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The Management and Marketing of Tenrikyo in its Globalization Effort

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Tenrikyo emerged in 1838 in a farming village in Yamato Province (currently Nara Prefecture) and established numerous branch churches after attaining government recognition in 1888. Tenrikyo has approximately 16,000 branch churches at present and is viewed as a representative Japanese New Religion in terms of its scale and historical importance. In addition to a brief overview of Tenrikyo theology that functions as the basis of its management philosophy, this report will include a description of its institutional framework in regards to its overseas mission and its expansion into Brazil.

One of the characteristic features of Tenrikyo theology is its centripetal religious disposition. The Main Sanctuary of Tenrikyo Church Headquarters is built centered around the “Jiba,” which is considered the spot of human creation. A pilgrimage to Church Headquarters is understood as a return to one’s home and is thus a religious act imbued with great significance.

The religion is structured in two ways. First, there is a vertical structure of approximately 160 churches directly supervised by Tenrikyo Church Headquarters to which the remaining churches form a network of church lineages that display the reciprocity of parent-child relationships. Second, there also exists a horizontal structure where local churches are supervised by regional outposts of Church Headquarters under a diocese system. The marketing of Tenrikyo was largely led by the effort of individual adherents through the aforementioned vertical structure.

This report will describe Tenrikyo’s organizational aspects (management), i.e., its underlying organizational and missionary principles and the system through which it nurtures its adherents (missionaries) as well as aspects regarding the manner in which it responds to pre-existing religions and potential or overt religious needs as it adapts to local societies (marketing). Lastly, I will offer Tenrikyo’s marketing effort as a case study to examine glocalization issues in Brazil.