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Ritual as Self-Cultivation in Motion and Self-  
Healing Practice: The case of Tenrikyo's  
*Mikagura-uta* in Taiwan  
移動修練與自我療癒實踐儀式  
——以天理教神樂舞在台灣為例

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## Abstract

This paper explores self-cultivation in motion in the context of a Japanese new religion, Tenrikyo. *Mikagura-uta* (みかぐらうた or ‘Songs for the Service’ to use Tenrikyo’s term), is a ritual based around bodily movement. It contains a wealth of religious idioms and cultural references that express issues including self-cultivation, health, world-renewal and cosmic unity. The article will show that *Mikagura-uta* has, since its inception, offered adherents a realistic route to physical health through accessible activities, which embody the landscape of a utopian society, reconfigured in accordance with the cosmological terms of Tenrikyo’s doctrine. This article will then suggest various theoretical approaches to *Mikagura-uta* through a discussion of bodies in respect of medical anthropology, religion and East-Asian philosophy, showing the interplay between ritual, health and environment. The research adopts a qualitative approach, providing ethnographic accounts of the significant role played by *Mikagura-uta* in the daily life of Tenrikyo members in Taiwan, and suggests that this self-cultivation in motion is an essential part of their lives, as a means to personal health, to personal life changes amidst an uncertain environment, and to develop social identity. In conclusion, this study discusses the implications of *Mikagura-uta* for understanding medical anthropology, religion, East-Asian philosophy and as well as suggestions for further research within this discipline.

## 摘要

日本新宗教脈絡下形成的天理教，發展一種名為神樂舞(みかぐらうた)之移動修練的宗教實踐方式，強調信徒日常生活的淨心與修身，企圖達成信徒個人、宗教組織、整體社會、甚至人類世界的重建與健康。本文以天理教的神樂舞為核心，採用多點民族誌所揭櫫的多語言/多文化圈的觀點，比較與分析神樂舞的在地實踐與相關課題。神樂舞以儀式為經，身體移動為緯，經緯之中蘊含宗教用語風格與文化展演參照架構，傳達淨心修身、個人與集體健康、社會重建、萬物合一的重要生命課題。田野資料顯示，神樂舞提供信徒一個健康生活之道，藉由教義的熟習、宇宙觀的認同、宗教活動的參與，得以構築天理教所揭櫫的完美社會典型。此一觀察，係參考醫療人類學、宗教研究、東亞哲學等文獻而得，藉此說明儀式、健康、環境脈絡之間的多重影響。以神樂舞在台灣的宗教實踐為例，臺灣信徒視神樂舞為日常生活之不可或缺，移動修練成為信徒的生活核心，在面對動盪與未知社會時，得以確保個人健康，生活適應、以及社會認同。筆者認為，神樂舞的探討與後續研究，對於醫療人類學、宗教研究、東亞哲學等學科領域，可提供若干研究啟示。

## 1. Introduction

The classic work of Rene Descartes concerning body/mind relationships begins with the premise that the body has only physical existence, possessing no faculties of intelligence and wisdom to cultivate knowledge, and that the mind is non-physical but has the capacity to think.<sup>1</sup> This leads to the creation of Cartesian dualism in Western philosophical thinking which postulates that there is a boundary between mind and body, with the mind being valued as the means of enlightenment. In addition, it rules out the possibility that the mind has a bodily state, let alone the social, cultural and emotional meaning that the body may carry. As a result, the form of enlightenment suggested by such a classical model is likely to be an important factor in describing a hierarchy of abstract and rational modes of social life, particularly for European culture.

On the other hand, anthropological notions about the body, as early as Mauss's 1979 study of *body techniques* and Marilyn Strathern's 1979 ethnographical account of *the self in self-decoration* in Papua New Guinea, have long sought to contextualise the material manifestation deemed 'social' or 'personal' within specific communal settings.<sup>2</sup> Mauss asserts that the body manifests a truthful display of the effect of social regulation and conditioning on the physical bodies of men or women in a society. A case in point is bodily decoration in Hagen society, which Strathern describes as conveying a range of messages: statements about role and status, representing emotions and attitudes and the image of welfare. Strathern argues that for Hagen people, the inner self is manifested through the body, and that ornaments worn by Hagen are symbols of themselves turned inside out.

The dichotomy between body and mind, the nature of bodily skills and manifestation through bodily decoration – themes elaborated by Descartes, Mauss

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1 See Andrew Strathern, *Body Thoughts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p. 3.

2 See Marcel Mauss, *Sociology and Psychology Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 97-123; Marilyn Strathern, "The Self in Self-Decoration," *Oceania* 49 (June 1979), p. 243.

and Strathern and others – continue to be of central interest to contemporary anthropologists and researchers in other disciplines such as sociology, sport, philosophy, history, religious studies and so forth. In addition, various distinct perspectives on body, rather than mind, have come to light. These approaches, under the rubric of embodiment, include the following aspects: the social body approach,<sup>3</sup> stressing that to discipline, mark or display the body is to produce a particular kind of social being; the experiencing and emotional approach,<sup>4</sup> emphasising that religious practices do not simply belong to a rational system in the hands of academics and formal theologians but, for those who live by them, to an emotional and physical as well as mental transformation; the conscious and sentient body approach,<sup>5</sup> understanding conscious, affective and sensuous views of bodily practices acted out in a specific historical setting; and the critique approach,<sup>6</sup> demonstrating that knowing is a corporeal activity, and that coping with the world through comprehension is achieved through our bodies.

In the case of Tenrikyo, one of Japan's new religions, Huang has stated that Tenrikyo has advocated a body/mind relationship but that such a distinction is not based on an epistemological view but rather on a cosmological one.<sup>7</sup> She

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3 Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Exploration in Cosmology* (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1970); Alfred Gell, *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Emily Martin, "The End of Body," *American Ethnologist* 19, no.1 (1992), pp. 121–140; Saburo Shawn Morishita, *Teodori: Cosmological Building and Social Consolidation in a Ritual Dance* (Roma: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2001); Jonathan Parry, "The End of the Body", in *Zone 4: Fragments for A History of the Human Body (Part II)*, ed. Michel Feher (New York: Urzone, 1989), pp. 490–518; Andrew Strathern, *Body Thoughts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

4 Gananath Obeyesekere, *Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981).

5 Trevor Marchand, *Minaret Building and Apprenticeship in Yemen* (Surrey: Curzon, 2001); Gregory Starrett, "The Hexis of Interpretation: Islam and the Body in the Egyptian Popular School," *American Ethnologist* 22, no. 4 (1995), pp. 953–969; Paul Stoller, *Embodying Cultural Memories: Spiritual Possession, Power and the Hanka in West Africa* (London: Routledge, 1995).

6 Michael Lambek, "Body and Mind in Mind, Body and Mind in Body: Some Anthropological Interventions in a Long Conversation," in *Bodies and Persons: Comparative Perspectives from Africa and Melanesia*, ed. Andrew Strathern and Michael Lambek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 103–123; Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (London: Routledge, 1993).

7 Chih-Huei, Huang, "The Concept of Person in Tenrikyo," in *The Concept of the Person, Meaning*

discovered that Tenrikyo followers hold that body and mind are complementary parts, despite the fact that the body is possessed by *God the Parent* and the mind by the human being. According to Huang, Tenrikyo followers advocate that such a cosmology-based view of the body/mind relationship is reproduced by practice not simply by belief, because for Tenrikyo the abstract models of experts and priests are simply secondary manifestations of social realities that exist at the level of practice.

According to Hukaya, Tenrikyo bases its body/mind relationship on a cosmological viewpoint, assuming the purity of body in contrast to the impurity of mind.<sup>8</sup> God lends the body to man and orders a number of Providences to reside in the human body to safeguard it. In contrast, the mind is owned by human beings and used at their will. The mind is also believed to be pure in its original nature. For Tenrikyo followers, human beings have the tendency to misuse their own minds, which causes the body to cease to function well. Thus, the polluted mind is thought to be the source of disease spreading in the body. The details of where God's different Providences reside in the human body are listed in Table 1 below:

All human bodies are things lent by God. Do you not know that free and ultimate workings of God? (*Ofudesaki* III, 126)<sup>9</sup>

The Universe is the body of God. Ponder this in all matters. (*Ofudesaki* III, 126)<sup>10</sup>

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*and Society*, ed. Ying-Kuei. Huang (Taipei: Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1993), pp. 363-387.

8 Tadamasu Hukaya, *What is Tenrikyo?* (Tenri: Tenrikyo Overseas Department, 2003).

9 Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, *Ofudesaki: The Tip of the Writing Brush* (Tenri: Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, 1998).

10 Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, *Ofudesaki: The Tip of the Writing Brush*.

**Table 1: The Divine Providences in the Human Body<sup>11</sup>**

| God's Providences              | Body Areas                                 | Note                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Tsukiyomi-no-Mikoto</i>     | bones                                      | in the male organ   |
| <i>Kashikono-no-Mikoto</i>     | nose and mouth<br>(breathing and speaking) |                     |
| <i>Kunitokotachi-no-Mikoto</i> | eyes                                       |                     |
| <i>Omotari-no-Mikoto</i>       | body<br>(temperature, warm)                |                     |
| <i>Kumoyomi-no-Mikoto</i>      | mouth<br>(eating and drinking)             |                     |
| <i>Kunisazuchi-no-Mikoto</i>   | skin                                       | in the female organ |

In this article, the author addresses this issue by seeing bodily movement as a type of self-cultivation in motion through the lens of Tenrikyo's *Mikagura-uta* ('Songs for the Service' or 神樂舞, also referred to as Sacred Dance).<sup>12</sup> The term 'self-cultivation' is associated with the cultivation of the human mind in the context of religion in general and the purification of the mind in Tenrikyo in particular, a moral principle paralleling Confucianism, particularly Neo-Confucianism.<sup>13</sup> Ellwood gives particular attention to Neo-Confucianism in Japan, saying that on a

11 Tadamasu Hukaya, *What is Tenrikyo?* (Tenri: Tenrikyo Overseas Department, 2003), 27-28.

12 It should be emphasised here that, according to one of Tenrikyo's three major doctrines (the *Ofudesaki*, literally translated as 'Tip of the Writing Brush'), the ultimate purpose of performing *Mikagura-uta* is to hasten world salvation. However, according to Chang Lin's study of Mahikari in Taiwan (Chang Lin, "The Development of Japanese New Religions in Taiwan: An Analysis of the Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyodan" (MA diss., Taipei: Department of Religious Studies, Fu-Jen Catholic University, 2001), although Taiwanese people take a pragmatic approach to their faith, they tend to place more weight on self-cultivation than altruism (or world salvation).

13 Robert Ellwood, *Tenrikyo: A Pilgrimage Faith* (Tenri: Tenri University Press, 1982); Helen Hardacre, *Kurozumikyo and the New Religions of Japan* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986).

metaphysical level, Neo-Confucianism serves as one of the bedrock principles of Tenrikyo's doctrine, notably in teaching. Also, Helen Hardacre applies this perspective to Japan, pointing out several curious parallels between Neo-Confucianism and Japanese new religions such as Tenrikyo in terms of their ideas of self-cultivation and those of world-view. They both have the notion of *kokoro* (self) and *ki* (vital force), with the former being seen as the source of human power, which can be controlled and cultivated through self-cultivation and the latter referring to the dynamic principle rendering humans animate and able to lead a bright and joyful life. In addition, they both believe that society, seen as an extended self, can be healed and transformed by self-cultivation in practising virtues.

From now on, no matter how serious your illness may be, nothing is incurable. It depends on your mind. (*Ofudesaki* V, 13)<sup>14</sup>

Unless the sweeping is thoroughly accomplished, you will not understand the truth of My heart. (*Ofudesaki* V, 28)<sup>15</sup>

In previous researches, one of the distinctive characteristics of the study of self-cultivation has been its grounding in ethnography, single-sited or multi-sited, personal or societal, long-term and in-depth engagement with the communities being explored.<sup>16</sup> These scholars have shown the linkage between philosophy,

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14 Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, *Ofudesaki: The Tip of the Writing Brush*.

15 Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, *Ofudesaki: The Tip of the Writing Brush*.

16 Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell and Thomas F. Carter, *The Anthropology of Sport* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018); Henning Eichberg, "The Enclosure of the Body – On the Historical Relativity of 'Health', 'Nature' and the Environment of Sport," in *Body Cultures: Essays on Sport, Space and Identity*, ed. John Bale and Chris Phio (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 47–68; Robert Sands, "Anthropology Revisits Sport through Human Movement," in *The Anthropology of Sport and Human Movement*, ed. Robert Sands and Linda Sands (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2010), pp. 5–37; William Sax, "Healing Rituals: A Critical Performative Approach," *Anthropology and Medicine* 11, no. 3 (2004), pp. 293–306; Andrew Strathern, *Body Thoughts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Yasuo Yuasa, *The Body, Self-Cultivation, and Ki-Energy*, trans. Shigenori Nagatomo and Monte S. Hull (Albany: State

medical anthropology, anthropology and sport within the wider context of economic, social and political structures and provided theoretical models for explaining the dynamics of self-cultivation in the context of the postmodern global world, in both the East and the West. Many researchers engaged in self-cultivation recognise the importance of philosophical, spiritual and religious aspects – ritual, ceremony, performance etc. – as explanatory models employed to better understand bodily movement and sport behaviours in specific settings.<sup>17</sup> It is in this context that the research field demands attention on the physical and mental health and healing aspect of religious ritual. *Mikagura-uta*, as described below, is a case in point. The propagation of Tenrikyo in Taiwan today is driven in part by the postcolonial context under which the Taiwanese people's appreciation of Japanese culture and religion becomes apparent. The regular bodily performance of *Mikagura-uta*, performed monthly in full song (Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) and practised daily in part (Sections 1, 2 and 3), serves as a potent means of the empowerment of local Taiwanese Tenrikyo followers. It also transcends cultural and language barriers and facilitates the conversion of a number of local people's belief to Tenrikyo. The complexity of ritual process, features of self-healing among them, renders the ethnographical examination of religious activity such as *Mikagura-uta* particularly revealing.

## 2. Tenrikyo's *Mikagura-uta*

Tenrikyo is a new religions movement which emerged in a rural area of Japan in the early nineteenth century, when Japan was undergoing a process of social transition which provided a social backdrop for the rise and proliferation of new

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University of New York Press, 1993).

17 Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell and Thomas F. Carter, *The Anthropology of Sport* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018), pp. 32-34; Kendall Blanchard, *The Anthropology of Sport: An Introduction* (Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Carvey, 1995); Saburo Shawn Morishita, *Teodori: Cosmological Building and Social Consolidation in a Ritual Dance* (Roma: Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 2001).

religions.<sup>18</sup> Since Tenrikyo's establishment in Japan, it has been expanding rapidly, both domestically and globally.<sup>19</sup> Tenrikyo has a distinct sacred text called *Mikagura-uta*, the ethical lyrics which were composed by its founder Nakayama Miki (中山美伎) between 1866 and 1875.<sup>20</sup> For Tenrikyo followers, *Mikagura-uta* is a sacred text that must be realised and experienced through the body 'moving and performing'.

Designed to act out self-healing and world salvation, *Mikagura-uta* is performed on a regular basis in the worship hall of any Tenrikyo church in Japan as well as in other churches throughout the world (see Figure 1). This paper will examine *Mikagura-uta* as it has been exclusively constituted and promoted within Tenrikyo's community in the context of Taiwan, and will demonstrate that Tenrikyo's *Mikagura-uta* is a performance of self-cultivation in motion and self-healing practice. After looking at *Mikagura-uta* and examining its procedure, the author's ethnography in Taiwan shows that this ritual and bodily movement is believed by Taiwanese followers to be a means of healing which may bring practical benefits for those who perform and receive it, thus helping them lead a healthy life.

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18 Ian Reader, *Religion in Contemporary Japan* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1991).

19 Yueh-Po Huang, "Colonial Encounter and Inculturation: The Birth and Development of Tenrikyo in Taiwan," *Nova Religio – Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 19, no. 3 (2016), p. 81.

20 Yueh-Po Huang, "Colonial Encounter and Inculturation: The Birth and Development of Tenrikyo in Taiwan," p. 82.



**Figure 1: The Bodily Performance of Tenrikyo Followers<sup>21</sup>**

### 3. From Sick Bodies to Healthy Bodies

The study of self-cultivation can be found in the field of anthropology.<sup>22</sup> In the works of Besnier, Brownell and Carter, these authors have highlighted an important distinction between medical anthropology and the anthropology of sport. The former stresses the factor of ‘illness’, paying attention to other dimensions of the patient’s problem which might include family and social relationships. The presence of illness has therefore been a major characteristic of the theoretical framework of medical anthropology.<sup>23</sup> However, the anthropology of sport emphasises the maintenance of healthy bodies and the most effective way to achieve a kind of bodily perfection, even extending abilities of human beings to

21 Photographed in Chiayi County, Taiwan by the author, 11/01/2012.

22 Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell and Thomas F. Carter, *The Anthropology of Sport* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018).

23 William Sax, “Healing Rituals: A Critical Performative Approach,” *Anthropology and Medicine* 11, no. 3 (2004), pp. 293–306.

near-superhuman levels.<sup>24</sup> It sees health as the result of a balance of multiple elements in the body, achieved by carrying out a proper intake and physical exertion. In addition, it sees the body as interconnected with the natural environment, including the absorption of sunshine, fresh air, clean water and so forth. The proponents of the anthropology of sport also advocate cross-cultural differences in the ideals of health upon which social practices and concepts of the body are founded. For instance, non-western configuration of sports, exercise and medicine, such as Indian wrestling and yoga as well as China's *qigong* (life energy cultivation or moving mediation), involve exercise and medicine.<sup>25</sup>

The Japanese contemporary philosopher Yasuo Yuasa<sup>26</sup> proposes what he calls an 'Eastern Mind-Body Theory', which is influenced by Eastern religious-philosophical systems such as Buddhism, Daoism and Yoga and which is intended to help the practitioner engage in meditative self-cultivation, notably the method of 'meditation in motion' such as dancing, swinging hands and legs while citing the phrase '*namu amidabutsu*' (literally meaning 'I entrust myself to *Amitābha* Buddha'). According to Yuasa, this method of self-cultivation works at best to enhance the mind (or spirit) by training the body, thus achieving a state of body-mind oneness, in which the mind and body congeal into one. For Yuasa, the key characteristic of Eastern thought lies in the inseparability of the mind and body.<sup>27</sup>

The anthropologist Andrew Strathern<sup>28</sup> posits a fundamental distinction in the discourse of body and mind between the West and the East. Western body/mind philosophy draws heavily on Rene Descartes' well-known epistemological dualism, as defined above. Descartes conceives of a boundary between mind and

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24 Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell and Thomas F. Carter, *The Anthropology of Sport* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018).

25 Niko Besnier, Susan Brownell and Thomas F. Carter, *The Anthropology of Sport*.

26 Yasuo Yuasa, *The Body, Self-Cultivation, and Ki-Energy*, trans. Shigenori Nagatomo and Monte S. Hull (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

27 Yasuo Yuasa, *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-body Theory*, ed. Thomas P. Kasulis and trans. Nagatomo Shigenori and Thomas P. Kasulis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 79.

28 Andrew Strathern, *Body Thoughts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

body, with the mind valued as the means of enlightenment. This rules out the possibility that the mind has a bodily state, let alone any social, cultural or emotional meaning that the body may carry. The form of enlightenment suggested by such a classical model is likely to be an important factor in describing a hierarchy of abstract and rational modes of social life, particularly for European culture.

An ethnographic focus on self-cultivation in motion leads to academic recognition that the body (or bodily movement) plays a genuinely important role in understanding the exercise, health and Eastern body-mind theory, giving rise to the anthropology of sport as a distinct field of study. Such a perspective is useful in understanding people's attitudes towards bodily practice such as *Mikagura-uta* within Tenrikyo as well as their preference for Tenrikyo. Similarly, since the healing aspects of *Mikagura-uta* can be seen in scriptures such as *Ofudesaki*, it is necessary to take into account the medical anthropology approach. The author found that although Taiwan has evolved into a modernised state since the 1960s, various types of folk religious therapy remain influential.<sup>29</sup> This makes *Mikagura-uta* more appealing to the general populace, who are more likely to be preoccupied with a folk (religious) healer and do not often want to devote time to a medical practitioner.

The scripture of Tenrikyo, *Ofudesaki*, based on the founder's divine revelation, deserves our attention here as it constitutes a significant part of the appeal of Tenrikyo. Although *Ofudesaki* is a language-based medium, it provides ethical guidance as well as a healing and medical perspective for ceremonial performance such as that of the *Mikagura-uta*, a practice-based medium which emphasises ancestor worship and a bodily performance easy to learn as well as simple to perform.

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29 Hsun Chang, "Taoism and Folk Therapy Culture: The Case of shou-kya Shu-Syndrome," in *Ritual, Festival and Community – Taoism, Folk Religion and Culture*, ed. Fong-mao Lee and Jung-kuei Chu (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1996), 427-455; Arthur Kleinman, *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

Day by day your innermost hearts will become purified and understood.  
So everything will become visible in accordance with the growth of your  
minds. (*Ofudesaki* VI, 15)<sup>30</sup>

Hereafter, however serious an illness there may be, I shall save you all  
by the Breath and the Hand Dance. (*Ofudesaki* XII, 50)<sup>31</sup>

Tatsuzo Yamochi and Hideo Nakajima<sup>32</sup> have revealed the main themes in *Ofudesaki*, given an introduction to each and explained the social condition in which each theme was written by the founder (see Appendix 1). Throughout the *Ofudesaki*, emphasis is placed on the significance of the Service and the importance of performing it.<sup>33</sup>

To promote its global influence, Tenrikyo bases its world expansion on two fundamental principles: *osieru* (spiritual enlightenment) and *otatsuke* (universal salvation). Spiritual enlightenment (*osieru*) indicates the aspiration of the Founder (Nakayama Miki) to enlighten human beings explicitly. Universal salvation (*otatsuke*) means the urgency of performing salvation rituals in order to channel virtuous energy into the human mind. All human afflictions – be they in the form of a physical disability, an intellectual impairment or a psychological illness – result from people’s abuse of their minds, and lead to the accumulation of mental dust and a moral degeneration in social life. The only way to treat the mind’s degeneration is through ritual performance that enables a person to realise their inherently unadulterated nature. We can also observe the importance of self-purification in facilitating Tenrikyo’s world expansion.

According to the doctrines of Tenrikyo, illness results from a polluted mind

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30 Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, *Ofudesaki: The Tip of the Writing Brush* (Tenri: Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, 1998).

31 Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, *Ofudesaki: The Tip of the Writing Brush*.

32 Tatsuzo Yamochi, *Ofudesaki haidoku nyumon* (Tenri: Tenrikyo Doyusha, 1994); Hideo Nakajima, *Kana no oshie ‘Ofudesaki’ ‘Tenrikyo kyoten’ nyumon* (Tenri: Tenrikyo Doyusha, 2006).

33 Matthew Eynon, *A Study of Ofudesaki* (Tenri: Tenrikyo Doyousha, 1987).

and the only method to dispel such mental pollution is through practising regular bodily movement (or self-cultivation) such as *Mikagura-uta*, which includes seated service (or seated self-cultivation) and hand movement (self-cultivation in motion). Mr Kanbara, a senior Tenrikyo priest, is the fifth and current head of the Tenrikyo Tai-Chung Yamana Mission Station situated in a suburban area of grand Taichung City (see Figure 2). During an interview, this Japanese Tenrikyo priest said that every kind of illness results from some abnormality within the sufferer's life and leads to the accumulation of mental contamination, subsequently weakening the body. At one point he made a few suggestions on aspects of diet, exercise, sleep and so forth, suggesting that a decent lifestyle is key to good health.<sup>34</sup>



**Figure 2: Mr Kanbara, on the left, chatted with a few local Taiwanese Tenrikyo Followers in Tenrikyo Tai-Chung Yamana Mission Station<sup>35</sup>**

34 Mr Kanbara, interview by author, Grand Taichung City, Taiwan, 15 December 2011.

35 Photographed in Grand Tai-Chung City, Taiwan by the author, 12/05/2011.

In addition, Tenrikyo advocates a body/mind relation, rather than a body/mind division, based on a cosmological viewpoint. Tenrikyo followers hold that the body belongs to *God the Parent* (父母神) who lends the human being the body. As for the mind, Tenrikyo followers believe that all human afflictions – be they in the form of a physical disability, an intellectual impairment or a psychological illness – result from people’s abuse of their minds, and lead to the accumulation of mental dust and moral degeneration in social life. The only way to treat the mind’s degeneration is through ritual performance (i.e. *Mikagura-uta*) that enables a person to realise their inherently unadulterated nature.<sup>36</sup>

*Mikagura-uta* was invented within the context of an agricultural society and is sometimes known as part of ‘*Otsutome*’ (Monthly Service or 御勤め),<sup>37</sup> an expression that connotes both obligation and regularity. *Mikagura-uta* is divided into five parts, with the first three sections called the ‘Seated Service’ or the *Kagura* (‘The Service with the Masks’ or 神楽) and the other two sections making up *Teodori* (‘The Dance with Hand Movements’ or 手踊り).<sup>38</sup> On the anniversary of the Tenrikyo Founder’s birthday, or on a chosen day of universal salvation within the month, whole sections of *Mikagura-uta* are scheduled for performance irrespective of location. By contrast, at any times other than those mentioned above, only the first three sections of *Mikagura-uta* will be performed, usually at dawn and at dusk.

Based on my ethnographical participation in the Tenrikyo monthly event in Taiwan, I intend to elucidate *Mikagura-uta* in the form of meditative self-cultivation and self-cultivation in motion performed by Tenrikyo followers in their

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36 See Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, *Ofudesaki: The Tip of the Writing Brush* (Tenri: Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, 1998), p. 49.

37 See Pino Marras, “Man World God: Tenrikyo Anthropological, Cosmic, and Theological Perspectives – Reflection from the Outside,” in *The Theological Perspectives of Tenrikyo*, ed. Tenri University Press (Tenri: Tenri University Press, 1986), p. 426; Fukaya Hiroshi, “The Mikagura-uta,” in *Tenri Forum 2006: New Frontiers in the Mission*, ed. Tenri Overseas Department (Tenri: Tenrikyo Overseas Department, 2008), p. 24.

38 See Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, *The Life of Oyasama, Foundress of Tenrikyo* (Tenri: Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, 1996), p. 55.

daily lives. Below is presented the practice of *Mikagura-uta* in a contemporary Tenrikyo church, based on ethnographical materials collected during my fieldwork in Taiwan, mostly in Chiayi City, from 2009 to 2017.

#### 4. *Mikagura-uta* as Self-Cultivation and Self-Healing Practice: Environment, Self-cultivation and Communal

##### (1) Preparatory Phase: Setting up an Ideal Environment

*Mikagura-uta* is usually performed in the second stage of *Otsutome*, which progresses in three main stages: ‘preparatory’ in terms of setting up an ideal environment, ‘performance’ of self-cultivation and ‘communal’ for health. In *Mikagura-uta*, preliminary priorities are environment-building activities, with major tasks such as cleaning the worship hall and church premises, setting up the space for the bodily movement and preparing the offering and other communal meals charged with God’s blessing of health for serving after the Sacred Dance (see Figure 3 below).



Figure 3: The Offering Neatly Displayed in Chiayi Dong-Men Church<sup>39</sup>

39 Photographed by the author, 11/20/2016.

Tasks related to the various forms of bodily activity are allocated according to two principles: seniority and gender. To show privilege to senior members, young male members take the most laborious jobs including cleaning, sweeping and mopping. Similarly, young female members are responsible for preparing the offering and other communal food, while senior female followers give advice or run trivial errands. All of the above tasks are rotated. A Taiwanese female minister shared with the author the significance of the preliminary stage:

We feel setting up the environment for performing *Mikagura-uta* is important because it helps us be more motivated and focused, and it's easier for us to engage in this religious atmosphere. In the event of a grand festival or monthly service, we are keen to make preparation, such as preparing offerings and placing them in the different positions.<sup>40</sup>

## **(2) Performing Phase: Self-cultivation in Motion**

In the middle section of *Mikagura-uta*, selected dancers sit, rise and move in front of the altar to perform. Prior to the bodily performance, dancers, musicians and attendees sit, and then the head minister comes forward and leads the ritual. During the reading of the prayer, the congregation remains silent, showing concentration and veneration by bowing their heads, leaning forward and placing both hands on their thighs. Attendees then clap their hands four times to mark the closing of the prayer, which ends with the ritual procedures of the head minister and assistants descending from the upper dais to the accompaniment of *gagaku* music (elegant music).

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40 Mrs Lin, interview by the author, Chiayi City, Taiwan, 13 December 2011.

### a. The Seated Service (Sections One, Two and Three)

As a type of self-cultivation in motion, the seated service is the opening part of *Mikagura-uta* and its purpose is to perform self-purification (see Figure 4 below). The head minister hits a wooden block against the prepared table-stand, signifying the beginning of this ritual. While music is played, the congregation sings the Text of Section One, with each phrase corresponding to certain hand movements. For instance, the word ‘evil’ (*Ashiki* or 悪しき) should be performed in accordance with the following hand movements – hands in front of the chest with palms facing the body, and then sweeping down the body to full arm’s length. The Text of Section One, together with its English translation, is as follows:



Figure 4 : The Seated Service in Chiayi Dong-Men Church<sup>41</sup>

41 Photographed in Chiayi, Taiwan by the author, 12/13/2011.

あし気をはろうてたすけたまへてんりわうのみこと (Japanese)<sup>42</sup>

*Ashiki o haroute tasuke tamae, Tenri-O-no-Mikoto* (Romanised Japanese)<sup>43</sup>

Sweeping away evils, please save us, Tenri-O-no-Mikoto. (Translation)<sup>44</sup>

The full hand movement in Section One is described in the following six steps:

1. both hands are held together at shoulder level, with fingers and palms together;
2. hands in front of chest with palms facing the body;
3. hands make a sweep down the body to full arm's length;
4. hands continue upward to the front of the chest with palms facing out;
5. hands move downward to the front of the chest with palms facing in;
6. return to step 1.

To complete Section One, followers repeat the full hand movement 21 times,<sup>45</sup> showing a certain degree of physical exertion and revealing their commitment to praying for salvation in order to discard bad habits and temperaments.

Section Two is performed by following the same ritual procedures as above, but with different forms of hand movement. For instance, words such as 'world', 'listen to' and 'speak' are practised in correspondence with the following bodily movements:

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42 The Japanese version is based on Yen Tze-Yun Hsu, *The Introduction and Explanations of the Songs for the Service* (Tainan: Tenrikyo Chen-Li Hshin-Yi Church, 2008).

43 The romanised Japanese is based on Saburo Shawn Morishita, *Teodori: Cosmological Building and Social Consolidation in a Ritual Dance* (Roma: Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 2001), p. 95.

44 This translation is made by referring to other sources of information such as those of Saburo Shawn Morishita, *ibid* pp. 49-61.

45 In Tenrikyo, 21 is a significant number, being three multiplied by seven. Three refers to the three aspects of human reason: birth, marriage and wealth; whilst seven represents seven aspects of departure for human beings: separation between child and mother in labour, departure of children from their family, death and so forth.

- ‘world’ – left index finger points up, and is held in front of the left shoulder with the right hand holding the left sleeve; the torso then pivots from the waist, moving to the left while the arm moves simultaneously with the torso;
- ‘listen to’ – the index finger of the right hand points to the ear while the left hand holds the right sleeve, and the right hand palm faces in;
- ‘speak’ – the right index finger points to the mouth while the left hand holds the right sleeve.

In Section Two, the full steps only need to be performed once. The text of Section Two and its English translation are set out below.

*Choto hanashi, Kami no yu koto kite kure, Ashiki no koto wa iwan dena.*

Just a word: listen to what God says. No word with regard to suffering will ever be spoken to you.

*Kono yo no ji to ten to o katadorite, Fufu o Koshirae kitaru dena.*

I created the perfect union of wife and husband, which was modelled on that of Heaven and Earth operating in the Universe.

*Kore wa kono yo no hajime dashi.*

This is the provenance of the world.

*Namu Tenri-O-no-Mikoto*

Hail Tenri-O-no-Mikoto! <sup>46</sup>

Section Two contains two basic themes, the person/God relationship and the

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46 This translation is made by referring to other sources of information such as those of Saburo Shawn Morishita, *Teodori: Cosmological Building and Social Consolidation in a Ritual Dance* (Roma: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2001) and Yen Tze-Yun Hsu, *The Introduction and Explanations of the Songs for the Service* (Tainan: Tenrikyo Chen-Li Hshin-Yi Church, 2008).

male/female relationship. First, the fundamental principle in the Tenrikyo worldview is that the world is the body of God, with humankind being part of the world. Second, God creates male and female by following the rule by which He creates Heaven and Earth. Male is associated with Heaven and female with Earth. A crucial point here is that man and woman form a couple as the fundamental unit of humankind. In other words, man and woman exist as a pair, which is the foundation for society.<sup>47</sup>

Section Three is performed in a similar way to Section One. However, Section Three takes less time, because it only needs to be performed three times. The text of Part Three and its English translation are as follows:

*Ashiki o harote tasuke sekikomu, Ichiretsu sumashite Kanrodai.*

Sweeping away evil, salvation hurrying, one and all purified, then the Kanrodai.<sup>48</sup>

In the Seated Service (Sections One, Two and Three), the underlying doctrinal message is that humans tend to misuse their minds in order to pursue self-interests. The mind then becomes contaminated which results in the affliction of the body with pains and illness. To avoid this, people must earn merit by using their minds in accordance with God's will.<sup>49</sup> As shown before, in Tenrikyo there exists a dynamic relationship between mind and body; with the mind having a detrimental effect on the body if it is totally dominated by man rather than God.

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47 Kaneko Akira, "The View of Men and Women: A Tenrikyo Human Studies Perspective," in *Women and Religion: Tenri International Symposium 98 in Commemoration of the 200th Birthday of Oyasama, the Foundress of Tenrikyo*, ed. Tenri Yamato Culture Congress (Tenri: Tenri Yamato Culture Congress, 2003), p. 73.

48 Kanrodai, translated as the Stand for Heavenly Dew, is a spot identified by Tenrikyo's founder (Miki) in her house yard. This site is seen as the birthplace of humankind (Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, *The Life of Oyasama, Foundress of Tenrikyo* (Tenri: Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, 1996).

49 Pino Marras, "Man World God: Tenrikyo Anthropological, Cosmic, and Theological Perspectives – Reflection from the Outside," in *The Theological Perspectives of Tenrikyo*, ed. Tenri University Press (Tenri: Tenri University Press, 1986), p. 431.

Once someone suffers illness as a result of misusing their mind, they need to perform the ritual by using (or training) their body to repair the mind. The primary purpose of performing the Seated Service is therefore to sweep away the polluted element that has accumulated in the mind within the body and produce a healthy being.

In interview, an elderly Taiwanese follower of Tenrikyo told me how he saw the Seated Service in relation to his health:

I always came to church to practise the Seated Service in order to enhance my health. When I slowly moved my hand and sang the song, I felt my head became focused and clear. I have always felt calm and easy after performing the Seated Service and *Teodori* (the Dance with Hand Movements). Before joining Tenrikyo, I was told that the Seated Service is good for our health. It was true because when I performed it, I always felt better. So I continue to come to the church for it.<sup>50</sup>

#### **b. *Teodori*, the Dance with Hand Movements (Sections Four and Five)**

Section Four, called *Yorozuyo* (よろづよ) and Section Five, from Song One to Song Twelve, constitute the most cosmological and eschatological parts of the Tenrikyo religion (see Figure 5). Before performing Section Four, most members of the congregation are assigned a particular part to play in this ritual, named *Teodori*. When *Teodori* begins, the names of six dancers are called out and they line up in the designated areas in front of the upper dais. Other performers, such as musicians, sit at both sides in front of the dancers. When everything is ready, Section Four proceeds.<sup>51</sup>

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50 Mr Tsen, interview by the author, New Taipei City, Taiwan, 5 September 2016.

51 The text of Section Four and its English translation can be found in the Appendix.



**Figure 5: Teodori in The New Dong-Men Church in Chiayi County<sup>52</sup>**

According to the doctrinal view of Tenrikyo, there is a basic logic in the transition from Section Four to Section Five. Section Four starts with a preface of ‘God, revealing’, ‘tell you the truth in detail’ and ‘cheer up all the minds of the world’, indicating that *Teodori* is performed to commence self-empowerment and world salvation.

Section Five is usually divided into two parts, with six songs in each. After the first part of Section Five is completed, the dancers advance in front of the table-stands, kneel on top of the upper dais, and with their heads inclined forward they wait for the musicians to place their instruments on the table-stand. At this point, the singer slams the wooden block against the table-stand to signal to everyone in the worship hall to clap four times, which closes the first half of the *Teodori*. The dancers bow in unison in front of the altars, stand and descend together from the upper dais into the worship hall.

Proceeding to the second part of Section Five, the second group of dancers

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52 Photographed by the author in Chiayi, Taiwan, 25/02/2009.

are summoned to the ritual space. The entire procedure of advancing to the upper dais is repeated and the dancing of the *Teodori* begins from Song Seven. The *Teodori* is completed after performing Song Twelve. As the ritual performance comes to an end, the singer once again slams the wooden block against the table-stand. The dancers repeat the previous procedure – advancing in front of their respective table-stands and kneeling while the musicians place their instruments on the table-stand. The performers remain with their heads slightly inclined forward until the singer hits the table-stand with the wooden block. This again is the signal for the congregation to clap four times. The dancers first proceed from the upper dais and bow with the performers from the edge of the worship hall. The others leave the lower dais and this marks the end of the performance of the *Teodori* within the setting of a monthly service.

Morishita<sup>53</sup> demonstrates that there are 116 types of non-verbal symbolic pattern designed by the founder of Tenrikyo, Nakayama Miki, to signify the text of the two sections. For instance, ‘press’ represents Jiba (the spiritual centre of Tenrikyo and birthplace of humankind), ‘lift up’ stands for the world and ‘hoeing’ corresponds to ‘fertile field’. In addition, the four directional motions (vertical, circular, horizontal and diagonal) made by the dancers denote different meanings. A circular motion, in Morishita’s interpretation,<sup>54</sup> can refer to creation, Jiba or purity.

For Taiwanese followers, performing *Teodori* and following its procedure allows them access to self-enhancement. The ethnographical evidence in Taiwan suggests that *Mikagura-uta* not only contains symbolic, functional, ideological and self-healing characteristics, but also dynamic, physical and sensual elements.

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53 Saburo Shawn Morishita, *Teodori: Cosmological Building and Social Consolidation in a Ritual Dance* (Roma: Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 2001), pp. 63-86.

54 Saburo Shawn Morishita, *Teodori: Cosmological Building and Social Consolidation in a Ritual Dance*, p. 108.

### (3) Communal Phase – Consuming God’s Blessing and Healthy Foods

The communal gathering is the final activity of *Otsutome*, in which the head minister, followers and guests normally participate. Consuming offerings is thought to be an effective way to embody the *kami* (God or 神), which has permeated these foods and drinks during the ritual, thus rendering these foods healthy. In Tenrikyo Taipei Headquarters in Taiwan, tables and chairs are set up in the dining room next to the worship hall for the communal meal. All attendees sit together without reference to social position, age or membership, and all eat the same meal (see Figure 6 below).



**Figure 6: The Communal Meal in Tenrikyo Taipei Headquarters<sup>55</sup>**

In summary, *Mikagura-uta* in the form of self-cultivation is bodily performed by followers of Tenrikyo in a religious environment. Details of its performance and its self-enhancement at local churches in Taiwan has been provided, from setting up the ideal environment, acting out self-cultivation and consuming God’s blessing

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55 Photographed by the author in Taiwan, 06/10/2017.

of healthy offerings through the active support of followers. For those who regularly participate in *Mikagura-uta* over a long period, such as the interviewees quoted in this article, Mr Kanbara, Mrs Lin and Mr Tsen, the complex interplay of bodily movements, associations and meanings, at the very least, reinforces historical continuity and collective identity, revitalises the individual or group in a variety of ways and redirects them towards leading a joyous and healthy life in Taiwan.

## 5. Discussion

### (1) *Mikagura-uta* as Self-cultivation and Self-healing Practice

In previous sections, the author has shown *Mikagura-uta* to be a form of self-cultivation in motion taking place in various phases within a framework of time and space constructed by Tenrikyo followers. Such an observation, however, still leaves aside several points which are worth exploring. How can we understand the reasons behind acceptance of the idea of *Mikagura-uta* by the non-Japanese population in Taiwan? The author's answer is that *Mikagura-uta* is believed to be a bodily performance which may bring benefits (such as health) for those who perform and receive it – that is, *Mikagura-uta* is a cross-cultural transducer from mind-purification to body-revitalisation.

Firstly, for Taiwanese followers, although *Mikagura-uta* is based on Japanese culture, it is a bodily practice of self-cultivation which not only overcomes cultural and ethnic boundaries but can also bring about practical benefits (health) to participants. In other words, action, via physical activities, appears to be the quickest, easiest and most powerful way to instantly change how participants think and feel about *Mikagura-uta*. When the author was in the field, he suspected that Taiwanese followers pay much attention to the symbols and words used. In fact, what motivated followers to join the bodily performance was one principle: they

believed that *Mikagura-uta* as a form of self-cultivation or self-healing exercise would bring practical benefits such as health as long as they moved their bodies according to the prescribed movements.<sup>56</sup>

In earlier, but still relevant, studies one important aspect is that most Japanese religious practices share one thing in common: they can bring practical benefits (*genze riyaku*) to followers, which is an intrinsic part of Japan's religion.<sup>57</sup> In Japan, Averbuch<sup>58</sup> suggested that the religious functions of *Kagura* (ritual dance) in Japan include two aspects: entertainment and magical efficacy, which for him are deemed so crucial in the performance that all audiences have to embody them and thereby promote the dissemination of its world-view, morality and social relationships in the present time. In Thailand, Richards<sup>59</sup> also finds that the use of Japanese language does not prevent Thai people from attending the liturgy of a Japanese new religion called Sekai Kyuseikyō, because the language even when not understood may sound as exotic, incomprehensible and mysterious as that of traditional Buddhist rites.

This is the main reason why *Mikagura-uta* can transcend cultural and language barriers and fit into the religious system in Taiwan. Tsai,<sup>60</sup> a Taiwanese scholar specialising in Japanese culture and religion, pointed out that the Hokkien and Hakka people, with their Chinese origin ethnic background, and with their long-term experiences of suffering many difficulties as immigrants, have developed a religion that may reflect traditional philosophical thought and ethical principles originally drawn from Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, but also

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56 Yueh-Po Huang, "Embracing Ritual Healing: The Case of *Sazuke* in Tenrikyō in Contemporary Taiwan," *Journal of Religion and Health* 19, no. 3 (2017a), pp. 1317–34.

57 Ian Reader and George Tanabe, *Practically Religious: Worldly benefits and the Common Religion of Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), p. 2.

58 Irit Averbuch, *The Gods Come Dance: A Study of the Japanese Ritual Dance of Yamabushi Kagura* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1995), p. 242.

59 Elizabeth Richards, "The Development of Sekai Kyuseikyō in Thailand," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 18, no. 2-3 (1991), p. 175.

60 C.T. Tsai, *Nihon teikoku shugi ka Taiwan no shukyo seisaku* (Tokyo: The Dohsei Publishing Co., 1994), pp. 38-39.

show a diversity of beliefs and practices with an abundance of local elements. What the local popular religions have in common, nevertheless, is that their collective religious practices promise their adherents the privileges of safety, health and wealth, all features of popular religion within Taiwan.

The other reason behind this type of cultural and ethnic transcendence is that *Mikagura-uta* shares some features with popular religions in Taiwan. Being a physically practice-based activity, *Mikagura-uta* is a ritual that emphasises ancestor worship and a bodily performance easy to learn as well as simple to perform, despite the fact that some local Taiwanese do not have a basic command of the Japanese language. This is what has led the author to examine *Mikagura-uta* (exercise-based medium) as an important case in point.

Secondly, the entire logic of *Mikagura-uta* as self-cultivation in motion and self-healing practice is dictated by Tenrikyo's mind-body theory. Also, it is in active interaction with the human world that Tenrikyo ministers and followers feel most anxious, conscientious and solicitous. According to Tenrikyo's mind-body theory, the mind is owned by human beings and used at their will. However, human beings have the tendency to misuse their own minds, causing the body to cease to function well. The polluted mind is thus thought to be the source of disease spreading in the body. In addition, there exists a dynamic relationship between body and mind: balanced exchange and sharing. The balanced exchange relationship is manifested through performing *Mikagura-uta* – the Seated Service as a form of self-cultivation in motion can sweep away the polluted element in the mind, while *Teodori* can restore the balance between body and mind, which is reached at the point at which body and mind receive divine energy after *Mikagura-uta*.

The performance of *Mikagura-uta* shows that Tenrikyo followers perceive external objects and events, perform a series of bodily movements and transform these representations into their mental operation. For instance, because each key word in *Mikagura-uta* is symbolically represented by non-verbal bodily movements, it is through performance that the meaning of *Mikagura-uta* and the

associated figures, places and history are understood by the performer and imprinted on his or her memory.

The configurations of bodily-movement, health and environment in Tenrikyo imply one of the main characteristics of Eastern thought (or the Asian model) – that mind and body are inseparable. This line of reasoning is in accordance with the philosophical terms of Yuasa’s mind-body theory.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, as Byron J. Good notes,<sup>62</sup> the body as ‘physical object’ cannot be neatly distinguished from ‘state of consciousness’ because the body is subject, being the very grounds of subjectivity and experience in the world. Furthermore, Henning Eichberg<sup>63</sup> advocates the body as conscious subject, transcending the surface of the skin, reaching into the space surrounding it and varying across time and across cultures.

Mari Womack<sup>64</sup> suggests that the body as physical object, although often seen as a self-contained organism by the Western mind, does not actually function independently of its environment. For instance, the body is affected by temperature (heat and cold), gravity and other surrounding factors, which comprises a fundamental part of the human experience. The other example is that through a combination of gravity and motion, human beings can not only prevent blood from forming clots but can also help the lymphatic system to remove excess fluids from body tissue. Womack’s perspective, along with the author’s fieldwork experience of Taiwanese Tenrikyo followers’ bodily practice of *Mikagura-uta*, prompts the author to take into account the role the body plays in influencing Taiwanese attitudes toward *Mikagura-uta* in contemporary Taiwan.

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61 Yasuo Yuasa, *The Body, Self-Cultivation, and Ki-Energy*, trans. Shigenori Nagatomo and Monte S. Hull (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

62 Byron J. Good, *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience: An Anthropological Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

63 Henning Eichberg, “The Enclosure of the Body – On the Historical Relativity of ‘Health’, ‘Nature’ and the Environment of Sport,” in *Body Cultures: Essays on Sport, Space and Identity*, ed. John Bale and Chris Phio (London: Routledge, 1998).

64 Mari Womack, *The Anthropology of Health and Healing* (Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2010).

## (2) Further Note: *Mikagura-uta* Performed in Local and Global Settings

Considering local or global variation emerges as Tenrikyo followers in the world might interpret and experience the effectiveness of *Mikagura-uta* differently in certain degrees, it should be noted that not all Tenrikyo members who perform the Sacred Dance reach the same level of self-cultivation and self-healing at the same time. During my field study in the aforementioned Chayi County in southern Taiwan, I was able to interview one local housewife after the *Mikagura-uta* she had performed ended. She was ill with systemic lupus erythematosus (or SLE) when she was a teenager. However, by believing in ‘faith healing’ as well as ‘divine healing’, she had been willing to keep performing *Mikagura-uta* ever since and was able to experience and witness the power of self-healing to a certain degree. I also noticed that other followers, looking healthy or ill, had not (or had not yet) experienced the same level of magical efficacy as the aforementioned housewife. However, they appeared to be very keen on continuing with their practice. The Taiwanese are great believers in the benefits of this form of self-healing therapy – performing the *Mikagura-uta*. On the basis of this investigation, I would point out that factors such as personal interpretation, experience, physical and mental status and social context all play their various parts in this practice.

In addition, there are a number of conceptual frameworks pertinent to matters concerning the performance of *Mikagura-uta* within and outside Japan,<sup>65</sup>

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65 Yueh-Po Huang, “Colonial Encounter and Inculturation: The Birth and Development of Tenrikyo in Taiwan,” *Nova Religio – Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 19, no. 3 (2016), pp. 78-103; Yueh-Po Huang, “Embracing Ritual Healing: The Case of *Sazuke* in Tenrikyo in Contemporary Taiwan,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 19, no. 3 (2017a), pp. 1317-34; Yueh-Po Huang, “The Methods of Propagation of a Japanese New Religion in the UK – Tenrikyo,” *Cogent Social Sciences/Social Anthropology* 3, no. 1 (2017b), pp. 1-17; Jonghyun Jin, “Sengo no Kankoku ni okeru niki shinshukyo no tekai-Tenrikyo no genchika o megute” *Frontier of Korean Studies*, vol. 1 (2014), pp. 42-59; Jonghyun Jin, *Kankoku ni okeru niki shinshukyo no zyuyo ni kansuru shukyou shyakaikagu teki kenkyu*, 2017; Saburo Shawn Morishita, *Teodori: Cosmological Building and Social Consolidation in a Ritual Dance* (Roma: Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, 2001); Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, *The Life of Oyasama, Foundress of Tenrikyo* (Tenri: Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, 1996); Hiroaki Yamanishi, *Japanese New Religions in Postcolonial South Korea and Taiwan: The Case of Tenrikyo* (Paper presented in the 2014 Consortium for Asian and African Studies (CAAS), 5th International Conference, Asia and Africa

including Japan, Taiwan, UK and South Korea.

In Japan, the author found that *Mikagura-uta* since its inception has offered the purity of everything worldly and a reachable religious goal through practices accessible in contemporary life. For the Japanese Tenrikyo follower, the daily practice of the *Mikagura-uta* was more likely to be a requisite for gaining self-healing and world salvation, which was in accordance with the cosmological terms of Tenrikyo's theology. This is in line with what Morishita found in his 2001 study of *Mikagura-uta* in Japan. One may distinguish *Mikagura-uta* performed in Tenrikyo Church Headquarters in Jiba, Japan from that in other countries, since Jiba has political and religious connotations.<sup>66</sup> *Mikagura-uta* in Jiba is specifically called the Kagura Service, the ritual performance that manifests the tasks God the Parent carried out in order to create humankind. During the Kagura Service, five male and five female performers are chosen to dance on the Kanrodai while wearing masks (*Kagura men*) and representing the ten Providences that God the Parent has bestowed on human beings.

In a postcolonial setting such as Taiwan, my ethnographical accounts of the significant role played by the *Mikagura-uta* in the daily life of Taiwanese members of Tenrikyo suggests that this bodily and self-healing performance continues to be essential for them, be it as an instrument for spiritual quest, a means to a personal life change amid uncertainty or as a social identity. The author found that *Mikagura-uta* is performed in the Japanese language in all Tenrikyo organisations across Taiwan. Due to colonial education, some Taiwanese followers with a basic or good command of the Japanese language could easily follow the bodily movement of the dancers. In principle, Taiwanese Tenrikyo followers follow the regulations of the *Mikagura-uta* as practised in Japan.

However, in South Korea, where the author conducted his fieldwork in Uijeongbu City, Japanese religious idioms and practices are removed and replaced

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across Disciplinary and National Lines, Columbia University), pp. 85-90.

66 For Tenrikyo followers, Jiba is seen as the centre of the world from which humanity first emerged.

with Korean ones. To the author's surprise, the practice in South Korea is different from that found in other countries such as Japan, the UK and Taiwan. Most of the attendees the author observed wore black robes embroidered with white Korean characters. The following remark made by one senior South Korean Tenrikyo follower is very relevant here:

Our senior followers added some Confucian elements into *Mikagura-uta*, for the purpose of helping us to understand it. We translate *Mikagura-uta* into the Korean language, which is slightly different from its original (Japanese) version, in order to make it relevant to our Korean society today... (in ritual) we do not clap our hands, because that is Japanese style. In Korea, we don't have such a culture (clapping hands in ritual). We change a lot of things, including the way we dance, the materials we use and the language we sing.<sup>67</sup>

Yamanishi<sup>68</sup> and Jin<sup>69</sup> investigated Tenrikyo in South Korea and provided a different result, which showed a discourse on decolonisation in the making, partly as a result of rekindled anti-Japanese sentiment and inflamed animosity towards Japan. Yet, what makes Tenrikyo's world propagation in South Korea distinct from its experience in other countries, as Yamanishi and Jin have found, lies in its discourse on decolonisation in the post-colonial context in South Korea.

In the context of immigration such as is seen in the UK, the spread of such culturally-embedded symbolic and material texts and practice to the two countries have occasioned adjustment or change in Tenrikyo's missionary policy. The

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67 Mr Lee, interview by the author, Uijeongbu City, South Korea, 5 August 2016.

68 Hiroaki Yamanishi, *Japanese New Religions in Postcolonial South Korea and Taiwan: The Case of Tenrikyo* (Paper presented in the 2014 Consortium for Asian and African Studies (CAAS), 5th International Conference, Asia and Africa across Disciplinary and National Lines, Columbia University), pp. 85-90).

69 Jonghyun Jin, "Sengo no Kankoku ni okeru nikei shinshukyo no tekai-Tenrikyo no genchika o megute" *Frontier of Korean Studies*, vol. 1 (2014), pp. 42-59; Jonghyun Jin, *Kankoku ni okeru nikei shinshukyo no zyuyo ni kansuru shukyou shyakaikagu teki kenkyu*, 2017.

demand for an English translation of the *Mikagura-uta* appeared to be an issue which forms a stark contrast to the acceptance of Japanese in Taiwan. Others, mostly Westerners, with very limited or no knowledge of the Japanese language tend to show their reluctance to perform the *Mikagura-uta*, so its obscurity could prevent them from joining the sacred dance. In principle, they see the *Mikagura-uta* as a bodily performance which can bring practical benefits to them. However, a number of recommendations, expressed more often than cultural translation, made it clear that the universalisation of Tenrikyo's missionary activities, if only through the *Mikagura-uta*, is required to invent a locally-oriented strategy in the face of emerging diverse cultures (or settings) around the world. In a word, Westerners appeared to be attracted to the public lectures or seminars in London, while the Japanese followers usually performed *Mikagura-uta* during the service.

## 6. Conclusion

The conceptual frameworks of anthropology, philosophy, religion and sports provide us with the lens through which to understand dynamic and complex self-cultivation and self-healing practices such as *Mikagura-uta* and to enrich these theories. The first point is that concepts familiar to anthropologists (ritual, illness, health, environment and so forth) shed light on sport in all its manifestations, local or global, religious or secular, personal or social and mental or physical. The religious symbols embodied in *Mikagura-uta* appear to be compatible with the modernised and secularised world. Symbolic religious idioms such as the origin, fertiliser, seed and carpenter were associated with an agricultural society, yet they were deemed so crucial in the performance that all Tenrikyo followers still have to embody them and thereby promote the dissemination of their cosmological and doctrinal ideas on matters such as world-view, morality, illness, health and social relationships.

The second point is that self-cultivation in motion and everything that

revolves around it (such as health, medicine and environment), present unique social and cultural configurations. Self-cultivation and self-healing practice, which continues to be one of the fastest growing and popular sub-disciplines in contemporary anthropological theory, provides a framework through which to accomplish one of the most formidable tasks today – namely elucidating how the everyday experiences of ordinary people in local settings shape, as well as are shaped by, large-scale social processes at the level of the national, the regional and the global, as shown in the case of Tenrikyo's *Mikagura-uta* and its major teaching (*Ofudesaki*) expanding from Japan to Taiwan.

Viewing bodily movement like sport as self-cultivation in motion and self-healing practice reveals that it includes a number of interrelated philosophical and religious thoughts that may target audiences of different regions, mostly in East Asia, helping to bring them together into increasingly encompassing communities. Yuasa's vivid account of Eastern mind-body theory deserves our attention.<sup>70</sup> In his analysis, mind and body are not separated from each other, and his 'mind and body theory' implies a more holistic approach. As regards Tenrikyo's *Mikagura-uta*, the study above has looked at some of the issues to which the author addressed himself as a way of seeing things in perspective and unravelling the mystery of Tenrikyo's *Mikagura-uta* in Taiwan. *Mikagura-uta* involves bodily movements, a self-healing activity for affliction which has resulted from polluted minds and resulted in physical suffering. Tenrikyo followers in Taiwan believe that *Mikagura-uta* provides magical efficacy, particularly in respect of its quality in healing. For Taiwanese followers of Tenrikyo, to perform *Mikagura-uta* is to engage in an exercise of physical therapy in a religious setting. Chiu<sup>71</sup> and Chang<sup>72</sup> discovered that Taiwanese popular religion emphasises the mysterious experience of efficacy,

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70 Yasuo Yuasa, *The Body, Self-Cultivation, and Ki-Energy*, trans. Shigenori Nagatomo and Monte S. Hull (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

71 Hei-yuan Chiu, "The Popular Religion of Taiwan," in *Religion, Occult and Social Change ( I ): The Study of Religion, Occult Behavior and New Religious Movements in Taiwan*, ed. Hei-yuan Chiu (Taipei: Laurel Publishing Company, Inc., 2006), p. 64.

72 Chia-Lin Chang, *The Development of Religion in Contemporary Taiwan* (Taipei: Lan-Tai Publishing Company, Inc., 2009), pp. 28-29.

which appeals to most Taiwanese people. However, *Mikagura-uta* may endure some reconfigurations as it is practised in different social contexts.

Less explicit in *Mikagura-uta* was the question of to what extent the body can be incorporated into mental activity, and vice versa. Similarly, the question of whether one can learn *Mikagura-uta* only through the body and not the mind, or vice versa, was an open-ended one. However, the argument seems to have been replaced recently with a more viable one that concentrates on the social context in which one learns *how to act*, but not *how to understand*. The inspiration behind this came from Marchand's remarks on the traditional way in which a Muslim apprentice learns minaret building, involving the balance between *the processes of making*, conceptualising the spatial relations between objects, and *the processes of reason*, defining points in the web of conceptual connections.<sup>73</sup>

Lastly, self-cultivation and self-healing practice is enmeshed in larger cultural configurations about the cosmos, particularly the relationship between humans and the natural environment, as shown in Chinese cosmology, which sees health, through movement, as the product of a balanced and harmonious relationship between the two. Simultaneously, in Tenrikyo the daily life of this religious community has always been based on the physical practice of *Mikagura-uta*. Exercise, cosmic unity, environment, self-cultivation and so forth are expressed through bodily performance, empowering Tenrikyo members. In the foreseeable future, we may see a great interchange of ideas contributed by scholars of philosophy, anthropology (medical anthropology and anthropology of sport in particular), health, environment and other areas – all of which can have a great theoretical impact on the research field.

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73 Trevor Marchand, *Minaret Building and Apprenticeship in Yemen* (Surrey: Curzon, 2001).

**Appendix 1: The Themes of *Ofudesaki* (from 1869-1882)<sup>74</sup>**

| No.       | Main Theme                                                                                                                                                                                     | Time of Writing |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Part I    | The ideal religious life in Tenrikyo                                                                                                                                                           | Feb., 1869      |
| Part II   | Similar to Part I, with an exposition of Tenrikyo (as a beneficent organisation) and the use of analogy (such as mountain fire and water) and the description of historical facts.             | Mar., 1869      |
| Part III  | World salvation mission through mind-purifying practices; the explanation of the life span of humanity that can last 115 years.                                                                | Jan., 1874      |
| Part IV   | The path to religious propagation in an uncertain (unknown) world; The creation of the world by God; the supremacy of God over everything in this world                                        | Apr., 1874      |
| Part V    | The methods concerning the missionary activity (such as self-cultivation); God's power as the source of the magical effects; God's work in the purification of human mind (from evil to good). | May, 1874       |
| Part VI   | To hasten the service for world salvation; the genesis of the world                                                                                                                            | Dec., 1874      |
| Part VII  | Sacred dance, safe childbirth; joyous life                                                                                                                                                     | Feb., 1875      |
| Part VIII | world salvation; Jiba                                                                                                                                                                          | May, 1875       |
| Part IX   | the construction of Jiba                                                                                                                                                                       | Jun., 1875      |
| Part X    | the construction of Jiba                                                                                                                                                                       | Jun., 1875      |
| Part XI   | the construction of Jiba                                                                                                                                                                       | Jun., 1875      |
| Part XII  | Mind-purification; the meaning of, as well as the path to, happiness; God's work in maintaining the function of human body                                                                     | 1876            |
| Part XIII | relying on the words of God; brotherhood; generosity and sincerity                                                                                                                             | Jun., 1877      |
| Part XIV  | Hasten the world salvation                                                                                                                                                                     | 1877            |

74 Tatsuzo Yamochi, *Ofudesaki haidoku nyumon* (Tenri: Tenrikyo Doyusha, 1994); Hideo Nakajima, *Kana no oshie 'Ofudesaki' 'Tenrikyo kyoten' nyumon* (Tenri: Tenrikyo Doyusha, 2006).(Collected, collated and reorganised by the author)

|           |                                                                                         |            |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Part XV   | Hasten the world salvation                                                              | Jan., 1880 |
| Part XVI  | The origin of the world and the truth of human mind and body; the coming of a new world | Apr., 1881 |
| Part XVII | world propagation                                                                       | 1882       |

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