

Introduction: Why An Issue in Japanese

The Journal of CESNUR

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ABSTRACT: The Church of Almighty God is a Chinese new religious movement that has been mentioned by Japanese media for its persecution in China, fake news spread about alleged crimes it committed, and refugee issues in Japan. *The Journal of CESNUR* publishes texts and documents that may help Japanese scholars understanding the issue, and assist at the same time those making decisions on asylum seekers.

KEYWORDS: The Church of Almighty God, Refugees in Japan, Religion-Based Refugee Claims, Chinese Asylum Seekers, Fake News.

The Journal of CESNUR publishes its first issue in Japanese. It is a monographic issue devoted to a Chinese Christian new religious movement, The Church of Almighty God, with a substantial section of documents.

We decided to publish this particular issue in Japanese due to the interest surrounding The Church of Almighty God in Japan. There are three reasons for this interest. First, reports about massive persecution and torture in China of members of that Church have reached also some Japanese media. In many respects, The Church of Almighty God is the new Falun Gong. It is considered today by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as the quintessential “evil cult” to eradicate, and as a serious threat to the regime. Those arrested are in the hundreds of thousands, those tortured in the tens of thousands, with frequent reports of extra-judicial killings and organ harvesting (Respinti 2019). Significantly, the U.S. Department of State in the section on China of its annual report on human rights, released on March 13, 2019, mentioned The Church of Almighty God, together with Falun Gong and the Uyghur Muslims, among the main victims of torture by CCP (U.S. Department of State 2019, 4).

Second, The Church of Almighty God is sensationalized in media reports, including in Japan, not only because of the persecution but also because it is accused of crimes, including the homicide of a woman in a McDonald's diner in Zhaoyuan, Shandong, in 2014. Scholars in the West have studied these accusations and concluded they are fake news fabricated by the CCP to justify the persecution. But these scholarly works are not well-known in Japan, and certainly the general public has an easier access to sensational media accounts. One article in this issue deals with the fake news, and two others with specific false accusations: one with the McDonald's case, and one with the frequently heard, but inaccurate, claim that The Church of Almighty God is "against the family." These texts are introduced by a general, short introduction to the Church's history, theology, and activities.

Third, Japan has a humanitarian problem connected with the presence of refugees from The Church of Almighty God who escaped China. As of February 2019, 281 refugees from the Church are seeking asylum in Japan. None of their requests has been granted. Japan has a well-known problem with asylum seekers in general. According to the *Japan Times*, in 2017 Japan received 19,628 asylum requests, and only 20 were accepted (Osumi 2018).

At the 40th session of the United Nations' Human Rights Council (25 February–22 March 2019), the French NGO CAP-LC (Coordination des associations et des particuliers pour la liberté de conscience), which is among the NGOs accredited at the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), submitted a written statement protesting the situation of the CAG refugees in Japan, published on the United Nations' official Web site (CAP-LC 2019), and translated into Japanese and published in this issue of *The Journal of CESNUR*. An oral discussion followed (Mirre 2019).

The general issue of refugees in Japan is immensely complicated (Sıddıkoğlu 2017; Chen 2017), and cannot be solved by scholars of religions. However, in the case of The Church of Almighty God, the fact that this Church is not well-known, while fake news about it are widely present on the Web, certainly makes the situation of its refugees in Japan even more difficult. To help those who take decisions about asylum seekers in Japan, we have translated into Japanese several important documents that have been used as evidence in cases in other countries and have often led to decisions granting asylum to members of The Church of Almighty God.

The question whether scholars of religion, and in particular scholars of new religious movements may or should engage in advocacy has been widely discussed (Richardson 1996; Introvigne 2014). It is the position of *The Journal of CESNUR* that advocacy in the shape of providing objective information to legal and political decision-makers is legitimate. In issues involving refugees, it may even become morally necessary. The case of the refugees of The Church of Almighty God in Japan is an eloquent example. As examples of refugees members of the same Church in other countries demonstrate, asylum seekers from The Church of Almighty God who are deported back to China are arrested, sentenced, and often tortured. Academics cannot just sit idle when information they are able to provide may avoid these tragedies and save human lives.

References

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序論: 日本語版の配信にあたって

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要旨: 全能神教会とは中国の新興宗教団体である。日本のメディアは、中国での同団体への弾圧、同団体が実行したと疑われている犯罪に関して広められた虚偽報道、日本での難民の問題について報じている。The Journal of CESNURは、日本の研究者がこの問題を理解し、亡命希望者の認定の決定を下す上で役立つ記事や文書を配信している。

キーワード: 全能神教会、日本における難民、宗教を基にした難民申請、中国人の亡命希望者、フェイクニュース。

The Journal of CESNUR を日本語で初めて発行いたします。本誌は中国のキリスト教系新興宗教団体の全能神教会を主題とした単行号であり、充実した資料を提供しております。

CESNUR(新宗教研究センター)は日本での全能神教会に対する関心の高まりから、この特別号を日本語で配信することにした。次の3つの理由から、日本でも関心が高まっているといえる。まず、全能神教会の信者の中国における大規模な弾圧と拷問に関する報道が、一部の日本のメディアでも報じられている。多くの点で、全能神教会は新たな法輪功と言えらる。現在、全能神教会は、中国共産党から、根絶すべき典型的な「邪悪なカルト」、そして、政権への深刻な脅威と見なされている。逮捕者は数十万人、拷問を受けた信者の人数は数万人にのぼり、そして、裁判を経ない処刑および臓器摘出に関する報告が頻繁に行われている(Respinti 2019)。米務省は、2019年3月13日に公表した人権に関する年次報告書の中国の項目において、中国共産党による拷問の主な被害者として、ウイグル族のムスリム、法輪功の信者とともに全能神教会の信者を挙げていたが、この点は大きな意味を持つ(U.S. Department of State 2019: 4)。

第二に全能神教会は、弾圧に関してだけでなく、2014年に山東省招遠市のマクドナルドで夕食を取っていた女性が殺害された事件を含む犯罪への関与を疑われ、日本のメディアの報道でも取り上げられた。欧米の研究者はこれらの疑いを調査し、これは中国共産党が迫害を正当化するために捏造したフェイクニュースであると結論づけた。しかし、これらの研究者による調査は日本では知名度が低く、また、一般の市民にとっては刺激的なメディア報道の方がアクセ

スしやすい。本号ではフェイニュースを取り上げた論文を 1 本掲載した。さらに、マクドナルドの事件や、全能神教会が「反家族的」という頻りに耳にするものの不正確な情報をテーマとした論文を 1 本ずつ掲載している。一連の論文は、冒頭で全能神教会の歴史、神学理論および活動について、大まかだが、簡潔に紹介している。

第三に、日本は中国から逃亡した全能神教会の信者の難民の存在に関して人道的な問題を抱えている。2019 年 2 月の段階で、同教会の 281 人の信者が日本で亡命を申請している。亡命が認定された者は一人もいない。また、日本が亡命希望者全般に関して持つ問題はよく知られている。日本は一般的に難民に対して厳格な方針を採用している。ジャパンタイムズ紙 (Japan Times) によると、2017 年、日本は 1 万 9,628 人の難民申請を受けたものの、申請を認めたのはたったの 20 人であった (Osumi 2018)。

国連人権理事会の第 40 回目の会合 (2019 年 2 月 25 日~3 月 22 日) で、国連経済社会理事会が認めたフランスの NGO の CAP-LC (Coordination des associations et des particuliers pour la liberté de conscience) が、日本での全能神教会の難民の現状を記した声明書を提出した。この声明書は国連の公式サイト (CAP-LC 2019) から配信されており、また、本号の The Journal of CESNUR で日本語に翻訳したものを提供している。今後、口頭による議論の予定もある (Mirre 2019)。

日本での難民に関する問題は非常に複雑であり (Siddikoğlu 2017; Chen 2017)、宗教の専門家が解決できるものではない。しかし、全能神教会に関しては、この団体があまりよく知られていないものの、フェイクニュースがウェブ上で広範に配信されているため、日本にいる同団体の難民の状況をさら厳しくしている。日本で亡命申請する決断を下した信者を支援するため、CESNUR は諸外国で証拠として用いられ、全能神教会の信者の亡命を認定する決断につながるが多かった複数の重要な文書を日本語に翻訳した。

宗教の専門家、とりわけ新興宗教団体の専門家が擁護活動に関与できるかどうか、関与すべきかどうかに関する疑問は広く議論されてきた (Richardson 1996; Introvigne 2014)。The Journal of CESNUR は、客観的な情報を法的小および政治的な意思決定者に提供する行為は妥当であるという立場だ。難民に関する課題においては、道徳面で必要になりつつある。日本にいる全能神教会の信者の難民の問題がこの点をよく物語っている。諸外国に亡命を希望した同教会の信者のうち中国に送還された者は逮捕され、有罪判決を受け、きに拷問を受けていることが証明されている。提供可能な情報がこのような悲劇を避け、

人の命を救うことができる可能性がある場合、研究者は行動を起こさずにはいられないものだ。

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