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Searching for Legitimacy
Tenrikyo, Omoto, and "Marginalized" Religions of Modern Japan

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Editors' Introduction

Searching for Legitimacy: Tenrikyo, Omoto, and "Marginalized" Religions of Modern Japan

The purpose of this special issue is to provide a new perspective on the study of "new religions" (*shinshūkyō* 新宗教) by positioning "early new religions"—religious groups that emerged in nineteenth-century Japan—as "marginalized religions." It also seeks to propose a framework that allows us to reconsider the history of religion in modern Japan from peripheral (marginalized) positions.

Scholars of religion in Japan have categorized the religious groups that emerged within the span of approximately two hundred years from around the end of the Edo period to the present day as "new religions," which are seen to have various characteristics that differ from those of established religions such as Christianity and Buddhism (Shimazono 1992). It is debatable, however, whether it is appropriate to discuss religious groups that arose in the nineteenth century and those that emerged after the end of World War II under the same category. Social and political contexts in these two time periods were significantly different, as were the challenges faced by each religious group.

We therefore limit the focus of our inquiry to "early new religions" and explore the process of their historical development. These groups, which include Kurozumikyo, Tenrikyo, Konkokyo, Renmonkyo, Maruyamakyo, and Omoto, among many others, operated in marginalized positions of society amid the social changes of modern Japan, such as the formation of the nation-state, the proliferation of a modern rationalistic worldview, the development of capitalism,

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the imperialization of Japan, and Japan's wars against China, Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and others. By focusing on zones of contact between these religious groups and society, the present volume seeks to foreground the complex relationship between religions and modernity as experienced outside the Western cultural sphere.

The focus on the historical context of modernity in Japan can also shed new light on the study of New Religious Movements (NRMs) in Western contexts. One of the characteristics of "newness" related to Japanese new religions concerns the development of these groups in association with the historical process of modernity (Reader 2005, 93). This sets apart new religions in Japan from their Western counterparts, whose newness tends to be associated with the membership comprising first-generation converts and is not necessarily predicated upon the analysis of specific historical conditions of modernity that would marginalize or even criminalize emergent and relatively "new" religions (Barker 2004). Dissecting the impact of modernity on the very process of emergence, development, and transformations of early new religions in Japan provides a new angle from which to approach minority religions in other social, cultural, and historical contexts.

Study of New Religions in Japan in the Post-World War II Period

To elucidate the scope of our present task, we first review the history of research on new religions in Japan. Scholarly attempts to understand new religions that emerged toward the end of the Edo period began as early as in the 1930s (Nakayama 1932; Tsurufuji 1939), but it was not until after World War II that more systematic studies started to develop. The 1950s saw a rise in sociological and historical studies of new religions that focus on social changes as the background to their emergence (Takagi 1954; Oguchi and Takagi 1954; Saki, Inui, Oguchi, Matsushima 1955). Some of these new religious groups had preserved writings of their founders, which, together with other texts produced by their members and institutions, provided a rich variety of primary sources for research. These texts have allowed scholars to reveal new religions' worldviews that differed from those of traditional religions, such as the connection between the source of life and human beings as well as this-world-oriented salvation (Tsushima 1979). In the 1970s and 1980s, a general image of new religions gradually emerged as a result of fieldwork conducted by scholars on various religious groups. This culminated in the compilation of *An Encyclopedia of New Religions* in 1990, which is still an influential work in the field.

Many of these studies were also informed by the perspective of people's history (*minshūshi* 民衆史), which focused on religious movements led by non-elite leaders as a lens to critically understand Japan's modernization process. As a rel-

atively new capitalistic empire seeking to catch up with Western powers, Japan went through a rapid process of Westernization and industrialization, which resulted in contradictions and inequalities in many corners of society. Scholars with this view approached the ideas and practices of new religions as a response of non-elites to these new social conditions. For many historians, the conflict between the modern emperor system and new religions was a particularly important issue. By studying how these religious groups conducted their own activities based on the religious authority of non-elite leaders, historians discovered examples of people seeking to criticize and relativize the Meiji regime, which emphasized the authority of the emperor as a divine being with a mythological origin as a way to unify the people and the country (Murakami 1958; Yasumaru 1974; 1977; Kozawa 1988; Katsurajima 1992).

Meanwhile, beginning in the 1980s, Western scholars of Japanese religions have approached new religions by drawing on the scholarship of Japanese religions as well as of new religious movements in the West, in particular sociology of religion. While many of these studies focused on groups that gained attention in the West, such as Soka Gakkai and Sukyo Mahikari (Davis 1980; Métraux 1988), some works also examined early new religions, including Tenrikyo and Kurozumikyo (Ellwood 1982; Hardacre 1986). This body of research did not necessarily develop in dialogue with the Japanese-language scholarship at the time, but rather revealed the teachings and practices of new religions through a variety of research methods.

Recent Studies on New Religions and the Concept of "Marginalized Religion"

Studies of new religions that emerged after the 1950s developed against the background of the rapid growth of religious groups such as Soka Gakkai, Rissho Kosei-kai, Agonshu, God Light Association (GLA), the Unification Church, and Kofuku no Kagaku. However, most of these groups ceased to grow in membership after the 1990s, with many of them trending toward a decline. The Aum Affair in 1995 further accelerated this trend.

The study of new religions continued to develop after the publication of *An Encyclopedia of New Religions* by building upon the contributions of earlier works. With a few exceptions (Stalker 2008), however, it gradually shifted its focus from the analysis of founders and first-generation members during the emergence period to the process of succession and transformation from the second-generation onward. Various scholars published monographs on new religions that developed after World War II, including Soka Gakkai, Agonshu, Jehovah's Witnesses, Sekai Kyuseikyo, and Shinnyo-en (Akiba and Kawabata 2004; Yumiyama 2005; Inose 2011; Tsukada 2015; Kumamoto 2018; McLaughlin 2018; Baffelli and Reader 2018; Yamaguchi 2022).

This shift is also seen in the study of early new religions. Religious groups that arose before the establishment of the modern religious system such as Kurozumikyo, Tenrikyo, and Konkokyo became institutionalized as modern religious organizations around the time when their second-generation members succeeded the leadership. Until the 1980s, the study of new religions was marked by a tendency to search for the "essence" of these religions in pre-institutionalized forms of movements led by their founders and first-generation members. In contrast, the development of these movements after institutionalization was seen in a negative light due to their transformation into rigid bureaucratic organizations as well as their subordination to the state or was simply disregarded as deviation from the original teaching (Oguri 1969; Murukami and Yasumaru 1971).

From around the 1990s, a growing number of studies began to focus on the development of early new religions during and after the time of second-generation members (Watanabe 1990; Ōya 1992; Lee 1994; Nagaoka 2015; 2020; Smith 2024). This is partly due to the perceived "saturation" of studies on the founders and first-generation members of these new religions. However, this shift of focus in the research was also part of a broader effort to reframe the problem of "aging" new religions toward the question of how such groups and their followers lived through the process of transformation. Such changes in approach, however, makes it difficult to see the differences between new religions and established religions, providing that the latter groups—whether it be Buddhist or Christian groups—have also changed as they developed in different historical and geographical contexts.

A new picture emerges when we shift our focus from new religions themselves to the historical context in which they were situated. New religions, especially early new religions, garnered mass appeal as religious movements but were at the same time seen as "evil cults" (*inshi jakyō* 淫祠邪教) that should be eradicated in the age of modern nationalism. In the eyes of the Japanese imperial state, these religions were seen as organizations that should be exploited for its strategy of nation building and wartime mobilization. The experiences of early new religions in these contexts overlapped with those of Buddhist groups, which were seen as mainstream religions, and Christian groups, which were closely associated with Western nations and cultures. However, the experiences of early new religions were qualitatively different due to the marginalization or subordination they faced at religious, cultural, and political levels, and in such a position they underwent processes of self-formation and self-transformation by negotiating with religious, cultural, and political values and conditions of modern Japan. Their difficult experiences may allow us to reconsider the unequal and violent nature of Japanese modernity. This is why we use the concept of "marginalized religion."

"Marginalized religion" is not a substantive concept defined by internal characteristics of the early new religions but rather a distinctive concept that focuses

on the unbalanced power relations arising in the contact zone between new religions and mainstream society. Members of early new religions were always thrown into ongoing power dynamics that would marginalize them, and their negotiations with larger society led them to take on complex and hybrid characteristics. Their experiences cannot be understood in terms of popular/elite, rational/irrational, orthodox/heretical, or pro-empire/anti-empire dichotomies but should rather be seen as disrupting such dichotomies.

Thinking of these religious groups as marginalized religions allows us to critically understand the complex politics unfolding around new religions while avoiding their essentialization. We can also compare the modern experience of these groups with that of marginalized religions outside Japan, which are not limited to new religious movements.

Critical Studies of the Concept of "Religion" and "Marginalized Religions"

Following trends in the Western academic discourse that were increasingly critical of the concept of "religion" (Smith 1982; Asad 1993; McCutcheon 1997; Fitzgerald 2000), scholars of religion in Japan began to deconstruct the origins of the Japanese term for "religion" (*shūkyō* 宗教), which was formulated in the context of diplomatic negotiations with Western countries in the late nineteenth century, as well as of the complex domestic political processes leading to the formation of the modern nation-state (Isomae 2003; Shimazono and Tsuruoka 2004; Hayashi and Isomae 2008; Josephson 2012; Maxey 2014). The ideal relationship between "religion" and the state, society, and science was also debated by government officials, bureaucrats, and intellectuals throughout the twentieth century, with the position of "religion" in modern society being in a constant state of reorganization (Akazawa 1985; Maekawa 2015).

Buddhists and Christians in Japan also endeavored to define their faith as "religion" by referring to modern academic knowledge (Hoshino 2012; Klautau 2012; Ōtani 2012; Krämer 2015). Some of the early new religions that came into being in later periods also formed their religious organizations with the concept of "religion" as a point of reference. This process overlapped with that of established religions in some respects but differed in many others. Magical rituals and practices that supported the development of early new religions were criticized as "superstition" that should be excluded from "religion" and were subject to police persecutions and social pressure. Their worldviews and ideas of salvation were also seen as being dangerous due to the perceived risk of denying or challenging the legitimacy of the state and were sometimes legally and socially excluded with such labels as "evil cult" or "pseudo-religion" (Katsurajima 2015).

However, early new religions were not only unilaterally excluded due to the social dynamics of marginalization. By actively engaging in the debate over the

concept of religion, they attempted to negotiate with the view of religion formed by the government and mainstream society. They sought to establish their own identity, sometimes by seeking recognition as an authentic "religion" and at other times by distinguishing themselves from existing religions. The discursive activities of the early new religions, which were at the boundary between "religion" and "superstition," "evil cult," or "pseudo-religion" sheds new light on scholarship related to the conceptualization of religion at large.

Overview of Articles

The articles featured in this special issue each illuminate how these religious groups, their founders, members, and other social actors have negotiated the place of their respective religious traditions within Japanese society in response to social forces that, to varying degrees, drove them into marginalized positions. Nagaoka Takashi's article seeks to address the question of marginality through a comparative analysis of the myths of Tenrikyo and Omoto. As Nagaoka rightly indicates, previous studies have tended to frame the relationship between national myths and the myths of the so-called "new religions" in terms of a binary opposition between orthodoxy versus heresy, as evinced by works of such influential scholars as Murakami Shigeyoshi. Nagaoka alerts us to the dangers of this view, which can lead scholars to neglect the ways in which new religions engaged with national mythology in creating or (re)interpreting their own myths.

To dissect the complexity of such mythmaking processes, Nagaoka focuses on Tenrikyo's *Doroumi kōki*, featuring a story told by Nakayama Miki of the creation of the world and human beings, and Omoto's *Reikai monogatari*, which is a multi-volume text dictated by Deguchi Onisaburō regarding his spiritual experiences in the world of kami. Though originally different in their stance toward the official myth of the nation and modern nationalism, religious and social actors in and related to both groups sought ways to reconcile the contradictions between their myths and the national myths in an effort to mitigate the political pressure from the authorities and to gain recognition by the state and mainstream society. Their efforts were in vain, as the tension with the state heightened from the mid-1930s onward, leading to the suppression of Tenrikyo's myth and the devastating crackdown on Omoto. The formation of the myths of these new religions was thus entangled in a complex political context. In his conclusion, Nagaoka urges scholars of Japanese religion to carefully reexamine the received scholarly narratives by shifting their focus to the experiences of members of marginalized religions.

It was not only the charges of blasphemy against the official myth of the state with which marginalized religions had to grapple. Social pressure label-

ing them as "superstition" and an "evil teaching" was another crucial aspect of marginalization, which Takashi Miura's article illuminates. The author focuses on Omoto's cofounder, Deguchi Onisaburō, and his unique conceptualization of the notion of "superstition" that was formulated during the period from the late 1910s to the mid-1930s. Rather than squarely rejecting the criticisms leveled by journalists, academics, and political actors, Onisaburō internalized the very language of "superstition," subverted its meaning, and used it in ways that would allow him to legitimize his group.

In so doing, Onisaburō criticized established religions and related social actors as being "superstitious" while discursively positioning Omoto beyond the conceptual perimeters of superstition and religion. His condemnation of superstition even extended to Omoto's own traditions, as marked by the dismissal of the *Fudesaki*, which is Omoto's primary scripture written by the other cofounder, Deguchi Nao, and the prohibition of the practice of *chinkon kishin* 鎮魂帰神, which involves spirit possession. Adding to these measures to eradicate superstitious practices was Onisaburō's move to define the realization of the imperial way as Omoto's supreme goal, which entailed placing Omoto's main deity, Ushitora no Konjin, in a subordinate position under Amaterasu. By illustrating all these processes of transformation, Miura reveals how leaders and other social actors of marginalized religion in modern Japan acted as active agents—rather than passive victims—to shape and reshape the concept of superstition that society used to invalidate the group.

The interplay between a marginalized religion and its critics is also highlighted in Franziska Steffen's discussion of Tenrikyo during the Meiji period. She traces social discourses between 1890 and 1908 to demonstrate how proponents and critics of Tenrikyo fought over the legitimacy of the new religious group by relating their arguments to science and the Christian-oriented conception of "revealed religion." Much akin to Onisaburō's subversion of the concept of "superstition" mentioned earlier, both sides of the debate negotiated the meaning of religious salvation and healing to support their own claims. A variety of ways in which the proponents of Tenrikyo sought to advance their arguments reveal their active engagement in public debate to provide scientifically legitimate interpretations of their faith.

In Steffen's assessment, these formulations of the self-image of Tenrikyo have not received sufficient scholarly attention due to the lack of introspection on three premises in the study of religion: the myth of disenchantment, a biased concept of religion, and the question of magic. These modernistic underlying premises all relate to what Steffen calls "compromised revelation," which allowed Tenrikyo to claim the authenticity of their faith practices as a revealed religion and yet confined the group to Nakayama Miki's original, unadaptable teaching. In the case of the healing practice that Miki developed, for instance, removing

it from the religious faith would undermine the authenticity of her revelation, but keeping it in the religious tradition would invite criticisms from wider society. Steffen suggests that unpacking these theoretical premises allows scholars of marginalized religions to see how their members and proponents executed their agency as they appropriated intellectual discourses to claim authenticity and legitimacy of their faith tradition in their own terms.

The final article of this volume departs from the pre-World War II context and sheds light on the identity negotiation of Tenrikyo from the 1960s onward. In his analysis, Masato Kato focuses on the process of Tenrikyo's disaffiliation from Sect Shinto traditions—a process that he calls "de-Shintoization"—by adapting John Breen's and Mark Teeuwen's notion of "Shintoization." In the decades following the end of World War II, Tenrikyo made a wide array of changes to its doctrine, ritual practices, and other aspects of the tradition in its effort to restore Foundress Nakayama Miki's teaching, which had been compromised due to state censorship. As part of the restoration, Tenrikyo dissociated from Sect Shinto tradition, which it had adopted at the time of gaining sectarian independence during the Meiji period. The process of de-Shintoization resulted in shedding its Shinto identity at the level of institutional affiliation as well as the removal of Shinto-related materials and practices from its ritual space, such as *shimenawa* しめなわ and *tamagushi hōken* 玉串奉献. However, this did not lead to a complete makeover, which Kato describes as "selective dissociation." Considering that Tenrikyo's de-Shintoization in the postwar decades was part of its pursuit of a distinctive religious identity, it remains to be seen whether Tenrikyo will make further changes to its ritual arrangements in relation to what is viewed as "proper" religion. Kato suggests that the case of Tenrikyo's dissociation from Shinto tradition can be a useful point of reference when analyzing the identity negotiation of other marginalized religions, including former Sect Shinto groups.

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Marginalized Myths and Modern Japan

The Interpretive History of *Doroumi kōki* and *Reikai monogatari*

This article examines the process by which two marginalized religions, Tenrikyo and Omoto, negotiated their relationship with the modern Japanese state through their mythmaking projects in the early twentieth century. Previous studies have framed the relationship between national myths and the myths of the so-called "new religions" in terms of a dichotomy between orthodoxy and heresy. This approach is too essentialist and static to account for the complexity of modern myths, as these myths took on diverse characteristics and meanings as they were revised and retold within the shifting political and social contexts of modern Japan. The myths of new religions were not only the outcome of the members' religious imaginations, but also highly political texts that served as the grounds for engaging with the modern Japanese state and the official national mythology that legitimized it. Through a comparative study of Tenrikyo's *Doroumi kōki* and Omoto's *Reikai monogatari*, I argue that through their efforts to defend the legitimacy of their own myths under adverse circumstances, these marginalized religions became deeply entangled in the logic of modern Japanese nationalism. Rather than constituting a challenge to the state and its foundational myths, these marginalized religions developed hybrid discourses that I call "popular religious nationalism."

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Myth is a mirror that reflects our minds and our society. Where some may believe in myth as a universal truth, others condemn it as a false narrative or deride it as ridiculous fiction. Individual attitudes toward myth partly arise from one's personal disposition, but they are also the product of complex political and social dynamics. For example, the *Kojiki* 古事記 and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 (hereafter collectively referred to as the *Kiki* 記紀) are well-known as two mytho-historical texts compiled in the eighth century that were key sources of legitimacy for the rule of both the premodern imperial court and the modern Japanese state. Regardless of how many people sincerely believed in the creation narrative and the lineage of emperors as descendants of the kami Amaterasu as recorded in the *Kiki*, the prewar Japanese state did not allow its citizens to openly deny their veracity. The state promoted the sacredness of the emperor and the *Kiki* as the religious basis for the emperor's authority among its citizens through a variety of means, including the repetition of imperial tours during the Meiji period, the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education, and the creation of national textbooks. Although scholars debate the extent to which "State Shinto" dominated prewar Japanese society as the national religion, it is undeniable that this state mythology significantly influenced people's religious imagination, expressions, and behavior.

The myths of Japan's so-called "new religions" are often discussed in opposition to national myths. In particular, Tenrikyo, Omoto, Nyoraikyō 如来教, and Shinsei Ryūjinkai 神政龍神会 promoted their own fully-fledged mythological narratives. That the myths held by these religious movements had to coexist with the national myths raised various questions about their relationship. If there are multiple myths, can only one of them be true and the rest false? Is there a hierarchical structure, with the narrative constituting a master myth and the others subordinate myths? Do these seemingly distinct myths in fact represent the same essential truth in different ways? Or are the multiple myths completely unrelated to each other? The answers to these questions were of interest to not only the marginalized religious groups concerned but also the government, police, journalists, and intellectuals. Moreover, they had significant theological, political, and social ramifications.

Postwar Japanese historians have often characterized the relationship between state-approved religions and new religions and their respective mythologies in terms of the binary of orthodoxy versus heresy. Murakami Shigeyoshi (1970, 1) proposed the term "popular religion" (*minshū shūkyō* 民衆宗教) to refer

to new religious movements in the 1950s, as he considered popular religions to be in opposition to "State Shinto" as a "national religion created by the modern imperial state" and evaluated them as bearers of ideas and practices that were independent of the state. Many scholars consider the myths of these religious groups to directly challenge the national mythology as constructed in the *Kiki* and thus, by extension, the religious authority of the emperor state (Murakami 1974, 40–41). As such, these myths constituted impiety and heresy.

For example, Murakami argued that although Tenrikyo's *Doroumi kōki*—a human creation myth told by founder Nakayama Miki 中山みき—promotes a certain kind of Japan-centered nationalism, it is ultimately a this-worldly and humanistic narrative in line with Tenrikyo's aim toward the salvation of the people and at odds with the national polity (*kokutai* 国体). Thus, Murakami emphasizes the conflict between "State Shinto" and "popular religions" to denounce *Doroumi kōki* as a "heretical" myth. Similarly, Hara Takeshi (1996) considers *Reikai monogatari*—the mythical narrative of Omoto composed by Deguchi Onisaburō 出口王仁三郎—as heretical because it regards Susanoo no Mikoto 素戔嗚尊, the central figure of the Izumo myth, as superior to Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大神, the ancestral deity of the emperor given primacy by the Japanese state and Ise Jingū 伊勢神宮. Repeated state interference in and suppression of popular religions and their myths seem to prove the plausibility of such critiques.

However, this analytical framework is too simplistic as it plays into essentialist narratives promoted by the very same Japanese state and fails to account for the ways in which new religions explicitly engaged with, and often incorporated, the national mythology in their own processes of mythmaking. In this article, I examine the complex process of negotiation that took place between two representative new religions, Tenrikyo and Omoto, and the modern Japanese nation and the impact it had on their mythmaking projects. I argue that through their efforts to defend the legitimacy of their own myths under adverse circumstances, these marginalized religions became inextricably entangled in the logic of modern Japanese nationalism. The result was the emergence of hybrid discourses that I call "popular religious nationalism."

Scholars have contrasted Tenrikyo and Omoto in terms of their position within the state religious system and the direction and methods of their activities (Murakami 2007; Katsurajima 2015). A comparative analysis is necessary to understand how these differences were closely tied to the content and form of their myths and influenced their relationship to the state. Through an iterative process of revision and retelling, these myths took on diverse characteristics and meanings within the shifting political and social contexts of modern Japan. On the one hand, *Doroumi kōki* and *Reikai monogatari* presented the worldview of the groups that constructed them, provided the basis for salvation, and served as the foundation for the groups' identity. On the other hand, they were also

condemned and derided by the majority of society as vulgar, immature, and ridiculous narratives. The adherents of popular religions faced the difficult task of maintaining what made their myths distinct and fundamental to their religious life while positioning themselves to gain recognition of their legitimacy by the state and the public. In this process, there was a phase in which the myths of the state and the myths of marginalized religions became intertwined. Marginalized religions oftentimes did not simply accept or reject the myths of the state, but instead restructured and expanded upon them. In this process of trial and error, the members of marginalized religions inscribed their experiences of a torn subjectivity, leaving clues for how we might reconsider fundamental categories and dynamics in the study of modern Japanese religion.

The Mythic Origins of Tenrikyo and Omoto

In order to examine the history of the marginalized religions' mythmaking and participation in discourses of popular religious nationalism, let us first trace the origins of *Doroumi kōki* and *Reikai monogatari*. Tenrikyo foundress Nakayama Miki wrote her major works, *Mikagura uta* みかぐらうた and *Ofudesaki* おふでさき, during the nineteenth century. During the last years of her life, she told her main adherents the story of the beginning of the world and the creation of human beings and had them record it in writing. *Ofudesaki* also contains a fragmentary section with similar themes (Nakayama 1957). In Tenrikyo, these narratives were collectively called *Doroumi kōki* and were respected as a unique creation myth.[1]

As its name suggests, *Doroumi kōki* tells the story of God's creation of human beings in a muddy ocean and is composed of narratives concerning male-female sexual relations, rice farming rituals, and anthropomorphic animal imagery (Nakayama 1957, 108–140). The story incorporates the names of established kami and buddhas to represent the "instruments" (*tohashira no kamina* 十柱の神名) that were used to create human beings. These ten deities are identified as: (1) Kunitokotachi no Mikoto, (2) Omotari no Mikoto, (3) Kunisazuchi no Mikoto, (4) Tsukiyomi no Mikoto, (5) Kumoyomi no Mikoto, (6) Kashikone no Mikoto, (7) Taishokuten no Mikoto, (8) Ōtonobe no Mikoto, (9) Izanagi no Mikoto, and (10) Izanami no Mikoto (Tenrikyō Kyōkai Honbu 1952, 1232–1233).[2] Of these sacred names, all but Taishokuten and Kumoyomi no Mikoto are similar to those

1. After World War II, the story came to be called *Moto no ri* 元の理 and *Moto hajimari no hanashi* 元初まりの話. The name *Doroumi kōki* was not officially adopted. See Watanabe (2021) for the interpretive history of *Doroumi kōki*.

2. This term "instruments" refers to the sacred names given to the ten aspects of the complete providence of God. In keeping with the language of the rest of the document, these names are written in *hiragana*, not *kanji*.

that appear in the *Kiki*. Taishokuten is said to be related to the Buddhist deity Taishakuten 帝釈天, while Kumoyomi no Mikoto does not correspond with deities from other sources.

Despite any apparent similarities, the attributes of the sacred names in *Doroumi kōki* have little to do with their counterparts in the *Kiki* or Buddhism. According to *Doroumi kōki,* Izanagi no Mikoto 伊弉諾尊 and Izanami no Mikoto 伊弉冉命 are described as a fish and a serpent, respectively; no such description appears in the *Kiki*. Originally, Miki's myth of human creation was unconcerned with the modern nation's developing divine order, in which Amaterasu and Ise Jingū were positioned at the top of the hierarchy. However, as Tenrikyo became more deeply involved in negotiations with state power and broader Japanese society, the superficial similarities between *Doroumi kōki* and the myths of the *Kiki* took on complex meanings.

The process of the formation of Omoto mythology is somewhat complicated. The founder of this religious group, Deguchi Nao 出口なお, wrote on sheets of paper the words of Ushitora no Konjin 艮の金神 while possessed by the deity and left behind an enormous collection of writings known as the *Fudesaki* 筆先. In the *Fudesaki*, passages speak of the coming and role of the gods. The god of justice, Ushitora no Konjin, incurred the displeasure of the other gods because he was too stubborn in his mission to rule the world; thus, for a long time he was forced to reside in the supposedly inauspicious direction of the northeast (*ushitora* 艮) and was feared as a possessed god (Yasumaru 2013, 133–134). As a result, the world as it should be descended into disorder. The major framework of the story of *Fudesaki* is that through Nao, Ushitora no Konjin will be revealed and fundamentally reform the disturbed world. Omoto refers to this fundamental transformation of the world as "rebuilding and renewal" (*tatekae tatenaoshi* 立替え立直し). It is an eschatological ideology that rejects modern Japanese society for being dominated by the greed and selfishness of Western material civilization, and it predicts the arrival of a new world after a great catastrophe. In the early twentieth century, Deguchi Onisaburō, Nao's close collaborator, published the *Fudesaki* in the Omoto institutional journal, and the concept of rebuilding and renewal caused a great sensation.

Because the social criticism in the *Fudesaki* extended to the emperor as a symbol of Japanese civilization, Onisaburō and fellow executives were arrested in 1921 on charges of impiety and other crimes in what is now known as the First Omoto Incident. Following these events, Onisaburō began to dictate *Reikai monogatari* as a new canonical replacement for the *Fudesaki.* According to the author's testimony, Onisaburō at times spoke in a "state of being possessed" by a divine spirit, in a normal "human state of consciousness," and at other times arranged and dictated his past spiritual experiences as guided by his inspirations (Ōmoto Nanajū Nenshi Hensankai 1964, 649). Onisaburō recommended his

followers to read *Reikai monogatari* as a method to open their spirituality, and so they held group readings of *Reikai monogatari* and sometimes performed the book as a play or film (Stalker 2008, 101). There were also tales of spiritual experiences in which illnesses were cured by reading this story. The text was accepted as a sacred book which contained the charisma of Onisaburō (Kawamura 2017, 377).

It is difficult to summarize the entirety of this lengthy work, but the explanation given at the beginning of the first volume foreshadows the development of a narrative that draws on the *Kiki* myths interwoven with the myths recorded in the *Fudesaki* and Onisaburō's own "exploration of the spiritual world" (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 1: 39). The story also incorporates elements of Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Swedenborgism, communist thought, and the political events of the time to construct a unique world in which ancient and modern trends coexist.

Onisaburō began his work on *Reikai monogatari* about forty years after the compilation of *Doroumi kōki*. By this time, the sacredness of the emperor and the myths of the *Kiki* as its religious basis had already deeply penetrated the public consciousness through diverse channels such as repeated imperial pilgrimages, the Imperial Rescript on Education, and national textbooks published and circulated during the Meiji period, as well as through historical events such as the Russo-Japanese War, the death of Emperor Meiji, and the High Treason Incident (Taigyaku Jiken 大逆事件) (Fujitani 1986; Hirayama 2015; Shimazono 2019). Having systematically studied the *Kiki* at a Shinto priesthood training institute toward the end of the Meiji period, Onisaburō made considerable use of his knowledge in interpreting the *Fudesaki*. In this sense, the historical context in which the *Reikai monogatari* was composed is quite different from that of *Doroumi kōki* in that from the beginning the former was inscribed with the national mythology in mind.

The Languages of Marginalized Religions

In our consideration of the historical context of the myths of Omoto and Tenrikyo, it is important to note their linguistic characteristics in addition to their contents. Sociologist Kurihara Akira points out that Deguchi Onisaburō's writings, including *Reikai monogatari*, consist of two types of language or styles of writing: the language of the national polity (*kokutai gengo* 国体言語) and the language of daily life (*seikatsu gengo* 生活言語). He explains that the former is the language of "posturing and of empty words painted with 'respect for the gods, the emperor, and patriotism,'" while the latter is a language that "flexibly conveys the movement of one's thoughts and feelings with a rich message" (Kurihara 1982, 192). For example, in *Reikai monogatari*, we see a mixture of mythological,

religious, autobiographical, fictional, and critical elements as well as allusions to the dignity of the national body. It is clear at a glance that a variety of languages are used in the text, from essays to poetry and narrative texts with a mix of dialogue. Kurihara suggests that Onisaburō used these different languages depending on the content of the message he sought to convey and his intended audience.

As for *Doroumi kōki*, the story conveyed by Nakayama Miki and transcribed by her followers is written in the "language of daily life." A similar language may be found in *Mikagura uta* and *Ofudesaki*, which Miki wrote herself, as well as in the *waka* 和歌 poetic style in the dialect of the Yamato region at the time. Neither Miki nor her adherents were educated in classical Japanese or Chinese literature, so it was natural for them to use a language more closely related to their own experience of daily life. Moreover, many of the sacred texts of the early new religions are written in the "language of daily life," such as *Okyōsama* お経様, which records the sermons of Kino 喜之 of Nyoraikyō; *Konkō Daijin on oboegaki* 金光大神御覚書, the religious autobiography of Akazawa Bunji 赤沢文治 of Konkōkyō 金光教; and *Fudesaki* by Deguchi Nao.

It may seem that Deguchi Onisaburō's *Reikai monogatari* provides a unique example of a "bilingual" composition that mixes the "language of the national polity" with the "language of daily life." However, if we consider the writings of founders as texts open to new interpretations and revision, it becomes clear that the myths of marginalized religions in modern Japan were bilingual. As we will see below, marginalized religions were pressured to engage in a subtle negotiation with nationalist discourses and to translate their religious ideals into the "language of the national polity" in order to survive in modern society. At the same time, these groups never gave up the "language of daily life," as it was an integral part of their identity. In other words, it may be said that a bilingual approach characterizes the modern experience of marginalized religions. This experience may be shared with those of colonized intellectuals who were torn between the languages of their mother tongue and that of the suzerain state (Kwon 2015; Nagaoka 2021). Thus, it is necessary to read the myths of Omoto and Tenrikyo in a way that does not fall into a simple dichotomy of the "language of the national polity" versus the "language of daily life" but rather acknowledges the bilingual nature of discourses of popular religious nationalism.

The Modernity of Doroumi kōki

Doroumi kōki played an important role in Tenrikyo faith. For example, in his 1928 commentary *Doroumi kōki: Fu chūshaku*, Iwai Takahito 岩井尊人 writes:

> *Doroumi kōki* is the fundamental set of texts from which Tenrikyo originated. It is the source of Tenrikyo and the driving force behind its development. There

> is not a follower of the path who has not heard of *Doroumi kōki*. A person who is a Tenrikyo member but does not know *Doroumi kōki* is not a follower of the path. (*Doroumi kōki*, 1)

Doroumi kōki is not only the "source of Tenrikyo" that explains the process of human creation and the privileged status of the *jiba* ぢば, the place of origin; it also represents the basis for salvation by God. Each of the aforementioned *tohashira no kamina* represents a function of God the Parent who protects human beings. For example, Kunitokotachi no Mikoto represents the function of protecting the moisture of the eyes, and Omotari no Mikoto protects the warmth of the body. This story was given as the doctrinal basis for curing disease and was the "driving force" behind the development of Tenrikyo according to Iwai. The interpretation of the stories also relied on folk knowledge related to Buddhism and Shinto and seems to have been popular among followers (Ishizaki 1997, 15–18).

For those critical of Tenrikyo, however, the subtle relationship between *Doroumi kōki* and the national mythology was a prime target for attack. After Nakayama Miki's death in 1887, Tenrikyo dramatically expanded in size. The organization legalized its activities by joining an officially recognized Shinto sect by the name of Shintō Honkyoku 神道本局, and their energetic missionary efforts focused on curing illness are said to have helped the group gain as many as three million adherents throughout Japan by the end of the nineteenth century (Tsujii 1995, 35). As Tenrikyo grew, so too did the surge of books and newspaper articles that criticized the emergent group. Many of those who published critical books were Buddhist and Shinto priests, and it is said that their writing was fueled by their sense of crisis over the rapid expansion of Tenrikyo (Tenri Daigaku Fuzoku Oyasato Kenkyūjo 2018, 810–811).

These critical documents ridiculed *Doroumi kōki* as a baseless and dubious fabrication, and the content was criticized for being both heretical and unpatriotic. One critic writes, "It is extremely impious to refer to the imperial ancestors as an insect or fish" (Haneda 1893, 17). That is, it is an act of impiety to equate Izanagi no Mikoto and Izanami no Mikoto—who are the parents of Amaterasu, the emperor's divine ancestor—with a fish and a serpent. Other major criticisms of the group ran the gamut, including slander against Nakayama Miki and the leaders of the group, questions of how Tenrikyo could preach a mixture of Shinto and Buddhist teachings while calling itself a Shinto organization, and allegations that Tenrikyo activities constituted public disorder, obstruction of medical care, and exploitation of property (Takano 1963, 136–137). In the eyes of these critics, Tenrikyo was a group of "fools" who blasphemed the emperor's lineage with dubious myths and opposed the modern pursuits of rationalization and civilization.

In response to these attacks, Tenrikyo chose to adapt to modern society by transforming its own doctrines and activities rather than refute these criticisms directly. This attitude is demonstrated by *Tenrikyo kyōten*, more commonly known as *Meiji kyōten*. Tenrikyo drafted *Meiji kyōten* with the aim of gaining recognition as an independent sect (Matsumura 1950). Its final version, officially adopted in 1903, took on a strong nationalistic character after the organization accepted the government's requests for revision during the compilation process.

Meiji kyōten mentions the creation of the land in the first few chapters. This rendition follows the standard national mythology drawn from the *Kiki* and aligns with the official nationalist position. It begins with the emergence of the heavenly deities and goes on to recount the creation of the land by Izanagi and Izanami as the ancestors of all things and the descent of the imperial descendants to the earthly realm. As the continuation of this divine lineage, the imperial family receives legitimacy to rule, divine help, and the fateful charge to secure the land. Descriptions of Nakayama Miki portray her as a person who reveres the emperor and has a patriotic heart. She is recorded as saying, "We should be convinced that our emperor is the sovereign appointed by heaven and be loyal to the imperial family with the same supreme love as repaying god's grace to god" (*Meiji kyōten*, 5). *Meiji kyōten* makes no mention of the elements of criticism of those in power found in *Ofudesaki*.

The myth of human creation at the heart of *Doroumi kōki* does not appear in *Meiji kyōten*. It is unclear whether the "time when heaven and earth were not yet divided" based on *Nihon shoki* that appears in *Meiji kyōten* and the time of the beginning when "all was a muddy ocean" from *Doroumi kōki* are the same. It seems that there was an awareness of the differences between the Tenrikyo myths and the *Kiki* among the early adherents. A transcribed document from 1888 and apparent variant of *Doroumi kōki* states, "Imperial Japan has had a scribe since the time of the emperor, but we do not know the source of the efforts of God the Parent, from whom human beings began."[3] This comment suggests the author saw the content of the creation story in *Doroumi kōki* as older and more fundamental than that of the *Kiki*. Among Miki's teachings, those that could challenge or relativize the structure of the *Kiki* mythology were eliminated from *Meiji kyōten*.

Although this section of *Meiji kyōten* was clearly composed with the national mythos in mind, Miki's teachings did not completely vanish. Of all the deities generated by Izanagi and Izanami, those "most notable for their virtues and works" are called *tohashira no kami*, and the virtues and works of the gods of heaven and earth are collectively worshiped as Tenri Ōgami 天理大神 (*Meiji*

3. "Kami no kogoki," quoted in Yasui (2004, 166).

kyōten, 1). And though some of the original *tohashira no kamina* were changed in the process of negotiations with the government, Tenrikyo clearly attempted to combine Miki's teachings with the official narrative.

In actual missionary work settings, the *Meiji kyōten*—written in the rigid "language of the national polity"—was rarely used. Rather, as Iwai argues, the stories of *Doroumi kōki* told in the "language of daily life" sustained the Tenrikyo faith until the 1930s (*Doroumi kōki*, 1). Still, this does not mean that the Tenrikyo faith was totally incompatible with "official nationalism" (Anderson 2006, 88) and operated without any connection to it. Members found other approaches to connect the founder's teachings with official nationalism.

Hiroike Chikurō 廣池千九郎, who contributed to the formation of Tenrikyo's doctrine in the early twentieth century, also foregrounds Miki as a patriot, but his argument is distinct from that found in *Meiji kyōten* in that it is based on the language of the *Ofudesaki*. He makes a clear connection between Miki's words written in the "language of daily life" and modern nationalism. Several songs in *Ofudesaki* explain the superiority of *Nihon* over *Kara* (that is, China), and Hiroike comments, "The founder was a passionate patriot.... These are songs of praise and lamentation in which the founder praised her homeland, and she saw Japan as the root of the world" (*Sankyō kaidō to Tenrikyō*, 52). Yet the Meiji government repeatedly suppressed Miki's religious activities, and in *Ofudesaki* she also includes a series of criticisms of *takayama* 高山 (mountain top), which is thought to refer to the authorities and is opposed to *tanisoko* 谷底 (valley floor, that is, the common people). This suggests a strong undercurrent of discord and conflict in the relationship between Miki and the modern state. However, Hiroike does not touch on these points and only emphasizes Miki's praise for the "homeland." Thus, Tenrikyo promoted discourses of popular religious nationalism by combining modern official nationalism with the writings and teachings of its founder.

Under these circumstances, intellectuals within Tenrikyo took on the difficult task of explaining the similarities and gaps between *Doroumi kōki* and the national mythology. For example, Iwai notes that because the *tohashira no kami* in *Doroumi kōki* overlap with the names of the deities of "ancient Japanese Shinto," there are people both inside and outside of Tenrikyo who confuse the two: "This *Doroumi kōki* is about the creation by the God—or the foundress—independent of the 'ancient Japanese Shinto' (*koshintō* 古神道), as well as of all other indigenous thoughts, religions, myths, stories, and so forth. It must be remembered that there is no plot or compositional relationship between them" (*Doroumi kōki*, 5).

Let us focus on Izanagi no Mikoto as an example. In *Doroumi kōki*, Izanagi is said to take the form of a fish and at the same time represent the principle of a man/father. Though the name is the same, Iwai argues that this divine name,

which belongs to Tenri mythology, has "no contact with the ancient Japanese Shinto" figure of Izanagi (*Doroumi kōki*, 35). However, the following line from *Doroumi kōki* seems to contradict Iwai's argument: "[Izanagi no Mikoto] appears as the principle of the Inner Shrine of Ise in Japan [Amaterasu]" (*Doroumi kōki*, 37). Here, Izanagi and the Inner Shrine of Ise—that is, Amaterasu—are equated. In the national myths, Amaterasu, the ancestral deity of the emperor, is generally regarded as a goddess and the daughter of Izanagi. If Izanagi in *Doroumi kōki* is interpreted as the Izanagi in the *Kiki*, then *Doroumi kōki* contradicts the received description of the deity in the national mythos. Though he denies that any "contact" between the two would seem the simple solution, Iwai dares to try to bridge the gap between the two as follows:

> It would be strange to say that the Inner Shrine of Ise represents a male deity's principle to protect the human species, but it is in fact a manifestation of natural reason. According to ancient Japanese Shinto, [Amaterasu] is born from the eyes of Izanagi no Mikoto. That is, since she has received the principle of the Father and has become the supreme ruler of the universe, her female body is the embodiment of the calm spirit (*nigitama* 大和魂) rather than a definite gender.… Thus, she became the head of Japan's (in fact, the world's) main family, and her legitimate heirs continued the imperial lineage. Thus, there is no mistaking that Amaterasu is the expression of the truth of the father, the origin and the seed of humankind. (*Doroumi kōki*, 36–37)

Iwai thus argues that since Amaterasu inherited the "principle of the father" from Izanagi and should be called the father of humankind, the description in *Doroumi kōki* aligns with the intention of the national myths. It is interesting to note that while Iwai explains that Tenri mythology and "ancient Japanese Shinto" should be understood separately, he desires to join the two without contradiction. This dilemma reflects the difficult position of marginalized religions, in which they are forced to defend themselves against the majority while aspiring to pursue their own vision of the world as an independent religion.

Ueda Yoshinari tried to resolve this issue in another way: "Since it is awe-inspiring to mention the name of Kōtaijingū 皇大神宮 (The Inner Shrine of Ise, that is, Amaterasu), the founder indirectly reveals her intention to revere Kōtaijingū by praising the name of the deity who is its parent" (Ueda 1937, 16). In other words, *Doroumi kōki* refers to Izanagi no Mikoto in relation to the Inner Shrine of Ise out of profound reverence for Amaterasu, the ancestral deity of the emperor; thus, the reference to Izanagi no Mikoto here is in fact a reference to Amaterasu. The passage then is evidence of Tenrikyo's "spirit of loyalty and retribution to the state" (Ueda 1937, 14). As will be discussed later, police surveillance and control of religions was strengthened during this period, and Tenrikyo was forced to emphasize its loyalty to the state even more clearly than before. We may thus understand

Ueda's argument as a somewhat acrobatic attempt to reinterpret the contradiction between *Doroumi kōki* and the national myths as a manifestation of Tenrikyo's nationalism in response to government pressure.

Although the general evaluation of *Doroumi kōki* outside Tenrikyo was that it was a wild fiction, there were attempts to counter the national mythology by tying its legitimacy to modern scientific theories from the West. Marginalized religions also desired to be recognized as bearers of modern values, even if their arguments proved unconvincing to the government and the general public. For example, Kinoshita Matsutarō (1922, 4) claimed that the story of *Doroumi kōki* was compatible with the theory of evolution and that Tenrikyo was "the most advanced, ideal new religion." He argued that *Doroumi kōki* is more scientific and rational compared to the biblical book of Genesis, as the former explains the process of God's gradual creation of the heaven and the earth as well as the gradual evolution from primitive creatures to human beings, whereas the latter claims that God created the heavens and the earth in a few days and humans in a single day. He also points out that the *Kiki* are only a compilation of ancient folklore and have little credibility as ancient history, while *Doroumi kōki* contains the "gist of the facts" thanks to direct divine revelation (Kinoshita 1922, 48). According to Kinoshita, *Doroumi kōki* was superior to the *Kiki* in terms of its value as a historical text describing the beginnings of the world and humankind.

The most radical confrontation between *Doroumi kōki* and the national mythology was instigated by Tenri Kenkyūkai 天理研究会, a group led by Ōnishi Aijirō 大西愛治郎. While working as a Tenrikyo missionary, Ōnishi had a mystical experience of receiving the will of God, and in 1913 he realized that he was a revelator who should succeed Nakayama Miki. Ōnishi appealed to various figures within Tenrikyo to validate the revelation, but they did not accept his assertions; in 1924 he was expelled from Tenrikyo. In 1928, Tenri Kenkyūkai compiled a doctrinal document called *Kenkyū shiryo* 研究資料. Murakami Shigeyoshi (1972, 106) argues that, in this document, Ōnishi and others "deny the records of the divine era of Japan (the *Kiki* myths) and clearly make a statement that the divine era is not historical fact and that the emperor on this ground is, of course, not a god and is not qualified to rule Japan." To be more precise, in their interpretation of *Doroumi kōki*, Ōnishi and others argued that the *Kiki* were not historical records but rather texts that predicted future events. The prophecy then converged with the idea that Ōnishi, who had inherited Nakayama Miki's will, would become the central leader for the unification of all nations. Tenrikyo could accept neither the proposal that Ōnishi was Nakayama Miki's successor nor the doctrine that denies the rule of the nation by the emperor. As a result, the leadership issued a statement to the outside world that Tenri Kenkyūkai was a completely unrelated organization. Nevertheless, the activities of Ōnishi

and his members illustrate how managing the potential tension between their mythology and the *Kiki* was of critical concern for marginalized religions.

The various textual interpretations examined above demonstrate the complex and multifarious nature of the relationship between the myths of Tenrikyo and the modern Japanese state. It is clear from a close reading of these texts that Tenrikyo actively constructed its own forms of popular religious nationalism that did not directly challenge the national mythos. Rather, Tenrikyo authors more often took considered and conciliatory approaches toward mythmaking ranging from adoption and integration to elision and equivocation, each of which created a somewhat different vision for Tenrikyo's identity and significance in the world.

Reikai monogatari as a Myth of Reconciliation and Reformation

While actors within Tenrikyo worked to clarify the relationship between *Doroumi kōki* and the national mythology, Deguchi Onisaburō engaged in a similar project but took a different approach. According to Onisaburō, classics such as the *Kiki* are valuable as "treasure books that should resolve the truth of the universe," but there were no thinkers at the time who could properly understand their truth (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 7: 160). In contrast, *Reikai monogatari* is said to have been "dictated and compiled at god's command to fill in the gaps in the classics and myths of the East and the West" as well as to reveal "some of the truths of the universe." For Onisaburō, who advocated the proclamation of the Imperial Way (*kōdō* 皇道), the *Kiki* were privileged as the textual "legacy of the Imperial Fathers," but they required supplementation by his *Reikai monogatari* (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 7: 527, 160).

Onisaburō and his followers sought to build a similar complementary relationship between themselves and the state. In his study, Kurihara attempted to clarify Onisaburō's worldview and its view of the state by delving into the plot of *Reikai monogatari* and connecting it to Onisaburō's biography and his movement's development. According to Kurihara (1982, 200, 203), the essential vision of the *Reikai monogatari* is accomplishing the rebirth of the autonomous and self-existent hometowns (*sato* 郷) as local, egalitarian communities or the construction of "heaven on earth" through the cooperation of missionaries—as extensions of Susanoo no Mikoto—and the indigenous people. However, Onisaburō did not depict hometowns as some flawless ideal. Rather, he presented them as crucibles "filled with contradictions that could be subverted into a society dominated by power at any time without the people's conscious activity." Thus, the main focus of *Reikai monogatari* is to "activate people in their daily lives toward the construction of such an unrealized hometown, to utilize

the hometown in their bodies, and in this sense, to subjectify the hometown" (Kurihara 1982, 202).

Yet the fact that Onisaburō's writings, including *Reikai monogatari*, are accompanied by his advocacy for protection of the emperor system and expansionist policies, seem to contradict the idea of rebuilding an autonomous and self-existing hometown. Regarding this point, Kurihara categorizes discourses that use the "language of the national polity"—which talks about the protection of the emperor system and expansionist policies—as "Sector A," and those that use the "language of daily life"—which speaks about the rebuilding of "hometowns" and cosmopolitanism—as "Sector B." He goes on to say that "the Omoto myth of the deity once expelled by Amaterasu appearing for the rebuilding and renewal of the universe contains a logic that reverses the myth of the emperor system. Therefore, Sector B is fundamentally opposed to Sector A." However, Kurihara points out that Onisaburō sought the survival of Sector B by incorporating Sector A as a "preventive device" and envisioned "a path of rebellion and salvation that is neither a total identification with the national polity nor a criticism of it from the outside, but an attempt to subvert it from within while being associated with it" (Kurihara 1982, 206–207). Kurihara notes that Onisaburō "carefully composed the Omoto mythology centered on the myth of *kunitsukami* 国つ神 (earthly deities) as opposed to the emperor system mythology centered on the *amatsukami* 天つ神 (heavenly deities)" while "trying to hide himself with the language of the national polity" (Kurihara 1982, 193–194). Kurihara thus regards *Reikai monogatari* as heresy. Such a view is made possible by de-essentializing the discourse of Sector A as the "ostensible and empty language of the national polity" (Kurihara 1982, 192). Therefore, Kurihara does not seriously discuss the nationalistic discourses belonging to Sector A in *Reikai monogatari*.[4]

Did Onisaburō himself make such a strict distinction between the myths of the state and of Omoto and between the "language of the national polity" and the "language of daily life"? In reading the text of *Reikai monogatari*, we must consider the point at which Kurihara's assumed dichotomy becomes dysfunctional. In so doing, we can better understand the complex modern experience of those who attempted to create new myths in modern Japan that cannot be neatly categorized as either orthodoxy or heresy (Nagaoka 2023, 159).

To illustrate the necessity of analyzing new religions' mythmaking in terms of popular religious nationalism, let us examine volume twelve of *Reikai monogatari* entitled "Ama no Iwato biraki" 天岩戸開. It is based on the *Kojiki* narrative

4. Kurihara (1982, 192) also mentions that the idea of Omoto was sidestepped into the "natural world based on the emperor system" by intellectual followers excited by Onisaburō's language of the national polity, but that this is a development "beyond the control of Onisaburō" and is detached from Onisaburō's own intentions.

of the same name, particularly the scenes featuring the casting out of Susanoo by Izanagi, the pledge between Amaterasu and Susanoo, Susanoo's wicked acts in Takamanohara 高天原, and Amaterasu's hiding in Ama no Iwato.

It is worth noting that prior to the composition of *Reikai monogatari*, Deguchi Nao had engaged with the Ama no Iwato myth in *Fudesaki*. She denied the legitimacy of the opening of Ama no Iwato in the *Kiki*, claiming that the world had been ruled by evil gods as a result of the "deceptive opening of Iwato" by Ame no Uzume no Mikoto 天宇受売命 and others, and that the "second opening of Iwato," that is, the rebuilding and renewal, was necessary (Yasumaru 2013, 147–148).

Almost twenty years later, in the aftermath of the severe government repression campaign known as the First Omoto Incident in 1921, Onisaburō boldly took up the Ama no Iwato tale once again to depict the confrontation between Amaterasu, who occupied an absolute position in the national mythology, and Susanoo, who is positioned as the chief deity of salvation in *Reikai monogatari*. I read this text as Onisaburō's attempt to construct a site of negotiation, or a contact zone, with the modern emperor state. As a marginalized mythmaker, Onisaburō had the difficult task of adjusting Omoto's strained relationship with the state and establishing a mythic basis for his new activities. In rereading this text with this situation in mind, moments emerge that disturb the supposed binary of orthodoxy versus heresy.

I will first give a synopsis of Onisaburō's version of the Ama no Iwato myth. A group of missionaries of Ananaikyō 三五教—a teaching based on the principle of *reishu taijū* 霊主体従 (spirit over matter) and Omoto's functional equivalent in *Reikai monogatari*, headed by Susanoo, Takamitsuhiko 高光彦, Tamamitsuhiko 玉光彦, and Kunimitsuhiko 国光彦—travel from the city of Iho in Egypt to the Nile River and around the Mediterranean Sea to do the divine work of salvation. At this time, the power of Urarukyō ウラル教—a teaching based on the opposing principle of *taishu reijū* 体主霊従 (body over spirit) and hostile to Ananaikyō—is spreading on the earth, causing it to fall to darkness and demons. In Iho, the Urarukyō adherents "drank alcohol without working and clouded the world with their selfishness, as a result of which evil spirits were generated all over the earth, the mountains withered, the rivers dried up, the grain did not ripen, the fruits were not mature, and the light of the sun and moon was obscured by black clouds" (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 2: 633).

Susanoo and his fellows attempt to convert people, pacify demons with the power of words, and restore the world. Missionary Katoriwake 蚊取別 and Hatsuko 初公, a chivalrous man, join the party and the group proceeds with their adventure under the guidance of Hinode no kami 日の出の神. They succeed in exterminating the evil serpent infesting the Shirase River, and "the world that had been shut in darkness for a hundred days and a hundred nights" shines "as

brightly as the dawn of day" (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 2: 675).[5] They then board a ship and sail through the Mediterranean, converting the other passengers along the way. Each of the three islands in the sea had three goddesses, all daughters of Susanoo.

One daughter, Miyukihime 深雪姫 (that is, Tagirihime 多紀理姫命), prepares to conquer a demon by gathering many strong deities on her island. Far away on Mt. Tenkyō 天教 (that is, Mt. Fuji), Amaterasu hears the voices of the warrior deities practicing and suspects that "the reason they are making weapons and practicing martial arts is probably because of the dirty mind of my brother Susanoo, who wants to occupy Takamanohara" (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 2: 694). Under the command of Amaterasu, Amenohohi 天菩比命 leads an army to attack the island. Miyukihime responds, "We have many weapons and soldiers, but they are not meant for killing the enemy," and she orders her men to "not antagonize them with arms but to correct their mistakes with good and beautiful words" (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 2: 696). Amenohohi, understanding the true intentions of Miyukihime, disarms his army, and the "beautiful heart of Susanoo" becomes clear (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 2: 702). Meanwhile, Amaterasu also sends Amatsuhikonekami 天津彦根神 and his army to another island where Akizukihime 秋月姫 (that is, Ichikishimahime 市杵島姫命) resides. However, when Amatsuhikone and his men hear Akizukihime recite *Amatsu norito* 天津祝詞, they abandon their weapons and "[dance] around like mad, forgetting the distinction between friends and foes"; in this way, "the suspicion against Susanoo was completely cleared" (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 2: 709–710).

The first half of the Ama no Iwato tale in *Reikai monogatari* seems to have no direct relation to the story of the *Kojiki*, but it describes how the Ananaikyō (that is, Omoto) missionaries open the "rock door of the heart" (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 2: 625) through their activities. The "Ama no Iwato biraki" of *Reikai monogatari* does not simply imitate the *Kojiki* narrative but transforms it into a narrative of religious conversion and salvation. The latter half deals more directly with the confrontation between Amaterasu and Susanoo found in the national mythology. However, these sibling deities do not appear together in the scene. Instead, the missionaries learn from the conversations of those aboard the ship that the pledges of the two gods were being made. The converts thus play the role of witnesses to the divine drama unfolding on the islands of the Mediterranean. They criticize Amaterasu's invasion, remarking that even though all the earthly continents are assigned to be under Susanoo's rule, Amaterasu is scheming to make everything her own.

5. The evil serpent in the Shirase River is a reference to the eight-headed serpent Yamata no Orochi 八岐大蛇 that Susanoo defeats in the *Kiki* version of the myth.

This passage associates the relationship between Amaterasu and Susanoo to those between Deguchi Nao and Onisaburō and the government/public and Onisaburō. The speaker describes the characters of the two deities as follows:

> The sister goddess looks like a goddess of love as clear and transparent as a jade, but her spirit is that of *henjō nanshi* 変性男子, and she is a very fierce and egotistical god. The younger brother god was born from the spirit of a terrible, sharp sword, but his spirit is that of the goddess of infinite benevolence and mercy, *zuirei* 瑞霊, or spirit of goodness.
>
> (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 2: 706)

Amaterasu is understood according to Omoto's concept of *henjō nanshi* (female body, male spirit), while Susanoo is *henjō nyoshi* 変性女子 (male body, female spirit). Later in *Reikai monogatari*, this language returns in a section titled "Comments on the *Kojiki*," which touches on the narrative of the *Kojiki* from the birth of the three noble gods to the Ama no Iwato tale.[6] Here, Onisaburō relates the fearful and reactionary Amaterasu with Nao and Susanoo with himself:

> [Nao was] very oppressive to the actions of *henjō nyoshi* [Onisaburō], saying that he would come to Takamanohara and crush it. Also, it appears in *Fude-saki* that *henjō nyoshi* are destroying the entire Omoto.… [We are] working day and night for the sake of this imperial country, following the teachings of the founder [Nao], by preaching the divine teachings of *reishu taijū*. However, since the founder also possesses the spirit of *henjō nanshi*, she is still highly suspicious. Amaterasu was suspicious of her brother's beautiful heart and wondered if he had come with a bad heart. The founder, likewise, has a model of the divine world of *henjō nanshi*.
>
> (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 2: 723)

As is well known, Onisaburō joined Nao's group at the end of the nineteenth century. Though he distinguished himself with his abundant knowledge of *kokugaku* 国学 (national classic studies) and *reigaku* 霊学 (spiritual studies), as well as his spiritual powers and excellent business sense, he repeatedly clashed with Nao and his old adherents over the direction of their activities (Ōmoto Nanajū Nenshi Hensankai 1964; Kawamura 2017). In this way, Onisaburō alludes to this tension and the righteousness of his actions through his rendition of the Ama no Iwato myth.

Furthermore, Onisaburō broadens his critique by commenting, "It is the same as how today's public, newspaper and magazine reporters, established religious leaders, and scholars are wondering if Omoto is thinking about something suspicious" (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 2: 723–724), linking

6. This section is a record of a lecture given in 1920, before the First Omoto Incident, but it seems to have been inserted as a supplemental reading for the main narrative.

Amaterasu's suspicion to the way society looked at Omoto on the eve of the First Omoto Incident. Thus, the confrontation between Amaterasu and Susanoo is not only a common motif in the mythological world of the *Kojiki* and *Reikai monogatari* but also symbolizes the unbalanced relationship between the national myths and the myth of Omoto (at the religious or political level), between Nao and Onisaburō (at the group level), and between society and Omoto (at the societal level). The "beautiful heart" of Susanoo/Onisaburō/Omoto is not understood by the overly skeptical Amaterasu/Nao/the nation and society.

The major difference between the account in the *Kojiki* and in *Reikai monogatari* is that in the latter, Amaterasu, driven by unjust suspicion, orders a violent and unwarranted attack on the innocent followers of Susanoo. In response to the invasion, Miyukihime and Akizukihime ask whether the aggressor is "the devil army of Uraruhiko ウラル彦 [Urarukyō]" or "the divine army of the great imperial deity [Amaterasu] who appears on Mt. Tenkyō" (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 2: 696). The goddesses clarify the distinction that the true enemies of Susanoo and his followers are the forces that uphold the principles of "body over spirit" and of "power over spirit." Amaterasu was never Susanoo's enemy in the first place; rather, Susanoo and Amaterasu are called upon to work together to rebuild the wayward world. Susanoo's dictum to "correct their mistakes with good and beautiful words" moves the attacker's mind, and the adversarial relationship between the two sides turns into a festive scene of "forgetting the distinction between friends and foes" (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 2: 709) At this point, too, the story is revised from the plot of the *Kojiki*, in which Susanoo unilaterally declares his victory in the pledge and is then expelled from Takamanohara after the opening of Ama no Iwato. In other words, the story of Ama no Iwato in *Reikai monogatari* is ultimately one of the reconciliations of Susanoo/Onisaburō/Omoto with Amaterasu/Nao/the state and society. It exemplifies the convoluted attempts of a minority religion seeking to gain recognition and resist marginalization by the ruling class and mainstream society (Nagaoka 2023, 164).

Hereticization of Marginalized Myths

While dictating *Reikai monogatari* in the 1920s, Deguchi Onisaburō took advantage of the spirit of international cooperation that followed the conclusion of World War I to intensify the international activities of Omoto. However, in the 1930s, especially after the Manchurian Incident, Omoto once again took on a more nationalistic character. Onisaburō advocated for Japan's expansionist continental policy, including the establishment of Manchukuo, and emphasized the

need for national defense.[7] In 1934, as *Nihonshūgi* 日本主義 discourse gained popularity, Onisaburō founded Shōwa Shinseikai 昭和神聖会 and energetically campaigned for the elimination of the theory that the emperor was an organ of the government (*tennō kikan setsu* 天皇機関説), the abolition of the London Naval Treaty, and the relief of farming villages. Shōwa Shinseikai had many right-wing and military members and supporters and attracted attention as an influential nationalistic organization.

The remarkable expansion of Omoto under Onisaburō was forcibly ended on 8 December 1935 by a massive crackdown by the police known as the Second Omoto Incident. The Special Higher Police had conducted a clandestine investigation, and many senior officials and laymen, including Onisaburō, were arrested on charges of impiety and violating the Peace Preservation Law. Under this law, Omoto was banned and ordered to dissolve, and its headquarters in Ayabe 綾部 and Kameoka 亀岡, as well as its branches throughout Japan, were destroyed before the trial.

The interpretation of *Reikai monogatari* was a key point of contention in the trial against Onisaburō. Based on the police investigation, the preliminary hearing conclusion recapitulated the doctrines of Omoto, centered on *Reikai monogatari*, in a mythological narrative consisting of three layers (*Ōmoto shiryō shūsei*, 342–343). Each of these three layers deals with different deities and temporalities, but all of them are consistent in their recognition that the original rulers of the earth have been forced from their positions and that this has led to the continuation of the "age of the survival of the fittest, the world of *shura* 修羅" (*Ōmoto shiryō shūsei*, 343). For example, the first layer is outlined as follows:

> Kunitokotachi no Mikoto, who was once entrusted by Tsuki no Ōkami 撞の大神 with sovereignty over the earth, was forced to retreat due to the animosity of his subordinate deities and was replaced by Banko Daijin 盤古大神 or Ninigi no Mikoto 瓊瓊杵尊, who came to Japan. His descendants, the "present imperial lineage," ruled over the earth. But the result is a society governed by the principle of body over spirit, riddled with guilt and iniquity, and a disastrous situation in which the strong oppress the weak. In order to rebuild and renew the chaotic world of today and make it a world of supreme benevolence and love, Onisaburō should abolish the current imperial lineage and become the ruler of Japan as the "spiritual representative" of Kunitokotachi no Mikoto, his wife Toyokumono no Mikoto 豊雲野尊, and Tsuki no Ōkami.
>
> (*Ōmoto shiryō shūsei*, 342–343)

7. Onisaburō developed a wide range of activities, including the establishment of the Jinrui Aizenkai 人類愛善会 (Humanity Love Society), whose slogan was "humanity compatriotism" and "all religions are derived from the same root"; exchanges with Daoyuan of China, Poch'ŏn'gyo in Korea, and the Bahá'í faith of Iranian origin; and expeditions to Mongolia and campaigns to spread the Esperanto language.

Taking the place of Kunitokotachi no Mikoto, Banko Daijin is equated with the ancestral deity of the emperor, Ninigi no Mikoto, and rule by the imperial lineage is made to correspond to the "state of confusion" of the world. The report assumes Onisaburō to be the spiritual representative of the gods who had gone into hiding and will save this world. According to such an interpretation, Omoto's doctrine would be considered impious in that it states that the rule by the imperial lineage has failed. It would also be considered as having the intention to change the national polity in that it claims to follow the Imperial Way but seeks to abolish the imperial lineage and make Onisaburō the ruler.

In a similar fashion to Kurihara, this document divides *Reikai monogatari* into the "surface" religious expression and the "hidden" political intention of usurping the throne. It interprets the former as a disguise to deceive the state and adherents while the latter is the original purpose of Omoto. The nuances of the negotiation that Onisaburō attempted with the state and the majority in *Reikai monogatari* are erased, and the myth is judged to be heretical by the violent logic of the dichotomy of orthodoxy and heresy.

In the trial, Onisaburō denied the charges, mainly arguing that: (1) the understanding of *Reikai monogatari* in the preliminary hearing conclusion was fatally erroneous; (2) *Reikai monogatari* is a story about the spiritual and psychic worlds and not "about the actual world, as politicians say"; and (3) Onisaburō and Omoto were "imperialists." Onisaburō said that "it is disgusting to read" the report, and "it is terrible to even think about such a thing [that he should replace the emperor]." When he remained unrefuted, he said, "I can't help but get angry" (*Ōmoto shiryō shūsei*, 390, 411, 384, 374–375, 368), revealing his resentment toward the detectives and the preliminary judge who conducted the interrogation with prejudice.

It may be tempting to view Onisaburō's affective utterances as an evasive performance of the language of the national polity along the lines of Kurihara's argument. However, Onisaburō's attitude here echoes the account of Susanoo's ravaging of Takamanohara after the pledge in "Comments on the *Kojiki*." According to Onisaburō, Susanoo did not become arrogant; rather, he became desperate because he was uncomfortable with being told that he was wrong, even though the innocence of his heart should have been obvious (Reikai Monogatari Kankōkai 2004, 2: 727). Viewed together, Onisaburō's anger and lamentation at his trial appear to be genuine emotions that arose from the rejection and crushing of the vision of rebuilding and renewal through reconciliation and joint struggle. Here, real events resonate with the mythology of *Reikai monogatari*, but Onisaburō and his mythmaking project fail to resolve the tensions between Omoto and the state.

The Second Omoto Incident led to a much stricter control of various religions by the police. The state made a sharp distinction between religions as friends and

enemies of the total war system and imposed severe repression on those judged to be the latter. As for Tenrikyo, the police could not easily touch the organization due to its status as an officially recognized religion under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and its size. However, the state, in the form of a "request" from the Ministry of Education, forced Tenrikyo to reform its doctrine and organization (*kakushin* 革新) to fit into the wartime system. The report submitted to the Minister of Education by Nakayama Shōzen 中山正善, the leader of Tenrikyo at the time, lists the specific contents of the reform: "We will focus on two points concerning doctrines and rituals: (1) All doctrines, rituals, and events shall be based on *Meiji kyōten* and shall not be contrary to it, and (2) no teachings related to *Doroumi kōki* or the story of the origin shall be used thereafter" (*Shakai undō no jōkyō* 11: 1101).

Tenrikyo remained under scrutiny as it began this reformation. For example, the police record the words of missionaries who opposed the reforms. They expressed their dissatisfaction with the prohibition of *Doroumi kōki* and other documents they had used in their missionary activities, as well as the forced use of *Meiji kyōten*, which directly expresses nationalistic ideology. One missionary commented that because *Doroumi kōki* tells of "the beginning of human beings," which is an element not found in the myths of the *Kiki*, the text would someday enjoy a resurgence, while others frankly complained that *Meiji kyōten* is "so difficult to understand and lacking in religious appeal" that "it is impossible for these ignorant people to simply bring up such a difficult book" (*Shakai undō no jōkyō* 11: 1122). One missionary even went so far as to say, "I have never given a single glance to *Meiji kyōten*" (*Shakai undō no jōkyō* 12: 396). Despite members' criticisms, under pressure from the state, Tenrikyo abandoned its claim to its own cosmology in *Doroumi kōki* and devoted itself solely to the total war system.[8]

Conclusion

In this article, I have examined the mythmaking projects of marginalized religions in modern Japan through the texts of Tenrikyo and Omoto and the process of their reinterpretation. Myths were not only the product of the religious and inner imagination of religious groups but also highly political texts that became the grounds for negotiation and confrontation with the modern Japanese state and the official national mythology that legitimized it.

The marginalized religions of the first half of the twentieth century constructed their mythic texts using both the "language of the national polity" and the "language of daily life." If we look at Tenrikyo, it is clear that the "language

8. Tenrikyo contributed greatly to the nation as a source of manpower to support the production of materials that were in short supply in villages, factories, coal mines, and other areas (Nagaoka 2015).

of the national polity" in *Meiji kyōten* was perceived as alien to the adherents. However, members engaged in the discourse of popular religious nationalism by combining official nationalism with texts written in the more familiar "language of daily life" such as *Doroumi kōki* and *Ofudesaki*. As a leader of Omoto, Deguchi Onisaburō also wove his own interpretation of the *Kojiki* into texts narrated in the vivid "language of daily life" in *Reikai monogatari*.

Tenrikyo's *Doroumi kōki* had little to do with modern nationalism, but it did incorporate folk knowledge about the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*. As the organization grew, Tenrikyo faced the difficult task of explaining the differences between *Doroumi kōki* and the national myths, both of which drew on the *Kiki*. Several parties took different approaches. Those in charge of compiling Tenrikyo's official doctrine in *Meiji kyōten* chose to remain silent about *Doroumi kōki*, which might conflict with the myth of the state. Attempts to explain that the *Kiki* and *Doroumi kōki* were unrelated despite some apparent similarities in the names of deities, as in the case of Iwai Takahito, struggled to follow a consistent logic. Ōnishi Aijirō and his Tenri Kenkyūkai denied the legitimacy of the emperor's rule based on the *Kiki* by assuming the infallibility of the *Doroumi kōki* and became the target of exclusion and suppression from both Tenrikyo and the state. Finally, Ueda sought to devise a logic that could resolve the contradiction between the two mythologies in order to gain recognition of Tenrikyo as a sectarian Shinto organization loyal to official nationalism. Regardless of the approach, Tenrikyo as a marginalized religion was torn between two contradictory goals: the pursuit of its own unique values and the identification with dominant values.

In the case of Omoto as well, there was no element of modern nationalism in the mythical story written in *Fudesaki* by its founder, Deguchi Nao, but in Deguchi Onisaburō's process of reinterpretation and the development of *Reikai monogatari*, Omoto found its mythology in a complicated relationship with the official mythology of the state. While emphasizing the importance of the *Kiki*, Onisaburō believed that the texts needed to be supplemented by *Reikai monogatari*. This text, which he dictated in the aftermath of the First Omoto Incident, reflects this tension with the state, but it cannot be reduced to opposition. In *Reikai monogatari*, Onisaburō altered the plot of the *Kojiki* to construct a story in which Omoto reconciles with the state through its "beautiful heart," and together they work hand in hand to rebuild and renew the world.

However, after the Second Omoto Incident in 1935, agents of the state erased the nuance that Onisaburō had put into his texts. They interpreted *Reikai monogatari* as an evil heretical myth written with the intention of disguising a plot to usurp the throne behind their claim to follow the "beautiful name of the Imperial Way." Following the crackdown on Omoto, the state turned its gaze to Tenrikyo and its mythology. Both parties claimed that there was no connection between *Doroumi kōki* and the *Kiki*, and the reform movement recognized *Meiji kyōten*

as Tenrikyo's official text and precluded the use of *Doroumi kōki*. Thus, previous efforts to reconcile without contradiction Tenrikyo's original mythology with the mythology of the nation were invalidated. In the total war system of the mid-1930s and beyond, there was no place left for the myths of marginalized religions.

The state tolerated marginalized religions' popular religious nationalism to a certain extent. For example, there was an obvious gap between the content of Tenrikyo's *Meiji kyōten* and the teachings actually preached by missionaries. Though there were external criticisms of this practice, the government and police did not see this as a major problem before the reformation.[9] For the state, a large religious organization such as Tenrikyo—which had accumulated abundant economic power, a nationwide network of local branches, and the know-how to mobilize the spiritual power and labor force of its adherents—had great utility, and there was no need to unnecessarily suppress its popular religious nationalism. Many criticized Omoto—which was not an officially recognized religion—as an "evil cult" after the First Omoto Incident, and the state strictly monitored its activities, as evidenced by the banning of some volumes of *Reikai monogatari*. Nevertheless, Ōnisaburō remained active in speech right up to the Second Omoto Incident, and his advocacy of the Imperial Way and insistence on social change attracted many supporters. Marginalized religions struggled to create their own place in society while enduring oscillations between exclusion and recognition by the state and majority society.

Understanding the relationship between the myths of the state and those of popular religions in terms of the dichotomy of orthodoxy versus heresy is an overgeneralization of the specific circumstances of the period, a time when the modern Japanese state tightened its control over religions in the process of building the total war system and strictly prohibited any deviation from the official theory of national polity. As we have seen, such generalizations at the time had dangerous consequences for the marginalized religions involved. Moreover, the orthodoxy/heresy binary is a violent logic that continues to play out in postwar historiographies of modern Japanese religion. Jolyon Baraka Thomas (2019) argues that in postwar Japan, the idea that religious leaders must essentially win and defend their religious freedom against the state became prevalent, and that this was instilled by the occupiers. The formation of the image of popular religions as standing in opposition to state power was also greatly influenced by Marxism, which, after prewar suppression, gained power in postwar Japanese academia (Nagaoka 2020). The composition of the state-religion conflict, narrated through the lens of postwar values, renders invisible the complex process of negotiation between the state and marginalized religions. Scholars of Japanese

9. However, this does not mean that regulations did not exist, as was the case when Iwai's *Doroumi kōki: Fu chūshaku* was banned.

religion must carefully reconsider these received narratives and take seriously the experiences of marginalized people on their own terms. In so doing, we will gain a better understanding of marginalized religions' goals and efforts to navigate unbalanced power relations with the state and majority society, and how these interactions shaped their religious world.

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Takashi Miura

Legitimizing an Evil Teaching

Deguchi Onisaburō and "Superstition" in Modern Japan

This article examines the writings of Deguchi Onisaburō, the cofounder of Omoto, and argues that he actively utilized the discourse of "superstition" to criticize a variety of contemporaneous religious movements and by doing so, legitimize Omoto as the only "true" religion destined to save Japan. Scholars of modern Japanese religions have highlighted the ways in which intellectuals, journalists, and proponents of mainstream religions condemned new religions as "superstitious and evil teachings" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet, an analysis of how new religions themselves responded to the charge of superstition has been neglected. Onisaburō was one of the most prominent religious figures in the early 1900s and possibly the public face of "superstition." However, this article demonstrates that Onisaburō himself appropriated the language of superstition in his own writings, instead of rejecting it. More specifically, he used it to characterize established religions represented by Shinto and Buddhist institutions as backward and vilify other contemporaneous religious practices as worthless delusions. According to him, the teachings of Omoto alone represented the path forward for modern Japan. This article thus reverses the prevailing understanding of the discourse of superstition in modern Japan as simply targeting and demeaning new religions. Representatives of new religions also internalized it and invoked it to further their goals.

keywords: Omoto—Deguchi Onisaburō—superstition—secularity—Shinto

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The development of the concept of "superstition" (*meishin* 迷信) in modern Japan has become a topic of great interest in the last decade (Josephson 2012; Maxey 2014). Scholars have shown that the category of superstition evolved in tandem with the categories of the "secular" and "religion." Veneration of the imperial family was classified as a matter of public ritual, while the doctrines of mainstream Buddhist denominations, Shinto-derived groups, and Christianity were contained within the sphere of private and personal "religion." Spirit possession, spiritual healing, and a wide variety of popular practices, as well as a number of new religious communities founded by charismatic leaders, were labeled as embarrassing "superstition." The boundaries drawn between the secular or "not-religion," religion, and superstition reorganized preexisting practices and views within the conceptual grid of a modern nation-state (Thomas 2019). According to Josephson, superstition was antithetical to the secular and served as a foil for the definition of proper, respectable religion (Josephson 2012, 4–5). Those who continued to engage in superstitious practices or, worse, joined suspicious "pseudo-religions"—that is, evil cults—were castigated as the "enemy within" who impeded Japan's reconstruction as a "civilized" country (Sawada 2004, 238–258).[1] Journalists, academics, and various political actors aggressively sought to eradicate the elements that they regarded as superstitious from modernized Japan.

Far less is known about the perspectives of the targets of stigma surrounding superstition. How did those who were rebuked as representatives of superstition respond to criticisms from society at large? What were their strategies for defending themselves? What concepts and discourses did they utilize to legitimize their practices? To answer these questions, this article focuses on Deguchi Onisaburō 出口王仁三郎, the cofounder of Omoto, one of the most prominent religious movements in the early 1900s. Despite its massive following in the mid-1910s and 1930s, Omoto was universally vilified as superstition and as an "evil teaching" (*jakyō* 邪教). The movement was subjected to severe government persecution in 1921 and 1935. As the leader of Omoto, Onisaburō was arguably the public face of "superstition" in early twentieth-century Japan.

Upon examining his writings and activities through the organizational framework of Omoto, it becomes clear that Onisaburō was concerned with the

1. See McLaughlin's (2012, 54) application of Gluck's (1985, 132–138) framework of "metaphorical foreigners" to analyze the positionality of new religions in Japan.

conceptual boundary of superstition. He was keenly aware of the positionality of Omoto in society and sensitive to the criticisms the movement received. Thus, Onisaburō sought to promote Omoto as a force of good, compatible with the modernizing agendas of imperial Japan. I find that he did so by adopting the language of "superstition" himself. That is, in much the same way that his detractors attacked Omoto and its leadership, Onisaburō condemned established religions and other religious actors as "superstitious" and detrimental to the progress of Japanese civilization. This discursive maneuver in turn implied that, unlike its opponents, Omoto was *not* superstition. Onisaburō went a step further to elevate Omoto beyond the categories of both superstition and religion by identifying the highest objective of Omoto as the realization of the Imperial Way (*kōdō* 皇道), a remaking of Japanese society based on the divine authority of the emperor. In other words, far from rejecting the discourse of superstition or taking a principled stance against this discourse as it was employed to castigate religious minorities, Onisaburō internalized and subverted it to legitimize his own movement.

In this article, I argue that those who were disenfranchised as "enemies within" in modern Japanese society did not quietly endure their marginalized status as passive victims. Rather, these agents played a critical part in shaping, and at times reformulating, the conceptual field of superstition to advance their own agendas. I begin by outlining the attacks levied against Omoto from the mid-1910s to the mid-1930s to contextualize the discursive environment in which Onisaburō operated. Then I analyze Onisaburō's own expositions on the concept of superstition and ways in which he leveraged it to denounce certain movements and practices while presenting Omoto in a favorable light. I conclude by tracing the concrete steps that Onisaburō took in an attempt to ensure that Omoto was free of "superstition" and above reproach.

Omoto as the Representative "Superstition"

In early twentieth-century Japan, Omoto was arguably the most high-profile example of a movement vituperated as deceptive superstition. Omoto traces its origins back to a spirit possession experienced by its cofounder Deguchi Nao 出口なお in 1892.[2] A kami named Ushitora no Konjin 艮の金神 (Golden Kami of the Northeast) possessed her and revealed the imminent destruction of the present world of evil. Nao's prophecy and her ability to perform miraculous healing attracted a small group of followers. She was eventually joined by a charismatic youth by the name of Ueda Kisaburō 上田喜三郎, who assisted Nao in

2. The movement inspired by revelations obtained through Deguchi Nao's spirit possession took on various names in different stages of its development. I refer to it as Omoto in this article for the sake of convenience and consistency.

formulating the organizational structure of her community. Kisaburō became the cofounder of Omoto, later changing his name to Deguchi Onisaburō and becoming Nao's son-in-law by marrying one of her daughters.[3]

Omoto grew rapidly in the 1910s due to a combination of factors, including Onisaburō's proselytization strategies and promotion of a spirit possession technique known as *chinkon kishin* 鎮魂帰神 (pacifying the soul, returning to the divine) believed to allow for dialogue with various spirits and grant miraculous blessings.[4] Omoto appealed to a wide range of demographics. Although it is difficult to estimate the size of Omoto's membership, the group claimed to have one to three million adherents by the 1930s (Garon 1997, 70–71). Notably, it attracted some prominent intellectuals and members of the Japanese military such as Asano Wasaburō 浅野和三郎, a scholar of English literature, and Akiyama Saneyuki 秋山真之, a navy admiral who had played a key advisory role in the Russo-Japanese War (Murakami 1978, 121–126).

Omoto's popularity was matched by intense public criticism from its detractors. For example, when Omoto's membership in Shimane Prefecture expanded considerably in the late 1910s, the local newspaper *Shōyō shinpō* 松陽新報 published a series of articles expressing concerns about Shimane residents embracing the "evil teaching Omoto." An article dated 3 February 1919 offers the following lamentation:

> The fact that this evil teaching [Omoto] has recruited as its adherents a few members of the intellectual class (*chishiki kaikyū* 知識階級) is one of the reasons why the foolish masses are being tricked (*shūgu o madowasu hitotsu no riyū* 衆愚を惑はす一つの理由). More than that, all these soldiers, teachers, judges, and doctors—where has their sense of self gone? They regard their allegiance to this doctrine as their ultimate honor and run around in a half-crazed state (*hankyōran* 半狂乱). Shouldn't we say that this is the height of idiocy or the upper limit of stupidity (*taichi no kocchō*, *baka no ikidomari* 呆痴の骨頂、馬鹿の行止まり)? (ONS 1: 417–418)

Conspicuous in this excerpt is the notion of insanity and derangement, that only those who were deluded would join a pseudo-religion like Omoto. *Shōyō shinpō* seems to operate according to the understanding that journalists had the moral obligation to advertise the danger of this "cult" in order to protect the "masses" who were either too dumb or ignorant to defend themselves. The implicit assumption is that people who became Omoto adherents were being

3. For more on the early history of Omoto, see Murakami (1978, 65–91) and Yasumaru (1987, 156–191).

4. See Stalker (2008, 12–16) for her discussion of the relationship between charisma and entrepreneurship as embodied by Onisaburō. See also Staemmler (2009) for a detailed history of the *chinkon kishin* practice.

tricked and that they were threats to the rest of society. These discourses were predictable and well-established tropes mobilized against "superstition" by the early twentieth century.[5]

Furthermore, around the same time, an association of Shinto priests based in Matsue in Shimane Prefecture issued an official resolution dated 21 February 1919 against the encroaching threat of Omoto. A significant number of shrine priests were apparently joining Omoto, and the association saw this situation as compromising to the integrity of its priesthood:

> Ayabe Kōdō Ōmotokai 綾部皇道大本会 (that is, Omoto),[6] which has become extremely widespread recently, harms public safety and causes social bewilderment. Despite this fact, there are those who become members of this movement while being shrine priests and contribute to the ministry of said movement in both covert and overt ways… these individuals are forgetting their original duty as shrine priests and are tarnishing the sanctity of Shinto shrines. With this understanding, our association issues this resolution supporting the following measures designed to confront this situation. (ONS 1: 418)

The resolution lists specific measures to be implemented against shrine priests who join Omoto, including the issuing of an initial warning to those suspected of having an interest in Omoto and demanding the resignation of those who ignore the warning. The resolution concludes by adding that whenever such a resignation—that is, dismissal—is processed, local newspapers are to be notified to make an official announcement, implying that those who join Omoto will be subjected to public censure and shaming. This concluding remark suggests that the association was likely in close contact with journalists and reporters. Accordingly, *Shōyō shinpō* publicized the association's resolution in an article titled, "Kōdō Ōmoto is the enemy of Shinto" (ONS 1: 418–419).

Shinto representatives were not the only ones to express fears concerning the expansion of Omoto. For example, in early 1920, Jōdo Shinshū priests and parishioners in Kanazawa reportedly stormed into a lecture hall where Omoto preachers were scheduled to speak; the Buddhists blocked the doorway to prevent people from entering (ONS 1: 420–421). Jōdo Shinshū leaders also circulated pamphlets criticizing Omoto and advising their parishioners not to be fooled by the group's teachings. Members of established religions responded in a similar fashion wherever Omoto's growth was notable. These responses also indicate the degree to which Omoto's appeal was widespread, potentially jeopardizing the membership base of both Shinto and Buddhist organizations.

5. For an analysis of the discourses of "madness" and "mental illness" associated with specific religious practices, see JOSEPHSON (2012, 20–21, 178–185).

6. Omoto at this time was known as Imperial Way Omoto. Ayabe 綾部 in Kyoto was the location of its headquarters.

Moreover, there were several public intellectuals in the 1910s and 1920s who condemned Omoto for its pernicious effects on Japanese society. Psychologist Nakamura Kokyō 中村古峡 is famous for his criticisms of Omoto published in special issues of a journal entitled *Abnormal Psychology* (*Hentai shinri* 変態心理), which were dedicated to debunking the false beliefs of Omoto from a psychological and medical standpoint (Hyōdō 2005). Nakamura was a favorite among journalists who sought to acquire an "expert opinion" on Omoto, and he gave speeches denouncing the movement. He described Omoto as "a collective of paranoids (*paranoia* パラノイア), delusional lunatics (*mōsōsei chihō* 妄想性痴呆), superstitious believers (*meishinsha* 迷信者), and swindlers (*yamashi* 山師)" (*Ōmotokyō no meishin o ronzu*, 40). Nakamura also referred to the *chinkon kishin* practice as a kind of hypnotic trick (*saiminjutsu* 催眠術) that utilizes people's preconceived beliefs. He based his criticisms on the premise that Omoto was "a great superstition and an evil teaching" (*dainaru meishin de ari jakyō de aru* 大なる迷信であり邪教である) that needed to be "eradicated" (*shōmetsu* 消滅) and "set straight on the correct path" (*seidō ni michibikan* 正道に導かん) (*Ōmotokyō no shōtai*, 69–71).[7]

The renowned scholar of religion Katō Genchi 加藤玄智 also lamented the spread of superstitious views in Japan, although he did so in a much milder tone than Nakamura. Katō argued that following the conclusion of World War I, the prestige of traditional religions such as Christianity and Buddhism plummeted, creating an opening for new religions and pseudo-religions to emerge. Some of these new movements could be regarded as "new superstitions" (*aratana meishin* 新たな迷信), and he found it strange that top businesspersons, military officers, and intellectuals were attracted to these superstitions. Katō ultimately attributed this phenomenon to a lack of "mental fortitude" (*seishinteki soyō* 精神的素養) among the Japanese and held that more work should be done in "social education" (*shakai kyōiku* 社会教育) so as to prevent people from turning to superstitions like Omoto (*Ōmotokyō no shōtai*, 73–74).

Omoto's massive appeal also alarmed the state. The group's vision of world transformation was informed by its visions of the "Taishō Restoration" (*Taishō ishin* 大正維新) and the Imperial Way, focusing on the realization of a divine form of governance based on Japan's singular mission in the world. Thus, Omoto provided an alternate modality of being a loyal "Japanese subject" that was impermissible in the eyes of the imperial government.[8] The fact that Omoto

7. Kanō Yūkei 狩野有景 was an educator and a former Omoto member who eventually turned against the movement. He authored the *Ōmotokyō no shōtai* in order to "expose" Omoto as an evil and dangerous superstition. In this book, he lists negative comments about Omoto made by experts and scholars of various backgrounds, including Nakamura.

8. For more on Omoto's vision of Japan's place in the world and its seemingly paradoxical Japan-centered universalism, see Miura (2018; 2019, 154–174).

attracted some members of the aristocratic class also proved inconvenient for the state. Public outcry against Omoto became particularly intense in the late 1910s, with some Omoto defectors going so far as to publicly claim that Onisaburō was actively planning to subvert the government by stockpiling weapons and training his young adherents to take up arms on his behalf (Murakami 1978, 118–119, 130–132). The "First Omoto Incident (Suppression)" started on 12 February 1921, when the authorities stormed the Omoto headquarters in Ayabe. They arrested Omoto leaders with charges of *lèse-majesté* (*fukeizai* 不敬罪) and violation of the Newspaper Law, as Omoto had purchased *Taishō nichinichi shinbun* 大正日日新聞 and proselytized actively through the platform. The authorities confiscated various documents and records from the headquarters and also searched for the rumored stockpiled weapons, to no avail. Although Onisaburō's supposed plan to subvert the government proved to be a fabrication, major newspapers nonetheless reported on the government crackdown and portrayed Omoto as a dangerous organization. The authorities proceeded with the charges of *lèse-majesté* against Onisaburō and the Newspaper Law violation against other Omoto leaders, though they were unable to find any evidence of subterfuge. The authorities also dismantled Omoto sanctuaries in Ayabe because they resembled Ise Jingū 伊勢神宮 (Murakami 1978, 131–138).

The first suppression did not deter Onisaburō from furthering his world transforming agendas. During the 1920s, he pursued new international connections, putting into practice his vision of "ten thousand teachings [from one] identical root" (*bankyō dōkon* 万教同根) by affiliating with various religious movements from continental Asia and also traveling to Mongolia to establish an earthly utopia.[9] Moreover, in the 1930s, Onisaburō solidified his ties with rightwing activists such as Uchida Ryōhei 内田良平 and Tōyama Mitsuru 頭山 満, who actively voiced their vision for the "sacred imperial way" (*shinsei naru kōdō* 神聖なる皇道) (OSS 2: 718–720). Onisaburō's political stance emphasizing the authority of the emperor seemed to align with the accelerating centralization of state power in the 1930s. However, Onisaburō's maneuvers only exacerbated the state's suspicion toward him, eventually leading to the "Second Omoto Incident" in December 1935. The authorities cited the Peace Preservation Law and *lèse-majesté* against the Omoto leadership and, greatly expanding the 1921 dismantling of Omoto facilities, completely destroyed the Omoto sacred grounds in Ayabe and Kameoka 亀岡 by demolishing all major buildings. The authorities justified this suppression by arguing that superstition had to be wiped out thoroughly and that Omoto was a superstition "incompatible with the national body" (*kokutai to ai irenu* 国体ト相容レヌ) (OSS 3: 231). As a Police Bureau chief in

9. For more on Omoto's international activities during the 1920s, see Murakami (1978, 147–178) and Stalker (2008, 142–169).

the Home Ministry remarked a few months after the crackdown, Onisaburō was the "mastermind behind an evil teaching" (*jakyō no genkyō* 邪教ノ元兇) whose existence had to be "forever eliminated from this sacred land, as long as our country exists" (OSS 3: 238). Major newspapers parroted the government propaganda (Murakami 1978, 204–209).

The two suppressions of Omoto were extraordinary in their magnitude, but perfectly ordinary in the sense that they reflected the modern "orthodoxy'" of outrage against superstition. This outrage was propelled by the mass media, public intellectuals, and representatives of "good" religions who cited predictable tropes of delusion, illness, and danger to characterize communities like Omoto and figures like Onisaburō as immediate threats to Japanese society. Their indignations, furthermore, were substantiated through state power and violence. However, the ways in which Onisaburō himself engaged with the discourse of superstition significantly complicate this picture. As I will show below, Onisaburō actively employed the same language of superstition in his own writings in order to legitimize his spiritual vision and repel criticisms against him and Omoto.

Onisaburō on "Superstition"

Onisaburō was a prolific writer, and he expressed his views on a variety of topics through his essays and transcribed sermons published by Omoto, which were read primarily by Omoto adherents. A common topic of discussion for Onisaburō was customs and practices he regarded as obsolete in the modern age. He denounced these practices as superstition, and when he did so, he sounded remarkably similar to the people who attacked him and Omoto for being superstitious. For example, in 1932 he published a short exposition aptly titled "Superstition" in which he criticized the conceptions of inauspicious directions and other geomantic concerns deriving from interpretations of the traditional calendar:

> People often say that it is inappropriate to build a bathroom in the northeast. The northeast is where the sun rises, so it does feel good to keep that direction clean and organized, but there is nothing more to it than that. One should place a bathroom somewhere inconspicuous in any case. This is all a matter of design, and one should not be concerned at all about the superstition [about the direction of the northeast]. [Similarly] if one is concerned about the auspiciousness of the year or the date, then one is being conquered by superstition (*meishin ni seifuku serarete iru* 迷信に征服せられている), and things will turn out negatively because of that. Nothing is more idiotic than being born in this vast world and living in such a constrained fashion so as to limit one's behaviors based on the supposed auspiciousness or inauspiciousness of certain dates. (DOC 3: 284)

Here Onisaburō refers to the custom of maintaining geomantic purity in the direction of the northeast, traditionally identified as an unlucky direction and described as the "gate of demons" (*kimon* 鬼門). He acknowledges the functional merit of keeping the northeast clean but stresses that there is no need to fear the northeast as inauspicious. The direction of the northeast held special significance in the Omoto cosmology since it was associated with Ushitora no Konjin, the main deity of Omoto whose name directly references the "northeast" (*ushitora*). According to Omoto mythology, Ushitora no Konjin was a righteous kami who was confined to the northeast by evil kami. The evil kami branded Ushitora no Konjin as a demonic spirit, resulting in the identification of the northeast as an inauspicious direction. Omoto's central mission was to reinstate the authority of Ushitora no Konjin and restore righteousness in the present world of evil. Given this cosmology, it makes sense for Onisaburō to work to dispel negativities associated with the northeast; yet it is noteworthy that he does so by specifically reframing the negative associations as superstition. He took the same approach with the custom of choosing auspicious days to perform certain actions, particularly life-changing events such as marriage and moving. As will be discussed more below, Onisaburō was dismissive of Japanese customs that struck him as irrational, and he did not hesitate to adopt a modern Western lifestyle. This attitude frustrated Deguchi Nao and her ardent followers and resulted in friction between them and Onisaburō (Ooms 1993, 64–65; Stalker 2008, 38–43).

Furthermore, Onisaburō went beyond disapproving of traditional customs to lambast specific ritual practices associated with better-established religious institutions. For example, he focuses his criticism on religious sites renowned for pilgrimages and ascetic practices in a 1919 essay:

> Even in this age of Taisho, in which our society has become much more enlightened, superstition continues to flourish (*meishin no ato wa taenu* 迷信の跡は絶えぬ). Just pay a visit to Mount Inari of Fushimi, Mount Myōken of Nose, or Mount Kurama. One will see naked worshipers walking around barefooted and praying in front of kami and buddhas. They repeatedly recite the Heavenly Prayer in a strange and rasping voice; they then proceed to recite the *Heart Sūtra* or chant the *Lotus Sūtra*. What nonsense is this? There are also many individuals who pour candle wax on their arms, and while enduring their skin being burned with greasy sweat on their foreheads they pray fervently for blessings in order to fulfill their selfish desires. In addition, there are many practitioners of superstition (*meishinsha*) who refuse to partake in the heavenly blessing of food and starve themselves to death, all the while asking kami and buddhas to realize their ridiculous wishes. (DOZ 5: 319–320)

Onisaburō does not shy away from openly mocking austerities associated with sites such as Fushimi Inari and Mount Kurama. In particular, he denounces

seekers of "this-worldly benefits" (*genze riyaku* 現世利益) and categorizes practices including sutra chanting and fasting as "superstition." This criticism is doubly ironic. The promise of this-worldly benefits was central to the growth of Omoto, particularly in its incipient phase, following a pattern of institutional expansion shared by other new religions; moreover, Onisaburō himself had engaged in ascetic practices on a mountain prior to meeting Nao for the first time in 1898 (Murakami 1978, 31–41). Nonetheless, Onisaburō here fully embraces the modernization and enlightenment discourse and devalues the importance of immediate, material benefits. This discursive move suggests that he was most likely aware that his detractors often cited claims of miraculous blessings as evidence of the superstitious nature of "pseudo-religions." It is worth considering that this essay was published at a time when Omoto experienced rapid growth and was exposed to a level of public outcry unprecedented in the movement's history. Critiquing certain religious practices as superstition served to differentiate Omoto from such practices. Onisaburō thus sought to explicitly disentangle his movement from the label of superstition.

Furthermore, Onisaburō in some instances adopted a seemingly secularized attitude to tacitly critique those who rely on religious efficacy. In a 1928 composition titled "The Great Plan of Kami" (*Kami no keirin* 神の経綸), Onisaburō stresses the importance of human effort in ameliorating the existing world and admonishes those who quickly depend on or expect divine assistance:

> Everything in the world exists in part because of human effort. However, humans cannot stand on their own. Each human being has a divine spirit or soul of the kami within, and this is how the world has developed to the extent that we can see today. Humans work with kami, and that is how a heaven (*tengoku* 天国) is created; that is how a pure land (*jōdo* 浄土) is created; that is how a civilized world (*bunmei no yo* 文明の世) is created. Forgetting this principle and thinking that, since kami and buddhas are omnipotent, all we have to do is to have faith and they will grant us all of our wishes—this is the epitome of superstition and delusional belief. (DOZ 6: 425)

Onisaburō envisions a mutually dependent relationship between humanity and kami in which civilizational progress is made possible through the combination of human and supernatural powers. In assuming a linear progression of human civilization, Onisaburō here reveals his modernist bent. Once again, he is in vigorous agreement with his critics, most of whom were advocates of "practical learning" (*jitsugaku* 実学) that could contribute directly to Japan's modernizing agendas; forms of knowledge that deviated from this pragmatic, scientific framework were to be jettisoned as superstition (Sawada 2004, 5–6). Interestingly, Onisaburō also equates a "civilized world" with a "heaven" and a "pure

land" and contrasts it against "delusion."[10] He thus reifies the distinction between respectable religions beneficial to the civilizing objective of the secular state and unacceptable superstition hindering the collective goal of the state. Onisaburō operated on the same binary between "good" and "bad" religions (that is, superstitions) that his detractors utilized. The point on which Onisaburō disagreed with them was that he saw himself as being on the good side, while none of his critics shared that view.

At the same time, the distinction between proper religion and dangerous superstition was of secondary importance for Onisaburō, who above all emphasized the centrality of the Imperial Way based on the sacrality of the imperial family. Onisaburō elaborates on this point in the following 1934 essay, in which he discusses the necessity of venerating a "true kami" (*shin no kamisama* 真の神様):

> Śākyamuni, Christ, Muhammad, Confucius, and others are founders of religion (*shūkyō no shiso* 宗教の始祖) and are great individuals, their deeds renowned in all of human history. However, in today's world, they no longer possess the power to lead and save people. The reason for this is that they are "dead gods and dead buddhas" (*shishin shibutsu* 死神死仏). In the modern age, they have no energy left, not even to let loose a good fart. In short, they are dead lions and dead tigers. A live cat has more vitality than dead lions and tigers and is actually more useful in daily life because it will catch mice. A live cat can bite and harass dead tigers and dead lions as it pleases. Having said that, it may be beneficial in some cases to study the sayings and actions of great religious figures, reflect on their marvelous willpower, and uphold them as models for one's own life and outlook. However, those who pray to these figures in order to have their wishes come true are foolish and superstitious (*gusha de ari meishin de aru* 愚者であり迷信である).
>
> Citizens of our great imperial country should venerate a true kami who is alive. What is this kami who is alive? This kami is none other than our emperor, the inheritor of the unbroken lineage of the heavenly gods who have manifested themselves as presiders of the universe from the very beginning of heaven and earth—a living kami who reigns with a supreme mastery of the three virtues of the lord, teacher, and parent (*shu shi shin no santoku* 主師親の三徳). Our emperor is the lord, teacher, and parent of the world. We pity the fact that many citizens of Japan, who had the good fortune of being born as children of this great parent-kami, are serving as children of and praying for salvation from the dead gods and dead buddhas who have no karmic ties to them. In other words, venerating and worshiping the founders of foreign religions is like being filial to the parents of strangers' families who died thousands

10. When Onisaburō discusses "heaven" and "pure land" in this context, he seems to be talking about an ideal world or society on earth, not a postmortem realm into which one aspires to be reborn.

> of years ago and is extremely misguided. The blind followers of established religions (*kisei shūkyō no mōshin no tohai* 既成宗教の妄信の徒輩) in Japan today are forgetting their own ancestors and parents and are devoting themselves to the ancestors of strangers' families. (OSS 2: 412)

Onisaburō begins by praising the founders of major world religions but claims that they are powerless in the modern world, comparing them to dead lions and tigers; people may find their deeds inspiring, but wish-fulfilling prayers offered to them are now futile and nothing but superstition. Onisaburō uses the expression "established religions" (*kisei shūkyō*) to refer to these "dead," outdated religions. The underlying message is that it is new movements like Omoto that have the ability to guide people toward salvation. Onisaburō then moves on to criticize Japanese citizens following these old impotent religions, reminding them that they should be upholding the Japanese emperor, the one true kami. For Onisaburō, this spiritual unification of Japan under the emperor—and the global expansion of this unity—represents the crux of the Imperial Way. To promote this vision, he positions the veneration of the emperor above not only superstition but also respectable religions like Buddhism and Christianity. In fact, in the passages above, he blurs the boundary between superstition and religion by implying that all religions that fail to recognize the divine reign of the emperor are superstitious, particularly for Japanese citizens. The author also insinuates that since Omoto promotes the true Imperial Way, it also stands above both religion and superstition. Onisaburō thus elevates and legitimizes Omoto in a way that directly mirrors the imperial government's policy of interpreting veneration of the imperial family as a matter of public duty, separate from people's private religious preferences and not infringing upon their religious freedom. The imagery of the family, in which the emperor is the parent and Japanese citizens are his children, also resonates with the contemporaneous government propaganda.[11]

His writings from the late 1910s and the mid-1930s show that "superstition" was a topic of great interest for Onisaburō for a significant portion of his career in the Omoto leadership. He criticized a variety of traditions as superstitious, using the same "modern" and "enlightened" language that his detractors mobilized against him. In other words, instead of rejecting the framework of

11. It remains a point of scholarly debate whether Onisaburō's flowery language about the emperor was purely tactical, a mere performative response to the first suppression in 1921, or expressed his sincere adoration for the imperial family. It is also possible that the image of an "idealized" emperor highlighted repeatedly in Omoto's publications was an indirect criticism of the "actual," living emperors of modern Japan, who did not live up to the movement's expectations. It is impossible to ascertain Onisaburō's "genuine" intentions, but analysis of his discursive maneuvers is necessary to understand how Onisaburō sought to situate Omoto within the complex social and political climates of the 1920s and 1930s. See Murakami (1978, 128–129), Stalker (2008, 72–73), and Yasumaru (1987, 199–200, 239–241).

superstition or opposing it as a matter of principle, Onisaburō embraced it and subverted it into a legitimating framework through which to present his own vision. He was skillful in setting up a foil against which he could differentiate his movement, ultimately associating it directly with the official state ideology that trumped both superstition and religion. At the same time, Onisaburō's engagement with superstition was not merely discursive. In the following section I will analyze the ways in which Onisaburō grappled with the question of superstition both internally within the Omoto organizational structure and externally in response to government scrutiny.

Reforming "Superstition" Within

Onisaburō did not only criticize an array of practices in society at large that he regarded as superstitious; he also challenged some views within Omoto itself that he recognized as backwards. This tension between Onisaburō and some factions within the Omoto membership was particularly poignant while Deguchi Nao was alive. Initially, Onisaburō encountered Nao in 1898 in his capacity as an interrogator of spirits (*saniwa* 審神者) in order to "evaluate" the spirit that was possessing Nao. Apparently, Nao had been frustrated by the fact that her spirit possession experience and the kami communicating with her were not receiving wide recognition. By this point, Nao had already acquired a small group of adherents while maintaining an affiliation with government-approved Konkōkyō 金光教. Nao had identified the kami possessing her as Ushitora no Konjin, also the main deity worshiped in Konkōkyō. She had come a long way since her very first possession experience in 1892, when she was locked up in a cell because people around her thought she had gone insane, especially since Nao would often scream out loud about the impending end of the world. The screaming ceased once she started to commit the content of her spirit possession to writing, which was compiled later as Nao's *Ofudesaki* お筆先, but the boundary between "delusion" and "prophesy" remained precarious.[12]

In the late 1890s, Nao sought a way to free herself of the subordinate role she occupied under Konkōkyō and have her prophetic messages certified as originating from an authoritative spiritual source. Onisaburō fulfilled this aspiration, aiding Nao with the process of establishing a new organization for her community and legitimizing her prophecies in a way that also complied with the mandates of government-approved Shinto. For example, Onisaburō defined the objectives of this new religious community as to "respectfully uphold and proselytize Foundress Deguchi's marvelous, sacred, and beautiful teachings" while

12. The fact that Nao's possession was initially interpreted as an expression of her madness is emblematic of the emerging discourse of superstition associated with mental illness in the late nineteenth century (Josephson 2012, 185).

also "venerating our imperial family for its glory and perfection and absolutely adhering to the imperial will" (OSS 2: 31).[13] From a certain perspective, from the very beginning Onisaburō's involvement with Omoto hinged upon rescuing the group out of the realm of "delusion" and rendering it as a community based on respectable doctrines.

However, some of Nao's earliest followers were unhappy with Onisaburō's interventions, and this friction manifested in different ways. For example, Onisaburō was critical of Nao's most loyal followers who interpreted her teachings literally. Some of them reportedly walked around with lanterns even during daytime based on Nao's teaching that the present world was covered in darkness; some also insisted on walking in the middle of the street, despite cars and horse carriages, because Nao had taught them to never stray sideways and stay in the middle of the path. Other members refrained from wearing Western clothes and shoes and eating meat since they were all evil foreign customs according to Nao. Onisaburō derided these practices as "superstitious, obstinate, and foolish" (*meishin gangu* 迷信頑愚) (ONS 1: 243).[14] Despite his interest in nativist traditions, Onisaburō held a cosmopolitan and flexible attitude toward Western customs, maintaining that material advancements and innovations could be embraced so long as they were accompanied by spiritual growth.[15]

Onisaburō's pragmatic—and, for some, inflammatory—outlook is illustrated by the following episode concerning the smallpox vaccine (*shutō* 種痘). As already mentioned, Onisaburō married one of Nao's daughters, Deguchi Sumi 出口すみ. They had their first child, Deguchi Naohi 出口直日, in 1902. When the local authorities circulated a notice to have children vaccinated against smallpox, Nao protested and maintained that children must not be vaccinated. When Naohi was born, Nao had declared that the leadership of Omoto was to be inherited by a female in her lineage; it was incumbent, therefore, that Naohi's body remained pure, not contaminated by a "foreign" technology like the smallpox vaccine.[16] When the authorities levied a fine of twenty yen for noncompliance, some Omoto members argued that they should not pay the fine, since doing so would mean that Japan [Omoto] was defeated by a foreign power. A group of

13. At this point, the organization was called Kinmei Reigakukai 金明霊学会 and affiliated with another state-sanctioned organization called Inari Kōsha 稲荷講社.

14. This quote is a later recollection by Onisaburō about the early years of Omoto's history. See also YASUMARU (1987, 184).

15. YASUMARU (1987, 186) characterizes Onisaburō's relatively cosmopolitan attitude toward the West as emblematic of a strand of early modern nativist thought that actively incorporated Western and Christian knowledge (ONS 1: 269–270).

16. Nao was possibly also concerned about the origin of the vaccination technology being cowpox and potentially exposing her granddaughter to an "impure" substance deriving from an animal (*chikurui* 畜類) (YASUMARU 1987, 184–185; ONS 1: 249–250).

Omoto adherents stormed the local municipal office to express their displeasure about the vaccine mandate and the fine, leading to a confrontation with officials. Onisaburō, most likely not sharing the misgivings about the vaccine, secretly paid the fine to prevent further conflict with the authorities. This covert act angered Omoto followers close to Nao, further driving a wedge between them and Onisaburō (YASUMARU 1987, 184–186).[17]

The antagonism against Onisaburō among some Omoto members eventually reached a point where they refused to listen to his sermons, interfered with his proselytizing activities, and even burned some of his writings. Radicals attempted to assassinate Onisaburō as well, their plan thwarted only thanks to Onisaburō's clairvoyance (ONS 1: 258–266). This antagonism intensified as Nao and her closest adherents' millenarian expectation heightened in the early 1900s. During this time, Nao predicted a catastrophic end to the present world, accompanied by devastating natural disasters and other calamities through which a significant percentage of the world's population would perish. Nao had expected this apocalypse to commence with Japan's total defeat against Russia during the Russo-Japanese War. After this period of tribulation, an ideal world would emerge on earth.[18] Onisaburō remained skeptical of these apocalyptic visions, dismissing them as pronouncements that "misled people" (YASUMARU 1987, 187–188).[19] In March 1905, Onisaburō departed Ayabe temporarily to maintain some distance from the Omoto community (ONS 1: 277).

When Japan's victory over Russia became apparent, many Omoto adherents were disillusioned with Nao's apocalyptic prophecies. The membership dwindled precipitously, leaving Nao and her family in a state of dire poverty, to the point of struggling to secure enough food to feed themselves. Onisaburō rejoined the Ayabe community in 1908. Prior to his return, Onisaburō had acquired an official certificate as a shrine priest and had built connections with government-sanctioned Sect Shinto groups such as Ontakekyō 御嶽教 and Taiseikyō 大成教, preparing avenues through which to provide organizational legitimacy to Omoto (YASUMARU 1987, 227). From 1908 onward, Onisaburō's leadership status in Omoto became indisputable. He quickly reformulated Nao's eschatological prophecies into a utopian vision of world unification under the spiritual leadership of Japan and its Imperial Way. Onisaburō thus emerged triumphant over "superstitions" within the organization.

Onisaburō's reformulation of Omoto continued, mostly in response to external pressures. The first suppression in 1921 occurred a few years after Nao's

17. For more on the frictions between Onisaburō and the old-time followers of Nao, see ONS (1: 213–217).

18. For more on Nao's apocalyptic visions, see YASUMARU (1987, 215–220) and OOMS (1993).

19. Onisaburō's direct dismissal of some of Nao's prophecies can be found in a copy of a text known as the "Great Origin of the Way" (*Michi no Ōmoto* 道の大本) attributed to Onisaburō.

passing in 1918. Onisaburō himself was arrested on 12 February and was charged with *lèse-majesté* as explained above. During his detainment, Onisaburō composed a document titled "Opinions on Improving Omoto" (*Ōmotokyō kairyō no iken* 大本教改良の意見), dated 4 May 1921. This document outlined the ways in which Onisaburō planned to rectify "problematic" elements within his organization. He dedicates a significant portion to discussing the positionality of the *Ofudesaki*, the central scripture of Omoto:

> I first encountered the *Fudesaki* around 1899 or so.… At first, I was able to keep a calm attitude when reading the *Fudesaki*, and I was often labeled as a heretic by old-time members and Nao because of this. But over the last twenty years, I was gradually drawn in, and by 1917 or so, I had come to have a steadfast faith in the *Fudesaki*. As a result, I made a grave mistake at this time [that is, being arrested]. Thinking about it today, a *Fudesaki* purported to be written in a state of spirit possession is a trick of evil gods (*jashin no itazura* 邪神のイタヅラ) and brings nothing but harm.… I am determined to eliminate future causes of delusion by burning all the *Fudesaki* composed by Deguchi Nao and Deguchi Oni [Onisaburō] while being possessed.[20] (ONS 1: 592–593)

This document was made public by the authorities on 13 May 1921 and understandably caused consternation among Omoto adherents. Onisaburō later retracted the content of the document, claiming that he did not mean any of it (*kokoro nimo naki koto* 心にも無き事) and that he had composed the document merely to satisfy the authorities.[21] Accordingly, Onisaburō did not follow through on his declaration to burn the *Ofudesaki*. What he did end up doing was curtail the importance placed on the *Ofudesaki* as the primary sacred text of Omoto. He sought to replace it with his own *Reikai monogatari* 霊界物語, a massive collection of teachings and allegories about the world of kami and its relationship to humanity. The shift from the *Ofudesaki* was most likely a deliberate move by Onisaburō since he knew that some content of the *Ofudesaki* had given the authorities ammunition to justify the *lèse-majesté* charge.[22]

Another significant change that followed the first suppression was the official prohibition placed on the *chinkon kishin* practice involving spirit possession. Even before 1921, Onisaburō had been aware that the spirit possession technique was attracting unwelcome attention to Omoto, including that of notable detractors like Nakamura Kokyō. Accordingly, he had warned about the danger of

20. Onisaburō had produced some *Ofudesaki* of his own.

21. Onisaburō gave elaborate explanations as to how and why this document was created, including a pragmatic one for wanting to bring the trial to a swift conclusion as well as a spiritual one involving spirits possessing him and guiding him to testify in a certain way (ONS 1: 591–595).

22. In fact, Omoto had received a warning about its publication of a collection of Nao's prophecies prior to the first suppression (Murakami 1978, 143–147).

uncontrolled spirit possession without a potent interrogator of spirits. Despite the warnings, the popularity of the *chinkon kishin* practice did not fade away. Onisaburō eventually issued an official ban on *chinkon kishin* in March 1923.[23] He thus significantly altered two important pillars of Omoto's institutional growth, the *Ofudesaki* and the *chinkon kishin* technique, as direct measures to appease the authorities. Onisaburō reacted flexibly to changing circumstances and was observant of the ways in which certain practices within Omoto were perceived as superstitious by broader society.

Moreover, Onisaburō's international endeavors in the 1920s and his political activism in the 1930s can be viewed as attempts to align Omoto with the expansionist and authoritarian agendas of the state. Onisaburō's excursion to Mongolia, for example, was underpinned by a Japan-centric idea that Mongolia was to serve as a utopia where all religions coexist harmoniously and to which Japanese and colonial Korean subjects could migrate. During the 1910s and 1920s, Mongolia was romanticized in the Japanese imagination as a highly spiritual yet "uncivilized" or "uncultivated" region of the world. Onisaburō combined this Orientalist view of Mongolia with his vision of world unification in which Japan was to lead other countries as the original "parent country" or the "prototype of the world" (*sekai no hinagata* 世界の雛形) (Stalker 2008, 142–146).[24] Based on this same underlying framework, he established the Universal Love and Brotherhood Association (Jinrui Aizenkai 人類愛善会) in 1925 with the aim of promoting friendship and goodwill among all nations, but with Japan clearly in charge. Along with his ideal of "ten thousand teachings [from one] identical root," this universalizing language helped to recast Japan's expansionism through a soteriological lens. Although there is no concrete evidence that Onisaburō mapped out his international activities specifically for the purpose of self-promotion following the first suppression, the direct convergence between Onisaburō's exploits on the Asian continent and the Japanese state's paternalizing rhetoric of prosperity and civilization building is undeniable (Murakami 1978, 160–179, 182–191).

Furthermore, Onisaburō began to reassert the centrality of the Imperial Way with renewed intensity in the early 1930s. As highlighted in the last section, Onisaburō frequently referenced the sacrality of the imperial family and called for a "unification of ritual and governance" (*saisei icchi* 祭政一致) through which the personhood of the emperor was invested with both suprahuman and political authority. In 1933, Omoto published a document titled "Basic Principles of Imperial Way Omoto" (*Kōdō Ōmoto shinjō* 皇道大本信条). This document

23. Even this official ban did not convince some Omoto adherents to stop engaging in the practice (Staemmler 2009, 231–239).

24. For more on the idea of *hinagata* and the role it played in Onisaburō's international vision, see Miura (2019, 154–174).

actively associates Omoto's doctrine with state-sponsored Shinto, describing the emperor as "the most noble and precious living kami who is to reign over the world." The document also explicates the relationship between the imperial family and Ushitora no Konjin, the main Omoto deity addressed here by its more formal name of Ōkunitokotachi no Mikoto 大国常立尊:

> We believe that our ancestral deity Ōkunitokotachi no Mikoto, having received a divine order from Amaterasu Sume Ōmikami 天照皇大神, is executing the work of the Rebuilding and Renewal of the World and presides over the phenomenon and spiritual worlds as a great protector deity who establishes order and peace. (ONS 2: 135–136)

Here Ushitora no Konjin/Ōkunitokotachi no Mikoto is placed in a subordinate role under the authority of Amaterasu. The central Omoto message of world transformation is made possible only under the beneficence of the imperial deity, implying a clear hierarchical relationship between the imperial institution and Omoto. Onisaburō's performative allegiance to the imperial family manifested in Omoto's auxiliary organizations as well. In particular, the Showa Sacred Association (Shōwa Shinseikai 昭和神聖会) engaged in overt nationalistic campaigns calling for the integration of the Imperial Way into all aspects of life including politics, economy, and education.[25] Onisaburō went all in, proclaiming that Japanese citizens had "heavenly endowed" duties to respect the gods, revere the emperor, and serve their nation as "subjects of the imperial country" (*kōkoku shinmin* 皇国臣民) (ONS 2: 136).

In the end, however, the second and more intense suppression in 1935 demonstrated that Onisaburō's relentless compliance with the emperor system and attempts to prove that his movement was not superstitious were futile. Superstition was superstition in the eyes of the state. No amount of posturing, repositioning, and negotiation could change that fact. In the mid-1930s, Omoto might have been "one of the staunchest supporters of the emperor" (GARON 1997, 77), but it was still an evil cult.

Conclusion

Onisaburō is often depicted as a figure who was larger than life, someone who defied conventions and commonsensical expectations. Yet, as the leader of Omoto, he responded cautiously to shifting circumstances and paid close attention to both how his movement presented itself and how it was perceived by the rest of society (MURAKAMI 1978, 200–201). He maneuvered carefully around the discursive contours of superstition and attempted to extricate Omoto from that categorization

25. The association vocally opposed the so-called "organ theory" concerning the seat of the emperor (*ten'nō kikan setsu* 天皇機関説) (ONS 2: 165–174, 190–198).

by first internalizing the discourse and then projecting it outward. His vision of Omoto was to contribute to the prosperity of a "modern" and "enlightened" Japan by realizing the true Imperial Way, unlike numerous "superstitions" that abound in the world. The very discourse mobilized against movements like Omoto could paradoxically be employed as a lens for legitimization.

From obtaining an official shrine certificate to affiliating with a reputable Sect Shinto group to echoing expansionist propagandas of the state, Onisaburō worked tirelessly to be liberated from the stigma of superstition. Put differently, Onisaburō sought to align Omoto with the mandates of the "Shinto secular" in extremely overt ways (Josephson 2012, 254–255). Ultimately, he was rejected. The boundary between the Shinto secular and superstition was not to be disrupted. It was incumbent for the state that Onisaburō remain the face of backward and perverse superstition, so that state authority and legitimacy were kept intact. The irony is that the closer Onisaburō approached the Shinto secular by reforming Omoto to meet the demands of the state, the more threatening he became as a potential disrupter of the boundary between the secular and superstition. The intensity of the two suppressions Omoto suffered attests to how sacrosanct the imperial regime held this boundary.

This article has mostly dealt with the writings of Onisaburō himself. Further research is necessary to understand the perspectives of ordinary Omoto members, many of whom were attracted to the movement because of the material blessings promised through the *chinkon kishin* spirit possession technique, perhaps not so different from the people Onisaburō criticized in his essays. More work is also needed to illuminate how other religious leaders in positions similar to that of Onisaburō responded to society at large labeling them as superstitious. For example, an examination of movements such as Konkōkyō and Tenrikyo and their response to the charge of superstition would yield meaningful comparative perspectives.[26] Based on findings in this article, it is likely that these movements did not simply resign themselves to being attacked and that they proactively renegotiated the boundaries of religion, superstition, and the (Shinto) secular. I further surmise that these movements and their adherents did not fundamentally reject the notion of superstition but, like Onisaburō, employed it to advance their own positions. For now, Onisaburō's writings provide us with an alternative angle through which to understand the history of the concept of superstition in modern Japan and the ways in which different actors sought to appropriate it in their search for legitimacy. As Onisaburō once put it, "We are working earnestly and tirelessly for our country and our lord, dedicating our lives to the great path of the kami's divine light and spreading our gratitude for the kami's

26. For a preliminary analysis on this topic, see Katsurajima (2015, 250–269).

beneficence and the virtues of our imperial family. How could anyone ever say we were superstitious and delusional?" (DOZ 2: 614).

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ABBREVIATIONS

DOC *Deguchi Onisaburō chosakushū* 出口王仁三郎著作集. 5 vols. Deguchi Onisaburō 出口王仁三郎. Yomiuri Shinbunsha, 1973.

DOZ *Deguchi Onisaburō zenshū* 出口王仁三郎全集. 8 vols. Deguchi Onisaburō. Manyūsha, 1934–1935.

ONS *Ōmoto nanajūnenshi* 大本七十年史. 2 vols. Ed. Ōmoto Nanajūnenshi Hensankai 大本七十年史編纂会. Tenseisha, 1964–1967.

OSS *Ōmoto shiryō shūsei* 大本史料集成. 3 vols. Ed. Ikeda Akira 池田昭. San'ichi Shobō, 1982–1985.

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Franziska Steffen

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 reli-

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

gion 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.

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

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).

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).

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 non-canonical 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]

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.

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

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).

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.

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

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

critiques of the cultural evolutionist Herbert Spencer's notion of primitive superstition (*Jicchi ōyō bukkyō enzetsu kihan*, 190).

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

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:

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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Masato Kato

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

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