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From Shinto Sect to Religion

The De-Shintoization of Tenrikyo

This article explores the identity negotiation of Tenrikyo during the post-World War II period by focusing on the way and extent to which it redefined its relationship with the state, nation, and Shinto traditions at discursive, representational, and material levels. According to the official Tenrikyo narrative, its teachings were restored to their "original state" after the end of World War II. In this process, many aspects of the doctrinal discourse that had previously been associated with Japan-centered interpretations were replaced with abstract or spiritualistic counterparts. The initiative of restoration marks a departure from its prewar past regarding doctrinal discourse and religious rites. Tenrikyo also underwent a process of dissociation from its identity as a Sect Shinto organization, which it had maintained until the late 1960s. Tenrikyo's disaffiliation from Sect Shinto traditions resulted in "selective dissociation," which reflects the lasting—albeit reduced—impact of Shinto traditions on the material formation of Tenrikyo's sacred space. Using the complex process of Tenrikyo's dissociation from its past, this article addresses the question of how minority religions negotiate their marginality by constantly maneuvering their discursive and social locations in relation to what is viewed as a "proper" religion in changing sociopolitical circumstances in Japan.

KEYWORDS: Tenrikyo—restoration—Sect Shinto (*kyōha Shintō*)—de-Shintoization—selective dissociation

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Recent studies demonstrate how contemporary social and political discourses have conceptualized Shinto as more than a religious tradition. In legal contexts concerning the separation of religion and state in postwar Japan, practices and beliefs associated with Shrine Shinto are often seen as "in some ways similar to *religion*" but "are still *essentially different* from other religions," with a close association with Japanese national identity (Larsson 2020, 57). Aike Rots (2017, 19) demonstrates how actors mobilize a "Shinto environmentalist paradigm" to reconceptualize Shinto as "an ancient tradition of nature worship containing important physical, cultural and ethical resources for tackling today's environmental crisis." In a similar vein, Chika Watanabe (2015, 226) has shown that framing a particular religious group as Shinto can help render the group's beliefs, values, and practices as part of Japanese tradition and transform sectarian values concerning Shinto and nature into "universal environmental ethics." Together these studies reveal how religious organizations can exploit Shinto as a normative category to generalize their particular beliefs, practices, and values. This perspective also provides an analytical method for understanding the discursive strategies employed by groups that self-identify as Shinto.

What normative ideas could drive a religious organization to shed its former identity associated with Shinto? In this article, I explore this question by examining how Tenrikyo has negotiated its identity since World War ii. More specifically, I focus on Tenrikyo's redefinition of its relationship with the state and Shinto traditions. The official Tenrikyo narrative holds that the group's original religious teachings and practices were compromised due to the Japanese imperial government's regulation of religion during World War ii and that its teachings were "restored" (*fukugen* 復元) after the war's conclusion. This postwar restoration marked a departure from its prewar past in terms of its doctrinal discourse as well as its identity as a Shinto sect (*kyōha Shintō* 教派神道),[1] which Tenrikyo adopted to gain official recognition in the early 1900s. Currently, the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs categorizes Tenrikyo under "other religions" (*shokyō* 諸教), as "a religious organization that is not identified as being Shinto, Buddhist, nor Christian" (Bunkachō 2022, 24). However, Tenrikyo was not always categorized as such, and we find the same religious group included in

1. Sect Shinto refers to officially recognized religious groups that were allowed to promulgate their teachings as Shinto sects (Ōya 1996, 21). The term "sect," as used here for the translation of *kyōha*, is not intended to carry the derogatory meaning often associated with so-called heretical or cult groups.

the "Shinto" section of earlier issues of *Shūkyō nenkan* 宗教年鑑 (*Annual Report on Religions*). I argue that Tenrikyo underwent a process of "de-Shintoization"—adapting John Breen and Mark Teeuwen's notion of "Shintoization"—as part of its restoration initiative starting in the late 1960s.[2] This de-Shintoization project resulted in Tenrikyo's institutional disaffiliation from Sect Shinto and the selective reconfiguration of the material formation of its ritual space.

Prewar Development of Tenrikyo Traditions

Discussion of Tenrikyo's dissociation from its Shinto identity must begin with the question of how the religious organization first developed a Shinto identity after the "physical withdrawal" of foundress Nakayama Miki 中山みき in 1887.[3] Tenrikyo's religious doctrine, rituals, and other institutional characteristics were formalized against the backdrop of Japan's modernization project at the turn of the twentieth century. Moreover, Tenrikyo developed as an institution during what Shimazono Susumu (2009, 101) defines as State Shinto's "establishment period" (1890–1910), a period during which a ritual system, mythical symbols relating to the national polity, and organization and training programs for shrine priests began to take shape. In 1888, the religious community then led by Nakayama Shinnosuke 中山眞之亮—Miki's grandson—and Iburi Izō 飯降伊蔵—a follower who served Miki and later delivered divine instructions in her place—gained legal authorization as Shintō Tenri Kyōkai 神道天理教会 under the direct supervision of the Shinto Main Bureau (Shintō Honkyoku 神道本局), making it a Shinto sect. Official recognition gave a certain level of legal and social standing to the religious community, which had been under severe public scrutiny from both established religious traditions and government authorities since the time Miki was physically present. And yet, the religious community continued to face a wide array of criticisms from society, particularly from journalists who labeled the group as a "heretical, anti-social faith" (*inshi jakyō* 淫祠邪教) (Nagaoka 2015, 11, 69–77).

In 1896, this social tension culminated in the Home Ministry Directive Number Twelve (Naimushō kunrei kō dai jūni gō 内務省訓令甲第十二号) entitled "Tenri kyōkai ni taisuru torishimari kunrei (hatsugi)" 天理教会に対する取締訓令(発議).

2. John Breen and Mark Teeuwen (2010, 21) propose the term "Shintoization" to describe a process through which shrines, myths, and rituals that were not understood as elements of Shinto came to be assimilated into modern Shinto ideology. I use the concept of de-Shintoization to refer to a process through which Tenrikyo leaders remove elements considered to be part of (or have originated from) Shinto from the organization's traditions or strip them of their original meanings associated with Shinto.

3. According to Tenrikyo doctrine, Nakayama Miki is understood to have withdrawn from "physical life" (*utsushimi* 現身) and to continue to guide human beings toward salvation by virtue of the "truth of the ever-living Oyasama" (*Oyasama zonmei no ri* 教祖存命の理).

This directive enforced strict control and surveillance of the religious movement for allegedly "obstructing modern medical treatment" (*iyaku bōgai* 医薬妨害), "forcing monetary contribution" (*kifu kyōsei* 寄付強制), and "facilitating gender-mixed social space" (*danjo konkō* 男女混淆). In response to public scrutiny and criticism, the leaders of Tenri Kyōkai began a movement for sectarian independence (*ippa dokuritsu undō* 一派独立運動) in 1899 based on the recommendation from the superintendent of the Shinto Main Bureau (Ōya 1996, 235). To meet the government's criteria for a legitimate religious organization in line with the ideology of State Shinto, the group developed an institutionalized religious organization and systematized doctrine by delegating to external intellectuals including Shinto scholars Inoue Yorikuni 井上頼圀 and Henmi Nakasaburō 逸見仲三郎, religious studies scholar Nakanishi Ushirō 中西午郎, and journalist and novelist Udagawa Bunkai 宇田川文海 (Ōya 1996, 33–34, 237). After five attempts, the group was granted permission to become a Shinto sect independent from the Shinto Main Bureau under the name of Tenrikyo in 1908 (Ōya 1996, 244; TJ, 47–53).

The formation of the religious community into first Tenri Kyōkai and then an independent Shinto sect resulted in systematization efforts in line with the Meiji government's regulations on religious groups. In terms of doctrine, Tenrikyo compiled *Tenrikyō kyōten* 天理教教典 as its official doctrinal text in 1903 with the editorial cooperation of Inoue and Henmi. Also referred to as *Meiji kyōten* 明治教典,[4] the doctrine "downplayed as many magical and folk elements as possible while highlighting the moral principle existing in [Miki's] simple teachings, thus systematizing the teaching [of Tenrikyo] as a Shinto doctrine" (Ōya 1996, 241).

As for ritual arrangements, Tenri Kyōkai sought ways to mitigate the social and political pressures it faced in the aftermath of the Home Ministry Directive Number Twelve. It eventually altered the material and ritual arrangement of the *Kagura zutome* かぐらづとめ, a sacred dance taught by Miki, along with other important elements of the faith tradition as follows:

1. The first section of the service (*otsutome* おつとめ) should be omitted; only the second and third sections can be performed;
2. The *kagura* masks (*kagura men* かぐら面) should be placed in front of the altar (*shinzen* 神前) [rather than be worn by the service performers];
3. The service should be performed only by men;
4. As for the musical instruments (*narimono* 鳴物) for the service, only men's instruments can be performed; the women's instruments should not be used until they have been replaced [with acceptable alternatives];
5. Amulets (*mamorifuda* 守札) should be replaced with sacred mirrors (*shinkyō* 神鏡); and

4. For more details about *Meiji kyōten*, see Nagaoka in this special issue.

> 6. The divine name Tenri Ō no Mikoto 天理王命 should be altered to Tenri Ōkami 天理大神. (TJ, 812–813)

Notable here is the change made to the divine name Tenri Ō no Mikoto, which is one of the most fundamental aspects of Tenri faith, as well as the replacement of *mamorifuda* with *shinkyō*, which implies a clear association with contemporary Shinto traditions. Moreover, in response to governmental pressure to abolish the *Mikagura uta* みかぐらうた, Tenri Kyōkai adopted a ritual dance in the *Yamato mai* 大和舞 style called *Kami no mikuni* 神の御国, as well as ritual music and dance created by the Imperial Household Agency at the request of Shinnosuke (SATŌ 2010, 3–4).[5] This ritual dance was first performed in 1906 on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the foundress.[6] It continued to be performed at Tenrikyo Church Headquarters (Tenrikyō Kyōkai Honbu 天理教教会本部) and local churches until 1933 (SATŌ 2010, 8–9).

NAGAOKA Takashi (2015, 174) notes that the configuration of Miki's teachings as a systematized doctrine based on select interpretations of her texts "began to emerge in the context of 'national edification' in the twentieth century."[7] The Meiji government's promotion of a national edification (*kokumin kyōka* 国民教化) policy led to the Sankyō Kaidō 三教会同 (Three Religions Conference) in 1912, which enlisted the help of local representatives of Shinto, Buddhist, and Christian sects to disseminate and reinforce a sense of national identity among the populace. Tenrikyo became one of the most active participants in this initiative in the hope of using the opportunity to revitalize their proselytization efforts that had been hampered in previous years (LEE 1994, 40–42). Cooperation with state policy took the form of group proselytization (*shūdan fukyō hōshiki* 集団布教方式). Tenrikyo missionaries lectured on popular ethics (*tsūzoku rinri* 通俗倫理), namely self-sacrifice and contribution to the nation in places such as factories. These activities garnered Tenrikyo greater recognition and new followers (LEE 1994, 44–46). In the 1910s and 1920s, interpretations of Tenrikyo's

5. *Yamato mai* is a genre of performing arts involving songs and dances that are said to have existed in the Yamato region (present-day Nara Prefecture) since ancient times. The genre has been performed in various ceremonies at Kasuga Taisha 春日大社 and the Inner Shrine of the Ise 伊勢 shrines as well as at court rituals of the Imperial Palace (SATŌ 2010, 6–7).

6. In Tenrikyo, foundress Nakayama Miki's physical withdrawal is commemorated as an "anniversary" (*nensai* 年祭) rather than a "memorial." Except for the first and tenth anniversaries, the anniversary has been commemorated every ten years as important junctures for the faith community (TJ, 170–171).

7. This does not necessarily mean that ordinary followers were mainly concerned with the contribution to the nation. Referring to an empirical study of why people became Tenrikyo followers, NAGAOKA (2015, 167–170) finds that many of them entered the religious faith through the experience of recovery from illness and therefore may not have been affected by the nationalistic discourses produced by the organization.

scriptures—the *Ofudesaki* おふでさき, the *Mikagura uta*,[8] and the *Osashizu* おさしづ—began to appear in Tenrikyo's publications, including the *Michi no tomo* 道乃友 (currently written as みちのとも) monthly bulletin (Nagaoka 2015, 164–166).[9]

From the late 1920s to 1930s, Tenrikyo restored many aspects of the foundress's teachings that the government had prohibited before the organization achieved sectarian independence. For instance, Tenrikyo published the *Ofudesaki* in 1928 and *Osashizu* from 1927 to 1931. In addition, members resumed performances of *Kagura zutome* in place of *Kami no mikuni* in 1934, and Tenrikyo Church Headquarters installed the *Kanrodai* かんろ台 pillar at its center.[10] As for other doctrinal aspects, some of the names of deities in the teaching of *Tohashira no kamina* 十柱の神名 were altered in a way that deviated from the conceptual parameters of the *Meiji kyōten* (Hatakama 2006, 144, 151–157). This indicates that Tenrikyo was able to partially restore the foundress's original teachings despite its status as a Shinto sect.

However, Tenrikyo continued to experience political pressure and interference from the government. In November 1938, Nakayama Shōzen 中山正善—the then spiritual and administrative leader of Tenrikyo, known as the *shinbashira* 真柱 ("central pillar")—was summoned to the official residence of the Ministry of Education. There the Religions Bureau Chief Matsuo Chōzō 松尾長造 demanded that Tenrikyo contribute to the state by altering its teachings and practices. The next month, Shōzen submitted a proposal to change the doctrine, rituals, and other institutional aspects. At the same time, he officially announced "Instruction Eight" (Yutatsu dai hachi gō 諭達第八号) on 26 December to the entire religious community, exacting the measure known as "adjustment" (*kakushin* 革新). In terms of doctrinal and ritual aspects, among many changes this policy resulted in a move to base religious teachings primarily on the *Meiji kyōten* by recalling the *Ofudesaki* and *Osashizu* from local churches, prohibiting the teaching of *Doroumi kōki* 泥海古記 and other teachings related to the Tenri creation myth, and removing several songs from the *Mikagura uta* (Nagaoka 2015, 186–188).[11] Tenrikyo thus faced stricter state censorship from the outset of Japan's war efforts and up to the nation's defeat in 1945.

8. The *Mikagura uta* was published as early as 1888, the year after Miki's physical withdrawal (TJ, 321). This text is normally written in hiragana characters in the current official version, but the title of the 1888 text appears as 御かぐら歌.

9. As Ōya Wataru (1996, 33–58) has demonstrated, Udagawa Bunkai had already written commentaries on the interpretation of the foundress's teaching in *Michi no tomo* in the 1900s.

10. The *Kanrodai* is a wooden pillar placed at the center of Tenrikyo Church Headquarters to mark the place known as the *jiba* ぢば, which is believed to be the place where human beings were first conceived in Tenrikyo's creation story.

11. *Doroumi kōki* refers to *Moto hajimari no hanashi* 元初まりの話, which is a story of the

Postwar Restoration of Doctrine and Ritual

Tenrikyo officially describes the postwar reconfiguration of its doctrines, rituals, and other institutional practices and characteristics as "restoration." In the immediate aftermath of Japan's surrender on 15 August 1945, Nakayama Shōzen, the second *shinbashira*, announced the initiative to restore the teachings as they had been compromised due to the political circumstances in the early twentieth century. In the foreword to the first volume of *Fukugen*, the second *shinbashira* elaborates on the meaning of the restoration in ways that distinguish it from the idea of going back to the old ways:

> "[R]estoration" does not mean restoring things to their condition before the Adjustment. There is a clear difference in meaning between the restoration of the origin and the resumption of the old ways. Neither restoring things to their former appearance nor indulging in reminiscing about how things used to be is "restoration." It is my belief that the significance of "restoration" lies in seeking the origin and inquiring into the ultimate cause of everything and that this is why we can find the strength to achieve "restoration."
>
> (Translated in Tenrikyo Overseas Department 2010, 330–331)

With this view, Tenrikyo began to restore a wide array of teachings and practices. The performance of *Kagura zutome* resumed, and all songs of the *Mikagura uta* were restored as early as in October 1945. That same month, leaders conducted a doctrinal seminar involving lectures on the restored service. Tenrikyo immediately resumed distribution of the *Ofudesaki* to all local churches and began compiling *Tenrikyō kyōten* based on the scriptures; the latter was published in 1949. In later years, the organization published and distributed the *Osashizu* as well as a biography of the foundress titled *Kōhon Tenrikyō kyōsoden* 稿本天理教教祖伝 in 1956 (Nagaoka 2015, 272–274; Tenrikyo Overseas Department 2010, 331). In this way, Tenrikyo experienced a major reconfiguration of its religious doctrine and practices in the early postwar period with the aim of returning to the original teaching from the time the foundress was physically present. In terms of its legal status, Tenrikyo was recognized as a religious corporation on 28 December 1945 in accordance with the Religious Juridical Persons Directive (Shūkyō Hōjin Rei 宗教法人令). It was later registered as a new religious corporation on 17 May 1952 (Monbushō 1955, 87) under the 1951 Religious Juridical Persons Law (Shūkyō Hōjin Hō 宗教法人法).

The extent to which the restoration initiative achieved its intended purpose requires extensive analysis beyond the scope of this article. Still, it is worth mentioning that the restoration tends to dissociate Nakayama Miki's life and her

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beginning of the world and human beings that Miki taught to early followers in spoken language (TJ, 713). For more details about this story, see Nagaoka and Steffen in this special issue.

writings from the historical and cultural contexts in which she lived and posit her teachings as unique and distinct from other religions. This is evident in the narrative of *Kōhon Tenrikyō kyōsoden*, which is the official text of Nakayama Miki's life as the foundress of Tenrikyo. In his detailed analysis of how the text was compiled, Hatakama (2012; 2013, 77) shows how the final published draft "highlights the doctrinal significance of the 'completion of the service' while de-emphasizing [Tenrikyo's] relationship with its historical and social contexts." We may trace this perspective back to the second *shinbashira*'s formulation of Tenrikyo doctrine, which scholars have variably pointed out as having been influenced in one way or another by the modern discipline of religious studies, which the second *shinbashira* had studied under the supervision of Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎正治, a renowned and influential scholar of the academic field at Tokyo Imperial University (Shimazono 1980; Hatakama 2012; Nagaoka 2015; Watanabe 2019). The idea of Tenrikyo's "distinctiveness" is of particular relevance when analyzing Tenrikyo's dissociation from Shinto.

The De-Shintoization of Tenrikyo as Restoration

Tenrikyo completed the restoration of doctrinal discourses, the official narrative of the foundress's life, and the sacred ritual of *Kagura zutome* in the late 1950s. In the decades to follow, Tenrikyo continued its formal dissociation from organized Shinto and removal of Shinto-derived ritual elements. In terms of institutional affiliation, Tenrikyo experienced a major change toward the end of the 1960s. In December 1966, Tenrikyo's official weekly newspaper, *Tenri jihō*, published an article on the front page entitled "Tenrikyo is not a Shinto Sect: Clearing Up the Misunderstanding in Society and Pledging Single-Hearted Salvation at the Assembly."[12] This short news article, which reports the proceedings of the thirty-fourth assembly held from 27 to 29 November, declared that Tenrikyo was no longer part of Sect Shinto (Tenrikyō wa Kyōha Shintō ni arazu, 1). This statement marks a significant move away from Tenrikyo's institutional affiliation as a Shinto sect.

This newspaper article points to three important details pertaining to Tenrikyo's institutional affiliation. First, it implies that followers, as well as people in wider society, held different views as to whether Tenrikyo was a Shinto sect. The text goes as far as to state that, in addition to the misunderstanding held by people in the authorities and the mass media, there were even followers still affiliated with the Sect Shinto Union (Shintō Rengōkai 神道連合会).[13] This suggests that

12. The Assembly (Shūkai 集会) refers to Tenrikyo Church Headquarters' consultative body that was first introduced in 1941 when Tenrikyo's constitution was amended. The Assembly was renamed Kyōgikai 教義会 in 1947 and later changed back to its original name in 1959 (TJ, 426).

13. "Shintō Rengōkai" refers to Kyōha Shintō Rengōkai 教派神道連合会 (Sect Shinto Union).

Tenrikyo's identity as a non-Shinto religious organization was unclear to some in the faith community and in society at large. This is reflected in *Shūkyō nenkan*, which still categorized Tenrikyo as "Shinto" as of 1967 (Monbushō 1968, 55).

Second, the article clearly situates the declaration within the context of the postwar restoration, which is illustrated by the use of terms such as *fukugen kyōten* 復元教典 (restored doctrine) and *ōbō no michi* 応法の道 (the path modified to conform to the law). The latter phrase often refers to compromises that Tenrikyo had to make on its teachings and practices prior to the restoration. Tenrikyo's identity as a religion that is essentially distinct from Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity is most succinctly emphasized in the following remarks:

> The Meiji government stipulated that religions refer to Shinto, Buddhist, and Christian sects. We must wash away the long-lasting misunderstanding and declare once and for all that "*Tenrikyo is nothing but Tenrikyo*" and cooperate with other religions on that basis. This is the purpose of this declaration.
>
> (Tenrikyō wa Kyōha Shintō ni arazu, 1; emphasis added)

Lastly, Tenrikyo's dissociation from Sect Shinto traditions is presented as being closely associated with the organization's overseas mission, which was formally revitalized in 1961. The article states that "it is not only Japanese people," but rather "all people throughout the world," who are the beloved "children of God the Parent." This implies a difference in position in comparison to how Shinto identity was understood to be closely associated with Japanese people. In this way, dissociation from Sect Shinto represented an important move to ensure Tenrikyo's universal outreach in its mission. In accordance with the 1966 declaration, Tenrikyo eventually left the Sect Shinto Union on 30 April 1970 (Inoue 1991, xx). Tenrikyo would be listed as one of the "other religions" in *Shūkyō nenkan* from then on (Bunkachō 1971, 54).

The institutional dissociation from the Sect Shinto Union as declared in 1966 paved the way for alterations of Tenrikyo's ritual arrangements in subsequent decades. Before the 1970s, attendees of the monthly service held at Tenrikyo Church Headquarters would have noticed various ritual objects often associated with Shinto traditions placed around the center of the sanctuary. These implements included *himorogi* ひもろぎ (more commonly known as *masakaki* 真榊, a pair of sacred tree branches decorated with five-colored silk cloths as well as a ritual sword, mirror, and *magatama* 勾玉 beads) and *shimenawa* しめなわ (a rope commonly used to demarcate a sacred space in Shinto traditions). In

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The organization was originally called Shintō Dōshikai 神道同志会 when it was formed in 1895. Tenrikyo joined the Shinto association in 1912 when it was called Shintō Konwakai 神道懇話会 (Kinenshi Hensan Iinkai 1996, 159). After changing names several times, the Shinto association adopted the current name Kyōha Shintō Rengōkai in 1934 (Kinenshi Hensan Iinkai 1996, 10).

1976 and 1986, the headquarters stopped using *himorogi* and *shimenawa* at the monthly service. Tenrikyo also stopped conducting the ritual of offering sacred tree branches (*tamagushi hōken* 玉串奉献) at the monthly service in 1986 (TJ, 813; Tenrikyō Dōyūsha 2016, 112, 122, 142).

As with the 1966 declaration, these measures concerning Shinto-related ritual materials were undertaken as part of the restoration movement. In his New Year's address delivered on 5 January 1976, Nakayama Zenye, the *shinbashira* at the time, announced the abolition of using *himorogi* on the occasion of Nakayama Miki's upcoming ninetieth anniversary. His reasoning emphasized the importance of the "spirit of single-heartedness with God," which describes a conviction of faith that should be solely based on Nakayama Miki's teachings.

> Above all, the most fundamental point that we ought to keep in mind in conducting any kind of activity in our faith is to establish *the spirit of single-heartedness with God*.… This requires nothing other than firmly cultivating an attitude that enables us to take action solely based on our conviction of faith as opposed to basing our actions on worldly common ways or baseless claims in society.…
>
> We live in a time when we can perform the service exactly in the way Oyasama taught us… when we can practice the path of single-hearted salvation leading toward the Joyous Life just in the way the foundress had taught us without any reservation for anyone around us.
>
> (*Michi no tomo*, February 1976, 4–5; emphasis added)

The *shinbashira* implies that the use of *himorogi* was a product of conformation to the law during the time Tenrikyo was unable to express Miki's teachings. The preface to the February 1976 issue of *Michi no tomo*, in which the *shinbashira*'s address quoted earlier appears, explains the historical context in which Tenrikyo adopted the ritual ornament.

> As explained in *Kojikiden* 古事記伝, *himorogi* originally referred to "*sakaki* tree branches that are erected as an altar to enshrine [a deity]." This means that *himorogi* refers to a place where a deity resides in Shinto traditions rather than a mere ceremonial object as commonly understood in the Tenrikyo community. *Himorogi* came to be used when Tenrikyo was only recognized by society under the direct supervision of the Shinto Main Bureau. Our predecessors decided to use *himorogi* in Tenrikyo by suppressing their true feelings, and it has continued to be used until today. (*Michi no tomo*, February 1976, 1)

As part of its postwar restoration project, Tenrikyo leaders sought to dissociate from Shinto organizations and traditions at the material level. This was achieved by removing elements that were not considered to be genuinely based on Nakayama Miki's teachings during the second half of the twentieth century.

The view that Tenrikyo is not Shinto is further elaborated by the *shinbashira*'s

remarks in later years. In his address delivered at the closing ceremony of the first session of the doctrinal seminar held in 1987, *shinbashira* Nakayama Zenye elaborated on Tenrikyo's relationship with Shinto and other religions as follows.

> Now, I would like to give you a few words of caution regarding how we should approach the Story of Creation. If you take the text of the story literally, most of the time you are likely to encounter questions that would turn out to be meaningless. Take for example the sacred names given to the instruments as well as to God the Parent, who is God of Origin and God in Truth. The *Ofudesaki* clearly states that Kunitokotachi no Mikoto refers to Tsukisama (the moon) and Omotari no Mikoto to Hisama (the sun). However, if worldly common ways of understanding override our understanding of the teachings, we may use as the basis of our judgment the fact that the same sacred names appear in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* and arrive at misleading conclusions, such as that Oyasama's teachings are Shinto. If this has occurred to any of you, I must say that is not correct….
>
> *The Doctrine of Tenrikyo* says that God had already given us nine-tenths of the complete teachings. This means that we human beings had been taught the divine truth little by little on different occasions by the time the last teaching was taught by God the Parent. I do not see any problem, therefore, that the same sacred names from the story of creation exist elsewhere. At any rate, this path is not Shinto, Buddhism, Christianity, nor Mohammedism [that is, Islam]. *It is a religion in its own right* (*Hitotsu no rippa na shūkyō de arimasu* 一つの立派な宗教であります). It is the ultimate teaching that God the Parent directly taught us human beings.
>
> (*Shinbashira kunwashū*, 773–774; emphasis added)

This remark was made twenty-one years after the declaration to dissociate from Sect Shinto and one year after the abolition of *shimenawa* and *tamagushi hōken* from the ritual arrangement of the monthly service. For many readers, the sentence "It is a religion in its own right" may echo a very similar phrase that appeared in the 1966 declaration: "Tenrikyo is nothing but Tenrikyo." Moreover, the phrase "this path is not Shinto, Buddhism, Christianity, nor Mohammedism [Islam]" bears a resemblance to what a Tenrikyo proponent asserted in the Meiji period (see Steffen in this special issue). It can be said that the period from the late 1960s to the late 1980s saw a culmination of Tenrikyo's long-standing pursuit of a distinctive religious identity.[14]

14. It is important to be aware as a point of reference that Tenrikyo is not the only Sect Shinto-related religious tradition that has sought to shed Shinto elements from its tradition. For instance, Konkōkyō 金光教 reportedly restructured its ritual arrangements in 1982 so that they would look "less obviously 'Shinto'" (Konkōkyō Honbu Kyōchō 1986, 450–454; Breen and Teeuwen 2010, 212).

Selective De-Shintoization

Tenrikyo's move toward establishing a non-Shinto, independent religious organization entailed major material changes at their headquarters and local churches. However, this is not to say that the dissociation from Shinto traditions resulted in a complete makeover of ritual space or other Shinto-derived practices. Many material and liturgical elements that suggest Shinto influences remain in use in Tenrikyo rituals today, particularly the use of ritual space and music.

When visiting a local Tenrikyo church today, one would never fail to notice the presence of shrines (*yashiro* 社), which serve as altars for God the Parent (Oyagami 親神), Oyasama 教祖, and Mitamasama 祖霊様. Bamboo blinds (*misu* 御簾) imprinted with Tenrikyo's emblem demarcate the sacred space and altars.[15] During a ritual known as *saigishiki* 祭儀式, which is conducted prior to the performance of the monthly service, the chief officiant of the service reads a *saibun* 祭文, which takes the form of a *norito* 祝詞—a script read by the chief performer of a ritual involving kami in Shinto traditions (Motosawa 2005). Shinto-derived material and liturgical elements are even more evident in a Tenrikyo-style funeral as it involves the ritual of *tamagushi hōken*, which had been removed from the service rituals in 1986 but continued to be part of the official procedure until February 2024, when Tenrikyo Church Headquarters announced its abolition along with other major changes (Tenrikyō Kyōkai Honbu Saigi Iinkai 2024).[16] Thus, it can be said that Tenrikyo underwent a process of selective de-Shintoization concerning the material and liturgical elements of the religious tradition.

In addition to the arrangement of the ritual space, Tenrikyo continues to use a music genre known as *gagaku* 雅楽 in its religious setting. This genre involves a wide variety of musical repertoires, including some originally from China and the Korean Peninsula, and developed as ceremonial and entertainment music in ancient aristocratic society (Terauchi 2010, 1). In the modern period, *gagaku* music underwent a major process of reconfiguration that reinforced its close association with the court ritual of the imperial household and formed a close connection with rituals conducted at Shinto shrines (Tsukahara 2009, 11, 88).

In the context of Tenrikyo, *gagaku* music is performed at the *saigishiki* ritual preceding the monthly and other services conducted at Tenrikyo Church Headquarters and at local churches as well as at funerals. The court music entered

15. Tenrikyo's emblem depicts an *umebachi* 梅鉢 (plum blossom) within a circle. The plum-blossom crest was originally the Nakayama family crest. Followers who felt close to Nakayama Miki came to use it, and Tenrikyo officially adopted the crest in 1941 (Tenrikyo Overseas Department 2010, 61; TJ, 947–948).

16. For detailed analyses of how the Tenrikyo-style funeral developed and changed over time, see Michitsuta (2023) and Tagiku (2024).

the religious tradition as early as 1888 at the time of the foundress's first anniversary. Later it became widely popular in the community after the adoption of the *Kami no mikuni* ritual in 1906. The church headquarters, churches, and dioceses formed *gagaku* music groups and associations over the years, and so the genre remained part of the religious tradition even after *Kami no mikuni* was abolished in 1933. Some of the *gagaku* music groups, including Tenri University's Gagaku Music Society, have performed this centuries-old music within various nonreligious settings within Japan and abroad (TJ, 197–203). Furthermore, some followers have promoted the genre in music programs at overseas universities, including the University of Hawai'i, Columbia University, and Cologne University (TERAUCHI 2010, 173). *Gagaku* music thus seems to have become an integral part of Tenrikyo tradition, both in terms of its presence in religious rituals and popularity among followers.

Conclusion

The dissociation of Tenrikyo from its identity as a former Sect Shinto group in the 1960s marked an important aspect of the initiative to restore foundress Nakayama Miki's teachings, which had been compromised due to political pressure during the prewar period. The transformation of Tenrikyo's religious identity through the process of de-Shintoization resulted in the removal of major Shinto-derived objects from ritual settings but not a complete makeover. Material culture and practices considered to have come originally from modern Shinto traditions thus still remain as part of Tenrikyo's ritual settings, without precluding the possibility of further changes as in the recent case of the removal of the ritual of *tamagushi hōken* from funeral proceedings.

The process of Tenrikyo's de-Shintoization gives us a glimpse into how a minority religion in Japan may choose to be or not to be affiliated or associated with Shinto. It remains to be seen whether Tenrikyo will further review and change other Shinto-derived materials and practices as part of the process to search for its unique, distinctive religious identity. Considering that such a process of transformation can also be seen in other new religions, the case of Tenrikyo's de-Shintoization discussed in this article can provide a useful point of reference for scholars who study how marginalized religions, including former Shinto sects, maneuver their discursive and social locations as they search for an alternative identity in relation to what is viewed as a "proper" religion in contemporary Japan.

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ABBREVIATION

TJ *Tenrikyō jiten* 天理教事典. 3rd ed. Ed. Tenri Daigaku Fuzoku Oyasato Kenkyūjo 天理大学附属おやさと研究所. Tenri Daigaku Shuppanbu, 2018.

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