Prosthetic Revelations : Sticking the Teachings to the Body in a Japanese New Religion

Japan Review 37 (2022): 29–49

Prosthetic Revelations: Sticking the Teachings to the Body in a Japanese New Religion

Philip SWIFT*

The Japanese new religion, Mahikari, is known primarily for its practical technique of manual purification, *okiyome*. However, this article instead focuses on the program of practices that is regarded as being equally important in terms of its purificatory and salvific effects: that of engaging with revelatory teachings, a form of engagement that is often articulated in terms of the expression "sticking the teachings to the body" (*oshie o mi ni tsukeru*). I consider this particular idiom of attachment and the ways in which it is actualized in devotional practices, and I contend that this notion of somatic yet spiritual "sticking" acts as a conceptual corrective to overly internalizing models of religiosity. In conclusion, I suggest that while Helen Hardacre once proposed that "cosmology" was analytically restricting, and argued instead in favor of "worldview," the issue with regards to the role of embodied practice in Mahikari calls for a reconsideration of these analytical terms. Accordingly, the article ends by suggesting a turn away from "worldview," back towards the category of the cosmological.

Keywords: Mahikari, *mi ni tsukeru*, learning, embodiment, ritual, conversion, Japanese religion, cosmology

Not for the first time, Shōji-san—my neighbor and a long-standing member of the Japanese new religion, Sūkyō Mahikari 崇教真光—was attempting to explain to me the meaning of the Mahikari revelation that one should "stick the teachings to the body" (*oshie o mi ni tsukeru* 教えを身に付ける). To attach something to the body is *like this*, he explained, taking off his glasses to illustrate. Thus, "I stick my glasses to my body" (*megane o mi ni tsukeru* メガネを身につける) he said, putting his glasses back on. It is the same when you put your clothes on, when you also "*mi ni tsukeru*"; and so too with the teachings. To stick Mahikari

* This paper was originally presented at a seminar held at the Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, SOAS, in February 2019. I would like to thank Lucia Dolce, Masato Kato, Fabio Gygi, and Eileen Barker for their generous comments and suggestions. I also owe a major debt of gratitude to the anonymous reviewers for their incisive and helpful remarks. Any remaining kinks and infelicities in the argument remain wholly my own.

teachings to the body, he continued, is to ensure that they will "emerge spontaneously" (*shizen ni deru* 自然に出る) in daily life.

Shōji-san's brief demonstration, if vivid enough, was perfectly straightforward. It was an object lesson in elucidating what is an otherwise utterly conventional expression in Japanese, for the phrase *mi ni tsukeru* simply refers to the physical action of putting or carrying something on the body, and, by extension, to the act of learning or the acquisition of a skill.[1] But precisely because this Japanese idiom is so ordinary, it has, I think, remained rather underexamined.[2] In this article, I shall argue that this notion of learning actually has something to teach us, not only because it speaks to the wider sociological issue of learning or enskilment as material practice, exemplified, for instance, in Pierre Bourdieu's elaboration of the concept of *habitus*, the incorporated space of acquired aptitudes and sensibilities.[3] It is also significant that this idea, as articulated in Mahikari, highlights a key theme in Japanese religiosity more generally, which is its thoroughgoing praxical or pragmatic ethos.[4]

In what follows, I also wish to suggest that this particular ethnographic instance of what it is to "learn religion," conceived in terms of somatic attachment, can act as a useful conceptual corrective to widely held assumptions about religion—and in particular, the process of religious conversion, where priority is given to interiority, at the expense of embodied practice.[5] As I have argued elsewhere, conversion, in sociological accounts of it, is often understood in internalizing terms, as a process of acquiring new beliefs, or a change of one's "worldview."[6] But, in Mahikari, as I hope to show, revelatory truth is explicitly understood to be somatically accessible. In an important sense, the truth of revelation in Mahikari is mobilized and actualized via the surfaces of the body. As an elementary Mahikari textbook explains, "the reality of divinity" (*kami no gojitsuzai* 神の御実在) is "realized not conceptually" (*gainen toshite de naku* 概念としてでなく), but "through the skin" (*hadami de* 肌身で).[7] That is to say, the knowledge revealed in the divine teachings is acquired through a kind of sensuous contact; an operation of bodily absorption or attachment that is often articulated in terms of the idiom of "sticking."[8]

Considered in this way, as a procedure of adhesion to the body, Mahikari practice presents us with a figuration of conversion that is rather different from its standard depiction in scholarship. For instance, according to the seemingly unobjectionable contention of Marc Baer, "conversion has an internal component entailing belief and an external component

1 An anonymous reviewer proposed that I might use "suturing" in place of "sticking," because the former is more suggestive of the formation of strong attachments. The point is a very good one. Nevertheless, if the reader will forgive the pun, I want to stick with "sticking" because it seems closer to the spirit of Shōji-san's demonstration, which established an equivalence between the action of putting something on the body and the operation of incorporation. That is, "sticking" seems to me to possess more general applicability as a translation of *mi ni tsukeru*, because it roughly covers both the attachment of clothes *and* of skills or, in this instance, revelatory knowledge.

2 With a few notable and excellent exceptions. See Kondo 1990, pp. 238–239; Mohácsi 2008; Mohácsi 2018, pp. 104–106.

3 Bourdieu 1977.

4 See for instance Reader 1991, pp. 15–20.

5 This point has been argued by Keane 2007, among others.

6 Swift 2012.

7 Sūkyō Mahikari 2002, p. 62.

8 Nor is this in any way unique to Mahikari. Köpping (2002, p. 154) has brilliantly described the crucial role of the "skin-membrane" in the generative dynamics of much Japanese ritual, whereby operations of transformation are explicitly understood to take place "through the body or the skin (*karada de* or *hada de*)."

involving behavior, leading to the creation of a new self-identity and new way of life."[9] This is the minimal definition of conversion endorsed by the editors of the recent *Oxford Handbook on Religious Conversion*, and it is admirable in its clarity and concision. After all, it just seems axiomatic that "beliefs" are inside, and behavior is "outside." Scholarly work on religious change in Mahikari also fits with this definition. For instance, Brian McVeigh has framed Mahikari transformations in terms of a process of "building belief through the body," while Miyanaga Kuniko argues that Mahikari "conversion" involves an "absolute change of an individual's epistemological orientation," in other words, the assimilation of a novel "belief system."[10]

And yet, to interpret conversion as the addition or adaption of beliefs is to answer a question that Mahikari practitioners are not asking, for they do not, in the main, conceptualize conversions in terms of "beliefs" at all, nor do they conceive of themselves as "believers" (*shinja* 信者). Rather, the term that Mahikari members use to characterize themselves is *kamikumite* 神組み手 (which literally means to be "hand in hand with the *kami*" [that is to say, with divinity]).[11] I would argue this particular formulation gives us an important indication of the way in which potentially transformative connections are conceptualized in Mahikari more generally. This is less in terms of a connection between "beliefs" and "behavior" than it is about the relationships between bodies, divinity, and truth. To be a *kamikumite*, as we shall see, implies having an intimate and tactile relation to revelation. Furthermore, the mode of engaging in revelation (and by implication, the attendant transformation of one's way of living) that I will ethnographically examine here points to a more involuted topology than that assumed by the straightforward demarcation made between beliefs "inside" and bodily action "outside." The notion of learning as somatic attachment instead suggests that what is "outside" the body is knowledge in the form of revelation, which is coextensive with the truth of the cosmos.

Thus, for Mahikari *kamikumite*, the crucial, soteriological objective, to be achieved by means of "sticking to the body," is the task of turning this "outside" into an "inside" in order to embody the truth of Mahikari teachings in one's everyday existence. In this sense, knowledge takes on physiological dimensions, for, just as Diana Espírito Santo has argued of the practices of Cuban spiritualists, revelatory knowledge in Mahikari is "a substance of sorts—one that is sensed and absorbed by bodies that must communicate it."[12] The emphasis on the physicality of spiritual practice is further indicated by the designation of the Mahikari center as a *dōjō* 道場—namely, a space of training, or "site of practice," in Grapard's felicitous translation.[13] The approach adopted here is therefore steadfastly centered on practice not only because, as Lucia Dolce has cogently argued, it is the most productive trend in the study of Japanese religiosity but also because Mahikari itself is quite emphatic about the centrality of the pragmatic.[14]

9 Cited in Rambo and Farhadian 2014, p. 11.
10 McVeigh 1997, p. 39; Miyanaga 1991, pp. 106–107.
11 I would like to thank John Breen here, who long ago got me thinking about the specificity of this conception of the relation to the *kami* in terms of *kumu* 組む.
12 Espírito Santo 2015, p. 581.
13 Grapard 2016, p. 126; cf. Davis 1980, p. 1.
14 Dolce 2015.

It is useful to think of Mahikari in terms of Peter Sloterdijk's almost gymnastic image of religion, considered less from the perspective of belief than in terms of the techno-somatic formats by which it is enacted. From this vantage point, as Sloterdijk remarks, "the dichotomy of believers and unbelievers becomes obsolete and is replaced by the distinction between the practising and the untrained, or those who train differently."[15] Likewise, as I will try to show, the ascetic efforts of Mahikari members to engage with sacred teachings are a matter of developing capacities of affectivity, of rendering the body receptive to truth. At issue, then, is the idea of a corporeal relation to revelation in Mahikari, such that the truth is something to be bonded to a body, in such a way that it becomes an extension of the person.

Sūkyō Mahikari

Sūkyō Mahikari is a Japanese new religion with an estimated membership of about half a million.[16] Its origins are generally understood to go back to Ōmotokyō 大本教, the massively influential late-nineteenth century new religion which spawned numerous offshoots. As with the aetiologies of a number of other new religious groups in Japan, Mahikari has its foundation in revelation. It specifically traces its own beginnings to the early hours of 27 February 1959, when Okada Yoshikazu 岡田良一 (1901–1974), the founder, received an urgent instruction from a divinity named Su. "The time of heaven has come," commanded the *kami*. "Rise. Your name shall be Kōtama 光玉 (jewel of light). Raise your hand. The world has entered severe times."[17] The imperative reference to "raising the hand" (*te o kazasu* 手をかざす) has to do with what would become Mahikari's distinctive practice, that of purification (*tekazashi* 手かざし, more commonly known as *okiyome* お浄め). *Kamikumite* gain the ability to perform *okiyome* because they wear an object on their bodies called an *omitama* お御霊, which anyone may receive after taking a three-day training course. The procedure of *okiyome* itself involves the radiation of divine light from the open hand, a light that is deemed to purify anything it contacts, although it is most often bodies that are the intended target of purification. Under the hot light of *okiyome*, hardened poisons which are constantly building up in the body can be melted, and accumulated karma dissolved, so the self can be brought closer to divinity.

Among Japanese new religions, Mahikari is one of the more well-documented organizations, and, understandably, *okiyome*, as Mahikari's principal ritual procedure, has claimed the lion's share of academic attention.[18] But there is more to Mahikari than *okiyome*, and engagement with written texts is also a crucial aspect of Mahikari practices, which have been the subject of some excellent analyses.[19] Heretofore, however, Mahikari revelation

15 Sloterdijk 2013, p. 3.

16 The question of what constitutes the "new" with regards to religious groups in Japan has been a matter of some discussion. The general consensus is that it refers to religions that have arisen since the nineteenth century. Nishiyama Shigeru has proposed a typology of "new-new religions" (*shin-shinshūkyō* 新新宗教) covering groups that came into prominence in the 1970s, which would include Mahikari. Such groups are characterised by an emphasis on experiment, on spiritual efficacy, and material evidence—in short, on "proof" rather than belief as a means of establishing relations with the divine. See Nishiyama 1988.

17 Quoted in Shimizu 1994, p. 243.

18 See Davis 1980; Knecht and Hatanaka 1993; McVeigh 1997; Louveau 2012. For a short, excellent treatment of Mahikari, its concepts and practices, see Staemmler 2011b.

19 See, for example, Knecht 1995; Broder 2008. One of the earliest is the outstanding analysis by Köpping 1967. That article retains its importance not simply owing to its stress on cosmology, but also because Köpping, the young ethnographer, was actually able to interview Okada Kōtama himself.

has largely been treated as doctrinal content, to be variously discussed and deconstructed in terms of its symbolism, its influences, and often unacknowledged borrowings. My interest is somewhat different. In an innovative analysis of Amerindian shamanism, Graham Townsley went against the grain of standard academic understandings in treating shamanism, not as a body of knowledge but as a mode of knowing. That is, his emphasis was less on what shamanism consists of, as a framework of beliefs or meanings, and more on what that framing entails, as a form of action.[20] My analytical strategy is similar here, in that I am not so much concerned with the substance of Mahikari revelation than with revelatory knowledge *as* substance; the notion, in other words, of written texts as somatically attachable material.

It may well be the case, as both Frédérique Louveau and Louella Matsunaga have asserted, that Mahikari produces few publications by comparison with other religious groups such as Kōfuku no Kagaku 幸福の科学 and Seichō no Ie 生長の家, whose voluminous output is such that they have been referred to as "publisher religions" (*shuppan shūkyō* 出版宗教).[21] Matsunaga is surely mistaken, however, in deploying this difference to establish a contrast between Japanese new religions which "encourage or even require members to study" their publications, and Mahikari, which does not.[22] This crucially overlooks the energy and attention that Mahikari members invest in practices of reading and writing, as we shall see below. Or, to put the point differently, while Matsunaga is absolutely correct in observing that Mahikari lays stress on experience, it is not so much that the experiential is emphasized *at the expense of* the textual, but rather that texts, too, are intended to *be experienced*, just as much as read.[23]

Adhesive Exercises: Practice in Mahikari (I)

It was on one of those days when I did not go to the dojo when Shōji-san phoned at around ten o'clock at night, urging that I should receive *okiyome*. He had been a member of Mahikari for some seventeen years, and was a constant source of insight, while being quick to step in whenever he felt that I was backsliding in my practice. When he finished giving me *okiyome*, by holding his open hand over various areas of my body, he asked me for something to write on, and I offered him my notebook. He began to write the words, "The true law…" (*seihō* 正法) and I immediately guessed that he was giving me a lesson. "These are the *fundamentals* of Mahikari" (*Mahikari no konpon* 真光の根本), he said with some emphasis. I looked at the text he had handed me. It read: "'Practice of the true law is indeed a treasure.' Through the practice of giving and receiving light, and by sticking the teachings to the body, the soul will be able to come closer to the *kami*."

"Practice these things," Shōji-san explained, and your spirit will "move upwards." "It's not difficult to understand. Is it?" he added, with a certain impatience in his voice. From time to time after this, Shōji-san would repeat this maxim to me. I later learned

20 Townsley 1993.

21 Louveau 2012, p. 17; Matsunaga 2011, p. 246. "Publisher religions" is a translation of "Verlags-Religion"; see Winter 2012, p. 144.

22 Matsunaga 2011, p. 246.

23 Catherine Cornille similarly concludes that it is ritual performance rather than "the understanding of the teachings" which is paramount in Mahikari, see Cornille 1998, p. 287. But, once again, to put it like this is to miss the point that the engagement with texts is itself a kind of ritual enactment.

from him that this citation comes from the last sentence of the last revelation given by the Oshienushisama 教え主様 (master of teachings), Okada Keishu 岡田恵珠, the previous leader of Mahikari, who has since handed over the responsibility of leadership to her successor, Okada Kōya 岡田晃弥.

The sense of this divine directive is uncomplicated, as Shōji-san emphasized, but it has exacting implications, for it is intended to be nothing less than a blueprint, or model in miniature, of the practicing life in Mahikari. *Seihō*, the "true law," is Mahikari's own particular variation on the Buddhist expression *shōbō* 正法, "the true dharma." Coupled with the keyword, *jissen* (practice), it refers, in Mahikari, to practice in accordance with the cosmic plan of the *kami*, and comprises two vital requirements. First, the performance of *okiyome* (both given and received); and second, the learning of divine teachings (*mioshie* み教え), to be stuck to the body, a process of learning that, as the phrase *mi ni tsukeru* says so suggestively, is as much corporeal as it is spiritual, since it associates the possibility of spiritual elevation with the act of attaching teachings to the body. As an initial observation, I want to draw attention to the propaedeutic dimension of this revelation. As with some of the other texts I will mention below, Mahikari teachings, themselves revelations, are often concerned with imparting the correct ways of engaging with those selfsame revelations.[24] Shōji-san's own conduct was consummately modelled on the doctrine, since he had incorporated this very revelation—attached it to his body—by committing it to memory.

But, more importantly, what the revelation makes plain is that the argument that Mahikari values the pursuit of experience over the study of texts is only half right, since both the procedure of *okiyome* and the acquisition of the teachings are regarded as coequal praxical imperatives. It would be more correct to say that, just as much as *okiyome*, the study of texts demands embodied and experiential engagement. Mahikari teachings are understood to consist of a series of vital principles, which can only be discovered in action. Here, comprehension is corporeal; a matter of "hands-on" experience. It is relevant then, in this connection, that the then-Acting Oshienushi, in one of his monthly teachings, should point to the graphic etymology of the Chinese character for *gaku* or *manabu* 學 (to learn), a component of which (臼) means "to hold something in the hands." A reminder, once again, of the almost physiological quality of knowledge in Mahikari. Understanding, in Mahikari, is a function of experience. "If you don't experience it, you won't understand" (*taiken shinai to wakaranai* 体験しないとわからない) was a phrase I heard over and over. The teachings, too, come to make sense in the light of experience, or perhaps they make sense following the experience of light. Thus, I once complained about the insoluble texture of the teachings to a young trainee minister (*dōshi* 導士) at the main dojo in Osaka. He agreed. Even Japanese don't understand them, he cheerily admitted. "It's a funny thing, though," he said thoughtfully, "but if you can't grasp some teaching or other, when you perform *okiyome*, you come to understand it."

The model of learning at work here, as Pierre Hadot has shown regarding programs of ascetic exercise more generally, is intended to be more transformative than informative in its

24 I use the term "teachings" synonymously with "revelations" because all official teachings in Mahikari are understood to be revelatory. In Mahikari, the relevant terms, *mioshie* and *gokyōji* 御教示, are used interchangeably.

aims and effects.[25] As I have argued elsewhere, *okiyome*, as understood by its practitioners, is fundamentally transformative; it is a technology of ontological conversion that creates material and spiritual effects capable of tangible apprehension.[26] But this sense of the tangibly transformative is also present in engagements with divine texts, and not only because the principle of sticking the teachings to the body is based on the notion that the teachings require a kind of haptic access if their truth is to be realized. It also reflects, as will be demonstrated below, that the texts themselves, as material objects, are deemed to be capable of producing transformative effects.

By understanding that truth is a matter of palpable, rather than purely intellectual, effects, we can perceive a relation between the realization of truth and the receptivity of bodies that is explicitly associated with neither pedagogics nor persuasion as a rhetorical expedient for the production of conviction. Rather, truth is more like something which is capable of being corporeally absorbed, admitted into a receptive body.

There are some suggestive sentences in Foucault, which might make this relation clearer. Foucault proposed that, prior to Descartes, it was

> always held that a subject could not have access to the truth if he did not first operate upon himself a certain work which would make him susceptible to knowing the truth—*a work of purification* … To put it another way: truth always has a price; no access to truth without ascesis. In Western culture up to the sixteenth century, asceticism and access to truth are always more or less obscurely linked.[27]

These remarks would appear to be tailor-made for Mahikari, wherein operations of purification are absolutely essential, but so too is this idea that truth requires ascetic access in order to be realized. I would venture to suggest that rather more than the pre-Cartesian procedures with which he was concerned, Foucault's proposal gains even greater analytical traction when applied to the wide range of physico-spiritual programs in Japan, where the linkage between ascetic practice and the activation of truth has always been anything but obscure.[28]

Now, one might well question the extent to which Mahikari practices can be described as "ascetic" at all, since one of the democratic attractions of such religious groups is the almost instant efficacy of the practices they promote. It is certainly true that Mahikari promotional literature often draws a distinction between *okiyome* as an easily accessible ability and the arduous ritual exercises associated with more traditional means of attaining magical powers.[29]

But I would argue that this presentational discrepancy is the product of a well-marked inside/outside contrast that Mahikari draws with respect to members, and those who

25 See Hadot 1995.
26 Swift 2012; Swift 2021.
27 Foucault 2000, pp. 278–279 (author's emphasis).
28 To take a single instance, in Shugendō 修験道 the body is explicitly recognized as the medium for the realization of salvific truth; see Grapard 2016, p. 143.
29 Thus, one such Mahikari publication states that, in order to obtain spiritual powers, it is no longer necessary to engage in "decades of hard austerities" (*nanjūnen to iu kibishii shugyō* 何十年という厳しい修行), see Sūkyō Mahikari 2002, p. 16.

have yet to join. For, as we shall see further below, the life and language of practice *within* Mahikari is characterized by a strongly ascetic dynamic, where practice is framed as an urgent task, a matter of devotional, repetitive efforts.[30] That is to say, it is easy enough to join Mahikari, but to remain as a diligent member is to commit oneself to a regime of daily life practice. As Louveau remarks, "If it's easy to raise the hand [in performing *okiyome*], maintaining the effectiveness of the sacred is conditional on rigorous practice."[31]

To the extent that Mahikari teachings exhort their adherents to "transform their existence into a kind of permanent exercise," these kinds of somatic truth-procedures can also be understood in Foucauldian fashion to comprise "techniques of the self," ascetic regimens orchestrated for the purpose of self-change.[32] My point is that the whole series of practices coming under the rubric of *seihō jissen* are a physical expedient requiring perpetual exercise for the conversion of the self, and that they are also a means of generating a spectrum of other spiritual and material transformations, not merely within the individual, but in the cosmos at large.

Doing Truth: Practice in Mahikari (II)

The simultaneously ascetic and existential trajectory of practice in Mahikari was illustrated during a study session I once attended at the main dojo in Osaka. After expounding on the significance of a revelation given by Oshienushisama, the Mahikari minister turned to the importance of putting the teachings into practice. He began drawing on the blackboard: the bell-curve line of a hill, and at the very bottom, a stick figure. At the hill's summit he wrote the word "happiness" (*kōfuku* 幸福). We all wish for happiness, he observed, pointing to the picture. We are all looking towards it, from below. We are, however, heavily burdened with impurities. To illustrate, he drew a looping, blue cloud around the stick figure. But, he went on, by following *seihō mioshie* we can try and make our way towards happiness. We try to climb the hill. We might lose sight of the top, but the *kami* will give us guidance (*omichibiki* お導き). We might be tempted to give up, but by coming to the dojo, giving *okiyome*, performing divine service (*gohōshi* 御奉仕), and saving people (*hito sukui* 人救い), he stated, gesturing at the words he had written up, we can dissolve spiritual obstructions and clouds of spiritual impurities. It is insufficient merely to study the teachings, as one can only discover these things through experience (*taiken o tōshite* 体験を通して).

If almost everything in the study session was concerned with the importance of doing and experiencing, then these imperatives were not said to be easy. As the minister's allegory of the hill made clear, Mahikari practice can be arduous, an uphill struggle, and the way to salvation difficult.[33] But what the lesson also makes clear is that revelatory truth in Mahikari has to be accessed somatically; it can only be realized through the prism of

30 To take a single instance, the term *gyō* 行 (ascetic practice) makes frequent appearances in Mahikari teachings, often in various compounds and combinations: e.g., *magyō* 真行 (true austerities); *kansha no gyō* 感謝の行 (the ascetic practice of gratitude); *sunao no gyō* ス直の行 (the practice of meekness towards Su *kami*); and *kokoro no geza no gyō* 心の下座の行 (the austerity of humility).

31 Louveau 2012, p. 196. The notion that a system of soteriological practices can, at different moments, be presented either as easy or difficult has been explored by Faure in his analysis of the sudden/gradual dichotomy in Chan/Zen Buddhist rhetorics. See Faure 1991.

32 Foucault 1990, p. 49; Swift 2012, pp. 276–277.

33 What is also evident from this analogy of ascent is the association between elevation and the state of purity in Mahikari. I have explored this connection elsewhere; see Swift 2021.

experience. Mahikari pedagogy consists, in large measure, of appeals to the concrete, to the idea that the teachings require sensuous comprehension, or what Ian Reader, emphasizing a central tenet of Japanese religious practice, calls "the importance of personal verification."[34] Indeed, Mahikari practice could well be characterized in terms of what William James called "veri-*fication*," insofar as truth is conceived as a matter of making and doing.[35] In James's scheme, truth is understood as a dynamic property, which is, as he says, "realized *in rebus*"—that is, in things.[36] Similarly, in Mahikari understanding, truth is something that is actualized in practice. The notion of truth at work here is not so much something taken to be an inherent property of propositions as it is a property and consequence of action. John Dewey's appraisal of the pragmatism of the Alexander Technique would work just as well as a description of Mahikari's praxical ethos: its "principle is experimental," wrote Dewey; the "proof lies in *doing* it."[37] In similar fashion, truth in Mahikari is deemed to be something that is *done*.[38]

Indicative of this notion of "doing" truth are the terms for a number of different activities, all prefixed by the character *ma* 真 ("truth"): most obviously, Mahikari ("true light"), which designates the group itself as well as its principle ritual procedure (*Mahikari no waza* 真光の業, the "technique of true light"). But missionary activities are also marked as forms of truth-doing: *maboe* 真吼え, meaning to spread the truth of the teachings, and *makubari* 真配り("distribution of truth"); that is, the dissemination of promotional literature—a practice I will return to below. But the relevance of this pragmatist understanding of truth-doing extends further, insofar as Mahikari announces itself as a movement defined by "supra-religious pragmatism" (*sūkyō puragumachizumu* 崇教プラグマチズム).[39] This is not to suggest, of course, that Jamesian philosophy is somehow the secret key to understanding Mahikari doctrine. Rather, owing to Mahikari's pragmatist emphasis, experience is understood to offer the key verification procedure for the truth of its teachings, and that this emphasis itself is just a more ascetically inflected, intensified form of the pragmatic principle underlying much religious practice in Japan.

Mahikari practices, then, are conceived as various means of veri-*fication*, various forms of doing the truth, which, taken all together, are governed by an "ascetic imperative."[40] In other words, a totalizing program of practices and perpetual exercises. This is summed up in the oft-mentioned exhortation in Mahikari to live "a spirit-first way of life" (*reishu no ikikata* 霊主の生き方)—that is, to give precedence to the spiritual in everything a person does. But this does not mean that one thereby turns one's back on the somatic, for Mahikari members are urged to "attach" this spiritual way of life to their bodies.[41]

Mi ni tsukeru, as we have already observed, refers not only to putting or wearing something on the body, but also means "to learn" or to "acquire a skill." But note that the physical dimension is no less present in this latter sense, since, as Dorinne Kondo points

34 Reader 1996, p. 268.
35 James 2000, p. 88; italics in original.
36 James 2000, p. 96.
37 Cited in Armstrong 1998, p. 108; italics in original.
38 See, for example, Holbraad 2012, p. 58.
39 Okada 2000a, p. 9; cf. Davis 1980, p. 213.
40 Harpham 1987.
41 Oshienushisama 2002, p. 11.

out, to develop an ability by attaching it to the body means to intensively incorporate it, so that it becomes a "palpable part of the self."[42] Here, I propose that the idea of learning as somatic attachment comprises a "body technique" in the classic Maussian sense: a palpable operation of adhesion to the body—a prosthetic project.[43] This is a mode of learning more concerned with the apprenticeship of the body than with the apprehension of ideas, and, as with apprenticeship in general, such learnings laid down in the body are open-ended in their potential for development. A technique once learned is not learned absolutely, and is always capable of further elaboration. As Mauss says, "the technique of swimming perfects itself day by day."[44]

In an edition of the monthly Mahikari journal (*Mahikari-shi* 真光誌), the Acting Oshienushi of Mahikari comes very close to this Maussian conception. He states that to learn (*manabu* 学ぶ) is more about "praxical bodily acquisition" (*jissen-teki ni taitoku suru* 実践的に体得する) than it is about acquiring abstract "knowledge" (*chishiki* 知識). Therefore, to learn in Mahikari is akin to learning to swim: "No matter how much one knows about the theory of swimming [*oyogi-kata no riron* 泳ぎ方の理論], one won't be able to instantly swim when one gets in the water." The skill of swimming can only be "learned through experience" (*taiken-teki ni manabu* 体験的に学ぶ).[45] Accordingly, kamikumite are urged to undertake a similar kind of experiential immersion in Mahikari practice. This program of bodily adaption and attachment is also an explicitly ascetic project—we might even speak of a prosthetic ascetics—since, as Yuasa Yasuo points out regarding Japanese practices of self-cultivation (*shugyō* 修行), an accomplishment is attached to the body (*gei ga mi ni tsuku* 芸が身につく) through constantly accumulated exercises of the body.[46]

In the same teaching quoted above, the leader of Mahikari explains that humans are not the only beings that learn by means of immersing their bodies in practice. Animals also engage in training their bodies. For example, nightingales learn how to sing through practice; and the cicada lives through learning (*manande ikite'oru* 学んで生きておる), training its tiny body to produce its resounding songs.[47] In this expanded notion of bodily training, we are presented with a kind of cosmic ecology of practicing beings (both human and nonhuman), a planetary vision of ascetic practice reminiscent of Nietzsche's notion of the earth as the "ascetic planet par excellence."[48] I will return to this cosmological theme below.

Copying as Somatic Sticking and the Autonomous Agency of Revelation

Perhaps the most vivid instance of the ascetic imperative of "attaching teachings to the body" is the monthly event known as the *gokyōji kakitori* 御教示書き取り (lit., "writing down the teachings"). The revelations (*gokyōji* 御教示) in this case are teachings revealed by Oshienushisama—and subsequently, by her surrogate, the Acting Oshienushi—at

42 Kondo 1990, p. 238.
43 See Mauss 1950, pp. 365–386.
44 Mauss 2002, p. 51.
45 Oshienushisama Odairi 2003, p. 20.
46 Yuasa 1990, p. 133.
47 There is a precedent for this image of practicing animals. In his study of educational practices during the Tokugawa period, Dore (1965, p. 38) quotes the Tokugawa-era philosopher Miura Baien to the following effect: "*Gaku* means learning. A bird learning to fly, a cat playing with a ball, are each learning their own 'way' in life."
48 Cited in Ansell-Pearson and Large 2006, p. 426.

a ceremony (*gesshisai* 月始祭) held each month at Suza, Mahikari's main shrine in Gifu Prefecture. These revelations are published later in the monthly Mahikari journal, and *kamikumite* are urged to read and reread them. But prior to their publication, a meeting is held at which *kumite* are given the opportunity to copy down the content of the relevant revelation from a text that is dictated to them.

The manner in which this pre-published text is produced is rather remarkable. Mahikari members and staff who have attended the *gesshisai* at Suza in person, who have copied down what they heard at that event, will compare notes (*yomiawase* 読み合わせ) with others who were there, in order to produce a document that is as faithful as possible to the given revelation. It is this collated, provisional text which is then dictated at local dojos. The *kumite*, the majority of whom will not have attended the ceremony, are then able to make copies for themselves, by hand, of the revelation.

Turning up at such an evening meeting at Akashi dojo, I asked the minister if I might make an audio recording of it, for research purposes. This is not possible, she said, since the version of the revelation to be read out, based as it was on the accumulated notes of a number of *kumite*, might not be completely "correct"—she said in English. However, she would allow me to make a copy of her copy, so long as you do it "with your own hand," as she put it. The minister's stipulation in favor of manual, against mechanical, copying, is a telling instance of the importance of tangibly engaging with the text.

But the transcription of revelation is not confined to *kakitori* meetings. Mahikari members also make individual efforts to copy (*kakiutsusu* 書き写す) the teachings. A sign on the wall in Osaka's main dojo carried the motivational slogan, "Let's copy the received, reverent teachings." While at this dojo, members *were* allowed to use a photocopier, but this was regarded as inferior to copying by hand. The latter "takes a long time," about two to three hours, one member told me. Indeed, Shōji-san made it into a regular practice, explaining to me that he learned the teachings by "reading them and writing them, reading, writing, reading, writing"; a repetitive expression that mirrored the repetitions of his method.

It appears that efforts have been made within Mahikari in recent years to reinforce the importance of devotional copying as a means of incorporating revelation. Previous ethnographic accounts of Mahikari mention the practice of listening to recordings of the teachings delivered at the monthly ceremony at Suza, using tapes distributed to local dojos.[49] But during my time in Mahikari, no such taped revelations were played at any of the dojos I attended.[50] Additionally, a *kumite* at the dojo in Akashi told me that a transcript of these teachings used to be sent to each dojo by fax from the headquarters at Takayama, but that this was no longer the case. When I asked why, she explained that Mahikari is "strict" (*kibishii* 厳しい). Reading between the lines, it seems that it was the act of *reading* itself that was regarded as problematic, since it might lead to too shallow an engagement with revelation; and the same reason might account for the discontinuation of the tapes. A divine teaching by Oshienushisama lends support to this ascetic explanation: commenting on the

49 Okada 1993, p. 125; McVeigh 1997, p. 162.

50 There is an exception here, which is that tape recordings of teachings by Sukuinushisama (Okada Kōtama) were sometimes played at the monthly ceremonies at Suza. The fact remains, however, that the revelations delivered each month at Suza were transmitted at local dojos by means of the dictation of texts that had been put together by the *kumite* themselves.

ending of the practice of playing tape-recordings of Mahikari revelations (*mikoe no tēpu* み声のテープ, lit., "tape of the honorable voice"), Oshienushisama states that listening to a tape encourages the development of a "casual attitude" (*an'i na sōnen* 安易な想念). If the teachings only "go in one ear and out the other" (*kikinagasu* 聞き流す) then they will not become "attached to the body" (*mi ni tsuku mono de wa arimasen* 身につくものではありません).[51]

The Mahikari knowledge-practice of transcription invites comparison with the long-standing practice of sutra copying (*shakyō* 写経). The copying of sutras, the *Heart Sutra* (*hannya shingyō* 般若心経) in particular, since it is so short, is a practice of devotion and merit generation (*kudoku* 功徳) that constitutes an abiding form of ritual action in Japan, associated, for example, with the making of pilgrimages.[52] And, as with *shakyō*, there is more to the manual copying of the texts in Mahikari than the mere dissemination or inculcation of information, for this action produces effects in its own right. Ian Reader and George Tanabe note of the practices of transcribing and reciting sutras in general that, "The value of the sutra is not just in the discursive meaning of the text, but in the ritual invocation which activates its mysterious powers."[53] Thus, a Mahikari member at the Akashi dojo suggested to me that the teachings would work their effects even if I could only read *hiragana* characters. She recalled reading a story in a Mahikari magazine about a boy who tried to read *gokyōji* even though he did not know many *kanji*; still, "somehow, it [the teachings] went in to his spirit" (*nantoka, tamashii ni haitte kita* 何とか、魂に入って来た).

Revelatory knowledge in Mahikari is more than merely epistemological; it also has ontological consequences.[54] In this sense, comprehension is not a necessary condition for transformation. Thus, in their capacity as *goshinsho* 御神書 (divine writings), Mahikari publications are *themselves* deemed to be capable of producing effects, whether one engages with them or not. For example, it is regarded as inadvisable to leave Mahikari publications anywhere near *butsudan* 仏壇 (ancestor altars) for any length of time, since *goshinsho* give off divine light, which might temporarily blind the ancestors enshrined in the altar. Similarly, to read from a divine book can sometimes be to feel its effects. Attempting a thirty-times trial of reading the most recent monthly teaching in the Mahikari magazine, required in order to attend a study meeting, one *kumite* told me that she "became hot" from the light emanating from its pages.

In sum, this intensive engagement with texts is indicative of the efforts that *kumite* make in order to absorb the truth of Mahikari teachings, to fuse the teachings together with their own bodies. In his excellent study of asceticism, Gavin Flood frames the project of ascetic self-formation in terms of a process of "entextualisation of the body."[55] By incorporating the form of a particular tradition, the body becomes progressively text-like; a sort of ascetic palimpsest. But Mahikari practices of *mi ni tsukeru* effectively turn Flood's formulation on its head, for they are less concerned with a process of bodies turning into texts than with one of the texts turning into bodies; it is not so much the entextualisation of bodies, but the embodiment of texts, that is at issue.

51 Okada 2000b, p. 102.
52 See Reader 2006, p. 67; Borup 2008, pp. 201–204.
53 Reader and Tanabe 1998, p. 76.
54 As Diana Espírito Santo argues for the nature of knowledge among Cuban spiritualists, see Espírito Santo 2015, p. 580.
55 Flood 2004.

The Quantification of Devotion and Perpetual Pedagogy

In his account of ascetic exercises in the Graeco-Roman world, the transformative programs that he styled "techniques of the self," Foucault remarks on what he calls the "testing procedures" by which such exercises could be measured, having "the dual role," as he says, "of moving one forward in the acquisition of a virtue and of marking the point one has reached."[56] Mahikari practice, too, is replete with such procedures, such as reading teachings thirty times, noted above. There are numerous means in Mahikari of marking the progress of practice and of moving it forward, challenges and objectives that are set at every level, from the transnational and organizational to the level of the local dojo and down to the personal—which is where it really matters, insofar as the personal is conceived as the fractal and partible aspect of the cosmos at large.

A good illustration of a testing procedure at the local level is a particular form of truth-doing known as *makubari*. *Makubari* is the practice of handing out promotional literature in order to spread the word about Mahikari. A pamphlet, *Yōkō raifu* 陽光ライフ (Sunshine life) is produced by Mahikari and delivered to each dojo expressly for this purpose. Members themselves buy the pamphlets from the dojo; how they are given out is generally an individual affair. I once spent a couple of hours in the summer doing *makubari* at the behest of Shōji-san. We handed out leaflets in the hot streets around the entrance to Akashi West train-station; an awkward afternoon when my ethnographic self temporarily turned promoter. There were, naturally, *kumite* who were much better at this practice than I was. In order to measure its success and to give it an extra incentive, the Akashi dojo had launched its own initiative. On the wall in the dojo was a poster that announced "Distribute one hundred thousand copies of the Truth" (*jūman-mai makubari* 十万枚真配り). On the poster was printed a grid and this had been half filled with stickers of various shapes and colors. Each square on the grid represented a hundred copies of *Yōkō raifu* handed out. Every time a member achieved this target they were entitled to fill one square with a sticker. Certain *kumite* appeared to be trying to differentiate their efforts by their choice of sticker, creating the impression that a certain one-upmanship was at work. (One member was using cute little stickers of dogs, for example, and their spread across the grid spoke eloquently of their individual exertions.) Other dojos had different schemes. The *makubari* roster was just one of a range of material means of quantifying commitment, and of making it visible. As Andrew Holden has remarked with regards to the arguably more stringent audit culture enacted by Jehovah's Witnesses, in which the time spent proselytizing is subject to continual assessment, these ways of gauging and displaying devotion encourage members to "think quantitatively about their salvation."[57] But the practice of *makubari* not only serves as a means of spreading the Mahikari message, it is also said to benefit the person doing it. In the same way that the giving of *okiyome* also purifies the giver, the performance of divine services (*gohōshi*) like *makubari* is understood to be a form of purification.

Moreover, the leaflets themselves are often purified before they are handed out, with the bundles of *Yōkō raifu* being placed in front of the *goshintai* 御神体 (lit., "honourable *kami* body"), a sacred panel of paper hanging in the dojo, which emits divine light from the *kami*. Left there for a while, they become irradiated with the *kami*'s light. Here,

56 Foucault 1990, p. 58.
57 Holden 2002, p. 72.

purification serves the purpose of increasing their effectiveness as material mediators of truth. But equally, what this also demonstrates is that truth, which is so often considered to be correlative with the sense and effects of divine light, is understood to be transmittable by means of *contact*. It is capable of being absorbed, whether by bodies, or, in this instance, bundles of paper. Other kinds of material objects, the *goshintai* being the most powerful example, are also attributed with light-emitting, purificatory agency in their own right, as I showed above.

The ultimate arbiters and orchestrators of testing procedures are the divinities. The challenges and adversities that Mahikari members may face are sometimes referred to as "the testing of the *kami*" (*kamidameshi* 神試し) and "training by the *kami*" (*kamikitae* 神鍛え). It is, however, their human representatives, the leadership of Mahikari, whose ascetic directives set the pace of practice, in the form of a seemingly unending series of organizational objectives (*mokuhyō* 目標) and personal performance targets. But the leaders, and the Oshienushi in particular, do not only instruct; they also set the example. As with other Japanese new religions, the leader of Mahikari is the very embodiment of ultra-ascetic accomplishment.[58] Oshienushisama herself was said to be perpetually at work in a small room, without air-conditioning in summer or heating in winter.[59] No one ever saw her sleep because she began her work before others awoke and finished only after they went to bed. Among her many ascetic engagements, she was said to undertake the "modulation" (*chōsei* 調整) of every *omitama* that anyone would receive after taking a training course. But in addition to all this, she also accomplished the "four sacred tasks" (*yondai seigyō* 四大聖業), that is, the completion of four monumental building projects, including the construction of Suza, Mahikari's main shrine.

But if the body of the Oshienushi is exemplary as the paradigm of the practicing body, it also has a more expansive cosmological function. For, in keeping with the logic of what we might call the "cosmic somatics" of Mahikari, in which the body is regarded as a major cosmic and soteriological operator, the body of the Oshienushi constitutes a kind of super-body, a scaled-up version of the bodies of regular *kumite*. This is so because, according to Okada Kōtama, although the *omitama* worn on the body establishes a link (*omusubi*), otherwise known as a "spirit-line" (*reihasen* 霊波線) to the *kami*, all such connections must first pass through the body of the Oshienushi, without which it would not be possible to link (*tsunagu*) to divinity.[60] Hence, just as the *omitama* functions as a container for the relation between the *kami* and the *kumite*, so too, the body of the Oshienushi is characterized by a kind of "expansive containment," operating as a meta-container for the relations of the entire corporate body of *kumite*.[61]

The extra-ordinary body of the Oshienushi is at the very apex of a system of ascetic metaphysics, a global, or cosmic conception of practice—a cosmological pedagogy. In this, Mahikari's vision of transformational training, embodied in the notion of *seihō jissen* as a lifelong enterprise, bears certain similarities to the Christian model of conversion as a cosmic pedagogy, where, particularly in its Augustinian incarnation, conversion is configured as "a

58 See Köpping 2002, pp. 107–108.
59 See Louveau 2012, p. 342.
60 Shodai Oshienushisama 2003, p. 42.
61 See Copeman and Ikegame 2012.

long pedagogical process lasting until death, full of pitfalls and reversals, and by no means assured of attaining its goal, no matter what its beginning."[62] Except that, in Mahikari, this pedagogical process carries on beyond death itself, for the spirits of the dead are also subject to a program of ascetic practices (*gyō*), having to undergo training in the astral world (*yūkai* 幽界). The arduousness of that training to a large extent depends on the degree of ascetic effort made by the living in the present world (*genkai* 現界) before they die.

But this totalizing and stringent vision of the cosmos as a deep space of perpetual exercise is perhaps best exemplified in Okada Kōtama's own revision, made with an extra, ascetic inflection, of the familiar metaphor of human life as a theater. "Life," he countered, "is not a stage, but a dojo, where one engages in a serious game until one dies."[63] This cosmological notion that the dojo is coextensive with the totality of life amounts to equating the dojo with the world, or a dojo-*fication* of the space of existence; in other words, a transposition of dojo space onto what Schattschneider (after Nancy Munn) calls the "bodily spacetime" of ascetic practice, the cultivation of an ascetic perspective—a dojo disposition—in the everyday lives of Mahikari members.[64]

Concluding with Cosmology

In the course of this inquiry I have stressed the importance of the cosmological angle in order to foreground the totalizing character of the conception of practice in Mahikari. Yasumaru Yoshio noted that "cosmological questions are total questions" which, articulated in the concepts and practices of religious groups, are capable of relating the most intimate insides to the most ultimate outsides, the innermost aspects of the self to fundamental cosmic processes.[65] In her seminal investigation into the underlying conceptual framework common to Japanese new religions, however, Helen Hardacre disavowed "cosmology" altogether as a useful term of analysis, in favor of "world view."[66] The problem with cosmology, she argued, was that it was hampered by a "static language," hardly amenable to the dynamics of practice that she was, rightly, concerned with analyzing. Hardacre's methodological move was justified given that cosmology in studies of religion at the time had come to be associated with a kind of frozen holism, or a fixed picture of the world.[67]

In an instance, as it were, of the karmic law of academic concepts, the fortunes of the two terms have since reversed, and I suggest that it is now cosmology that allows for a more conceptually flexible and expansive language of description. For cosmology does not only refer to a particular vision or configuration of the cosmos, it also enables the potential to give more emphasis to actions and processes.[68] While the word cosmology carries no implications as to the way a world is engaged with, worldview—suggesting, as it does, the relation of a viewer to a vision—is, as Walter Ong noted long ago, marked by a visualist

62 Morrison 1992, p. 24.
63 Okada 1999, p. 69.
64 Schattschneider 2003, p. 149
65 Quoted in Shimazono 2013, p. 355. As McVeigh argued of the experiences of Mahikari members, transformations at the level of the self are often taken as tangible evidence of wider cosmic operations, see McVeigh 1997, p. 44.
66 Hardacre 1986, p. 9.
67 See Abramson and Holbraad 2014, pp. 5–6.
68 For an excellent analysis of the conceptual state of play of cosmology in anthropology, see Abramson and Holbraad 2014, as well as the contributions therein.

bias.[69] In the case I have been considering here, it does not, and cannot, adequately capture the praxical, somatic, and sensuous engagement with textual materials in Mahikari. One might summarize the difference in the following way: if worldview implies "viewing," cosmology implicates "doing," and that practices of sticking in Mahikari constitute not simply a view *of* the world, but a mode of engagement *with* it. As Webb Keane argues, if we want to understand practitioners of religion, then we are required to stick to the ethnographic principle of attending to what they "have to say about their cosmos and its implications for how they set about acting in, and on, the world."[70]

Thus, the conception of practice in Mahikari, epitomized by the idea of *mi ni tsukeru*, is not framed in terms of viewing or vision or systems of belief. It is, as we have seen, instead a tactile and embodied, cosmological operation, whereby the substance of revelatory truth is accessed by a much-repeated means of somatic attachment. Having been sufficiently, somatically "stuck" and internalized by this adhesive ascetic process, the truth of the teachings is held to emerge spontaneously, in everyday action. To borrow the phraseology of Alfred Gell, it is a "process of involution" which involves "making an inside of an outside, and an outside of an inside."[71] As such, "worldview" is inadequate as a means of making sense of the kinds of intimate connectivities involved. The haptic modality of relation to the teachings in Mahikari is arguably more akin to the concept of "skinship," which better represents the ascetic efforts Mahikari members make in order to achieve a skinship with divinity.

In closing, I should note a potential objection to the emphasis that I have placed on the body. This would be to argue that, contrary to what is this article asserts, Mahikari actually grants preeminence to the *spirit*, since it inherited from Ōmotokyō the cosmological postulate of *reishu taijū* 霊主体従.[72] According to Mahikari's rendition of this principle, human beings are composite constructs, consisting of the spiritual body (*reitai* 霊体), which is foremost, followed by the astral (*yūtai* 幽体), and finally the physical (*nikutai* 肉体). But notice how all three concepts are nonetheless configured in terms of "bodies" (*tai*, *karada* 体). It is partly for this reason that I referred earlier to Mahikari's "cosmic somatics," a cosmology premised, in important respects, on different but interrelated, or correlative aspects of, bodies. The spirit, too, is conceived as a kind of body.

Mahikari exhibits many of the features which Ernst Cassirer identified with the operations of mythical thinking. "Despite all the 'spirituality' of its *objects* and *contents*, its 'logic'—the *form* of its contents—clings to bodies," with the result that various spiritual attributes, relations and agencies, are accordingly conceived in terms of "transferable substances," concretized forms of the spiritual, capable of being physically transmitted.[73] It is quite in keeping with this spirit that I give a final instance of contact, of the significance of sensuous attachment and tangible transfer. Attending the monthly ceremony at Suza, my friend Yoshino-san appeared, seeming excited, and grabbed my hand, shaking it, saying,

69 Ong 1969.
70 Keane 2007, p. 32.
71 Gell 1996, p. 39.
72 See Staemmler 2011a, p. 133.
73 Cassirer 1955, pp. 59, 56. Among other examples, Cassirer considers the Shinto practice of *katashiro* (形代, usually a person-shaped piece of paper that has an apotropaic function) as instantiating the idea of substantial transferability; in this case, the transfer of impurity.

with a certain thrill in her voice, that she had just shaken hands with someone who had just shaken hands with the Oshienushi. "*Utsushita*" (移した), "I've transferred it," she declared, satisfied.

REFERENCES

Abramson and Holbraad 2014

Allen Abramson and Martin Holbraad. "Introduction: The Cosmological Frame in Anthropology." In *Framing Cosmologies: The Anthropology of Worlds*, ed. Allen Abramson and Martin Holbraad. Manchester University Press, 2014, pp. 1–28.

Ansell-Pearson and Large 2006

Keith Ansell-Pearson and Duncan Large, eds. *The Nietzsche Reader*. Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

Armstrong 1998

Tim Armstrong. *Modernism, Technology and the Body: A Cultural Study*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Borup 2008

Jørn Borup. *Japanese Rinzai Zen Buddhism: Myōshinji, a Living Religion*. Brill, 2008.

Bourdieu 1977

Pierre Bourdieu. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge University Press, 1977.

Broder 2008

Anne Broder. "Mahikari in Context: *Kamigakari, Chinkon kishin*, and Psychical Investigation in Ōmoto-lineage Religions." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 35:2 (2008), pp. 331–362.

Cassirer 1955

Ernst Cassirer. *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms. Volume Two: Mythical Thought*. Yale University Press, 1955.

Copeman and Ikegame 2012

Jacob Copeman and Aya Ikegame. "Guru Logics." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2 (2012), pp. 289–336.

Cornille 1998

Catherine Cornille. "Canon Formation in New Religious Movements: The Case of the Japanese New Religions." In *Canonization and Decanonization*, ed. Arie van der Kooij and Karel van der Toorn. Brill, 1998, pp. 279–291.

Davis 1980

Winston Davis. *Dojo: Magic and Exorcism in Modern Japan*. Stanford University Press, 1980.

Dolce 2015

Lucia Dolce. "The Practice of Religion in Japan: An Exploration of the State of the Field." In *The Sage Handbook of Modern Japanese Studies*, ed. James D. Babb. Sage Publications, 2015, pp. 33–62.

Dore 1965

R. P. Dore. *Education in Tokugawa Japan*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965.

Espírito Santo 2015
Diana Espírito Santo. "Liquid Sight, Thing-Like Words, and the Precipitation of Knowledge Substances in Cuban Espiritismo." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 21:3 (2015), pp. 579–596.
Faure 1991
Bernard Faure. *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism*. Princeton University Press, 1991.
Flood 2004
Gavin Flood. *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory and Tradition*. Cambridge University Press, 2004
Foucault 1990
Michel Foucault. *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality Volume Three*. Penguin Books, 1990.
Foucault 2000
Michel Foucault. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth. Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984, Volume One*. Penguin Books, 2000.
Gell 1996
Alfred Gell. *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia*. Clarendon Press, 1996.
Grapard 2016
Allan G. Grapard. *Mountain Mandalas: Shugendō in Kyushu*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.
Hadot 1995
Pierre Hadot. *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Blackwell Publishing, 1995.
Hardacre 1986
Helen Hardacre. *Kurozumikyō and the New Religions of Japan*. Princeton University Press, 1986.
Harpham 1987
Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism*. University of Chicago Press, 1987.
Holbraad 2012
Martin Holbraad. *Truth in Motion: The Recursive Anthropology of Cuban Divination*. Chicago University Press, 2012.
Holden 2002
Andrew Holden. *Jehovah's Witnesses: Portrait of a Contemporary Religious Movement*. Routledge, 2002.
James 2000
William James. *Pragmatism and Other Writings*. Penguin Books, 2000.
Keane 2007
Webb Keane. *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*. University of California Press, 2007.
Knecht and Hatanaka 1993
Peter Knecht and Hatanaka Sachiko 畑中幸子, eds. *Dentō o kumu shinshūkyō: Mahikari* 伝統をくむ新宗教: 真光, *Akademia Jinbun-Shakaikagakuhen* アカデミア 人文·社会科学編 57 (1993).

Knecht 1995

Peter Knecht. "The Crux of the Cross: Mahikari's Core Symbol." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 22:3–4 (1995), pp. 321–341.

Kondo 1990

Dorinne K. Kondo. *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*. University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Köpping 1967

Klaus-Peter Köpping. "Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan: A Preliminary Discussion of a Recent New Religious Movement in Japan." *Contemporary Religions in Japan* 8:2 (1967), pp. 101–134.

Köpping 2002

Klaus-Peter Köpping. *Shattering Frames: Transgressions and Transformations in Anthropological Discourse and Practice*. Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2002.

Louveau 2012

Frédérique Louveau. *Un prophétisme japonais en Afrique de l'Ouest: Anthropologie religieuse de Sukyo Mahikari (Bénin, Côte d'Ivoire, Sénégal, France)*. Éditions Karthala, 2012.

Matsunaga 2011

Louella Matsunaga. "Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan and Sūkyō Mahikari." In *Establishing the Revolutionary: An Introduction to New Religions in Japan*, ed. Birgit Staemmler and Ulrich Dehn. LIT Verlag, 2011, pp. 239–258.

Mauss 1950

Marcel Mauss. *Sociologie et anthropologie*. Presses Universitaires de Paris, 1950.

Mauss 2002

Marcel Mauss. *Manuel d'ethnographie*. Petite Bibliothèque Payot, 2002.

McVeigh 1997

Brian J. McVeigh. *Spirits, Selves and Subjectivity in a Japanese New Religion: The Cultural Psychology of Belief in Sūkyō Mahikari*. Edwin Mellen Press, 1997.

Miyanaga 1991

Kuniko Miyanaga. *The Creative Edge: Emerging Individualism in Japan*. Transaction Publishers, 1991.

Mohácsi 2008

Mohácsi Gergely モハーチ ゲルゲイ. "Sai o mi ni tsukeru: Tōnyōbyōyaku no shiyō ni miru ningen to kagaku gijutsu no sōkansei" 差異を身につける: 糖尿病薬の使用にみる人間と科学技術の相関性. *Bunka jinruigaku* 文化人類学 73:1 (2008), pp. 70–92.

Mohácsi 2018

Gergely Mohácsi. "Technologies of Difference: Chronic Disease and the Politics of Life in Contemporary Japan." PhD dissertation, Osaka University, 2018.

Morrison 1992

Karl F. Morrison. *Understanding Conversion*. University Press of Virginia, 1992.

Nishiyama 1988

Nishiyama Shigeru 西山茂. "Gendai no shūkyō undō: 'Rei = jutsu'-kei shinshūkyō no ryūkō to 'futatsu no kindaika'" 現代の宗教運動:「霊＝術」系新宗教の流行と「二つの近代化」. In *Gendaijin no shūkyō* 現代人の宗教, ed. Ōmura Eishō 大村英昭 and Nishiyama Shigeru. Yūhikaku, 1988, pp. 169–210

Okada 1993
Okada Hiroki 岡田浩樹. “Girei to soshiki: Dōjō ni okeru tekazashi girei” 儀礼と組織: 道場における手かざし儀礼. In Knecht and Hatanaka 1993, pp. 97–148.
Okada 2000a
Okada Keishu 岡田恵珠. *Yōkōshi no sandai tokumoku: Kansha* 陽光子の三大徳目: 感謝. L. H. Yōkō Shuppan, 2000.
Okada 2000b
Okada Keishu. *Yōkōshi no sandai tokumoku: Kokoro no geza* 陽光子の三大徳目: 心の下座. L. H. Yōkō Shuppan, 2000.
Okada 1999
Okada Kōtama 岡田光玉. *Hikari no wakōdo e: Mahikari seinen e no gokyōji*, vol. 1 光の若人へ: 真光青年への御教示 1. L. H. Yōkō Shuppan, 1999.
Ong 1969
Walter J. Ong. “World as View and World as Event.” *American Anthropologist* 71 (1969), pp. 634–647.
Oshienushisama 2002
Oshienushisama 教え主様. “Nijū-isseiki no tobira o hiraku: Jūseki o hatase” 二十一世紀の扉を開く: 重責を果たせ. *Sūkyō Mahikari* 崇教真光 482 (2002), pp. 10–19.
Oshienushisama Odairi 2003
Oshienushisama Odairi 教え主様お代理. “Yōkōshi norigotoshū kaisetsu 4: Shin, yū, gen no sandai reikai wa jissō no sekai” 陽光子祈言集解説 4: 神, 幽, 現の三大霊界は実相の世界. *Sūkyō Mahikari* 492 (2003), pp. 10–29.
Rambo and Farhadian 2014
Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian. “Introduction.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian. Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 1–22.
Reader 1991
Ian Reader. *Religion in Contemporary Japan*. Macmillan, 1991.
Reader 1996
Ian Reader. “Pilgrimage as Cult: The Shikoku Pilgrimage as a Window on Japanese Religion.” In *Religion in Japan: Arrows to Heaven and Earth*, ed. P. F. Kornicki and I. J. McMullen. Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 267–286.
Reader 2006
Ian Reader. *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku*. University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006.
Reader and Tanabe 1998
Ian Reader and George J. Tanabe Jr. *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan*. University of Hawai‘i Press, 1998.
Schattschneider 2003
Ellen Schattschneider. *Immortal Wishes: Labor and Transcendence on a Japanese Sacred Mountain*. Duke University Press, 2003.
Shimazono 2013
Shimazono Susumu 島薗進. “Shūkyō to kosumorojī kara miete kuru mono” 宗教とコスモロジーから見えてくるもの. In *Yasumaru Yoshio shū*, vol. 3, *Shūkyō to kosumorojī* 安丸良夫集 3: 宗教とコスモロジー. Iwanami Shoten, 2013, pp. 353–370.

Shimizu 1994
Shimizu Masato 清水雅人. "Sūkyō Mahikari: Kamikumite ni yoru sōnen no daitatekae" 崇教真光: 神組み手による想念の大建て換え. In *Shinshūkyō jidai*, vol. 2 新宗教時代 2, ed. Shimizu Masato. Daizō Shuppan, 1994 pp. 225–280.
Shodai Oshienushisama 2003
Shodai Oshienushisama 初代教え主様. "Reihasen no shikumi" 霊波線の仕組み. *Sūkyō Mahikari* 488 (2003) pp. 34–45.
Sloterdijk 2013
Peter Sloterdijk. *You Must Change Your Life: On Anthropotechnics*. Polity Press, 2013.
Staemmler 2011a
Birgit Staemmler. "Ōmoto." In *Establishing the Revolutionary: An Introduction to New Religions in Japan*, ed. Birgit Staemmler and Ulrich Dehn. LIT Verlag, 2011, pp. 121–140.
Staemmler 2011b
Birgit Staemmler. "Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyōdan and Sūkyō Mahikari." In *Establishing the Revolutionary: An Introduction to New Religions in Japan*, ed. Birgit Staemmler and Ulrich Dehn. LIT Verlag, 2011, pp. 239–258.
Sūkyō Mahikari 2002
Sūkyō Mahikari 崇教真光. *Mahikari mondō* 真光問答. L. H. Yōkō Shuppan, 2002.
Swift 2012
Philip Swift. "Touching Conversion: Tangible Transformations in a Japanese New Religion." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2:1 (2012), pp. 269–288.
Swift 2021
Philip Swift. "Bodies in Place: The Transformative Atmospherics of Lightscapes in Mahikari." *Asian Anthropology* 20:3 (2021), pp. 173–189.
Townsley 1993
Graham Townsley. "Song Paths: The Ways and Means of Yaminahua Shamanic Knowledge." *L'Homme* 33 (1993), pp. 449–468.
Winter 2012
Franz Winter. *Hermes und Buddha: Die neureligiöse Bewegung* Kōfuku no kagaku *in Japan*. LIT Verlag, 2012.
Yuasa 1990
Yuasa Yasuo 湯浅泰雄. *Shintairon: Tōyōteki shinshinron to gendai* 身体論: 東洋的心身論と現代. Kōdansha, 1990.