On December 24, 2009, a famous palm-reader named Shūhei Shimada started a rumor on TV, claiming that good things will happen to those who put on a photograph of the Kiyomasano-ido Well at the Meiji Jingū Shrine as their mobile phone wallpaper. He emphasized the well’s worldly benefits and promised that it would bring viewers good luck (Jiyūkokuminsha 2014). This led to the Kiyomasano-ido Well’s reputation as a “power spot” and sparked a remarkable phenomenon where people would form long lines to touch the water of the well and to take photographs of it (Yamato 2015).

The term “power spot” is an example of wasei-eigo, Japan-born English terms. A native English speaker might imagine that it has something to do with electricity. In Japan, however, it is generally used to indicate a location where one can feel a strong, invisible spiritual power, energy or ki (the Japanese word for qi). A dictionary of modern terms, Gendaiyōgo no Kiscochishiki (“Basic Knowledge of Modern Terms”) defines “power spot” since 2010 as “a place full of energy that heals the mind and body” (Jiyūkokuminsha 2014). Interestingly, this dictionary includes “power spot” in the category “foreign loanwords.” Many Japanese think that since the term “power spot” is originally English, it is a new concept imported from overseas.

In Japan, places that are historically connected to Shinto, such as the aforementioned Meiji Jingū Shrine, are often designated as power spots. It is believed that the body and mind can be healed when someone visits them. Similar to conventional shrine visits, there are also expectations of worldly benefits (genze riyaku) such as being successful in one’s career or love life. Furthermore, power spots are believed to exist all over the world, and visiting them is considered as a way to pay respect to the spiritual energy of the Earth. Some also make nationalistic claims that the Japanese tradition of nature worship is more suitable for a world in environmental crisis than monotheistic religions that try to rule over nature. There are opposing elements within the discourse on power spot: passive awareness of power for changing oneself versus active accumulation of power for achieving worldly benefits; spirituality versus materiality; the New Age spirituality of the West versus old Japanese Shinto spirituality; universality versus particularity; and individualization
versus a return to tradition. The aim of this chapter is to describe in chronological order how these complicated aspects have developed.

**Power Spots of the 1980s: Enter the Tenkawa Shrine**

As indicated above, the concept of power spot is commonly believed to have been suddenly propagated by the mass media from 2009 to 2010. On the other hand, prior researchers have shown the importance of a book written by Masaki Kiyota in 1991 in the propagation of the concept of power spot (Suga 2010; Kotera 2011). However, for researchers who have long observed the field of individualistic spirituality, the interest in power spots is decisively not a new phenomenon. It can be traced back earlier than Kiyota’s book, and he should not be considered the proponent of the term (though Kiyota wrote that he started using this word independently in his school days, which was in the 1970s; Kiyota 1991, 22–3). The term was well established among Japanese New Age practitioners as early as the middle of the 1980s. Following a recommendation, the manga artist Suzue Miuchi visited the Tenkawa Daibenzaiten Shrine (in Nara Prefecture) in November 1985 when looking for a place to set the stage of her play, “The Crimson Goddess,” for her work *Glass Mask* (serialized in 1975). The shrine was already known to musicians inside and outside Japan as a source of inspiration. There, according to her explanation, Miuchi also had a mysterious experience.

Suddenly, I felt as if I was in the center of a hole in the earth, exposed to a cold rush of air blowing from below, and my body became transparent. All that remained of me was a mass of Life (*Inochi*), without feelings or flesh. That was my true self. I felt that I was living my Life connected to the other Life forms, fire, water, and much more. In just one night, my perspective of Life changed completely.

Both human and nature are granted Life by a greater power. In my comic book series, that message was narrated by the renowned actress Chigusa Tsukikage, who once acted in “The Crimson Goddess.” That is what I personally experienced, and what I want to tell the world.

*Miuchi 2011*

A concise explanation of the site of “Tenkawa” is provided on the back cover of the guidebook, *Tenkawa: Super Psychic Spot*, published in 1986 and edited by Mikinosuke Kakisaka, the chief priest of the Tenkawa Shrine.