

Tenrikyo in Brazil from the Perspective of Globalization*

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Abstract

This article analyzes from the perspective of “globalization” how the Japan-born Tenrikyo religion has contributed to the enrichment of Brazilian religious pluralism by becoming an option of religious markets there. Tenrikyo, emerged in 1838 and spread throughout Japan and abroad. It reached Brazil in 1929, but was primarily the religion of Japanese immigrants for a long time. Only from around 1990, when Brazil adopted liberal economic policy, did the number of non-Japanese followers begin to increase, many of whom interpreted Tenrikyo within the more familiar context of Christianity and Spiritualism. Accordingly, it may be supposed that globalization, as a result of the emergence and growth of a foreign religion, may help relativise and revitalize the context of local Brazil.

Keywords: Brasil, Globalization, Pluralism, Secularization, Tenrikyo

1. Introduction

Tenrikyo emerged in 1838 in rural Japan at a time when the country was going through modernization which began in the Meiji era. Since then the religion has had significant impact on the religious culture of Japan. The basic tenet of Tenrikyo is that human beings were created by God for the purpose of living lives full of joy, and that their lives are sustained through their relationship with God. In Tenrikyo’s theology, the human body has been lent by God, and it is only the mind that belongs to human beings. In this sense, suffering in general is by no means God’s punishment, and is instead considered divine guidance from God through which human beings reflect upon the dust that has piled up in their minds. Dust is a metaphor for the misuse of the mind that constitutes a fundamental cause of suffering.

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Human beings can realize the 'Joyous Life' here on earth when the human soul is restored to its original integrity by sweeping away the dusts of the mind. At the Main Sanctuary of the Tenrikyo Church Headquarters lies the 'Jiba of Origin', a site considered as the place where humankind was first conceived and represents the home of all mankind. Accordingly, followers of Tenrikyo consider the pilgrimage to Jiba one of the most important religious practices.

Tenrikyo has established missionary facilities not only in Japan, but also in various other countries and regions including Asia, Europe, Africa, Oceania, and North and South America. In Brazil, for example, Tenrikyo is practiced primarily among ethnic Japanese and has approximately 20,000 members.¹ In my observation, Tenrikyo in Brazil has changed dramatically during the last 20 years. While most of the members used to be Japanese Brazilian, there have been an increasing number of non-Japanese members. Moreover, changes within the Tenrikyo community seem to mirror the way the transformation of the wider Japanese-Brazilian community. During the late 1980s, there was a tide of '*dekasegi*' (people working away from their home countries) coming to Japan from Brazil, most of whom, whether or not they were able to speak Japanese, were of Japanese origin with Japanese phenotype. Recently, however, there has been an influx of Brazilian laborers moving to Japan who do not appear to have Japanese ethnic origins. One of the reasons behind this change may be the increase in inter-racial marriage among Japanese-Brazilian communities. Similarly, this kind of interaction between the usual racial segregations has become increasingly visible in Tenrikyo communities in Brazil as well. Inevitably, we can identify a similar dynamic in the interactions of intangible things between the two communities such as religious teachings. As will be discussed later, it is apparent that the teachings of Tenrikyo, which are foreign in Brazil, are going through qualitative transformations by interacting with pre-existing religious values in Brazil. This article therefore seeks to analyze through a case

¹ There is often a large gap between the data of a statistical survey and the actual number when it comes to the number of members of a religious group. It results from the fact that a religious group tends to include the number of newly registered members as well as sympathizers of the religion into the sum of the members. It also has to do with the tendency that the definition of membership is up to those who answer survey questions. For example, the 2000 census of the *Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)* reports that there were about 4,000 Tenrikyo followers; yet, the number of the census data seems to be smaller than the actual number as far as my personal observation at the Tenrikyo Mission Headquarters in Brazil is concerned. The same census data lists large-scale Japanese religions in Brazil and the number of their members as follows: the Church of World Messianity (100,000); the Church of Perfect Liberty (55,000); and Seicho-no-Ie (30,000). In this respect, Tenrikyo is the fourth-largest religious group of Japanese origin in Brazil.

study of Tenrikyo in Brazil, how various religious values come to meet and transform one another as entailed by globalization.

It was during the 1990s that a body of discussions on globalization began to emerge. Both the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union two years later, prompted people to begin the dialogue about globalization particularly in the fields of economy and finance and this dialogue has also considered the transmigrations of people and cultures. In regard to the globalization of religion, some scholars have defined the World Religions such as Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam—as globalized religions while others have focused on religious movements that have become increasingly animate as a result of globalization.² Although there have also been discussions on similar topics such as internationalization and multi-nationalization of Japanese religions, this article will analyze Japanese religions from the perspective of globalization. My observation is that past work on internationalization and multi-nationalization have not paid close enough attention to the distinctive manners in which religious values come to interlace with and transform one another when a certain religious culture comes into contact with other religious cultures. Also worth mentioning is the way in which a religious culture becomes *bricolaged*³ and is received by consumers based on their own agency, just like the manner in which personal computers can be custom-made in response to the needs of consumers under the principle of market economy. When we look at the religious ethos in Brazil since the 1990s, we can observe that various factors which used to be in different conceptual categories have become interlaced with one another and resultingly reconstructed by receivers of the religious ideals. In the era of globalization, we can notice the ways in which religions are developing with the influence of factors which may even be considered ‘foreign’ within the perimeter of the religions’ orthodox understandings of faith practices. It is for these reasons that globalization and *bricolage* serve as keywords in this article.

2 See, for example, Poewe (1994) and Corten and Ruth (2001) for discussion of Pentecostalism, a religious group growing rapidly in such regions as Latin America and Africa.

3 A term coined by French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, *bricolage* refers to the process in which people construct or create a work from a diverse range of things that happen to be available by using their own knowledge and wisdom.

2. Globalization and Religion

When discussing the issues surrounding globalization of religion, we first need to understand the way in which the religious ethos in Brazil has changed in the face of globalization. In this section, I will present a viewpoint that defines religious ethos as a certain type of 'market' and clarify the manners in which globalization differs from such concepts as internationalization and multinationalization.

2.1. Globalization and 'Religious Market'

The underlying principle on which globalization is premised is the market economy. Cultural value is also subject to this principle as a kind of commodity to be consumed in a market. If we take religion for example, teachings and salvific messages of particular religious institutions become commodities that people consume.

In the first instance we should consider the economic situation in Brazil during the 1990s, so as to better understand the 'religious market' of the country. During this decade, the economic market in Brazil went through enormous transformations. Under the influence of neo-liberalism that prevailed throughout Latin American, the economic policy in Brazil began to shift from one regulated by the government to one based on market economy. Since the 1990s, foreign direct investment has increased and led to disinflation, while the gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' widened in the country. In 1994, an economic policy called "Real Plan" was adopted. The initiation of this policy resulted in three key things; the liberalization of market, the privatization of government-run enterprises, and cuts in government expenditures. Take for example the automobile industry, which had maintained a policy of protectionism by prohibiting trade with other countries. However, when Brazil adopted the free trade policy in the 1990s, it was able to import the latest-model automobiles from overseas countries, including Japan. With the increased variety of consumer durables, the range of options for the consumers became much wider.

A similar picture appears when we look at the 'religious market'. Although the Catholic Church had lost much of its power and status as the state religion by the end of the 19th century, many people in Brazil still consider the Church as the de facto state religion. However, the Catholic Church has been cooperating with other religious groups since the

Second Vatican Council (1962-65), which marked the first move toward the deregulation of the 'religious market'. In the 1980s people gradually started to leave the Catholic Church, a trend which became more acute during the 1990s. According to the *Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)*, *the proportion of Catholics in the entire population declined from about 84% in 1991 to approximately 74 % in 2000 (see Table 1). The same statistics show that the proportion of Catholics was 89% in 1980, further demonstrating the radical shift in the 1990s. On the other hand, the Protestant churches grew dramatically in the 1990s, with membership increasing by 36% in the 1980s and by 71 % in the 1990s.⁴ Also worth noting is the growing number of people with no religious affiliation. Roughly speaking, the decreased membership in Catholicism seems to correlate with the increased number of those who are affiliated with Protestant churches and those who have no religious affiliation at all. Additionally, the percentage of those who were affiliated with Kardecism, Afro-Brazilian religions, and Eastern religious traditions increased slightly, from 1.5% to 1.8% between 1980 and 2000.* Thus, we can see that the 'religious market', just like the economic market, has been shifting from a monopolized market to a free market, in which Tenrikyo stands as one of the options for consumers.

2.2. Globalization and Religious Value

There have been several studies on how New Japanese Religions emerged and developed in overseas. Those discussions relevant to this article are those that analyze Japanese religions in overseas countries in terms of internationalization and multi-nationalization (Inoue 1995; Nakamaki 1985). Internationalization refers to the way in which a certain value, principle, or group have crossed national boundaries whereas multi-nationalization indicates the manner in which these social and cultural entities come to control several nations while affirming the legitimacy of national boundaries. These two concepts are thus closely interrelated with each other, with the latter concept being more attentive to the framework of a nation. One thing that these two concepts share in common is the idea that nation is a given concept. However, ever since the fall of the Berlin Wall, people have begun to recognize that the framework of a nation is not a given category. In addition, the fluid interactions among people, materials, and money have been challenging the validity of nation as a given entity. In other words, the ways

4 Calculated from Table 1.

in which New Japanese Religions emerge and develop in overseas countries today cannot be fully grasped from the perspectives of internationalization and multi-nationalization.

Table 1. The Transition of Religious Populations in Brazil

		1980	1991	2000	Total (169,870,000)
Catholic Church		89%	83.8%	73.9%	125,510,000
Protestant Churches		6.6%	9.0%	15.4%	26,180,000
(Pentecostalism)		(48.5%)	(62.0%)	(67.3%)	(17,610,000)
Kardecism		0.7%	1.1%	1.3%	2,260,000
Afro-Brazilian Religions		0.6%	0.4%	0.3%	520,000
No Religions		1.6%	4.8%	7.4%	12,490,000
Eastern Religions	Buddhism	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	210,000
	World Messianity			0.06%	110,000
	Others			0.03%	50,000
Other religions		1.0	0.2	1.1	1,800,000
No Religion		0.3	0.4	0.4	740,000

Source: Data adapted from the *Brazilian* Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)

The cultural dynamics in the context of globalization is engendered by reciprocal penetration of values across national boundaries. When two different cultural values come into contact with each other, they tend to interlace and transform. However, the question here is, in what way do they transform each other? It has been argued that globalization entails standardization of values, as encapsulated in such words as ‘Americanization’ and ‘McDonalization’. Accordingly, some scholars have observed that globalization can lead to ‘Americanization’ of all local values, while others have indicated that global corporations, by monopolizing local markets, would eventually force people to buy into a single monolithic value. Indeed it would be fair to say that there is certainly a tendency towards

standardization, but there is also another type of dynamic. That is, while having a possibility of standardizing various local values, globalization can at times function as dynamism that reevaluates and revitalizes local values. Sociologist Roland Robertson defines globalization not as a process that homogenizes the world and eradicates individuality, but rather essentially and immanently promotes it. Indeed in his own words, globalization is a “process that globally promotes diversity” (Robertson 1997: 5). This viewpoint suggests that, even when one single, monolithic value penetrates into the world as a result of globalization, one still needs to pay attention to the way in which the value interacts with other preexisting local values.

An organized religion tends to be considered as a social group controlled and governed by central organizations, such as headquarters or central government office, that authorize religious practices and espouses religious values. However, when we look towards the bottom of the organizational hierarchy e.g.. lay members, we may notice that there exists a variety of dynamics, and that the religious group is full of distinct religious practices that interlace with each other. Take for example the Catholic Church in 19th-century Brazil. During this era, many European clergy were sent to Brazil in an attempt to control popular religious practices that were out of sync with scriptural and institutional standards defined by the Vatican. However, the so-called ‘Romanization’ of popular religious practices never materialized. Instead presently, we find many religious practices amalgamated with Afro-Brazilian religions and Spiritualism in Catholic circles in Brazil. Though far from being something we can simply generalize, it should be noted that it is difficult for a religious group to always function as a ‘unified front’. The dynamic in which a religious group seeks to maintain its distinctive identity while involving somewhat foreign factors seems to be closer to what is really taking place. It is the dynamics wherein various religious factors are interrelating and intertwining with each other, as entailed by those who selectively embrace religious practices based on their agency and needs. I call this dynamic ‘bricolage of religious values’. As has been mentioned earlier, one of the most notable examples is Catholicism, whose religious practices involve various kinds of saint cult and pilgrimage. Recent trends also include the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, which is similar to charismatic movements of

Protestant Pentecostalism. Thus, we can notice the richness of 'bricolage' in this religious group.

Therefore, it may be assumed that the ways in which Tenrikyo is influenced by globalization can be manifested as 'bricolages' in the way lay members in Brazil receive and practice Tenrikyo, not in the way the central organization of the religion interacts with local cultures. In this article, I will present a way to understand globalization of religions by focusing on how lay members interact with preexisting local religious values as well as how they come to terms with new religious values. Yet, we first need to look in general as to how, in Brazil, Tenrikyo has developed as a religious organization. In the paragraph that follows, I will discuss the organizational development of Tenrikyo in Brazil.

3. The Organizational Development of Tenrikyo in Brazil

Tenrikyo has long served to preserve and develop Japanese culture in Brazil. For instance, the Tenri Library in Sao Paulo, is well known among Japanese-Brazilian communities, and one of the top libraries dealing with literature on Japan in Brazil, ranked after the libraries at the Center for Japanese Cultural Studies at the University of Sao Paulo and the Japan-Brazil Cultural Association. In this sense, Tenrikyo has responded to the needs of Japanese-Brazilian communities. However, in terms of integrating into the wider Brazilian society, Tenrikyo had to wait for changes in Japanese-Brazilian communities or go into a place that had few Japanese-Brazilian populations. (Unsure as to what is being said here.). In this chapter, I will discuss the organizational development of Tenrikyo as well as the place of the religion among Japanese New Religions in Brazil by shedding light on the historical background and characteristics of Japanese New Religions in Brazil.

3.1. Overseas Mission of Japanese New Religions

In General the overseas mission of Japanese religions went hand in hand with the immigration of Japanese people as well as Japanese colonization.⁵ In the case of Brazil, immigration which started in 1908 marks the beginning of the missionary work of these religions, although in the beginning the immigrants were not actively recruiting members. Nobutaka Inoue points out that there were two types of Japanese religions that engaged in

⁵ Examples other than in Brazil includes the Japanese Emigration to Hawaii in 1885, the Annexation of Korea in 1910, and the establishment of the State of Manchuria in 1932.

overseas mission (Inoue 1985: 217). At the outset of their mission, some groups sought to recruit only Japanese immigrants overseas while others included non-Japanese people as their targets. Inoue refers to the former group as “overseas business trip type” and the latter groups “multinational type.” Tenrikyo started its overseas mission before World War II and it has been one of the most actively-propagating groups among New Religions in Japan. Hirochika Nakamaki points to the establishment of *Tenri-mura* (an immigrant community built by Tenrikyo followers in the State of Manchuria) as something that went beyond the mold of “overseas business trip type” and sought to go into the level of “mass immigration type” (Nakamaki 1994: 609). We can notice this pattern in Brazil; a case in point being the mass immigration to Brazil organized by Nankai Grand Church in 1929. Tenrikyo had thus long stayed in Japanese-Brazilian communities to carry out its mission. However, many Japanese New Religions that went to Brazil after 1950 have tended to target non-Japanese. It is well known today that the Church of World Messianity⁶ and Seicho-no-Ie have attracted many members and adherents. On one hand, the Church of World Messianity started its overseas mission in 1955 and, from the outset, sought to recruit non-Japanese. Seicho-no-Ie, on the other hand, began its missionary activity in 1934 in Japanese immigrant communities and started to target non-Japanese in the 1960s. Another well-known group, though small in size compared to the above two religious groups, is the Church of Perfect Liberty which began its missionary activity in Brazil in 1957 and started to attract non-Japanese at an early stage of their mission. Lastly, Soka Gakkai Buddhism launched its Brazil chapter in 1960 with the presence of Daisaku Ikeda, then president of the religious organization.

Thus, New Religions from Japan started to actively recruit new members in Brazil during the post-war period and, as a result, has increased the number of non-Japanese members. The primary factor that played into this shift is the specific socio-historical context of the 1960s. During this decade, Brazil adopted foreign currency to boost industrialization. Because many people left countryside for the large cities, the city population outnumbered its rural counterpart. This shift led to the increased number of social problems such as poverty, familial dysfunction, stress, and diseases that created fears among those living in large cities. New Religions from Japan were able to ‘save’ these people by addressing the problems with

6 The Church of World Messianity is commonly known as “Messianica” in Brazil, and many Brazilian do not know that it is a religion transplanted from Japan.

relatively systematized doctrines and religious practices that developed in the context of Japanese modernization (Nakamaki 1994: 609-610). Also worth mentioning is the impact of the Second Vatican Council. By cooperating with other religions, the Catholic Church lost its monopoly over other religious groups. Although Catholicism was not the only religion in Brazil; there had already existed Afro-Brazilian religions and Spiritualism before the Second Vatican Council, the fact remains that the Council created an ethos in which the Catholic Church came to officially recognize the plurality of religious cultures. Also, the counter-culture movement that arose in the United States in the 1960s had impacted greatly on Brazil. Brazilians came to give positive meanings to African cultures, which used to be labeled inferior in Brazil, and started to embrace African music and religions born in Brazil (Jensen 1999: 286). This kind of relativization of values created an ethos in which Brazilian people could accept Japanese New Religions. Thus, the changes in socio-historical background have led to the acceptance of Tenrikyo by non-Japanese Brazilians. However, this trend did not become prominent until the late 1980s, when Japanese-Brazilian society began to change.

3.2. The Organizational Development of Tenrikyo

When we look at Tenrikyo's mission in Brazil, we cannot simply reduce its expansion to the merely social factor of colonialism but must also recognize the historical antecedent unique to this group. In 1929, Tenrikyo Nankai Grand Church sent 10 families to Brazil for missionary work. Three years prior to 1929, Tenrikyo observed the 40th Anniversary of the Foundress and, by which time the emphasis towards overseas mission was already high. Toward the 40th Anniversary, Tenrikyo had set a goal of attaining twice as many members by coining the slogan "Double-the-Membership-Drive." In 1924, Shozen Nakayama, who would later become the second Shinbashira (spiritual and administrative leader of Tenrikyo), became president of Tenrikyo Young Men's Association. He announced that the primary missionary field after the anniversary year would be overseas countries and that the association members were the ones who were to shoulder the tasks. In 1925, Tenri Foreign Language Institute (present-day Tenri University) was established for the purpose of training missionaries for overseas mission.⁷ Around the time Nankai Grand Church sent families to

⁷ One could argue that these moves were engendered by the socio-economic context of the time. However, there was a divine message that said "the divine name, Tenri-O-no-Mikoto, will be spread from one end of the

Brazil, Kita Grand Church also sent followers to Brazil in 1927 and established Noroeste Church, the first ever Tenrikyo church in Brazil. In 1936, the year of the foundress' 50th Anniversary, a total of five churches had been established in Japanese immigrant communities located in inland Brazil.

The organizational structure of Tenrikyo can be categorized as "parent-child type," which emphasizes the superior-subordinate relationship between a "parent," the one who guides someone to the religion, and a "child," the one who is guided to the religion (Watanabe 2001: 7).⁸ The structure of grand churches are also predicated upon this superior-subordinate relationship, and each local church belongs to the Church Headquarters through this organizational structure. The superior-subordinate relationship in each grand church extensively affects the characteristics of churches belonging to the same grand church, thus leading to forge a distinctive group identity of the church affiliation as a whole. Moreover, not only grand churches but also local churches belonging to a superior church usually have their own corporate status, being legally and financially independent of their superior churches. Basically, each local church organizes its own missionary activities, and the kind of activities they conduct is largely up to the personality of a head minister who leads the church. Thus, the organizational and spiritual characteristics of Tenrikyo are marked by its superior-subordinate relationship with each local churches having their own distinctive identities.⁹ On top of this church hierarchy, there is a missionary facility called Tenrikyo Mission Headquarters in Brazil, which oversees all churches in the country. The mission headquarters is directly supervised by the Church Headquarters.¹⁰

world to the other" 75 years after 1838, when Tenrikyo came into being. It seems plausible, therefore, to assume that the members of Tenrikyo in those days were moved by this message and set out to advance Tenrikyo's overseas mission.

8 Watanabe points to Konkyokyo and Reiyukai as other religious groups that share a similar organizational structure.

9 In contrast, Seicho-no-Ie, the Church of World Messianity, the Church of Perfect Liberty, and Soka Gakkai have an organizational structure whose membership is defined by the territory members inhabit and whose local churches are integrated and governed by the bureaucratic institution of the central organization.

10 Tenrikyo has mission headquarters not only in Brazil but also in the U.S. mainland, Hawaii, Taiwan, and South Korea.

The way in which Tenrikyo has engaged in missionary work in Brazil has been centered upon the so-called “immigration type,” just as the aforementioned mass immigration by Nankai Grand Church. As of January 2007, for instance, 43 out of 82 churches in Brazil were led by head ministers who immigrated from Japan, and none of them were temporary religious workers.¹¹ In this sense, Tenrikyo in Brazil can be classified as an ‘immigration type’ rather than an ‘overseas business trip type’. It is logical, therefore, that they have tended to advance their missionary activities in Japanese immigrant communities by accommodating the convenience of the immigrants. For immigrants to Brazil, social welfare and education of their children were critical concerns. In responding to the needs of Japanese immigrant communities, they established organizations called Cultural Association, which still remain in regions with large populations of Japanese-Brazilians. Tenrikyo also established the Bauru Cultural Association in 1964 in the city of Bauru, where the mission headquarters is located, and has thus responded to the needs of the Japanese immigrants by running a Japanese language school, sewing school, and a boarding house. Although the Cultural Association has become independent of the mission headquarters, the Japanese language school is still being run at the mission headquarters. Tenrikyo in Brazil has also sought to contribute to Japanese-Brazilian communities as well as promote the understanding of Japanese cultures by running the aforementioned library in Sao Paulo as part of the mission headquarters’ activities. Moreover, some local churches have taught the Japanese language to children of Japanese immigrants. In the mid-1980s, for example, five churches in Sao Paulo were running a Japanese language school. In the larger schools, they had more than 100 students and offered classes every day.¹² Japanese language schools also served to supplement the need for such classes as music, P.E., and art, which elementary and junior high schools in Brazil did not necessarily offer. However, Japanese language schools had to change so as to respond to the transformations of Japanese-Brazilian communities. On one hand, since the mid-1980s, when *degasegi* was becoming more and more popular, there has been an

11 This is not to say that there have not been any overseas-business-trip-type head ministers in Tenrikyo churches in Brazil. Yet, there have been only a few head ministers of this type, and the head ministers positions have been taken over by other immigrants or children of the head ministers.

12 In the school system of Brazil, students go to school for half a day, either in the mornings or evenings. During the 1980s, many students in Japanese language schools went to a Portuguese-speaking school in the mornings and spent the afternoons in a Japanese language school. A Japanese language school was almost like a Japanese immigrant community for children.

increasing number of students who wanted to learn Japanese in order to be able to work in Japan. On the other hand, there have been less and less people who wanted their children to learn the mother tongue of their grandparents.¹³ Many second-generation Japanese Brazilians used to identify themselves as ethnic Japanese and learned or were forced to learn the Japanese language. In the 1990s, however, things began to change. Today only three out of five Japanese language schools are still being run, and there has been a sharp decline in the number of students in each school. Many students learn the Japanese language for practical reasons such as working in Japan rather than for maintaining their Japanese identity. Other students include non-Japanese Brazilians who have become interested in the Japanese language as influenced by the 'Manga' comic boom.

4. Globalization of Tenrikyo: Bricolaging with Religious Values in Brazil

In the foregoing, we have seen that Tenrikyo in Brazil has long served to respond to the needs of Japanese-Brazilian communities. It can be said that the group has engaged in missionary work by responding to the need for ethnic orientation among Tenrikyo communities in Brazil and the wider Japanese-Brazilian communities. This is confirmed by the fact that 74 out of 82 Tenrikyo churches in Brazil are located in the states of Sao Paulo and Parana, where Japanese-Brazilian populations are concentrated. It was therefore logical, that Tenrikyo was not widely recognized outside Japanese-Brazilian communities. However, with recent transformations in Japanese-Brazilian communities, the proportion of non-Japanese followers in Tenrikyo communities has been increasing. A critical issue in this context is the way in which Tenrikyo has come to interact with religious cultures of Brazil that had been foreign to the religious group. It can be observed that the fluid interactions between the religious values of Tenrikyo and of Brazil have led to bricolages. In fact, this type of bricolage had already been taking place in local churches in regions with few Japanese-Brazilian populations. In the following discussion, I will discuss how Tenrikyo has gone beyond the boundary of Japanese-Brazilian culture and communities and has integrated into the wider religious ethos of Brazil. My observation is based on interviews I conducted at two Tenrikyo churches, one in Recife and the other in Curitiba. These two churches are both well

13 From 1984 to 1991, I served as a teacher in a Japanese language school run by Tenrikyo Brazil Hoyo Church, located in Sao Paulo. The descriptions of the transformations of Japanese immigrant communities are based on my own and my colleagues' observations.

known for their high proportions of non-Japanese followers and the growing number of active members.¹⁴

4.1. Reinterpretation of the Bible

4.1.1. The “Pillar of the Temple” as the Kanrodai

In Brazil, “religion” often refers to having faith in Christ and taking the Bible seriously. People believe in the divinity of Jesus and the inerrancy of the Bible not only in Catholic and Protestant circles but also among Afro-Brazilian religions and Kardecism. In this context, it is difficult for people in Brazil to have religious experiences in Tenrikyo, whose religious beliefs and practices are not predicated upon faith in Christ and the Bible. However, a non-Japanese Brazilian man who converted to Tenrikyo said that he found an important teaching of Tenrikyo in the Bible in the following passage:

If you conquer, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God; you will never go out of it. I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name (NRSV: Revelation 3.12).

At Tenrikyo Church Headquarters, the most sacred place of Tenrikyo located in Tenri, Nara, Japan, there is a pillar called the Kanrodai, which literally means the “Stand for the Heavenly Dew.” In Tenrikyo’s teachings, the Kanrodai marks the place where humankind was first created and is consecrated with the name of God in Tenrikyo, Tenri-O-no-Mikoto. Performed around the Kanrodai on a monthly basis is the Kagura Service, which is the most important rite in Tenrikyo’s faith practices. For the Brazilian man mentioned earlier, “a pillar in the temple of my God” points to the Kanrodai, and Tenri-O-no-Mikoto, whose name is given to the Kanrodai, is that which “will never go out of it [the Kanrodai/the pillar].” The “new Jerusalem,” moreover, indicates Tenri, which is named after Tenri-O-no-Mikoto. These interpretations are not based upon discussions in Tenrikyo’s theology, let alone those of Biblical Studies. And yet, the hermeneutical marriage of the biblical passage and the description of the Tenrikyo’s sacred place gave him a sense of coherence in his religious

¹⁴ Recife, a city located in northeast Brazil, has only 150 Japanese-Brazilian families. Curitiba does not have so many Japanese-Brazilian families either, although there are Japanese-Brazilian communities in Londrina and Maringa in Parana State, the state in which Curitiba is located.

reality. Here we see how two religious teachings came to bricolage; the person's faith that was nurtured in the Catholic Church was translated into the faith in Tenrikyo.

4.1.2. The Discovery of the "Truth"

One of the major concerns for those who are familiar with the Bible is the way in which the "truth" is defined and understood in Tenrikyo. For Christians, the truth is embodied in Jesus Christ.¹⁵ In this context, how can we explain the truth in Tenrikyo, which does not define Jesus as the mediator of the truth? In the Gospel of John, Jesus is described as the "way" through which people can come to the Father, i.e. God. A Brazilian woman, who had made her first visit to the Tenrikyo Church Headquarters in 1996, told me that she had come to see the truth and experienced spiritual rebirth while staying at Jiba. In Tenrikyo, the pilgrimage to Jiba is referred to as "returning to Jiba" and is considered as an important religious practice. For visiting Jiba, which is the place where humankind was first created, is considered to be equivalent to going back to one's hometown. There are quite a few people who, like this woman, have realized that they have experienced spiritual rebirth through the pilgrimage. If we define returning to Jiba as a pilgrimage, then we could regard it as a drama of spiritual death and rebirth. By receiving the truth of the Sazuke, which is a healing ritual in Tenrikyo bestowed only at Jiba, this woman was reborn into a person who can engage in the work of saving others. Yet, it should be noted that this woman accepted a new message of Tenrikyo also within the context of Christianity. She did not reject Catholic teachings; rather, her faith in Catholicism is submerged and bricolaged into a new religious belief.

4.2. Epiphany of the Foundress

In the mid-1980s, a black spot appeared on a white wall in a Tenrikyo mission station in Curitiba. The spot gradually grew larger and ended up looking like a person who is seated straight on the floor and facing to the left. Since then, many people who came to the mission station were cured from serious illnesses. Stories of miraculous salvation spread through word of mouth, and more and more people, even those from distant places, started coming to the mission station. People at the mission station told me that they sometimes had 200 people waiting in line. Moreover, when visiting the mission station in 1999, I was told that they

¹⁵ "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (NRSV: John 14.6).

had at least 10 people everyday visiting the site. Members of the mission station believe that the spot is an epiphany of the Foundress and that the Foundress is the one who made miraculous healings happen. The wife of the head of the mission station told me that she came to hear the Foundress' voice ever since the foundress had "appeared" on the wall, and had since been delivering messages from the Foundress to those who came to the mission station.

Not only in Brazil, but in most predominantly Catholic Latin American countries, there are places where people believe St. Mary appeared. In many of those places, we can observe devout believers venerating the statue of St. Mary. In Brazil, St. Aparecida is a nationwide cult just like Lourdes in France and Fatima in Portugal. Needless to say, the black spot on the wall is understood as equally significant as an epiphany of these saints. In the Cathedral of Aparecida, there is a place called the Room of Miracle, in which people make prayers to St. Aparecida. When their prayers are answered, they offer pictures, letters or miniature cars and houses. I saw uncountable pictures offered at the above-mentioned mission station as well, although it was different from the Room of Miracle in that, at the mission station, the pictures were piled up in a drawer in the sanctuary.

There is also another aspect of this black spot that is worth mentioning. Normally, the only materials that are set up in a worship hall of Tenrikyo are the shrines, which are the sacred objects for worship, and chairs for attendees. However, at the mission station mentioned above, we find not only the Foundress' figure on the wall, but also benches and beds that could accommodate about 20 people seeking healing. Everyone lying on the beds and seated on the benches are covered by white sheets. These people believe that, when covered by these sheets, spirits of doctors, who are the disciples of the Foundress, descend and heal them. For example, one young man, who had problems with his internal organs, told me that he felt someone touching inside his body and later found out that his illness was cured, and although initially skeptical, now believes that he was indeed miraculously cured. Therefore, we find not only a miraculous epiphany of the Foundress, which is interpreted in the context of Catholicism, but also miraculous healing mediated by an invisible "spiritual medium," which is construed in the context of Spiritualism. Those who were cured at this mission station later moved on to attend the Doctrinal Seminar and the Spiritual Development

Course¹⁶ conducted at the mission headquarters, and some even making a pilgrimage to Jiba, receiving the Truth of the Sazuke, and going on to engage in missionary work. These things further examples of bricolage.

4.3. Kardecism and Tenrikyo

We have explored how Tenrikyo is received and interpreted in the context of Catholicism. Which suggests that Tenrikyo is being received in a way that does not reject pre-existing cultures; rather, in a way that gives positive meanings to those cultures. In this sense, Tenrikyo is going through the process of bricolage. The same process can be identified in the context of Spiritualism such as Kardecism.

4.3.1. The Passe and the Sazuke

Nearly 10% of non-Japanese Tenrikyo followers that I interviewed said that they used to be members or adherents to Spiritualism.¹⁷ Spiritualism here refers to Kardecism, a religious group from Europe. Kardecism emerged in France mid-19th-century and soon spread to Brazil, although today the group has more adherents in Brazil than in France. Kardecism stresses the compatibility of science and religion and seeks to explain religious salvation in the guise of science. For example, Kardecism is influenced by mesmerism, a healing technique based on the idea of animal magnetism. It teaches that the human body consists of body and spirit, which are tied to each other by a spiritual energy called *perispirito*. Surrounding *perispirito* are two auras that go around in opposite directions and, when the auras lose their balance, a person becomes sick (Azuma 1995: 39). Kardecism has a healing ritual called the Passe, in which a spiritual medium holds his or her hand(s) over a person in order to bring about healing by restoring the balance of auras. Even many of those who are not official members of Kardecism visit a spiritual medium to have the Passe offered on them. Some followers of Tenrikyo consider the Passe of Kardecism and the Sazuke in Tenrikyo as similar healing rituals. It is not to say, however, that the Sazuke is explained in terms of

16 The Doctrinal Seminar is a five-day long seminar while the Spiritual Development Course is a one-month long spiritual training course.

17 The research that I conducted has revealed that this proportion applies to the members not only in Tenrikyo but also other Japanese New Religions such as Seicho-no-Ie and the Church of Perfect Liberty (Yamada 2001; 2002).

Spiritualism in the context of Tenrikyo. Rather, converts to Tenrikyo find new meaning in the Sazuke based on their understandings of spiritual healing.

4.3.2. *Spiritual Evolution and Spiritual Maturity*

Spiritualism and Tenrikyo are similar not only in terms of healing rituals but also in regard to teachings. For instance, Kardecism's "spiritual evolution" and Tenrikyo's "spiritual maturity" are understood as the same teaching through translations in Portuguese. Both teachings are translated into such expressions as *evolução espiritual* (evolution of spirit) or *maturação espiritual* (maturity of spirit) in Portuguese. However, Tenrikyo followers tend to prefer the former expression most likely due to the large influence of Kardecism on the religious culture of Brazil. Spiritual evolution as taught in Kardecism indicates the process in which a spirit evolves from a lower-rank spirit into an upper-rank one by repeating reincarnation. The teaching says that spirits must continue evolving until they reach heaven. For followers of Kardecism, the world is divided into the "visible world" (earthly world) and the "invisible world" (spiritual world). These worlds are also subdivided into different levels as follows: the elementary world; the world of "atonement and hardship," in which human beings live; the world of "regeneration"; the world of "happiness"; and the world of "divinity" (Yamada 2000). Thus, the concept of spiritual evolution reflects the worldview of Kardecism. In contrast, Tenrikyo's worldview does not involve the idea of spiritual world and therefore does not pay much regard to spiritual beings. The world only consists of "this world," which is equivalent to the earthly world in Kardecism. Therefore, the concept of "spiritual maturity" is not related to the evolution of spirit. Rather, spiritual maturity as used in the context of Tenrikyo refers to the state in which people use their minds in a way that accords with the intention of God. It is through the mind that one finds joy in whatever he or she is blessed with and seeks to help his or her neighbours. Yet, Kardecism also has a teaching that encourages people to help their neighbours. It teaches that the spirit will evolve into the upper world by performing selfless actions. Thus, we can observe how Tenrikyo's teachings are bricolaged with the counterparts of Kardecism.

4.3.3. *Karma and Causality*

We can see another similarity between the two religions when we look at the teachings of “karma” and “causality.” The concept of karma¹⁸ in Kardecism and the notion of causality in Tenrikyo both point to the idea that whatever that occurs in human life has some underlying cause. Another similarity is the notion that believers must help other people in order to improve their own karma or causality. In Kardecism, however, a person can be elevated from the present world, which is the world of atonement and hardship, to a higher, more superior world. This process is considered as spiritual evolution. The key issue here is the worldview that defines the present world as a world of atonement and hardship. In Kardecism, human beings are allowed to use their mind freely. However, as they repeat reincarnation, humans lend themselves to improper use of the mind that turn into a kind of debt they need to pay off. These ‘debts’ cause misfortune and suffering, and accepting such a predicament is what human beings are expected to do in this world. While Kardecism teaches that human beings cannot be saved in their present lives, Tenrikyo says that salvation occurs in this world; the world of the Joyous Life, which is the ultimate goal of human existence in Tenrikyo i.e. the world to be realized in this world. This religious message Tenrikyo highlights appeals to members of Kardecism who seek salvation here on earth. For former followers of Kardecism, conversion to Tenrikyo is one dimension of ever-continuing spiritual evolution.

5. Conclusion

We have seen the ways in which the teachings and practices of Tenrikyo came to meet and integrate with the religious culture of Brazil through various channels. The interactions Tenrikyo has encountered led to the transformation of the local religious culture of Brazil as well as Tenrikyo itself. Certainly, when a new religious culture spreads in the context of a different religious culture, it is difficult for the new religious culture not to go through a certain extent of transformation.

Compared to an established religion like Catholicism, Tenrikyo, which is about 170 years old, is still a relatively young religious group. One of the ways in which institutionalised religions can survive and thrive in the face of globalization is to embrace diverse institutional characteristics and become immune to a wide range of socio-cultural factors. As we have

¹⁸ The presence of this Sanskrit word suggests that Kardecism is influenced by Eastern philosophy.

seen in this discussion, bricolage of religious value is taking place among the lay members of Tenrikyo in Brazil. A challenge that Tenrikyo faces in an era of globalization is whether the religious group can tie its institutional characteristics with the religious value of Brazil while maintaining its distinctiveness.

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