Introduction
The phenomenon of the expansion of Japanese new religious movements in various countries the world over has become a subject of scholarly interest resulting in several book-length studies (Mullins and Young 1991b; Wilson and Dobbelare 1993; Clarke and Somers 1994; Clarke 2000b; Nakamaki 2003; Matsuoka 2007, Pereira and Matsuoka 2007). Such studies focus upon movements that show a high numerical presence in the receiving cultures as Soka Gakkai in Britain, Perfect Liberty Kyōdan and Church of World Messianity in Brazil, and Sūkyō Mahikari in Western Europe and Australia. Alongside the presence of these rather large Japanese new religious movements abroad, there are quite a few — though smaller in numerical size and shape — that have found their way into foreign fields. These less vital Japanese religious
groups situated overseas have been given marginal attention, but when occasionally brought into the loop, they are usually written off as having limited appeal to non-Japanese, as a subtle form of nationalism, or as movements that are simply “vigorously seeing a relevant way to relating to the world beyond Japan” (Mullins and Young 1991a, 96). Some have gone so far as to make rather strong statements, employing the rhetoric of “winners” or “losers,” in an attempt to differentiate the “successful” ones from those that are purportedly “failing” to do what religions ought to be doing abroad.

One of the major representatives of such claims is Peter B. Clarke, a sociologist of religion by profession, who has written extensively on Japanese new religious movements abroad. Going straight to the point, he overtly labels Tenrikyo, one of the older Japanese new religious movements, as a religion “failing” to adapt to different cultures around the world which according to him translates into a more serious “failure” to attract non-Japanese members (Clarke 2002, 58). Overstepping the perimeters of the profession, Clarke forewarns that “Tenrikyo will probably exercise greater appeal as ‘theatre’ in the West than as religion” if it does not adapt its rituals to the location in which it seeks new converts (Clarke 2000a, 290). Clarke makes these strong assertions based on the grounds that the Tenrikyo teachings, rituals, and ways of propagation are all fundamentally Japanese. Having mentioned this, however, what I want to emphasize in this essay here are ways in which Tenrikyo missionaries self-reflexively see themselves with respect to their work abroad and the motivations that impel them to continue to engage in that mission. In short, this essay will argue against the allegations that Tenrikyo outside of Japan shows signs of “failure” first by surveying Clarke’s charge on Japanese new religious movements abroad and then by adumbrating the formation and development of Tenrikyo in Australia in order to counter it.

This essay will therefore unfold in three sections: 1) a brief but critical introduction of Clarke’s article on the success and failure of new religious movements abroad; 2) a description of Tenrikyo’s presence in Australia; and 3) an internal interpretation of that overseas presence. The descriptive section focuses on two interrelated Tenrikyo facilities and depicts a general picture of Tenrikyo’s mission in Australia. These two facilities are the Tenrikyo Melbourne Shinyu Church and the Tenrikyo Oceania Centre, respectively located in Melbourne and Brisbane. Non-Tenrikyo members and academics such as Clarke may recognize both as equal facilities for the Tenrikyo mission, but for members, they have come to exist in different ways and purposes. I make these a central concern so as to account for the minor but very important details that have been neglected in previous studies and as a means to supplement Clarke’s rather skeptical research highlighted in the first section. The interpretive section, on the other hand, will seek to underscore an internal understanding of the presence in Australia. Though little or no scholarly attention has been given to Tenrikyo’s contemporary regional presence overseas, and where the originality of this essay dwells, the points below intend to say something different though in very general terms about Tenrikyo’s undertakings abroad through one particular case. That is, I use Tenrikyo in Australia as a specific case study
to subvert the argument that “winners” and “losers” or “successful” and “failing” Japanese new religious movements could possibly exist by emphasizing the deeper and more spiritual motivations for engaging in foreign missionary fields than the statistics which show the numbers of “winning” new converts abroad.

“Success” and “Failure” Revisited

Peter Clarke’s controversial article taken up in this essay on the “success” or “failure” of Japanese religions abroad is strategically situated in the final pages of Japanese New Religions in Global Perspective, a book Clarke himself edited. It implicitly serves somewhat as a grand finale to Japanese religions abroad by not only providing a survey of what may be perceived as the “winners” and “losers” in the race to gain new members but also by foretelling future prospects about them as well. At first glance, it appears quite natural that such a sweeping article, as the title itself suggests, terminates a volume which examines what happens when Japanese new religions traverse borders to preach a universal message to others.

The general outlook of Clarke’s article owes much to the renowned and controversial sociologist Rodney Stark and especially to his revised theory of why religious movements “fail” or “succeed” (Stark 1996). In that article, Stark not only offers ten propositions immersed in economic terms with which to critically evaluate new religious movements, but also encourages “those involved in case studies to investigate these issues and consequently to begin an accumulation of comparable data” (Stark 1996, 133–34). Clarke’s incentive in light of this seems clear: an exercise to apply Stark’s theory to assess and compare the phenomenon of Japanese new religions abroad. However, his proclamations demonstrate otherwise for Stark’s theory is only addressed in the rather lengthy conclusion; yet when mention is in fact made, Clarke unfortunately rushes through the basic propositions without clearly reformulating them there for the reader. More unsettling is the way Clarke rashly offers an alternative eleventh proposition of his own, capitalizing perhaps on a personal hidden agenda. Readers, therefore, are prone to sift through Stark’s article in order to decipher Clarke’s rationale, but even after doing so, they are left to find that Clarke ultimately falls short of extrapolating the significance of Stark’s theory and clarifying the grounds on which his own justifications stand.

For Clarke, Japanese new religions abroad, regardless of the specific circumstances of when, where, or why they began their missions, were essentially all ethnic religions serving the immigrant Japanese community in various parts of the world since their first appearance overseas in the 1890s until after the Second World War in the 1950s. Japanese religions abroad therefore served to provide temporary spiritual and religious support for the Japanese community abroad because it was felt that these immigrants would someday return to their homeland. Clarke marks the thriving presence of Japanese new religions abroad to the 1960s as “rapid take off,” asserting their novelty in this way. He specifies the religions in the United States of the 1960s such as Zen with intellectual appeal and Soka Gakkai with mass appeal as testimony of such enthusiasm.
for Japanese new religions by non-Japanese Americans. Interestingly, note is that although Clarke suggests that leadership is not entirely responsible for the success of new religions, he underscores the missionary and administrative strategies of Masayasu Sadanaga, alias George Williams, as key to Soka Gakkai’s early success in the United States. This claim is nothing new in itself; rather, it intrigues us that Clarke brings this point up despite one of Stark’s propositions favoring “legitimate leaders with adequate authority to be effective” (Stark 1996, 139–140). Clarke, though signaling his intention to emulate Stark’s proposition, regretfully does not actually see these ramifications through.

Rather than revert to any of Stark’s propositions in the main body, Clarke shows a particular sensitivity to works done by scholars of Japanese new religious movements writing for a western audience and, from time to time in his line of argument, employs phrases such as “my data shows,” “my research says,” “my informants clarify,” or “official sources say,” when they actually refer to one and the same thing: an interview he carried out with members of a particular Japanese new religious movement abroad at their center or church. A closer look at his data — some with aliases as “Mr. X” or “Ms. Y” and others that obscurely indicate “members” of a particular group — reveal they are based on one-day visits, each lasting perhaps only a few hours at most, and are purportedly sufficient evidence for him toward unilaterally answering questions of success and failure of Japanese new religious movements abroad.

Scholars of Japanese new religions agree that sources are indeed limited on these religious movements in western languages which often constrain the researcher to carry out interviews and fieldwork for extended periods of time on their own. Helen Hardacre’s work on both Reiyūkai Kyōdan and Kurozumikyō (Hardacre 1984; 1986), Emily Ooms discussion on Ōmotokyo (Ooms 1993), or Robert Ellwood’s early deliberations on Tenrikyo (Ellwood 1982) although carried out in Japan are nevertheless exemplary of how one may go about engaging in specific case studies to come to terms with totally different religious worlds and also to make sound objective claims about them. Indeed, long-term engagement with a particular new religious movement characterized by a participant-observant approach becomes the hallmark of such inquiries. Clarke’s so-called “data” however show considerable flaws not only with regard to depth of penetration, but because of this absence, it also helps sustain false pronouncements such as the locations of both the oldest and largest Tenrikyo community in the United States. This begs the following question: how many other times does Clarke miss the point?

The resounding thrust of Clarke’s argument is whether Japanese religions are versatile enough to adapt to non-Japanese cultural surroundings. Those that are able to make adjustments are assumed to possess a higher rate to succeed than those that cannot, which according to Clarke, are unable to because they are being loyal to Japanese ethnocentrisms. In Clarke’s own words, the reason for the success of Soka Gakkai is that “no one is obliged to abandon their native culture or nationality in order to fully participate in the spiritual and cultural life of the movement” (Clarke 2000b, 281). This reiterates Stark’s first proposition that religions will succeed to the degree that “they
retain cultural continuity with the conventional faiths of the societies which they seek converts” (Stark 1996, 136) though not mentioned in that section of his article. Clarke leaves this point to take up in his conclusion; instead, he examines what he sees as the flip-side of success — failure — by particularly faultfinding Tenrikyo with its “slow growth” (Clarke 2000b, 287), as a religion being “limited in terms of range of experience and scope” (Clarke 2000b, 287) and ill-equipped to address the pluralistic and multi-ethnic world due to its ethnocentric implications of the teachings (Clarke 2000b, 287). In other words, the rhetoric can be understood as follows: if you are not a failure, then, you are a success, and if you are a success, then you are not a failure, and there lies nothing in between.

As “black and white” and elementary a perspective it may be, Clarke strongly insists that failure of new Japanese religions abroad is based solely upon a religion’s extent and degree of conforming to a different sociocultural milieu, and based upon the aforementioned research, he goes on to claim that Tenrikyo’s primary goal is strongly connected with the conservation of Japanese customs and culture because it refuses to adapt throughout the world over (Clarke 2000b, 288). Clarke deplores that “almost everything about Tenrikyo reinforces the image people have of this movement as a model of traditional Japanese life” (Clarke 2000b, 288) and therefore “has limited appeal to non-Japanese in the United States, Europe and elsewhere” (Clarke 2000b, 289). Tenrikyo is not the only religion being victimized for Clarke similarly sees all other Japanese new religious movements, with the exception of only a few, as examples of failure in the United States: Rissho Kosei-kai because of its difficulties of retaining second generation followers, Konkokyo because it is an ethnic Japanese religion and, despite their success in Brazil, Seicho no Ie and Messianity for their unwillingness to attract non-Japanese Americans which is perhaps the only requirement for Japanese new religious movements to be successful in the first place.

I conclude this brief critical review at this juncture so as to offset it with a different version of the story, employing the formation of Tenrikyo in Australia as a base for my argument. It will be hoped that this examination will serve to show resistance to Clarke’s unilateral perspective of Tenrikyo by pinpointing specific details of Tenrikyo’s presence and development in Australia as well a much needed understanding of that presence from those involved in that type of mission.

**The Groundwork of Tenrikyo in Australia**

**The Beginnings**

The formation of Tenrikyo in Australia goes back to 1969 when, as one of the commemorative projects of the Tenrikyo Young Men’s Association’s [hereafter TYMA] fiftieth anniversary, the organization sent nine members to study abroad and help inaugurate the mission in six countries: Singapore, Indonesia, Australia, Chile, Italy, and Israel. Two of its members, Shiba Motoichi and Ishizaki Yoshitaka, were sent to Australia. For our purposes, I draw upon the efforts of Shiba for his story proves pivotal.
Shiba attended La Trobe University in Melbourne from March 1969, leaving his wife, who was expecting their first child, in Japan. Approximately three months after his arrival, Shiba met up with another follower by the name of Michiko Jones. Michiko had become a Tenrikyo follower in Japan but then moved to Australia in 1955 when she married Brian Jones. Later that year, Michiko revamped her garage into a bungalow to allow Shiba to move in. In December 1970, Shiba’s wife and son, who he had not yet seen until then, came to join him, and in March 1971, Shiba transferred to Monash University as a graduate student. In the meantime, the Jones’ family began to perform the Tenrikyo service on a monthly basis at their home. In implementing these services, however, it was Michiko’s kind and generous personality that attracted others to their home services, enabling her to introduce the teachings of Tenrikyo to them. Ten people attended the home service regularly, and when numbers were large, approximately twenty people gathered (Shiba 1999, 13).

In 1973, two of the Jones’ daughters and a friend traveled to Tenrikyo’s administrative and spiritual headquarters located in Tenri city — known as the “home of the parent” by followers — to learn more about the religion. One of the Jones’ daughters and her friend received the Sazuke, and the other daughter went on to enroll in a Tenrikyo operated Japanese language school. In July 1974, Shiba completed his graduate studies, and from January 1975, Shiba taught Japanese language and culture part-time at Monash University. December 1975 is considered a watershed for the formation of Tenrikyo in Australia when, the entire Shiba family, Brian and Michiko Jones, Michiko’s sister Sumiko who had also immigrated to Australia, and Sumiko’s friend, made a pilgrimage to the “home of the parent.”

This was the first formal pilgrimage group organized from Australia and realized through Shiba’s conscious efforts to attend the ninetieth anniversary of Oyasama, a large-scale event held in January 1976 to commemorate ninety years since Nakayama Miki, the foundress of Tenrikyo, “withdrew from physical life.” Brian went on to attend a three-month spiritual development course, Michiko attended the head minister qualification course, and Sumiko received the Sazuke. The time was ripe to start considering ways to receive permission to formally carry out missionary work in that area. Though it took a few more years to receive approval, the Tenrikyo Melbourne Shinyu Mission Station was established in 1978 and Michiko became its head minister.

Consolidating the Groundwork

In 1981, Fukuda Ryoichi and his family set out to help with the responsibilities and maintenance of the mission station. Eventually, the Fukuda family would take the Tenrikyo mission to a further level in the years to come. For the first several years, however, times were difficult since they did not know the language or customs, and at times, the children were bullied at school. Fukuda remembers how the signpost of the mission station was broken down several times (Fukuda 1997, 67).
In 1984, Fukuda and his wife began to give Japanese language lessons to children. The story goes that Fukuda had previously taught children to play the fiffe and drum for the Royal Melbourne Show, giving him the opportunity to meet regularly with approximately eighty children and their families (Fukuda 1997, 73-74; Onoue 1996, 7). During that time, he realized that parents were uneasy about the scanty Japanese language instruction being given to their children. This led to the opportunity to extend a helping hand, to be of some service to the community, by holding Japanese lessons at the mission station. Children were taught Japanese in this way every Saturday afternoon and such lessons continue even to this day.

The Fukuda family has come in contact with a number of people through pedagogical and cultural activities, and through responding to immediate linguistic needs of those people, the family has imparted a few insights regarding the Tenrikyo teachings. And though religion is never pushed upon students, it does provide opportunities to make the presence of Tenrikyo known to the community. In point of fact, Fukuda has recounted that several children’s parents have asked for his spiritual advice, and though they might not become members, he emphasized that being there when needed is the most salient factor in their endeavor to help others (Fukuda 1990a, 11).

In 1989, Tenrikyo Church Headquarters [hereafter TCH] accepted the mission station’s petition to be elevated as a church, and for its official name, registered it as Tenrikyo Melbourne Shinyu Church. Preparations for this drive began among its members two years prior by deepening an understanding of the Tenrikyo teachings, organizing pilgrimages to the “home of the parent,” and constructing what would later become the worship hall for the church (Fukuda 1990b). At that time, the head minister of the mission station’s parent church advised Fukuda that “rather than to have the buds sprout, you ought to work toward making the roots strong” (Fukuda 1990b), and he continues to this very day to move about with a compliant attitude of not expecting to see immediate results of his selfless efforts for the mission.

The Tenrikyo Oceania Centre

In 1997, TCH established the Tenrikyo Oceania Centre [hereafter the Centre] in Brisbane and appointed Adachi Masafumi to head the mission upon receiving legal recognition. Prior to the founding of the Centre, there were approximately 240 followers in Australia, with one church, three mission stations, and six directly supervised offices operating under different cities and circumstances. However none of these facilities were under direct supervision of TCH. The need to establish a place managed by the religion’s administrative and spiritual center had been on the minds of many for years. The role and responsibilities of the new Centre would be to provide spiritual support and care for members regardless of Tenrikyo’s internal church affiliation, to bring forth Tenrikyo-based information and news to the diocese, and to implement activities sponsored by TCH in the Australian diocese such as lecture series, rallies, and pilgrimages.

As preparations for establishing the Centre were being made, the Tenrikyo Young
Men’s Association announced in April 1997 that they would launch three projects commemorating its eightieth anniversary to be celebrated the following year: 1) recruiting and sending members to engage in the overseas mission; 2) spreading the Tenrikyo teachings in Australia; 3) donating literature on Tenrikyo to libraries around the world (TYMA 1998, 22). These tasks replicated its fiftieth anniversary campaign thirty years earlier, reaffirming members’ responsibilities in the overseas mission and assisting them in actually carrying them out. To fulfill the second duty of “spreading the teachings in Australia,” TYMA set out three objectives: building a Tenri Youth Hall at the newly established TOC, sending members to serve as staff at the same Centre, and organizing short-term study group tours so as to heighten an awareness of the mission in Australia. To implement these projects, they launched a campaign to collect funds from members (Nakata 1999, 15).

**Present Activities at the Centre**

According to Adachi, the present head of the Centre, the mission in Australia is still in its early stages, having begun with Shiba’s arrival several decades ago, and therefore, many still do not know the presence of Tenrikyo in Australia. He strongly insists that efforts must first be made to have the community become familiar with the name “Tenrikyo” for this will open a venue to get to know its contents later. Thus, when the centre organizes door-to-door proselytizing twice a month, they are perceived not so much as opportunities to win new converts, but rather as a way to have people know the presence of Tenrikyo in that area. TYMA study tours have interacted with the local community with this scope, enlarging people’s awareness of the religion. Besides these activities, cultural ones such as *ikebana* [flower arrangement] and tea ceremony are intermittently carried out. The centre also organizes a sleepover for children at the Centre four times a year, somewhat parallel to a one night indoor camping event, so that youngsters can attain first hand experience of getting to know the people and grounds of the facility through fun and games. Every Sunday morning, residents of the Centre can be seen cleaning up the streets in the neighborhood. From 1999, the Centre has sponsored a charity bazaar every other year and allocates its proceeds to a charitable institution, and from 2002, the Centre has dispatched at least one staff member each day to assist in the activities at a school for the mentally challenged. Parallel to these activities, the Centre, together with the support of the Tenrikyo Overseas Department, sponsors a lecture series held intermittently in the major cities of Australia that aim at involving the general public to become more familiar with the Tenrikyo teachings.

**An Internal Understanding of the Mission**

Making the name Tenrikyo known to those who have never heard of the religion is anchored on doctrinal and historical grounds. The objective of this final section therefore is to demonstrate an insider’s perception of this aspect of the mission. By so doing, the viewpoints will not only complement what has been said so far on the formation of
Tenrikyo in Australia, but will continue to reframe the picture portrayed by Clarke as well. This perspective therefore will clarify the ideals that motivate the types of action thus far reviewed. Two basic assertions have been chosen to reveal these ideals and they are 1) “sprinkling the fragrance of the teachings” is the first step in missionary work and 2) missionary work is essentially an individual enterprise.

**Nioigake** : “Sprinkling the Fragrance of the Teachings” as the First Step in Mission

The foundress of Tenrikyo, Nakayama Miki, spoke of means to implement mission by using the metaphor of smell. She taught that people who understand the intention of God will emit an attractive aroma that would enable others to become familiar with the religious message. Thus *nioigake* — translated as “sprinkling the fragrance of the teachings” as mentioned in some places above — is the phrase Miki used to describe the casting of a special Tenrikyo-based aroma to others and perceived as a first step in enabling others to lead a happy joyous life. Many accept *nioigake* as the beginnings of a larger purpose in missionary work, i.e., a way into administering the healing ritual of the Sazuke or performing the Tenrikyo service. *Nioigake* is believed to be a prologue to these exclusive types of “salvation work” and considered the most natural way of transmitting the religion’s doctrine because aroma can be emitted by anyone and anywhere, and at anytime so as long as an individual is able to live according to the tenets of the Tenrikyo teachings.

Propagating the Tenrikyo teachings thus implies that there is a very passive factor to it in that, just as flowers emit a pleasant fragrance to its proximity, the transmission of doctrine may or may not be distinguished by others. More often than not, it is the continuous emission of a scent that is most pressing by those carrying it out, regardless of whether passersby will take notice of it. In retrospect, if *nioigake* is to be understood as a means of “winning new converts” or “enlarging the membership of the congregation,” then, most would feel that it is no longer *nioigake* : Tenrikyo makes it a point that *nioigake* and door-to-door proselytizing are in actuality worlds apart. Rather than seeing *nioigake* as a means to a specific goal, “sprinkling the fragrance of the teachings” is an end in itself: the diffusion of a Tenrikyo type of fragrance.

Historically, it was Nakayama Miki’s youngest daughter, Kokan, who first hand whiffed her mother’s “aroma” and did *nioigake* in the bustling city of Osaka (Nakayama 1986, 29–34). This took place in 1853 when Kokan was just a young girl of seventeen. She reportedly stood for three days on busy street corners singing “Namu Tenri-O-no-Mikoto,” the name given to God according to Tenrikyo doctrine, over and over while maintaining a rhythmic beat with the wooden clappers she had brought along with her. Tenrikyo missionaries acknowledge this as one of the many models provided in understanding the meaning of “sprinkling the fragrance of the teachings” in that this very act did not actually arouse people’s minds to seek further into what the doctrine had to offer; on the contrary, it is said that Kokan was most likely shunned and ignored.
This was purportedly carried out without any thought for the self, or any expectations with regard to gaining future membership, despite the fact that there was hardly anyone who knew of Tenrikyo at that time.

The initial stage of missionary work in Tenrikyo — both domestic and overseas — is through nioigake, and presently, there are formal ways to carry this out: passing out pamphlets, approaching homes door-to-door, preaching on street corners, and implicitly conveying the message to family and friends. These are some of the traditional forms “sprinkling the fragrance of the teachings” in Tenrikyo. On an informal level, however, nioigake can be carried out simply through “being” — or “being there” in the mission territories — in that “being there” as a Tenrikyo member will, like a particular smell, release a special scent based on the teachings of Tenrikyo irrespective of whether the individual is formally conscious of taking part in a nioigake activity.

Activities carried out as nioigake endeavors in Australia by Adachi and Fukuda, and Shiba and Michiko before them, in retrospect have not been carried out only for the express purpose of increasing membership nor does it mean the opposite in that the number of converts represent the fruits of their nioigake efforts. Rather, and especially true in the case with the various activities associated with the Centre, nioigake signifies emitting a continuous Tenrikyo fragrance to others as such. Taking that first step in enabling others to know of Tenrikyo’s existence is a goal and an end in itself. In effect, then, a disregard for the number of converts while engaging in missionary work, then, can be summed up as follows: “Whether people accept the fragrance of the teachings or not is determined by the blessing of God the Parent and, thus, we need not be concerned with this. Of much greater importance is that we actually sprinkle the fragrance. I should like you to be clearly aware that to sprinkle fragrance is the mission of Yoboku” (Tenrikyo Doyusha, 1996, 72).

Missionary Work as an Individual Enterprise

The most basic element of the missiological process begins with the individual who is convinced of the Tenrikyo teachings. This person may have heard it from someone else equally exuberant about Tenrikyo’s teachings and ideals as a way to lead a joyous life, and cannot help but convey the belief to others. Throughout Tenrikyo’s history, in point of fact, the role played by individuals in propagating Tenrikyo and assuring others of its effectiveness was quite remarkable in the early period of its formation, causing great concern for critics, the media, and government authorities alike (Tenrikyo Overseas Mission Department 1998, 58).

Individual missionaries with such zeal and enthusiasm have established the churches that exist in Tenrikyo today. On their way toward establishing a church, however, it is quite common that they first establish a mission station as we have seen in Shiba’s case. A church leader may request a passionate member to lead a different congregation and mold it into a subordinate church as seen in Fukuda’s example above: the church he guides in Australia today is a subordinate church of a parent church in Japan. This
parent-child relationship between churches is a common organizational characteristic that purportedly developed out of a Japanese cultural paradigm. Nevertheless, it does play a specific role in the mission [see note 8].

Though a parent church should meet the basic needs of its subordinate church, which includes matters of how to finance the church, an offshoot church will ask nothing more from its parent church than spiritual advice, and will strive to demonstrate its loyalty through attending the services and activities of the parent church regardless of geographical distance between them (Mori 1986). What is vital for organizational ties between churches to work smoothly however is that sound individual relationships exist between the minister of the parent church and ministers of branch churches. In other words, though the Tenrikyo organization is highly institutionalized and structurally construed in top-down fashion, trusting individual bonds between leaders of congregations are neglected but important factors of the mission.

For Shiba, and though originally selected and sent by TYMA to study in Australia for two years, it was ultimately left up to him to implement what he did: create the groundwork toward the establishment of a local church. He was very much on his own, as his testimony conveys, which indicates “a Tenrikyo capacity to act alone, without support of a close-knit group at all times” (Ellwood 1982, 94). Shiba’s narrative conveys that times were often difficult. It was at these critical junctures that the spiritual support from his parent church proved to be invaluable (Shiba 1979).

Tenrikyo ministers are sanctioned as leaders of their congregation by Tenrikyo authorities but are then free to choose to what extent they carry out missionary work. The irony is that, though a minister is required to find a way to the “home of the parent” to receive the Sazuke, to complete the three-month spiritual development course [Shuyoka], or to attend the head minister’s qualification course, they are free to choose what they do after receiving institutional consent. The church establishment may appear to have a fairly tight control over matters regarding the actual mission, yet in reality, the individual has the final say on the way he or she goes about carrying out missionary work. This is especially true when the local church is located thousands of miles away from its parent church in that missionaries may sometimes take up a slightly different but closely related vocation out of necessity because no material support is imparted by a parent church: the missionary is quite free to discover ways to become self-supportive. Paradoxically, then, a free and unstructured missionary may just be a byproduct of the highly institutionalized Tenrikyo church structure.

By Way of Closing

Tenrikyo’s church structure, in the strict order of TCH, grand church, branch church, and mission station, is a highly institutionalized religious organization. This organizational enterprise goes as far back as when Tenrikyo itself was seeking official recognition in the early years of the twentieth century and continues to exist today regardless of its pyramidal formation. Despite this feature, however, we have seen how
Tenrikyo in Australia progressed through the efforts of several individual missionaries. Some were originally sent by an internal association such as TYMA as in the case of Shiba, others through the mandate of a parent church as in the case of Fukuda, while others through the directives of TCH as in the case of Adachi. In this essay, these three individuals have been highlighted to show just how missionary work overseas is an individual enterprise, a very free and unstructured one, within the backdrop of this top-down ecclesiastical arrangement.

Tenrikyo as a church institution has no alternative but to publish works and make it known that they recommend members to engage in “bringing in new members,” “increasing the number of followers,” and “conveying the message to as many people possible,” something quite obvious to those familiar with religious movements that are mission bent. Scholars such as Peter Clarke have focused on the winning of new converts by Japanese new religious movements, and when comparing this blueprint with membership statistics abroad, a large discrepancy between the two becomes evident whereby “failure” becomes a term used to characterize the gap. However, this claim becomes less plausible due to the glitches reflected in his research method as well as his one-sided mastery of Tenrikyo doctrine. Moreover, acknowledging a religion as “failure” is a claim that goes far beyond the scope of an academic of religion since a bitter value judgment is being made upon an object purportedly under scholarly examination. Tomoko Masuzawa, in response to her own critics, strikes a chord with the tenor of this essay when she says “failure” is unilateral and doesn’t invite a response, leaving no room for compromise for it cuts off debate. She ultimately goes on to affirm: “Accordingly, to declare someone’s failure is not without risk. For, proportionate to its deflating power, the pronouncement of failure has an enormous potential for energizing reaction, in all manners of negativity, if the judgment could be felt to be the least bit unjust or out of place” (Masuzawa 2008, 143). We have taken these considerations to heart and review one final point before closing.

The individual faith of a missionary moves him or her to do what he or she does, usually through some form of nioigake, “sprinkling the fragrance of the teachings.” As we have mentioned, nioigake is not looked upon as a means for something else; rather it is an end in itself and if we were to give a reason for carrying out these activities, the resounding incentive appears to be for the sake of individual growth. Upward mobility or a better position within the church structure, however highly institutionalized it may appear to be for an objective scholar, is presumably not one of the reasons to create the groundwork for a community of members. It is for these reasons that, despite a tendency toward unfavorable numerical statistics, Tenrikyo individuals continue to qualitatively engage in the foreign mission.
A notable exception is Robert S. Ellwood’s early work on Japanese new religions in the United States (Ellwood 1974). Ellwood later went on to publish a volume on Tenrikyo where he provides a short description of the Tenrikyo mission overseas (Ellwood 1982, 105–109). For an overview of Tenrikyo in the English language, and among the several publications available, refer to a sociological analysis of Tenrikyo (Newell and Dobashi 1968); a reflection on Tenrikyo mission from the “outside” (Marras 1982); several non-Tenrikyo perspectives (Oyasato Institute for the Study of Religion 1986); the official doctrine (TCH 1993); an introduction to the history and teachings of Tenrikyo (Tenrikyo Overseas Mission Department 1998); and a study on the ritual dance in Tenrikyo (Morishita 2001).

TYMA was formed by young male members in 1918 “out of the passionate desire of the youth in those days to spread the teachings further by their own hands. . . . It was not what somebody taught them; rather, it was what sprang up from within themselves” (TYMA 1999a, 3). Throughout the years, the group’s main theme has been “to be pioneers of the Path,” that is, to venture outward and take advantage of their young vigorous nature and enthusiasm “to spread the teachings ever more widely” to people throughout the world (TYMA 1998, 21). The overseas mission, then, was always a crucial element in the mission for young male members serious about sprinkling the fragrance of the teachings abroad.

Japanese personal names are given in the standard order of family name followed by their given name when they appear for the first time. Thereafter, the family name will be used at times when referring to the person, not out of disrespect, but for the sake of simplicity. Western personal names, on the other hand, will be given in the standard order of name followed by their family name the first time they appear including Japanese nationals who have married Westerners. In this case, their first name will be used thereafter also for the sake of simplicity unless otherwise indicated.

Shiba Motoichi, during a conversation with the author in May 2004.

The “home of the parent” is a translation of the Tenrikyo term, oyasato. This refers to the area surrounding the Jiba, the spot where according to Tenrikyo doctrine humankind was first conceived. A hexagonal wooden stand called the Kanrodaï, literally “sweet dew stand,” has been erected to mark the Jiba, and it is around the Kanrodaï that Tenrikyo’s most important ritual, the Kagura Service, is performed on a monthly basis. Four large worship halls surround this Jiba-Kanrodaï, symbolizing the four cardinal directions from where worshipers “return home” to what is believed to be humankind’s original place of creation. What follows is that making a pilgrimage “home” is an indispensable act of faith for Tenrikyo members, and when people visit Tenrikyo’s spiritual and administrative centre even for the first time, “welcome home” gestures of various sorts are made to visitors by members responsible for the task of receiving pilgrims.

The Sazuke has two intertwining referents. First, the Sazuke is a “truth” granted upon an individual upon listening to a series of nine lectures called the Besseki. These lectures can only be given at the “home of the parent” [see note 5 above]. Therefore, the Jones’ daughter and friend completed the series of the nine lectures and were endowed a grant to perform
Tenrikyo’s healing rite. Upon receiving this truth of the Sazuke by the Shinbashira, the spiritual leader of Tenrikyo, it then takes on another meaning as the Tenrikyo healing rite. That is, the person who has received the truth of the Sazuke is called a Yoboku, literally “useful timber” and often translated as “missionary.” The Yoboku, who has been granted the truth of the Sazuke, is recognized formally as someone able to administer it as a form of prayer to those who are afflicted with an illness.

Fukuda’s longing to engage in overseas missionary activities began at a very young age when he visited the United States with his high school brass band to perform in the annual Rose Parade of 1966. During his short visit, he was able to experience the Tenrikyo mission in the United States which inspired him to engage in overseas missionary work someday in the future. Thus, prior to graduating from high school, he thought of going to the Philippines to study English. Yet the head minister of his parent church, the same church Shiba was affiliated to, disapproved of this idea since the church was undergoing renovations at that time. Instead, Fukuda studied Indonesian at Tenri University and commuted to school from his parent church. He eventually went to Indonesia to begin missionary work but returned to Japan due to malaria. Just about the time he had accepted the idea that his longing for the foreign mission could not be realized, the head minister of his parent church asked him and his family to engage in missionary work in Australia.

The basic entities of church organization otherwise known as the religion’s institution are in the order of TCH, grand churches, branch [local] churches [or simply churches in overseas countries], and mission stations. Presently, there are 159 grand churches and 16,980 branch churches institutionalized under the umbrella of Tenrikyo’s church system. As mentioned earlier, TCH is located at the “home of the parent,” the area around the place called the Jiba, and serves as the administrative and spiritual centre for the religion as a whole. A grand church is a church that was established in early in Tenrikyo’s history with at least fifty or more subordinate churches. All Tenrikyo members are therefore affiliated with his or her own branch church, the local church, as well as a “directly supervised church,” a grand church, which is linked through the relationship of grand/branch churches. These grand churches, in turn, are supervised and guided by TCH. In the case of both Shiba and Fukuda, they both belong to the same grand church, Shikishima Grand Church, through their ties with a particular local church, Katsujō Branch Church. Therefore, when TCH establishes a facility abroad [either a mission headquarters, mission center, or mission post], it is directly nurtured and supported by the religion as a whole, and not by a grand or branch church. Though it may appear highly group oriented and often pigeon-holed under the rubric of the ie system (Ellwood 1982, 95), I argue below that the church institutional organization may conceal important “individual,” especially in regard to missiological, factors.

The Centre is presently located in Brisbane with three separate buildings standing: a place for worship, a modest living quarter, and the Tenri Youth Hall. This two-story Tenri Youth Hall was built by TYMA and donated to the Centre for the express purpose of implementing the mission. On the first floor, there are several different sized study rooms, a meeting room, an office, and the dining hall, and on the second floor, there are rooms for
lodging. Completed in June 1998, this edifice is the hallmark for the Centre, for it is
hoped that it “will serve as a stable place for followers to come to . . . [and] a place for
various kinds of activities in the future which will support the endeavor to spread the
teachings” (TYMA 1999b, 31).

(10) The following is a summary of the activities and ideals of the Centre that was mentioned
during a conversation the author had with Adachi Masafumi in April 2004.

(11) Ellwood implies a liminal factor to this missionary process as follows: “In Japan, one can
often hear Tenrikyo street preaching, get Tenrikyo pamphlets pushed into one’s hand, or
find a smiling missioner at one’s door. This is what the Shuyoka [three month spiritual
development course held at TCH] graduate is really supposed to do — go out utterly
without support, trusting entirely on God, sleeping in the open, eating only what is given,
trying to start a new church in a new district, or strengthen an existing one without
thought for self. It is through persons like this, as we have seen, that new churches are
really supposed to begin. This free, unstructured side of Tenrikyo, counterbalances the
endless rows of bureaucratic desks in the Honbu [TCH], and the careful rituals of the
sanctuary” (Ellwood 1982, 103).

(12) In the case of the Centre, on the other hand, Adachi works full-time for the mission he
leads in Brisbane. In addition, the maintenance of the Centre is funded by TCH and the
offerings received by local members help support its various activities. Live-in youths, as
they are dubbed, are sent from TCH to help manage with the administrative and religious
affairs for a predetermined period of time. In any case, the differences between the two
modes of engaging in the overseas mission, one which is supported by TCH and serving
therefore as an official “representative” of Tenrikyo in the strict sense of the word, and the
other, which are facilities that have been established by individuals belonging to both
grand and branch churches in Japan, are two types of missionary outposts that have often
been confounded by many. Yet, in reality, the difference cannot be more important to
distinguish especially in light of the criticism the overseas mission has received from
outsiders who naturally presume they are all the same.

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