



**Saburo Shawn Morishita, *Teodori: Cosmological Building and Social Consolidation in a Ritual Dance***

Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2001. vii + 238 pp. Tables, diagrams, glossary, bibliography. €16.53 paper, ISBN 88-7652-891-1.

THIS DETAILED, enlightening study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature on Tenrikyo. Tenrikyo, the “teaching of divine wisdom,” is one of Japan’s most successful “new” religions, which was established by Nakayama Miki, known to her followers as Oyasama, or “beloved parent.” There are over three million adherents in more than thirty countries. In Japan alone there are some seventeen thousand Tenrikyo churches, all affiliated with the Head Church in Tenri City, Nara, the birthplace of Oyasama. This self-contained city has its own railway station, hospital, university, city hall, and information center and regularly hosts visitors from throughout the world. Within the Head Church is the Jiba, the place where, according to Tenrikyo mythology, human beings were first conceived during creation. The Kanrodai pillar (“The Stand for the Heavenly Dew”) marks the Jiba’s location.

In 1866 Oyasama began teaching the *Mikagura-uta* (Songs for the Service), the first of the three Tenrikyo scriptures. This work is divided into two sections. The first, *Kagura-no-uta* (Songs for the Kagura) is performed using kagura masks and hand gestures. The second section, *Teodori-no-uta* (Songs for the Teodori) is expressed through the Teodori (Dance with Hand Movements). Performed by three men and

three women and accompanied by nine instruments, this ritual dance is the focus of Morishita's study.

We learn that Morishita is the son of two missionaries who were part of a Tenrikyo church set up on the West Coast of the US. Religious discipline must have been strict, for he describes how he was called from childhood play to perform in the ritual dance for the evening service. But as time passed by, Morishita admits to "actually finding peace through the dance." He explains that "something transforms—whether the actual word or my perception of it—through a dance I initially disliked." This theme of spiritual transformation is central to the study as the author explores "what that something is by trying to understand the interconnectiveness between the performance of the Teodori and the world around me." Hidden among the footnotes on page nineteen, this information is crucial to our understanding of the author's intention. It provides a context for his focus on a "world view," and so might have been better placed in a preface.

In the first chapter Morishita sets up an intellectual framework for the study, using as a basis the anthropological writings of Clifford Geertz. Since the main methodology seems to be drawn from his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), this is a safe, though well traveled path, consistent with the main emphasis of Teodori as a mode of cosmological building and a process of social consolidation. In his quest for a world view, Morishita spends some time rationalizing the native anthropologist's approach, concluding it to be "reasonable, if not favorable." The reader would concur, for despite the author's control, we occasionally glimpse a passion and commitment that could not come from an outsider. Morishita's concluding wish "that the Teodori be accepted as a means of a joyous portrayal of living" is very clear. While this might seem unsound in terms of anthropological methodology, it can be seen equally as a strength when Tenrikyo is viewed as a living, growing religion.

The study then moves to the Teodori itself, beginning with an account of Nakayama Miki's life. For some reason this section is not edited as well as the rest of the book and non-Japanese readers need further clarification of terms such as "grant." The following translation of the Teodori, comprising of the Yorozuyo (prelude) and twelve songs is clear and concise. At this point readers might ponder over the significance of the thirteen tiers of the Kanrodai marking the Jiba's location. Do these tiers represent the thirteen Teodori texts? Diagrams and descriptions of the hand movements follow, taken from the *Otefuri Guide* (1992), which, in turn, draws on Louise Sasaki's (1980) master's thesis, "The Tenrikyo Sacred Dance."

A discussion of the Teodori setting follows: preparation for the monthly service, the three altars fronting the Jiba and the nature of the special offerings. We learn that in larger churches the offering ceremony is accompanied by *gagaku* (ancient Japanese court music) and that the nine musical instruments used for the Teodori are arranged on either side of the altars. This musical ensemble is similar, although not identical to a traditional *gagaku* ensemble, but we are uncertain whether it is used for one or both musical purposes. Clearly the music is subservient to the

dance. The dancers “represent vital figures for the life of the church” and perform on the upper dais in front of the altar of God the Parent, while the musicians are chosen “at random” and positioned at a lower level. The chapter closes with an account of the communal meal postluding the service.

Morishita then describes the “intertext” within the dance vocabulary, which is manifested in both “verbal and non-verbal symbolic patterns.” He distinguishes three overarching verbal patterns supporting the study’s overall cosmic theme: world, space, and time. These are assigned various meanings. Readers versed in sensory imagery might also note that time, space and energy serve as the building blocks for dance creation. Various references to energy might also be found within the Teodori song text, thus adding an extra layer of kinesthetic meaning to the verbal patterns.

A fundamental feature of Japanese religion (and indeed, Japanese culture) is the interplay of opposite meanings. In discussing the nonverbal patterns the writer explores vertical, circular, horizontal and diagonal movements, similar to the directions of a compass. These are seen as “ordered Appollonian movements,” instilling peace and quiet in the dancer’s mind. They are consistent with the creation myth, where God makes human beings from chaos. Images of within and without also permeate the model, developed later in the study. The author discusses the creation animals, their symbolic role in the Kagura (seated service) before turning to the *Ofudesaki*, a poetic work consisting of 1,711 verses. Written by Miki in a couplet style known as *waka*, this work is the second of the three Tenrikyo scriptures. Morishita summarizes this intertext in a model consisting of widening circles, which serve as images of propagation. The central point symbolizes the Jiba while the largest circle suggests the countries of the world. Thus in contrast to the pilgrim (one who returns to the Jiba), is the missionary (one who goes out from the Jiba).

Towards the end of this chapter the ritual *Teodori-no-Sazuki* (Divine Grant) is explained, together with testimonies from various Tenrikyo adherents. The healing of the body/spirit through dance now becomes analogous to social healing, and in its widest sense, to the healing of the world.

Using the insights of scholars James Valentine and Judith Hanna, Morishita contemplates the context of the Teodori symbols and their place in Japanese culture. He compares folk dance with classical dance, pointing out the free versus rigid structures. Declaring that Eejanaika dancing, the popular dance of Miki’s time, was born from spiritual and emotional frustration, “vent out feelings and discontent,” we are shown how this frenzied, undisciplined style led Miki to create a dance in direct contrast. “To do so, however, she must have felt a deep kind of religious experience,” he asserts. The order, stylization, and enduring quality of Teodori dance is in many ways similar to Noh drama, which is referred to later in the study.

As the many symbolic practices of Tenrikyo are unfolded, pilgrimage, or “coming home” to the Jiba, is explored: a practice where one receives both *jiriki* (self empowerment) and *tariki* (power from others). Using the *uchi/soto* (“us and other”) principle, we see how the ritual attire, hierarchy, boundaries, and conventions of Tenrikyo are “wrapped” in symbolic meaning. To understand the whole,

the author believes an “unwrapping” process is needed. This is as necessary to the Tenrikyo worshipper as it is to an outsider experiencing a Teodori performance for the first time, either in a church or on a street corner.

Crucial to Morishita is the Teodori’s role in world salvation. He examines the reasons why many prospective Tenrikyo practitioners are culturally and spiritually alienated by the Teodori. Some of the Tenrikyo faithful advocate change while others argue to retain conventional spiritual practice. Using the example of Japanese martial arts, tea ceremony, and Zen Buddhism, Morishita concludes that “entering through form” could be a useful approach for the novice Tenrikyo follower. The best way to teach Teodori is through its “bodily form,” as Miki did.

Although the study focuses on dance, a little more musical information might have been useful. Musical images can bring new insights to both the text and the dance, since all are interrelated. If dance is fashioned from movement and stillness, these cannot be executed without sound and silence, from which music is born. Secondly, the physical division of male and female performers in the Teodori, with women playing the stringed instruments and men playing wind and percussion, is not only a cultural convention. It is an important *uchi/soto* marker. The same principle is emphasized in the two *Mikagura-uta* instruction manuals (one for women and one for men) which teach the correct way to learn and play the musical instruments.

At the close of the book Morishita uses the analogy of work and play to demonstrate how the Teodori returns to its origins, perhaps as a pilgrimage of the spirit. He sees the Teodori performance as a playful celebration, just as little children might dance for a loving parent, who also receives joy and fulfillment from the dance. Work, which in a pluralistic society has lost its role, now returns to a means of “earning one’s bread,” as seen in the nonverbal symbolic pattern of hoeing. Through this analogy, work and play become part of the joyful life and the underlying meaning of *hinokishin* (voluntary service in gratitude to God the Parent) is revealed. Interestingly, Morishita sees play studies as a rewarding approach for future investigations of the Teodori.

It is unfortunate that the book is so poorly edited in various parts. While the information per se is riveting, the reader is hindered by the ponderous writing, clumsy phrasing, poor word choices and unnecessary repetition in Chapter Two. But despite these editorial problems, Morishita brings fresh and valuable insights to the study of Tenrikyo. Although it is still a relatively new religion, Tenrikyo continues to fascinate students of many disciplines. As both Sasaki and Morishita have found, the role of dance is intrinsic to cultural and intercultural harmony. This also applies to other art forms. Those modes of worship supported by great works of art, be they dance, music, drama or the visual arts, bring extra beauty, spiritual inspiration and joy to the senses of the faithful. They can also serve as powerful pedagogical tools and instruments for world peace. In her wisdom, Miki apparently sensed all this and was moved through God the parent to create the Teodori, thus providing a unique form of worship. This has probably helped Tenrikyo to survive during a period when other new Japanese religions struggled for survival.

Although universal in context, dance is a difficult art form to decode, due to its complex nonverbal language. There is much to commend in this comprehensive and insightful work. It should generate interest and discussion in many disciplines.

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