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From Faith-Healing Group to New Religion

The Discursive Formulation of Tenrikyo in Meiji

Tenrikyo is a popular religious movement founded in the nineteenth century based on the revelation of Nakayama Miki. The group become a Shinto sect in 1908 only after reforms in response to charges of "superstitious" faith healing and heterodoxy. These reform efforts are often presented as a part of a victim narrative of a new, universal but magical "revealed religion" struggling to persevere against the modern Shinto-centric establishment through compromise. I propose that this narrative has it backwards: the negotiation between "religion" and its supposed opposite, "superstition," affected Miki's healing group in its efforts to construct its self-image as the original revealed "new religion" Tenrikyo. Contrasting publications from the 1890s shows that both critics and proponents operated within the same discursive field to delegitimize or legitimize Tenrikyo, respectively. This entailed negotiating the meaning of religious salvation and healing by strategically relating their arguments to the paradigm of science and the Christian-occidental exclusivistic concept of "revealed religion." This article gives legitimate agency back to proponents of new religious movements, showing how they strove to provide scientifically legitimate interpretations of their faith in modern times.

keywords: Tenrikyo—revealed religion—superstition—faith healing—concept of religion

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Tenrikyo is one of the many religious organizations that established themselves in the Meiji period, when the building of the modern Japanese Empire marked a time of great change. According to its official doctrine, the "God of Origin, God of Truth" Tenri Ō no Mikoto 天理王命 was revealed to Nakayama Miki 中山みき in 1838 (DT, 1). She began to teach divine salvation, which brought her both followers and trouble due to the lack of legal status and a license for her faith-healing activities. Only after Miki's death did her successors seek recognition as a religion, becoming Shinto Tenrikyo in 1908. This configuration of a faith-healing group becoming a "Shinto religion" raises questions about the nature of "religion."

The group has been categorized as a "new religion" (*shinshūkyō* 新宗教), a view espoused by Nakanishi Ushirō, who found Tenrikyo to be "not Shinto, Buddhism, nor Christianity but a new religion" (*Shūkyōdan: Ichimei Tenrikyō no kenkyū*, 25) that is "qualified to govern the faith of the future civilized world" (*Tenrikyō kenshinron*, 75). This early positive take on the group may be surprising, given that the scholarly term was established in the 1950s specifically to free its *signifiés* from the stigma of appellations like "pseudo religion" (*ruiji shūkyō* 類似宗教) (Shimazono 1994, 2–3). Such a pejorative assessment is illustrated by the Buddhist monk Kaneko Dōsen 兼子道仙, who prosecutes Tenrikyo in his fictional *Trial of Truth* on the charges that they "believe in Tenri Ō no Mikoto and blessings instead of medicine" and that they "are not Buddhism, Confucianism, nor true Shinto." He concludes, contrary to Nakanishi, that Tenrikyo has "gone the deviant way of heretical teachings" (*Shinri no saiban: Yōkyō bokumetsu*, 4–5).

While both authors arrive at opposite conclusions, they do employ the same strategy to prove their points; only by framing Tenrikyo as a "revealed religion" that is original, absolute, and exclusive can they portray the group as fundamentally different from established religions, as something "new." Naturally, studies on new religious movements (NRMs) are premised on this discerning marker. Yet, the ascription of newness or originality, irrespective of positive or negative connotations, is simply an othering strategy based on essentialist differentiations. It is chosen to either legitimate or delegitimate the subject.[1] Unfortunately, neither the inherent bias of this marker nor its Christian-occidental connotation of religious exclusivism have received much attention in scholarship on religion in modern Japan. After all, it is only in the last few decades that the field of religious studies has begun to unravel its own bias toward and involvement in establishing the very Christian-occidental idea of religion that was disseminated at the turn of the twentieth century. Paradoxically, the image of Tenrikyo as an exclusive, original revealed religion has been the premise of research on Tenrikyo, when, in truth, this self-identification marked the end of Tenrikyo's process of becoming a religion in the early twentieth century, a process that indeed had been heavily influenced by Western ideas of religion.

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[1] Baffelli and Reader (2019, 14–16) discuss the dualistic connotation of the "new" as positive (dynamic and charismatic) or negative (disruptive and destabilizing).

The premise of being "new" has obscured the historical details of how Tenrikyo became a "new religion." To avoid this normative approach, I follow David BROMLEY and Gordon MELTON (2016, 6), who define NRMs as "alternative religious tradition groups" who claim "legitimacy as authentic representatives of non-dominant religious traditions." This angle allows a fresh look at the question of how early Tenrikyo laid claim to authenticity.

The answer to the question of Tenrikyo's claim to authenticity is buried under two layers of framing. First, the othering in research: the NRMs have been defined *ex negativo* via a "common deficiency," since religious and secular authorities found their "new" beliefs and practices "unacceptable" (MELTON 2004, 73). This elitist-modernist bias is fed by a preference for critical sources, thus precluding any agency of NRMs in defining religion. This led to Tenrikyo being mostly denied legitimate agency in their own story, whereas Max DEGG (2013, 208) points out that the dynamic between criticism and apologetics is particularly conducive to mapping common reference points of religious ideas. Second, Tenrikyo's self-image: we must remember that the religion has a stake in how it is presented, as it seeks to safeguard its legitimacy. However, NAGAOKA Takashi (2020, 16) rightly casts doubt on the view that interpretations of a faith are formulated only within faith communities. In what he calls the "dynamic process of collaborative interpretation," he stresses that believers and their communities necessarily (re)shape their religious interpretations through confrontation with the outside view.

In this article, I trace social discourses between 1890 and 1908, at the end of which time Tenrikyo emerged as a "new religion." I demonstrate how Tenrikyo was strategically "othered" in both self- and other-referential discussions, with both sides tying its newness to a specific configuration of the concept of "revealed religion" in their fight over religious legitimacy.

A History of Marginalization: The Othering Bias of the "New"

The point of contention between Tenrikyo supporters and critics concerns the time that Tenrikyo spent within the frame of Shinto. Tenrikyo was a small faith group when foundress Miki died in 1887. After joining the Shinto Bureau (Shintō

Honkyoku 神道本局), the number of believers grew rapidly, reaching over three million by 1896, owing mostly to the promise of healing (Nagaoka 2015, 168). In the same year, the Home Ministry (Naimushō 内務省) instituted Directive Number Twelve (Naimushō kunrei kō dai jūni gō 内務省訓令甲第十二号), ordering police surveillance for the charge of misleading the masses into rejecting medicine, among others. This charge echoed the claims of critics who decried Tenrikyo as immoral and unscientific, evidenced by its heretical syncretism and superstitious faith healing. Bowing to pressure, Tenrikyo amended its teachings by changing the name of its god, modifying rituals, and limiting healing (Tenrikyō Dōyūsha 2012, 126–140). The group also revised and codified its doctrine to gain independence as Shinto Tenrikyo (see Kato in this volume).

Tenrikyo has been locked in what I call a "compromised revelation." Articles on Tenrikyo regularly mention its foundation in 1838, when Nakayama Miki experienced divine revelation (Triplett 2015; Yamada 2019; Sanguineti 2024). This conforms to the official narrative of the organization but also the policy of religious studies adopted at the 1960 Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (iahr) held in Marburg, which stipulated that the veracity of revelations shall not be questioned (Feldtkeller 2014, 93–94). This neutral stance represented progress for the field insofar as honoring the self-perception of nrms meant that they were no longer excluded as pseudo-religions but ostentatiously rehabilitated as religions instead. Yet, ironically, it was this enshrinement of Tenrikyo as a revealed religion in a very Christian-occidental sense that locked it in a "compromised revelation": while a revelation legitimizes the religion in the eyes of scholars, it simultaneously confines it to Miki's original and therefore unadaptable teaching, which, as long as it promises salvation through "magical" healing, was often still judged as "unacceptably" different. With the idea of "compromised revelation," I argue that despite explicit attempts to see the "new" in a positive light, past research could not assign Tenrikyo a legitimate place in modernity because of the lack of introspection on fundamental premises in the study of religion: the myth of disenchantment, a biased concept of religion, and the question of magic.

The early voices calling for the eradication of Tenrikyo found their echo in postwar scholarship on nrms. The "new" in Japan's nrms, which are characterized as propagating salvation through practices to achieve this-worldly benefits (*genze riyaku* 現世利益), was dismissed as repackaged folk-religious "magic" with which adherents had yet to be "disenchanted" (Hayashi and Yamanaka 1993).[2] But, as the number of alternative religious groups exploded, scholars began to ask what they signified in a secularizing world. Still, scholars struggled to interpret this-worldly "magic" as a legitimate part of modern religion. This rejection of "magic" is due to a Christian-occidental view of modern religion that sought to overcome magical practice as an expression of faith and understood religion to be solely based on belief in salvation in the afterlife (FELDTKELLER 2014, 37–84). Held against this ideal, NRMS still found themselves marginalized in the church-sect typology in which sects are pejoratively contrasted with churches as deviant from mainstream norms (BROMLEY and MELTON 2016, 7–24).

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[2] While attributed to Max Weber, the disenchantment theory was formulated by J. G. Frazer (Josephson-Storm 2017, 125–152). By disenchantment, Weber meant overcoming the irrational within a religion, not religion itself (Feldtkeller 2014, 69–72).

Japanese scholars, on the other hand, found a positive meaning in the marginalization of the NRMS by the Japanese empire. Faulting established religions for having supported fascism, MURAKAMI (1963) and YASUMARU (1974) found the roots of Japan's modern humanism in an oppressed "popular religion" (*minshū shūkyō* 民衆宗教). These scholars argued that the founders, inspired by a Protestant-like ethical mindset, had rejected traditional authorities and empowered moral individuals to attain salvation through self-cultivation (SAWADA 2021, 14–17). In their projection, Miki left magic behind to reveal an eschatology of salvation through a rational faith, which would culminate in a utopian society. Seen as a beacon of democratic values based on her revelation, the foundress was successfully framed as being morally opposed to, and therefore oppressed by, the totalitarian State Shinto establishment. It follows, however, that any doctrinal changes necessary to gain recognition had to be interpreted as a betrayal of the revelation by Miki's successors (MURAKAMI 1963, 186). The whole agenda of creating a positive vision of "people's religions" hinged on the concept of founder *qua* belief-centric religion, which is why doctrinal development was seen as a sign of a compromised NRM.

The scholarship on "people's religions" also reinforced the marginalization of Tenrikyo because it served the purpose of finding Japan's modern sentiment beyond mainstream culture, thus reproducing a deterministic view of history. As long as modernization and secularization were regarded as interlinked teleological processes, the revitalization of religion—in this case the flourishing NRMS propagating faith healing—could only be seen as signs of a failed modernity (FELDTKELLER 2014, 146).

TSUSHIMA et al. (1979) were pioneers in their claim that magic and modernity are not mutually exclusive. They argued that rituals for acquiring this-worldly benefits were not irrational since the NRMS based themselves on viable soteriological doctrines of self-cultivation. KATSURAJIMA (2005, 225–228) built on this claim, arguing that Tenrikyo actively translated its practical faith into a codified teaching in step with the times. However, he also undermines the legitimacy of this effort, judging that the changes were a "dilution" and a "tragedy." KATSURAJIMA (2019, 82) explicitly thinks of Tenrikyo as "the other" (*tasha* 他者) who embodied a rich world of folk religious belief before its formalization as religion.

Ultimately, we are left with the same narrative that was posed sixty-five years earlier, when Straelen (1954, 51) questioned why Tenrikyo had compromised its doctrine instead of building a "granite wall of opposition" like Christians had done. As Nagaoka (2015; 2020) has criticized, the problem lies in the reduction of religious interpretations to a supposed original core (*honrai* 本来), a view that disallows any doctrinal development unless it is linked to the founder figure. To my mind, researchers are caught in a circular reasoning: because of their own bias concerning religion, they presume that the foundress's revealed teaching must embody an unchanging truth. They therefore cannot fully legitimize alterations, even as they recognize these changes as the very steps necessary to make the group adhere to the model of universal religion in the first place.

As the "new" was compromised, there was not much research interest in how Tenrikyo fared thereafter. But what of Tenrikyo itself? After the Pacific War, the group resurrected itself in a "restoration" (*fukugen* 復元) campaign. It was the logical result of their so-called dual structure narrative, according to which the compromised teaching (and thus support of wartime Shinto ideology) was merely compliance with the authorities that the group had to endure until Miki's teaching could be restored (Nagaoka 2015, 117–123). This victim narrative resolves the tension between a god-given teaching and prewar doctrinal adjustments by divorcing the latter as temporary and inconsequential measures. Today's Tenrikyo seems caught between acknowledging the historicity of interpretations of Miki's revelation and denying the historicity of the revelation itself.

Both researchers and the Tenrikyo organization agree to absolve Tenrikyo of true agency at the crucial time it sought independence as a religion around 1900. It is because only this victim narrative enables all parties to see Tenrikyo as the good counterpart to an oppressive regime. The legacy of the notion of "popular religion" is the idea that political oppression proves the religious value of the early NRMs, which is why, in turn, their legitimacy lies in their rejection of any authority other than that of their god(s). It is evident that researchers and research subjects have influenced each other.[3] The result is a positive (self)-othering strategy, which is upheld by framing Tenrikyo as an original and absolute "revealed religion." Emphasizing an "original core" of Tenrikyo's faith serves to dismiss Tenrikyo's time as a Shinto sect as deviating from the norm, that is, a "proper religion." In sum, we are left with a "compromised revelation" that ignores the impact of this period on Tenrikyo's doctrinal development.

Although modern society subscribes to the "myth of disenchantment" (Josephson-Storm 2017), we live in an ongoing process of secularization in which the spheres denoted as "secular" and "religious" are perpetually renego-

[3] Nagaoka (2015, 18–20; 2020) has criticized how Tenrikyo's dual structure narrative is reflected in academic research and shows how important the oppression narrative was for Omoto.

tiated (Paramore 2017). This approach enables us to contextualize how "religious" and "secular" were mutually constituted without implying an existing understanding of what the religious was supposed to be (Krämer 2015, 1–2).

In Western contexts, secularization denotes how Christianity lost its status as the sole foundation of culture (Hanegraaf 2003, 359). In Japan, it was the Shinto-Buddhist worldview that was undone. The separation edicts of 1868 initiated the reconception of secular and religious spheres. While the Buddhist schools were left to themselves, Shinto was a governmental project and was for the first time established as an entity of its own. In a unique configuration, worship of the divine emperor was secured through Shrine Shinto, a secularized mandatory ideology, which was meant to transcend Sect Shinto, an administrative umbrella for groups deemed religious (Maxey 2014, 9–11). Due to the absence of any agreed-upon understanding of what exactly Shinto was, many groups that shared a traditional cosmology were eligible in principle. However, the accepted groups would define what constitutes religious Shinto, and this is the crux in the story of the NRMs.

The discussion on how to define a suitable localized form and place of religion was part of the fabric of the new nation-state, making the Japanese an active part of the global co-construction of the concept of religion (Krämer 2015, 141). Agency lies only with the elite. Isomae Jun'ichi (2014, 64) contends that the elite discourse could not have possibly changed the self-perceptions of the masses and their NRMs, caught as they were in magical and compromised revelations opposed to modernity and Shinto ideology. But how could Miki and her faith group, conceived in a Shinto-Buddhist cosmology, claim self-consciousness as an originally exclusive religion when such a notion of religion had yet to be established? Accepting Tenrikyo's self-image as a "religion" has not absolved the group of playing the part of the revealed "other," but has instead obscured how proponents of minor religious organizations took part in shaping modern, acceptable views on religion.

The Story of Creation

We can glean more of Miki's teachings regarding the story of creation from noncanonical accounts of this story. First recorded between 1881 and 1883, these texts, known collectively as "Kami no kōki" (ancient stories/oral transmissions about God), exist in the form of several handwritten copies and differ from the official postwar version of the creation story (DT, 20–28).[4]

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[4] Nakayama (1982, 46–52) lists thirty-two copies of varying titles for the Tenrikyo creation story dating from 1881 to 1887. Although they are named after the copyist or family owning the copy, I refer to them as *Kami no kōki*, which is the title used by the critic Katō Totsudō.

As the story goes, in the beginning there was just a muddy ocean (*doroumi* 泥海), so the gods Kuninotokotachi no Mikoto 国常立の命 and Omotaru Mikoto 面足命 decided to create the world and human beings. The moon god Kuninotokotachi, a male dragon, created laws including the Buddhist law, thus he is also Śākyamuni. Omotaru is the sun god, and a female snake, who is also Amida Nyorai and Kannon Bosatsu. Jointly they are called Tsukihi 月日 or God the Parent (Oyagami 親神). They gathered various sea creatures to imbue them with divine providence, making eight other gods. To create Izanagi and Izanami as the prototype of man and woman, they inserted an ogre into a merman and a turtle into a snake, respectively. Finally, Tsukihi entered both to teach them the providence of creating human beings. Izanami's children grew through many cycles of rebirth as various animal species. Finally, all died except a she-monkey who conceived humans again and, with creation thus completed, humankind left the water to dwell on land. This is why all people are siblings in spirit as children of the ten gods or God the Parent and are warned of their sins in the form of illness. According to the text, we should correct our hearts to free our souls from pollution, and, if we succeed, we are promised healing and an ultimate paradise on earth. Miki was given the soul of Izanami to lead humankind to a joyous life (*yōki gurashi* 陽気暮らし) in salvation (*Kami no kōki* attributed to Umetani).

Postwar research had trouble making sense of this multifaceted God the Parent, often diagnosing a mixture of "true" religions like Shinto and Buddhism in some sort of folkish syncretism (Tsushima 1994, 213). Of course, the idea of religion being an original and discrete entity was at play, thus feeding the narrative of the NRMs as "deficient." Although historian of "people's religions" Murakami Shigeyoshi (2007, 79–96) had a positive reading of Tenrikyo's folk-religious legacy, he relied on the idea of religious exclusivism just the same. His agenda was to detach Tenrikyo from Shinto by arguing that it was Miki's humanist-democratic and folk-religious foundation that had inspired her to synthesize the feudal plethora of kami into a monotheistic creator, thus fashioning an absolute authority for her revelation. To his mind, Miki had spelled out an absolute, democratic-egalitarian vision as a means to confront the Shinto ideology. Indeed, from a historical point of view, it stands to reason that Miki was incentivized to express her thoughts coherently against outside influences. But Murakami makes an anachronistic error when he presumes an authoritarian-defined Shinto religion *qua* ideology as her enemy, while in fact what was to be Shinto was still much contested (Katsurajima 2004, 77–81).

Miki clashed with local healing practitioners, temples, and shrines as soon as she first ventured outside her village to heal people in 1861, which was twenty-three years after her revelation (KSD, 43–68). Henry van Straelen (1954, 32) echoes official Tenrikyo lore that recounts how "the new faith" encountered religious persecution by hostile established groups, but nowadays even Tenrikyo scholars agree that those were local conflicts of interest over Miki lacking a healing license (Hatakama 2002, 88). These clashes motivated Miki's son and household head Shūji to obtain a license from the Yoshida Administrative Office of Shinto (Yoshida Jingi Kanryō 吉田神祇官領), which headed a shrine system operating on granting licensing rights (Hardacre 2017, 240–243, 274–276).

Tenrikyo sources lament over this "knot" (*fushi* ふし)—a term Tenrikyo uses for obstacles it encounters—for compromising Miki's independence. But, to the contrary, this prompted a coherent transmission of the *Mikagura uta* in 1867. To my mind, Miki utilized a logic originally used by the Yoshida to disentangle Shinto deities from a multifaceted Shinto-Buddhist cosmology that had long operated through the "original foundation, manifest traces" (*honji suijaku* 本地垂迹) paradigm. Originally a logic that allowed Buddhist schools to impose their deities through local kami, the Yoshida house had reversed this rhetoric and successfully developed an autonomous Shinto shrine cult in the fifteenth century. The core idea was to posit local deities as manifestations of some higher universal entities, which allowed flexibility in associating or assimilating the supernatural (Teeuwen and Rambelli 2003, 39–40). Popular application focused more on assembling deities based on practical needs like this-worldly benefits (Reader and Tanabe 1998, 151). The logic operated on inclusion and enabled the Yoshida to coop Miki's group on the condition of adding Yoshida-style rituals. Within this malleable combinatory logic, the modus operandi to define the religious could only be *ex negativo* by excluding what was not to belong (Inoue 2015; Ōhashi 2014, 155). Accordingly, Tenrikyo and their god, now called Tenri Ō Myōjin 天理王明神 (Tenrikyō Dōyūsha 1993, 110), belonged, even though in a minor position.

Jason Ānanda Josephson (2012, 27) stresses that this amalgamation process was hierarchical, a technique to establish a desired "original" rather than just a worldview, but I would argue that in the case of Tenrikyo it was both. Miki was convinced she had been revealed her own version of an "original truth" and relayed this in the *Mikagura uta*, which, according to an anecdote, was taught because nobody could understand the Yoshida prayers (Moroi 1958, 51). Borrowing the legitimacy of the Yoshida system, Nakayama Miki mirrored their strategy and revealed herself to be a new superior shrine, an idea she suggests in her second scripture, the *Ofudesaki*, in which she refers to herself as the "Shrine of Tsukihi" (*Ofudesaki*, part 3, verse 59).

The Tenrikyo story of creation suggests that the foundress had a new interpretation of the existing cosmology, but it offers little to no awareness of religious exclusivism. Passages in the *Ofudesaki* (part 3, verses 69–71; part 4, verses 122–124) hint that Miki had thought about the story of creation since 1874, probably influenced by the religious reordering of the Meiji years. The passage "there have been teachings, ethical and ancient (*shingaku kofuki* しんがくこふき), but there has been no one who knows the origin" (part 3, verse 69), for instance, has been taken to mean that Miki was positioning her revelation in contrast to Shinto (Tenrikyō Dōyūsha 1993, 255–257). This narrative is bolstered by the "knots" that Tenrikyo claimed to encounter. As their license was annulled in 1870 after the Yoshida house lost its administrative rights, Miki's faith group had constant trouble with the police. Miki revealed the last parts of the scripture when her group was named Tenrin Ō Kōsha 天輪王講社, a short-lived association under the Nakayama family temple that lasted from 1880 to 1882, which had been organized by Shūji and ended after his and his wife's death. Again, Miki's faith group was in legal limbo, and the foundress's message was again put in writing to make the next move. Indeed, *Kami no kōki* from 1883 was attached to a failed petition to Wakōji 和光寺 in the hope of gaining legal status again. These texts are our best sources from which to gauge how Miki positioned herself in respect to the religious reorganization occurring around her. In the compilations of *Kami no kōki* that were made by Masui Isaburō 桝井伊三郎 in 1883, we find the following explanation of the gods:

> Tenrin Ō Mikoto 天輪王命 is how the ten gods are called together.… There are kami and buddhas in this world that we used to worship, but as the kami cannot enter paper, metal, or wood like they have entered us human beings and given us the divine providence, there are no gods superior to humans.
> (*Kami no kōki* attributed to Masui; Nakayama 1982, 125)

As already mentioned, Tenrikyo's postwar dual-structure narrative maintains that Miki's original teaching was only provisionally adapted to Shinto. Scholar and Tenrikyo believer Ishizaki Masao (1997, 18) recognizes that Tenrikyo has a striking similarity to the Shinto idea of the human heart as the seat of the gods or to the Buddhist idea of obtaining buddhahood through becoming one with buddha. Yet he rejects the assertion that the above-mentioned quote references these concepts. Ishizaki and Yasui Mikio (2014, 37) allow that Miki invoked the language of Shinto and Buddhism as a translation device merely as a way to make the novel teaching comprehensible. Since both scholars base their interpretation of this passage on their faith in Tenrikyo as an exclusive and revealed religion, they rejected any association with Shinto and Buddhism.

Tenrikyo scholar Kaneko Akira (2017) argues that Miki was critical of the official, lofty, and convoluted Shinto lectures of the Great Promulgation Campaign (1870–1884). She had probably heard about them a year before, in 1873, when doctrinal instructors (*kyōdōshoku* 教導職) lectured in her household. This campaign had been a heavy-handed attempt to recruit personnel to edify the populace on the rather abstract national standards of loving the nation and the emperor. Various participating groups (except Buddhist ones) became ipso facto religions (Sawada 2004, 110). Heavily influenced by doctrines of *kokugaku* 国学,

the nationalist branch of Shinto thought, the campaign served to craft a religious identity for Shinto (HARDACRE 1986, 41–53). As congregating and preaching for non-doctrinal instructors were prohibited (SAKAMOTO 1994, 468–470), Miki's group was banned in 1874, which prompted Miki to distinguish herself visibly by wearing a red kimono and changing the name of her god from a nondescript kami to Tsukihi (TENRIKYŌ DŌYŪSHA 1993, 150–158).

With these events in mind, KANEKO (2017) argues that Miki's verse literally refers to *shingaku* 心学, originally a widely popular ethical teaching of moral cultivation that came to be reestablished as a religious Shinto group in 1873 as part of the Great Promulgation Campaign (SAWADA 2004, 110–118). Seeing that Miki had already advanced an accessible teaching within the framework of Yoshida Shinto, I agree with KANEKO (2017, 8–10) that the foundress contrasted the *shingaku* lectures (*shingaku kōgi* 心学講義) with her own "Lectures of the Muddy Ocean" (*doroumi kōgi* 泥海講義), which is an often-used title for the Tenrikyo origin story. The official translation of the kana text *shingaku kofuki* as "ethical and ancient teachings" disassociates the passage from a concrete teaching, which is why "ancient story" (*kōki* 古記) or "oral transmission" (*kōki* 口記) are frequent glosses (NAKAYAMA 1982, 158). Kaneko's take is convincing, considering that the story was written down from 1881, when the first Tenrikyo confraternity was opened as a *shingaku* group following suit in 1884. This was allowed as a "narrow path" (*hosomichi* 細道) or a temporary scheme (KANEKO 2017, 14–15), in which we can already see the dual structure narrative. Yet, the story of origin itself proves the lasting impact of *shingaku* and Shinto regulations against which it was developed.

But does the fact that Miki distinguished herself from institutionalized forms of Shinto prove that she meant to reveal an exclusive teaching? I do not doubt that Miki was apprehensive of being put under the administration of others just as the Tenrikyo canon claims (KSD, 107, 148). However, this does not mean that Miki claimed that her teachings were exclusive from "Shinto."

There are ten gods, some of whom are given names from the Shinto tradition and are identified with Buddhist deities as well. At least seven copies of the story of origin identify the ten gods with the *Tenjin shichi dai chijin go dai*, the copy of the *Kami no kōki* attributed to Masuda Chūhachi 増田忠八. This text explains that seven gods make up the seven generations of heavenly creator gods and are additionally accorded a syllable of the Buddhist formula *na mu a mi da bu tsu*, while five gods make up the five generations of earthly gods. There is evidence that Miki actually taught which buddha is identified with which god. Komatsu Jirō 小松治郎 notes in his 1885 copy of *Kami no kōki* that Iburi Izō 飯降伊蔵, who was chosen by Miki as her spiritual successor, taught this content during Miki's lifetime (*Kami no kōki* attributed to Komatsu; NAKAYAMA 1982, 150). ISHIZAKI Masao (1997, 67–73) has confirmed this to be the case, which proves that Miki's teaching was deeply rooted in Shinto-Buddhist realities and not just disseminated in a translatory fashion.

Furthermore, Miki utilized the mechanism of situating oneself within a greater cosmology by claiming revelation of a new "original" (*honji* 本地). The foundress was eighty-two years old in 1880 when she shared her story of creation for the first time (Tenrikyō Dōyūsha 1993, 250). She had spent the larger part of her life as a minor player in the cosmological power play of hierarchies in which the "original" and "trace" could be contested. Tsuji Chūsaku 辻 忠作, one of the first followers, recollects in 1898 that Miki had explained *jiba* ぢば to him as the "place" where humanity originated and where the "eight million gods" (*yaoyorozu no kami* 八百万神) came down as Tenri Ō no Mikoto (Nakayama 1947, 12). Another proof text is found in the copy of Kita Jirokichi 喜多治郎吉 from 1881:

> The five generations of earthly gods are the buddha Amida and comprise five gods. The seven generations also include Izanami and Izanagi and the buddha Amida. This may look like a conflation of Shinto and Buddhism (*shinbutsu konko* 神仏コンコ), but if we compare this to a tree, then there are eight branches, but one root. (*Tenrin Ō no Mikoto*, 102)

Authorized by her superior insight as the "Shrine of Tsukihi," Miki seems to have intended to lay claim to a new interpretation of the known cosmology of gods and buddhas. Her god was a combinatory god of this cosmology, and, while it was a new "original foundation," it still derived legitimacy from the imperial creator gods, Izanami and Izanagi.[5] Erica Bafelli and Ian Reader (2019, 18) have noted that the NRMs often present themselves as "new" in the guise of the "old." However, Miki had little incentive to completely separate her revelation from the known cosmology, that is, to found an exclusive "religion." After all, the whole idea of establishing an "original" is premised on there being "traces," upon which to establish a new shrine. In short, Miki needed the Shinto-Buddhist cosmology as a basis.[6] Unaware that Shinto would soon be conceptualized as a nonreligious ideology, Miki offered a new but minor interpretation of the existing cosmology with her revelation about the true origin of the world. In the 1890s, however, Miki's teaching would be perceived as a dangerously religious dimension of Shinto.

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[5] The story of creation was often included in the *Ofudesaki*, indicating that both were canon. The identification of the ten gods with kami or buddhas continued at least until 1889, as found in the *Yamazawa sama ohanashi* (1889, 128).

[6] Miki herself was challenged by the same logic in 1865 by Sukezō 助蔵, a follower who claimed that he was the "original foundation" and thus superior to Miki (Tenrikyō Dōyūsha 1993, 105–108). There were also other followers who believed themselves to be gods (Inoue 2015, 202).

Accusations of Exclusivism

There were around twenty authors, as well as the newspaper *Chūō shinbun* in particular who published criticism of Tenrikyo between 1890 and 1902.[7] While many critics supported Buddhism in its competition with the new religious groups, SANO Tomonori (2007) and KIM Taehoon (2009) have proposed that the main target of these critics was less Tenrikyo per se than its connection to Shinto. Most authors came from Shinto or Buddhist households and had been priests or monks, although nearly all had ceased their traditional functions of edification (HATAKAMA 2016). Boasting knowledge gained at religious seminars or what would later become universities, they disseminated ideas on religion, philosophy, and ethics gleaned from leading intellectuals of their day as self-appointed watchdogs of society.

Kaneko Dōsen presents his case in an entertaining way: as a trial. The prosecution opens with the statement that Tenrikyo cannot claim protection under Article 28 of the 1890 Constitution, which excludes threats to the nation from the freedom of belief (*Shinri no saiban*; *Shinri no saiban: Yōkyō bokumetsu*, part 5, 3–5). Being a patriot meant supporting the state-sanctioned nonreligious but sacralized Shinto ideology. Haneda Ayaharu, who engaged in municipal politics, is quite clear on this and claims that Shinto is not a religion (*Tenrin Ō benmō*, 34–36). Buddhist Itō Yōjirō clarifies that Shinto solely serves to honor the gods and the emperor and admonishes the Shinto sects for allowing into their ranks immoral heretics (*inshi* 淫祠), who mistake *kannagara* (the way of the gods) for religion (*Inshi jūichi kyōkai*, foreword, 5–6). So, while becoming a Shinto sect offered the only legal means to groups in the Shinto-Buddhist landscape to conduct activities deemed religious, its existence alongside nonreligious Shinto was the conundrum at the heart of the critics' ire. At the very least, all agreed on what was not a proper Shinto religion: one that renders belief in the imperial ancestor gods falsifiable by deviant systems of knowledge like Tenrikyo.

The defendant Tenrikyo reportedly testified the intent to remain silent on all allegations (*Shinri no saiban: Yōkyō bokumetsu*, part 3, 24; TENRIKYŌ DŌYŪSHA 1993, 131). But extant writings from the 1890s onward indicate that more so than in Miki's time, Tenrikyo's followers felt the need to put forth their visions of their faith. As a result, they interpret Miki's teachings through the same lens as the critics by aligning their views with Shinto and science, thus reconciling their minor faith with the major trends of their time.

Kaneko's trial virtually establishes knowledge as Tenrikyo's judge, following Positivist Henry T. Buckle's motto that "nothing can weaken superstition but knowledge."[8] Believer Takeda Fukuzō was right to worry that the critics were intentionally wielding the accusation of superstition to undo the group (*Tenrikyō mondō fukyō no chūseki: Ichimei, kyōshoku no shōshū*, 13–16). The label "superstition" was associated with "irrationality," assumptions of a wrong causality, and "immorality," the transgression of religious standards. The critics presented these traits as essential facts, when in truth their usage of the label was a strategy to negotiate the boundaries between religion and science. Josephson (2012, 251) has stressed the political dimension of this strategy. This political negotiation was the discursive field the Tenrikyo critics operated in. They used markers of differentiation like "licentious" (*in* 淫), "evil" (*ja* 邪), "deviant" (*i* 異), and "mistaken" (*mei* 迷) to renegotiate the boundaries of religion. Accordingly, Tenrikyo is tried by the combined knowledge of Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Shinto is called to evidence whether Tenrikyo follows the way of the gods, Confucianism to assess their moral qualities, and Buddhism to serve as a template for a true religion. The verdict of Kaneko's trial, subtitled "Eradicate the Demonic Teaching," was already in. To safeguard the national ideology, Tenrikyo had to be expelled from Shinto as heresy and from religion as superstition.

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[7] The biographies of nine authors can be found in HATAKAMA (2016, 80–86), while TENRIKYŌ DŌYŪSHA (2012, 132) lists nine titles. The *Chūō shinbun* was the second largest newspaper in national circulation in 1895 (HUFFMAN 1997, 386–387).

Kaneko's trial presents evidence on how Tenrikyo is a heresy. The illustrious nativist historians Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 and Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 were consulted to establish that Japan was created by Izanami and Izanagi, proving the emperor's descent from Amaterasu as historical fact. Kaneko then scorns Tenrikyo for conflating the seven generations of heavenly gods with the five generations of earthly gods within God the Parent on the grounds that the first creator gods had long receded from the world as *rishin* 理神, gods who do not intervene in the world after creation (*Shinri no saiban*, 45–47). Thus, unbeknown to the uneducated foundress, the first god Kuninotokotachi could not have revealed himself to her (*Tenrin Ō benmō*, 20). This point was important to nationalist critics like Kaneko. At a time when the Christian view of genesis was criticized as unscientific, the divine descent of the emperor originating with Amaterasu had to be explained historically in order to be defended from accusations of superstition. While Kaneko believed the Shinto chronicles to be beyond reproach, Tenrikyo's story of creation, however, deviated from Shinto lore while including Izanagi and Izanami. Thus, the Tenrikyo creation story exposed the divinity of the emperor to the risk of being falsified. A deistic interpretation of Shinto allowed ideologues like Kaneko to circumvent deliberation on creation by accepting the knowledge as lost with the withdrawal of the gods from this world, while maintaining the sacred origins of Japanese history (Godart 2017, 24, 51–56). Therefore, the transformation of gods into fish, snakes, and so on in Miki's telling of creation were degraded to nothing but animal worship, echoing critiques of the cultural evolutionist Herbert Spencer's notion of primitive superstition (*Jicchi ōyō bukkyō enzetsu kihan*, 190).

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[8] Kaneko (*Shinri no saiban: Yōkyō bokumetsu*, part 1, 1) paraphrases Buckle (1878).

Miki's emphasis on God the Parent in her story of origin was highlighted as a wholesale rejection of Shinto. Apprehensive of God the Parent being presented as a combinatory god, Tsukinowa Bōten claims that Tenrikyo believes its god to "declare the only true will of heaven" and that anyone who believes in kami or buddhas will receive punishment, just like the Christians (*Bukkyō saikin no teki: Ichimei Tenrikyō no gaidoku*, 53–54). Nationalists had fears that Christianity was undermining emperor worship, a view that was fanned by the influential scholar Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎. Against this background, many critics played to the old trope of likening Tenrikyo to formerly banned Christianity (Inoue 1995, 59; Ōhashi 2014). Moreover, invoking Christianity served to frame Tenrikyo as a "revealed religion" because of its creationism, with the critics strategically infusing the concept with the idea of absolutism and exclusivism.

As evidenced by the witnesses in Kaneko's trial, the critics call upon both old and new scientific authority to safeguard an idealized deistic Shinto history by juxtaposing it with Miki's revelation to discard the latter as heretical superstition. This is why they deliberately refuse to accept God the Parent in the form of ten gods as part of the Shinto cosmology and thus Miki's revelation to be a new variant of Shinto.[9] To the contrary, they utilize the fact that religious exclusivism opposes the Shinto ideology. Rendering God the Parent monotheist is the perfect strategy to expel Tenrikyo as blasphemy. Yet, Christianity anchored monotheism firmly within the conceptual realm of religion. The next step was to prove that Tenrikyo was not, in fact, a true religion.

God the Parent, conceptualized as a monotheistic god, can be disproved. Katō elaborates that a creator is omnipotent, but science dictates that the universe is infinite, which represents the "universal principle" (*uchū no dōri* 宇宙の道理). But there cannot be two absolutes, which convicts monotheism of believing in a "principle outside of reason" (*rigai no ri* 理外の理) that is flawed logic (*Jicchi ōyō bukkyō enzetsu kihan*, 33). In Kaneko's trial, Buddhism posits a pantheist idea that the universe itself is god (*Shinri no saiban: Yōkyō bokumetsu*, part 4, 8; *Jicchi ōyō bukkyō enzetsu kihan*, 36). The critics walk in the footsteps of Buddhist philosopher Inoue Enryō 井上円了, who had already discredited creationism as an effect without a cause, which is impossible according to the law of the conservation of energy (Godart 2017, 77). Katō agrees that this law, which says that things always change but the sum of their energy does not, corresponds to the

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[9] The critics ignore Hirata Atsutane's monotheistic interpretations of Shinto, which were possibly influenced by Christianity (Godart 2017, 53–55). Only Matsuyama Shunkaku gripes that some think that Shinto has a creation theory because of Atsutane (*Tenri taiji shōmakyō*, 51).

Buddhist principle of karmic causality (*inga* 因果). This proves Enryō correct: he had claimed that Buddhist truth had preceded and anticipated nineteenth-century empirical science and as such has always embodied evolution (Godart 2017, 75–77; *Jicchi ōyō bukkyō enzetsu kihan*, 36). In this way, the old and new norms of discerning the truth are knowledge, which is revealed in modernity as science because science is reason itself. To the critics, natural science and the spiritual are ultimately one, a view that culminates in the following equation: The cosmic principle is called the law of karma in Buddhism, heaven's destiny (*tenmei* 天命) in Confucianism, or the way of the gods (*kannagara* 惟神) in Shinto (*Tenri taiji shōmakyō*, 65). The only true religion is Buddhism, which is in its essence a "revealed religion" as it offers salvation based on karma. This means it is nothing other than cosmic *qua* scientific law, which is mirrored in the core of the Japanese nation, Shinto, and its guiding Confucian principles. In contrast, monotheistic religions like Christianity and Tenrikyo defy this basic universal logic in their very religious essence.

TENRIKYO IS THE PINNACLE OF KANNAGARA

In the 1890s, Tenrikyo proponents felt the need to clarify Tenrikyo's relation to what Shinto had become. Titles such as *Tenrikyō konpon jitsugi: Haja kenshō* profess to reveal the "fundamental truth" to "fight misconceptions." In this particular work, Yamanaka Jūtarō 山中重太郎, a believer turned conman, directly interviewed Tenrikyō's leadership (Hatakama 2016, 92; Yasui 2008, 111). However, most other authors involved in the Tenrikyo discourse at this time were relatively unknown. The publication of these pamphlets without the involvement of the headquarters indicates that the authors tried to independently impact missionary activity and public understanding of Tenrikyo by advocating a true "Shinto Tenrikyo." Tsutsukawa Sueko's 筒川すえ子 apologetics set the tone: "What is the goal of Tenrikyo? It is to promulgate the great way of the gods" (*kannagara no daidō* 惟神の大道) (*Tenrikyō juka mondō: Tsūzoku*, question 7). Maki Tengai 真木天涯, who claims to have studied Buddhism and Christianity at the Shingon school's seminary (*daigakurin* 大学林) but had since become a Shintoist (*shintōka* 神道家), cites the Rescript on Education to clarify that Tenrikyo's teaching is Shinto because it mandates the worship of the imperial ancestor gods starting from Kuninotokotachi (*Tenrikyō tōron enzetsu: Shintō jubutsu ichimei, fukyōka no tamatebako*, 50). Countering the critics' attacks, staunch patriot and Tenrikyo believer Shibazaki Suizan 柴崎翠山 scoffs that nobody thinks the ancestral gods to be corporeal, suggesting that it is the critics' attacks on God the Parent that cast unacceptable doubt on the imperial ancestor gods (*Shinkan hikkei Shintō kyōdō kihan*, 7–9).

Takeda, a believer, if his self-publishing of two apologetics is any indication, raises the question: if Shinto and the Tenrikyo are the same, why is there a need for Tenrikyo? He carefully answers his rhetorical question: Shinto and Tenrikyo attribute the same miraculous power through the same kami, but their respective teachings differ. Takeda frames his argument in the context of modern cultural evolutionary theory, exclaiming that while the gods of Shinto were born in myth and are part of Japanese history, faith in these gods was a rational development that culminated in Tenri Ō no Mikoto being revealed as the "supreme original God" (*mujō honzon* 無上本尊) (*Tenrikyō mondō fukyō no chūseki: Ichimei*, *kyōshoku no shōshū*, 4–9). Yet, the existence of this god depends on whether people believe in it (*Tenrikyō mondō fukyō no chūseki: Ichimei*, *kyōshoku no shōshū*, 32–34). As such, Takeda strategically acknowledges Shinto as existing in a secular history while placing the Shinto Tenrikyo in the protected realm of religion beyond the boundary of politics.

The idea of revelation plays a crucial part in this narrative, which is formulated by connecting old ideas to the critics' arguments. At least two copies of Miki's story of origin called *Kami no kōki* state that God the Parent is officially named Tenri Ō no Mikoto, because Miki's heart was filled with *tenri* 天理, or "heavenly reason" (*Kami no kōki* attributed to Masui and Komatsu; Nakayama 1982, 126, 145). Yamanaka Jūtarō reminds his readers that this corresponds exactly to the national credo of the Great Promulgation Campaign, which he claims is the same as how Tenrikyo teaches to follow the gods as "reason, the law of heaven," while being governed by "the way, which is the law of earth" (*tenri jindō* 天理人道) (*Ten no hikari: Tenri kyōgi*, 7). Thus, fully agreeing with the critics that the Shinto way of the gods embodies the universal principle, the Tenrikyo proponents simply extend the critics' deist argument. Highly aware of how the critics tried to frame Tenrikyo, Takeda intentionally uses their wording of "the principle" (*dōri* 道理), reworded as "heavenly reason" (*tenri*), with both meaning the basic law of the universe. As the critics stress, this "principle" or "reason" is the principle of karmic causality (*Tenrikyō mondō fukyō no chūseki: Ichimei*, *kyōshoku no shōshū*, 1–2, 24–26). Framing Tenrikyo as being one with the gods and the universe naturally acknowledges the laws of karma and science, as exemplified in the story of creation.

Tsutsukawa refutes the view that Miki's teaching is unscientific and primitive, saying that the muddy ocean in the creation story should not be taken literally but rather is essentially congruent with the primal chaos of the Shinto chronicles and the scientific fireball theory (*Tenrikyō juka mondō: Tsūzoku*, question 39). Takeda also labors to explain why Tenrikyo does not commit heresy when it compares the kami to fish and insects:

> Humankind did not come fully formed.… Nowadays, anthropologists argue that humans and apes share the same ancestry. The complex ape is no doubt an evolution from simpler insects and fish, and… the driving force behind its evolution is God.
>
> (*Tenrikyō mondō fukyō no chūseki: Ichimei, kyōshoku no shōshū*, 30–32)

Takeda indicates that Miki had revealed the scientific truth of evolution in her story of origin. Yamanaka, on the other hand, scoffs that this cannot be said of any other religion (*Tenrikyō konpon jitsugi: Haja kenshō*, 13). Ikubo Teikichi 井久保定吉 gloats that, in a world of cultural evolution, the power of a religion is determined by its vitality, making the novel, fast-growing Tenrikyo the obvious winner in the "survival of the fittest" as the "most enlightened" and "best fit to the Japanese national character" (*Nihon yuiitsu Shintō Tenrikyō taii*, 14–17). The proponents attribute such qualities as progress and enlightenment to Tenrikyo, which embodies the cosmic, scientific law and therefore the way of the gods. Tenrikyo thus righteously rises to the position of being the newest, best version of religious Shinto.

The proponents make it a point to take up the idea of modern religion having to be based in science and conform to the way of the gods in a form of pantheism, which had been used against Tenrikyo. Yet they strive to develop this idea and present an evolutionary framework for Shinto with God the Parent as its source, who is not just one original foundation among many possible interpretations, but ultimately the sole origin and as such encompasses Shinto, Buddhism, and all other religions as the only true god.

THE GODS ARE NOT DUST SWEEPERS

The main reason why the critics denied Tenrikyo the credentials of a proper religion was the perception of the group's faith healing as irrational and primitive "magic" (Inoue 1995, 67–69; Shimada 2009, 108). Bernd-Christian Otto, however, posits that any practice disparaged as "magical" can interchangeably be glossed as "religious," too. He cautions that even though authors often truly believe that religious and magical practices are fundamentally different, scholars should not mistake a discursive strategy of ascribing legitimacy for an essential concept (Otto 2011, 31, 624). Taking inspiration from this insight, I propose that the exclusion of Tenrikyo's faith healing was not the goal per se but a strategy to redefine healing in Shinto and Buddhism. Tenrikyo was excluded because of its likeness to both traditions, which was glaringly evident due to the history of interactions between these traditions. Nonetheless, Tenrikyo's healing practices were rejected.

A case in point were *kaji kitō* 加持祈祷 (healing prayer rituals for exorcizing capricious beings), which were blamed for polluting one's spirit and causing sickness through the power of the gods. By the nineteenth century, *kaji kitō* had become an umbrella term for healing prayer techniques in general (WINFIELD 2005). Miki herself had taken the role of a medium to cure her son's illness. Yet, it was revealed to her that "the origin of illness lies in your own mind" (*Mikagura uta*, song 20, verse 10) and a "sign of God" (*Ofudesaki*, part 2, verses 22–23). Humankind is mandated to rid itself of the so-called "dust of the mind" (*kokoro no hokori* 心のほこり) to reach salvation, that is, paradise on earth. Preaching, dancing the *kagura zutome* かぐらづとめ (a ritual dance to the accompaniment of singing the *Mikagura uta*), and *sazuke* さづけ (healing prayer) were part of the repertoire to reach this goal, as well as administering holy water or amulets. SHIMAZONO Susumu (1979, 399–403) has pointed out that in contrast to traditional *kaji kitō* practice, the success of which relied on the persuasion of arbitrary gods and buddhas through prayer, Tenrikyo could promise healing success due to Miki, the "shrine of God," being permanently favored by God the Parent. However, insofar as healing was premised on prayers to a deity, it could just as well be argued that Tenrikyo still followed conventional *kaji kitō* logic, depending on the agenda of the respective judge.

Kaneko's prosecution first invokes the authority of the law (*Shinri no saiban: Yōkyō bokumetsu*, part 1, 5–6). The *kaji kitō* provisions of 1873 (Kitō Kin'atsu 祈祷禁圧) banned shamanistic practices for inhibiting the new medical system. These laws have been read as part of the state's efforts to override folk wisdom, that is, to ban "magic" and "superstition" (KAWAMURA 2006, 37–49). However, Kaneko notes how these provisions are of great concern to all Shinto sects, which, "in response to the demands of the people," continue to offer healing based on the addendum from 1882 that allowed healing practice for doctrinal instructors on the condition that the supplicant had sought medical treatment (*Shinri no saiban: Yōkyō bokumetsu*, part 1, 6). Thus, the state did not ban magic, nor did the critics unanimously mean to condemn all healing practices. Tenrikyo healing was protected as religious by law unless it "hindered the practice of medicine," as Kaneko eagerly points out. The best strategy to exclude Tenrikyo from the religious was to prove it was harmful superstition. Kaneko's prosecution gives evidence as follows:

> The defendant, Tenri church, does not allow medicine or consulting a doctor… claiming that if their doctrinal instructors pray for healing (*kitō sureba* 祈祷すれば), one will be completely healed.… Many people take medicine too late and throw away their precious lives.
>
> (*Shinri no saiban: Yōkyō bokumetsu*, part 3, 6–7)

Itō highlights that Tenrikyo even claims to heal nonbelievers. Since God the Parent is an absolute monotheist deity, he frames healing as a matter of natural logic: either it always works or does not work at all (*Inshi jūichi kyōkai*, Tenrikyō, 5). This grants an opening to debunk Tenrikyo's healing on two accounts. First, it is blasphemy. Traditionally, healing practice is to be understood as a display of sincere gratitude to the deities and "to await blessings." If the gods answered every human whim, they themselves would be perverted (*ja* 邪) (*Inshi jūichi kyōkai*, Kurozumikyō, 6–8). The coercion of God the Parent, who represents the imperial ancestor gods, makes Haneda exclaim: "Is it not blatant blasphemy to employ the gods as dust sweepers?" (*Tenrin Ō benmō*, 28). Second, healing is a perversion of natural law. As a logical consequence of the argument that karmic causality, the gods, and science are congruent and embody the universal principle, supernatural healing is flawed logic and no longer viable.

Katō is triumphant that the advance of science has finally done away with popular misguided practices and beliefs (*jagi jadō* 邪義邪道) in healing, but not true religion (*Jicchi ōyō bukkyō enzetsu kihan*, 9). Itō allows that the deities do grant blessings. But Dōgen 道元, the revered patriarch of the Sōtō Zen school in Japan, had already preached in the thirteenth century that healing practices were a crutch, or an expedient means (*hōben* 方便), which helps guide the unenlightened to salvation in the afterlife (*anshin ritsumei* 安心立命) and that it is to be discarded as soon as human progress allows. Now, Itō Yōjirō declares, this "enlightened" age of science has come. Here, Buddhists assert the critical difference between Buddhism and Tenrikyo: Buddhism aims at true salvation while Tenrikyo only offers this-worldly salvation, neglecting the soul (*Inshi jūichi kyōkai*, Kurozumikyō, 6–7; Tenrikyō, 7). The critics present God the Parent as an "always answering God" to logically disprove the existence of this deity.

But could Tenrikyo not redeem itself by disavowing its "magic" as the Buddhists did? After all, Tenrikyo did adjust its teaching, for example by banning the story of origin in 1887. The critics, however, block this possibility. Matsuyama lectures that "the essence of a religion is nothing that could be changed. It should have a solid core" (*Tenri taiji shōmakyō*, 3). With this, the critics trap Tenrikyo in the "compromised revelation" trope that would haunt later research. This final verdict shows how Christianity as a "revealed religion" had come to dominate the critic's model of what constituted a religion. The foundress was convicted of having taught superstitious healing, which proves her god wrong. However, reforming the revealed creed would likewise disprove God the Parent. To the critics, the Shinto elements in Shinto Tenrikyo were only superficial. In truth, Tenrikyo never was and never could aspire to be a legitimate religion. Ironically, their argument of Tenrikyo being two-faced—that is, only pretending to be Shinto—would resonate quite strongly with the group's own view.

GOD DOES NOT PUNISH PEOPLE

The proponents' writings reveal significant overlap with how the critics defended Buddhism. Takeda Fukuzō scolds people who say that Tenrikyo prohibits going to the doctor, stating that they truly do not know the teaching at all (*Tenrikyō mondō fukyō no chūseki: Ichimei*, *kyōshoku no shōshū*, 14). Miki was clear on the workings of healing: "Do not think that incantations (*jitsu* 術) or magical arts (*hō* 法) are great. The mind's sincerity is the true art" (*Ofudesaki*, part 5, verse 44). Miki clearly did not think of her healing as *kaji kitō* but as salvation through sincere belief, placing importance on distinguishing her new "original foundation" from other traditions. This credo is reiterated in the 1890s by, for instance, Yamazawa Ryōjirō 山澤良次郎, who taught that God does not hear the clapping of hands for *kaji kitō* if the true heart does not ring and that medicine is ultimately a provisionary means (*ōbō* 応法) (Yasui 2008, 122–128). Citing Miki's *Mikagura uta* (song 2, verse 6), Ikubo, Tsutsukawa, and Maki vocally warn that one should "never make an unreasonable prayer" when medical treatment is available (*Nihon yuiitsu Shintō Tenrikyō taii*, 22–24; *Tenrikyō juka mondō: Tsūzoku*, question 12; *Tenrikyō tōron enzetsu: Shintō jubutsu ichimei, fukyōka no tamatebako*, 1). Medicine is elevated from expedient means to an integral part of the process to cleanse one's soul, meaning that medical progress is part of the great plan of salvation.

The proponents agreed that true religions like Tenrikyo teach about the "salvation of the soul" (*anshin ritsumei* 安心立命). Takeda argues that science and religion have both originated from the great mystery, the absolute (*hontai* 本体), and that neither can debunk the other in their struggle to reveal the mystery. Religion's solution then is that one must repent to reach blissful unity with god, the great mystery. For this, *kaji kitō* is necessary. Here, Takeda throws the attack on Tenrikyo's *kaji kitō* practice right back at the critics. He says that *kaji kitō* can only be expedient means (*hōben* 方便). He contends that, in both Buddhism and Shinto, they use holy water, divination, talismans, and more, thus belying the critics' claim of an ideal Buddhism without *kaji kitō*. To the contrary, expedient means is needed as an expression of faith and indispensable to sustain religious organizations (*Tenrikyō mondō fukyō no chūseki: Ichimei*, *kyōshoku no shōshū*, 36–38, 15). Concerning the workings of *kaji kitō*, Takeda beats the critics with their own weapons:

> God does not punish people. Those who believe God does this do not understand that it is karma that comes for them.… They falsely believe that God sits somewhere apart from the universe and has the omnipotence to create or extinguish life or that God tells people to not take medicine.… These beliefs are all without proper logic.
>
> (*Tenrikyō mondō fukyō no chūseki: Ichimei*, *kyōshoku no shōshū*, 41–42)

Maki theorizes in detail that if one's sins from previous lives are too strong or that medicine and faith in this life are too weak, one will not heal. There is a karmic battle to be fought, which could result in this-worldly benefits, a sign of having purified all the dust from the chain of karma (*Tenrikyō tōron enzetsu: Shintō jubutsu ichimei, fukyōka no tamatebako*, 70–71).

Not all authors agree with this pantheist view. Some opt to see God the Parent as *rigai no ri*, but in doing so they still invoke agnosticism—no matter the criticism, science cannot ultimately disprove the gods (*Tenrikyō konpon jitsugi: Haja kenshō*, 51–53; *Shinkan hikkei Shintō kyōdō kihan*, 11–15). Also, all agree on the workings of karma and that god and this-worldly benefits can only be reached in an ultimate effort of faith, affirming the critics' stance that true faith is the locus of religion. As such, the proponents redefine "superstitious magic" as a religious practice that aims at salvation of the soul, a practice grounded in Miki's revelation of the great absolute, the ultimate mystery. While the tendencies of claiming pantheist unity with Buddhism and Shinto are strong, these are ultimately subsumed under Miki's absolute revelation.

TENRIKYO WILL CONQUER THE WORLD

Tenrikyo proponents argued for a different version of "revealed religion" than the critics and, at least nominally, their leadership. Nakayama Shinjirō 中山新治郎 published a provisional official explanation of the *Mikagura uta* in 1900, written by Nakanishi Ushirō (Tenrikyō Dōyūsha 1993, 222–238). It explains that medicine is part of God's plan to guide humanity to perfection and that, while medicine is material, the goal of salvation is purely spiritual. This interpretation conformed to the *zeitgeist* of the twentieth century when belief in miracles was confined to an individuals' heart. Therefore, it was these spiritual interpretations without this-worldly benefits that truly initiated Tenrikyo's process of becoming a "religion" (Sano 2008, 203).

Yamanaka emphasizes that, while interpretations necessarily change over time, ultimately salvation has always been Tenrikyo's true unchangeable core (*honshitsu* 本質), a core that had been hidden because Tenrikyo had to persevere within the constraints of conventional Shinto (*zairai no Shintō* 在来の神道) (*Tenrikyō konpon jitsugi: Haja kenshō*, 8, 16–17). Finally, Nakanishi concurs with Nakayama Shinjirō (*Mikagura uta shakugi*, 81) that it has been recognized that "Tenrikyo is a new religion" (*shinshūkyō* 新宗教).[10] Well versed in the debates on religion, Nakanishi is convinced that modern religion must be a "revealed religion" with an absolute exclusive claim to originality. Nakanishi's verdict is radically different from that of the pantheistically inclined believers:

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[10] To my knowledge, this is the first reference to Tenrikyo as a "new religion" with a positive connotation.

> If you tried to make Tenrikyo gods into the Shinto gods from the chronicles, that would be like calling Greek Jupiter the Jewish Yahwe or… identifying Amenominakanushi 天御中主神 with Amida Nyorai. If Tenrikyo did [this], they would throw away their teaching and destroy themselves utterly.
> (*Shūkyōdan: Ichimei, Tenrikyō no kenkyū*, 20–21)

Nakanishi borrows legitimacy from foundress Miki, who had allegedly said that the Christian cross was a reference to the ten gods combined in God the Parent. The critics had used such statements to frame Tenrikyo as an exclusivistic religion, a blasphemy to Shinto, and a superstition violating the natural law, but elsewhere Nakanishi (*Tenrikyō kenshinron*, 75–77) turns the tables on them by claiming that Miki has thought of her religion as a "unified religion" (*tōitsu shūkyō* 統一宗教) that encompasses all others, but it is and has always been at its singular core a world religion. Ultimately, the proponents' plight was overheard by the Tenrikyo leadership in favor of the dual structure narrative, which hinges completely on the idea of Tenrikyo being an exclusivistic revealed religion, like the critics first made it out to be.

Conclusion

Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1984, 10) famously stated that "the concept 'religion' distorts what it seeks to illuminate." Thus, classifying Tenrikyo as a "revealed religion" in a Christian-occidental sense—a connotation that the concept "religion" adopted only at the turn of the twentieth century—has led to two distorting outcomes. First, it has locked the group in a "compromised revelation," because scholars could not see past the confines of their own modern bias concerning a secularized concept of religion in which faith healing practices no longer had a place. Second, it has obscured Tenrikyo's agency in the process of crafting their self-image in the first place. For Tenrikyo, this "distortion" is woven directly into their fabric, as their institutionalization coincided with the discussion of the category itself, the result of which would marginalize the NRM as "deficient." Yet, Tenrikyo showcases how enmeshed research and research subjects truly are, and that categories like "original" and "distortion" must be first and foremost recognized as framing strategies to uncover.

This article argues that NRMs such as Tenrikyo should not be seen as "new" but as a minority group in the landscape of Buddhist schools, Christian denominations, and the Shinto sects being defined in terms of "religions" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By considering Tenrikyo within a broader contextual framework, it is possible to understand the ambition of Tenrikyo proponents, who wholeheartedly believed that the "new religion" Tenrikyo would become the one true religion, as viable at that time.

The opposite is true. For their critics, it was precisely the "new" that proved effective in undermining Tenrikyo. The asymmetry of power dynamics between proponents and critics thus reveals the ambivalence of the term "new." But more importantly, the major-minor dichotomy is more conducive to recognizing how from the beginning the believer's interpretation of Miki's revelation was shaped through interdependent synergies of a "community" of critics and proponents. While being hierarchical, religious concepts formulated in elite discourses were disseminated and appropriated by Tenrikyo, thereby operationalizing them alongside the major traditions to claim authenticity and legitimacy in modern times.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DT *The Doctrine of Tenrikyo*. 10th ed. Ed. Tenrikyo Church Headquarters. Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, 1993.

KSD *Kōhon Tenrikyō kyōsoden* 稿本天理教教祖伝. 25th ed. Ed. Tenrikyō Kyōkai Honbu 天理教教会本部. Tenrikyō Doyūsha, 1974.

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