzling, shining ecstasy, which surpassed this, jumbled together and whirled and dragged Jirō about. Jirō was completely unaware that this strange world was a mirror of merciless revenge that reflected Takiko’s own unfulfilled passions.<sup>60</sup>

However, Jirō died one night, while bent over his work, unaware that lethal gas was leaking from a blocked element with which he was heating glue. In his last moments he was working at creating jewellery for Takiko:

Alone in the dead of night, while joining and combining minute, gleaming beads made of paste or coloured glass with a thin metal thread, making a slight tapping sound as he worked with his finger tips, while stooped over his workbench, not knowing that the vent in the element with which he was heating glue was blocked, he must have dozed off in the midst of the heavy gas which was being spewed out, and died.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> “Mimiyōraku”, p. 189.

<sup>58</sup> “Mimiyōraku”, p. 190.

<sup>59</sup> “Mimiyōraku”, p. 190.

<sup>60</sup> “Mimiyōraku”, pp. 190-191. This strange ‘other world’, a combination of the promise of sexual ecstasy and female revenge, is projected into Jirō’s room by the ‘enchantress’ inside Takiko.

<sup>61</sup> “Mimiyōraku”, p. 191.

When she heard the news of Jirō's death, Takiko received a shock as if she were caught on a strong metal spring<sup>62</sup>, as if the spell which connected her with Jirō had broken. She irrationally believed that she was responsible for Jirō's death, that as he bent over his workbench, in his muddled consciousness in the twilight world in which he was breathing in carbon monoxide, he believed that he was grasping her hand firmly and was embracing her body, pressing with his *mamushi yubi*.<sup>63</sup>

Only after Jirō's death was Takiko able to perceive that she had been acting like a *miko* in a trance during this strange period.

Only at this time did Takiko finally realise that the empty woman inside her, who had been awakened by Takanashi's outrage, had chosen Jirō as her object and had continued to stamp her feet in a wild, spectral dance.<sup>64</sup>

Jirō's role in the story, like that of Tōno, has similarities to the role of the *waki* (secondary character in *nō* drama), often a priest, who helps reveal the true self of the *shite* (main character) who may be a possessing spirit, and leads it to religious enlightenment. Doris Bargaen writes, "The true self is often the spirit of an aggrieved dead person who sheds all grief, resentment, or lingering attachment in a dance intriguingly like the trance of spirit possession".<sup>65</sup>

However, Takiko does not yet achieve 'enlightenment'. The erotic dance of the *miko*, while providing an outlet for her needs, did not lead to the fulfillment of her desires, but rather, she believed, to the death of Jirō. Takiko implicitly compared the toxic gas emerging from the element to the effects of her shamanistic 'dance'. She had seen with her own eyes "the effects of the poison, which is spewed out from her own *shinikuchi* [cavity of death]".<sup>66</sup> She believed her spirit of wantonness and revenge

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<sup>62</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 191.

<sup>63</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 191-192.

<sup>64</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 192. Note the shamanistic overtones of the word used for 'dance' (*rambu* 乱舞 literally, 'wild dance') suggestive of the shamaness's dance in which she circles around and around to reach a state of trance.

<sup>65</sup> Bargaen, *A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in The Tale of Genji*, p. 74.

<sup>66</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 192.

had killed Jirō. From this time on Takiko again suppressed all emotional and sexual passion, and threw herself desperately into her work.<sup>67</sup>

Takiko's absolution and 'rebirth' into life significantly occur on New Years Day, a time when evil spirits and impurities are traditionally driven off. At the Asakusa Kannon temple a function of Takiko's *shinikuchi* is suggested which is different to the one which she had imagined: that of *hotoke oroshi*<sup>68</sup>, summoning and communicating with spirits of the dead. Takiko instinctively visits Kannon, the Buddhist goddess of mercy, to pray for the health and prosperity of her family. At the temple, two strange incidents occur when Takiko seems to see the dead Jirō. The first time she is startled when, as she prays for the peace and prosperity of her family before the Buddha, she feels someone touch her shoulder. When she turns around to look, she is startled because the person worshipping next to her resembles Jirō. As she descends the stairs she can see in her mind only Jirō's rounded shoulders and the *mamushi yubi* of his hands placed together for prayer as he had seemed to be worshipping next to her.<sup>69</sup>

The second time Takiko seems to see Jirō, it is in the profile of a man with thick eyelids, who, concentrating as he leans over a chessboard in the open area behind the Kannon hall, clinks chessmen as he rolls them around in his hand.<sup>70</sup> Without the conscious intention of doing so, Takiko boards a trolley bus and goes to the cemetery where both her father and Jirō are buried. She buys a large bunch of red flowers for the graves and enters the cemetery. After placing some flowers at her father's grave, Takiko visits the nearby grave of Jirō, also placing some flowers there. While tending Jirō's grave, it comes to her that the self-indulgent times she had spent in his gloomy workplace had not necessarily been unhappy times for either of them.<sup>71</sup> Both Jirō and her father now lie peacefully in their graves. As she wanders among

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<sup>67</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 192.

<sup>68</sup> See Chapter Two, p. 44.

<sup>69</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 184.

<sup>70</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 185.

<sup>71</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 193.

the graves, reading the names of the dead, she is sharply aware that she is alive and enjoys the vagueness of wandering as if lost along the paths.<sup>72</sup>

At this point Takiko passes a small girl, her arms full of red flowers, emerging from between the graves. When she wanders back past her family's graves and sees the empty flower receptacles, she realises that the girl must have stolen the flowers. However, the image of the small girl vigorously removing all the flowers strangely refreshes her.<sup>73</sup> The thought that the flowers of the dead will change into tomorrow's sustenance for the small girl who will sell them somewhere makes Takiko smile.<sup>74</sup> Red flowers, which Takiko has passed on indirectly to the girl, are again used as a symbol of life, renewal and femininity.

When Takiko arrives at the temple, the sun is described as weak and "jelly-fish-like in a cloudy sky"<sup>75</sup>. As Takiko, having left the cemetery, stands beneath a rail overpass and gazes at the lights of the railway station, the sinking sun has taken a distinct form, becoming "a scarlet circle, without cloudiness"<sup>76</sup>. The design for a neck brooch, consisting of a girl embracing flowers, inserted inside a red circle steals into Takiko's mind<sup>77</sup>. The brooch design, which resembles both an egg and a womb, can be seen as a symbol of fertility. It also brings to mind the shape of the brand for Takiko's family name, Marui, which is often written as . Although Takiko can never produce a child of her own, she has come to the realisation that she is still a woman with an important role to play in the cycle of life. She can contribute to the life of future generations, represented by the girl, through the creativity of her vision and the works produced by her family business. The fact that it is the sun which stimulates this vision in Takiko again links her to Amaterasu, the sun goddess. Like Amaterasu, who was reborn on emerging from the Rock Cave of Heaven so that the cycles of life could continue, Takiko too is reborn from the darkness of her living death into an acceptance of life and of her own identity and role as a woman which does not have to depend on the possession of female sexual organs and the physical production of children. She has absolved herself of her guilt about Jirō's death. In

<sup>72</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 193.

<sup>73</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 194.

<sup>74</sup> "Mimiyōraku", p. 195.

some way it seems perhaps Jirō has helped to heal her wounded heart and body with his *mamushi yubi*, and exorcised her vengeful spirit.

### Discussion

In both “Yō” and “Mimiyōraku” a spiritual power develops in the women when the suppression of the self and the desire for sex and for life become unbearable. The occurrence is involuntary in both women. Her mind filled with stories from the past, Chigako seems possessed by the spirits of Heian women writers, urging her to become an enchantress both in mind and body and to create a world of fiction. A mystical experience seems to cause her dream to manifest itself in reality. She achieves ecstasy with a man and revenge against her husband, albeit only in a dream world. The art of writing fiction provides her with a “medium” through which she can transform her self and her experiences.

Takiko’s possessing spirit is also a vengeful enchantress, born from her trauma and self-suppression. Made aware of the spirit’s baleful nature by Jirō’s death, she is able to transform its energy into creativity and a life-force only after making peace with Jirō’s spirit, and with herself.

Both Chigako and Takiko ‘die’ in a sense and are reborn after their spiritual experiences. Both now have a self no longer tied to the traditional women’s role of wife-mother and an art through which they can express and transform their experiences and selves; Chigako through writing and Takiko through the design of jewellery.

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<sup>75</sup> “Mimiyōraku”, p. 184.

<sup>76</sup> “Mimiyōraku”, p. 195.

<sup>77</sup> “Mimiyōraku”, p. 195.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Onnamen (Masks)*

This chapter investigates the shamanistic characteristics and qualities of the main female characters in *Onnamen*, a novel whose atmosphere is one of mystery and hidden depths of great power, of ruthlessness and beauty. The motifs of ancient female power, of spirit possession and of *nō* masks and theatre, with references to the Heian period classics *The Tale of Genji* and *Tales of Ise*, give a sense of transgressing the boundaries of time.

A summary of the plot of the novel is followed by an outline of the ideas relating to shamanism and spirit possession in the main character Toganō Mieko's essay "Nonomiyaki", which is embedded in the novel. The shamanistic attributes of Mieko, whose psychic powers greatly transcend those of Chigako in "Yō" and Takiko in "Mimiyōraku", are then discussed. Mieko bears some similarities to the shamanistic foundresses of New Religions such as Nakayama Miki<sup>1</sup>, foundress of the Tenrikyō sect. The mediumistic and other-worldly qualities of Mieko's daughter-in-law Yasuko and of Mieko's daughter Harume are then studied. Finally, the chapter provides a discussion of the relationship in the novel between shamanistic feminine power and androgyny.

#### **Plot Outline**

Mieko married Toganō Masatsugu, the son of a wealthy landowning ex-samurai family, at the age of nineteen. However, unbeknown to Mieko, as was the custom in his family, Masatsugu already had a lover installed in the household, the servant Aguri. By the time Mieko conceived a child Aguri had already been forced to have two abortions by her master. In jealous revenge Aguri caused Mieko to abort her

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter Two, "The Foundresses of the New Religions", pp. 46-48.

baby by placing a nail strategically on a staircase and causing Mieko to fall. On learning the truth Mieko did not return to her parents, but stayed in the marriage. Aguri was sent home to her family in the country. While outwardly her marriage seemed a success, Mieko secretly took a lover and in time bore twins to him, a son Akio and a daughter Harume. Harume, injured in the womb by her brother, was born mentally retarded and was sent to be brought up by Mieko's parents. For reasons known only to herself, Mieko did not leave her husband for her lover, nor did she ever tell Masatsugu that the children who bore his name were not his. She developed her literary skills and became a skilled poet and leader of a women's poetry circle. Deeply interested in the subject of Heian spirit possession, she encouraged Akio in his research on this theme.

Akio married Yasuko, a young woman who subsequently aided him in his research. However, Akio died in a climbing accident on Mt. Fuji before the couple had produced any children. Yasuko grew close to Mieko and continued to live with her mother-in-law after Akio's death and to continue his research.

When the novel begins Mieko is a widow in her fifties. Yasuko is about to become involved in a triangular relationship with two young men who are members of the study group on spirit possession to which Yasuko and Mieko also belong. The two men who are both drawn to the young widow are Ibuki Tsuneo, a lecturer in Heian literature, and Mikame Toyoki, a psychiatrist and amateur student of spirit possession in folklore. Ibuki, however, is married with a child. Although Yasuko tells Ibuki she plans to marry Mikame and leave Mieko as she feels Mieko controls her, it is Ibuki she subsequently has a relationship with. Yasuko and Ibuki meet in Akio's old study at the Toganō house and it is here that the crucial event occurs. One night Mieko and Yasuko, in collusion, substitute Harume for Yasuko in Ibuki's bed and he unwittingly impregnates her. By the time Ibuki's wife uncovers the affair between her husband and Yasuko, Mieko and Yasuko have achieved their aim. Ibuki realises that he must be the father of the child that the beautiful but retarded Harume is carrying. Mieko refuses to allow Harume to have an abortion even though the doctor informs her that her daughter has a severely retroflexed womb. When the child, a boy, is born Harume dies. Yasuko will stay and care for the baby as its foster

mother. As the novel ends the household is packing preparatory to moving from the Toganō house in Tōkyō to Kamakura.

### “Nonomiyaki”

“Nonomiyaki”, the essay which Mieko wrote as a young mother for her lover and whose existence she subsequently tried to hide, perhaps because it reveals aspects of her own nature, is a key to understanding Mieko and a revelation of Mieko’s (and Enchi’s) views on the Rokujō lady.

The Rokujō lady was a high ranking aristocrat in Heian society, talented in poetry and aesthetics, who was, however, unable to sublimate her will to that of a male, or to find solace in religion. Disappointed in life by the actions of her husband and by his untimely death, she was later betrayed by Genji after he became her lover. She was a woman of great spirit, passionate in both love and hate, transformed by passion into a living ghost. Unbeknown to her, her living spirit left her to attack, and finally kill, Genji’s wife Aoi. Spirit possession was the only outlet available for her strong will.<sup>2</sup> Although she could produce poetry of lyrical beauty, her spirit alternated between lyricism and spirit possession, “making no philosophical distinction between the self alone and in relation to others”.<sup>3</sup>

“Nonomiyaki” reveals Mieko’s great admiration and sympathy for the Rokujō lady. She maintains that Genji cared deeply for the Rokujō lady, as well as for other ladies of strong character such as the Akashi lady and Akikonomu, and, in contrast to other critics, asserts that the Rokujō lady had an enormous influence over Genji throughout his life. In contrast to Genji’s other, more submissive women, the Rokujō lady’s recurring, discordant presence provides a unifying theme to *The Tale of Genji*.

Mieko states that the Rokujō lady is a *ryō no onna* (literally, ‘spirit woman’):

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<sup>2</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 69/51.

<sup>3</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 72/54.

one who chafes at her inability to sublimate her strong ego in deference to any man, but who can carry out her will only by forcing it upon others – and that indirectly, through the possessive capacity of her spirit.<sup>4</sup>

Mieko suggests that, in writing of spirit possession, Murasaki Shikibu was able to “combine women’s extreme ego suppression and ancient female shamanism, showing both in opposition to men”<sup>5</sup>. It is the proposal of a link between the Rokujō lady and the ancient shamanistic *miko* which is particularly novel and intriguing to Ibuki when he reads “Nonomiyaki”<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, Ibuki surmises that Mieko may have written about the Rokujō lady as a pretext for writing of her own psychic powers.<sup>7</sup>

Just as there is an archetype of woman as the object of man’s eternal love, such as Fujitsubo and Murasaki in *The Tale of Genji*, Mieko notes in her essay that there must be an archetype of woman as the object of men’s eternal fear, perhaps representing the shadow of man’s evil actions<sup>8</sup>. The Rokujō lady is an embodiment of this archetype. Mieko relates the power women have over men to the persistence of ancient shamanism. She writes:

In our own day, shamanism seems to have withered and died. Yet does it not, on second thought, offer a partial explanation of the power women still have over men? Perhaps it is true, as Buddhism teaches us, that this power constitutes woman’s greatest burden and delusion – and ultimately her greatest sin. But the sin is inseparable from a woman’s being. It is a stream of blood flowing on and on, unbroken, from generation to generation.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 70/52. The figure before the slash mark shows the quotation’s location in *Onnamen* (Shinchōsha, 1966). The second figure gives the page reference in *Masks*, trans. Juliet Winters Carpenter (Vintage Books, 1983). The English translations are all from Carpenter’s translation, unless stated otherwise.

<sup>5</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 75/57.

<sup>6</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 76/57.

<sup>7</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 77/58.

<sup>8</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 76/57.

## Mieko

Mieko has many similarities to the Rokujō lady. She too is a very intelligent, cultured woman of considerable literary and aesthetic talents and a woman of great passion in love and hate. Her husband's betrayal led to the death of her first-born child and the development of her long and secret plan of revenge to produce a line bearing the Toganō name, but in fact bearing no Toganō blood.

Although living in the present, Mieko has strong links with the past. The daughter of the head priest of a well-known Buddhist temple, she grew up in an old world environment. At a firefly party where the "Fireflies" chapter in *The Tale of Genji* is discussed, Mikame remarks of Mieko's home in Tōkyō "This house and garden belong to a different age".<sup>10</sup> Mieko's environment and her intense interest in *nō* masks and costumes, in *The Tale of Genji* and in Heian spirit possession make her seem a figure who lives in both the present and the past.

Mieko is a mysterious, enigmatic figure. Her name hints at supernatural ability, similar in sound to both *miko* (shamaness or spirit medium) and *mieru* (able to see).<sup>11</sup>

Mieko's face is always shielded by a serene, emotionless mask on which no trace ever shows of sorrow at the death of two of her children and of her lover. Ibuki compares her face to a *nō* mask. He notes that despite many encounters he has "no clear mental image of her face", "It was a face like a *Nō* mask, while the impression it gave was one of even greater obscurity and elusiveness"<sup>12</sup>. Even her old servant Yū, who has been with her since before her marriage, finds that Mieko's features blur and become vague as she gazes at her<sup>13</sup>. Only the painting depicting Mieko as a young woman before her marriage, which hangs in her dead son's study, shows her

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<sup>9</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 75-76/57.

<sup>10</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 52/38.

<sup>11</sup> Pounds notes that the three characters in Mieko's name ( 三重子 ) suggest a three-fold personality structure which he elaborates as the following: an incarnation of the spirit of vengeance which constitutes part of the cultural inheritance of Japanese women, thus allying Mieko to the ancient "shamaness"; woman-as-victim, suppressed by patriarchal denial of her humanity, unable to escape her karma; the individual woman, to some degree unknown to herself. ("Enchi Fumiko and the Hidden Energy of the Supernatural", p. 171).

<sup>12</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 116/91.

<sup>13</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 159/123.

original features and her strength, which she keeps hidden<sup>14</sup>. Like a masked character in a *nō* play, Mieko represents woman, transcending her individuality. At the beginning of the novel, Mieko, Yasuko, Ibuki and Mikame view *nō* masks and robes owned by the *nō* master, Yakushiji Yorihiro. The next day Yasuko tells Ibuki "...it seems to me that she [Mieko] must be one of the last women who lives that way still – like the masks – with her deepest energies turned inward"<sup>15</sup>.

Etō Jun writes that Mieko is mask made flesh and that, as is made clear from "Nonomiyaki", she is an incarnation of the spirit of the Rokujō lady. Her two-fold mask conceals the Rokujō lady in the background. He states that Mieko is both Enchi's image of the ideal woman and at the same time she fulfills the role of medium, linked to the shamanistic woman with spirit possessing ability, who transcends time and individuality.<sup>16</sup> Strangely, at the Yakushiji house Yorihiro insists from his sickbed that the party be shown a *ryō no onna*<sup>17</sup> mask, a rare national treasure. Yasuko and Ibuki find it be the most chilling of the masks. Yasuko comments later to Ibuki that Yorihiro must have sensed something of the interest of the group in spirit possession, even though no-one had said anything of it.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps Yorihiro who is lying near death and who has experienced himself the possessing force of female masks, understands something of Mieko's 'possession' by the *ryō no onna*<sup>19</sup>.

Mieko is a figure of great feminine charm and charisma whose unknown depths Yasuko senses but cannot penetrate. Yasuko says of her:

The secrets inside her mind are like flowers in a garden at nighttime, filling the darkness with perfume...Next to that secret charm of hers, her talent as a poet is really only a sort of costume.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 130/108.

<sup>15</sup> *Onnamen*, p.36/26.

<sup>16</sup> Etō Jun, "Kaisetsu" in *Onnamen*, p. 186.

<sup>17</sup> Carpenter states of the *ryō no onna* mask in a footnote, "Said to represent the vengeful spirit of an older woman tormented beyond the grave by unrequited love" (*Masks*, p. 25).

<sup>18</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 36/26

<sup>19</sup> Doris Barga suggests that Yorihiro may be a former lover of Mieko ("Twin Blossoms on a Single Branch: The Cycle of Retribution in *Onnamen*", p. 165).

<sup>20</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 45/32.

Mieko's true talent does not lie in her poetry, but in the spiritual strength which enables her to possess others and to move events as she wishes. Towards the end of the novel Ibuki comments to Mikame that Mieko's poetry is fake, lacking depth and that her real self is only shown in "Nonomiyaki".<sup>21</sup>

Although Mieko appears to be possessed by the *ryō no onna*, it is more than the passive possession of the medium. She actively carries out her secret agenda. She shares the dichotomy of the shamaness-goddess nature of the foundresses of the New Religions and of Amaterasu herself. The daughter of a priest, she was brought up in an environment where one communicates with spirits. She is deeply introspective and reclusive by nature. Since the death of her first-born Mieko has suppressed and internalised her emotions. She told her lover that she was a woman who lacked the courage to take action in real life and that in this lay the explanation for her literary gifts as a poet and the darkness of her fate as a woman.<sup>22</sup> Mieko faced suffering and oppression in her marriage and trauma in the death of her first-born. Subsequently she appears to be possessed by the *ryō no onnā*, the spirit of the Rokujō lady. Mieko's personality and appearance have changed from those of the young woman in the portrait in Akio's study to a figure of "filmy beauty"<sup>23</sup> of great poise, charm and self-control, the matriarch of her family. Moreover, "Nonomiyaki" is a form of revelational literature of Mieko's spiritual beliefs.

As is the case for some shamans, drugs (in the form of alcohol) seem to increase Mieko's abilities. One night at her home as Mieko continues to weave her web involving Yasuko, Ibuki and Harume, Ibuki is surprised at her capacity for liquor in the form of whisky. On leaving, as Ibuki walks down the hall slightly drunk the "provocative, vaguely medicinal odor that emanated from her [Mieko's] clothing struck him full in the face like a cloud of smoke".<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 170-171/131.

<sup>22</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 134/104.

<sup>23</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 138/108.

<sup>24</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 103/79. As occurs here, Enchi sometimes uses smoke as an image when spiritual power is apparently working. When Ibuki and Harume are together in Akio's study, "clouds of white smoke rose dimly in the light of the moon" (132/103). The image of smoke carries connotations of the burning of incense as offering to deities and the spirits of the dead. Here there is also a foreshadowing with the rising of the spirit after death - Harume dies as a result of this event when the baby is born.

As if imbued with the divine Mieko arouses adoration in those around her. The young women in Mieko's poetry circle worship her. Her lover, who came to view Mieko as someone beyond a normal human being, "as gracious as a goddess"<sup>25</sup>, was in awe of her. In a letter he wrote to Mieko that he "at times feared you and even tried to get away from you"<sup>26</sup>. Yasuko is also "part admiring, part fearful"<sup>27</sup> in her devotion to Mieko.

The act which is the culmination of Mieko's planning, Ibuki's impregnation of Harume, occurs inside a room in Mieko's house hidden from the outside world<sup>28</sup>. Yasuko leads Ibuki into Akio's study, where she now carries on his research into Heian spirit possession. Mieko watches over the room in the form of the painting of herself as a young woman. Ibuki is thus drawn into Mieko's world. Under the influence of his infatuation with Yasuko and of any drug that may have been added to the curacao with which Yasuko served him, he enters a sensual realm of light and ecstasy. He is "transported into another realm, as if he were dreaming wide-eyed in the midst of a fearfully brilliant light"<sup>29</sup>. That night it is as if Ibuki has taken Mieko's place in relation to Yasuko. The curacao "filled him with a sense of fierce power, as if his body were being invaded steadily by a strength not his own ... The sensation was strangely agreeable, as if she were waiting on him, as if he had taken Mieko's place"<sup>30</sup>. At some time in the night, however, he is aware that the young woman lying in his arms is not Yasuko, but Harume. However, Ibuki is as if bewitched, his perceptions and thoughts muted by his fascination with Yasuko so that he does not question deeply and continues to meet Yasuko in Akio's study until his function has been carried out.

After Mieko has sent Harume with Yasuko to Ibuki, she appears to summon her possessing spirit, dropping to her knees, and uttering "anguished moans like prayers

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<sup>25</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 133/104.

<sup>26</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 135/105.

<sup>27</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 63/46.

<sup>28</sup> The acts of sexual and spiritual ecstasy or torment in "Yō" and "Mimiyōraku" also occur in 'hidden' rooms.

<sup>29</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 140/109.

<sup>30</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 140/109.

or lamentations”<sup>31</sup>. Then, as if in a trance, her body carries out the involuntary sexual dance of the *miko*:

Her expression was calm and unflickering as always, but beneath the chill weight of her sagging breasts her heart raced in a mad elvish dance [*yōsei no odorikuruu yō ni*], while from hips to thighs a powerful tension enveloped her, anchoring her to the floor.<sup>32</sup>

In agitation Mieko gazes, as if at the text of a well-read *sutra*<sup>33</sup>, at the letter her lover wrote to her many years ago, in which he admitted the worshipful love for her that he could no longer deny. In a calmer state, she suddenly sees in front of the shuttered window, the face of a woman, similar to a *masugami* (*nō* mask of a young woman in a frenzy – the title of this chapter in *Onnamen*). As Bergen notes, Mieko sees a vision of what may be imagined to be Harume’s face at the moment of conception.<sup>34</sup> Mieko’s shamanistic powers have given her the ability to create new life through her daughter.

Mieko is also a supreme mother<sup>35</sup> figure, in similar fashion to Nakayama Miki, who is sometimes known as *Oyasama* (“Beloved parent”)<sup>36</sup> to her followers. In his letter to Mieko, her lover wrote, “What are patriarchal notions of blood and family to a man who has given his child you for a mother?”<sup>37</sup>. For Yasuko, who has lost her husband, the dominant Mieko fills the role of all-providing mother. The mother and child image is depicted strongly at the beginning of the “Masugami” chapter, when Yasuko, woken from sleep by a nightmare, climbs into Mieko’s bed and is embraced and stroked:

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<sup>31</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 131/103.

<sup>32</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 132/103.

<sup>33</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 136/106.

<sup>34</sup> Bergen sees this as Mieko’s exorcism of her miscarriage: “At this moment of sacrifice, at the height of her trance, she exorcises herself of what possessed her, her miscarriage, in a vision of her daughter’s face at what may be imagined as the moment of conception. It is her daughter Harume who becomes the medium for achieving the shamanistic epiphany of birth and death as a symbolic unity.” (Bergen, “Twin Blossoms on a Single Branch”, p. 160).

<sup>35</sup> See Chapter Three, p. 58 for Enchi’s comment in *Saimu* on the relationship between the *miko* and the “original mother”.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Ellwood, *Tenrikyo: a pilgrimage faith: the structure and meanings of a modern Japanese religion*, p. 81.

<sup>37</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 105/134.

Slowly, as the sweet smell of Mieko's body drifted warmly about her, fragrant as summer flowers, the look on Yasuko's face became as tender and childlike as that of a contented babe at its mother's breast.<sup>38</sup>

The close physical contact intimates that there may also be, as Ibuki suspects<sup>39</sup>, a sexual relationship between the two women.

Mieko's aspect of timelessness and her association with the spirit world, mean that she is not tied to the morality of contemporary society. Just as the Rokujō lady made "no philosophical distinction between the self alone and in relation to others"<sup>40</sup>, in his letter to Mieko, her lover wrote:

...you contain a curious ambiguity that enables you to get along without distinguishing between the truth and falseness of your actions in the real world. ... I was profoundly drawn by the intense emotion engendered in your mysterious body and soul<sup>41</sup>.

Because of Mieko's nature, although their love had been illicit, her lover now felt no lingering sense of guilt and sensed "heaven's blessing in this tangible fruition [the twins] of our love"<sup>42</sup>. Yū, however, who has known Mieko since she was a small child and has seen the birth of the twins and the death of Akio<sup>43</sup> and who now fears for Harume, tells Mieko that she fears for the human race when she thinks what she has become.<sup>44</sup>

Through Harume, Mieko has access to the origin of life. It is this power which Ibuki feels when he views the heavily pregnant Harume in Kyōto and feels a "swift sense of peril" as he remembers the moment when life passed from him to Harume<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> *Onnamen*, pp. 82/62-63.

<sup>39</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 103/79.

<sup>40</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 72/54.

<sup>41</sup> *Onnamen*, pp. 134/104-105.

<sup>42</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 135/105.

<sup>43</sup> The spirit of the mountain on which Akio died may also be associated with Mieko. Yasuko tells Ibuki that lately she has come to realise that Akio too was probably under Mieko's power and, in climbing Mt Fuji, may have been trying to escape her influence (p. 48/34-35). Climbing Mt Fuji is seen as a religious pilgrimage and a form of purification. However, in ancient Japanese myth and religion, the mountain was seen as a mother-goddess of death and rebirth (see Chapter Four, Footnote 17). Knapp also surmises that the mountain force may be a projection of Mieko ("Fumiko Enchi's *Masks: A Sacred Mystery*", p. 194).

<sup>44</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 159/123.

<sup>45</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 176-177/136.

Mieko's deeds and teachings are hidden, not revealed to the world like those of the foundresses. However, like the foundresses and shamanesses of old<sup>46</sup>, she seeks to pass on her knowledge and her influence into the future. When Yasuko states that when a man and a woman have a physical relationship, both are forever changed, Mieko tells her:

... to hear you say what you just did makes me think that you are a woman who could pick up and begin again where I leave off. And in that sense you are my real daughter; the woman in me that I tried, but failed, to pass on to Harume has found new life in you.<sup>47</sup>

In the end it appears that Yasuko will become Mieko's successor as she will remain with her, filling the role of foster mother to the baby after Harume's death.

Mieko is aware of her spirit possessing others: "She meditated on the deep and turbid female strength within her that had all but taken possession of Yasuko" and on the burden of karma that she must carry with her.<sup>48</sup> Mieko perceives this burden as part of her femaleness, passed on in the blood of women, from generation to generation. She sees a vision of the mother-goddess Izanami lying in a state of pollution, decay and death, the sight of which caused her brother and lover Izanagi to flee. This act caused Izanami's love to be transformed into hatred and a passion for revenge.<sup>49</sup>

The last chapter of the book is entitled "Fukai", the mask for a middle-aged woman, especially a mother, a woman mature in experience and understanding as well as in years. This is the mask worn by a mother who has lost her child. For Yorihiro, who bequeaths the mask to Mieko, the mask also symbolises the heart of an older woman which is like the depths of a bottomless well, so deep that its water would seem colourless<sup>50</sup>. This again links Mieko to the Rokujō lady. In "Nonomiyaki" Mieko

<sup>46</sup> Hori notes, "The family lines of shamanesses or priestesses are supposed to represent a special matrilineal inheritance system which was maintained for a long time after the rest of society had changed to a patrilineal system under the strong influence of the Chinese social system". (Hori, "Hitotsu-Mono" in *Myths and Symbols*, ed. Kitagawa and Long, p. 293).

<sup>47</sup> *Onnamen*, pp. 88-89/67-68.

<sup>48</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 164/126.

<sup>49</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 164/127.

<sup>50</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 180/138.

gazes into the water of an old stone well at the Shrine in the Fields (Nonomiya) where, in *The Tale of Genji*, the Rokujō lady and her daughter resided during the period of purification preparatory to the daughter taking up her position as the High Priestess of Ise. Deep in the colourless water Mieko could make out nothing except the blurred outlines of her own face<sup>51</sup>, a face as mysterious and as unfathomable as that of the Rokujō lady.

As Mieko gazes at the *fukai* mask, it alone seems to be able to strip away her habitual emotionless mask and to reflect her heart, to know “all the intensity of her grief at the loss of Akio and Harume – as well as the bitter woman’s vengeance that she had planned so long, hiding it deep within her ...”<sup>52</sup>. At this point, the cry of the innocent baby, of the new generation, wakes her from her reverie and her hand unconsciously blocks out the mask. The household is shifting out of the Toganō house to Kamakura. Just as “The atmosphere of chill and desolate refinement that normally hung over the large house” is broken by the baby’s wails<sup>53</sup>, the lives of the women are changing.

Like Mieko’s nature, and the tone of the novel itself, the ending is ambiguous. Bargaen posits that perhaps spirit possession and *mizuko* (Mieko’s miscarried baby) have been successfully incorporated into a healing ritual<sup>54</sup>. Bargaen points out that the surname of the *nō* master Yakushiji Yorihiro contains the same *kanji* as those for the Healing Buddha in Nara ( 薬師寺 )<sup>55</sup>. Yorihiro, who plays a role similar to that of the *waki* in a *nō* drama, helping to reveal Mieko’s true self by ensuring that she view first the *ryō no onna* mask and later the *fukai*, may be assisting Mieko to shed her possession and heal. Perhaps, as symbolised by her recognition of herself in the *fukai* mask, Mieko is now healed of her wounds and her need for revenge, with the birth of the new life. Knapp claims that, in her final act of covering the *fukai* with her hand “as if in a trance”, Mieko is shedding this mask and replacing it with love in the form

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<sup>51</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 64-65/47.

<sup>52</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 183/141.

<sup>53</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 181/139.

<sup>54</sup> Bargaen, “Twin Blossoms on a Single Branch”, p. 169.

<sup>55</sup> Bargaen, “Twin Blossoms on a Single Branch”, p.151.

of the child<sup>56</sup>. Bargaen asserts, using Eliade's phrase, "She has become the Japanese female version of a shaman who 'is not only a sick man; he is, above all, a sick man who has been cured, who has succeeded in curing himself.'" <sup>57</sup>

Mieko is thus a complex figure who seems to combine aspects of the shamaness as supreme mother, the shamaness who controls her trance and has a privileged position in relation to the world of spirits, and a woman possessed by a vengeful spirit.

### Yasuko

In contrast to Mieko, Yasuko has the qualities of the *miko* as medium. She is Mieko's medium. Ibuki perceives that "Inside, she has no sense of independence, of being her own woman"<sup>58</sup>. The intense relationship between the two women begins after Akio's death when "we realized that our thoughts and feelings were so much in tune ... it was like becoming mother and daughter all over again"<sup>59</sup>. Mieko is the still serene centre, and Yasuko her vivacious attendant, dancing attendance on her. Mieko, who has chosen Ibuki to father Harume's child, uses Yasuko to attract and seduce him. Yasuko tells Mieko, "It is you who like him [Ibuki] - somehow, time and again, your feelings seem to take hold of me"<sup>60</sup>.

The first physical contact between Yasuko and Ibuki occurs at a séance, which Yasuko, Ibuki and Mikame attend as part of their research. A voice, speaking in French through a female medium, tells those assembled that he is a mountaineer who died on the Matterhorn. The séance may be genuine or it may be a hoax. However, an eerie atmosphere is created. Moved when apparently hearing the voice of this spirit, whose death was so similar to Akio's, Yasuko, susceptible to spirits, suddenly and strangely, puts her hand in Ibuki's.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Knapp, "Fumiko Enchi's *Masks: A Sacred Mystery*", p. 207.

<sup>57</sup> Bargaen, "Twin Blossoms on a single Branch", p. 171.

<sup>58</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 20/14.

<sup>59</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 47/34.

<sup>60</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 88/67.

After the visit to Kyōto, when the *nō* masks are viewed at the beginning of the novel, Mieko arranges events so that Yasuko and Ibuki return to Tōkyō together on the train. During the train journey Yasuko tells Ibuki that she feels Mieko in the background controlling her actions according to some plan of which she, Yasuko, is unaware and that she wishes to leave the Toganō house while she still can. She knows that both she and Ibuki are Mieko's pawns. However, in telling Ibuki that her easiest means of leaving would be to marry Mikame, Yasuko furthers Mieko's aims. The thought of Yasuko marrying Mikame spurs Ibuki to the spontaneous action of dragging Yasuko off the train to spend a night with her in a hotel in Atami. During the conversation on the train Yasuko alternates between saying what she feels herself and acting as Mieko wishes; between describing her desperate need to escape Mieko's influence and acting provocatively towards Ibuki. Although Yasuko denies that she is possessed by her mother-in-law's spirit, her actions contradict this. At one stage she takes the cigarette out of Ibuki's hand and places it in her own mouth:

her small lips, round and pink, tightened on the cigarette which moments ago had been his. Through the cloud of smoke that veiled her profile momentarily, he watched a slow smile settle on her face.<sup>62</sup>

Later, as if possessed, Yasuko

closed her eyes and shook her head, as if to free herself of some encumbrance. The action had a startling violence. Then for a while she was still, before turning to face Ibuki once again.<sup>63</sup>

At this point Yasuko begins to speak of Harume, who is central to Mieko's plan, but does not reveal to Ibuki the fact of Harume's imbecility. Even in moments of clarity, Yasuko knows that she cannot escape Mieko. She tells Ibuki who surmises that Mieko is trying to tempt them into a relationship, "Her will is far more absolute than that. Issuing us orders is more like it".<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> The reader may conjecture whether it is perhaps Mieko, who is not physically present at the séance, who has possessed the medium.

<sup>62</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 43/31. Note the image of smoke again here when Yasuko is in an apparent state of possession.

<sup>63</sup> *Onnamen*, pp. 50/35-36.

<sup>64</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 49/35.

Ibuki senses the relationship between Yasuko and Mieko to be somehow unclean, to “possess a quality of moistness, of clingingness, like that of something animal [*ikimono no nama na nebakkosa*]; he was reminded of a spider’s web”<sup>65</sup>. But at the same time, he is drawn to it: “he was aware also of his own paradoxical desire to enter that unclean moistness”<sup>66</sup>.

Since Heian times the role of the *miko*, which has erotic aspects during trance, has frequently been associated with that of the prostitute. Ibuki views both Mieko, and more especially Yasuko, as sometimes resembling prostitutes. Early in the novel he compares Mieko and Yasuko to a courtesan and her attendant respectively in a seventeenth century wood block print.<sup>67</sup> At the beginning of the novel when Yasuko arrives at the café and invites Mikame, on behalf of Mieko, to view the *nō* masks, “to Ibuki her soft smile was repugnant, seeming to reveal within her an unconscious hint of the harlot”<sup>68</sup>. Her behaviour on the train towards Ibuki alternates between seriousness and the provocative gestures of a wanton flirt. On another evening, as he is escorted down the hall of the large, old-fashioned Toganō home by Mieko and Yasuko, Ibuki feels like “a man being escorted by two prostitutes down the hall of a brothel in some long-age time”<sup>69</sup>. That night, fuelled by alcohol, his desire for Yasuko grows, but he is denied an opportunity to touch her. When he ponders on Yasuko’s behaviour, Ibuki muses, “Her attitude was not that of an innocent and moral woman, but, indeed, that of an experienced whore – one who had mastered every skill”<sup>70</sup>.

Although half aware that he is being manipulated, Ibuki’s infatuation with Yasuko is such that he is a mere pawn in Mieko’s scheme. His relationship with Yasuko is purely sexual. He learns nothing of her inner self. Ibuki is as if under a spell, echoing Mieko’s musing in “Nonomiyaki” that perhaps shamanism is a partial explanation for the power women have over men. The atmosphere created during Yasuko and Ibuki’s sexual encounters is other-worldly. Yasuko weaves a “delicate, silken

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<sup>65</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 115/90.

<sup>66</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 104/80.

<sup>67</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 19/13.

<sup>68</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 23/16.

<sup>69</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 103/79.

<sup>70</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 116/91.

atmosphere” in which questions disappear. Ibuki is happy just to be with her in “a kind of ecstasy that was like dwelling in a world apart from reality”. For Ibuki, Yasuko is a “fairy enchantress” (*yōsei*).<sup>71</sup>

### Harume

Yasuko is the lure, but it is Mieko’s daughter, the innocent Harume who carries Mieko’s blood, who is to bear the child. On the first night when Ibuki comes to Yasuko in Akio’s study, Mieko prepares Harume for her role as seductress, bathing and perfuming her and applying lipstick before the mirror. Harume too will be her medium. Mieko fills Harume’s body “with her own warm breath ... “Harume, you won’t be alone tonight. I’ll be with you. You must carry out my plan for me”<sup>72</sup>. “Harume shook her head slowly, seemingly annoyed by the tickling in her ear, and then became quiet, eyes staring, her face solemn.”<sup>73</sup>

Harume is not a normal woman. Kamei notes that, in her lack of awareness, Harume transcends space and time.<sup>74</sup> Pounds comments that she is “woman reduced to physical being”<sup>75</sup>. In the vacant mask-like beauty of her face, in her imbecility and her fertility, Harume is the essence of “woman”, the purified form of woman inside Mieko<sup>76</sup>. In the early stages of pregnancy when she loses flesh, in dim light “her face with its haggard eyes became startlingly like that of Mieko”<sup>77</sup>.

Ibuki has unknowingly presaged the role of both Yasuko and Harume as *miko* during sexual intercourse with him when he discusses spirit possession with his university class:

The state of inspiration itself is intensely physical, heightening a person’s sensuality to the furthest degree (unlike intellectual labor, which diminishes sexuality), so that

<sup>71</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 167/129.

<sup>72</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 130/102.

<sup>73</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 131/102.

<sup>74</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 177.

<sup>75</sup> Pounds, “Enchi Fumiko and the Hidden Energy of the Supernatural”, p. 173.

<sup>76</sup> Etō Jun, “Kaisetsu” in *Onnamen*, p. 188.

<sup>77</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 156/121.

the body of a medium in a trance comes to seem the very incarnation of sex.<sup>78</sup>

He comments to his class that the high priestess involved in an encounter depicted in the ninth century *Tales of Ise* has the “shamaness’s view of sex, as something intrinsically sinless”<sup>79</sup>. Yasuko quotes a poem from this same episode to confuse Ibuki when he tells her he thought Harume took her place during the night: “Did you come, I wonder, or was it I who went? I scarcely know – was it dream or reality, did I sleep or wake?”<sup>80</sup> Harume, in her lack of awareness, closely resembles a medium in a trance during sex. She is the impulse towards sex and life without intellect. For her, as for the high priestess, sex is sinless. It is during the sexual ecstasy between Harume and Ibuki that the child is conceived. Ibuki comes upon Harume again by chance at the temple compound in Kyōto where she is staying during her pregnancy. He gazes at her great melancholy beauty and high round belly and remembers with fear the moment when “that bit of life had passed from him and lodged within her body” but feels no disgust, only reverence for her.<sup>81</sup> Subsequently, Harume’s life is sacrificed for that of the child.

Harume is also associated with the snow and the *yukionna* (snow maiden)<sup>82</sup>, although her name means “spring girl” with its life-giving connotations. Her skin is white like snow and it is against the reflected light of snow that her unearthly beauty is most often viewed by Ibuki. Harume is associated with the *yukionna* as she sings a children’s snow song, partly in northern dialect<sup>83</sup>. When Ibuki sees her for the last time at the temple in Kyōto, Harume is again singing the snow song. Harume is also

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<sup>78</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 100/77.

<sup>79</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 100/77.

<sup>80</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 143/112.

<sup>81</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 176-177/136.

<sup>82</sup> The *yukionna* or *yukimusume* (snow maiden or fairy) is said to lure men to their deaths on snowy mountain paths. In the winter months after the avalanche when Akio’s body still lay buried on Mt Fuji, to Yasuko the mountain had seemed like a snow goddess (*yukionna*) clutching him in her embrace (*Onnamen*, p. 47/34).

<sup>83</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 91/69. Borgen states that the snow fairy can only be Harume and that her snow song and snow appearance are an expression of her longing for the twin buried in the snow (“Twin Blossoms on a Single Branch”, p. 156).

often associated with the moon, which can be interpreted as a symbol of fertility and femininity (the menstrual cycle).<sup>84</sup>

### Female Spiritual Power and Androgyny

In contrast to Mikame's assertion that "A woman can't help being attracted more to men than she is to other women"<sup>85</sup>, Yasuko is drawn irresistibly to Mieko. When discussing Harume's pregnancy and the thought of a baby with Akio's blood in its veins she tells Mieko:

You and I are accomplices, aren't we, in a dreadful crime – a crime that only women could commit. Having a part to play in this scheme of yours, Mother, means more to me than the love of any man.<sup>86</sup>

Although the theme of shamanism and spirit possession in *Onnamen* is woman-centred, based on the traditional shamanistic power of Japanese women, there are also elements of androgyny in the novel as there are in the stories of the foundresses of the New Religions. Mieko shows elements of masculinity in carrying out and persevering with her plan and in her strength of ego<sup>87</sup>. As Kamei notes, she begets a child as the Heian regent Fujiwara Michinaga did with his daughter Shōshi, consort of the emperor. Mieko is now, ironically, the executor of the sex which gets descendants.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, Mieko's relationship with Yasuko may be homoerotic. Bargaen notes, "Homoeroticism is androgynous to the degree that conventional masculine and feminine roles often become indistinct"<sup>89</sup>. Mieko also prefers and selects the sensitive Ibuki, who is more feminine both physically and emotionally than Mikame, to be the father of Harume's child. As Mikame tells Ibuki, "Your feminine streak gives you a secretive side of your own, but that sort of thing isn't in my line"<sup>90</sup>.

<sup>84</sup> Knapp notes that Tsuki-yomi, the Moon God, is the force which "sees to vegetation and fertility rituals and which regulates the growing process in a realm deprived of light" ("Fumiko Enchi's *Masks: A Sacred Mystery*", p. 202).

<sup>85</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 20/14.

<sup>86</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 164/126.

<sup>87</sup> Etō, "Kaisetsu" in *Onnamen*, p. 188.

<sup>88</sup> Kamei and Ogasawara, *Enchi Fumiko no Sekai*, p. 176.

<sup>89</sup> Bargaen, "Twin Blossoms on a Single Branch", p. 154.

<sup>90</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 171/132.

*Nō* masks, so prevalent in the novel, are also androgynous in nature. The *onnamen* masks, representing women, are worn only by male actors. Not only does the male actor become the female mask, but Ibuki wonders if the masks themselves are transfigured by the actor's sensations:

I can't help thinking that each of the female masks we saw – *Zō no onna* and *Ryō no onna*, *Deigan* and the rest – was somehow transfigured by the sensation he had, while wearing it, of actually becoming a woman.<sup>91</sup>

Yasuko describes how the expressions on the masks which, when not being worn seem to symbolise one's own dead, were transformed when *Yorihito's* son, *Yorikata*, donned them. For Yasuko, the *zō no onna* mask had particular significance, seeming to contain both male and female in one, as if *Akio* and *Harume* had merged:

The moment when she had felt faint at the sight of the *Nō* mask on the *Yakushiji* stage, she had seen it plainly: the two faces of *Harume* and *Akio* coming together as one before her eyes.<sup>92</sup>

Finally, at the end of the novel, Yasuko is momentarily frightened when she seems to see both *Akio* and *Harume* in the innocent stare of the new baby boy.<sup>93</sup>

The child is the result of *Mieko's* plan to eradicate the *Toganō* line, of the victory of matriliney over patriliney and a replacement for *Mieko's* lost first child. *Mikame* comments, noting the fact that men can never be sure that their children are really theirs, "Even the sadistic misogyny of Buddha and Christ was nothing but an attempt to gain the better of a vastly superior opponent"<sup>94</sup>. Through inherited female shamanistic powers, transmitting an ancient female force into the modern world, *Mieko* has achieved revenge and the fulfillment of her desires.

However, the child, partaking of *Mieko's* apparent divinity, may be more than a symbol of her love and revenge. A symbol of hope, he seems to contain both male and female, both *Akio* and *Harume*. *Eliade* notes that androgyny can be seen as a

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<sup>91</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 35/26.

<sup>92</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 95/73.

<sup>93</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 182/140.

formula for the expression of wholeness. Some of humanity's supreme beings and mythical ancestors are androgyne.<sup>95</sup> To the extent that Harume appears at times to encompass her brother's spirit, the child can be seen to be a product of both twins. Takemori comments that in the complex combining of mother and daughter in a chosen older brother-younger sister coupling, it could be said that Mieko is trying to reproduce in the present a variation of the myth of close kin coupling.<sup>96</sup> Hulvey also notes "the affinity of twins to the legend of the incestuous mating ritual of the brother Izanagi and his sister Izanami, suggesting the mythical rebirth of the ancestral soul".<sup>97</sup> The child may be the symbol for a new hope for a future in which male and female are not opposed, but united.

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<sup>94</sup> *Onnamen*, p. 172/133.

<sup>95</sup> Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, pp. 174-175.

<sup>96</sup> Takemori, "Enchi Fumiko. Hito to Sakuhin", p. 1051.

<sup>97</sup> Hulvey, "Enchi Fumiko", p. 57.

## Conclusion

This thesis set out to investigate the use of shamanism and spirit possession by Enchi Fumiko in four selected works written in the 1950s. Various critics have already commented on the *mikoteki* (shamanistic or mediumistic) nature of some of Enchi's characters, noting that the supernatural powers of her characters during this period develop in women in whom unfulfilled desires and the desire for revenge have been suppressed. However, no detailed study had been done on the way in which Enchi incorporates and uses shamanism and spirit possession in particular works. This thesis aimed to fill that gap, relating Enchi's depiction of women's shamanistic powers to the *miko* (shamaness or medium) of myth, history and contemporary society.

Chapter One of the thesis provides a discussion of Enchi's life and of the effects of significant events in her life on the themes of her writing, particularly on the development of her interest in female shamanism and spirit possession. Chapter Two provides the results of an exploration of anthropological, historical, and religious studies texts on the *miko* and on spirit possession in the Japanese context. Chapters Three to Five discuss the interpretation and analysis of shamanistic elements in *Onmazaka*, "Yō", "Mimiyōraku" and *Onmamen*.

Chapter One reveals that Enchi's interest in female shamanism and spirit possession, while being influenced by examples in literature such as the possessing spirit of the Rokujō lady, grew also from her own experiences of an unhappy marriage and of illnesses that struck at her perception of her own femininity. Enchi likened the act of writing, which for her was driven by a psychological hunger, to spirit possession. With an introspective personality which, like that of many of her characters, did not enable her to act directly, Enchi was filled with curiosity and unfulfilled desires, inducing a longing for the shamanistic. Similarly, she saw elements of *kamigakari* (possession by gods or spirits) in the Japanese women who experienced life in the repressive patriarchal society in Japan before the Second World War. She portrays such women in some of her stories of the 1950s.

Chapter Two provides evidence of the wealth of material from other disciplines on the role that shamanism has played in Shintō, Buddhism and the arts in Japan. The nature of shamanism changed over time. The end of the Nara period marked the decline in the role of the previously religiously and politically powerful *miko*. In the rising *shugendō* (way of the Buddhist mountain ascetic) men took on the dominant shamanistic role, with women as passive mediums. Spirit possession by vengeful unhappy spirits became accepted as the cause of national and personal crises and illnesses. Women have continued to act as folk shamanesses although Hori labels this ‘pseudo-shamanism’. Their role is mainly to act as mouthpieces by which spirits of the dead communicate with their loved ones. However, the examples of the foundresses of the New Religions reveal that the belief still exists in Japanese society that the potential for communication with the divine exists in some women. The study of this interdisciplinary material provides valuable background material for a study of Enchi’s works.

Due to the constraints of time it was not possible to explore and research major texts in Japanese on shamanism and the *miko* within the given time frame. The investigation did however reveal the great richness of the theme of the *miko* in Japanese history and culture.

This thesis concurs with Hulvey that *Omazaka* contains the theme of the *miko* in germinal form. The official wife Tomo suppresses her emotions and her sexuality during the long years of her marriage. Only on her deathbed is Tomo’s spirit able to break its bonds of suppression and to wreak damage on Yukitomo’s proud ego. In delirium the usually decorous, controlled Tomo utters shocking words which would never normally pass her lips, as if she is possessed by the persona of another. The thesis determined other evidence of allusions to the latent shamanistic abilities of women, such as Toshi’s apparent talent in ‘divining’ and Tomo’s ability to ‘see through’ to the reality of young women. Tomo’s experience of feeling as if she has been possessed by a supernatural snake and her dreams of being smothered are similar to experiences during the ‘spirit sickness’ experienced by future shamans. Affinity with the snake and a connection with the sea link Tomo to legends of the

*miko*. She has the power to inspire fear in others through her supreme will and the self-control of her jealousy and resentment, but this does not lead to the manifestation of shamanistic powers. Just as in *The Tale of Genji* Genji's principal wife Aoi was possessed by the vengeful spirit of the Rokujō lady on her deathbed, so too is Tomo apparently possessed by such a spirit. Moreover, Suga, who bears similarities to Murasaki who was also possessed by the jealous spirit of the Rokujō lady, shows incipient signs of spirit possession, of being inhabited by 'demons' of jealousy and resentment.

"Yō" and "Mimiyōraku" both portray women of a later generation who are still forced to suppress their selves and their needs in a society which condones men's sexual promiscuity and encourages the maintenance of their economic and social power over women. Studies have mentioned Chigako's mediumistic ability which enables her to achieve both sexual fulfillment and revenge in a dream world. Chapter Four of the thesis examines the story in terms of spirit possession and shamanism. The aging, unhappy Chigako undergoes a period similar to 'spirit sickness' when she is driven to try and rejuvenate herself, as if possessed by the spirits of women writers of the Heian period. Changes in Chigako occur when she moves into her annex lying on the flank of the hill, living in a room which is like a cave or a burial room inside the hill. Mountains have long been associated with a mother-goddess of creation, of death and rebirth, and with the spirits of the dead. In this strange atmosphere Chigako is transformed into an 'enchantress' in a dream world which is a mixture of reality and fiction. The mirror, an object associated with the summoning and housing of spirits, aids in Chigako's transformation. On the mysterious environment of the hill, in the strange light of the rainy season, the world of spirits seems to converge on the world of reality through Chigako one night when she is as if immersed in the 'mountain's' sacred waters. Chigako's dream lovers seem to break through into the world of reality.

Takiko's 'spirit possession' in "Mimiyōraku" occurs as a result of her trauma at the loss of her sexual organs and the subsequent denial of her femininity by herself and others. Her possession by a spirit of revenge and temptation is involuntary and overwhelming. The spirit seems to be attracted by the *yōraku*-type jewellery made by

Jirō. A glowing world, which is a combination of revenge and of the promise of sexual ecstasy, is projected into Jirō's cave-like room, where Takiko performs the "wild, spectral dance" of a *miko*. Just as Chigako is 'exorcised' of her resentment, Takiko is eventually purified of both her need for revenge and her guilt at Jirō's death. In an episode reminiscent of the function of the *kuchiyose* (folk shamaness), who acts as a *shinikuchi* (mouthpiece of the dead), Takiko is able to lay both Jirō's spirit and her own demons to rest. The myth of the 'death' and 'rebirth' of Amaterasu, goddess of productivity and fertility, and the consequent renewal of the cycle of life and death on earth is woven into the background of Takiko's story.

Both Chigako and Takiko are aided by men in their spiritual renewal. Both find a connection to an essential life-force through their experiences and, through this, a way to live through a combination of life and art.

Mieko in *Onnamen* resembles a more intellectual Tomo, who has no fears of breaking any moral code. Mieko initially experiences trauma through the death of her child and betrayal by her husband. Subsequently suppressing her self and her emotions rather than acting directly she develops shamanistic powers. Mieko is more similar to a shamaness, in her apparent long-term relationship with a spirit and the power it gives her, than to a woman subject to uncontrollable bouts of spirit possession. She has, like the foundresses of the New Religions, become semi-divine herself, although she also remains, as the *fukai* masks reveals, the individual mother who suffers at the death of her children. Mieko also represents the vengeful woman, feared by men. Like the Rokujō lady her own spirit is able to leave her and to possess and control others.

The motifs of the Rokujō lady, and the *ryō no onna* mask and other structures and symbols of the *nō* theatre deepen the layers of mystery and the blurring of present and past in *Onnamen*. Enchi enhances the sense of mystery through devices such as the association of Mieko's possession of Yasuko with descriptions of smoke and of a web-like stickiness between the two women that Ibuki senses. The most important and mysterious event in *Onnamen* occurs, as in "Yō" and "Mimiyōraku", in a cave-like room hidden from the world. Mieko herself is only present in spirit. The actors

are Yasuko and Harume, her mediums, and Ibuki, who is also subject to her power. Mieko's spiritual strength enables her to bring about the birth of a new child through events in which the old patriarchal order has been overturned.

Yasuko represents the *miko* as prostitute, who maintains power over men through a connection with the divine during sex. Harume is associated both with the moon, a symbol of fertility, but also of darkness and shadow, and with snow, which took her brother's life. The body of Harume, who lacks intellectual awareness, is, like that of the *miko* during trance, the very incarnation of sex during intercourse. Intercourse with Harume is thus a form of contact with a divine force, with the origin of life. It is thus Harume who gives life to the new baby.

Enchi evokes an atmosphere of mystery in which the overlapping of the world of the present and the world of spirits seems possible. She does this, as critics note, by incorporating elements of Heian classics, and motifs and symbols of the *nō* theatre and Edo ghost stories (e.g. *Oiwa*). She also weaves into her works allusions and symbols of shamanism from myth, legend, history and contemporary reality such as mountains, the snake, jewels and the mirror.

As critics claim, Enchi weaves the motifs of spirit possession and shamanism into her stories as a device to empower suppressed unfulfilled women. When the suppressed emotions and need become overwhelming the hunger inside them develops a supernatural force that they cannot control and that moves events. They become possessed by a spiritual force, as the *miko* did in past times. The possessing spirit is, as critics note, linked to the vengeful spirit of a wronged woman. Similarly, Genji's women in *The Tale of Genji* are possessed by the spirit of the proud, vengeful and unforgiving Rokujō lady. However, the possessing spirit is also a spirit of Eros, re-establishing the link between the women and their sexuality, which has been repressed and denied. The women, although past child-bearing, become reconnected to the creativity of life. Chigako develops the creative power of the pen. Takiko is led from despair towards a realisation of her own role in the cycle of life as a creative woman whose gifts help to sustain future generations. Mieko brings into being a new hope for the future.

Enchi both used shamanism as a literary device and was also deeply interested in it as a phenomenon. She commented in an interview that she felt shamanism to be something basic and unchanging in humanity. Her conception of the *mikoteki* (shamanistic or mediumistic) in her stories involves a connection with the creative force of life.

The thesis has thus revealed the depth to which Enchi incorporated the themes of shamanism and spirit possession in the works studied and the way in which she used these phenomena to empower her characters and to create an atmosphere of mystery and timelessness. The study incorporates a synthesis and critique of relevant critical works. It further enhances the understanding of these four works by Enchi through detailed interpretation and analysis, using information from interdisciplinary studies on shamanism and spirit possession. The study also provides a detailed analysis and interpretation of “Mimiyōraku”, a story which is of considerable importance among Enchi’s works but which has not yet been published in English.

In conclusion, this thesis suggests topics for future research, such as whether the interpretation of Enchi’s use of shamanism and spirit possession put forward here holds true for other stories by Enchi from this period. Furthermore, how does this analysis of Enchi’s use of shamanism and spirit possession fit in with her development of the elderly *mikoteki* woman of later stories? Other areas of investigation remain, such as the analysis and interpretation of her many other stories from various periods in her career, most of which have not yet been translated into English, not to mention translation of the works themselves. In short, there is a great deal of research waiting to be done on this important and pivotal Japanese writer.

S. Yumiko Hulvey writes:

Although her literary creations are difficult to decipher, it is indeed a worthy venture to invest time in divining the true purpose behind the texts she weaves so skillfully. Enchi is a rare genius.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis provides evidence of the truth of Hulvey’s claims.

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<sup>1</sup> Hulvey, “The Intertextual Fabric of Narratives by Enchi Fumiko”, p. 216.

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