

## A Study on the English Translation of the Ofudesaki, *The Tip of the Writing Brush*

Susumu MORI\*

1. Introduction
2. Case Study One: *Tsukihi* written as Romanized form
3. Case Study Two: *Nihon, Kara, Tenjiku* written as Romanized form
4. Case Study Three: *Ningen* translated as “human bodies”
5. Conclusion

### 1. Introduction

The Ofudesaki, *The Tip of the Writing Brush*, is a Tenrikyo scripture whose original copy has been preserved. It was written between 1869 and 1882 by the Foundress of Tenrikyo, Miki Nakayama,<sup>1</sup> in *waka* poem style, comprising 1,711 verses in 17 parts. She composed this in order to reconstruct the world as the Joyous Life World—the world of harmonious joyousness between God and human beings. The Ofudesaki can be read by anyone in the world. Through the Ofudesaki, people can understand God the Parent’s teachings, settle them in their hearts, and implement them in their daily lives.

Tenrikyo Church Headquarters published the Ofudesaki in 1928. In its Foreword, Shozen Nakayama, the second Shinbashira of Tenrikyo, referring to the need of translating the Ofudesaki, writes:

Oyasama wrote the Ofudesaki in Japanese in *waka* verse form. Thus, in order to spread its message to the world without delay, I feel that there is necessity for translation. In fact, I believe that it would not be against God’s will at all for us to take it upon ourselves to translate the Ofudesaki into many languages without being inflexible over its form as a work composed in Japanese (TKH 1980: 6).

In 1971, 43 years later, the Church Headquarters first published an English translation of the Ofudesaki. As the teachings spread and the number of the followers in English-speaking countries increased, they began raising questions concerning the 1971 edition of the English translation. Consequently, the possibility of improving the translation was discussed. Then, in 1986, the year of Oyasama’s Centennial Anniversary, the efforts to revise the translation began and a number of sessions of the translation conference were held in various venues including the Mission Headquarters in America, the Mission Headquarters of Hawaii, and Oyasato, the Home of the Parent. These efforts bore fruits when the newly translated version of the Ofudesaki, *The Tip of the Writing Brush*, was finally published in September 1993. This article deals with three expressions that appear in the revised edition of the Ofudesaki.

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\* Tenri Seminary; Tenri University.

<sup>1</sup> *Translator’s Notes*: Miki Nakayama, the Foundress of Tenrikyo, is called Oyasama, “our Beloved Parent.” Hereafter, She is referred to as Oyasama in this article.

An interpreter employs the first person's voice "I" and "we" instead of the third person's voice "she," "he," and "they" to refer to the original speaker. It is customary to do so for an interpreter to speak from the original speaker's perspective. That is, the interpreter's speech is regarded as the same with the original speaker's speech. Likewise, a translator who goes in between the writer and the reader is required to serve like a "person-behind-the-scene" in *kabuki* who remains inconspicuous. Regarding the Ofudesaki, its translators have a responsibility to enable its readers to come in touch with the intention of Oyasama, who composed the Ofudesaki, through its translation while remaining unnoticeable from the readers. In this sense, an ideal English translation of the Ofudesaki would allow its readers—who are from English-speaking countries or who understand the language—to feel as if "Oyasama personally wrote this book for me." Thus, the more the translators try to serve as "person-behind-the-scene," the better the translation is because the readers have a more direct access to the original, which was written by Oyasama. For this reason, translators—who are asked to serve as "person-behind-the-scene"—ought to be aware of their important responsibility and engage in translation with utmost seriousness and strictness.

The important point here for translators to keep in mind when they try to interpret and understand the original, is to be in full accord with the original author. To achieve this, translators should leave aside all preconceptions—including knowledge, thoughts, concepts, and experiences—for the time being when translating so that they can empty their minds however difficult it may be. These are the necessary steps for them to put themselves in the author's shoes. In the field of religious studies, this methodology is called *epoché* or bracketing. Although this method is impossible to carry out in reality, translators should at least make their utmost efforts to interpret, understand, and translate the original with such an attitude. Therefore, translators ought to seek to understand the original author's backgrounds, based on his or her words and actions.

It is virtually impossible for the translators to be in full accord with Oyasama's mind because Her mind is that of God according to the Tenrikyo teachings. Nevertheless, it is of prime importance for translators to keep trying to near Oyasama's mind and put themselves in Her position so as to understand the true meanings of what is written in the Ofudesaki. Whether or not translators have such an attitude makes a great deal of differences in the translators' basic orientation when they interpret the original as well as subtle nuances. This is obvious from the fact that they would have different interpretations and understanding of the original, depending on whether they place themselves in Oyasama's position or their own. The method of *epoché* is, therefore, an important, necessary, and effective means for the translators.

Moreover, translators must be always aware of the readers. They do not just replace a word or a phrase with a foreign language. Rather, they are asked to pay a careful attention to the readers' cultures and various other factors involved in their language when translating some words into that language. On the other hand, if they pay too much attention to the background matters and not enough to the author's original intention, they would not only distort the meaning but also give wrong information to the readers. This destroys the whole purpose of translation. Particularly, when translating the Ofudesaki, the translators are trying to paraphrase the original text in the language with different cultural backgrounds while paying attention to both universal

teachings that lie behind the original text and particular instances of expressions as well as their interpretations.

The translators who worked on the new edition of the English translation of the Ofudesaki, which was published in 1993, aimed at being “faithful to the original”—which is one of the themes in this article—based on faithful understanding of the original text. The process of interpreting and understanding ought to be the same when reading the original and its translation. For instance, when the original can be interpreted in many ways, it should be translated in such a way that its translation allows different interpretations as much as the original does. If the translators interpret the text only in a certain way and translate it in a way that its translation can be interpreted only in limited ways, the translation may well be easy for the readers to follow. But it has more chance of excluding possibility of different interpretations and more chance of misinterpretations.

The Ofudesaki in particular, as Tenrikyo followers understand, was composed by Oyasama Herself who is the Shrine of God. Moreover, because the Ofudesaki is written in *waka* poem style, which has many restrictions, in some parts, the author’s intention may not be readily comprehensible. For this reason, the translation should allow different interpretations as much as the original does without limiting them. Being “faithful to the original” is thus all the more important when translating the Ofudesaki.

In general, a good English sentence can convey its meaning “concretely,” “definitively,” and “clearly” to anyone who understands the language. Extremely speaking, it is a sentence that cannot be interpreted otherwise. That is, ambiguous sentences should be avoided in the English language. Furthermore, passive voice in a sentence whose subject is a person is to be avoided as much as possible. In addition, it is better not to use inactive verbs such as “to be” and “to have” or verbs without much movement involved. These characteristics of English common usage may frustrate the translators technically when translating Japanese into English. The same applies to when people translate the Ofudesaki.

If Oyasama had used more Chinese characters in composing Ofudesaki, people who could read the Chinese characters could more easily and more precisely grasp the meanings. The same can be said about the present situation. However, Oyasama deliberately chose not to employ many Chinese characters but used *kana*, which can be understood by anyone—whether he or she is educated or not, so as to make it readable for everyone. It is obvious that one can interpret and comprehend because he or she can read it. Thus, Oyasama gave such a chance to almost all people who could read Japanese even if they do not understand Chinese characters.

The use of *kana*, on the one hand, provides more room for a variety of interpretations through homonyms, which are characteristics of the Japanese language. On the other hand, it makes precise understanding more and more difficult. Moreover, because the Ofudesaki employs many metaphors and analogies, it requires high competence to interpret and fully understand God the Parent’s profound intention contained in it. This is perhaps another reason why Oyasama employed *kana* more than usual. Furthermore, Oyasama seems to have a profound intention in selecting *waka* poem style rather than prose to convey God’s intention.

This may not be a good comparison when considering a scripture, but Shakespeare's works are translated into many languages and are loved by people for a long period of time. There are a number of reasons for this. The same text can be interpreted differently depending on the person, time, and circumstance, and, in many important parts of the text, the sentences leave room for various interpretations. Even when the same individuals interpret the same text, their interpretation may differ depending on time, environment, social conditions, and elements. That is, their interpretation of the text may be affected by both external and internal elements of their circumstance such as time, place, nationality, race, social conditions, and so forth.

On the other hand, some sentences have an unchanging meaning regardless of various conditions and elements. Shakespeare's text involves universal human thoughts and sentiments that transcend external and internal elements including the language. This makes his writings extremely interesting. His works are, therefore, loved by all kinds of people in the world and continue to be used in plays, TV programs, and films. Those universal elements should remain universal even when they are translated in other languages, and this can be achieved when the translation is "faithful to the original." Thus, we can see how being "faithful to the original" is important here.

In case of interpreting the Ofudesaki, the problem is deeper than this, because, according to the Tenrikyo teachings, the Ofudesaki is written by Oyasama whose mind is that of God, and therefore it is not composed by human thinking. Although the text is written in a human language, it is written from a perspective that transcends human thinking. For this reason, its translators are asked to be extremely humble and pay the most careful attention when interpreting and understanding the Ofudesaki.

Consequently, the translators could distort the original meaning by limiting their understanding to a certain interpretation when translating the Ofudesaki which contains some parts that are difficult to comprehend for us human beings. For this reason, it is all the more important to leave ambiguous parts in the original as ambiguous in translation and it is fair and kind for the readers who do not understand the original text. This is why I am emphasizing the importance of being "faithful to the original."

Three cases that are dealt in this article include profound and important problems. My aim in the article is not to come to a conclusion of some kind concerning those problems but to raise questions for further study. I will discuss three cases of translation in 1993 version of the English translation of the Ofudesaki in terms of my theory concerning the process of translation—particularly the principle of being "faithful to the original" and the method of *epoché*.

## 2. Case Study One: *Tsukihi* written as Romanized form

The first chapter "Oyasama" in *The Doctrine of Tenrikyo* explains why Oyasama employed *Tsukihi* as God the Parent's name as follows:

Then She [Oyasama] called God the Parent by the name *Tsukihi* (Moon-Sun) and taught that the sun and the moon are none other than visible manifestations of God the Parent in the heavens. By comparing God's providence to the sun and the moon, which impartially illuminate the entire world and nurture all creation with warmth

and moisture day and night, She sought to lead us to a sense of intimacy with God the Parent and to an appreciation of God's blessings (TCH 1993b: 9).

According to this explanation, by employing an expression *Tsukihi* as God the Parent's name, Oyasama intended to convince all people in the world of God the Parent's existence and the workings as well as to bring them to feel closer to God and realize the blessings that they receive. Oyasama thus used *Tsukihi* to refer to God so that Japanese people in those days can easily understand God's existence and workings. This Japanese word *Tsukihi* can be understood by a particular group of people. It does not mean, however, that its message is directed towards particular individuals or particular groups.

Oyasama employs concrete, particular examples and expressions to teach something universal. Regardless of time and place, what Oyasama taught to human beings contains universal truth. The translators should therefore read and understand precisely what Oyasama really meant from the original text and then translate it. Through such a translation, its readers can understand God the Parent's teachings as they are. In this sense, one must consider whether or not the readers can really grasp Oyasama's intention through the expression *Tsukihi*, which is left untranslated, rather than being translated as Moon-Sun.

When I was studying at Weber State College (now Weber State University) in Ogden, Utah, between 1973 and 1975, I was surprised to hear my mentor, Professor J. G. Olson, pronouncing *Tsukihi* as "two-kih-hai," although he knew Tenrikyo teachings to some extent. It made me wonder why *Tsukihi* was expressed in Romanized form. If this term is used as a proper noun, the difference in pronunciation between Japanese and Romanized expression poses more problems.

The reason why Oyasama employed "Tsukihi" is to have all people in the world understand well God the Parent's existence and workings and settle in their minds a sense of intimacy towards God and of gratitude for the blessings. Then, it may well be easier for English-speaking people if *Tsukihi* is translated as "Moon-Sun" ("MoonSun" or "Moon/Sun"). On the other hand, if *Tsukihi* is left untranslated and put in the Romanized form "Tsukihi," it would not mean anything to the minds of English speakers. What would Japanese speakers feel and think when they read and hear an English expression "Moon-Sun"? When Japanese speakers see *Tsukihi*, they can pronounce it and understand what it means. Likewise, English speakers may well understand intuitively what it is meant by "Moon-Sun" rather than "Tsukihi." In fact, in *The Doctrine of Tenrikyo*, *Tsukihi* is accompanied by its translation, appearing as "*Tsukihi* (Moon-Sun)" (TCH 1993b: 8).

The differences in interpretations within the intra-cultural context would not be a big problem, but the differences within the cross-cultural context may well cause serious misunderstanding. One must therefore pay a careful attention to such a possibility.<sup>2</sup>

In the Ofudesaki, *Tsukihi* appears 374 times and therefore the way it is printed—whether *Tsukihi* or Moon-Sun—would produce a quite different impression of the scripture.

Seiichi Yoshida published his first trial translation of the Ofudesaki in 1946 and later the revised edition

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<sup>2</sup> See also the following three articles: Mori 1986abc, Mori 1988, and Mori 1996.

was published in 1961 under the title *Ofudesaki, The Holy Scriptures*. In the revised edition, *Tsukihi* appears as an explanatory expression, “*Tsuki-Hi*, God the Parent,” in most verses.<sup>3</sup> There are several instances of untranslated expression “*Tsuki-Hi*.”<sup>4</sup> He also uses a pronoun instead of common noun in some verses.<sup>5</sup> In the trial translation, which was published in 1946, he employs “God the Parent” in VI: 9 and “Moon and Sun” in VI: 35.<sup>6</sup> The same translator thus has five different expressions for *Tsukihi*, namely, “*Tsukihi-Hi*, God the Parent,” “*Tsuki-Hi*,” “God the Parent,” “Moon and Sun,” and the pronoun in these two publications. Here I see Yoshida’s anguish as a translator.

Akio Inoue employs “*Tsuki-Hi*” in his translation, which was published as *A Study of the Ofudesaki—The Original Scripture of Tenrikyo* in 1987.<sup>7</sup> Mitsuru Yuge, who served as secretary at Tenrikyo Mission Headquarters in America, makes up a combined word “MoonSun” to refer to *Tsukihi* in his trial translation.<sup>8</sup>

One possible objection against translating *Tsukihi* as “Moon-Sun” is the concern that the expression specifically refers to the moon and the sun and not to God the Parent. Yet, the same can be said about Japanese

<sup>3</sup> Yoshida writes:

No one knows the true intention of *Tsuki-Hi*, God the Parent, who created the whole world.\*

VI: 9

\*In *Ofudesaki* the first character is always God the Parent. And God the Parent is expressed by the words *Kami*, God; *Tsuki-Hi*, God the Parent; *Oya*, Parent; successively. Literally saying *tsuki* means moon and *hi* means sun, but theologically *Tsuki-Hi* means always God the Parent (Yoshida 1946: 63; emphasis added).

<sup>4</sup> Yoshida writes:

Listen! Henceforward you must reconsider yourselves and take My words as the words of *Tsuki-Hi*.

VII: 54 (Yoshida 1946: 63; emphasis added)

<sup>5</sup> Yoshida writes:

They intend to prohibit My doctrines.  
What do you think of My great regret?

VI: 70 (Yoshida 1946: 63; emphasis added)

<sup>6</sup> Yoshida writes:

No one knows the real intention of God the Parent  
who created the whole world.

VI: 9 (Yoshida 1947a: 63; emphasis added)

Looking at them, both Moon and Sun thought of making them  
the original Parents of human beings.

VI: 35 (Yoshida 1947a: 65; emphasis added)

<sup>7</sup> Inoue writes:

Looking at them, a single thought came  
to the truly sincere mind of *Tsuki-Hi*.

VI: 35 (Inoue 1987: 400-401; emphasis added)

<sup>8</sup> Yuge writes:

Seeing this, an idea came to nothing else than the sincere mind of MoonSun.

VI: 35 (Yuge 1987: 32; emphasis added)

as well. One can tell whether it is referring to God, celestial objects, or the passage of time, depending on the context. Therefore, based on the theory I developed in this article, Oyasama's intention in employing the expression *Tsukihi* should not be left untranslated but should be translated and made understandable to the readers. It would be more appropriate, kind, and fair to do so. That is, the principle of being "faithful to the original" should be observed here. In other words, despite the limitations and restrictions on translation, it is appropriate, kind, and fair to provide a translation that enables its readers to interpret and understand in the same way that the readers of the original do as much as possible.

Another reason why *Tsukihi* is left as Romanized expression is that *Tsukihi* is seen as proper noun. Is this true? As in Tenrikyo scriptures, *Tenri-O* and *Tenri-O-no-Mikoto* are the only proper nouns that Oyasama taught, and *Kami*, *Tsukihi*, *Oya*, and *Oyagami* are common nouns. Therefore, these common nouns can be and should be translated. In fact, English translation that is published by the Tenrikyo Church Headquarters employs untranslated "Tenri-O" and "Tenri-O-no-Mikoto" while *Oyagami* is translated as "God the Parent." Moreover, *Kami* and *Oya* are translated as "God" and "the Parent," respectively, in the English translation of the Ofudesaki. Consequently, it would be more natural to translate *Tsukihi* as "Moon-Sun" (or "MoonSun" or "Moon/Sun").

### 3. Case Study Two: *Nihon, Kara, Tenjiku* written as Romanized form

The majority of the followers in Oyasama's days were farmers. Many of them never had a chance to go out of Yamato Province in those days. What did those expressions—*Nihon, Kara, Tenjiku*—mean to them? Perhaps, the country "Japan" seemed to be bigger than we imagine it to be now.

*Kara* geographically meant China or Korea, but for the people in those days, I assume, it only meant "some foreign country," which would be so far away. *Kadokawa Kogo Dai Jiten* and *Nihon Kokugo Dai Jiten* respectively define *Kara* as follows:

(1) Name of a foreign country. . . . (a) Refers to a small nation in Minama or the Korea Peninsula. . . . (b) Used specifically in reference to China. . . . Often used in contrast with Yamato. (2) Used as prefix of a noun and signifies that it is from a foreign country or it has a foreign taste. In Nara era or before, it meant Korea for the most part and, in Heian era or after, it came to refer to China (Nakamura 1994: 889).

(1) Refers to a group of small nations located in Naktong-gang River region in southern part of the Korea Peninsula between the third and sixth century CE. In *Nihon Shoki*, it is referred to as Minama. (2) It refers to a wider area, namely, Korea and/or China, and after the Middle Age, it sometimes meant foreign countries in general such as Nanman (NS 2001: 1046).

*Tenjiku*, on the other hand, refers to India geographically. Those people in Oyasama's days probably thought of it as the place that is much farther away than *Kara*, which in itself is a place far from Japan. To some extent, they might have thought it as "the end of the earth." This can be inferred from the definition given in the two dictionaries. *Kadokawa Kogo Dai Jiten* and *Nihon Kokugo Dai Jiten* respectively define *Tenjiku* as follows:

(1) Name of a foreign country. Refers to India. . . . Often used as “*Kara-Tenjiku*” to mean a foreign place or foreign taste farther than *Kara* (Nakamura 1994: 587).

(1) Refers to India in Chinese or Japanese. (2) noun. (a) Sky. Heaven. (b) High location. (c) Top. Pinnacle. (3) affix. (a) After Europeans came to Japan, it came to add a sense of “foreign, far place” or “foreign origin; imported” to the word affixed (NS 2001: 792).

By employing the expressions *Nihon*, *Kara*, and *Tenjiku*, Oyasama probably did not intend to refer to actual places or countries—Japan, China/Korea, and India. Rather, She wanted to illustrate the gap among the three by using concrete names of place. I find here Oyasama’s consideration that She tried to give an impact on the concrete sense of distance, on the one hand, and a general idea of far places, on the other. The gap in the distance is concerned with the Jiba. Tenrikyo teaches that the Jiba is the place of original conception of human beings and it is also the place where Tenri-O-no-Mikoto resides as the Parent. Tenrikyo followers are taught that returning to the Parent’s intention is the basis, the core of their faith. For them, therefore, the gap in the distance means metaphorically the gap from the Parent’s intention.

In the Ofudesaki published by Tenrikyo Church Headquarters in 1971, *Nihon*, *Kara*, and *Tenjiku* are translated as “the region where My teachings spread early,” “the region where My teachings shall spread later,” and “the region where My teachings shall spread last,” respectively. Strictly speaking, these expressions are merely explanations of the original words.

For reference, I will cite translations given by Yoshida and Inoue in the notes.<sup>9</sup>

*Nihon* means the people (or region) who are closer to God the Parent’s intention. Even if the expression is explained well in the Notes when the term first appears in the book, there is a possibility for the readers to intuitively interpret it as referring to Japan. In the same way, *Kara* and *Tenjiku* may refer to China/Korea and

<sup>9</sup> The translation of *Nihon* and *Kara* (Ofudesaki, II: 31; emphasis added) are as follows:

Original	<i>Korekara wa kara to nihon no hanashi suru</i> <i>Nani o yu tomo wakari arumai</i>
Yoshida (1946 & 1961)	Henceforward I will tell you about <u>those who know me</u> and <u>those who do not</u> , but you may not be able to understand Me.
Inoue & Eynon (1987)	From now on, I shall speak of <u>the initiated</u> and <u>the uninitiated</u> . No matter how I explain, you cannot easily understand it.
Inoue (1971)	From now on I will speak of <u>the profane</u> and <u>the faithful</u> . No matter what I say, it may not be understood.

*Tenjiku* (Ofudesaki, X: 3; emphasis added) is translated as follows:

Original	<i>Kono hanashi doyu koto de aro nara</i> <i>Kara tenjiku mo kokoro sumashite</i>
Yoshida (1946 & 1961)	What I mean is this, I intend to make the minds clean not only of My followers but also of <u>those who do not understand Me</u> .
Inoue & Eynon (1987)	What do you think these intentions are? I intend to purify the hearts of <u>the distant</u> and the uninitiated.
Inoue (1971)	What does this intention really mean? I will purify the hearts of both the profane and <u>the faraway peoples</u> .



India, respectively.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, even if the readers understand in their head the meanings of those terms, they would be unlikely able to settle in their hearts God the Parent's teachings, for *Nihon* appears 45 times and *Kara* 32 times in the Ofudesaki.

Furthermore, because Tenrikyo is a foreign religion for the people born and raised outside Japan, it can be regarded as Japanese religion and thus God the Parent's teachings could be well regarded as being Japanese. If Tenrikyo aims to be a world religion, pursuing world salvation, untranslated expressions may well limit the religion to a certain portion of the English-speaking people with particular knowledge. The possibility of such misunderstanding increases if the readers know beforehand that *Nihon* is a Japanese word for Japan because they might read the verses without looking at the notes. This is all the more true when people would be likely to read only the book without having anyone else explain it.

In addition, there are some cases where the problem of leaving the terms *Nihon* Romanized would become grave. The Ofudesaki is read out loud every day at Tenrikyo facilities around the world such as mission headquarters, mission centers, mission stations, churches, and fellowships. In some countries and regions, people have much stronger sense of nationalism than that of Japanese. Then, if they are to read out loud "*Nihon*" or "*Nippon*," they may become irritated.

In terms of interpretation—particularly simultaneous interpretation, it would be very difficult to provide adequate interpretations and explanations of the terms when the verses with *Nihon*, *Kara*, or *Tenjiku* are cited, for the time is very limited.

Finally, English is widely spoken in the world, and thus we can easily imagine that the English version of the Ofudesaki is read by a variety of people in different countries other than English-speaking countries. In that case, too, those terms—*Nihon*, *Kara*, and *Tenjiku*—would cause national, racial, and/or political disputes that are unnecessary otherwise.

By being "faithful to the original," I do not necessarily mean a literal translation. Rather, it is to understand the original text as faithfully as possible and to translate it into the closest possible words in another language. For this reason, those terms *Nihon*, *Kara*, and *Tenjiku* need not be translated literally as Japan, China/Korea, and India. I do not think it is adequate to leave those terms untranslated and in Romanized form as *Nihon*, *Kara*, and *Tenjiku*. The best way to deal with these terms for the time being is Yuge's trial translation, namely, "homeland," "faraway places," and "farthest places" because these translations seem to be the closest to what is intended in the original text.

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<sup>10</sup> In the Notes, these terms are explained as follows:

*Kara* and *Nihon*: These terms are the components of a geographical metaphor that expresses the distance between the intention of God the Parent and a person's understanding of it. Consequently, these terms do not refer to any actual regions or to peoples inhabiting them.

*Nihon*, deriving from a word that indicates the region around the Jiba, refers to the place settled by those whose use of mind and way of living are near the intention of God the Parent, who is one in truth with the Jiba.

*Kara*, on the other hand, refers to the places inhabited by those whose use of mind and way of living are still distant from God's intention. *Tenjiku* (which first appears in verse X: 3) refers, by extension, to the places inhabited by those whose use of mind and way of living are still farther away from God's intention. (TCH 1993a: 266-7)

#### 4. Case Study Three: *Ningen* translated as “human bodies”

*Ningen wa minamina Kami no kashimono ya  
Nanto omote tsukote iru yara*

All human bodies are things lent by God.  
With what thought are you using them?

III: 41

*Ningen wa minamina Kami no kashimono ya  
Kami no juyo kore o shiran ka*

All human bodies are things lent by God.  
Do you not know the free and unlimited workings of God?

III: 126

*Kono yo wa ichiretsu wa mina Tsukihi nari  
Ningen wa mina Tsukihi kashimono*

Everything in this universe is all by Tsukihi.  
All human bodies are things lent by Tsukihi.

VI: 120

I will cite six other versions of the translation of the three verses in the notes.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Other translations of III: 41, III: 126, and VI: 120 are as follows:

**TCH (1971)**

All human bodies are things lent by God.  
With what thought are you using them?

Human bodies are all things lent by God.  
Do you not know the omnipotence of God?

This whole universe is the body of Tsukihi.  
So human bodies are all things lent by Tsukihi.

**Yoshida (1946b, 1947a)**

Human bodies, of which you are making the free use, are nothing but the loan from Him.  
What are you thinking about them, I wonder?

Your bodies are nothing but the loan from Him. Therefore He can do whatever He likes  
with your bodies. It is a pity that you cannot understand it.

Any and everything in this world was created by both Moon and Sun, and human  
bodies are nothing but the loan from Them.

**Yoshida (1961)**

Human bodies, of which you are making free use, are nothing but a loan from Me.  
What are you thinking about them, I wonder?

Your bodies are nothing but the loan from Me. Therefore I can do whatever  
I like with your bodies. It is a pity that you cannot understand it.

In this section, I will mainly deal with III: 41 in terms of its interpretation as well as the translation. Concerning the interpretation of *ningen*, I find the following four points to be our focus here. They are, namely, (1) a modifier of *minamina*, (2) an object of *omote*, (3) an object of *tsukote*, and (4) a usage and meanings of *yara*.

First, what is it that *minamina* modifies? In all the translations cited above, *minamina* or *mina* in VI: 120, which is translated as “all,” modifies “bodies.” This seems awkward in relation to the verses that come before and that follow after. This applies not only to III: 41 but also to the other two verses.<sup>12</sup> The verse III: 40

Any and everything in this world was created by *Tsuki-Hi*, God the Parent, and human bodies are nothing but the loan from *Tsuki-Hi*.

#### **Inoue & Eynon (1987)**

The bodies of all human beings are things lent by God.  
For what purposes are you using them?

The bodies of all human beings are things lent by God.  
Are you aware of God’s omnipotence?

The whole universe is the body of *Tsuki-Hi*;  
All human bodies are things lent by *Tsuki-Hi*.

#### **Inoue (1971)**

All human bodies without exception are things lent by God.  
With what kind of thought are you using them?

All human bodies without exception are things lent by God.  
Know you not of the omnipotence of God?

All things in this universe belong to *Tsuki-Hi*;  
all human bodies are things lent by *Tsuki-Hi*.

#### **Yuge (1987)**

All human beings are things lent by God.  
What thought is given to their use?

All human beings are things lent by God.  
Do you not know the unlimited workings of God?

Everything in this universe is all MoonSun.  
Every human being is on loan from MoonSun.

<sup>12</sup> The Ofudesaki reads:

The trees which grow in the high mountains and  
the trees which grow in the low valleys are all the same.

All human bodies are things lent by God.  
Do you not know the free and unlimited workings of God?

Let all of you in the world take care.  
There is no knowing when or where God will go.

reads: “This universe is the body of God. Ponder this in all matters.” This is followed by “All human bodies are things lent by God.” It appears difficult to interpret *ningen* as “human bodies,” for it seems more natural to read it as “human beings” as whole including both mind and body rather than restricting it to “human bodies.” If *ningen* refers not to “human bodies” but to “human beings” including both mind and body, *minamina* or *mina* grammatically modifies “human beings” or “things lent.” That is, it refers to all that comprises human beings, particularly, mind and body, which are important elements of human beings.

Next, concerning (2) and (3), the objects of *omote* and *tsukote* do not appear in the verse. According to the official translation, the subject of *omote* is human beings and it reads, “With what thought are you using them?” I think that the objects of the two verbs are deliberately hidden due to the formal restriction of the *waka* style, which allows certain number of syllables. These two points are related to the way *ningen* is interpreted—whether one interprets it as “human bodies” or literally “human beings.” I am advocating the latter position. If *ningen* means “human beings,” the part “*Ningen wa minamina Kami no kashimono ya*” would mean that the whole human being—both mind and body—is the thing that God the Parent lends. The verse thus can be read as “Regarding God’s intention in lending us—which is the realization of the Joyous Life World with us human beings and God in harmonious joyousness, what do we human beings think about it and using what is on loan to us—mind and body?” In this sense, the object of *omote* is “God the Parent’s intention who lends all to human beings.”

The object of *tsukote* would be “human bodies” if *ningen* is interpreted as “human bodies.” If, on the other hand, *ningen* is understood as “human beings,” then the object of *tsukote* may well be “human beings,” “the things lent,” or, more concretely, “the mind and the body” of a human being. God the Parent places the way we use our minds at the core of the teachings. Why, then, does this part emphasize only on the way we use the bodies? It can be hardly thought that the way we use the bodies is the focus of this verse.

Concerning the usage and the meaning of *yara*, *Nihon Bunpo Dai Jiten* defines as follows:

(A) adverbial particle/parallel-making particle. [meaning] (1) Expresses indecisiveness. When used in this sense, it is accompanied by a question word in many cases. (2) Makes a parallel between which one is being indecisive about choosing. . . .

(B) adverbial particle. (1) Expresses that things are being uncertain. . . .

(C) final particle. [meaning] Ends a sentence with an unsure feeling such as “What will it be?” or “I really don’t know.” Sometimes its meaning also includes a sense of exclamatory admiration. [additional explanation] *Yara* as final particle hints at a sense of uncertainty as if *wakaranai* or “I don’t know” is omitted. . . (Matsumura

Whoever you are, you are all My children.  
Awaken to the anxiety in the mind of Tsukihi!

Everything in this universe is all by Tsukihi.  
All human bodies are things lent by Tsukihi.

If this truth is known all over the world,  
no one will remain selfish or greedy.

1981: 1756-1760).

Based on these definitions, if we consider the characteristics of the Ofudesaki, which God the Parent composed for God's children, human beings, we can infer the following understanding. Although the Ofudesaki contains God the Parent's direct words for human beings, as far as this verse, III: 41, is concerned, God makes it sound as if God were talking to Godself by employing *yara*. That is, God may be saying in this verse, "Human beings are all the things lent by Me. But, with what kind of thoughts concerning My intention in creating humankind—the realization of the Joyous Life World with human beings and God in harmonious joyousness, are they using the mind and the body?" In this way, God may well be expressing the impatience with us human beings who do not really understand God's deep parental love. Contained in the verse is God's indescribable, inner feeling towards us human beings about our uncertainty in understanding. I think that Yoshida was trying to express this through the expression "I wonder" in his translation (Konishi 1980: 876-877). At the same time, according to the definitions cited above, the particle *yara* may be expressing God the Parent's strong encouragement and urging towards us human beings.

Whether *ningen* is interpreted as "human beings" or "human bodies" would make a difference in considering the modifier of *minamina* as well as the objects of *omote* and *tsukote*, respectively.

Up to this point, I have examined the problems relating to the interpretation of *ningen* from linguistic, grammatical perspective. In what follows I will examine the interpretation and the translation of *ningen* from the theological standpoint.

The first point that we need to consider is why Oyasama used *ningen* instead of *minouchi*. It is reasonable for Oyasama to deliberately choose a different expression (*ningen*) to mean something different from what *minouchi* may mean and indicate. In terms of syllables, which are of great importance in *waka* form, both *ningen* and *minouchi* have four syllables. This means that Oyasama could have used *minouchi* instead of *ningen* if She wanted to. Doesn't She have some kind of special intention in deliberately choosing to use *ningen*? Moreover, the Ofudesaki has 18 appearances of *minouchi* and its translations include "the body," "your bodies," "their bodies," "a body," "your body," "bodily," "the bodies." All instances have "body" or its variations. Thus, *minouchi* is always translated as "body," while *ningen* is also translated as "body" just like *minouchi*. If one is to be "faithful to the original," this may be problematic.

The Osashizu, *The Divine Directions*, reads:

Do not wonder where My free and unlimited workings are. In each of your minds,  
you will find them wherever sincerity abides.

Osashizu, December 7, 1888

This divine direction is explained as follows:

Whether we can enjoy the free functioning of the body or mourn its impairment or loss of function is determined solely by the way we use our minds. This is what is meant by the teaching "the mind alone is yours" (TCH 1993b: 52).

Regarding human beings, what is important is not the body per se but the mind that is ultimately in control of

the body. The mind is granted by God to be used freely. The condition of the body is affected by the way we use our minds. In order to receive the free and unlimited workings, it is all the more important to use our minds in accord with God. In this way, the Osashizu that I cited above clearly teaches us.

There are two instances in the Osashizu where God teaches that “the mind is eternal” (OK 1994: 339).<sup>13</sup> Now, I’d like to share my thoughts on this teaching, “the mind is eternal.” Human beings pass away and are eventually reborn. At birth, human beings are already endowed with the mind. Each individual person has a different name and uses his or her mind differently. In that process, s/he may well use the mind not in accord with God’s intention—which is called the “dust of the mind” and it would add up to form an *innen* or causality. Moreover, *innen* includes the way an individual used his or her mind in previous lives because the way s/he uses the mind—whether good or bad—is engraved in his or her “soul” that lives through endless generations. The mind that is engraved in the soul, which is eternal, must be eternal as well. Therefore, in the soul, a number of different minds, which were used by various individual persons, exist. The same can be said about the next life and the subsequent lives as well. I believe this is the meaning of the teaching, “the mind is eternal.” That is why, I think, the mind as well as the way we use the mind is important.

Moreover, a divine direction refers to “the mind eternity” in contrast with “the body for a lifetime.” The Osashizu reads: “Truth is eternal and it never decays in this Residence. The mind is eternal while the body is only for one generation. You ought to understand this matter quickly. . .” (Osashizu, May 17, 1893). Thus, the Osashizu, which is often regarded as being supplementary to the Ofudesaki in its meanings and understanding, places an emphasis on the importance of the mind over the body as far as human beings are concerned.

However, according to the official English translation of the Ofudesaki, the verse, III: 41, is interpreted as follows: With what thought are human beings using the bodies? The way we use the bodies is thus stressed. Isn’t it the way we use our minds that God is actually trying to work with? What is the reason for translating *ningen* in the original as “human bodies” while setting aside the mind? Based on what is taught in the divine direction as well as in *The Doctrine of Tenrikyo*, it is difficult to think that God the Parent is dealing with the way we use the body.

Among the official translations of the Ofudesaki, which have been published by Tenrikyo Church Headquarters as of 2004, *ningen* in III: 41, III: 126, and VI: 120 are all translated as “human bodies” in ten languages except in Korean.<sup>14</sup>

Translating *ningen* as “human bodies” is posing another serious problem. English-speaking people’s reading of the verse is limited to “human bodies” when *ningen* is thus translated. There would be no chance for them to consider Oyasama’s intention, purpose, and reason for choosing *ningen* instead of *minouchi* or “human bodies.” For those people who cannot understand Japanese but English, this way of translating would limit their understanding without leaving any other options available for them. For those who can understand

<sup>13</sup> *Tenrikyo jiten* cites two instances from the Osashizu: “The mind is eternal; the body is for a lifetime” (May 17, 1893) and “. . . you can take delight if I tell you that the mind is eternal” (February 12, 1900, supp. vol.).

<sup>14</sup> The languages in which *ningen* is translated as “human bodies” include: English (1971, 1993, 1998), Indonesian (1977), Portuguese (1981, 1985, 1991, 2000), German (1982), Chinese (1984, 2000), French (1984, 1998), Spanish (1991, 1996), Thai (1993), Nepalese (2003), and Russian (2004).

God the Parent's intention and teachings only through translation, this fact shows some possibilities of limited understanding and distortion, thus being unfair to them. This instance of translating *ningen* as "human bodies" thus shows that it can be a problem if the translator does not pay enough attention to the principle of being "faithful to the original."

Furthermore, as the principle of translation, I also think that translation should not be explanatory, although translators need to interpret the original text and the outcome could well be explanatory. Let me illustrate this point through the following example. For instance, many Japanese Tenrikyo followers read *ningen* in the concerned verses as meaning "human bodies." In fact, many Japanese Tenrikyo literatures explain this as "human beings (their bodies)."<sup>15</sup> When I also asked a wide variety of people how they understand *ningen* in III: 41, most of them thought my question itself was strange to ask. They read it *ningen* with their mouths but in their head they replace it with "human bodies." That is, for them, such an

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<sup>15</sup> Explanations of these verses are given as follows. For instance, Yoshinaru Ueda writes:

"Since everything on this earth and in the entire universe is the body of God the Parent, human bodies are lent by God to human beings for 115 years. God is thus saying: 'Without understanding this, what are you thinking and using them?' . . ." (Ueda 1994: 62).

"All human bodies are what God the Parent lends. And God provides free and unlimited workings. Do you human beings not know this truth?" (Ueda 1994: 90).

". . . The whole universe is the body of Tsukihi, God the Parent. Therefore, you human beings who live in it borrow your bodies from God the Parent. From God's point of view, the bodies are things lent. . ." (Ueda 1994: 224).

Next, Shigeru Serizawa writes:

"Moreover, human bodies are things lent by God. What are you thinking and using them?" (Serizawa 1990: 79).

"Human bodies are things lent by God. Know that they are free and unlimited workings of God!" (Serizawa 1990: 115).

"Everything in the universe is all the body of Tsukihi, and the bodies of human beings who live in it are all things lent by Tsukihi" (Serizawa 1990: 256).

Moreover, Tatsuzo Yamochi writes:

"From there, you should be able to understand that human bodies are all things lent by God the Parent. What are you human beings thinking about using each of your bodies, which we borrow from God?" (Yamochi 1994: 83).

"Human bodies of all are things lent by God the Parent. Do you not know that God is providing any kind of workings depending solely on your mind?" (Yamochi 1994: 113).

"Everything in the universe is created and sustained by God. Therefore, human bodies are what God the Parent lends" (Yamochi 1994: 231-232).

Finally, these verses were explained in terms of the teaching of "a thing lent, a thing borrowed" in *Kyogi Kenkyu Ofudesaki Koza* (TSH 1976b: 29, 38, and 67).

interpretation is already given. Yet, they still have a chance to consider other options as long as the original has the word *ningen*.

This is the reason why I think translation should not be explanatory. Translation is the source for those people who understand God the Parent's teachings in other languages. They can only rely on the translation, not the original. For this reason, it is important to provide them with a translation that enables them to interpret the original as much as possible. Therefore, along with the interpretation based on the principle of being "faithful to the original," the method of *epoché* is important for the translators. When they actually interpret and translate *ningen*, they should get rid of all preconceptions and empty their minds so that they can put themselves in Oyasama's position to understand why Oyasama wrote *ningen* in the verse.

Another reason why this verse is difficult to understand is the definition of *ningen*. According to Shigeru Matsumoto, a human being consists of soul, mind, and body. He writes:

A human being, simply speaking, has three parts, namely, the soul, the mind, and the body. This division may be too simplistic and in reality it is more complicated than this. But, roughly speaking, this is how a human being can be seen (Matsumoto 1991: 80).

Tenrikyo teaches that human bodies are things we borrow from God the Parent and the minds are ours. Here, too, what "ours" really means is quite difficult to understand. The Osashizu reads:

With human beings: the body is a thing lent by God, a thing borrowed. The mind alone is the truth of oneself.

Osashizu, June 1, 1889

According to this divine direction, the body is a thing borrowed from God the Parent and the mind is the "truth of oneself." This divine direction seems to provide a basis for interpreting *ningen* as human bodies. Yet, "oneself" as appears in the "truth of oneself" remains unclear as to what it really means.

The mind exists insofar as the body exists except that the way it is used is engraved in the soul. It never exists apart from the body. We are taught that while the body does not exist, the eternal soul is embraced in the bosom of God the Parent. When we are born in the world again, the mind comes along with the body. This means that we cannot think that the mind and the body exist separately. If the mind cannot exist without the body, it seems reasonable to say that the mind itself is a thing borrowed from God the Parent. This is one of the reasons why we should reconsider if it is appropriate to translate *ningen* as human bodies in a limited way, on the ground that *ningen* consists of not just the body but also the mind.

On the other hand, although we cannot use the body as we wish, we are allowed by God the Parent to use the mind freely. In this sense, the mind is essentially different from other bodily organs in its function and role. The problem is that although we are allowed to use it freely, it does not necessarily mean that we can use it freely. In fact, because we cannot use it freely as we wish, we are troubled and suffer. In order for us to use the mind freely, we are in need of God's workings—the same with the body. This could mean that the mind does not really belong to us humans but it is something we actually borrow from God the Parent. This is one of the reasons why I have a hard time accepting the translation of *ningen* as "human bodies." From this



standpoint, I argue that “all”—*minamina* or *mina*—modifies not just human bodies but also entire human beings, including the mind and the body.

This raises a further question: What is it that which uses the mind? What is the subject of a human being? According to the second Shinbashira of Tenrikyo, Shozen Nakayama, the answer is the soul. He writes:

In fact, because the body is a thing borrowed, there must be the subject that borrows it. We call that subject the soul. The soul eternally repeats births (Nakayama 1991: 27).

He also writes:

Faith is essentially concerned with the spirituality or the mind. The spirit, the mind, the subject, or the self is what makes me myself or what makes you yourself. We call this the soul (Nakayama 1991: 29).

I mentioned earlier that the mind is essentially different from other organs in its function and role. I also mentioned that although the mind is allowed to be used freely, it cannot be used freely without God the Parent’s workings just like the body. Although we are taught that so-called illness does not exist,<sup>16</sup> phenomenologically speaking, there are mental illnesses, for we have medical departments specialized in the field of the mind such as psychiatry and psychosomatic departments in a general hospital. This is why I argue that God the Parent’s workings are needed for the mind to function properly. Yet, in Tenrikyo, the way we use the mind causes the illness and disorder in our bodies, as taught in one of the Tenrikyo scriptures, *Mikagura-uta*, *The Songs for the Service*, which reads, “The origin of illness lies in your own mind” (X:10).

Finally, I would like to show you the three different translations besides the official translations that I dealt with in this article. First, Yoshida’s translation of III: 41 reads:

Human bodies, of which you are making free use, are nothing but a loan from Me.  
What are you thinking about them, I wonder?

He adds “I wonder” at the end because he interprets *yara* as expressing God the Parent’s inner talk. Moreover, he interprets and translates *ningen* as “human bodies.” The same verse, III: 41, is translated by Inoue as follows:

The bodies of all human beings are things lent by God.  
For what purposes are you using them?

Here, *ningen* is translated as “human beings.” Although *minamina* is seen as modifying “human beings,” he adds “bodies,” which does not exist in the original.

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<sup>16</sup> “Illness” is found in the three scriptures at the following places.

*Ofudesaki*: 32 verses (I: 24, 25, 32; II: 7, 11, 23; III: 93, 95, 103, 138; IV: 25, 94, 109; V: 13; VI: 22, 76, 105, 108; IX: 9, 10, 33, 34; X: 20, 68; XI: 25, 26; XII: 50, 51, 128; XIV: 20, 21, 77).

*Mikagura-uta*: five verses (II: 8, IV: 8, X: 8, X: 9, X: 10).

*Osashizu*: nine divine directions (January 9, 1887; March 1887; March 15, 1887, 12:00 A.M.; September 5, 1887; January 1889; April 10, 1893; October 17, 1893; January 19, 1900; July 25, 1900).

Both Yoshida's and Inoue's have their own characteristics but they can hardly be said as being "faithful to the original." On the other hand, Yuge translates III:41 as follows:

All human beings are things lent by God.  
What thought is given to their use?

This translation follows the principle of being "faithful to the original." The latter half seems grammatically complicated. Yet, his interpretation of the verse including that of *yara* is faithful to the original, and his translation seems to capture its meaning precisely.

Concerning the passive voice used in Yuge's translation, there is an interesting entry under "Objectivity" in *Gendai Eigogaku Jiten*, which reads:

. . . . For example, the English language uses passive structure more than French does. Its usage is very wide and free. This suggests that passive structure carries more objectivity. Generally passive structure hides the subject behind the sentence. For this reason, passive structure is a style best suited for the purpose of describing things without explicitly referring to the subject's judgment or opinion. . . . In general, the French language frequently uses active structure that reflects the subjectivity, making a sharp contrast with the objectivity that is often found in English's passive structure. . . (Ishibashi 1973: 594-595).

The latter half of the verse, which reads, "What thought is given to their use?" seems to mean something like "I wonder if you human beings really understand what kind of intention God has in human beings or the way the things lent are used." The truth of the content is objectively well expressed through the passive voice.

Concerning the translation of *ningen* as "human bodies," I argued that it would be more appropriate to translate it as "human beings" or "humankind" just as the original in terms of hermeneutics and art of translation. As a conclusion, I would like to suggest that it be fair for the readers to do so, and that as for the interpretation, it be left open for the readers.

## 5. Conclusion

Translators are in an important position to bridge between the author of the original and the readers of the translation. If they interpret the text mistakenly and thus translate it, they would be distorting the author's intention and giving the wrong information to the readers. If they only provide the translation that is not comprehensible enough for the readers, they are held responsible against both the author and the readers.

On a foreign diplomatic scene, it is a well-known fact that errors in translation may literally cause conflicts. During an international trial, how the translators translate and the interpreters interpret sometimes affects the outcome. The translators and interpreters are thus entrusted with a grave, crucial responsibility.

Generally speaking, when a translation is good, people would praise for the original while translators are blamed for when the translation is bad. Translators are thus expected to have a high level of mentality, concentration, knowledge, and skills. Moreover, they ought to be competent in reading deeply into what author is trying to convey the readers through the original text while they should be able to imagine how the

readers read the translation. It is important for the translators to know their own limitations and engage in the work of translation with humble and cautious attitude. Translation is therefore one of the most difficult tasks.

In this article, I first discussed the art of translation in terms of interpretation, skills, method, attitude, and so on. In so doing, I emphasized the importance, necessity, and effectiveness of the principle of being “faithful to the original” as well as the method of *epoché* in interpreting and translating a text. Based on that understanding, I tried to examine three examples from the Ofudesaki, *The Tip of the Writing Brush*, published by Tenrikyo Church Headquarters in September 1993 and drew attention to the problems embodied in these translations.

The process of translation begins with interpretation of the text. Translators should study the author’s backgrounds such as his or her philosophy and biography so as to understand more accurately and more precisely what s/he intends in the text. To do this, they ought to bracket all their preconceptions including knowledge, thoughts, concepts, and experiences, for the time being, and empty their minds in order to put themselves in the author’s shoes. Through this method of *epoché*, they can maintain the principle of being “faithful to the original.”

Based on the principle of being “faithful to the original,” as the case of *ningen* shows, when the original cannot be clearly understood or when the interpretation is open for further discussions, I argued, the original text should be translated literally as it is. Yet, the principle of being “faithful to the original” does not necessarily mean the literal translation, as shown in the case of *Nihon, Kara*, and *Tenjiku*. What is implied by the principle is to understand the true intention of the author as faithfully as possible, which is often hidden between the lines. This applies to the case of translating *Tsukihi*. By referring to God the Parent as *Tsukihi*, Oyasama intended to show God’s existence and workings to us human beings, thereby enabling us to feel familiar with God the Parent and realize God’s blessings. For this reason, unlike the case with *Nihon, Kara*, and *Tenjiku*, the word *Tsukihi* should be translated as it is—Moon-Sun or MoonSun—in English for the sake of English-speaking people.

By being “faithful to the original,” I meant the translators’ efforts to understand as accurately as possible what the original author is trying to convey through the text as well as their efforts to put that into another language as precisely as possible. To achieve this goal, translators ought to have a strong will to get rid of the self and to purify the mind as much as possible, although this may be almost impossible to attain. Along with making such an endeavor, the translators should try to have similar experiences with the author’s so that they can understand the author more fully and more accurately, thereby coming as close as possible to the author’s thoughts in writing the original text. Basing themselves on the author’s point of view, they interpret and translate the text. For this reason, I emphasized the importance, the necessity, and the effectiveness of the principle of being “faithful to the original” as well as the method of *epoché* in translation. I tried to illustrate this point by examining three examples from the Ofudesaki, *The Tip of the Writing Brush*.

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### Abstract

The Ofudesaki, *The Tip of the Writing Brush*, consisting of 1,711 verses in 17 parts, is one of the three Tenrikyo scriptures. It was written between 1869 and 1882 by Oyasama, the Foundress of Tenrikyo, Miki Nakayama, in *waka* poem style. She composed this in order to reconstruct the world as that of “Joyous Life”—the world of harmonious joyousness between God and human beings. The Ofudesaki can be read by anyone in the world. Through the Ofudesaki, people can understand God the Parent’s teachings, settle them in their hearts, and implement them in their daily lives. For this purpose, to translate the Ofudesaki originally written in Japanese into other languages is required.

In this article, I discuss the art of translation in terms of interpretation, skills, principles, attitude, and method. In interpreting and translating a text appropriately, I emphasize the importance, necessity, and effectiveness of the principle of being “faithful to the original” as well as the method of “*epoché*, bracketing,” employed in the field of religious studies.

Limiting and specifying the interpretation and translation of the original meanings in the Ofudesaki may lead to a distortion of the original work. When the meanings of the original are unclear, they should also be left in the translation as such. By means of the principle of being “faithful to the original” and the methodology called “*epoché*,” translation would be fair and kind to a reader who is incapable of understanding the original.

Based on the principle and the method, I try to examine three examples from the Ofudesaki and draw attention to the problems embodied in the translations. By giving and illustrating three examples of translation, I offer my own commentary and provide a few suggestions. It is my opinion that an ideal translation will emerge when there is no gap between the original work and the reader.