



**“In the Beginning, Woman Was the Sun”:
Takamure Itsue’s Historical Reconstructions as
Matricultural Explorations**

YASUKO SATO, PhD

Abstract

Takamure Itsue (1894-1964), the most distinguished pioneer of feminist historiography in Japan, identified Japan’s antiquity as a matricultural society with the use of the phrase ‘women-centered culture’ (josei chūshin no bunka). The ancient classics of Japan informed her about the maternalistic values embodied in matrilineal residence patterns, and in women’s beauty, intelligence, and radiance. Her scholarship provided the first strictly empirical verification of the famous line from Hiratsuka Raichō (1886-1971), “In the beginning, woman was the sun.” Takamure recognized matricentric structures as the socioeconomic conditions necessary for women to express their inner genius, participate fully in public life, and live like goddesses. This paper explores Takamure’s reconstruction of the marriage rules of ancient Japanese society and her pursuit of the underlying principles of matriculture. Like Hiratsuka, Takamure was a maternalist feminist who advocated the centrality of women’s identity as mothers in feminist struggles and upheld maternal empowerment as the ultimate basis of women’s empowerment. This epochal insight into the ‘woman question’ merits serious analytic attention because the principle of formal equality still visibly disadvantages women with children.

Keywords

Japanese women, Ancient Japan, matriculture, Takamure Itsue, Hiratsuka Raicho

Takamure Itsue (1894-1964), pionnière éminente de l'historiographie féministe au Japon, a découvert dans l'antiquité japonaise une société matriculturelle qu'elle a identifiée comme: une 'société centrée sur les femmes' (josei chūshin no bunka) ou société gynocentrique.



Elle a découvert dans les oeuvres classiques japonaises des valeurs maternalistes incarnées dans les formes de résidence matrilocale, ainsi que dans ce qu'elle perçu comme la beauté, l'intelligence et le rayonnement des femmes. L'oeuvre de Takamure a ainsi fourni la première vérification empirique des célèbres paroles de Hiratsuka Raichō (1886-1971): "Au commencement, la femme était le soleil". Pour Takamure, les structures matricentriques fournissent les conditions socio-économiques essentielles permettant aux femmes d'exprimer leur génie intérieur, de participer pleinement à la vie publique, et de vivre comme des déesses. Cet article explore la reconstruction par Takamure des règles de mariage de l'ancienne société japonaise et sa recherche des principes matriculturels sous-jacents. Comme Hiratsuka, Takamure était une féministe maternaliste qui prônait, dans les luttes féministes, la centralité de l'identité des femmes en tant que mères. Pour Takamure, l'émancipation maternelle est la base ultime de l'émancipation des femmes. Sa lucidité révolutionnaire sur 'la question de la femme' mérite une analyse sérieuse car les inégalités de genre touchent encore visiblement les femmes avec des enfants.

Mots-clés

Femme japonaise, Japon ancien, matriculture, Takamure Itsue. Hiratsuka Raicho.

Takamure Itsue (1894-1964), distinguished pioneer in the historiography of Japanese women, identifies pre-Heian (pre-794) Japan as a matricultural society – in her own words: a 'women-centered culture' (*josei chūshin no bunka*).¹ She also claims that a 'women's culture' (*josei bunka*) lasted until the Kamakura period (1186-1336) of medieval Japan, while declining gradually under the impact of patriarchal assumptions and institutions.² Takamure's scholarship provided the first strictly empirical verification of the famous line from feminist writer and activist Hiratsuka Raichō (1886-1971), 'In the beginning, woman was the sun,' as Hiratsuka herself acknowledges.³ What do these words imply? Did women live like the sun at the dawn of Japanese civilization? This paper explores how Takamure fleshed out the historical details of Hiratsuka's intuitive understanding of Japan's ancient heritage, with primary attention to matricultural formulations.

Reconstructing the marriage rules of ancient Japanese society and seeking out the underlying principles of matriculture, Takamure upheld maternal empowerment as the ultimate basis of women's empowerment. Like Hiratsuka, Takamure was a maternalist feminist who emphasized the centrality of women's identity as mothers. Takamure's conviction was that matricentric structures were necessary socioeconomic conditions for women to participate fully in public life, unleash their inner genius, and shine their radiance like the sun.

In line with matricultures in other corners of the world, including the Mosuo people of southwestern China, Takamure presents ancient Japan as an egalitarian, female-friendly society. Matrilocality represented a world apart, with maternal orientations and concerns embodying spiritual peace,

1 *Josei no rekishi I*, in *Takamure Itsue zenshū*, 10 vols. (Tokyo: Rironsha, 1965-1967), 4:118-38. Hereafter *TIz*.

2 *Ibid.*, 4:226-27.

3 Hiratsuka Raichō, *Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta: Hiratsuka Raichō jiden* (Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shoten, 1992), 4:300.

cosmic harmony, and reverence for nature. The clan systems, combined with geographical barriers, gave rise to decentralized communities that practiced subsistence agriculture, fostered a culture of life-giving interdependence, and nurtured mother-centered paradigms. The ancient classics, written against this background, informed Takamure about women's beauty and intelligence. She was particularly drawn to women's spiritual powers, the generative powers of life and love that could overcome obstacles in times of crisis. From her perspective, thinking and acting maternally entails cherishing, nurturing, and protecting life. Takamure affirms matricultural wisdom as a total way of life that manifests in full measure women's strength, courage, and community spirit.

Takamure's linguistic and historical inquiry into ancient Japanese kinship organization, which highlights bilineal descent, uncovered the existence and importance of duolocal (wife-visiting) and uxorilocal (matrilocal) marriage, female inheritance of houses and property, and communal child rearing on the mother's side. The whole system spared women from being reduced to performing domestic duties (motherhood and housekeeping), a ubiquitous problem in institutionalized forms of marriage. It is to this system of duolocal and matrilocal residence that Takamure attributes women's relatively high status in ancient Japanese society as well as their preeminent position in classical Japanese literature.

Takamure's analysis of duolocal and uxorilocal marriages is guided primarily by the term *tsumadoi* (妻問, the husband's visits to his wife's home) observable in Nara texts (710-94 CE) and by the term *mukotori* (婿取, the adoption of a man into his wife's family) that frequently appears in various Heian (794-1185 CE) texts.⁴ During the period of kin-based communities, husband and wife had separate residences and married duolocally, and were full members of their respective clans. Marriage was thus a visiting relationship in which the husband commuted to his wife's house, while his own clan ensured his livelihood and persisted as his domestic and family base. In the mid-Heian period, however, increased agricultural productivity under the *shōen* (private proprietorship) system enticed maternal families to improve their economic prospects by contracting marriages.⁵ Non-aristocratic men left their natal homes, lived with their wives, and performed labor for their in-laws.

In the Muromachi period (1392-1573 CE), there was a fundamental shift from the 'taking of a son-in-law' (*mukotori*; matrilocal/uxorilocal residence) to the 'entering of a daughter-in-law' (*yomeiri*; patrilocal/virilocal residence). As urban and commercial life undermined and overthrew the traditional kin-based communal order, wives became bound to their husbands' households. Takamure thus connects the historical emergence of full-fledged patriarchy to a shift of attitudes and practices that saw men treating women like commodities in the profit-driven economy. While documenting the existence of women voluntarily offering themselves for sex from Nara times onward, she analyzes the rapidly expanding market economy—the driving force behind the proliferation of commercialized sex—as the ultimate cause of women's subordination.⁶

4 See *Shōsei kon no kenkyū I*, in *TIz*, 2:28-29, 71-72; *Josei no rekishi I*, in *TIz*, 4:64, 206.

5 See *Nihon kon'in shi*, in *TIz*, 6:81-82.

6 Takamure provides detailed accounts of female sexual entertainers (such as *yūkō jofu*, *asobime*, *kugutsu*, and *shirabyōshi*) who engaged with the shamanic tradition, along with women in wealthy households who offered sexual services to traveling noblemen or samurai warriors, in the pre-Muromachi periods. She interprets both cases as degraded forms of *otori* ('taking of a man'), seduction of a man by a woman. See *Shōsei kon no kenkyū I*, in *TIz*, 2:346-48, 618-30; *Shōsei kon no kenkyū II*, in *TIz*, 3:883-90; *Nihon kon'in shi*, in *TIz*, 6:158-60.

Takamure published a six-volume series of Japanese women's history—*Bokei sei no kenkyū* (A Study of the Matrilineal System, 1938), *Shōsei kon no kenkyū* (A Study of Uxorilocal Marriage, 1953) in two volumes, and *Josei no rekishi* (A History of Women) in three volumes—ancient, feudal, and modern—which were respectively published in 1954, 1955, and 1958. These books deal with three central aspects of her historiographical enquiries: 1) the transition from matrilineal to patrilineal forms of kinship in the pre-Heian periods; 2) duolocal and matrilineal marriage customs in ancient and early medieval times; and 3) the changing position of women in Japan in a world-historical context.⁷

Many scholars are of the opinion that Japan's antiquity was a bilateral society,⁸ and Takamure, too, makes bilineality her major focus, despite all her emphasis on presumed matrilineal descent. I contend, in any case, that the real question for her is not whether ancient Japanese society was purely matrilineal, but whether it was matricultural. Takamure discovered that the official records—with descent in the male line—were politically manipulated under Chinese influence and almost entirely divorced from reality, and that the material base for female-centeredness remained unchanged for centuries. Takamure's central interest thus lay in matrifocal practices, which sustained the high status of women and allowed them to unleash their brilliance like the sun. The sun thus provides Takamure with a framing device. She highlights its splendor at the beginning and end of *Josei no rekishi*, in which she offers a comprehensive view of history that looks for a better future.

Matriculture as a Paradigmatic Model for Constructing a New Culture

At the age of twenty-five, Hiratsuka wrote 'In the Beginning, Woman Was the Sun' ([*Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta* 1911 }) for the founding issue of *Seitō* [The Bluestockings, 1911-16], Japan's first all-women literary journal. This poetical essay was a trailblazing manifesto calling for women's self-awakening and inner transformation. Hiratsuka proclaimed: 'In the beginning, woman was truly the sun, an authentic person. Now she is the moon, a wan and sickly moon, dependent on another,

⁷ Takamure's classification of marriage patterns in Japan is: group marriage (from consanguineal to affinal marriage in the non-pottery, Jōmon [ca. 10,500-300 B.C.E.], and Yayoi [300 B.C.E.-250 C.E.] periods); pairing marriage with remnants of group marriage—polygyny and polyandry (visiting marriage in the Yamato/Kofun period [ca. 250-538], pre-uxorilocal marriage in the Asuka [538-710], Nara [710-794], and early Heian [794-1185] periods, pure uxorilocal marriage in the mid-Heian period, managerial uxorilocal marriage in the late Heian period, and pseudo-uxorilocal marriage in the Kamakura [1185-1336] and Nanbokuchō [1336-1392] periods); virilocal marriage (patriarchal monogamy in the Muromachi [1392-1573], Azuchi-Momoyama [1573-1603], and Tokugawa [1603-1868] periods); companionate marriage (pure monogamy in the Meiji [1868-1912], Taishō [1912-1926], and Shōwa [1926-1989] periods). See *Nihon kon'in shi*, in *Tlz*, 6:12-13.

⁸ For an analysis of the development of bilateral descent theories in the study of ancient Japan, see Kurihara Hiromu, *Takamure Itsue no kon'in joseishi zō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Takashina Shoten, 1994), 150-55. According to this source, the two most important works in this effort are Yoshida Takashi's *Ritsuryō kokka to kodai no shakai* [The Ritsuryō State and Ancient Society, 1983] and Akashi Kazunori's *Nihon kodai no shinzoku kōzō* [Kinship Structures in Ancient Japan, 1990]. Kurihara also refers to Yoshie Akiko's *Nihon kodai no uji no kōzō* [Clan Structures in Ancient Japan, 1986] and Sumi Tōyō's *Zenkindai Nihon kazoku no kōzō* [Family Structures in Premodern Japan, 1983]. Sumi interprets Heian marriage practices in light of the bilateral kinship systems of Southeast Asia. Kurihara explains bilateral kinship in terms of the absence of clear marriage residence rules.

reflecting another's brilliance. The time has come for us to recapture the sun hidden within us.⁹ Takamure hailed the explosive outburst of vitality in Hiratsuka's poetic language, and regarded her as a 'prophet and forerunner.'¹⁰ Takamure saw the crucial importance of Hiratsuka's equation of 'the sun hidden within us' with 'the genius dormant within us'¹¹—her exhortation that women restore their hidden sun and free their inner genius.

For Hiratsuka, one of the major participants in the “motherhood protection debate” of 1916-19 in Japan, the crux of women's issues lay in their special role as mothers. She was a staunch critic of liberal and socialist feminists who relegated the special needs of motherhood to the margins of women's struggles. Hiratsuka's revolutionary maternalism held that pregnancy and childcare belonged to the public realm, not on account of state-determined norms or nationalist goals, but on the grounds that mothers were contributors to society and humanity.¹² Like Hiratsuka, Takamure placed motherhood at the centre of the woman question. For Takamure, 'issues other than motherhood do not deserve to be called 'women's' issues because they are gender-neutral issues, such as human rights, labor, and agriculture.'¹³ Takamure was openly skeptical of liberal individualism because it trivialized maternal values, downplayed biological femaleness, and favored gender-neutral approaches. Instead of resorting to micro-political strategies, such as resistance via deconstruction, she sought to end patriarchal oppression by offering a strikingly new matricentric view of the world. Departing from traditional sacrificial motherhood, she posited communal mothering as the ultimate source of empowerment for women.

Pursuing maternalistic values entails a refashioning of the world—locally, nationally, and internationally. Takamure's ultimate concern was with the creation of a wholly new culture. Bringing fundamental changes to a society that devalues motherhood requires no less than drastic cultural restructuring. In 'Standing on the Women's Front' [*Fujin sensen ni tatsu*, 1930], Takamure advocated for 'new cultural construction' for the sake of remaking society.¹⁴ This anarcho-feminist manifesto echoed another work by Hiratsuka, 'Women's Mission for Social Reconstruction' [*Shakai kaizō ni taisuru fujin no shimei*, 1920], in which she proposed that a fundamental 'reconfiguration of society' promoting love, marriage, procreation, childrearing and education should be the prime objective of the most progressive women's movement.¹⁵ Taking Hiratsuka's vision a step further and redefining maternal thinking and feminist mothering in her anarchist philosophy, Takamure embarked on a series of historiographical research projects and discovered a mother-friendly society in Japanese antiquity.

Enquiring into matrifocality in Japan, Takamure drew on the works of anthropologists who had conducted research on matrilineal societies, among whom were Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942),

9 Hiratsuka Raichō, *In the Beginning, Woman Was the Sun: The Autobiography of a Japanese Feminist*, Weatherhead Books on Asia, trans. Teruko Craig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 158.

10 *Josei no rekishi II*, in *TIz*, 5:724.

11 Hiratsuka, *In the Beginning, Woman Was the Sun*, 158.

12 See *Josei no rekishi II*, in *TIz*, 5:732-38.

13 Takamure Itsue, “Nihon ni tatsu,” *Fujo shinbun*, January 1, 1932, 7 (7).

14 Takamure Itsue, “Fujin sensen ni tatsu,” in *Waga michi wa tsuneni fubukeri: jūgo nen sensō zenya*, ed. Nagahata Michiko (Tokyo: Fujiwara Shoten, 1995), 38, 49-50.

15 See Hiratsuka Raichō. “Shakai kaizō ni taisuru fujin no shimei—Josei dōmei sōkan no ji ni kaete—,” in *Hiratsuka Raichō hyōron shū*, eds. Kobayashi Tomie and Yoneda Sayoko (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1987), 157, 163.

John Ferguson McLennan (1827-81) and Robert Stephen Briffault (1876-1948). Takamure weaves anthropological studies into her narratives of ancient Japanese marriage patterns, pointing to many parallels between Japan and other cultures on the margins of civilization with radically different gender organisations. She takes an interest in the matrilineal Amis (Pangcah) tribe, an indigenous group in Taiwan, referencing Okada Yuzuru's (1906-69) *Mikai shakai ni okeru kazoku* [*The Family in Primitive Societies*, 1942]. She also expresses interest in the uxorilocal mode of living of the Minangkabau people,¹⁶ and is familiar with the Garo (although not with the Khasi) through Gabrielle Bertrand's chronicle of her expedition to the Northeast Indian state of Assam, *Secret Lands Where Women Reign* (1956).¹⁷

Takamure marvels at the Iroquois Confederacy, a confederation of five (later six) Native American tribes in the central region of New York State that inspired Benjamin Franklin (1706-90 CE), one of America's founders, to envision the United States as a league of equal states cooperating for their common welfare. Guided by American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan's (1818-81 CE) *Ancient Society* (1877), she extols the benefits of a self-governing system that organises human societies into a coalition of multiple autonomous communities. Pointing out the advantages of Iroquois society, she writes: 'Despite being simple and rudimentary, this system was remarkable in that order was maintained without the military or police, kings or aristocrats, courts or prisons; there were no poor people or slaves in this communal society.'¹⁸ From Takamure's standpoint, as I will discuss later, the matrilineal Iroquois, along with the ancient Japanese, offer two primary models for reshaping society. Coincidentally, Shinto, the traditional animistic belief system of Japan, is strikingly similar to Native American religion.

The Ancestral Sun Goddess Amaterasu and Ancient Japanese Women's Literature

'In the Beginning, Woman Was the Sun' is a reference to the supremacy of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu—the Queen of the Heavens and the mother of all—in Japan's pantheon of deities. Takamure wonders why the sun is feminine in Japanese culture, while it is masculine in many other cultures, as in the case of Apollo in Greek mythology.¹⁹ She suggests that the gender of the sun deity in all cultures was originally feminine and was later altered to masculine. She bases her argument on the fact that in Japan, at the height of patrilineal-patriarchal practices from the Muromachi to Tokugawa (1603-1868) periods, there emerged movements to change the gender of Amaterasu to neuter or masculine. In *When God Was a Woman* (1976), Merlin Stone shows a precedent when she writes that Muhammad (570-632 CE), the prophet and founder of Islam, 'brought an end to the national worship of the Sun Goddess, Al Lat' in seventh-century Arabia.²⁰

16 *Nihon kon'in shi*, in *TIz*, 6:48; *Josei shi kenkyū no tachiba kara*, in *TIz*, 7:228-29.

17 See *Nihon kon'in shi*, in *TIz*, 6:35, 65.

18 Takamure, "Fujin sensen ni tatsu," 45.

19 *Josei no rekishi I*, in *TIz*, 4:9-10.

20 Merlin Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1976), 195. Stone identifies accounts of sun goddesses in Canaan, Anatolia, Arabia, and Australia and among the Eskimos, the Japanese, and the Khasis of India. See *Ibid.*, 2-3.

Equating the cosmic dimensions of feminine power with the glory of sunlight, Hiratsuka's aforementioned manifesto inspires Takamure to explore women's ritual activities pertaining to Amaterasu during the early period of Japan.²¹ Tapping into the ancient tradition of oral storytelling, Takamure calls attention to the female ritual narrators (*kataribe*) of the Nara and pre-Nara periods who participated in recounting celebrated mythological and historical events from the ancient Japanese past. Foremost among these ceremonial oral reciters was Hieda no Are, a court attendant. Are played a pivotal role in compiling the *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters, 712), Japan's earliest extant history, and in transmitting wondrous stories of Japan's ancient mythopoetic universe. Takamure takes special note of ancient Japanese women's speech because women played a salient role in invoking the power of *kotodama*, the spiritual power residing in words. Embodying the plenitude of living speech, they played a prominent part in the development of Japan into the 'land blessed with word-spirits'.

Takamure is utterly fascinated with women's role in oral traditions because it points to their significant contribution to linguistic vitality in the communal relations of early Japanese society. She explains *kataribe* primarily as a 'guild in each clan whose task was to orally pass down its genealogical and anecdotal stories by performing *katari mono* (things to narrate) with beautifully chosen words and musical sounds'.²² Holding the *Kojiki* to be of great inspirational value, Takamure observes that the narration of past events energized and uplifted the collective spirit of its listeners by means of clan rites. She illustrates this point by referring to the story of Karanu, a ship that sailed at amazing speed. It was made from a towering tree that had cast its magnificent shadow over a remote island (Awaji Island) in the morning sun and over a distant mountain (Mount Takayasu) in the evening sun. When the vessel was decayed and burnt for salt, leftover parts were made into a cittern, 'the sound of which reverberated for seven leagues'.²³ Takamure presumes that this legendary account was transmitted by *kataribe* reciters in the Tonoki clan in Tonoki (富木, "Bountiful Tree") village in Izumi Province (present-day Osaka Prefecture) for the establishment of a sacred regional order, because the Tonoki Shrine was their tutelary shrine.

Besides the *Kojiki*, the *Man'yōshū* (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves, c. 760), the oldest extant anthology of Japanese poetry, is a celebrated example of *makoto*—words spoken with the utmost truthfulness and sincerity. Takamure claims that duolocal marriage (in which the husband visited the wife solely for love) formed the background for the marvelous heights of commoners' poetic sensibilities and allowed women to achieve both sexual and economic independence.²⁴ She also finds in poems composed by anonymous authors a source of inspiration to call for the 'resurrection of chastity'.²⁵ She understands chastity as an innate longing for bodily and spiritual integrity. Drawing examples from the *Man'yōshū*, she observes that, during the period of duolocal residence, chaste love restrained promiscuity and allowed for the regulation, control and management of sexuality in place of the institution of marriage. She defines chastity as the dictates of conscience in the feeling of love, a conscience that keeps women and men from yielding to authority or coercion. *Man'yō* verses were

21 See *Josei no rekishi II*, in *TIz*, 5:723.

22 See *Josei no rekishi I*, in *TIz*, 4:125-26.

23 *Kojiki*, trans. Donald L. Philippi (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1968), 322.

24 See *Nihon kon'in shi*, in *TIz*, 6:43-44.

25 See *Ren'ai ron*, in *TIz*, 6:425-37.

composed for nearly one and a half centuries until the mid-Nara period, marking a time when mutual attraction between the sexes figured purely as love, free from the contractual fetters of marriage and domesticity.²⁶

Takamure established a direct connection between poetic lyricism and the lack of formal marriage rules and procedures. Evidently, not all historians agreed with her perspective. For example, Wakita Haruko, a historian of medieval Japan and a steadfast believer in the institution of monogamous marriage, berated Takamure for finding positive value in freely chosen and potentially unstable conjugal relationships.²⁷ Wakita had a deep antipathy toward polygamy but, interestingly, the same is true of Takamure. Takamure detested polygamous practices and expressed a strong partiality for monogamy. But Takamure extolled conjugal relations sustained by the power of language—the kind of linguistic prowess manifested in the *Man'yōshū*, the most highly revered collection of Japanese poetry—rather than by the financial benefits of institutional marriage. In the *Man'yō* era, when marriage was not yet an economic institution, marriage partners relied on linguistic exchanges rather than formal ties. Understanding great poets as those who are capable of great love, Takamure has no difficulty in drawing a dramatic and immediate link between the practice of duolocal marriage and the flowering of lyrical poetry.

Takamure expresses marked ambivalence about the accomplishments of women writers during the Heian period, because they were the product of the gradual transition from matricultural to patricultural systems, an era of high aristocratic culture. Although Heian society was matrilocal, women aristocrats became increasingly objectified and vulnerable as their male clan members capitalized on marriage ties to achieve political influence and power. William H. McCullough agrees with Takamure that there was an 'almost total absence of virilocal marriages' among Heian aristocrats, and that patterns of marital residence were invariably uxorilocal, duolocal, or neolocal.²⁸ These residential arrangements, however, may not necessarily be taken as evidence of women's higher status. Wakita argues that Heian uxorilocal marriage should not be confused with female dominance because the taking of a son-in-law was in fact dictated by a bride's father.²⁹ Indeed, according to Peter Nickerson, the curious mixture of patriliney and uxorilocality characteristic of mid-Heian institutions was a result of elaborate 'alliance-games' between wife-takers and wife-givers.³⁰

Under the corrupting influence of power and wealth, Heian men developed a pronounced tendency for rampant promiscuity. As the pleasures of the flesh came to replace spiritually exalted love, married lives became subject to men's arbitrary whims. According to Wakita, Heian duolocal marriage caused

26 See *Shōsei kon no kenkyū I*, in *TIz*, 2:44.

27 See Wakita Haruko, *Chūsei ni ikiru onna tachi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995), 23-25. According to Suzanne Gay, Wakita "casts doubt on the theory that patriarchal societies are uniformly harmful to women's interests." Wakita Haruko and Suzanne Gay, "Marriage and Property in Premodern Japan from the Perspective of Women's History," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1984): 73.

28 William H. McCullough, "Japanese Marriage Institutions in the Heian Period," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 27 (1967): 106.

29 Wakita and Gay, 83. In Heian aristocratic society, "men of good lineage and ability" like Fujiwara no Kaneie were greatly favored as sons-in-laws by women's families who sought economic prosperity and security. *Ibid.*, 85.

30 Peter Nickerson, "The Meaning of Matrilocality. Kinship, Property, and Politics in Mid-Heian," *Monumenta Nipponica* 48, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 445-46.

tremendous emotional distress to women, because 'this form of marriage...allowed one man to have many wives, or, more properly speaking, allowed one man to have multiple wives and multiple concubines.'³¹ Against this backdrop, as Takamure observes, Heian women strenuously resisted the downgrading of their status through a powerful outpouring of literary achievements with an originality and intensity unequalled by any Japanese writers of later ages.

This literary output includes the world's first psychological novel. Written by the court lady Murasaki Shikibu, the monumental *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji, ca. 1010-14 CE) epitomises its author's phenomenal ability to grasp the full complexity of human existence. Written with superb narrative vitality, this Heian classic thoroughly impressed Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801 CE), the foremost Tokugawa scholar of National Learning, who wrote that the tale delineates the most profound human emotions in exhaustive detail. Indeed, Murasaki Shikibu succeeded in bringing an astonishing complex of subtle emotions and intricate human relations into a harmonious whole. For Takamure, Lady Murasaki reached deeply into each single character, showing a thorough knowledge of the human psyche. For Takamure, the staggering array of characters in *Genji monogatari* represents a warm affirmation of all human existence.³² Takamure sees in Lady Murasaki's portrayal of both female and male characters not only extraordinary empathy but a profound understanding of life.

Takamure regards the whole breadth of Heian women's literary production—poetry, poetic diaries, fictional tales, and essays—as a resistance to men.³³ Positioning women's literary pursuits as acts of 'final resistance,' she compares Lady Murasaki's 'resistance literature' to 'the light of the sunset's afterglow that crimson the evening sky in late fall.'³⁴ For Takamure, the confessional literature of Heian Japan articulated the 'resistance of the sun.' In her mind, the explosive nature of Heian women's individual creativity was the ultimate consequence of the deep introspection that grew out of their all-consuming desperation and sorrow. In a manner akin to maternal sensitivity and insightfulness, their unclouded vision transmuted the domain of subjectivity into a considerable degree of objectivity, retaining the pantheistic atmosphere emanating from communal consciousness. While reflecting on the grandeur of their literary realism, Takamure laments: 'The lives of women in our country have never again risen to such stunning heights.'³⁵

Matricultural Aspects of Ancient Japan

Takamure understood 'women's culture' as an inclusive and communal realm engendering a sense of common humanity. She contrasts women's culture with exclusive and hierarchical 'men's culture,' which sets up class divisions for exploitation and oppression. Seeing the essence of matrilineal kinship in peaceful coexistence, Takamure has no interest in female supremacy or in a reversal of the power relationship between men and women. She thus rarely uses the term 'matriarchy' [rule by women], a mirror opposite of patriarchy. Takamure's position is that patriarchal norms are detrimental to both

31 Wakita and Gay, 84.

32 See *Josei no rekishi*, in *TIz*, 4:234-35.

33 See *Ibid.*, 4:228-29.

34 *Ibid.*, 4:234.

35 *Ibid.*, 4:238.

sexes. For Takamure, female culture implies a society based on the love of others. She speaks of the early Japanese (prior to the rise of the Heian aristocracy) as 'agriculturists, pacifists, and pantheists' who contemplated the spiritual power of nature with reverent wonder and had genuine respect for women.³⁶

This bears a remarkable resemblance to the findings of Peggy Reeves Sanday in her ethnographic study of the Minangkabau in West Sumatra, the world's largest matrilineal society today. In *Women at the Center: Life in a Modern Matriarchy* (2002), Sanday focuses on the Minangkabau's nature-centered worldview and claims that 'maternal nurture constitutes the wellspring of social power.'³⁷ Reflecting on the supremacy of nurture (not dominion) in Minangkabau village society, Sanday explores an alternative to the modern Western notion of power, entrenched in rivalry and contestation in civil society. In place of such a zero-sum approach to power, she redefines power in terms of the regeneration of life on the model of fertility and growth in the world of nature.

In defiance of the valorization of the individual self in the modern West, Takamure invokes the notion of maternal love (*haha gokoro*). She searches for a fundamental paradigm shift away from the sovereignty of selfhood to the spirit of love. This paradigm shift entails embracing others and the larger world as 'part of one's own self.'³⁸ Hence maternal love is not simply the love of the mother but essentially the love of life itself. It is a higher consciousness of love that belongs fully to the realm of 'godly love'.³⁹ Takamure looks on maternal warmth and tenderness as the quintessence of women's brilliance in ancient Japanese culture. Maternal love is the highest form of women's grace and charm known to her. Without hesitation, she elevates maternal empathy into a timeless, universal model.

Takamure is committed to the primacy of love because she sees in it the potential to fully develop individual intellectual and emotional capabilities. She explains maternal compassion as 'an affectionate, insightful way of looking at things.'⁴⁰ She reaches for examples in literary depictions of children and small things, such as Lady Murasaki's portrayal of the young Murasaki (no Ue), Prince Genji's most beloved lady, and Sei Shōnagon's fascination with noisy, lovely chicks in *Makura no sōshi* (The Pillow Book, ca. 1002). A specifically maternal aura surrounding Heian women's texts compels Takamure to write: 'The capacity to love so deeply is a form of great ability or intelligence.'⁴¹ The affirmation of all living things bears witness to women's capacity for love in ancient Japanese history. The love of life on a cosmic scale is precisely what Takamure sees as missing from modern liberal thinking.

Takamure reflects on ancient Japanese women's voluntary efforts to elevate the hearts and minds of people in domestic and public life.⁴² In ancient Japan, the spirit of communal existence—the very core

36 Ibid., 4:123.

37 Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Women at the Center: Life in a Modern Matriarchy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 46.

38 Takamure Itsue, "Chisei," *Nihon fujin* (December 1944): 19.

39 Takamure Itsue, "Kami gokoro," *Nihon fujin* (August 1944): 9, 11.

40 Takamure, "Chisei," 18.

41 Ibid.

42 See Takamure Itsue, "Shimei kan," *Nihon fujin* (September 1944): 18.

of powerfully maternal consciousness—was most clearly manifested in the performance of religious functions by women. Most important of all were those related to the legend of Ame no Uzume no Mikoto, an ancient goddess of mirth. She became divinely possessed and wrestled with the greatest crisis imaginable, namely, Amaterasu's concealment in the Heavenly Rock Cave, which plunged the world into darkness and led to a never ending night and all sorts of misfortunes.⁴³ The Sun Goddess refused to come out of the cave out of exasperation with the sinfulness of the world embodied by her unruly brother Susanoo. In this dreadful situation, Uzume deliberately chose to sing and dance half-naked at the door of the cave with her breasts exposed and her skirt-band pushed down to her genitals. The eight hundred myriad gods roared with laughter. Amaterasu could not resist the urge to know what made them rejoice so merrily. When she opened the door, she was tricked by a mirror and pulled out of the cave. While finding humor in the exotic Uzume's attire and performance, Takamure is awed by the efficacy of her wholehearted prayer, which moved both gods and humans and ultimately solved the crisis.⁴⁴ Takamure describes Uzume as epitomising women's power to combat evil and chaos and to restore peace and order to the world.

Takamure attaches special significance to an ancient ritual prayer (*norito*) called the *Ō-harae* (Great Purification). *Harae* was the ceremony of cleansing the mind and the body to bring about new beginnings. The Great Purification concerned four female deities of the rivers and oceans who undertook the arduous task of removing human sins from the entire realm. Takamure writes: "In river rapids and ocean currents, in the middle or at the bottom, the goddesses are endeavoring to atone for offenses emanating from humans."⁴⁵ The spiritual power of women was believed to have such purifying effects. By extension, in Takamure's perspective, maternal love has the vitality needed to resolve conflicts and to replace brutal power struggles with peaceful and harmonious relationships.

The mythic narratives of early Japan, full of maternal imagery, formed the foundation for Shinto rituals. In *Matriarchal Societies* (2012), a study of female-centered cultures around the world, Heide Goettner-Abendroth identifies the ancient Shinto faith as a matriarchal mythology.⁴⁶ Takamure was fascinated by Shinto because she was drawn to the purely religious, the power capable of ennobling the human soul. Since the Shinto pantheon is made up of eight hundred myriad deities (*yaoyorozu no kami*), Shinto (the Way of the Gods) is religiously eclectic and can accommodate an infinite variety of religious faiths—so long as faith penetrates to the heart of the divine. Symbolically, 'eight million' (*yaoyorozu*), the number deemed uncountable in the Shinto religion, encompassed all supreme beings. Indeed, religious inclusiveness was entirely compatible with the all-encompassing nature of maternal sensibility in the ancient Japanese past.

43 See *Kojiki*, 81-84.

44 See Takamure, "Shimei kan," 18-19.

45 These goddesses were Se-ori-tu-hime, Haya-aki-tu-hime, Ibuki-do-nusi, and Haya-sasura-hime. See Takamure, "Shimei kan," 21. In Donald L. Philippi's translation, Ibuki-do-nushi is identified as male, but Takamure specifies that the gender of this deity is female. See *Norito: A Translation of the Ancient Japanese Ritual Prayers*, trans. Donald L. Philippi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 48.

46 See Heide Goettner-Abendroth, *Matriarchal Societies: Studies on Indigenous Cultures Across the Globe*, trans. Karen Smith (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 149-52.

The Sociopolitical Conditions Attending Matrilineal-Matrilocal Ties

Coining the term *hime-hiko sei* [queen-king co-ruling], Takamure brings attention to a political system of collaboration between men and women during Japanese antiquity.⁴⁷ Essentially, the system fostered the high status of women in the brother-sister rule of clan societies in the pre-*ritsuryō* era—before Japan adopted Chinese-style administrative structures and legal codes. Takamure specifies that, in principle, a pair styled as co-rulers was not a couple. She places the 'queen-king co-ruling' paradigm at the center of the early Japanese Yamato court by referring to the Izanagi-Izanami myth ('He Who Invites' and 'She Who Invites') as well as the coupling of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami ('Great Divinity Illuminating Heaven') with her brother the Moon God Tsukuyomi ('Moon Counting/Reading').⁴⁸ Besides invoking such mythical entities, Takamure observes that numerous examples of paired names are detectable in the *Kojiki*, *Fudoki* (Topographical Records, commissioned in 713 CE) and the *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan, 720 CE), among other ancient genealogies and records.⁴⁹ In light of this, she describes country chieftains (*kuni-no-miyatsuko*), the governors of provinces (*kuni*), as paired chieftains.⁵⁰ Such gender-complementary chieftain pairs allowed for the emergence of women rulers who devoted themselves to divine services and made administrative decisions.

One such woman ruler was Himiko (August Child of the Sun), the charismatic queen-shaman whom Takamure views as the country's ancestral mother (*zokubo*).⁵¹ Himiko was only fourteen or fifteen years old when she took the throne. She was a celibate queen who secluded herself for the rest of her life in order to strengthen her magico-religious powers.⁵² After her enthronement, only her younger brother ever attended to her, serving her meals and transmitting her words, as he alone had access to her living quarters. This ensured that her commitment to the shamanic theocracy was uninterrupted. According to 'Woren *zhuan*' (Entry on the Wa People) in the third-century Chinese chronicle *Wei zhi* (Records of Wei), Himiko resided in the kingdom of Yamatai, a land which the Chinese derogatorily

47 See Joan R. Piggott, *The Emergence of Japanese Kingship* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), 39. If the consolidation of Japanese kingship is the focus of our analysis, women's political contributions may appear to have been a preliminary stage. See Joan R. Piggott, "Chieftain Pairs and Corulers: Female Sovereignty in Early Japan," in *Women and Class in Japanese History*, eds. Anne Walthall, Hitomi Tonomura, and Wakita Haruko (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1999), 17-52.

48 See *Bokei sei no kenkyū*, in *TIz*, 1:361.

49 See *Bokei sei no kenkyū*, in *TIz*, 1:367; *Josei no rekishi I*, in *TIz*, 4:110-11.

50 For a discussion of regional female chieftains in fourth- and fifth-century Japan, see Yoshie Akiko and Janet R. Goodwin, "Gender in Early Classical Japan: Marriage, Leadership, and Political Status in Village and Palace," *Monumenta Nipponica* 60, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 462-65, 471. Yoshie Akiko interprets the widespread presence of female local chiefs as a precursor of the economic and administrative roles played by women known as *toji* in agricultural production and management in the eighth and ninth centuries.

51 See *Josei no rekishi I*, in *TIz*, 4:74.

52 See *Ibid.*, 4:78. This historical fact was of special significance for Takamure, because she went into seclusion in 1931 and devoted the rest of her life to the study of women's history. She inaugurated the field of feminist historiography in Japan like the ancient queen-shaman performing religious services with the assistance of her male partner. This unremitting labor would not have been possible without the wholehearted support of Takamure's husband, Hashimoto Kenzō (1897-1976). Since she worked for no less than ten hours per day, he dutifully performed household chores and looked after all aspects of her life. As she prohibited herself from going out, he collected all the materials she needed for her research.

named the land of Wa ('Dwarfs' or 'Small People'), from 180 to about 248 CE. The text also mentions that she performed the task of religio-political governance and 'had a special power that bewitched the people.'⁵³ Wei (220-266 CE), one of the major three states in the Three Kingdoms period (220-280 CE), thus scoffed at her manifest devotion to shamanistic practices. No matter what external views were, this shamanic queen gave peace and stability to the Yamatai confederation by rendering service to the deities.

Together with her brother, the Sun Queen ruled over more than thirty states, of which Yamatai was most powerful. Takamure makes significant connections between Queen Himiko's confederation and Iroquois polity, which emerged around 1400-50 CE. According to Takamure, the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy are comparable to the regional clans loosely held together under Yamato authority in the early Yamato period (250-710 CE). Thus, Takamure names this system the Yamato Confederacy, bringing it close to Iroquois political institutions.⁵⁴ She posits Himiko's reign as an early phase of the Yamato confederation. Himiko oversaw Yamatai, a loose confederation of a little more than thirty allied states in third-century Japan.

According to religious scholar Hori Ichirō, "Himiko was enthroned by her people at the apex of political and social crisis...in a transitional period of revolutionary political, economic, social, and cultural changes at the juncture of the Yayoi and Kofun periods."⁵⁵ William Wayne Harris, a historian of premodern Japan, likewise situates Himiko as a transitional figure between the Yayoi (300 BCE-250 CE) and Kofun (ca. 250-538 CE) eras.⁵⁶ From the late third to fifth centuries, monumental burial mounds in the round keyhole shape were constructed as ostentatious displays of the power held by the ruling authorities in Japan. Takamure interprets the advent of *kofun* (ancient megalithic tombs) as a sign that hegemonic power threatened to supersede the existing horizontal system based on motherly compassion.⁵⁷ During this time of trials, Himiko was put on the throne in the belief that her spiritual presence could produce stability and unity. The source of her unifying power was nothing other than the sacral functions that she performed as a shamanic priestess.

The decisive fact here is that both the Yamatai and the Iroquois' confederacies made strenuous efforts to end endemic warfare, to restore order, and to abandon strife and enmity for peace and tranquility. It is interesting to note that the Great Law of Peace, with which five Iroquois nations made peace, is semantically consonant with Yamato, which meant 'Great Peace,' and was one of the ancient names of Japan.

53 Ichiro Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan: Continuity and Change* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 188.

54 See *Josei no rekishi I*, in *TIz*, 4:88-100.

55 Hori, 188, 191. According to the *Wei zhi* "Woren zhuan": "That state [Wo] was ruled by a king for 70 to 80 years. At that time, Wo was in a chaotic state as the result of which a great civil war broke out and for many years the lords of small manors attacked each other. Afterwards, the people of Wo elected a young girl as their queen who was then named Himiko." *Ibid.*, 188; *Josei no rekishi I*, in *TIz*, 4:76-77.

56 William Wayne Farris, *Sacred Texts and Buried Treasures: Issues in the Historical Archaeology of Ancient Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 24, 42, 47, 48.

57 See *Josei no rekishi I*, in *TIz*, 4:83.

After Himiko's death, a king occupied the throne only to throw his realm into disorder, as male chieftainship was violently resisted.⁵⁸ Hence Himiko's thirteen-year-old niece and sister-shaman Toyo (or Iyo) restored order and stability. After Toyo's rule, it became customary for male rulers to carry out the task of government while female rulers remained in the background. For Takamure, the subsequent alternation of male and female monarchs represented the last vestige of the *hime-hiko* (queen-king co-ruling) system. In her explanation, queens like Himiko played a central role in male-female rule until the mid-third century and kings, while substantially assisted by their wives, held political leadership roles in the Kofun period; this was followed by the alternation of male and female emperors in the seventh and eighth centuries.⁵⁹ From Suiko (r. 592-628 CE) to Shōtoku (r. 764-70 CE), half of the sixteen monarchs were female, with six women heading eight reigns. Takamure links this phenomenon directly to the tradition of dual-gender pairs of rulers that goes back to times immemorial.

Takamure's interest in paired rulership is extended to the Ryukyu Islands (today known as Okinawa), which had a tradition of rule by pairs of male-female chieftains until 1667.⁶⁰ Her principal sources were Sakima Kōei's (1893-1925 CE) *Nyonin seiji kō* (Reflections on Female Rulership, 1926) and Torigoe Kenzaburō's (1914-2007 CE) *Ryūkyū kodai shakai no kenkyū* (A Study of Ancient Ryukyu Society, 1944). In the Ryukyu Kingdom, which Takamure regards as a great confederacy, the political leader was the king. He oversaw the religiopolitical rule with his sister who acted as the chief priestess (*kikoe ōkimi*) in the town of Shuri, the capital of the Ryukyu Kingdom.⁶¹ Through a reading of the *Omoro sōshi*, a collection of Ryukyuan songs comparable to the *Man'yōshū*, Takamure identifies the *kikoe ōkimi* as a worshipper of the sun. In villages, male clan chieftains called *aji* ruled with priestesses called *noro*. With reference to Iha Fuyū's (1876-1947 CE) *Ko Ryūkyū* (Old Ryukyu, 1911) and other writings on Okinawa, Takamure underscores the deification of women and the similarity between Ryukyu and ancient Japanese customs.

Takamure establishes that early kinship-based communal systems were essentially incompatible with centralized bureaucratic control, as social order and cohesion were based not on legal norms but on blood relations. In such self-sufficient communities, the system of consanguinity and affinity outweighed the use of police and military forces. The demise of this egalitarian order was largely the result of hostilities and intrigues in court politics. Takamure points out that the enhancement of productivity, the creation of agricultural surpluses, and the division between exploiters and the exploited spurred the rise of clan rivalries.⁶² After violent conflicts among powerful clan leaders, the Soga ministerial house's hegemony contested Yamato authority and led to the assassination of Emperor Sushun (r. 587-92 CE).

58 See *ibid.*

59 See *ibid.*, 4:100-17, 220-24.

60 *Ibid.*, 4:101-11.

61 *Ibid.*, 4:106.

62 See *ibid.*, 4:210-13.

In Takamure's estimation, the reign of Empress Suiko marks the beginning of the Japanese state.⁶³ Of Soga lineage, Suiko came to the throne to fill the political vacuum left by the killing of Sushun while her nephew Shōtoku Taishi (574-622 CE) acted as regent. Prince Shōtoku sent the first official envoy to Sui China in 607, which was among the most drastic actions he took to unify Japan under imperial authority.⁶⁴ When this ardent reformer died, however, the Soga clan arrested his heir and destroyed his family altogether. In turn, Soga power was crushed through the successful coup staged by Prince Naka no Ōe (626-72 CE) in 645 CE.

The consolidation of the Japanese imperial state was brought about by the Taika (Great Change) Reform of 645 and the promulgation of the Taihō Code of 701, a sequence of epoch-making events that led to the introduction of the *ritsuryō* administrative system. The *ritsuryō* polity, which was modeled on the Chinese legislation of the Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907) dynasties, placed all the land and people under the direct control of the central government. This was followed by the gradual disintegration of communities bound together by blood ties, resulting in a shift from the common clan ownership of property to the individual accumulation of private property. With this transformation of property systems began the decline in women's status. Yet, as Takamure observes, the *ritsuryō* government did not bring about sweeping social change across Japan.⁶⁵ In fact, there remained a considerable gap between *ritsuryō* legal codes and actual social conditions. Yoshie Akiko, a scholar of ancient Japanese history, argues that a residential unit called *ko*—artificially created for the purposes of taxation and conscription—was a fictional patrilineal structure.⁶⁶ In the *ritsuryō* era, marriages between free people and slaves, imperial family members and commoners, and high-ranking and low-ranking officials were officially prohibited but nonetheless did occur.⁶⁷ All of this led Takamure to conclude that matrilineal-matrilocal traditions were sufficiently embedded to cross over class lines and to work against social stratification.

Takamure argues for the resilience of the earlier magico-religious order and points out that it was not entirely destroyed under the new imperial system, for women continued to carry out religious duties at all levels of society.⁶⁸ She cites the Saiō of the Grand Shrine of Ise (Amaterasu's shrine), the Saiin of the Kamo Shrine in Kyoto, the Saijo of the Kasuga Shrine in Nara, and the Negi of the Yahata Shrine in Kobe. As Takamure notes, Princess Yamato-hime, a poet and the wife of Emperor Tenji (r. 661-72 CE), singled out Ise as a holy place that was best suited to enshrine the Yata no Kagami (Eight Span Mirror), while she was traveling with it.⁶⁹ Symbolic of the egalitarian spirit of the Sun Goddess, this sacred mirror was transmitted to her grandson, Ninigi, at the time of his descent to earth and established the political ethos through which the Yamato sovereign ruled Japan. This ancient bronze artifact, one of

63 See *ibid.*, 4:220. Joan R. Piggott's work on early Japanese kingship from Himiko to Shōmu (r. 724-749) shows us how Suiko's Japan was "the womb of an early state formation" or "an inchoate early state," because Shōtoku, her regent, introduced a merit-based court ranking system that disrupted the hitherto dominant kinship-based political structures. See Piggott, *The Emergence of Japanese Kingship*, 13, 100-1.

64 China was divided into the Three Kingdoms (Wei, Shu, and Wu) when Queen Himiko of Yamatai sent a diplomatic envoy to the Wei emperor in 238.

65 See *Nihon kon'in shi*, in *TIz*, 6:52-62.

66 See Yoshie and Goodwin, 438-42, 446-47.

67 See *Shōsei kon no kenkyū I*, in *TIz*, 2:297.

68 See *Josei no rekishi I*, in *TIz*, 4:219.

69 See Takamure Itsue, "Saiō Yamato-hime no Mikoto," *Nihon fujin* (October 1943): 10-11.

the Three Sacred Treasures of the Japanese imperial family, was supposedly shaped in the form of a flower with eight petals—evocative of the radiance of the sun in all directions. The mirror was crafted to lure the sun deity out of the Rock Cave of Heaven when she concealed herself and engendered a dark world.

Takamure as a Matricultural Visionary

Immersing herself in the world of ancient Japan, Takamure aspires to become a prophet of the future. Indeed, her paradigms are both historical and futuristic. She is firmly convinced that humanity one day will create an entirely new system that is female-oriented, both in concrete and abstract forms.⁷⁰ She thus envisions a world order predicated on love and nurture.

In matricultural paradigms, Takamure finds a vision for the future. Consanguineous clans are oriented towards localized independence and communal support for motherhood and child rearing. Contrasting the clan system and the family system, she concludes that the former brings about decentralized rule, while the latter undermines local solidarities, underlies the system of private property, and operates as the foundation of state centralization.⁷¹ Takamure outlines her vision of humanity's future as follows:

In the ultimate future society, as the family system disappears, thousands of years of patrilineal private ownership will be completely replaced by a matrilineal system in which children are communally supported and protected. At that time, all adult men will become fathers in common, and all adult women will become mothers in common, with all members of society calling each other brother and sister. In such a society, the collectivization of the means of production and of access to resources will put an end to the long history of patrilineal kinship systems based on the institution of marriage as an economic unit of private ownership. At the same time, all women's problems will wither away.⁷²

This is what Takamure learned from matricultural societies, societies free of the woman question. She concentrated her considerable energies on proving the existence of such cultural remnants in Japan's past, precisely because they bring forth the possibility of realizing similar societies in the future.

In support of global connectedness, Takamure postulates such new possibilities as 'global citizens' and 'global citizenship'.⁷³ This is a variation of 'the conversion of the whole world into one family,' her heart's ideal during World War II (1939-45). During the Asia-Pacific War (1931-45 CE), when the Japanese public was totally kept in the dark about Japanese atrocities, Takamure was supportive of the Japanese war against the Anglo-American countries, but she never argued for imperial

70 See *Mori no ie nikki VI*, in *TIz*, 9:483.

71 See *Josei no rekishi I*, in *TIz*, 4:194-201.

72 *Josei no rekishi II*, in *TIz*, 5:652.

73 *Ibid.*, 5:2, 1022-28.

aggrandizement or colonial expansion.⁷⁴ Far from being an ultranationalist, she even ran the risk of committing treason against her nation by publishing *A Study of the Matrilineal System* in 1938. This work went against the wartime Japanese polity, refuting the immutability of the Japanese patriarchal family system.

For Takamure, the war occasioned a historical questioning of colonial modernity. She also came to proclaim the cardinal importance of worshipping the sun, in which she had taken little interest before the war. While Japanese wartime ideologues made use of Amaterasu to aggrandize the Sun Line, an unbroken line of imperial succession, Takamure gave a dramatic twist to their jingoistic rhetoric and recast this deity as an awe-inspiring peacemaker with universal appeal. In her contemplation of the Yamato Confederacy, Takamure looked to the Sun Goddess as a contributing factor in pacifying warlike rebellious tribes, because the grandness of her authority had convinced them of the importance of transcending differences and of forging a greater union.⁷⁵ Inspired by the archaic coalition of clans that had served to maintain peace in Japan (and perhaps also by the Iroquois League), Takamure brought forth a vision of one world family as an alternative to a conflict-ridden world of nation-states that had arisen under Western hegemony. In light of the competitive, patriarchal, and hierarchical nature of nation-states, it seems evident that local communalism will thrive on global communalism. In the postwar era, therefore, Takamure looked for signs of greater global integration, including the Campaign for World Government and the World Federalist Movement.⁷⁶ She applauded Hiratsuka for participating in the move toward the establishment of a global federal system.⁷⁷

Takamure's faith in maternal pacifism highlights the absurdity of maintaining national boundaries that escalate armament races and obstruct human development. She describes military and national security spending as insanely wasteful and as squandering the progress of civilization.⁷⁸ Indeed, in light of the realities of national and international politics, her endorsement of one world family appears logical and cost-effective rather than naive and utopian. After the Second World War, Takamure saw the cause of the wars of the previous decades as resulting from the intoxication of a philosophy that divides the world between *yūshō reppai* – the superior win, the inferior lose.⁷⁹ She offered a passionate plea for communal living as an antidote to the doctrine of the survival of the fittest.

74 For a discussion of the controversies surrounding Takamure's wartime essays, see Yasuko Sato, "Takamure Itsue's Revolt against the West during the Asia-Pacific War: Japanese Antiquity and a Global Paradigm Shift," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 42 (2012): 31-61. The crux of my argument is that Takamure supported the war for Japan's victory over the West, and not for Japan's conquest of Asia. In 1932, she expressed shock and outrage at a report on the brutalities that Japanese settlers had committed in Manchuria, but there is not one shred of evidence that she approved of Japan's imperialist aggression. Nonetheless, numerous critics of her wartime support, including Nishikawa Yūko, Kanō Mikiyo, Yamashita Etsuko, and Sonya Ryang, conclude that her writings endorsed the Japanese colonial empire. This is perhaps because they have limited access to Takamure's wartime journal contributions. The monthly journal *Nihon fujin* (Japanese Women, 1942-45), for example, is available only at the Kokkai Toshokan (National Diet Library) and the Fusen Kaikan (Women's Suffrage Hall) in Tokyo. Photocopying the aging journal is prohibited, and its physical deterioration makes it irritatingly hard to read. I had the luck to obtain photocopies of all Takamure's articles in *Nihon fujin* from a friend who worked as a librarian at the National Diet Library.

75 Takamure, "Saiō Yamato-hime no Mikoto," 12.

76 *Josei no rekishi II*, in *TIz*, 5:1052.

77 *Ibid.*, 5:747.

78 *Ibid.*, 5:1023. See also *Ibid.*, 5:1028.

79 *Ibid.*, 5:1031.

Takamure advocates for a shift from a profit-oriented to a subsistence economy and for abandoning the competitive struggle for survival to embrace 'love that nurtures coexistence.'⁸⁰ In this context, she denounces the absurdity of the economic system under which enormous quantities of food are thrown away while countless numbers of people are left hungry. Such food waste may be right for those who support patriarchal capitalism, but it is nothing other than a dystopia from a perspective of love. Moreover, it has recently been reported that the decomposition of food waste in landfills causes methane emissions that are dozens of times more damaging to the environment than carbon dioxide emissions. From Takamure's point of view, the food waste problem shows that the prevailing economic system is delusional. Her vision for one world/one matrilineal family resonates with significant new paradigms such as the 'world house' (Martin Luther King, Jr.), 'planetary citizenship' (Hazel Henderson), 'Earth Community' (David C. Korten), 'Earth Democracy' (Vandana Shiva), and earth ethics.

For Takamure, Amaterasu, the supreme deity of the Shinto pantheon, epitomises universal love. Love, like the life-giving power of the sun, is indispensable to all human lives. The sun is at the center of the cosmos and belongs to no hierarchy. As the universal giver of life, the sun promotes our identification with all humanity. Takamure's revitalization of the motherly peace embodied in the Sun Goddess Amaterasu is inextricably linked to her call for women's awakening to worldwide love and peace and to a desire for the well-being of all human beings.⁸¹

Takamure characterized the early Japanese as 'scholarly cosmologists' in the sense that they interpreted the world on cosmological planes and felt deeply connected to both the physical and the spiritual universe.⁸² She compared 'citizens of the universe' who cherish the oneness and divineness of all life to miners who indefatigably raise questions and dig deeply into the mysteries of the universe. When nuclear armaments threatened to destroy humanity in the early Cold War years (1945-91 CE), Takamure pondered the contributions of such scientific geniuses as Marie Curie (1867-1934 CE) and Lise Meitner (1878-1968 CE) in the field of radioactivity. In her mind, their keen insights and deep intuitions were aligned with the divine feminine, a tradition going back to the belief in *onarigami* ('divine manifestations' or 'female tutelary deities') in Ryukyuan culture.⁸³ She discusses how Ryukyu women in general were perceived as sister-deities, protective spiritual forces for their clans and communities. Taking such female attributes one step further, Takamure anticipated an era when women would use their mysterious powers in beneficent ways and discover for peaceful purposes new scientific principles greater than nuclear physics.

Takamure did not live to see much of the nuclear age, but she correctly predicted the immense magnitude of solar energy applications and demands in the future. She prophetically wrote that large-scale solar energy production would be one of the privileges of planetary citizens. The hydrogen bomb and the sun share the same principle of nuclear fusion, the reaction where four hydrogen atomic nuclei join to make helium. For Takamure, nuclear fusion represents not weapons of mass destruction

80 See *Ibid.*, 5:1028, 1049.

81 *Ibid.*, 5:1053-59.

82 *Ibid.*, 5:1056-58.

83 *Josei no rekishi I*, in *TIz*, 4:119-21.

but the mother sun that serves as a benevolent, peaceful, and gigantic source of energy. Prodigiously wasteful of energy, the sun arouses her wonder. The quantity of heat that the earth receives in the daytime is more than ten million times as large as one hundred million kilocalories. This is the heat capacity gained through the burning of one hundred million tons of coal all at once. When Takamure arrived at such a scientific understanding, her cheeks flushed red, with the pupils of her eyes filled with shimmering fire.⁸⁴ Firing her imagination, creating solar power by converting sunlight into electricity was already an exhilarating prospect during her lifetime.

In all likelihood, Takamure would insist that now is the time to let peaceable women step into their inner goddesses, unleash exuberant creativity, and save mother earth from destruction. The fact that existing renewable energy technologies have environmental impacts can be an indication that patriarchal practices and attitudes (including mastery over nature) are still left unquestioned. Therefore, unless the cosmic feminine is translated into eco-spirituality, it may not be possible to develop new insights into the inner workings of the natural universe or to derive truly workable solutions. If the violation of nature is inseparable from the toxicity of prevailing patriarchal norms, it is imperative to pursue the life-affirming values inherent in matriculture. In an era of what we might call global self-destruction, the life-giving way of matriliney is thus urgently relevant.

A catastrophic crisis like global environmental change may remain unsolved if the mysticism of female principles is dismissed as spurious. The stupendous complexity of the earth's rapidly changing climate is elucidated in terms of 'hyperobjects' that "occupy a high-dimensional phase space that makes them impossible to see as a whole on a regular three-dimensional human-scale basis."⁸⁵ A revival of the spiritual and magical traditions of matricultural communities, therefore, has a direct and immediate relevance to the present. As we saw earlier, Uzume and Himiko (Sun Child or Sun Daughter) are archetypal illustrations of females who exert themselves and overcome monstrous adversaries that are inaccessible to reason.

Takamure wrote that women were like the sun when they realized their self-worth in the form of love and peace. She sought to replace ever-unchanging patriarchy-induced impairments with matricultural principles. She extolled matrifocal institutions as guardians of feminine values: of nurturance, care, and community. While the patriarchal order is dualistic, hierarchical, and authoritarian, matriliney functions as a unifying force in the service of life. For Takamure, human flourishing is grounded in the empowered mother. In societies where maternal power flourishes, both men and women are like the sun, full of light and life. The world should awaken to the importance of matricultural systems.

Author Biography

Yasuko Sato is an Associate Professor of History at Lamar University in Beaumont, TX, where she teaches East Asian history courses and U.S. history surveys. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Her main areas of interests are Japanese intellectual history and feminist thought in global

84 See Ishimure Michiko, *Saigo no hito: shijin Takamure Itsue* (Tokyo: Fujiwara Shoten, 2012), 131-32.

85 "Climate Change is Too Big for our Brains feat. Mike Rugnetta," *Hot Mess*, accessed September 30, 2020, <https://www.pbs.org/video/climate-change-is-too-big-for-our-brains-feat-mike-rugnetta-nc26o0/>.

contexts, matricultures, environmental ethics, and the relevance of classical antiquity to the modern world. Her manuscript, *A Woman from the Land of Fire: Takamure Itsue and Japanese Antiquity*, has been accepted into the Studies of the Weatherhead East Asia Institution publication series at Columbia University. Her publications include 'Takamure Itsue's Revolt against the West during the Asia-Pacific War: Japanese Antiquity and a Global Paradigm Shift' in *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* (2012) and 'Matrilineal-Matrilocal Arrangements May End Trafficking in Women and Children' in *The Global Status of Women and Girls: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (Lexington Books, 2017).

Bibliography

Farris, William Wayne. *Sacred Texts and Buried Treasures: Issues in the Historical Archaeology of Ancient Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998.

Goettner-Abendroth, Heide. *Matriarchal Societies: Studies on Indigenous Cultures Across the Globe*. Translated by Karen Smith. New York: Peter Lang, 2012.

Hiratsuka Raichō. *Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta: Hiratsuka Raichō jiden*. Vol. 4. Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shoten, 1992.

---. *In the Beginning, Woman Was the Sun: The Autobiography of a Japanese Feminist*. Weatherhead Books on Asia. Translated by Teruko Craig. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

---. "Shakai kaizō ni taisuru fujin no shimei—Josei dōmei sōkan no ji ni kaete—." In *Hiratsuka Raichō hyōron shū*, edited by Kobayashi Tomie and Yoneda Sayoko, 150-63. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1987.

Hori, Ichiro. *Folk Religion in Japan: Continuity and Change*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968.

Ishimure Michiko. *Saigo no hito: shijin Takamure Itsue* (Tokyo: Fujiwara Shoten, 2012).

Kojiki. Translated by Donald L. Philippi. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1968.

Kurihara Hiromu. *Takamure Itsue no kon'in joseishi zō no kenkyū*. Tokyo: Takashina Shoten, 1994.

McCullough, William H. "Japanese Marriage Institutions in the Heian Period." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 27 (1967): 103-67.

Nickerson, Peter. "The Meaning of Matrilocal Kinship, Property, and Politics in Mid-Heian." *Monumenta Nipponica* 48, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 429-67.

Norito: A Translation of the Ancient Japanese Ritual Prayers. Translated by Donald L. Philippi. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

- PBS. "Climate Change is Too Big for our Brains feat. Mike Rugnetta." *Hot Mess*. Accessed September 30, 2020. <https://www.pbs.org/video/climate-change-is-too-big-for-our-brains-feat-mike-rugnetta-nc26o0/>.
- Piggott, Joan R. "Chieftain Pairs and Corulers: Female Sovereignty in Early Japan." In *Women and Class in Japanese History*, edited by Anne Walthall Hitomi Tonomura, and Wakita Haruko, 17-52. Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1999.
- . *The Emergence of Japanese Kingship*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Sanday, Peggy Reeves. *Women at the Center: Life in a Modern Matriarchy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002.
- Sato, Yasuko. "Takamure Itsue's Revolt against the West during the Asia-Pacific War: Japanese Antiquity and a Global Paradigm Shift." *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 42 (2012): 31-61.
- Stone, Merlin. *When God Was a Woman*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1976.
- Takamure Itsue. "Chisei." *Nihon fujin* (December 1944): 16-19.
- . "Fujin sensen ni tatsu." In *Waga michi wa tsuneni fubukeri: jūgo nen sensō zenya*, edited by Nagahata Michiko, 39-50. Tokyo: Fujiwara Shoten, 1995.
- . "Kami gokoro." *Nihon fujin* (August 1944): 8-11.
- . "Nihon ni tatsu." *Fujo shinbun*, January 1, 1932, 7 (7).
- . "Saiō Yamato-hime no Mikoto." *Nihon fujin* (October 1943): 10-15.
- . "Shimei kan." *Nihon fujin* (September 1944): 18-21.
- . *Takamure Itsue zenshū*. 10 vols. Tokyo: Rironsha, 1965-1967.
- Wakita Haruko. *Chūsei ni ikiru onna tachi*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995.
- Wakita Haruko and Suzanne Gay. "Marriage and Property in Premodern Japan from the Perspective of Women's History." *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 10, no. 1 (Winter 1984): 73-99.
- Yoshie Akiko and Janet R. Goodwin. "Gender in Early Classical Japan: Marriage, Leadership, and Political Status in Village and Palace." *Monumenta Nipponica* 60, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 437-79.