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Massimo Introvigne

Loup Blanc: A French Shaman and the Anti-Cult Police

Massimo Introvigne

CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions)

maxintrovigne@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: In 2021, a French spiritual master called Cyrille Adam (Loup Blanc) was arrested, accused of “abuse of vulnerability” (*abus de faiblesse*) and “aggravated rape” by six former disciples. Based on published and confidential material and interviews with students, the article reconstructs the teachings of Loup Blanc and the organization of his group. While the Tantric sexual work performed with a minority of female students was never a main feature of Loup Blanc’s teachings and practices, I discuss it in detail since it is at the center of both media controversies and the legal case.

KEYWORDS: Loup Blanc, Cyrille Adam, Chamanisme de l’Origine, Harmonia, Oxyon 777, Neo-Tantrism, Anti-Cultism in France.

Introduction

The neoclassical Castle of Granès, located in a village in the French department of Tarn-et-Garonne, dates back to the 17th century, but was entirely rebuilt in 1886 following a project by renowned architect Jacques-Paul Lequeux (1846–1907). His majestic century-old peace was disturbed in the morning of December 7, 2021. Six carloads of police officers came to raid the castle and arrested Cyrille Adam, a spiritual master known to his students as “Loup Blanc” (White Wolf), who taught and gave initiations to students there. After a disgruntled ex-member had accused him of abuse of vulnerability (*abus de faiblesse*), regarded in France as the crime, typical of “cults,” that involves the use of psychological techniques to control “cult victims,” and five women claimed they had been abused, Loup Blanc was arrested. The French specialized anti-cult police CAIMADES (Assistance and Intervention Unit in the Field of Cultic Deviances, Cellule d’assistance et d’intervention en matière de dérives sectaires),

started looking for other “victims” prepared to testify, including by posting an appeal on Twitter, which was picked up and publicized by twenty-one different French media (Roux 2022).

The saga of Loup Blanc started, with dozens of articles about the “sex shaman” published in France (69 until January 2023, plus five video reports broadcasted by TV networks or social media). French media have a strong bias about groups labeled as “cults” (sectes), and this story featuring sex, shamanism, and mysterious rituals promised to be particularly juicy.

I have studied several groups teaching sacred eroticism whose leaders were accused of sexual abuse, from the Romanian movement MISA (Introvigne 2022a) to the Czech Guru Jára Path (Introvigne 2019), and beyond. I have emphasized in my studies of these groups, and reiterate here once again, that I do not condone sexual abuse, and do not believe that its perpetrators can protect themselves by invoking freedom of religion or belief.

Studying movements whose practices include sacred eroticism, on which I started publishing in 1990 through a book that remains an oft-quoted reference in the field, *Il cappello del mago* (The Magician’s Hat: Introvigne 1990), is a delicate matter. By exploring these movements for more than thirty years, I did come across instances of abuse. Even more often, I encountered cases in which anti-cultists, the media, and the police argued that practices combining spirituality and eroticism in which women are led by a male guru through sex-based rituals are always and by definition abusive. If the women themselves deny the abuse, it is because they are victims of brainwashing. Not believing in the existence of brainwashing (Introvigne 2022b), I do not accept this theory either, and maintain that each case should be studied in its own context.

It is not for scholars to assess whether Loup Blanc is guilty or innocent. We are simply not equipped to ascertain what really happened between him and those who are now the plaintiffs in the criminal case. However, scholars specialized in new religious movements can contribute to the debate on Loup Blanc a piece missing in the media discussion: a reconstruction of what his teachings are all about, and why a certain number of students follow him. My sources are the voluminous public and internal literature of Loup Blanc’s group of students, written statements by several of his pupils, and personal interviews with ten students (eight women and two men, for whom I use pseudonyms) in February and March 2023. I also interviewed the lawyer representing Loup Blanc, read the

statements of those plaintiffs in the court case who talked to the media, and a good number of hostile articles. Finally, I submitted some question to Loup Blanc himself, who answered them from jail.

A “Ferryman of Souls”

Loup Blanc is defined by the media as a “guru” or “shaman,” but he prefers to be called a “passeur d’âmes,” a “ferryman of souls.”

There are all kinds of jobs on this globe, he writes, but the most beautiful and the most useful is that of a ferryman, not just any ferryman, but the ferryman of souls. Yes, a ferryman of souls! The ferryman would take people across to the other side when there was no bridge, that’s what KYRIOS [one of the first names he used, before “Loup Blanc”] does in the simplest way possible. No decoration on the boat, no fuss, no muss, whether it’s decorated or simple it will take you to the other side. The other shore KYRIOS is talking about is the one we don’t even know exists. Perhaps we have heard of it, but we have never wanted to make the effort to set foot on it. KYRIOS helps us because it knows this other shore, the inner shore, and this is what he proposes to us: to go to the other, inner shore and set foot on this still virgin land that conceals unsuspected treasures (Kyrios 2008, 7–8).

A “passeur d’âmes” is born rather than made. Born in Chantilly, in Paris’ metropolitan area, on December 20, 1951, Loup Blanc reports that he had his first spiritual experiences at age 7 (Chamanisme de l’Origine 2023). Answering my questions about his first experiences, he added that

When he was about 18 years old, the Christ appeared in the room where he was relaxing, he was full of light, alive, real. The Christ took out his sacred heart and put it in his [Loup Blanc’s] heart and said, ‘I give you my sacred heart to fight scorpions and snakes.’

After having practiced martial arts for several years, and achieved a certain fame as a self-taught poet, painter, musician, and photographer, Cyrille Adam, in his own words, realized in 1980 that “believing he was doing many things, he understood that in fact he was not doing anything at all” (J.L.B. 2009a, 23). In that year, “something came down from heaven to encounter this being [Loup Blanc]” and his “life changed completely” (J.L.B. 2009a, 23–4). On February 2, 1982, he gave his first public lecture (J.L.B. 2009a, 24).

In 1983, the first structure gathering his students and coordinating his work was created, with the name Invitation à la Vie (no relations with the new religious movement founded with the same name, coincidentally in the same year 1983, by

Yvonne Trubert). As the main structure for Loup Blanc's students, it was replaced by Association Nitya Yoga in 1988, Association Harmonia in 1989, and Association Oxyon 777 in 1994. The latter was dissolved in 1999, in a context marked by the French controversies about "cults," to which I will return. A number of auxiliary organizations were also established: publishing houses, real estate managing companies, and an Académie européenne du Qi Gong Chinois de l'envol de la grue et techniques affinitaires (European Academy of Crane Flight Qi Gong and Similar Techniques), founded in 1996 and managing inter alia Qi Gong stages in France with masters invited from China.

Originally, Loup Blanc lectured and conducted the group stages called "initiations" in rented locations and in the premises of some students, including a farm in Brou (near Chartres) and lodges in Soeuvres (near Vézelay). In 2001, a student bought the Castle of Granès, where most initiations have taken place since, including after December 2020 when the castle was sold to an American gentleman who continues to rent it to the association managing the activities of Loup Blanc. Two students bought in 1999 a house in Sumène (Gard), where Loup Blanc, who lived beforehand in rented apartments or in the homes of followers, resided until July 2021. He then moved to a property bought by students in the Western Pyrenees, which also serves as a spiritual, ecological, and artistic center.

Stages were also offered in Peru, where land was bought in 2006 in El Paraíso (The Heaven), and some wooden houses were built. Three students moved there. There was no electricity, and the houses were very simple. However, my interviewees who went there found the experience "beautiful" and even "magnificent." Stages lasted normally for three weeks, with students preparing during the day and experiencing with ayahuasca at night. They underline that they always respected the law, and never took ayahuasca in Europe, where laws may regard it as prohibited (see Labate and Cavnar 2023), except once in Spain, at a time when local laws did not forbid its use. My interviewees described the experience as very powerful. Danièle called it "the experience of a lifetime," and noted she would not have done it with just any other shaman offering ayahuasca in Peru. She overcame her reservations only because she trusted Loup Blanc.

In 2012, the work in Peru was discontinued and the property was put on sale. Quarrels followed with a Peruvian who had served as the local manager of the center. His niece had married one of Loup Blanc's students, S., who had once

been the closest advisor of the master and whom some even regarded as his possible successor. However, he left the group, decided to remain in Peru with his wife, and started giving independent courses of shamanism. The economic and property quarrels with the former local manager are now before the Peruvian courts.

From 1990, Loup Blanc had traveled to meet spiritual masters from several different traditions. He regards as important his visit in 1996 to the ashram of Swami Muktananda (1908–1982) in Ganeshpuri, India, where he received a Tantric initiation (Shaktipat) and experienced the awakening of the Kundalini (Kyrios 1996, 79–80).

Gradually, a model developed where he would visit renowned teachers from different traditions in their spiritual centers and then invite them to France to lecture and conduct stages for his students. Some of my interviewees jokingly observed that this behavior seems to be the contrary of what should be typical of “cult” leaders, who prevent their students from meeting other spiritual masters who may eventually become their competitors. On the contrary, the model including a visit by Loup Blanc and an invitation to France was followed in the case of Swami Chetan of Haridwar (1990); the Rinzai Zen Buddhist roshi Eido Tai Shimano (1932–2018; 1992)—who many years later was also accused of sexual abuses during Zen private sessions with female students, although the case never proceeded to court—; Chinese Crane Flight Qi Gong master Zhao Jin Xiang (1993–1998); Taoist and traditional Chinese medicine master Wan Su Jian (1993–2014); Venerable Jamyang Tashi Dorje, the abbot of the Sakya Tashi Ling Monastery in Olivella, Spain (2000–2001); Shoshone Native American ritual specialist Clyde Hall (1999–2000). The cooperation with Clyde Hall, who is one of the most well-known leaders of the gay Native American movement, runs counter accusations of homophobia recently raised against Loup Blanc in some French media.

Loup Blanc also met leaders of the Indian movement Brahma Kumaris, visited with his students the German ashram of Mother Meera, an independent student of Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950), and cooperated with several Peruvian shamans. He continued his international contacts well into the 21st century. In 2016 and 2017, for example, after a trip to Mongolia, a local shaman called Grandmother Ayangat visited Loup Blanc and his students in France (Chamanisme de l’Origine 2016). The group’s website includes words of appreciations for Loup Blanc by

traditional healers and spiritual masters of different cultures. His students have kept documents and pictures of all these encounters with international spiritual leaders. The different names used by Loup Blanc reflect the different traditions he draws from: Kyrios, Ahimsa Hridayananda, Wan-Yang, J.L.B. (Joachim Loup Blanc).

An outside observer may recognize in Loup Blanc's books elements coming from Western Esotericism as well, including the Theosophical tradition, although explicit references to esoteric masters are scarce and, in his answers to my questions, he stated that "he knows about Theosophy, yes, but he has never read a book on the subject nor has he [been] enrolled in their lodges." George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1866?–1949) is mentioned in passing as having been himself "a *Tantric Master*" (Loup Blanc 2020, 17). Esoteric Christianity is also a key reference, as evidenced by the first books published by Loup Blanc in 1988, *Mudra-Pater*, an esoteric interpretation of the Lord's Prayer and a guide to translate it into movements of the body (Adam 1988, republished in 2001 with prefaces by former Dominican turned Orthodox priest Jean-Yves Leloup and Venerable Jamyang Tashi Dorje: Kyrios 2001a), and *Les Chants du Vivant* (Songs of the Living) of 1992, a collection of poems (Adam 1992).

Loup Blanc, however, distinguishes between the genuine teachings of the Avatar Jesus and what he regards as their distortion by organized religion, particularly the Catholic Church. The theme returns in many of his writings:

it is not a reference, this Roman Catholic Church! Many crimes have been committed in the name of its son of God; it wanted to impose its beliefs through violence and fear! Jesus, who was only love and tolerance, would never have wanted this in his lifetime (Hridayananda 2002, 37).

Like other contemporary esoteric teachers, Loup Blanc also accuses the Christian churches of having replaced the doctrine of reincarnation, which was "clearly explained in the Gospel," with the "absurdity" of the resurrection of the flesh (Kyrios 2001b, 116).

While it is part of the scholars' work to investigate the possible sources of spiritual teachings, Loup Blanc insists that he discovered most of what he teaches by himself. In 2002, he published the first volume of *Le Voyageur incorporel* (The Incorporeal Traveler: Hridayananda 2002), to be followed in the future by two further installments. It is a long chronicle of dreams where he encounters a being he nicknames "the Blue Sage" and who tells him he can call him "Jean."

This “master” may be Loup Blanc’s higher self, or the Supreme Consciousness of the universe. When asked who gives him the order to divulge or not to divulge a certain teaching, he answered that

he could say the Supreme Consciousness or a Spiritual Assembly or a Cosmic Avatar... What good would it do if He told you where these Orders come from? Anyway, you would not be able to understand and even believe it! (Loup Blanc 2020, 27).

The Students: A Group of Seekers

In 2011, a main structure coordinating the management of Loup Blanc’s activities was founded with the name Association Les Amis du Peuple Debout (Association The Friends of the Standing People). The “standing people” are the trees, and the name indicates the ecological commitment of the group. After Loup Blanc was arrested, an Association de défense de Loup Blanc was also created.

According to my interviews, although it had not escaped the radars of the anti-cultists, the group kept a low profile until 2015, when it decided to offer some of his teachings through the Internet. It was a momentous decision, generating both success and problems. Loup Blanc lent money to a student, T., to be trained as a webmaster. He produced a beautiful website, “Chamanisme de l’Origine” (Original Shamanism), which made Loup Blanc and his teachings known to a broader circle. One result is that media and opponents now argue that there is a group or “cult” whose name is Original Shamanism, even if the “members” prefer to be called simply students of Loup Blanc and their legal structure’s name is The Friends of the Standing People. They feel that they are not, or perhaps not yet, a “movement,” and that the organizations and associations have been created for the need of administrative management only. They meet to receive the teachings during a weekend (or for a longer period in the summer) but do not live communally.

“Original Shamanism” refers to a teaching imparted by Loup Blanc after two spiritual experiences. In 1996, he felt the presence of the legendary Native American chief Sitting Bull (ca. 1831–1890). The chief revealed to Loup Blanc that the latter is the reincarnation of a great Indian chief, Red Cloud. In 2002, Loup Blanc received a higher initiation directly from the Origin, the Highest Conscience of the universe. Loup Blanc also teaches that he and several students

were once part of the Scottish MacGregor clan (hence the use of Richie MacGregor as yet another of Loup Blanc's names), and used to lead them to Scotland to the places where he believed they had lived their past lives.

T. gradually came to believe that his work with the website had entitled him to a privileged position in the group. Many of my interviewees pointed out his aggressive and manipulative attitudes towards other students, which caused a reaction by Loup Blanc. T. left the group in 2020, eventually becoming its most active opponent.

Who are the students of Loup Blanc? According to my interviews, at least in the 21st century they have remained stable between 150 and 200. This was the number of those attending the initiations before the COVID pandemic. Today (2023) the initiations gather between 50 and 70 students. While it is true that some have left because of the campaign started in 2020 by T. and some other ex-members, and the arrest of Loup Blanc in 2021, I have been told that their number is not significant.

In March 2022, a demographic survey was carried out by the group and submitted to Loup Blanc's lawyers. Contacted via the Internet, 170 in the group's mailing list identified as students and submitted their answers. The results show that 72.4% of the students are women, and 74.2% are 46 or older. Only 2.4% are 25 or younger, although some of those who joined did it through their parents who were already in the group. In one of my interviews, Marie told me that when she was 15 Loup Blanc organized a weekend that children were also allowed to attend. She came with her parents, and never looked back. One consequence of the comparatively high median age is that 22.9% of the students are retired. The group appears to be more stable than others: 54.1% of the respondents have been part of it since at least ten years.

The group has no full-time members. Among the 170 interviewees, 15 are "lawyers, architects, or engineers," 9 are "managers," 12 are "doctors and nurses." I was told that even a French Army general was once a member. No names were named, but the presence of highly educated professionals has been noted by the opponents themselves. The most represented profession is alternative medicine: 41 respondents are naturopaths, acupuncturist, or energy therapists. While some were already in these professions before meeting Loup Blanc, or made a living out of techniques he does not specifically teach (Feng Shui, which she studied autonomously in Brussels, in the case of one of my

interviewees), others were encouraged by him to use his teachings to start a career that may both be profitable and help suffering human beings.

My interviews show that almost all students were spiritual seekers, who had explored other paths of alternative spirituality either directly or through books before they met Loup Blanc. For example, Martine lived in Canada where she meditated in a center of Chögyam Trungpa's (1939–1987) Shambhala movement. Nadia had two aunts in the group of Sri Aurobindo. Without joining any movement, Marc practiced yoga in a center following the teachings of Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar (1918–2014). Christian, a medical doctor, was always interested in alternative medicine and has a Vietnamese Buddhist wife. Claudine was a teacher in one of the Waldorf Schools inspired by Anthroposophy, and had been reading the works of Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986) and Carlos Castaneda (1925–1998) since she was a teenager. Sophie had visited Aurobindo's ashram and was a yoga teacher when she started having visions of Native Americans. She decided to explore their culture and music, and visited an alternative healing and spirituality fair at Paris' Porte d'Auteuil, where she met Marie, who had a booth there and told Sophie about Loup Blanc. Eventually, Sophie became part of the group, and asked Loup Blanc to meet her yoga students in the home of one of them, Juliette, who also joined.

Uncharacteristically, Julie was a self-styled atheist, but reports that at age 7 she had a vision of "the Divine" and was told she would meet her master at age 36, which happened when she encountered Loup Blanc, who had sought her professional services as a beautician. Danièle was following another spiritual master when she started being "harmonized" by a student of Loup Blanc. She continued to follow both paths until she met Loup Blanc in person and found him a "more joyful and simple man" than her other teacher. In fact, all my interviewees were somewhat unhappy with the other teachings they had experimented with. They were told about Loup Blanc by relatives or friends, or met him by coincidence like Danièle, and in all cases reported that they "immediately" perceived he was the spiritual master they had been looking for.

Although some had heard his lectures, most went straight to the initiations, and some directly to the stages in Peru. "Initiations" are not one-on-one rituals but collective events held during the course of a weekend (or a longer period for the summer and other special initiations). Students go through hours of silence and meditation and listen to the words and music of Loup Blanc or, more recently

and even before his arrest, of the “ambassadors” he has appointed, women and men he regards as qualified to impart specific teachings. In recent years, most initiations have been led by the ambassadors, with Loup Blanc appearing only occasionally or for the longer summer initiations.

Many report having experienced extraordinary phenomena during the initiations, particularly when they touched Loup Blanc or were touched by him, often by pressing his thumb on their forehead. They thus became regulars at the initiations and, while keeping their jobs, started devoting significant time to attend the different events of the group. Some, based on their availability of time and skills, may volunteer to help with the events, from keeping accounts to cleaning the floors or cooking. This is regarded as a form of yoga (Séva Yoga) developing the capacity of giving and loving. A fee is charged for the initiations, but is not extravagant. A weekend initiation costs between 210 and 400 euros; those who come back to follow the same cycle a second time pay a reduced 50% fee.

The Teachings: Different Techniques of Self-Liberation

What do they learn at the initiations? All describe Loup Blanc as a charismatic and entertaining speaker. He played the drum and other instruments, dressed in colorful garbs representative of different spiritual traditions, performed traditional shamanic and other rituals, and answered questions with wittiness. Some of his antics have been ridiculed by the hostile media, but were in fact meant to be humorous. For example, he impersonated a female shaman he called Sandrine Leboeuf, the “Shaman of Berry,” for the first time at a fancy dress event organized by students. They found the character so humorous that he played “Sandrine” again in other events.

Loup Blanc’s teaching is not systematic, and is included in thousands of pages of transcribed lectures, interviews, and books. While “syncretism” today is a contested category, we can call his teaching “eclectic,” as it incorporates elements of several different Eastern and Western traditions, which are creatively reinterpreted and connected.

According to Loup Blanc, all the universe is submitted to the law of karma. We reap what we sow, and indeed the metaphor of the gardener represents the three

fundamental principles of life. The gardener is the conscious mind, who sows in the subconscious both positive and negative thoughts. The good thoughts go up to the divine sphere, but the bad thoughts come back to us, creating physical and mental problems. The universal cosmic energy (Prana) is both positive (Pingala, connected to Adam and represented by a red snake) and negative (Ida, connected to Eve and represented by a green snake). Through breathing exercises, we learn to mobilize the Prana, create harmony, and restore the original androgynous union between Adam and Eve. The exercises taught by Loup Blanc also lead to the awakening of the Kundalini or Shakti, a divine energy located at the base of the spine, which may then travel through the focal body points called chakras up to the crown chakra located on the top of the head. Meditating on specific colors and sounds also helps this process (Hridayananda 1993).

Nadia, one of my interviewees, is familiar with Hinduism and has a scientific formation. She insisted that all the techniques taught by Loup Blanc are consistent with modern science, which is not incompatible with the fact that some have a millennia-old Hindu tradition. Many are described in great detail in the 1994 *Manuel d'Auto-Libération* (Manual of Self-Liberation: Hridayananda 1994), whose readers would immediately notice that Hinduism is but one among many references of Loup Blanc, which also include esoteric Christianity, Judaism, Native American spirituality, Buddhism, and Taoism.

While we can all learn to connect with the cosmic energy, a master can make our journey more direct and easier through the transmission of his spiritual energy (Shaktipat). One example Loup Blanc offers is the esoteric interpretation of the meeting of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1–42). Loup Blanc sees in the well a representation of both the macrocosm and the human microcosm. The edges of the well, in contact with the air, represent Heaven and the supra-consciousness. The upper part of the well, in contact with the ground, represents the earth and the consciousness. The lower part of the well, where the water is, represents Hell and the subconscious. When Jesus tells the woman “You have had five husbands, and the man you are now living with is not your husband,” this has an esoteric sense indicating that the woman had five spiritual masters (also corresponding to the five senses and the five elements), is now dominated by the Ego (the non-husband), and is ready to accept her sixth and final master, Jesus, who will awaken her Kundalini through his Shaktipat (Kyrios 1996).

Loup Blanc proposes a similar esoteric interpretation of the episode in John 13 when Jesus washes his students' feet. The feet, who have touched many grounds, symbolize the old humans, and the old experiences from which genuine masters free their students, Peter's resistance is the struggle of the Ego confronted with a radically new teaching. Judas symbolizes the stubbornness of those attached to the conservative and authoritarian religious and political powers. Jesus is ready to wash their feet too, but they will always betray their masters. Loup Blanc explicitly compares the betrayal of Judas to the attitude of some of his own students, and notes that in the early days of Nitya Yoga he also used to wash the feet of his students (J.L.B. 2010, 36).

The liberation has many symbols, which can be mobilized to help the practitioner in the path. Loup Blanc believes that the Marseille Tarot deck is a powerful tool to develop the power of the imagination and intuition. He has even registered in his name in 2003 a trademark TAROT VISION® designating his courses on the Tarot deck. He has also filed or registered trademarks for CHAMANISME DE L'ORIGINE®, and for HARMONIATHÉRAPIE (later SPIRALES DE VIE®), CLÉS DE VIE CLÉS DE RÉUSSITE, and SEI-MEI-KIDO, which refer to specific teachings and applications of his techniques to various aspect of physical, psychological, and even financial well-being. Teachings currently imparted also include Ananda Yoga and the Medicinal Wheel (Roue Médecine). Several interviewees extolled the healing power of what was once called "harmoniathérapie" and now "spirales de vie." The positive effects of being "harmonized" persuaded them to join the group. The healthy effects of these techniques have also been acknowledged by one of the Chinese Qi Gong masters who visited the group in France.

The individual self-realization also benefits society in general, Loup Blanc teaches. However, there are certain rules to be followed. Respiration "makes of a human a master or a slave" and, for example, we would easily become slaves if we are smokers, as it is "cigarette smoke that polluted the bodies—vital, astral, mental, and causal" (J.L.B. 2009b, 49). Apart from the theory of the different human bodies, common in Western esotericism, Loup Blanc's students normally do not smoke.

They do not eat meat either. The master tells Kyrios that "Carnivore, cannibal, there is no big difference, it's all about eating flesh!" (Hridayananda 2002, 253), the only difference being perhaps that carnivores cook their meat and cannibals

eat them raw. The “immense genocide of animals, started since humans have been on earth and that will never stop” (Hridayananda 2002, 255), goes beyond the problem of unhealthy eating. Its consequences on the spiritual plane corrupt society in depth and generate dictators, who are also cannibals in their own way (Hridayananda 2002, 254). We can protect our liberty by getting rid of the system of political, religious, and economic structures “that create fanaticism, terrorism, and install social barriers” (Kyrios 2008, 39), but to eliminate the esoteric causes of oppression we also need vegetarianism, Loup Blanc teaches.

Tantric Work with a Minority of Women

One of my interviewees, Martine, reported that for years, while attending initiations, she never heard from Loup Blanc the word “Tantrism.” In Loup Blanc’s books, it is used exceptionally only, e.g., in J.L.B. 2009b, 92, and there to warn that

if you start doing exercises of Tantrism after three or four months you will become crazy.
If you are not well guided by somebody, you will compromise your health.

However, the basic Tantric teachings about Shakti and Kundalini were taught since the beginning. Simply, the word “Tantrism” was not there. The immediate reason for this was that “Tantrism” evokes today among the general public teachings about how to improve sexuality by attending expensive weekend courses. Loup Blanc insists in his 2020 notes for an unpublished (and unfinished) book on Tantrism that

He is not like *Those* who convert *Tantra* into a profitable business... Yet, it is fashionable: *Reiki-Tantra*, *Tantra Stages*, *Tantric Shamanism*... offered just to attract clients who look for a romantic liaison or a new encounter (Loup Blanc 2020, 14).

On the other hand, Loup Blanc confirms in the same text that, while not using the word “Tantra,” it has always given to his students a Tantric teaching:

It is not because you don’t know it, or you don’t see it that *He* has not taught it. In fact, *He* has taught it in every initiation, since all the practices that *He* gives are Tantric... All is Tantric, all the practices *He* gives are as such (Loup Blanc 2020, 10–1).

In accordance with the academic literature on the subject, Loup Blanc insists that Tantric teachings are not about sexuality only, nor even mostly:

It is an aberration to place it at the sexual level only since *Tantrism* is much more than this! To limit Tantra to the sexual relation or to the couple just evidences a lack of understanding (Loup Blanc 2020, 14).

The scholar wishing to study Loup Blanc's group is confronted here with a dilemma. To understand the controversies and the legal proceedings against Loup Blanc, it is indispensable to explore the Tantric work he did with a small group of some twenty female students. Yet, by doing this, the scholar is led to devote to this work a space that is out of proportion with its real role in the group, with the risk of giving the false impression that teachings on sexuality had a central position in the path proposed by Loup Blanc. This was never the case. The following in-depth analysis of the Tantric sexual work has been made necessary by the current controversies, but readers should always remember that its role was never central among Loup Blanc's multiple teachings. It involved a limited number of women, and most students never heard of it. All the women involved were single. Their experiences went from one single session to twenty years of regular Tantric work with Loup Blanc in the case of my interviewee Danièle. No woman was a virgin when she started this particular work.

My interviews evidenced that the limited use of the word "Tantrism" by Loup Blanc is not a simple discursive strategy, since its discourse on sexuality does not have the Tantra as its single source. In the French context marked by Catholicism, before discussing specific practices of sacred eroticism, Loup Blanc believes that it is crucially important to overcome the taboos, "almost 2,000 years of Catholic dust" (Loup Blanc 2020, 1) that have covered and hidden the truth about sexuality. The images of St. Michael defeating Satan, St. George killing the Dragon, and the Virgin Mary trampling the snake under her feet all symbolize the Christian Church's willingness to control and demonize the force of sexuality (Loup Blanc 2020, 14).

In *Le Voyageur incorporel*, the Sage tells Loup Blanc that the Catholic Church has preached throughout the centuries the image of "sex as ugliness, a vile and perverted thing that leads to the fall out of Eden, tipping us into hell" (Hridayananda 2002, 258). This image, Loup Blanc teaches, is false, but is also a self-fulfilling prophecy that converts sex into a "deadly force... Sex is responsible of the evil you can see on this earth" (Hridayananda 2002, 256). If we try to expel sex, it comes back with a destructive vengeance. The Sage tells the parable of a man who has never seen a woman and is told by a sanctimonious neighbor that

one is coming to live in a nearby house. Not to be tempted by her, the man ties himself to a pole. When the woman appears, his desire and agitation only grow, until the rope is twisted and he is in pain. The man eventually escapes the temptation of that particular woman, but his reaction to the experience is to start a life of promiscuity and debauchery. The bigot neighbor represents the old religious teachings, and the meaning of the parable is that an “imbecile and unreasonable chastity” is like a cork on a champagne bottle: when it is pulled by an outside force, it pops thunderously and creates unforeseen disasters (Hridayananda 2002, 261).

In fact, sexuality according to Loup Blanc may be both a force of life and a force of death. He teaches that sexuality operates at four levels, which he calls Cocoon, Caterpillar, Chrysalis, and Butterfly. The Cocoon level corresponds to hell, and the repressed sexual force erupts in crimes such as rape and murder. The Caterpillar level is better than the Cocoon’s, but still includes perverted and degraded practices. It is at the Chrysalis level that one starts living sex in a liberated and loving way, until the Butterfly level of Divine Love is achieved. The ascension to the Butterfly level also corresponds to the Tantric path that allows the Kundalini to rise up the spine until the top of the head (Loup Blanc 2020, 7–10).

According to another scheme, included in an additional note for the book he was preparing on Tantrism, sent to Claudine who shared it with me during our interview, there are three levels of the Tantric work.

The first level is the knowledge of the phantasms or the ghost of desire, a way to live them and transcend them and use them as a liberating means!... The second level is the expansion of the four senses by the obstruction of a fifth one, which is the sensitive and sensory exploration of the double energy! The last level is the EXTASE of YANG and YIN, or of SHIVA and SAKTHI, how to open our souls to the cosmic soul of creation!

There is also a “fourth level which is the INTIMATE UNION WITH OURSELVES!”

Since in general, “in the MAN there is a WOMAN and in the WOMAN there is a MAN,” at the end of the Tantric work a woman may experience the intimate union of her male and female parts within herself, without a sexual encounter with Loup Blanc or any other man. This is the experience related to me by Claudine. After two years of Tantric work, she continued to sleep often in the home of Loup Blanc, but sexual relationships stopped. She just benefited from his presence and

energy for what she described as “an encounter between my male and female parts,” through which the Tantric work in fact continued for seven years, but in a different way.

A Tantric work on sexuality with Loup Blanc may follow a request by a female student or the fact that an invitation from the master has been accepted. As Martine told me, however, as it happened in her case, when Loup Blanc proposes the work to a woman it is because she had sent to him signals he had perceived and understood as a non-verbal request. I also found cases of women who asked to be taught this Tantric work and were told by Loup Blanc they were not ready. In fact, in more than twenty years less than 10% of the female students went through the Tantric initiations.

A scheme of the Tantric work that Loup Blanc himself shared with me is as follows:

There is an individual at the center (the Point), surrounded by circles (1. Phantasms, 2. Taboos, 3. Non-limit). Catholicism has put a lot of prohibitions in the minds of humans. All these prohibitions have caused a lot of drama, and continue today. Although repressed, this sexual energy is a creative energy. Phantasms can develop neuroses and deviations. The soul is feminine and the spirit is masculine. Love is a wave that travels through the Universe, it is impersonal and it becomes personal by passing through the human filter. Taboos are security locks, or sources of slavery. The last circle allows a liberation at the sexual level, we are free, we feel more energy and we develop spiritually, creativity is expressed at all levels of the being.

He admits that,

It is certain that the White Wolf way of working is different from the traditional Tantric model, but are there not “many mansions in my Father’s House”? (John 14:2).

The first work to do to avoid the catastrophes connected with sexual repression and recover a healthy sexuality is to overcome the phantasms and taboos. As one female student told me, in France they affect even women who have been educated in secular, non-Catholic families. While in the criminal case against Loup Blanc this has been reconstructed as evidence of abuse, the interviewees explained that they perceived what in a written summary of their Tantric experiences some of them listed as

sexy clothes; videos, photos and “explicit” exchanges sent from a distance before the encounters; videos, photos and “explicit” exchanges during the encounters;

as part of a shock therapy to liberate them from fears and taboos about sex. They say it worked so well that, as the Tantric work continued, some of these experiments were eventually proposed and initiated by them rather than by Loup Blanc.

Some traditional Indian Tantric schools would insist that romantic love is not needed when working on sexuality with a master and may even be a distraction. Some female students, however, testified that they fell in love with Loup Blanc and felt loved by him, although they understood it was not the kind of love you may experience in a usual couple, and they knew the relationship was not exclusive. Corinne wrote in her testimony that Loup Blanc “is not a man you can own. He teaches us and frees us from possessiveness and jealousy.” For Corinne, this is compatible with a loving relationship. Other women, however, made a distinction between love and what they call “l’affectif” (the affective element), which in our society is never free from an “attachment” that leads to dependence and jealousy. Loup Blanc, they say, would let the “affectif” develop but women who become “attached” would quickly understand that the work is “something else,” sometimes in a painful way. “He does not create affective dependence, Juliette said, he frees you from it.”

Loup Blanc himself answered me on this precise point that

in the Tantric way, it is logical that there is no ‘affectif.’ The ‘affectif’ is the prison in which a large part of humanity is locked. The ‘affectif’ brings jealousy, suffering, slavery, it is a feeling of blackmail.

This is a wall, Danièle told me, through which women in the Tantric work with Loup Blanc at some stage should learn to pass. Not all succeed. Without judging them, she feels that those who left the group and became plaintiffs in the criminal case simply did not manage to pass through that wall. Other interviewees told me they had mistaken the Tantric work for a “normal” couple relationship with Loup Blanc, despite being repeatedly told that this was precisely what this path was not.

The majority of the testimonies report that their non-possessive relationship ended quietly when both Loup Blanc and the student felt that the work had been completed, and the admittedly peculiar relationship they had established had run its course.

What comes straight from Tantrism is the teaching and practice of continence, i.e., sexual encounters without male ejaculation. One Western mistake about

Tantrism is to reduce it to teachings about sexuality only. Another mistake, sometimes found among early Western academic scholars who tried to make Tantrism “respectable,” is to remain silent on its sexual teachings. Tantrism does include teachings about eroticism, and while they have criticized pseudo-Tantric “New Age ‘tantric sex,’” Indologists have sometimes “provided inadequate corrective in the form of detailed studies on sexuality in traditional tantric practice systems” (Hatley 2018, 196). In the introduction to a 2015–2018 edition and translation of the *Brahmayamalatantra*, one of the oldest (7th-8th century) surviving goddess-oriented Tantras, American Indologist Shaman Hatley distinguishes among seven different paths of sacred eroticism (Hatley 2018, 196–99). He criticizes the theory that “coital practices [with ejaculation] in which sexual fluids were collected and consumed [...] have historical precedence,” and argues that in Tantric Shivaism the path based on continence “finds earlier attestation” (Hatley 2018, 200). The *Brahmayamalatantra* itself teaches “stopping/retention of seminal fluid” as a way to gain miraculous powers (*siddhi*) and the knowledge of past lives (Kiss 2015, 49, 51–3).

In a nutshell, the Tantric doctrine of continence teaches that when ejaculation is avoided, the male semen and the female sexual energy can travel inward up to the crown chakra located on the top of the head, which has a number of physical, psychological, and spiritual positive effects for both the male and the female partners. This teaching is common in many Tantric and neo-Tantric schools (see Introvigne 2022a), and is an important part of Loup Blanc’s Tantric work. He teaches that,

When you understand that wasting *Energy* does not help you, it just tires you out and gives even more strength to your *Ego* by locking you in the cage of *envy*, then you will make the decision to work on that level, to raise the *Life Force* along the *Spinal Channel*. At that moment, the *Spiritual Journey* will begin for you, as you will understand that, instead of letting the *Life Force* go downward, you will raise it upward and thus heal yourselves in depth (Loup Blanc 2020, 12–3).

This comes from a confidential, unpublished text. However, Loup Blanc occasionally hinted at this Tantric teaching in his published books. In *Le Pouvoir régénérateur de la Lumière* (The Regenerating Power of Light), published in 2009, he explained that to “use the sexual energy for spiritual purposes... it is enough to bring up the energy inside”: “there is a complete technique to bring the essence up to the top of the head” (J.L.B. 2009c, 92).

Unlike in other Tantric groups, however, continence is not mandatory for male students. Loup Blanc extols its benefits and practices it himself, but also warns it is not useful for those who are not prepared. Interviewees reported that between 2015 and 2023 three children were born to couples of students. According to them, that there were no more children did not derive from a generalized practice of continence, which did not exist, but from the fact that most women in the group were in their forties or fifties. Men I interviewed told me that teachings on continence were given privately to a few students, some of whom had an interest in the subject even before joining the group, and were almost never mentioned in the public lectures.

Anti-Cultism and the Prosecution of a Shaman

In a book published by Oxford University Press in 2011, Canadian scholar Susan J. Palmer explored the roots and reasons of the French campaign against the “cults” (called in France “sectes,” a French word to be translated in English as “cults” rather than “sects”). Old tensions between secularism and religion were combined with new fears that “cults” had developed sinister brainwashing techniques (Palmer 2011). While anti-cult movements are active in other countries as well, in France the main groups combating the *sectes*, including the UNADFI (Union nationale des associations de défense des familles et de l'individu victimes de sectes, National Union of Associations Defending the Families and Individuals Victims of Cults), are subsidized by the government. There is a governmental Inter-ministerial Mission for Monitoring and Combating Cultic Deviances (MIVILUDES, Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires) and special anti-cult police units such as the one that dealt with the case of Loup Blanc.

The ideology inspiring both the MIVILUDES and the UNADFI are frequently criticized by international scholars of new religious movements and non-French governmental institutions such as the USCIRF (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom). They note that the anti-cult ideology is based on the pseudo-scientific theory of brainwashing, which assumes that otherwise mentally competent adults may be deprived of their free will through sinister and mysterious techniques of mind control developed by evil “gurus” (see USCIRF 2020). Most scholars of religion and courts of law in several countries, from the

United States to Italy, have concluded that these techniques do not exist. Claims that they are used by the “cults” are simply tools to discriminate against unpopular minorities. Anti-cultists insist that some doctrines and practices are so strange and socially unacceptable that they can only be embraced by victims of brainwashing or mental manipulation (Introvigne 2022b).

Loup Blanc has poked some fun at the associations that combat the “sectes” but behave themselves as “sectes” according to their own definition (J.L.B. 2009d, 82). He has observed that

soccer, hunting, political parties, religious parties, they are ALL cults but are authorized by the government (J.L.B. 2009d, 75),

which only hits those who dare to think unconventionally. However, he could not escape the malevolent attention of media that adhere to the definition of the “cult” prevailing in French society, of the UNADFI, and finally of the MIVILUDES.

In 1992, a local newspaper from Alençon called *L’Orne hebdo* published an article slandering Loup Blanc as the typical “guru” of a “cult.” The information came from the local affiliate of the UNADFI. Harmonia, the association that gathered at that time the students of Loup Blanc, decided not to react (although Loup Blanc personally had suggested a legal action). However, on April 22, 1993, a national newspaper, *France-Soir*, used the report of *L’Orne hebdo* in an article where an ex-member hidden under the pseudonym of “Christian” accused Harmonia of “destroying families and individuals.” *France-Soir*’s article reported the UNADFI’s opinion that Harmonia was one of the most dangerous “cults” in France, and suggested a comparison between the students of Loup Blanc and the Branch Davidians that three days before, on April 19, 1993, had died in Waco, Texas, in a confrontation with the FBI. The same and the following day, the TV network France 3 broadcasted the same information.

This time, Harmonia sued. On March 14, 1994, the Justice Court of Paris found *France-Soir* guilty of defamation for not having checked the accuracy of the story of “Christian” and having proposed a slandering comparison with the Branch Davidians (Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris 1994). The newspaper did not appeal, and the judgement became final. The TV network had been sued separately before a different court, the Tribunal of Caen, which on June 12, 1994, concluded that the broadcasted content was not inherently defamatory, but

France 3 was nonetheless guilty of having presented it in a malicious way aimed at slandering Harmonia. Unlike *France-Soir*, the TV Network appealed. On June 25, 1996, the Appeal Court of Caen (Cour d'Appel de Caen 1996) ruled in favor of France 3, and on December 17, 1998, the Court of Cassation confirmed the appeal verdict. These decisions stated that the defamation issue could not be separated from the one about how the information about Harmonia had been presented. However, by that time Harmonia no longer existed. The Appeal Court and the Supreme Court, for a technical reason, were not persuaded that the new association, Oxyon 777, can replace Harmonia and exert all its rights. They thus found against Oxyon 777, based on a technicality that the students of Loup Blanc imputed to a mistake of their lawyer.

Meanwhile, in December 1995, a French parliamentary commission had published a report on “cults in France,” which included a notorious “list of cults” that was heavily criticized by international and French scholars and the French government itself later disavowed. The list included “Oxyon 777 (ex-Harmonia)” (Commission d'Enquête sur les Sectes 1995, 24). This was not surprising, considering the role of the anti-cult associations, directly or through their contacts with the French police intelligence service Renseignement Généraux (see Palmer 2011), in the preparation of the list. In 1997, *L'Orne hebdo* published a new vitriolic attack (*L'Orne hebdo* 1997). Some exchanges of letters followed, but once again the members of the association decided not to pursue a local newspaper.

In retrospect, the campaign led to some police or Renseignement Généraux surveillance of members and events of the group, but did not last for long. Its most annoying consequence for Loup Blanc's students was the use in some divorce cases of the argument that the parents who were members of a “cult” were not fit for the custody of their children. As mentioned earlier, Oxyon 777 was dissolved in 1999, and the campaign slowly subsided.

However, a worse storm started in 2019. As mentioned earlier, the student who had built the website of the group, T., was becoming progressively estranged from Loup Blanc for personal reasons. In March 2020, T. left the group, according to some of my interviewees after Loup Blanc had started confronting him about his manipulatory, aggressive, and inappropriate behavior toward several other students. Soon, he started campaigning against it on social media and inciting some female ex-members to contact the MIVILUDES. His aim was to

submit a report to the MIVILUDES and file a complaint against Loup Blanc. This was eventually done (although on the role of T. my interviewees had different opinions), accusing Loup Blanc of using techniques of psychological manipulation (the typical “cult” crime in France), including on women who accepted to participate in the Tantric work without realizing that, while they consented, they did it because they were “sous emprise” (under psychological control), which eventually led to his arrest on December 8, 2021.

While the criminal investigation continues, his lawyer, whom I interviewed, complains about the conditions of his detention, first in Nîmes and now in Béziers, where Loup Blanc is prevented from meeting his students and his relatives, following his vegan diet, and using his usual natural health remedies. According to the attorney, he lost 15 kilos since he was arrested. The lawyer also complains that 140 witnesses ready to testify in favor of Loup Blanc, including women who went through the Tantric work, were substantially ignored. Some students were heard, but they complained that the interrogations by the anti-cult police were quite aggressive. One even claimed that when she said that Loup Blanc “always respected the women,” her sentence was transcribed in the official report as “never respected women nor men.” She adds that when she asked to correct the report she was threatened by the agent. Requests to convert Loup Blanc’s detention into house arrest for humanitarian and other reasons were rejected.

Let me repeat once again that I do not condone sexual abuse, nor do I believe that freedom of religion or belief should protect abusers. In cases like this, which are not infrequent when a Tantric work on sexuality is part of the teachings, we are always confronted with irreconcilable narratives. Those who remain in the group are persuaded of the leader’s innocence. “Apostate” ex-members—“apostate” being here not a derogatory term, but a technical category used by sociologists to indicate the minority of ex-members who turn into militant opponents of the group they have left (Bromley 1998)—insist he (more rarely she) is guilty.

While leaving to courts of law the difficult task of ascertaining the facts, based on several decades of experience with groups and teachers who perform Tantric sexual work, I would only suggest that prosecutors and judges consider their peculiarities. Their practices, while typical of a century-old tradition in Asian Tantrism, may look bizarre, strange, and even subversive in the West. The

question is whether this should lead to the conclusion that the consent of any woman participating in these practices with a male guru should be regarded as necessarily and by definition vitiated by mental manipulation or mind control. It seems to me that such a conclusion would be offensive to the highly educated women I interviewed who insisted that they participated in a Tantric work with Loup Blanc that included several sexual practices, some of them unconventional, perfectly understanding what it was all about and after having concluded it was an experience they wanted to try. They emphatically claimed they were never coerced to do anything, and stopped the experience when they wanted to and believed they had already reaped the fruits they had expected from it. They then continued as members of the group in good standing to this very day. They are not aggressive when discussing the accusers, but believe that, having left the group, they are now ashamed of experiences they undertook freely and even described enthusiastically to other students at the time they were taking place. Now, however, they rationalize them through the convenient brainwashing argument easily available in the French anti-cult culture they are being socialized into.

Abuse, of course, is always possible. Although sexual abuse is statistically more prevalent in mainline religion, including the Roman Catholic Church, than in new religious movements (Shupe 1995, 1998, 2000, 2007), it can occur everywhere. It is a risk in groups including among their teachings Tantric sexual practices too, and there have been cases of unwilling women forced to have sex with the leaders. On the other hand, assuming that willing women are never really willing, notwithstanding how they tell their story, and can only be under the spell of mind control, implies that experimenting with Tantric sexual work is forbidden in general in France, and is just another incarnation of the old and discredited theory of brainwashing.

As for the fate of Loup Blanc, he would probably answer our questions, according to an unpublished poem a student sent to me, that “TIME... the Great Weaver, tirelessly weaves the wool of our experiences” and, in ways we do not always understand, weaves

the FABRIC of each creature’s destiny,
Giving the best to each according to their merits.

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The Abe Assassination and the Use of Ex-Members in Japan in the Campaign Against the Unification Church: The Case of Sayuri Ogawa

Masumi Fukuda

Investigative Journalist, Hanada magazine

edit@asukashinsha.co.jp

ABSTRACT: In the campaign against the Unification Church (now called the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification) that followed in Japan the assassination of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on July 8, 2022 (see Introvigne 2022), the sensational revelations of an ex-member of the movement who went under the pseudonym of “Sayuri Ogawa” played a prominent role. We offer a translation of an article published in the Japanese magazine *Hanada*, “The Truth About ‘Sayuri Ogawa’: A Subject That Influences National Politics. The Exclusive Confession of Her Parents” (Fukuda 2023) by well-known investigative journalist Masumi Fukuda (who also holds a degree in Sociology from Rikkyo University). The article casts doubts on the story told by “Sayuri Ogawa” based on the journalist’s interviews with the ex-member’s parents.

KEYWORDS: Unification Church, Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, Assassination of Shinzo Abe, Sayuri Ogawa, National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, Anti-Cult Movement in Japan.

The Birth of “Sayuri Ogawa”

Sayuri Ogawa (pseudonym, 27 years old), who claims to be “the daughter of a former head minister of the Unification Church,” attracted a lot of attention last year (and possibly this year too).

She appeared in a number of media, attended hearings organized by politicians from both the ruling and opposition parties, and held a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan. Not long after this press conference, Prime Minister Kishida decided to exercise the government’s right to pose questions to the former Unification Church [“former” since it is now called the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification]. He had previously been

reluctant to do so, since he believed the case of the former Unification Church did not meet the conditions prescribed by the law for such questioning. When the government exercises its right to pose questions to a religious organization, this is a measure that may anticipate a request for the legal dissolution of the group, in this case the former Unification Church.

At the same time, deliberations on the new Victims Relief Act, a law proposed in response to the problems of the former Unification Church, proceeded at an unusually fast pace, and on December 7, 2022, the ruling and opposition parties reached an agreement. On December 9, Ogawa was summoned as a witness to the Diet, and she tearfully said that, “I was called ‘a liar’ and ‘a hypocrite’ every day by the members of the former Unification Church and by some others, and I tried to accept their words as an opinion, but I could not stand them at the end. I was so ill that I would rather die. I am grateful to be allowed to speak today in the Diet as an official witness.”

On December 10, the next day, the Victims Relief Act was passed. Despite the slander she claimed to be a victim of, Ogawa made a great contribution to the government’s decision to exercise the right to pose questions to the former Unification Church and the enactment of the new law. Most of the public opinion supports the dissolution of the former Unification Church and regards Ogawa as a praiseworthy woman.

On the other hand, as she herself inadvertently mentioned in the Diet, there are some who strongly doubt the plausibility of her statements. Her statements change from time to time, and the timeline of her story is often inconsistent.

Needless to say, those who make statements in the public space have a serious responsibility. If false statements influence national politics, this will remain a stain on the political history of our country and will be remembered in the future.

At the end of last year, I met Sayuri Ogawa’s parents somewhere in Mie Prefecture. Her father is a tall, thin man with a smart look, and her mother a small woman with a kind smile. Their own daughter had denounced them for the religion-based abuse they allegedly submitted her to, and the poverty she claims she had been forced to endure because of their large donations to the former Unification Church.

The father said, “It is hard for parents to be criticized like this, but I cannot blame my daughter because it is also true that she has suffered, even though what she says is based on a misunderstanding.”

It was on July 20, 2022, that her parents learned that their eldest daughter, who was married and living in the Tokyo metropolitan area, was talking to the media, and claiming she had been victimized by the former Unification Church. Her father, whom I would call Yoshihiko (a pseudonym), told me that, “The head minister of our local church told us about it, and I watched the recording of Zero News [an evening news program on Nippon Television Network Corporation] on July 15. I do not remember the details clearly anymore. But my second son spoke to my daughter on the phone, and told us, ‘I think she is doing this to distract herself from the stress of raising her child.’ So, I did not take it too seriously at that time.”

“Later, however, on August 15, I watched the recording of the MBS (Mainichi Broadcasting System) News that aired on August 4, and realized that the situation was much more serious than I thought,” he said. “I did not understand why our parent-child relationship, which had been good until last time we had met on July 9, had changed so much, and I wondered why she was saying so many things that were not true. However, I reflected on what might have been my own shortcomings as a parent, and the next day, on August 16, after careful consideration, I wrote a message and sent it to my daughter via [the messaging application] LINE.”

“It was only after this message that I became aware of my daughter’s Twitter feed,” he continued. “Not only was she telling there many stories that were not true, I also felt her strong resentment and hostility toward the church, and I worried about my daughter’s state of mind.”

As Ogawa has disclosed herself, she had been examined by doctors and hospitalized several times in the past for mental disorders. Her parents were more worried about their daughter’s physical and mental health than about anything else.

But that was not all her parents worried about.

“What our daughter is saying about us is only a family matter, her father said, but the image of the church and the image of its second-generation members have been seriously damaged by our daughter’s statements. If this campaign will lead

to the dissolution of the church, then many church members will lose the spiritual support and other benefits that are important to them. When I think of their pain, I feel a deep sense of responsibility.”

Thorn between their daughter and their church, her parents are deeply concerned.

“The Daughter of the Former Head Minister of the Unification Church”

As her father pointed out, Ogawa first caught the attention of the public on Twitter.

She seems to have several Twitter accounts, but when the former Unification Church started being slandered after the assassination of former Prime Minister Abe, she started using an account called “The Daughter of the Former Head Minister of the Unification Church,” and going on and on about how vicious her parents, who are members of that church, and the church itself, are.

In a tweet of July 13, 2022, she wrote that, “Since I was a child, I was forced to live in poverty, and bullied at school, but my parents just went out to have lunch with other believers. When I started a part-time job, my parents took all my wages, and the money I had tried to hide and saved was withdrawn without my permission when I was first hospitalized in a psychiatric ward. The reason I was hospitalized was that my family was abusing my non-self-sufficient grandmother. Every day, my family shouted at my grandma, telling her they hoped she would die soon, and also used violence. Dad, who was the head minister of the church, pretended not to see it, saying to us children, ‘It is the fault of both of them, grandma and your mother.’ Mom was still working hard to meet her quota of donations, borrowing money to maintain her position as the head of the local women’s department of the church. At one stage, I found the courage to confess to my mother that I had been seriously bullied, and even undressed, but she just said, ‘God expected so much of you. It is a challenge of love.’ She explained everything with God, so I regretted I had told the story to her.

I just wanted them to genuinely look at me and say something to me as parents.

When I started a job, I did not fit in with my colleagues. I was depressed and became a shut-in. I would spend my days looking up at the ceiling.

Mom treated me kindly at home, and she looked like the only person who was trying to save me. However, I learned that she was complaining to my younger sister when I was not at home, ‘When is she going to work? I want her to bring home some money soon.’ So, I decided to leave the church and to run away from home.

I went to the police to complain that my parents were withdrawing money from my account without my permission, but they told me this was a family issue to be solved within the family.

I do not agree with what the criminal who killed Abe did, but at that time I also wanted to kill or set on fire and burn the church’s premises and top leaders, so I would have become a criminal if I had not met the man who is now my beloved husband.

Sorry I scribbled this quickly, so a correction is needed. In fact, my mental illness was triggered by the exploitation of my parents, whom I trusted at that time.”

She had also written on the same Twitter account the day before, July 12, “It is fun to see the Unification Church on fire, LOL [laughing out loud], Eog Manse!!!!” She was using a Korean expression. “Manse” means “ten thousand years” in Korean, and it is used to wish a long life, just as the Japanese “Banzai.” “Eog” reinforces “manse” with the two words indicating an even longer period of time, literally one hundred million years, as does “Banbanzai” (ten thousand and ten thousand years) in Japanese. So, she was shouting a loud “Hurrah,” and one got the impression that she was very happy to see that the former Unification Church was at the receiving end of intensive bashing.

The Suicide Note Waved in Front of the TV Cameras

Some readers may find it strange, but in a way it is true that the more extreme a story is, the easier it is for the media to jump on it without asking questions. On August 4, the young woman first appeared on the regional MBS News for the Kinki region using the pseudonym “Sayuri Ogawa.” The part of the interview where she discussed the situation with her family at home largely repeated the story she had told on Twitter, but some parts were more specific.

For example, when she talked about how poor she was as a child, she said: “My parents confiscated all the money gifts I received from other relatives for the New Year, and they never gave me gifts for Christmas or for my birthday.” The family had no money, she said, but there were pots and seals at home. These were artifacts normally given by the former Unification Church to donors, and implied that her parents had made large donations.

The reason Ogawa gave for her decision to leave the church was the family situation and the quarrels about how to care for her maternal grandmother. Ogawa’s mother, who was tired of taking care of her own mother, had become harsh with Ogawa, she claimed, and the stress had caused her to suffer from panic disorder.

However, I already see a contradiction here. In the Twitter account she used to criticize the church, Ogawa said, “I learned that she [my mother] was complaining to my younger sister when I was not at home, ‘When is she going to work? I want her to bring home some money soon.’ So, I decided to leave the church and to run away from home.”

In addition, she initially stated on Twitter that the reason she became psychotic (and the reason why she was hospitalized at a mental hospital) was that her family “was abusing my non-self-sufficient grandmother.” However, at the end of the same Twitter thread she corrected herself: “Sorry I scribbled this quickly, so a correction is needed. In fact, my mental illness was triggered by the exploitation of my parents, whom I trusted at that time.”

But in the interview with MBS News she went largely back to her original Twitter statement, the one she had later corrected. She claimed in the interview that “My mom, who was tired of taking care of her own mother, had become harsh with me, and the stress had caused me to suffer from panic disorder.”

According to the interview, Ogawa became suicidal around the age of 19, both before and after she left the church, and she even wrote a suicide note. She kept it in a clear file folder. The TV program was glad to show part of the suicide note: “I still cannot digest the mistakes of my dad and mom. It is your fault that I died. But it is not a lie that I loved you. I regret it. I regret it. I wished I had lived. I wanted to love and be loved.”

As I noted at the beginning of this article, Ogawa is now 27 years old. The TV camera showed a message she allegedly wrote when she was nineteen. The paper

the message was written on, however, looked new. Moreover, the paper had no line of folding, and there was no sign it had ever been folded. Normally, suicide notes are folded and hidden somewhere. Furthermore, she claimed she had also written shocking words in this suicide note: “First, I wanted to kill my grandma. Then, someone from my family. I did not care who it was, but I wanted one of them to die.”

But wasn't she heartbroken that her family was abusing her non-self-sufficient grandmother?

Eventually, Politicians Also Approached Her

Eventually, Ogawa was approached by various media outlets. In one YouTube program, she testified that when she participated in a training session at a church event, she was sexually harassed by a male group leader. She was told that this had happened because she was possessed by an evil spirit. She said she was sent to the church's facility where evil spirits can be exorcized located in Cheongpyeong, Korea, where she had a mental breakdown and had to be hospitalized.

She also claimed that three of her six siblings were adopted by other church members, but the eldest among her three younger sisters eventually returned home. Adoption practices in the former Unification Church later became an issue in the media. In later interviews, Ogawa criticized the practice harshly. “It is almost like human trafficking,” she said. However, at the time of the early YouTube video, she reported that she had been “glad that my sisters were adopted. Each of them became the only child in her adoptive family, they were so well cared for.”

Politicians who wanted to understand the reality of the former Unification Church started approaching her too. On August 23, she attended a hearing organized by the Constitutional Democratic Party and shared with the politicians what she claimed had been her sad experience.

“Because my parents made large donations to the church, just as it happened in the case of Abe's assassin, I was born poor and was always poor. I was bullied for a long time at school because of it. Since childhood, I was forced to attend church events and religious services, and if there were church events on a weekday, I was forced to be absent from school to attend. I was told that romance was evil. My

parents did not allow anything that was against the doctrines of the church, such as TV, comic magazines, etc., and romance novels. My life has been like this.

One of the reasons why I decided to leave the church was money. I started a part-time job when I was a high school student, but all the money was confiscated by my parents since they had a tough time making a living. After graduating from high school, I earned about 100,000 yen a month from my part-time job, but my parents confiscated all my wages. They claimed they needed the money for the family's living expenses, but they actually spent it for their donations to the church. When I was hospitalized in a psychiatric ward, my mom withdrew all my hidden savings without my permission.

The second reason why I left the church was psychological. My parents became verbally abusive and violent toward my non-self-sufficient grandma during my high school days. They told her 'You should die!' and repeatedly beat and kicked her. These violent words and actions were totally inconsistent with the doctrines of 'the family is all-important' and 'true love' that I heard proclaimed every day. Faced with these contradictions, I started asking myself questions.

During a 21-day training session that I had to attend before I could participate in a collective wedding, I was sexually harassed by a male group leader. Later, when I attended three training sessions at the training center in Cheongpyeong, Korea, where my evil spirits should have been expelled, I saw many believers who suffered from mental breakdowns. I myself became mentally unstable and developed a mental illness.

The doctor did not give me a specific name for my disease, but it was like panic disorder, depression, or schizophrenia."

She concluded that "I, like the suspect of the Abe assassination, Yamagami, have been victimized by the former Unification Church."

During the press conference held at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan on October 7, something unexpected happened. Fifty minutes after it had started, when Ogawa had almost concluded her speech, the foreign woman who served as chair of the event suddenly started talking to Ogawa's husband, who was also present, while looking at some documents. Immediately after that, her husband spoke up on behalf of Ogawa.

"I am going to speak on her behalf, he said. I just received a message from a member of the former Unification Church. Her parents' signatures are here. To

summarize it, she is, they say, mentally disturbed. ‘And since the shooting of former Prime Minister Abe, her condition has worsened, and she has been telling many lies. For this reason, we request you to cancel this press conference immediately.’”

Ogawa, who was sitting next to her husband, was clearly upset by these words. Then, she said in tears that her personality disorder had been cured several years before, and she was now healthy. She concluded, “I think many people who have seen this will understand who is the worst between those who continue to insist that they are right and myself.”

Thus, the image of the former Unification Church as a despicable organization that was manipulating the parents of a former member to shut down their daughters’ press conference was spread throughout the world.

“Sayuri Ogawa”: The Story of Her Parents

What follows is the story of Sayuri Ogawa’s parents. Although they have shared a parent-child relationship for a long period, there is now a hopeless gap between the respective perceptions of the same facts by the parents and by their daughter.

Her father, Yoshihiko, is in his late fifties and graduated from a well-known national university. He later studied at a graduate school affiliated with the former Unification Church in the U.S. Her mother, Masako (a pseudonym), is in her early 60s. She started working at a local supermarket after graduating from high school. After that, Masako’s elder sister joined the former Unification Church. Masako also learned about the Unification Church’s “Divine Principle” through her sister’s invitation, and ended up joining the church.

Yoshihiko and Masako were part of one of the church’s international mass weddings in Seoul, Korea in October 1988, and started their married life in the Ibaraki prefecture in 1992. Since then, they had six children: an eldest son, a second son, an eldest daughter, Sayuri, a second, a third, and a fourth daughter. The third and fourth daughters were adopted by other families.

Sayuri’s father, Yoshihiko, currently works for a company not connected with any religious organization but, from November 2003 to the end of January 2010, he served as head minister of Family Federation churches in various places.

The eldest daughter, Sayuri, was born in October 1995. Sayuri had excellent grades and leadership skills since she was a child. She loved being in public, and “had rather a show-off character,” Masako said.

Sayuri was well-known among the local second-generation members of the Unification Church. The church holds cultural festivals for junior high and high school students called the Chuwa Cultural Festivals. For three years in a row, during her high school years, Sayuri won the second prize in the high school speech category of one of these cultural festivals, which is held for the Aichi and Mie prefectures.

In her third year of high school, she lectured on the Unification Church’s “Divine Principle” and won the first prize in the Western Japan competition, and the second prize in the nationwide competition. She also won several other awards.

“She is extremely intelligent and hardworking. My husband had the highest expectations for her,” Masako said.

The parents could not believe their ears when they heard such a proud daughter repeatedly telling the media that she and her siblings were bullied at elementary school because they were poorly dressed, were called “stinky,” and were excluded from their peer groups on their way to and from school, all this because their parents had made large donations to the church and their family was poor.

“Our family was not financially able to make large donations, Masako said, because Sayuri’s father had spent a long time studying in the U.S. when our children were small. We were not able to tithe, i.e., donate one-tenth of our income. My daughter may think that we made large donations because we had pots, a two-stories pagoda, and a Maitreya statue at our home, and these are items normally given to church members who had made important donations. However, we had received these artifacts from deceased members of our congregation. My husband was requested from a bereaved family to take over these objects, and another co-religionist donated the Maitreya statue to us.

My husband thought that our daughter had misunderstood the reason why we had the artifacts in our home, and on September 11, 2022, he explained to her why this had happened via LINE.

Our daughter, however, did not respond to his message, but posted on Twitter on September 16 that, ‘My parents seem to be completely unaware that they made large donations.

Now, let’s assume this, at the very least.

Even if my two parents’ salaries are 300,000 yen a month and they have been tithing for 30 years, this makes 30,000 (one tenth of 300,000) x 12 (months every year) x 30 years = 10.8 million yen.

Easily more than 10 million yen, and my parents said we were paying three tenths, so they donated more. This is what brainwashing is all about,’ she said. But we were never able to pay one-tenth, so there was no way we could donate three tenths of our salaries,” Masako insisted.

She shook her head when she was asked about Sayuri’s claim of being bullied and “excluded.”

“I asked Sayuri’s closest younger sister. She said she has never heard that Sayuri had been bullied. Even my eldest and second sons have never been bullied or excluded from their peer groups. What once happened was that Sayuri had been naughty with a friend, and her teacher at junior high school had warned her.”

In addition, Sayuri said she was forced to attend church events and religious activities since childhood, but her father, Yoshihiko, set the record straight. “Every three or four years or so, if there was a big convention or event at church on weekdays, I had my children absent themselves from school. When school club activities on Saturdays and Sundays overlapped with church services or events, I sometimes encouraged my children to prioritize the church activities. On the other hand, I prioritized their sport matches and other activities, including mini-basketball games, when they were at elementary school, over church events. And I have accompanied my children several times to matches held far away from home.”

Sayuri’s mother, Masako, also reported: “We have never taken away or banned television, music, books, or comics from our children. Sayuri loves singing and playing guitar, and performed in various live events. My husband and I took leave from our work to go and cheer her several times. Sayuri did not marry in one of the international mass marriages that are recommended by our church’s teachings, but my husband and I have never fought her about it. In the first place,

we never told her ‘You will go to hell if you fall in love.’ We have been to our daughter’s wedding, and sincerely celebrated their marriage. We were also really happy about her pregnancy and delivery. We even went to take care of her immediately after the baby was born.”

Masako also emphasized that it would have been impossible for Sayuri to win the second prize and awards at the Family Federation contests if she had been forced to participate against her will. She won the awards because she wanted to participate in these contests, and even asked to go there. In her high school days, Sayuri did not question or worry about the church’s doctrine. She rather enjoyed the liberal school life. “I heard she was popular because her face was a little male-looking and handsome. I also heard she discussed with her friends the fact that she attended the church openly,” Yoshihiko said.

According to Yoshihiko, it is also not true that the family verbally abused Masako’s non-self-sufficient mother, telling her “You should die,” or beat and kicked her. It is true that there was a long-standing feud between Masako and her mother, and there were some heated arguments, but there was never any violence or “death wish” at all. And the quarrel between mother and daughter started since when Masako was old enough to remember, and was not caused by the Unification Church.

Emergency Transport to Hospital in Cheongpyeong

In February 2014, Sayuri participated in a 21-day training session at the Chiba Central Training Center of the Family Federation during her spring break, just before graduating from high school. She claimed in the media that she was sexually harassed during this training session, for example by being caressed on the head and hugged by a male group leader. She also said that she had reported the incident to her mother, but Masako claims she never heard of it.

In fact, at that time, Sayuri told a church staff that she had received an e-mail from this male group leader after returning home from a training session. But Sayuri did not tell the church staff that she had been sexually harassed. However, since the Family Federation teaches a strict sexual morality as part of its doctrine, the staff thought there was a problem even if the male group leader had just sent an e-mail to a female believer. The staff reported the e-mail issue to the chief of

the Chiba Central Training Center. After receiving the report, the chief questioned the male group leader, and found out that in fact she had talked to him often, so he did not feel there was anything wrong in writing a message, and they had exchanged a few e-mails only.

At that time, she also sent an e-mail to another church staff, where she said, “I felt the male group leader’s gaze,” but again, she did not mention sexual harassment. In other words, she suddenly “remembered” the sexual harassment incident only after she had started talking to the media.

Sayuri then participated three times in 40-day training sessions at the Cheongpyeong Training Center at the headquarters of the Family Federation in Korea. However, during these training sessions, she talked strangely with the Korean male staff, and they were embarrassed.

In mid-September 2014, during the third training session that had started on July 30 of the same year, something unusual happened to her body. Suddenly, Sayuri felt as if her voice had changed to that of an aggressive woman, and she began to go out of control. Several male staff restrained her and transported her to a hospital adjacent to the Cheongpyeong Training Center.

Her mother Masako went to Korea immediately, arriving on September 16. Seeing her mother’s face, Sayuri was relieved and calmed down, and left the hospital on the following day, September 17. The doctor told Masako about her daughter’s condition, “Be careful, she tends to get stressed easily.” Sayuri loved the Cheongpyeong Training Center, and wanted to return there for the training session. But the staff was concerned about her physical and mental condition, and recommended she should go back home as soon as possible. She and her mother went home on September 30.

She Was Very Close to Her Father

In January 2015, the following year, Sayuri enrolled in a vocational school in Nagoya to be trained as a counselor. However, she quitted after four or five lessons, claiming that, “I could not go there because I was chased by a stalker.”

In August and October, she participated in a church’s training session in Korea again. Around this time, she sang as a vocalist in a band formed by her

father, Yoshihiko, and at the end of that year, she participated in a Family Federation event and sang.

In 2016, Sayuri became mentally unstable again. She went to mental clinics and was transferred to a hospital because of her hyperventilating. In 2017, Sayuri began living by herself in an apartment, although her mental condition had not improved. Before and after she left her parents' home, she was hospitalized at a national medical center for a few days.

Masako said, "There are several cases of depression or manic depression (bipolar disorder) on my side of the family. Some even committed suicide. I think that Sayuri's mental disorder is genetic. My daughter says that the Unification Church caused her mental illness, but I do not think it has anything to do with it. I myself have not heard the name of the disease directly from the doctor, but my daughter says she has been diagnosed with depression, panic disorder, and so on."

Sayuri, on the other hand, was very enthusiastic about her musical activities. She sang at events held by local churches with Yoshihiko, and also played guitar on her own. She was also very close to her father.

A Puzzling Incident

In February 2018, Sayuri witnessed a staff abusing a patient at a facility for the mentally disabled where she had worked part-time since she was a high school student. She filmed the abuse and reported it to the police and the public administration. She also mentioned this incident on Twitter, insisting that the patients should be separated from the staff. She also claimed that she herself was being abused by her supervisor. Probably because of this, she quit the facility in March. The incident was featured on the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) news for the Tokai region on July 2 of the same year.

It was a puzzling case. I watched the video she uploaded at that time, but it did not look like it documented such a terrible abuse. Mentally disabled people often scream and go out of control, and those who care for them may have to hold them down strongly. This appeared to be such a case. Is it true that she was abused by her supervisor? First it was "sexual harassment," then it was "abuse by her supervisor."

“I was chased by a stalker.”

“I was sexually harassed.”

“I was abused by my supervisor.”

“I felt a man’s gaze.”

“Staff abuse disabled people at a specialized facility.”

“My family abused my grandmother.”

Although the truth is of course impossible to determine, considering the whole series of her statements, Sayuri appears as very self-conscious and paranoid. This is also admitted by her parents.

After Sayuri quit her part-time job at the disabled facility, she became more active in music, performing at live events and on the street.

On the less bright side, she also suffered from depression, and in mid-April 2018 she moved out of her apartment and back to her parents’ home.

At home, she stopped working and began sleeping all the time, which irritated her younger sister. So, she said to Sayuri, “Mom says behind your back, ‘When is she going to work? I want her to bring home some money soon.’” Masako does not remember saying this, but Sayuri was so upset with her sister’s words that she decided to leave her parents’ home again.

“Give Me My Money Back”: An E-mail Request Repeated Several Times

On May 24 of the same year 2018, Sayuri left home. She left a note where she said, “I’m a little tired, so I’m going to rest,” and went to stay with her current husband, with whom she was already in a relationship at that time. She seems to have met her future husband during her musical performances.

After running away from home, money troubles surfaced between Sayuri and her parents. Around June 2018, Sayuri repeatedly send text messages to her father, saying “Give me my money back,” as well as informing him that she wanted to leave the church.

“‘I gave you 100,000 yen every month from year this to year that, and I want them back.’ I was surprised to read that. It was not only about money, she also said, ‘You people have destroyed my life,’” the father recalls.

She testified that she left the church when she was twenty, around 2016, but she attended several church events in 2016 and beyond, so this does not make sense.

About the money, her mother Masako, explained, “It is true that I borrowed 160,000 yen from my daughter, when she was a high school student, and did not return it, because it was hard for us to pay for the tuition fees for our two elder sons. But I only borrowed those 160,000 yen from my daughter. In fact, on the day my daughter ran away from home, 220,000 yen were withdrawn from my husband’s Japan Agricultural Bank account at an ATM. Since nobody else in our family withdrew the money, we thought Sayuri had taken it, but we did not say anything because of the 160,000 yen.”

In addition, Sayuri often asked Yoshihiko to send money to her. Each time, Yoshihiko remitted several tens of thousands yen several times, totaling about 100,000 yen.

Again, in January 2021, Yoshihiko remitted 80,000 yen in response to Sayuri’s request. Then, he received a long message from Sayuri saying, “Thank you, I’m sorry, as I know you are in a difficult situation.” Along with these words of appreciation, she sent a long message, starting “I need to talk to you about something.” In summary, the message was as follows. “When I was 18-20 years old, my mom took all of my wages, around 100,000 yen every month, for my brothers’ tuition fees. I want you also to tell my brothers about this and ask them to help me. I told her I did not want to give her my money, but mom came to the place where I worked to get the money. I was really scared. I have had mental problems since I was eighteen, and I still have them. Now I am twenty-five, and I am still depressed and cannot keep a job. I think it is my family that robbed me of my future back then.”

Her parents were surprised. They were told a story they knew nothing about. However, since it was true that her two elder brothers had been helped by their sister Sayuri, the parents told her brothers this, and both transferred a sum of money to Sayuri’s account. In March, Sayuri returned the 80,000 yen that she had borrowed from her father.

Since then, the relationship between Sayuri and her parents has been good. Her parents frequently sent sweets and vegetables from their garden to Sayuri, and she also sent food and other items. In July, her parents and her second eldest

brother visited Sayuri at her apartment, and in November, Yoshihiko and Sayuri kept in touch via LINE. In December 2021, Sayuri and her husband were married at Tsurugaoka Hachiman Shrine in Kamakura, and her parents and second eldest brother attended.

The following April 2022, when Sayuri gave birth to a baby boy, Masako stayed at her apartment to help her. Later, the parents visited the apartment and took pictures of everyone smiling around their newborn grandson.

She Changed After the Assassination of Former Prime Minister Abe

The dark cloud now hanging over what had once been a good parent-child relationship was triggered by the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on July 8, 2022. More exactly, immediately after the shooting there was still no significant change.

Shortly before this incident, Sayuri's family had decided to move from an apartment to a house. She contacted Yoshihiko via LINE to tell him that they needed a car that she had purchased and left at her parents' home. Therefore, on July 9, her parents delivered the car from Mie Prefecture to their daughter's new home in the Tokyo metropolitan area.

On that evening, Sayuri sent a message via LINE to Masako saying, "Thank you for today. I am really sad that Mr. Abe was shot. The suspect Yamagami is from the Unification Church, right?" On July 11, she sent another message to Masako and asked, "Mom and others, are you okay? It seems the media are flooding to the church in Nara. Are you still going to the church? Please be careful." She was concerned for her parents. On the same day, the Family Federation President Tomihiro Tanaka held a press conference, and admitted that the mother of the suspect Yamagami was a member of the Family Federation.

On July 13, however, Sayuri's behavior changed drastically. As if she had become a completely different person, she started attacking both her parents and the church (see the paragraph "The Daughter of the Former Head Minister of the Unification Church" above).

On July 16, she sent this message via LINE to Yoshihiko: "As for the former Unification Church, it is very hard to believe that God would want the devotees to make large donations or to buy a book that costs 30 million yen, as the news say

recently. If they had a legitimate reason for this, I think they should disclose how all the donations they are collecting are spent.”

The reason why Sayuri had changed might have been the press conference held on July 12 by the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, an anti-Unification-Church organization. This press conference started with a moment of silence for the late former Prime Minister Abe, prefaced by the words, “Such acts should never be allowed for any reason whatsoever,” but what followed was a fierce criticism of the former Unification Church.

They waved a book, saying that the price for a volume with Rev. Sun Myung Moon’s words was a whopping 30 million yen. Addressing the problems connected with the former Unification Church, the lawyers said that Abe’s assassin Tetsuya Yamagami and his mother were “100% victims of the former Unification Church,” and that the church was “100% the perpetrator,” describing it as a “terrible evil.”

Sayuri might have been greatly shocked by this press conference. In fact, she was showing in public an attitude distancing herself from the church since around 2017. Yoshihiko asked Sayuri’s sister for details, believing she might know more. She said that around that year, Sayuri might have been in contact with an ex-member who had left the former Unification Church to join a Christian denomination and might have been exposed to some criticism of her parents’ religion. However, she never openly criticized the church at that time.

People of Sayuri’s age do not know from direct experience that the church has been severely slandered by the media in the past. It was impossible for her not to be influenced when she saw the church suddenly attacked by the media, with statement such as “The church is 100% evil and a terrible evil.” As evidence, on the day of the press conference, she had already posted on Twitter, “It is fun to see the Unification Church on fire, LOL. Eog Manse!!!!”

After this, Sayuri must have waited for a contact from the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales. At the Constitutional Democratic Party’s hearing, she stated emphatically, “The Unification Church is a cult that calls itself a religion. It is an antisocial organization that drives its believers’ families to collapse. I would like Japan to adopt the anti-cult law that already exists in France.” At the end of the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan press conference, she said in a strong tone, “Please dissolve this organization.”

These statements are an exact copy of the claims of the members the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, such as attorney Masaki Kito. In particular, “Dissolve the former Unification Church” is a kind of slogan that the Network has been using since its foundation in 1987. It is reasonable to assume that the Network coached Sayuri before her media and public appearances, and she was under their influence.

We have already described how Sayuri began to appear in the media in August 2022. At a hearing held by the Constitutional Democratic Party on August 23, her statements were already far away from the truth. Her parents spent many sleepless nights, worrying that more and more Japanese would misunderstand their church.

“We Have Been Trying to Communicate with Her via LINE”

Late at night on August 25, Masako worried and sent a message via LINE to Sayuri, saying that she wanted to visit her daughter’s home the next day. On August 26, however, Sayuri replied “No one from the church is allowed in our house now. If you would come, come, but be prepared. I take videos of everything and broadcast them on YouTube, social media, and TV.” At that time, Masako was already close to Sayuri’s house, but decided to turn back.

Yoshihiko tried to communicate with his daughter via LINE. He felt guilty that as a father he had not helped his daughter, who said she had become mentally disturbed after she had seen her mother abuse her grandmother. But he could not admit what was not true. See the following excerpts from LINE conversations:

Father: “I do not know in what kind of media you, X (Sayuri’s real name), have appeared, but are you okay? Aren’t you still taking medicine and pushing yourself too hard? I know you are probably breastfeeding, and your mom is very worried about that. I know you think this is none of our business, but isn’t now the most important time to concentrate on raising your child? I just wish we could have time together as a family again.”

Daughter: “Thanks for ruining my life, causing me trauma and mental illness, and taking nearly two million yen of my wages. If you pay me three million yen as consolation, I will listen to you. But otherwise, please don’t get involved with me any more in the future.”

Father: “Dad just wants to apologize to X. I really should have discussed with your mom about your grandma. Dad believed he should give up. Your mother said that she just could not stop quarreling with grandma because of the intense scars that were carved on her from birth. I am really sorry. I had to find a solution no matter what it was. But I was not able to do that. I sacrificed the most sensitive person, X [Sayuri], because of it. If money is the solution for X, I would do anything to find it. But I do not understand some parts of the story that your father and your family took your money, so I am hoping you will talk to me.”

Daughter: “Mom took my entire wages every month after I graduated from high school. Though she was saying, ‘I am sure I will pay you back,’ never once she paid me back. Nearly two million yen in two years.”

“How can you eat quietly without paying me back my money? I despise you from the bottom of my heart.”

Father: “Your mom does remember that she borrowed 160,000 yen at a difficult time and could not pay you back. I am really sorry. I wonder how you made a living when you were living alone in the apartment. It must have been so hard. I wonder if you gave your wages directly to your mom in cash. Or did your mom have your bank passbook or cash card and withdrew the money? I would appreciate it if you could tell me more about this.”

Daughter: “When I was hospitalized in Cheongpyeong, mom withdrew all my savings without my permission. She did not borrow them, but rather withdrew them without asking me and never returned the money. I got my part-time pay in cash, and every month mom said, ‘It is so hard right now, I am sure I will pay you back,’ so I gave the money to her. When I turned her down, she came to Y (the facility for the disabled where I worked) to pick it up directly on payday.”

Father: “Thanks for telling me. You say that your mom withdrew all the money from your account in Japan, when you came back from Cheongpyeong and found out that there was no money left in the account. But you did not say anything about it at that time: was it because you put up with it? How much money did you hand over to your mom every month?”

I know that by October 2014, you had been to Cheongpyeong three times. And when you returned to Japan, all your savings were withdrawn, and all your wages were taken every month. Does it mean that you got the money you needed from your mom? I think you paid for the driving school, the car, the car repairs,

the apartment's rent, and other things since around January 2016—but where did all this money come from?

In case you did not know, we did not purchase the two-storied pagoda and the Maitreya statue, but took them over because the owner had passed away and they were donated to us.

You might think we made large donations because of the two-storied pagoda or the Maitreya statue. When you were a small girl, we experienced financial difficulties, but it was not because of the donations. I think a lot of misconceptions and misunderstandings are at work here.

You said that your mom withdrew your savings while you were hospitalized in Cheongpyeong. If you still have your bank passbook, could you please take a picture of it and send it to me? Because your mom is very worried about it. If you no longer have the passbook, could you ask your bank to provide the transaction history?”

However, Sayuri did not answer.

When her father asked her to submit her bank passbook or transaction history to corroborate her story, Sayuri either did not respond or dodged the question.

Why Her Claims Are Totally Unbelievable

First, let us examine her statement, “Mom took my entire wages every month after I graduated from high school. Nearly two million yen in two years.” Actually, the periods when Sayuri claimed she had her wages taken change often in her statements, but let's assume it was after she graduated from high school. In this year (2014), she attended training sessions from March 15 to April 24, April 26 to June 4, July 30 to September 30, as she did from December 29 to January 2 of the following year.

And since January 2015 she attended a vocational school for training as a counselor in Nagoya for a short period, so she was able to work for a limited time only. It is hard to believe that she earned two million yen in two years.

Besides, she said that at the facility for disabled where she worked, she received her wages in cash until around April 2015, and that her mother was taking money from her every month until that time. If so, this would have been from March

2014, when she graduated from high school, to around April 2015, which makes little more than a year, not two years. She said, “I received my wages in cash, and therefore there is no record in my bank’s passbook.” But when her father asked her to disclose the passbook, she refused it.

Her claim that “Mom withdrew all my savings without my permission when I was hospitalized in Cheongpyeong” seems similar to her statement at the hearing of the Constitutional Democratic Party, that “When I was hospitalized in a psychiatric ward, my mom withdrew all my hidden savings without my permission.” Note that she mentioned this story for the first time in August 2022.

Her mother Masako said, “I had no way to know about her hidden account, and even if I knew, I, not being the account owner, would not have been able to withdraw the money without her permission.” As for the claim that she took her daughter’s wages directly from her employer, she wondered, “I didn’t even know the payday and the amount due to my daughter. Then how could I go and get it?”

Thus, clearly Sayuri’s claim that her mother took her money has no plausibility at all.

The Press Conference at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan

The true story of the press conference at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan on October 7, 2022, is as follows.

On October 6, Sayuri’s parents were informed from a local church staff that Sayuri would hold a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan the following day. They were surprised and thought they had to do something. The church staff seemed to have seen Sayuri’s post on Twitter announcing the press conference for the following day.

However, her parents were informed only after 9pm on October 6. Since Yoshihiko starts to work very early, at 4am, they did not have enough time to consider the matter. Even so, firstly, Sayuri’s brother called her. However, she did not answer. So, in the morning of the press conference day, Yoshihiko sent the following message via LINE: “You hold a press conference today. Your dad and your family are very concerned because a lot of your memories of the past are so different from what we remember. Before speaking to a large audience, I would

like you to first check your past e-mails and messages via LINE with your dad and your family, and check the records of your bank passbook. Even if now you believe that your memories are correct, I am afraid that my daughter will be hurt if she will find out later that her memories were wrong.”

Yoshihiko said that “I knew it would be difficult to stop the press conference, but I wanted to do anything possible to stop the circulation of fake news. However, my message via LINE was never read.”

Later, a local head minister of the church suggested that he might send a fax to the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan. However, Yoshihiko did not have enough time to prepare the document. Therefore, Sayuri’s parents asked a church headquarters’ staff who spoke English to prepare the document in both Japanese and English, and send it to them by e-mail. Yoshihiko read and understood it. He thought that the English text was good enough and the translation was not needed; therefore both the father and the mother signed the document in English. Yoshihiko asked Masako to send it by fax. Sayuri later posted on Twitter that the fax arrived at the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan at 10:40 am:

“Urgent.

We are the parents of Sayuri Ogawa (real name XX), a former member of the Unification Church, who is going to hold a press conference today at your press club.

As XX admits at the top of her Twitter page, she suffers from a serious mental illness known as ‘dissociative identity disorder.’ According to the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare website, this mental disease is a neurosis, in which several personalities with completely different characters, memories, and genders appear in one person. XX has been showing the disease’s symptoms for a long time, but after the media started reporting about the shooting of former Prime Minister Abe, her symptoms became worse. And she began to speak in the media and at political party meetings describing facts that were completely different from those that really happened in the past.

We are very concerned that if she continues these activities, her mental disorder may become much worse, or she may commit a crime such as defamation. Therefore, we are currently considering legal procedures to prevent her from telling any more untrue stories.

As such, we sincerely ask you to cancel her press conference today [...].

Best regards,

[Signatures of the parents].”

Around 1pm, another document requesting the cancellation of the press conference was sent by the church’s lawyer to the club. When the press conference began at 2pm, the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan should have been aware of these faxes. However, as mentioned earlier, the press conference started as scheduled, and after about 50 minutes had passed, the foreign lady chairing the event looked panicked as if she had just received those faxes, and showed Sayuri’s husband the English document requesting the cancellation of the press conference and the Japanese document sent by the church’s lawyer. The husband said that according to the parents’ fax his wife Sayuri was “mentally abnormal” and was “telling a lot of lies,” but this harsh language was not in the original document.

Her parents could not imagine that the organizers would publicly read their fax asking to cancel the event during the press conference. Even more, Sayuri’s husband used an inaccurate Japanese translation.

It is not clear whether the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of Japan made a summary on the spot and handed it to Sayuri’s husband, and he merely read it aloud. However, as I mentioned earlier, many in the audience had the impression that the church was trying to derail the press conference. In the end, it was a great success for those who manipulated the reality and managed to put the church in an even worse light.

Furthermore, the parents were also accused of disclosing their daughter’s undetermined mental illness and violate her right to privacy. However, her parents thought that, because their daughter had clearly posted the name of her disease on Twitter, she had been officially diagnosed and did not want to keep her diagnosis private. They also considered that their daughter’s symptoms of telling false stories were indeed similar to those typical of the dissociative identity disorder. The parents felt that their daughter was now a different person, as if another personality was possessing her body.

Besides, if you blame the parents for their breach of privacy, Sayuri herself is even more problematic. She tried an incomprehensible defense on YouTube,

saying “I consulted people who are familiar with the disease, and posted its name on Twitter in my profile section to improve my symptoms.”

The Terrible Evil That Uses “Sayuri Ogawa”

During my interview, Yoshihiko, Sayuri’s father, tried his best to speak calmly, but there was only one moment when his face flushed, and his voice became choked up. That was when he was talking about his daughter’s criticism of the adoptions that had been conducted by the members of the Family Federation for a long time. She said, “It is almost like human trafficking.”

“I assume that someone is making her say that. We have been talking to our daughter previously how we felt when we gave my daughters up for adoption, and I am sure she understands that... As for our second daughter, we once gave her up for adoption, but she came back after six months because the family were not confident enough they could raise her due to their difficult circumstances. We talked to our second daughter about this around September last year, before this issue hit the media, and she understood.”

Sayuri testified, “I cannot forget my sister’s expression when she cried and said, ‘Mom, why did you give me up for adoption?’”

But Yoshihiko strongly denies this: “It’s impossible. I asked my second daughter and she said she has no idea of this.”

“My wife and I were lucky enough to have many children. We wanted to help families who were unable to have children. We decided that if we would have a fifth and a sixth child, we would give them to families who were in desperate need of children. None of this was mediated by the church.”

“There is a strange criticism, he said, that ‘Arranging the adoption before birth is treating the child as an object and violating human rights.’ However, we have formed a trusting relationship based on faith with the future adoptive parents even before the birth of our children who were later adopted, and we cooperated with them until the day of the birth. The two families raise the child together for one month, then the child is adopted. What is the problem with that? After that, the two families continue to interact with each other, and the siblings have a good relationship with one another. In fact, our third daughter is particularly concerned about us and her sister [Sayuri] now.”

Currently, Sayuri and her parents are communicating again via LINE, and the communication seems to work. The parents hope to meet their daughter in person to make sure of the facts and clear up any misunderstandings, as their memories of past events differ so much. And until then, they ask her to refrain from appearing in the media. Sayuri says, “Okay, let’s talk about it.” But she would like at least one of her parents to appear in a documentary that Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) is currently planning to feature her, and she says she would like to have a frank talk with them, to work out their misunderstandings.

Yoshihiko replied, “I do not want to have such an important talk in the public media to clear up misunderstandings between parents and child. Why do we need the media to repair a parent-child relationship?”

Her parents continue to ask Sayuri to send them her past bank transaction history but each time she refuses, claiming that she cannot send it because her lawyer would not allow her to do so or because the former Unification Church would misuse it.

You Do Not Care if It Is a Lie

Sayuri mentioned a lawyer. In fact, there is a trial she is involved in right now. Noriko Ishigaki, a member of the House of Councilors [the Upper house of the National Diet] for the Constitutional Democratic Party, posted a video of the hearing held by the party with Ogawa on her YouTube channel.

However, on November 2, 2022, the Family Federation requested a provisional injunction from the Tokyo District Court ordering the deletion of the contents, claiming that they were factually inaccurate and constituted defamation against the church.

The part of Ogawa’s testimony that the Family Federation finds especially objectionable is the following: “During the collective wedding in which my parents were married, the founder Reverend Sun Myung Moon said, ‘Even if you need to borrow money or sell your body, Japan, the country of Eve, must give donations to Korea, the country of Adam.’ Echoing these words, dad, who was the head of his local church, said the same thing to his flock during the service.”

According to the church, Reverend Sun Myung Moon was speaking in Korean to his male Korean believers at that time, and he did not say, “The Japanese who are from the country of Eve”—or anything like that. In particular, the phrase “even if you sell your body” is a literal translation from Korean. The original meaning is completely different. It means “even if you have to work very hard,” and it is derived from the theological principle that “even if you work hard, it is always insufficient in the presence of Heaven.” Therefore, Yoshihiko, who was the head minister of the church, would never give such a sermon to his believers.

The response from Councilor Noriko Ishigaki to this provisional injunction was extremely insincere. The first trial hearing was scheduled on December 6, but prior to this, the court was contacted by Mr. Takashi Yamaguchi and other lawyers belonging to the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, representing Councilor Ishigaki. They asked to postpone the first hearing because Ogawa was suffering from irritable bowel syndrome and could not attend.

However, I checked Ogawa’s Twitter feed and found out that she regularly posted on Twitter every day. She even posted a video featuring herself. On December 4, she announced that she would appear on a live webcast program of the Tokyo Broadcasting System, titled “Houdou 1930,” scheduled to be aired on December 6. How can a sick person appear on a live program that requires mental and physical strength? In other words, she showed no signs of illness at all.

On the other hand, the court decided that waiting for too many days would be against the purpose of the provisional injunction, and the first hearing was held on December 6 as scheduled. At that time, Attorney Yamaguchi offered many weak excuses, such as “We only met with Ogawa a week ago, so we have yet to hear her story,” and “It takes time to listen to her.”

What I can assume from this is that it is the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales itself that is using Ogawa to further its own agenda, even if they may be very much aware of the lack of plausibility of her statements. Therefore, they try as far as it is possible to avoid bringing her to the forefront.

This can be assumed from another fact. I was eager to talk to Sayuri as well, so I requested an interview through Yoshihiko by e-mail. However, the reply came from Attorney Takashi Yamaguchi.

The answer was “no interviews,” and he even refused to be interviewed himself about her. Therefore, I replied to him that, “I now understand that Attorney Yamaguchi and the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales do not care about the facts.”

The Network would not hesitate to use all means to destroy the former Unification Church. They are willing to tell all sort of stories, including lies, to achieve what they believe is a righteous purpose. They often throw the words “anti-social” and “cult” at the former Unification Church, but considering their involvement in the abduction and confinement of believers, one may wonder whether they are not more deserving of these labels themselves.

The facts are quite simple. Sayuri Ogawa was not a victim of the former Unification Church, nor was she subjected to religious abuse by her parents, who were members of the church. Her parents raised her with sufficient love. If there was some trouble between parents and daughters, even if I accept most of their claims, it was purely a family problem.

In the first place, it is easy to notice that there are many contradictions in Sayuri’s statements if you just listen a little bit carefully. However, the media and politicians did not verify her statements, did not pay any attention to the contradictions, and continued to use Ogawa as their convenient tool. As a result, misinformation was spread, and the honor of the parents and the Family Federation was severely offended. And the most serious problem is that national politics was distorted by her false statements.

Her father, Yoshihiko, said, “But I am sure that one day my daughter’s misunderstandings will be cleared up and she will come back to herself. Then, my daughter might be criticized. That’s what I worry about. And moreover, this is an important time for both my daughter and her baby in the postpartum period. We are capable of resisting slander thanks to the training we have undertaken as part of our life of faith, but it would be unbearable for us that our daughter will be spoken ill of. My daughter has been constantly saying lately that it is dangerous for her to see us, but who is it that makes her say such things? Who says she can only speak in front of the media? I pray that my daughter will not be used any further by the media. ‘Sayuri Ogawa’ is not who she really is. I want to talk to X (Sayuri’s real name). My daughter is, at heart, a good girl who loves her parents.”

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All Political Questions Are Ultimately Religious: The American Founding and the Tai Ji Men Case

Marco Respinti

Director-in-charge, Bitter Winter magazine

marco.respinti@bitterwinter.org

ABSTRACT: The relationship between centralization, personal rights, taxes, and religious liberty was an important aspect of the American Founding. The paper discusses the main historical events at the origins of the United States, and proposes a comparison with a case in contemporary Taiwan, where a spiritual movement, Tai Ji Men, was discriminated through ill-founded tax-bills. The Tai Ji Men case is not merely a tax issue, but a question of freedom of religion or belief. It shows what America's Founding Fathers knew, i.e., that the deepest political questions have ultimately a religious dimension. [A shorter version of this paper was presented at the session "New Religious and Spiritual Movements, Discrimination, and Democracy in Taiwan" of the European Academy of Religion 2022 Annual Meeting in Bologna, Italy].

KEYWORDS: American Founding, Tax Reform, Tax Justice, Tai Ji Men, Tai Ji Men Case, Freedom of Religion or Belief and Taxes.

"I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided,
and that is the lamp of experience.
I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past."
Patrick Henry (1736–1799) (Henry 1775)

1. Federalists and Anti-Federalists: The Problem of Centralization I

The Second Continental Congress of the United States of America (May 10, 1775–March 1, 1781), which functioned as the provisional government of the country during most of the American War of Independence (April 19, 1775–September 3, 1783), proclaimed the separation of the British North American colonies from Great Britain in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. On November 15,

1777, the thirteen former colonies, now thirteen sovereign states, bound in league, adopted the *Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union* (*Articles of Confederation* 1777).

In subsequent years, many Americans increasingly grew disillusioned with that document (and some were since the beginning), judging it a tool too weak for political administration. Wishing to revise it, a Constitutional Convention was summoned in Philadelphia on May 25, 1787. It lasted until September 17, 1787, and ended up producing a totally new document, the federal Constitution (*Constitution of the United States* 1787), effective from March 4, 1789, which still governs the United States today (Carey and Hyneman 1967).

The state-by-state ratification process of the federal Constitution, which took place throughout 1788, saw a serious debate among two main currents of thought and policy. One was supported by those in favor of a stronger central power, who constituted the backbone of what came to be known as the Federalist movement (McDonald 1958, 1985), and the other was advocated by those who, opposing this tendency, came to be known as Anti-Federalists.

The Anti-Federalists were different people coming from a variety of political inclinations, united solely by their opposition to centralization. One thing to be noted is that, to some extent counter-intuitively, since the institutional model proposed by the new Constitution was a federal union of sovereign states that should devolve some of their sovereignty to the central government, in this context “federal” means “central” and even “centralized,” while “Anti-Federalist” conveys the idea of a devolutionary and confederate structure where the central administration is weak or almost non-existent (Bradford 1993; McDonald and Shapiro McDonald 1968; McDonald 2000). Patrick Henry, first and sixth Governor of Virginia, was one of the most famous exponents of the Anti-Federalist camp, but—to underline the complexity of the topic and the confusing use of words at that time—he belonged to the Federalist Party.

The apologists of a strong central government produced 85 articles and essays, published in prominent journals, aimed at defending the project of a new Constitution. These texts were later collected under the title *The Federalist*, also known, since the 20th century, by the popular name *The Federalist Papers* (*Full Text of The Federalist Papers* 1787–88; Hamilton, Jay, and Madison 2001; Rossiter 1961; Dietze 1960; Carey 1989). They were all signed with the

pseudonym “Publius,” conveying the idea of “public” in the sense of what is good for the general public and the care for the *res publica*, and were actually written by some of the most prominent public figures of the nation at that time: Alexander Hamilton (1755–1804), later the first US Secretary of Treasury; James Madison (1751–1836), then the fourth US president (elected by the party that opposed the Federalist Party—complexity again); and John Jay (1745–1829), who became Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court.

The Anti-Federalists, i.e., those skeptics towards a strong central government, produced specular works, underlining the dangers that centralization poses to the individual and common good. Out of analogy, the collection of these scattered texts became known by the popular name *The Anti-Federalist Papers* (Storing and Dry 1981; “Anti-Federalist Papers” 1787–88).

Both the products of Founding Fathers held in high esteem nation-wide, and similarly aimed at preserving liberty albeit through diverse, even opposite means (Bradford 1979), the two “Papers” are first-rate sources of a distinctive American political theory. *The Federalist Papers* hail the virtue of a federal Constitution. *The Anti-Federalist Papers* caution against it by highlighting the necessary limits of a centralized power. The latter eventually brought to the approval of the US *Bill of Rights* (*Bill of Rights* 1791).

2. The Principle of Subsidiarity: The Problem of Centralization II

While a first review of the concept of an “American political theory” can profitably begin through the understanding of that notion elaborated by American political scientists George W. Carey (1933–2013) and Willmore Kendall (1909–1967) in *The Basic Symbols of the American Political Tradition* (Carey and Kendall 1970), and through Carey’s long-time activity as editor of *The Political Science Review* (*The Political Science Review* 1971–2022), the *Bill of Rights*, which became effective on December 15, 1791, contains the first ten amendments to the US Constitution, and its importance can hardly be overestimated.

Being the pivotal single fount of the American concept of a “limited government,” it leaves to the states of the American federal union all the powers that are not explicitly entrusted in the hands of the central government. And not

only to the states, but also to all levels of political and administrative power, down all the way to the US citizens and their institutions, starting with their families.

Called “principle of subsidiarity” (if an inferior entity is capable of carrying out a task well, the superior entity must not intervene), this model was outlined, with specific reference to the United States, by French political theorist Alexis Charles Henri Clérel, Earl of Tocqueville (1805–1859), in his seminal *Democracy in America* (Tocqueville 1835–1840). More recently it was revisited by American sociologist Robert A. Nisbet (1913–1996: Nisbet 1953, 1966, 1968, 1970, 1973) and others who discussed the communitarian tradition in the United States (Carey and Frohnen 1998; Shain 1994; Respinti 2002).

Of this general framework, provided by the *Bill of Rights*, the *First Amendment* is particularly notable since it founds all American liberties upon religious liberty. The struggle between power and freedom, or, better, between different visions on how to secure liberties in America, made religious liberty the foundation, paramount, and parameter of all American liberties and of the very concept of an American citizenship.

The *First Amendment* of the *Bill of Rights* reads:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Roman Catholic theologian John Courtney Murray S.J. (1904–1967), an authority on religious liberty, in his seminal book *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition*, notes:

The American Bill of Rights is not a piece of eighteenth-century rationalist theory; it is far more the product of Christian history. Behind it one can see, not the philosophy of the Enlightenment but the older philosophy that had been the matrix of the common law. The “man” whose rights are guaranteed in the face of law and government is, whether he knows it or not, the Christian man, who had learned to know his own personal dignity in the school of Christian faith (Murray 1960, 39).

3. “A Government of Laws and Not of Men”: The Problem of Centralization III

Let us return to the source of the religious and political liberties enshrined in the US *Bill of Rights*. The anonymous author of the “Anti-Federalist Paper” Number 17, using the pen-name “Brutus,” writes:

It is proper here to remark, that the authority to lay and collect taxes is the most important of any power that can be granted; it connects with it almost all other powers, or at least will in process of time draw all others after it; it is the great mean of protection, security, and defense, in a good government, and the great engine of oppression and tyranny in a bad one (“Antifederalist No. 17” 1788).

Anti-Federalist thought emphasized an idea deeply rooted in the American spirit. If taxes can grant the maximum protection that a state should give to every citizen, they can be as well the instrument of an open despotic rule, the difference lying in the moral nature of political power. For this reason, American political thought is based on the idea of “a government of laws and not of men,” to use the words uttered by John Adams (1735–1826) for the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780. Adams was then an attorney and later became the second President of the United States (*The Report of a Constitution or Form of Government for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 28–31 October 1779, Chapter II* 1779). Probably Adams’ concept was to some extent influenced by *De l’esprit des lois*, published in 1748 by French judge and man of letters Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu (1689–1755) (Montesquieu 1989). It was aimed at securing good government through the rule of law against arbitrariness.

This reflection on state and taxes, power and liberty, extends the very idea that originated the United States to the whole American experience. The slogan epitomizing the so-called “spirit of 1776” (Murray 1960; D’Elia 1983), or the protest of the British colonists of North America against their motherland in Europe, was, famously, “Taxation without representation is tyranny.” It means that at least taxation should buy citizens substantial political rights.

The slogan was widely used against the Parliament of London’s imposition of the 1765 Stamp Act (*Great Britain: Parliament—The Stamp Act; March 22, 1765* 1765) to the colonists, an imposition which urged a tax on paper, legal documents, and various commodities. Repealed the following year (*Great Britain: Parliament—An Act Repealing the Stamp Act; March 18, 1766* 1766), the Stamp

Act was replaced by the “The American Colonies Act 1766,” commonly known as the “Declaratory Act” (*Great Britain: Parliament—The Declaratory Act; March 18, 1766* 1766), which essentially stated that the British Parliament had absolute legislative power over the colonies. It was this tyrannical fiscal policy of the British “Crown in Parliament,” the very symbol of a broader political oppression, that ignited the protest of the North American colonists and then led to war.

The idea “Taxation without representation is tyranny” is probably rooted in a 1754 letter that American patriot and scientist Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, sent to William Shirley (1694–1771), Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, writing:

excluding the People of the Colonies from all Share in the Choice of the Grand Council would probably give extreme Dissatisfaction, as well as the Taxing them by Act of Parliament where they have no Representative (Franklin 1754).

In fact,

[...] it is suppos'd an undoubted Right of Englishmen not to be taxed but by their own Consent given thro' their Representatives (Franklin 1754).

It should be emphasized that originally the North American colonists did not want to sever ties with England, nor to establish a new government through a revolution. When that happened, it was not on purpose. The colonists wished in fact to continue enjoying the chartered rights of the Englishmen, the “unwritten” English Constitution that for centuries granted the benefit of a good government established “forever” by the *Magna Carta* in 1215 (*Magna Carta* 1215) to all the subjects of the Crown.

But the North American colonists judged that those traditional rights were now being betrayed by Great Britain, and that it was their moral duty to compel the “Crown in Parliament” to submit again to the rule of law, granting the colonists back their full rights as Englishmen.

Sensing the approach of some turbulent events (Franklin 1775), Franklin said clearly to Irish philosopher and statesman Edmund Burke (1729–1797)—who was a staunch critic of the French Revolution (1789–1799) (Burke 1790, 1998) and a supporter of the rights of the American colonists (although not of their independence: Burke 1775)—that “America [...] would never again see such

happy days as she had passed under the protection of England,” if independence were actually to happen (Burke 1791, 37).

This attitude to conserve rather than to destroy had more to do than we may believe with the power of a state to tax. “Anti-Federalist Paper” Number 17 is in fact lucid in using the power of a state to tax to distinguish “a good government” from “a bad one.”

4. Taxes and Religion: The Tai Ji Men Case I

The Founding Fathers of both persuasions, federalist and anti-federalist, were confronted with a decisive question: what makes a government good or bad? In fact—they reasoned—, if a state recognizes no authority, thus limit, above itself, and claims to be the source of all that is good and just, thus the authority to define in turn what is bad and unjust, then the criterion and measurement of what is good is only a matter of power. The power of the state is absolute, i.e., “might is right.”

For the American patriots and Founding Fathers, the question of taxation was directly connected with the nature of political power, its boundaries, and its source. Conversely, the nature of political power, its boundaries, and its source manifested themselves in the key element of taxation, “the great mean of protection, security, and defense, in a good government, and the great engine of oppression and tyranny, in a bad one,” according to the “Anti-Federalist Paper” Number 17.

Burke, in supporting the right of the North Americans colonists as Englishmen angered by unjust taxation, made it clear that a good government is a government that rules respecting a superior law, natural thus divine (Stanlis 1958, 1991; Kirk 1967).

The question of taxes becomes then directly religious, and the relation between taxes and justice in the American Founding, or taxes and the moral, even divine, foundation of just laws in a righteous state, proves Spanish political theorist Juan Donoso Cortés, Marquis of Valdegamas (1809–1853), to be right when he pointed out that all political questions are ultimately, at their core, theological questions (Donoso Cortés 1851, 2014; Herrera 1995, 2007).

The case of the Taiwanese spiritual movement Tai Ji Men (see the texts available in “Tai Ji Men Case” 2023), unjustly persecuted in its motherland with false accusations of tax evasion (and even black magic) by rogue bureaucrats, finds an important reference in the work of American philosopher Ellis Sandoz.

Sandoz did not know about the Tai Ji Men case but, by insisting on the relation between the power (to tax) and religion in the American Founding, he offered textual proofs of the double value, political and religious, of the American public rhetoric at the birth of the nation (Sandoz 1991; Bradford 1991), thus allowing for a first important theoretical conclusion. That is, fiscal reform and tax justice are connected with freedom of religion and the right to live according to our beliefs (Respinti 2002, 2022). It is here that old American precedents become relevant to discuss also the Tai Ji Men case.

5. From Legitimate to Illegitimate: The Tai Ji Men Case II

The reflection on state power, as limited by a higher law, cuts through all American political theory and history. American political scientist Edward S. Corwin (1878–1963) classically addressed the topic in his *The “Higher Law” Background of American Constitutional Law* (Corwin 1928–29) and, before him, Chief Justice John Marshall (1755–1835) made it clear that the abuse of state power in taxing may result not only in damaging citizens but also in demolishing the state.

In his ruling in the 1819 US Supreme Court case *James McCulloch v. The State of Maryland, John James*, commonly known as *McCulloch v. Maryland*, Marshall wrote:

[t]hat the power of taxing by the States may be exercised so as to destroy it, is too obvious to be denied. But taxation is said to be an absolute power, which acknowledges no other limits than those expressly prescribed in the constitution, and like sovereign power of every other description, is trusted to the discretion of those who use it. But the very terms of this argument admit that the sovereignty of the State, in the article of taxation itself, is subordinate to, and may be controlled by, the constitution of the United States. How far it has been controlled by that instrument must be a question of construction. In making this construction, no principle not declared, can be admissible, which would defeat the legitimate operations of a supreme government. It is of the very essence of supremacy to remove all obstacles to its action within its own sphere, and so to modify every power vested in subordinate governments, as to exempt its own operations from

their own influence. This effect need not be stated in terms. It is so involved in the declaration of supremacy, so necessarily implied in it, that the expression of it could not make it more certain. We must, therefore, keep it in view while construing the constitution (*McCulloch v. Maryland* 1819).

First, the matter of taxes evokes a central moral question. Being intimately related to the very nature of the state power and its limits, it brings then that moral question to its religious roots. In the American Founding this is particularly evident, but it is not an American issue only.

The burden imposed by an abusive state power over citizens is a global problem: it is in fact a human problem throughout all history. The case of Tai Ji Men in Taiwan is just one instance of this universal question. As others have demonstrated (Jacobsen 2020), the power of the state to tax citizens was transformed into a weapon to prevent some taxpayers from enjoying their fundamental right to freedom of religion or belief.

Even more seriously, in the Tai Ji Men case the abuse of the power of taxation became more than an instance of a legitimate power gone astray (Respinti 2021). What happened was the transformation of the exercise of a state power from legitimate to illegitimate through fraud and lies.

Tai Ji Men was falsely accused of tax evasion. It was cleared of all accusations, but the administrative consequences of the accusations are still damaging the movement, also in term of property rights. This abuse of state power goes even beyond the abuse itself. It replicates and multiplies the abuse's misdeeds like the echo of a loud cry in a void, deep cavern resonating on and on, making it possible for those misdeeds to survive the abusive acts themselves.

After Tai Ji Men has been repeatedly declared not guilty of tax evasions by several courts of law (Jacobsen 2020), the echo of false accusations against its Grand Master (*Shifu*) and disciples (*dizi*) continues to curtail their rights to religious liberty and to fundamental political and economic rights.

6. Religious Liberty as Good Politics: The Tai Ji Men Case III

In fact, that echo forbids Tai Ji Men in Taiwan to fully use its properties for its moral, spiritual, and religious aims. It damages its image as a peaceful spiritual organization in the eyes of many, seeding the calumny of dishonesty and waving

even the phantom of black magic. It compels Tai Ji Men to invest part of its time and energy in redressing, against a much more powerful adversary, the consequences of false accusations, instead of entirely dedicating itself to its spiritual goals. And, gravely, it tries to force it to understand and live religious liberty just as a private feature, instead of enjoying it in its fullness, which is both freedom of belief and freedom to publicly live according to that belief, operating and contributing to the welfare of society and the common good following a spiritual inspiration.

The religious liberty enshrined in the *First Amendment* to the US Constitution as the primary human and political right of the American citizens and the foundation of the American *res publica* is what the consequences of the false accusations against Tai Ji Men, surviving their legal collapse, have denied for more than a quarter of a century to the leader and disciples of the movement.

Both in the American Founding and in the Tai Ji Men case the abuse of the state power of taxation turns into a preeminent case of religious liberty. At its core, the American Founding, and indeed the “American question,” as defined by the “spirit of 1776,” is deeply connected with religious liberty. It acknowledges that freedom of religion is threatened by the abuse of the state power to tax, and answers that threat by affirming a notion of religious liberty that also affects politics (and taxes).

The Tai Ji Men case requires the same acknowledgment. It is not a mere case of (false) tax evasion or exaggerated taxation, but is ultimately a case of freedom of religion or belief, making it clear that truly all political questions are ultimately, at their core, religious questions.

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Research Notes

Dangerous for Many Religions: The New Japanese Guidelines on Religious Donations and “Religious Abuse of Children”

Massimo Introvigne

CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions)

maxintrovigne@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: On July 8, 2022, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was assassinated by the son of a member of the Unification Church (now called the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification). A campaign against this movement followed in Japan, and among the main accusations were that the Unification movement manipulates followers to donate excessively and creates an unhealthy environment for children. As a by-product of these campaigns, the laws on donations were amended, and in December 2022 the Consumer Affairs Agency (CAA) released guidelines on how to interpret them with respect to donations made to religious organizations. At the same time, the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare issued guidelines on the “religious abuse of children.” While they are clearly aimed at hitting the Unification movement, these documents also include provisions seemingly directed against the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Evangelical Christians, and the Roman Catholic Church.

KEYWORDS: Unification Church, Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, Religious Abuse of Children, Japanese Directives Against Religious Abuse of Children, Assassination of Shinzo Abe, Anti-Cult Movement in Japan.

1. The Guidelines on Religious Donations

Did you feel “confused” when you decided to donate to an unpopular religious organization? This is evidence that “mind control” was at work, and you can get your money back. But what if you honestly cannot remember that you felt “confused”? This is evidence that in your case “mind control” was particularly effective, and you can still ask to be reimbursed.

Scholars of new religious movements believed they had debunked the pseudo-scientific theory of brainwashing (or “mind control”) in the 20th century, comforted by the fact that in 1990 the *Fishman* decision in California had stopped its use as a weapon against the so-called “cults” in American courts. But the dead horse of brainwashing is now being resurrected in Japan, after former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (1954–2022) was assassinated on July 8, 2022, by one Tetsuya Yamagami, whose mother is a member of the Unification Church (now called the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification). Yamagami’s mother went bankrupt in 2002, allegedly because of her excessive donations to the Unification Church. Twenty years later, Yamagami killed Abe claiming he wanted to punish him for having appeared in two events of an organization connected with the Family Federation.

Rather than blaming the assassin—and the sensational media campaigns against the Unification Church that had turned his head—most Japanese media found fault with the religious group, with the strange argument that if his mother had not donated to the church Yamagami would not have killed Abe (Introvigne 2022a). A number of moves by the government followed. A procedure was started that may lead to de-registering the Family Federation as a religious organization, and Japanese laws regulating donations were amended, including through the “Act on Prevention of Inappropriate Solicitation of Donations and Similar by Corporations and Similar Organizations” (Act no. 105 of 2022).

The courts and agencies enforcing this Act are now supposed to use guidelines in the forms of questions and answers released by the Consumer Affairs Agency (CAA) on December 28, 2022, which clarify the scope of the law (an English translation of the full text is published as Appendix A to this article; quotes in this paragraph refer to the questions in the documents unless otherwise indicated).

The guidelines explain that the Act’s purpose is threefold. First, it extends pre-existing statutes protecting consumers against corporations to entities that are not corporations but not-for-profit associations or foundations, and their employees or legal representatives. It does not extend to donations made to individuals. However, it is specified that,

if a member of a religious group is not a representative or an employee of the group, but solicit donations to that group, obviously there is an implied contract between the religious corporation or similar organization and the individual. Accordingly, the act of

such an individual is regarded as an act of a corporation and similar organization, and is subject to the provisions of the Act (Q4).

Second, it prohibits certain forms of solicitation of donations. It introduces the notion of “duty of consideration,” meaning in the case of donations that

the solicitation should not make it difficult or excessively burdensome for an individual to make an appropriate decision as to whether or not to donate (Q6).

Since this is somewhat abstract, the law and the guidelines specify which contents and means of solicitation are prohibited.

As for the contents, they prohibit to take advantage of a “state of anxiety” induced in the donors about “misfortunes” that may fall upon them or their relatives in this life or in the afterlife. The word “anxiety” is ambiguous. In 1843, Danish Lutheran philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) gave to one of his most famous books the title *Fear and Trembling* (de Silentio 1843). The words of the title came from Paul’s Second Epistle to the Corinthians 7:15 in the Bible. Kierkegaard argued that “fear and trembling” is an appropriate Christian attitude before God since we can never be sure whether we will be saved or not. Were Kierkegaard, and the author of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, inducing a “state of anxiety” in their readers? The answer is yes, and this is typical of many religions, which also teach that such “anxiety” can be relieved by faith and good deeds—including donations.

Note that in the case of members of religious organizations, it is possible according to the guidelines that the “state of anxiety” had been induced at the time of joining the group and reinforced through the continuous teaching of the movement’s theology. As a consequence, it can be recognized that devotees of certain religions are in a permanent “state of anxiety,” and it would not be needed to connect the “anxiety” with the specific moment of the donation.

As for the manipulative techniques used for taking advantage of the “state of anxiety,” they are defined as those used to induce a situation of “confusion” where the donor

is mentally incapable of making judgments under free will, such as when the person is puzzled and perplexed and does not know what to do. It is a broad concept that also includes awe (fear and dread) (Q10).

This is, as one question in the guidelines note, what is commonly called “mind control.”

But what if donors cannot honestly remember that they were “confused” when they donated? Is this evidence that they were not victims of “mind control” and donated freely? Not at all, the guidelines answer.

Even if the donors, when they made a donation, were unable to determine whether or not they were confused, it may still be possible to exercise the right of revocation after they got out of that condition... if at the time of the donation the donors were unable to determine whether they were confused, and even if they believed that they were donating based on a sense of duty or mission, but later they considered what happened more calmly and realized that they had donated out of confusion because somebody solicited them and took advantage of their anxiety, it would be possible for them to exercise the right of revocation (Q11).

The third aim of the Act is to allow those who donated because they were manipulated through unlawful solicitations or mind control to be reimbursed. Several provisions allow their relatives to exert a right of subrogation and ask for reimbursement, even if the donors are still “confused” (and are still members of the religious movement) and would not ask to be reimbursed themselves.

Knowing that in some cases Japanese courts of law have recognized the validity of undertakings by donors not to seek reimbursements in the future, the guidelines declare such undertakings as uniformly invalid.

“Does the Act interfere with freedom of religion or belief?” the guidelines ask. They answer that it does not, because it only targets organizations and practices “that are generally regarded by our society as socially inappropriate.” They can also be publicly denounced through reports and other acts informing the population that a certain group solicits donations unlawfully.

Here, as in other measures introduced or proposed after Abe’s assassination, Japanese authorities refer to a standard of what society in general regard as appropriate and acceptable or otherwise. This is a recipe for discrimination. Japan is a signatory of the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). In 1993, the United Nations Human Rights Committee adopted General Comment No. 22 to art. 18 ICCPR, which deals with freedom of religion or belief. Section 2 of General Comment no. 22 states that Article 18 prohibits any form of discrimination

against any religion or belief for any reason, including the fact that they are newly established, or represent religious minorities that may be the subject of hostility (U.N. Human Rights Committee 1993).

Japan makes the fact that certain new religious movements are “the subject of hostility”—and of the accusation of using brainwashing or “mind control,” long recognized by scholars of new religious movements as a pseudo-scientific concept (Introvigne 2022b)—a justification for treating them differently. This is an obvious violation of Article 18 ICCPR.

2. *The Guidelines on “Religious Abuse of Children”*

“Religious abuse of children” is discussed in a document published at the end of 2022 by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. It includes directives sent to all local governments throughout Japan, under the title “Q&A on Handling Child Abuse and Similar Cases Related to Religious and Similar Beliefs” (an English translation of the full text is published as Appendix B to this article; all quotes in this paragraph are from that text, unless otherwise indicated).

Unlike the legislative measures against donations to religions, this text escaped the attention of most English-language observers, except for a good article published on January 7, 2023, in the *Financial Times* by its Asia business editor, Leo Lewis (Lewis 2023).

Lewis commented that

in its rush to enact something, Japan has skipped some extraordinarily nuanced theological questions and created potential trouble for a much larger circle of organisations and activities than it has bargained for (Lewis 2023).

Noting that the directives can also affect “Japan’s mainstay religions of Shinto and Buddhism, and even the substantial Christian presence here,” he suggested that “the political backlash could be more severe than the one it was meant to head-off.”

What is it all about? As Lewis understood, the guidelines “have the Unification Church squarely in their sights,” and are designed for “breaking it down.” However, whoever drafted them also took into account post-Abe-assassination attacks against the Jehovah’s Witnesses and conservative Christian groups.

The starting point of the guidelines may seem well-intentioned. They state that child abuse should never be tolerated, and perpetrators cannot use religious liberty as a defense. I agree. The problems, however, start when the document tries to define what child abuse in a religious or spiritual context is. The first case,

it states, is “physical abuse.” It reminds the local governments that corporal punishments are illegal in Japan, and cannot be justified by religious reasons. This is less obvious than it may seem, and has given risen to significant legal contentiousness in Germany and elsewhere, where conservative Christian groups insist that mild corporal punishment is prescribed by the Bible. On the other hand, there are now similar provisions in most democratic countries.

Less common is the statement that taking children to religious services where they are required “not to move for a long period of time,” or told “to make specific movements or keep specific postures, such as prostrations,” also amounts to physical abuse. We can certainly imagine excesses in this field, but except in the People’s Republic of China, where those under 18 years of age are prohibited from attending religious services, minors routinely participate in religious activities where they are asked to remain seated or to genuflect or prostrate at certain times during the service, and this is an integral part of their socialization into their parents’ religion.

What is certainly new in the directive is the definition of a religion-based “psychological abuse.” This is defined as “forcing the children to participate in religious activities and similar,” or inducing minors to certain specific behaviors by “threatening them with words such as ‘If you don’t do this, or do this, you will go to hell,’” or “with images or materials that may arouse fear.” Although perhaps less fashionable now, Christians of my generation remember how priests and pastors at Catholic Catechism or Protestant Sunday School did tell children that sinners go to hell. My parents did too, and as for “images or materials that may arouse fear” the provision may imply that Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, with its graphic depictions of hell, is forbidden to minors in Japan, and Japanese travel agents should not take families with minors to the famous Medieval Cemetery of Pisa or to countless European cathedrals whose frescos or paintings show how devils will torment the sinners in the afterlife (Buddhist depictions of Cold Hells are not less terrifying).

It is also forbidden as religious “psychological abuse” to prevent minors from “socializing with friends in a way that our society generally accepts,” keep them away from birthday parties (something only the Jehovah’s Witnesses do among religions active in Japan), or from comics, cartoons or video games “that are considered age-appropriate for the children based on their general acceptance in our society.” This may seem a minor point but betrays the rationale of the

directive in general, i.e., that religionists do not have the right to pass to their children a way of living that is different from what is “generally accepted in our society.” Obviously, many religions teach that what is “generally accepted” by the majority is in fact morally decadent or unacceptable.

Minors, we read in the guidelines, have a right to keep their religion confidential, perhaps because by revealing it they may be bullied at school or ridiculed. As a consequence, parents cannot require “children to wear ornaments and similar that objectively reveal their belief in a specific religion.”

Perhaps Japan has not experienced the heated European discussions about the Muslim hijab, or does not have enough male minor Sikhs for which it is mandatory to wear a turban since a very young age, but here it seems that minor Jewish boys should be prevented to wear a kippah in public as well.

Taking children to religious activities is not illegal per se, but it becomes “psychological abuse” to socialize them into religions that “significantly deviate from accepted social standards.” Again, a stand is taken discriminating against religions that may just want to live differently. How and by whom it will be determined that a religion “significantly deviates from accepted social standards” is also unclear.

There are severe threats against parents who make excessive donations to religious organizations and have no money left to provide for their children and pay their tuition fees. They are threatened with the possibility of losing the custody of their daughters and sons. This is a clear allusion to the case of Abe’s assassin and the controversy about donations to the Unification Church. The text even mentions cases in which parents-thieves steal the money earned by their student children through part-time jobs to donate it to dubious religious organizations. I believe the only such case in Japan is the claim against her parents by a girl who once belonged to the Unification Church and goes under the pseudonym of Sayuri Ogawa. Her story is demonstrably false (Fukuda, this issue of *The Journal of CESNUR*).

Parents and guardians are also threatened with losing the custody of their children if they refuse for them “essential medical treatments.” The example repeatedly given is “refusing a blood transfusion,” and also having children “carry a card to express that they refuse blood transfusions.” This indicates that, without naming them, the provision targets the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Catholic and other Christian groups are in turn the targets of a provision that defines as neglect, again punishable with the loss of custody, the parents' refusal to give their consent to an abortion in the cases where Japanese laws allow it for underage girls. Without entering into the merits of such laws, the Catholic Church and several conservative Protestant denominations forbid their members from approving of or cooperating with an abortion in all cases.

That sexual abuse cannot be justified by religious pretexts is obvious, but the directive specifies that children should not be exposed to materials using "sexual expressions" or discussing sexual acts, which may create a problem with certain books of the Bible. More problematic is including into the field of "sexual abuse" situations where minors are requested to "disclose their own sexual experiences" to the "staff" of any religion. In this case, not only the religious personnel but also the parents will be punished.

Stated in these terms, the provision forbids and qualifies as "sexual abuse" the Catholic confession of minors and similar practices in other religions. Confession in the Catholic Church starts at age seven. Many Catholic confessors would agree that the sins most frequently confessed by Catholic teenagers have to do with their "sexual experiences," and certainly the questionnaires used for preparing the confessions do include references to sexual sins.

Special provisions refer to adopted children and children in foster care. Techniques to discover religion-based abuse are suggested, observing that minors subject to "psychological abuse" in a religious context often are not aware that they are abused, and would insist they are not. The directive implies that they should not be believed. A lengthy part listing agencies who can offer support to the Children Guidance Centers in this field, including the unavoidable lawyers who fight against the Unification Church, is also included.

Fighting child abuse is a laudable aim. Sexual and other forms of child abuse unfortunately do occur in a religious context too. They are not protected by religious liberty. Children are beaten, forced to work without a salary in a variety of businesses, and sexually abused or trafficked by several organizations and individuals. Some of them are religionists, including as we all know priests and ministers of mainline religions. They betray the trust of children and families, and should be severely punished.

However, physical violence, being submitted to slave labor in a factory or agricultural field, rape, sexual assault, and forced prostitution are all-too-real forms of abuse. “Religious child abuse” and “psychological child abuse” are much more elusive categories. Parents have a right to pass their religious faith to their children. This is not a right for parents in mainline and majority religions only. It extends to parents who belong to minority religions, whose values are not those regarded as “normal” by social majorities—but in our increasingly secularized societies the gap is widening between the opinions of the majority and what most religions teach, on several subjects.

Perhaps parents want to teach their children that the prevailing social attitude on sexuality, abortion, or economic materialism is wrong. Perhaps they find the majority’s view reflected in movies, comics, magazines, or video games they want their children to stay away from. Some of them may believe, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses do, that celebrating birthdays is against God’s command expressed in a sacred text. Others would insist that teaching their children that criminals not only go to jail but may eventually go to hell may contribute to educating them to become good law-abiding citizens. Some parents donate significantly to religious organizations or charities, and teach their children that this generosity makes them better persons. And some ask children to go to confession, and discuss their wrongdoings with a minister of God.

We may agree or disagree with each of these attitudes or behaviors. They may not correspond to our preferred idea of pedagogy. But it is absurd and discriminatory to equate these ways of educating children based on certain religious belief with child abuse or neglect.

Respecting religious pluralism and freedom of religion or belief does not mean only to allow citizens to freely practice their faith, but also to pass it to the new generations and their own children. The post-Abe-assassination hysteria is not reason enough for a democratic country such as Japan to forget its commitment to religious liberty, which is consecrated in its Constitution and by its having signed the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

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APPENDIX 1

Text of the Guidelines on Donation (English Translation)

The Act on Prevention of Inappropriate Solicitation of Donations and Similar by Corporations and Similar Organizations: Explanatory Document (Q&A format)
December 28, 2022

[General Discussion]

Q 1: What is the purpose of enacting the Act on Prevention of Inappropriate Solicitation of Donations and Similar by Corporations and Similar Organizations?

The purpose of the Act on Prevention of Inappropriate Solicitation of Donations and Similar by Corporations and Similar Organizations (Act no. 105 of 2022, hereinafter referred to as "the Act") is to prohibit the unfair solicitation of donations by "corporations and similar organizations," meaning both corporations and associations or foundations that are not corporations and that designate a representative or an administrator. The Act also provides for

administrative and other measures against such corporations and similar organizations that solicit donations.

The other purpose of the Act is to protect, in combination with the Consumer Contract Act (Act No. 61 of 2000), those who receive solicitations of donations from corporations and similar organization.

In other words, to be as effective as possible under the current Japanese legal system, the Act prohibits malicious and socially unacceptable forms of solicitation of donations, including donations that do not constitute consumer contracts, and introduces administrative measures such as recommendations, as well as orders and reports, against such solicitations. In addition, the Act also provides for the revocation of donations made in a confused situation after having been subjected to inappropriate solicitations, since such promises are vitiated by an intrinsic defect. Furthermore, a “duty of consideration” is imposed on those who solicit donations. Therefore, the Act also makes it possible to take administrative measures such as warnings and similar against the inappropriate solicitations of donations made in breach of the law. It contributes to the recognition of certain acts as illegal according to the Civil Code (Act no. 89 of 1896) and, based on this, also makes claiming damages easier.

Thanks to the Act and the parallel “Act for Partial Revision of the Consumer Contract Act and the Act on the National Consumer Affairs Center of Japan” (Act no. 99 of 2022), it becomes possible to obtain a relief that could not have been obtained in the past for damages caused by the inappropriate solicitation of donations, and to prevent such damages to be caused in the future.

Q 2: Does the Act interfere with freedom of religion or belief? And is there the risk that it would prevent the formation of a social culture promoting donations to legitimate NGOs and other institutions?

The Act acknowledges the importance of donations in our society, and takes into account the need for academic freedom, religious freedom, and freedom of political activity. In enforcing the Act, these freedoms should be taken into account.

It is also true that the duty of consideration and the prohibitions introduced by the Act are limited to forms of solicitation of donations that are generally

regarded by our society as socially inappropriate. These provisions are not meant to interfere with the normal solicitation of donations by NGOs and other legitimate organizations, nor to introduce inappropriate restraints to the promotion of a culture of donation. On the contrary, we believe that the prevention of inappropriate solicitations of donations by corporations and similar organizations will lead to a better understanding of the nature of donations, and a greater sense of security in the field of solicitation of donations.

Q 3: What amendments have been introduced by the House of Representatives during the Act's discussion in the Diet?

The House of Representatives has introduced the following amendments (*) to the "Act on Prevention of Inappropriate Solicitation of Donations and Similar by Corporations and Similar Organizations": (1) about the duty of consideration, it has amended the words "corporations and similar shall consider" (when soliciting donations) to "corporations and similar shall carefully consider;" (2) it has made reports, public announcements, and measures possible if a corporation or similar organization fails to comply with its duty of consideration; and (3) it has changed the period within which the Act shall be re-examined and if necessary amended, from "approximately three years" to "approximately two years" after the Act has been enacted.

(*) We refer, specifically, to the "Proposed Amendments to the Act on Prevention of Improper Solicitation of Donations and Similar by Corporations and Similar Organizations," submitted by Councilor Masahisa Miyazaki and four others at the House of Representatives' Special Committee on Consumer Affairs, and passed. Their main content includes the above items (1) through (3).

Q 4: In what cases is the solicitation of donations considered as a solicitation made by corporations and similar organization, and subject to the provisions of the Act, even if the donations are solicited by an individual?

If an individual solicits a donation, but the act is considered as a solicitation by corporations and similar organizations, it is subject to the provisions of the Act. Specifically, any solicitation by representatives, executive officers, or employees of a corporation is considered to be an act of the corporation. In addition, in the

case of religious donations, even if a member of a religious group is not a representative or an employee of the group, but solicit donations to that group, obviously there is an implied contract between the religious corporation or similar organization and the individual. Accordingly, the act of such an individual is regarded as an act of a corporation and similar organization, and is subject to the provisions of the Act.

As explained in Q 1 above, not only corporations but all the associations or foundations that have a designated representative or administrator are subject to the provisions of the Act. In addition, the donations subject to the provisions of the Act include both those made by an individual to a corporation or a similar organization in the form of a gift, and the donations made by an individual to a corporation or similar organization through a contract transferring property rights belonging to the individual for free.

Q 5: Should not donations to individuals also be subject to the provisions of the Act?

As explained in Q 4 above, even if the donation is made to an individual, if the solicitation of the donation by the individual is deemed to be an act of a corporation or similar organization, then the donation is subject to the provisions of the Act. On the other hand, if the donation is purely between individuals and is not regarded as the consequence of a solicitation of a donation by a corporation or similar organization, it is only subject to the provisions of the Civil Code and the other relevant laws that have been enacted before the Act.

[The Duty of Consideration]

Q 6: What is the purpose of regulating the “duty of consideration”?

The “duty of consideration” focuses on the conditions and other circumstances individuals may find themselves in as a result of the solicitation of donations. For example, when a corporation or similar organization solicits donations, the duty of consideration implies that the solicitation should not make it difficult or excessively burdensome for an individual to make an appropriate decision as to whether or not to donate. The provision on the duty of

consideration in fact covers a wide range of acts that may result in such a situation. In addition, it makes it easier both to recognize that certain acts should be regarded as unlawful according to the Civil Code and to claim damages based on such violations, when an inappropriate solicitation of donations has been made in breach of the provision on the duty of consideration.

In addition, the amendments introduced by the House of Representatives allow us to require corporations and similar organizations that solicit donations to carefully consider the situation of the potential donors and others who are solicited, and to admonish through an advice or warning the organizations that act against the duty of consideration. These amendments have made the Act more effective.

Q 7: Is it possible to use the advice warning an organization that it has violated the duty of consideration as a basis to have the donations reimbursed?

The details of each advice shall be determined on a case-by-case basis. However, in general, it is difficult for us to recommend to individuals to seek a refund based on an advice because of the principle of the non-intervention of the state in civil affairs. On the other hand, for example, we could include in our advice to a corporation or a similar organization that it should sincerely respond to requests for reimbursement.

[Prohibited Acts / Revocation Based on the Solicitation of the Donation]

Q 8: How should the words in the Act “at the time when the solicitation of donations was made” be interpreted?

The words “at the time when the solicitation of donations was made” indicate the period between the time when the corporation and similar first contacts an individual about a donation (after which the individual may think about it for some days, or even for months) and the time when the individual actually makes the donation.

If it can be considered that the period from the date when a potential donor is approached by or joins a religious organization to the date of the donation

includes an ongoing series of solicitations of donations, then the whole period is considered to constitute “the time when the solicitation of donations was made.”

Q 9: In what cases is the period from the date when a potential donor is approached by or joins a religious organization to the date of the donation considered as “the time when the solicitation of donations was made”?

A case of an ongoing series of solicitations of donations occurs, for example, when potential donors are told that bad luck or other misfortunes may befall their family to arouse their anxiety. Then, they join the religious organization, which by teaching them certain doctrines takes advantage of their anxiety, and induces in them a state of confusion where they are led to believe that donations are a way to avoid further misfortunes, such as bad luck and similar, among their relatives.

Even if it cannot be determined that there has been an ongoing series of solicitations, if a corporation or similar organization takes advantage of a state of anxiety that continues from the time when the donor joined the organization, and solicits donations, this would constitute the wrongful act of “taking advantage of anxiety,” and can thus be considered as a prohibited act, with the consequence that the donation will be subject to revocation.

Q 10: What does “confusion” mean?

The term “confusion” refers to a situation in which a person is mentally incapable of making judgments under free will, such as when the person is puzzled and perplexed and does not know what to do. It is a broad concept that also includes awe (fear and dread).

This is in accordance with the explanation of “confusion” in the current Consumer Contract Act. The provisions on the right of revocation in the Act and in the Consumer Contract Act are equivalent. The Act, however, regulates donations in the same way whether the donation is the consequence of a contract signed by a consumer or not. Therefore, it is appropriate that the notion of “confusion” of the Act is the same as the one of the Consumer Contract Act.

Q 11: Can I revoke the donation even if I did not feel uneasy at the time, claiming I was a victim of the so-called mind control?

The answer to the question is that, even if the donors when they made a donation were unable to determine whether or not they were confused, it may still be possible to exercise the right of revocation after they got out of that condition, by making a claim and proving their case.

Similarly, if at the time of the donation the donors were unable to determine whether they were confused, and even if they believed that they were donating based on a sense of duty or mission, but later they considered what happened more calmly and realized that they had donated out of confusion because somebody solicited them and took advantage of their anxiety, it would be possible for them to exercise the right of revocation, by making a claim and proving their case.

Q 12: If the organization requires donors to sign an agreement (the so-called “memorandum”) when they are in a state of confusion, is the memorandum valid?

If the donors signed a memorandum in which they agreed, should they change their mind, to seek only a partial refund of the donation or no refund at all, and they were in a state of confusion, then the memorandum is considered invalid as it is against public order and morals according to the Civil Code.

In addition, although cases should be examined individually, when a corporation or a similar organization solicits donations, and asks donors to sign a memorandum or make a videotaped statement where they waive in advance any right to be reimbursed, this may be regarded as evidence that the solicitation of the donation by the corporation or similar organization was unlawful. In addition, it should be noted that in this case a claim for damages based on the fact that an act regarded as unlawful by the Civil Code was committed may be more likely to be approved.

Q 13: What does “necessary and indispensable” mean? Why according to the Act for a solicitation to be prohibited it should present the donation not only as “necessary” but also as “indispensable”?

In fact, it is not crucial that those soliciting the donations use the words “necessary and indispensable.” The Act applies whenever the solicitation creates a feeling that the donation is indispensable and urgent. Many cases of malicious solicitation leading to large donations create such feelings of necessity and urgency.

If the Act had used only the term “necessary,” the scope of the regulation would have been too broad, extending to religious and similar activities that are generally permitted, such as the common exorcisms against bad luck. In addition, “indispensable” is not limited to cases in which only one option is presented to the donor. For example, if somebody solicits a donation by presenting two options, “To avoid a significant disadvantage, you should either donate one million yen or forgive the same amount of debt,” this may be deemed to be within the scope of the Act’s reference to a donation presented as “necessary and indispensable.”

[Prohibition of Financing Donations Through Borrowing and Similar]

Q 14: What is the purpose of prohibiting that donations are financed through borrowing and similar?

The Act prohibits suggesting that the donor should borrow money to donate it. It also prohibits the act of persuading donors to dispose of or liquidate residential real estate or business assets that are essential to support their and their families’ livelihood and donate the corresponding proceeds. This is based on the consideration that a donation is a one-sided act that places a burden solely on the individual making it, and soliciting donations that would place an excessive burden on the individual should be prohibited. On the other hand, it does not forbid to solicit the donation of residential real estate or business assets. This is based on the consideration that the act of soliciting donations by suggesting that such assets should be converted into cash is considered to be more malicious. If, at the time of the solicitation of the donation, there is no suggestion that such assets should be sold, or the assets are voluntarily sold or donated, then the person who solicits the donation does not violate Article 5 of the Act.

In addition, in the case of donations of real estate where the family also resides, to solicit a donation without considering whether the donors, their spouses, and

their family may experience problems in maintaining livelihood may constitute a failure to comply with the duty of consideration.

[Measures Against Violations and Similar]

Q 15: How will the provisions for public reports, as well as recommendations and orders, regarding the prohibited acts, operate?

With regard to the preparation and publicity of reports, recommendations, and orders, regarding prohibited acts, the Act should be interpreted somewhat narrowly, taking into account that the Act may affect a large number of corporations and other organizations, and refers to a broader concept of donations as transfers of property rights without compensation and similar deeds.

Specifically, the “special necessity,” which according to the Act is required for the reports, will be found, for example, in a case in which the prohibited acts of solicitation are systematically committed against an unspecified or large number of persons, their social impact is regarded as significant, and it may be assumed that a report is really necessary to protect the persons who are solicited. The recommendations and orders shall apply to the cases in which the prohibited acts not only appear to be systematic and malicious but also will most likely continue against an unspecified number of persons, and therefore it may be assumed that such measures are needed to prevent the spread of the damage over a wider area.

In addition, the Act states that donations play an important role in society, and it is necessary to take into account academic freedom, religious liberty, and freedom of political activity. The provisions about reports, recommendations, and orders shall be enforced by duly taking this statement into account.

[Subrogation Rights of the Creditors]

Q 16: What special provisions protect the subrogation rights of creditors?

To provide relief to family members, the Act facilitates the use of the subrogation rights of the creditors. This system permits to exercise rights on behalf of another person to the extent that this is necessary to protect one’s own rights. In general, under the Civil Code, creditors may not exercise their right of

subrogation until their credits become due (Article 423.1.2 of the Civil Code). However, the Act includes a special provision. It refers to creditors to whom periodic payments are due in fulfillment of an obligation of support or similar, whose debtors are individuals who have made donations in cash to a corporation or a similar organization. They may exercise their right of subrogation, and act in the name and on behalf of their debtor, demanding the reimbursement of the donations up to the amount needed to cover the unpaid periodic payments, including those not yet due.

Since the subrogation right of the creditors is an exception, whose aim is to allow the exercise of other rights, it is granted in this case only when the debtor (i.e., the individual who made the donations in cash as described above) does not have other resources.

Q 17: How do the special provisions for the subrogation rights of creditors operate in practice? In particular, what about the case of minors?

If minors want to avail themselves of the right of subrogation, but their guardians cannot be expected to exercise their parental authority properly, special procedures may become necessary, such as the suspension of parental authority, the appointment of a guardian of the minor, or the appointment of a special representative when there is a conflict of interest between the guardian and the minor. However, considering the fact that it may be difficult for minors in a situation of need to carry out these procedures on their own, support, especially legal support, is considered to be particularly important when they intend to exercise their subrogation rights as creditors.

To contribute to the relief of the damage suffered by relatives of the donors, including minors, it is important not only to enact legal provisions, but also to provide support to enable them to recover the damages through the appropriate exercise of their subrogation rights as creditors, taking into consideration the various situations that may arise in individual cases. Accordingly, the Japan Legal Support Center and related institutions and organizations, and similar groups, should work together to develop a consultation system and offer other forms of support.

[Others]

Q 18: When will the Act come into force?

As a general rule, the Act will come into force on the date (January 5, 2023) when twenty days will have passed from the date of its promulgation (December 16, 2022). However, the provisions that prohibit the solicitation of donations financed through borrowing and similar, and the administrative measures against the violations, will come into force on the day that will be indicated by a Cabinet Order, within a period not exceeding one year from the date of the promulgation.

In addition, some provisions prohibiting certain forms of solicitation of donations (specifically, the prohibitions of Article 4, Section 3 and 4 of the Act, and the right of revocation pertaining thereto) will come into force on the same day of the coming into force of the Consumer Contract Act as amended by the “Consumer Contract Act and the Act on Special Measures Concerning Civil Court Proceedings for the Collective Redress for Property Damage Incurred by Consumers” (Act no. 59 of 2022) (i.e., on June 1, 2023).

Q 19: Will all the acts prohibited by the Act become illegal on the day the Act will come into force?

The provisions prohibiting certain forms of solicitation of donations will come into force on the day that will be provided by a Cabinet Order, within a period not exceeding one year from the date of the promulgation. This is because administrative penalties and criminal penalties should be imposed only after a reasonable period allowing citizens to become aware of the new laws. Therefore, certain actions violating the provisions of the Act will only be considered illegal if committed on or after that date.

Q 20: Does the Act require corporations and similar organization to deliver their donation records to the authorities?

The Act regulates the inappropriate solicitation of donations by corporations and similar organizations, but does not require these organizations to deliver their donation records to the authorities. The accounting procedures of

corporations and similar organizations that receive donations should be implemented according to the laws and to the provisions of the by-laws and statutes that the corporations themselves have adopted.

In general, it is recommended that a corporation or a similar organization that receives a donation should properly deliver a document or receipt that certifies the content of the donation. In addition, if individuals donate to corporations, they may be able to prove the date and amount of their donations by obtaining their transaction history from their bank, or in other ways.

(*) This explanatory document (Q&A format) was prepared on December 28, 2022. Supplements to this document and other similar documents will be issued in the future if necessary.

APPENDIX 2

Text of the Guidelines on “Religious Abuse of Children” (English Translation)

Q&A on Handling Child Abuse and Similar Cases Related to Religious and Similar Beliefs

[About the definition of child abuse and cases of child abuse]

1-Basic Concepts

Q 1-1: When considering whether or not a case constitutes child abuse, should cases related to religion be treated differently from other cases?

(Answer)

Even if the guardians have religious or similar beliefs (including beliefs that produce anxiety as they refer to the action of spirits or other elements that it is difficult to prove rationally) as part of their background, if the guardians commit an act that falls under the definition of child abuse as defined in one of the sections of Article 2 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, it is necessary to take measures, including temporary custody and similar, to ensure the safety of the children, as in other cases of abuse for other reasons.

Taking into account that Article 14 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that children's rights should be respected, including their freedom of thought, of conscience, and of believing in religion and other belief systems, and that children do not always believe in religion out of their own free will, Child Guidance Centers and municipal governments need to take immediate action, when an act that corresponds to child abuse is suspected, even in cases related to religious or other beliefs.

Questions 2-1 to 5-2 below provide examples of child abuse cases that may occur against the background of religious or other beliefs. However, when determining whether a case falls under the category of child abuse defined in one of the sections of Article 2 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, it is necessary to come to a comprehensive assessment, considering the child's situation, the guardian's situation, and their living environment, rather than mechanically applying the indications of the following paragraphs. In addition, the determination should be made from the child's side.

Q 1-2: How should cases be handled in which guardians commit acts that constitute child abuse because they have been so instructed or incited by specific third parties, for example members or believers of a religious organization?

(Answer)

Acts of child abuse can constitute the crimes of battery, injury, forcible indecency, forcible sexual intercourse, abandonment by a person responsible for protection, and others. In addition, the act of directing or instigating these crimes can make those responsible accomplices (Article 60 of the Criminal Code), abettors (Article 61), or accessories (Article 62) of these crimes.

Therefore, when dealing with such cases, it is necessary to cooperate with the police appropriately, including by sharing information with the officers promptly.

The Child Guidance Centers should consider the best interest of the child, and should not hesitate to consult with the police about accusations of child abuse if needed.

2-Physical Abuse

Q 2-1: Do cases in which guardians force children to participate in religious activities and similar by using corporal punishment constitute child abuse?

(Answer)

The use of corporal punishment that causes or is likely to cause physical injury to a child's body for any reason, including for forcing children to participate in religious activities and similar, constitutes physical abuse.

Q 2-2: Does the act of a guardian who slaps or whips children for not listening seriously, or falling asleep, while attending a religious event such as a lecture on doctrine, constitute child abuse?

(Answer)

The act of a guardian who slaps or whips children for whatever reason constitutes child abuse.

Q 2-3: Does it constitute child abuse if guardians force children to participate in religious activities such as worship services, lectures on doctrine, and similar, and require children not to move for a long period of time, or direct them to make specific movements or keep specific postures, such as prostrations, or throw their whole body to the ground, or compel the children to attend religious and similar activities until late at night?

(Answer)

The acts of guardians who require children not to move for a long period of time, or directs them to make specific movements or keep specific postures, constitute physical abuse.

In addition, the acts of guardians who require children to participate in religious activities and similar until a certain time constitute neglect, as they may interfere with attendance at school or the everyday life of the child, and may be inappropriate from the perspective of a healthy upbringing and care for the child.

Other acts are discussed in Q 3-1 below (see the answer), as they correspond to psychological abuse.

3-Psychological Abuse

Q 3-1: Does it constitute child abuse if guardians force children to participate in religious or missionary activities, force them to make certain decisions regarding life, or instill a continuous fear on them from childhood through severe verbal reprimands or threats using references to the spirit world or similar? In these cases, how should we qualify the guardians' attitudes of ignoring, constantly rejecting, or discriminating children for the purpose of forcing them to participate in religious or similar activities, or as a result of the children's reluctance to participate in such activities?

(Answer)

It constitutes psychological abuse or neglect if a guardian forces the children to participate in religious activities and similar, or prevents the children from making free decisions about their career paths or places where they want to work and similar, including by refusing to sign documents with the required guardian's consent or to fill in emergency contact forms, or by threatening the children with words such as "If you don't do this, or do this, you will go to hell," "You will be destroyed," or with images or materials that may arouse fear, instill fear, or by continuously taking hostile attitudes such as ignoring or harassing the children.

Q 3-2: Does it constitute child abuse if guardians constantly prevent children from socializing with friends, or from marrying those who do not follow a particular religion, or from participating in social events such as birthday parties and similar? And how should the acts of guardians who constantly and daily bombard children with words of criticism of these people and attitudes be considered?

(Answer)

Considering each child's age and level of development, if guardians constantly prevent children from socializing with friends in a way that our society generally accepts, and impairs the children's socialization, those acts constitute neglect. In

addition if, as a means of restricting children from socializing with friends or from marrying certain partners, guardians continuously exhibit threatening or rejective attitudes as described in Q 3-1 above (see the answer), or call the children's friends, teachers, or other persons with whom the children socialize "enemies," "Satans," or other similar names, to instill in the children a strong sense of fear, those acts constitute psychological abuse.

Q 3-3: Does it constitute child abuse if guardians prohibit children from watching, reading, or using certain fairy tales, cartoons, comics, and games because they are regarded as being against the guardians' religious or similar doctrines? And how should we qualify the acts of guardians who allow children to access only those forms of entertainment that are approved by their religious or similar organizations?

(Answer)

Prohibiting entertainment and similar for reasons based on child custody and education does not immediately constitute child abuse. However, it constitutes psychological abuse if, because of their religion or beliefs, guardians systematically prohibit children from accessing forms of entertainment or similar that are considered age-appropriate for the children based on their general acceptance in our society. In addition, it constitutes psychological abuse if guardians allow children to access only the forms of entertainment approved by their religious or similar organizations, because these are acts that undermine the children's free will, unless such restrictions may be regarded as reasonable based on educational or similar considerations, even if these derive from religion or belief.

Q 3-4: Does it constitute child abuse if guardians force children to declare in front of others that they believe in a certain religion?

(Answer)

Because it seriously harms the child's mental health, it constitutes a psychological abuse if guardians force children to declare that they believe in a certain religion, even if in fact the children themselves do not believe in that religion, or force the children to disclose their religion or beliefs to others

without taking into consideration that the children themselves do not want others to know their religion or beliefs (including by forcing children to wear ornaments and similar that objectively reveal their belief in a specific religion).

Q 3-5: If a religious or similar organization, or guardians who have received instructions from a religious or similar organization, force the children to repeatedly participate in missionary activities, do these actions constitute child abuse and child labor?

(Answer)

It constitutes psychological abuse if a religious or similar organization, or guardians who have received instructions from a religious or similar organization, force the children to participate in missionary activities through acts and strategies such as those described in Q 3-1 and Q 3-2. In addition, if a religious or similar organization, or guardians who have received instructions from a religious or similar organization, use threats or violence to force children to participate in religious missionary activities, these may be considered as cases of extortion under the Criminal Code. Therefore, when dealing with such cases, it is necessary to work with the police, including by sharing information quickly.

In addition, the cases of those who work (e.g., as reception clerks) and should receive remuneration in the same manner as ordinary workers, but are induced to believe that they are performing a religious service or training, should be examined individually on the basis of the actual circumstances, considering the specific conditions of work. Therefore, it should be noted that such persons may be considered as workers.

Child guidance centers should also take the above points into consideration and handle the cases of possible illegal labor, working with the police and the Labor Standards Inspection Office.

4-Neglect

Q 4-1: Does it constitute child abuse if guardians cause children to join a religious or a similar organization whose doctrines lead to practices that deviate significantly from generally recognized social standards, including by violating

laws and regulations, and an organization that in fact forces its members to act in this way (with reference to cases in which children are regarded as members of the organization)?

(Answer)

As stated in Q 3-1 (see answer), it constitutes psychological abuse if guardians force children to engage in religious or other acts. In addition to the above, it constitutes neglect if guardians are aware that there are in the organization persons who directly or indirectly instigate children to act in a manner that significantly deviates from accepted social standards, and the guardians do not take action to prevent the children from participating in these acts, which may include the act of making the children formally join such religions. In cases of religious and similar beliefs, it may be assumed that the guardians may not be aware of the nature of these acts. Therefore, in such cases, police or Child Guidance Centers need to give guidance to the guardians, paying attention to the contents described in Q 6-1 below (see the answer), and should consider whether other measures are necessary, including temporary custody of the children.

Q 4-2: Does it constitute child abuse if, because guardians have given significant amounts of money to religious or similar organizations (regardless of how this was called: donation, or contribution, or similar), the children's family life is severely disrupted, and the guardian does not provide children with an appropriate housing environment, clothing, foods, and similar, which are needed for a healthy child-rearing, or if the children's educational opportunities such as attending elementary school, junior high school, high school, or university and similar are disturbed?

(Answer)

It constitutes neglect if, because guardians have spent their money in belief-related, religious, or similar activities, they do not provide children with appropriate housing environment, clothing, foods, and so on, which are needed for creating a healthy child-rearing environment, including cases in which the family life is severely disrupted. It also constitutes neglect if, because of these acts, a guardian makes it difficult for a child to attend, enroll in, or start elementary school and junior high school, which are part of mandatory education.

With regard to enrolling in or starting high school, if the children themselves want to enroll in or start high school, and guardians do not allow them to do so without sensible reasons, but only due to their religion or belief, this constitutes neglect or psychological abuse as an act that impairs the children's independence and seriously harms their mental health. With regard to enrolling in or starting university, see Q 4-3 below (see the answer).

In such cases, the child may be able to exercise the right to rescind the donations made by the guardian and others under Article 8, Section 1, of the Act on Prevention of Inappropriate Solicitation of Donations and Similar by Corporations and Similar, acting on behalf of the guardian, to preserve the child's right to claim support from the guardian.

In order for the child to actually exercise this right, the child must exercise the right to rescind the donations after the child has filed a claim to support from the guardian, and the claim pertaining to the guardian's obligation to support has been determined.

If it is necessary for the child to conduct court and similar proceedings, normally the guardian, i.e. the person who has custody of the child, shall file a suit, or start other proceedings. However, if there is no legal representative such as a person with legal custody of the child, or if the legal representative is unable to act as such, such as when a person who had custody of the child has had the custody suspended, a special representative shall be appointed by the court, who would represent the child with respect to these claims.

In order for the child to obtain the appointment of a special representative, it is necessary to file a petition for such appointment with the court. For the child to actually file such a petition, the procedure will be facilitated if a lawyer represents the child. Therefore, when the Child Guidance Centers and similar institutions handle such cases, they need to cooperate with other relevant organizations, such as bar associations and similar.

Bar associations have a system whereby a child can be represented by a lawyer at no cost if certain criteria are met.

Q 4-3: Does it constitute child abuse if guardians do not allow children to enroll in high schools, universities and similar on the basis of religious or similar beliefs?

(Answer)

Enrolling in or going to high school is the same as described in Q 4-2 (see answer).

On the other hand, it does not immediately constitute child abuse if guardians do not allow children to enroll in universities (including by refusing to sign documents requiring the guardians' consent, or to fill in emergency contact forms, as well as by not allowing children to take a part-time job to earn the money they need to cover expenses such as college fees and others).

However, when the children themselves want to access higher education and it is possible to do so, considering the family's financial situation and other circumstances (including the possibility of using supports such as scholarships and similar), then it constitutes psychological abuse if guardians prevent children from accessing higher education based on their religious doctrines or beliefs, through the following acts:

- Threatening the children with expressions such as "If you don't do this, or do this, you will go to hell;"
- Trying to persuade the children to renounce higher education with arguments such "It is useless to go to school because the world is doomed;"
- Systematically exhibiting an attitude of hostility, such as ignoring the children or refusing to provide financial support and similar.

Q 4-4: Does it constitute child abuse if a guardian, against the child's will, gives the income earned by the child through a part-time job or similar to a religious or similar organization (regardless of how it is called: donation, contribution, or similar)? In this case, what remedies are available?

(Answer)

It constitutes psychological abuse as an act that seriously harms the children's mental health and betrays their trust if guardians take the children's income from part-time jobs and similar (including scholarships and similar loaned or provided to the children for their enrollment in or attendance of high school, university and similar), by taking advantage of the right to manage the child's property, and use

this income for purposes that objectively and obviously are not beneficial to the children's present or future life, against the children's will.

The income earned by a child through a part-time job is the property of the child, and if a guardian spends it against the child's will and for a purpose that is not beneficial to the child's present or future life, this is a tort committed by the guardian against the child.

In addition, if a guardian is instigated by a religious organization and donates to it the property of the child without the child's permission, the child can claim compensation for damages directly against the religious organization, because in this case a tort against the child has been committed by the religious organization.

Furthermore, the chief of the Child Guidance Center may file a petition for a trial depriving the guardian of the right to manage the child's property (Article 835 of the Civil Code and Article 33-7 of the Child Welfare Act). After this trial for depriving the guardian of the right to manage the child's property, the chief of the Child Guidance Center may file a petition asking for the appointment of a new guardian of the minor (Article 33-8, Section 1, of the Child Welfare Act). Then, the newly appointed guardian of the minor, as the child's legal representative, may file a claim for support by the original guardian, and after the claim pertaining to the original guardian's obligations to support is determined, the new guardian of the minor may exercise the right to rescind the donations based on Article 8 of the Act on Prevention of Inappropriate Solicitation of Donations and Similar by Corporations and Similar.

Q 4-5: Does it constitute child abuse if a guardian acts in a way aimed at not providing a child with essential medical treatment (e.g., by refusing a blood transfusion) because of the teachings and rules of the religion the guardian believes in?

(Answer)

It constitutes neglect if, for whatever reason, guardians do not allow children to visit a medical institution without a reasonable reason, or do not allow children to receive certain medical treatments (surgery, medication, blood transfusion, and others), which medical doctors have determined the children need (including

by forcing the children to carry a card to express that they refuse blood transfusions or other treatments).

If necessary, emergency measures should be considered, such as temporary custody or a petition for suspension of the guardian's custody of the child, filed by the chief of the Child Guidance Center (Article 834-2 of the Civil Code and Article 33-7 of the Child Welfare Act).

Q 4-6: Does it constitute child abuse if guardians prevent the children from participating in certain school events and similar, because of the teachings, rules, or other prescriptions of the religion guardians believe in?

(Answer)

It constitutes psychological abuse or neglect that, while the children themselves would like to participate in school events and similar, guardians prevent children from participating, not considering that this may deprive the children of appropriate upbringing and educational opportunities, even if the act is based on religious or similar beliefs.

Q 4-7: When guardians seriously neglect their obligation of taking care of children, this constitutes neglect. Does it constitute neglect even if it is due to the guardians' activities related to religion, such as service activities and missionary activities (e.g., training sessions, seminars, pilgrimages to sacred places, and so on)?

(Answer)

It constitutes neglect if guardians seriously neglect their obligation of taking care of children due to the guardians' activities related to religion, such as service activities and missionary activities (e.g., training sessions, seminars, pilgrimages to sacred places, and so on), even if this is due to solicitations or other inducements by a religious or similar organization.

Q 4-8: Does it constitute child abuse if guardians force children to pursue a certain career path based on religious doctrine or other reasons, without considering the children's own wishes or choices, or, at the time where they may

have pursued higher education, induce children to start a job based on the doctrine or precepts of a religion or belief system?

(Answer)

It constitutes psychological abuse if guardians threaten the children by using words such as “If you don’t do this, or do this, you will go to hell,” or by continuously taking a negative attitude such as ignoring the child and similar, or if in practice they prevent the children from pursuing higher education or starting a job by refusing to sign documents requiring the guardian’s consent or fill in emergency contact forms and similar, because of the guardians’ religious doctrines or beliefs.

Q 4-9: Does it constitute child abuse, if members of a religious or similar organization have committed violent acts or oppressive acts in words or attitudes against the children in facilities owned by the religious or similar organization, or at events held by such organization, and guardians fail to take appropriate measures against such acts?

(Answer)

It constitutes neglect if guardians know that the children have been victims of violent acts or oppressive acts in words and attitudes, or other acts that are considered child abuse in this document, in facilities owned by religious or similar organizations, or at events held by such organizations, but do not take any measures to ensure the children’s safety.

Q 4-10: Does it constitute child abuse if a girl who has become pregnant not through her own will, but e.g. after a sexual assault or similar, wants to have an artificial abortion, but her guardian does not consent to the abortion because of doctrines related to religion? And how should such cases be handled?

(Answer)

A medical doctor can perform an artificial abortion on an underage girl

(i) in the case that the girl herself has clearly expressed her will to have an artificial abortion, and became pregnant as the result of a sexual intercourse

during which she was unable to resist or reject the man due to his assaulting or threatening attitude; or

(ii) in the case the continuation of pregnancy or the delivery is likely to cause serious physical or economic damage to the mother, her body, or her health.

If a guardian does not consent to the artificial abortion in these cases, for whatever reason, it constitutes neglect.

In such cases, child protection authorities should work with doctors designated under the Motherhood Protection Law, and consider how to handle the matter, including by suspending the guardian's custody of the minor, petition for a temporary restraining order, or take other measures ensuring that the girl may have her necessary artificial abortion.

5-Sexual abuse

Q 5-1: Does it constitute child abuse if somebody shows or verbally describes to children material that includes sexual expressions that are inappropriate for their age, claiming that they are part of an education to learn religious or similar doctrines?

(Answer)

It constitutes sexual abuse if somebody shows genitalia or sexual intercourse to children, or shows or verbally describes to children materials or images that includes sexual expressions (words or illustrations about sexual intercourse, masturbation, lewdness, and similar) that are inappropriate for their age, even if this is done in the name of teaching religious or similar doctrines.

Q 5-2: Does it constitute child abuse if somebody forces a child to talk about the child's own sexual or similar experiences to the staff of a religious organization or other relevant people, claiming this is a part of religious activities?

(Answer)

It constitutes sexual abuse if somebody forces a child to disclose the child's own sexual experiences to others. It constitutes sexual abuse or neglect if the guardian does not take special measures to prevent it, knowing that the child will

be exposed to such an act on the premises of an organization, even if the guardian does not directly engage in such an act.

6-Points to keep in mind when handling cases of child abuse and supporting self-reliance

Q 6-1: When we deal with child abuse cases related to religion, what are the points we need to pay special attention to, including when dealing with the children and interacting with the guardians? Is there any difference if we know that the case is related to religion or belief, or do not know it, at the time of its first notification or finding?

(Answer)

Children who may have been subjected to child abuse related to religion or belief may be strongly influenced by their guardians' ideas and values based on religious and similar doctrines; therefore, it may be difficult for them to recognize their own situation as a problem and to make claims about it.

It is necessary to objectively assess their situation, and to provide explanations and guidance to the children themselves and their guardians based on the definition of child abuse, if we suspect that the case may be one of child abuse.

However, there may be cases in which it would be difficult to change the guardian's behaviors or thoughts toward children based on religious or similar doctrines, even by providing guidance. There are also concerns that guidance and similar may lead to an escalation of child abuse acts by the guardian, or that the religious groups and similar organizations may increase their influence on the family. Therefore, it is necessary to place the highest priority on ensuring the safety of the child and, if necessary, we should not hesitate to take measures such as temporary custody.

In considering these measures, it is important to ask advice from the special agencies and other bodies mentioned in Q 6-5 below (see answer).

Q 6-2: When children consult with a Child Guidance Center or send messages suggesting that they strongly desire to be separated from their guardians for a certain period, because of the guardians' acts related to religious or similar

beliefs, and the children's own anxiety or other feelings, even without evidence of acts constituting child abuse, how should such cases be handled?

(Answer)

If the children themselves come for consultation, for whatever reason, the staff at the Child Guidance Center shall listen to them carefully, taking into consideration the child's anxiety and feelings. It is the same when the children want to be separated from their families. The staff at the Child Guidance Center shall verify the reasons for such a request and the children's situation, and consider how to handle the case, including through temporary custody. In addition, when a religion or a similar organization is present in the background, it is also necessary to pay attention to the possibility that a parent may harm the child physically or psychologically. The staff should contact the parents and conduct the essential investigation after ensuring the child's safety, including considerations about temporary custody and other measures.

Q 6-3: How should a case be handled if persons older than 18 consult with a Child Guidance Center regarding issues related to their parents' religion or belief?

(Answer)

If the persons request support for self-reliance on the basis of separation from their families, the Child Guidance Center needs to explain to them the system of self-reliance support homes and similar institutions, and consider measures, for example admission to such a home, according to the request of the persons. Even if the persons do not request to be admitted in a self-reliance support home or similar, the Child Guidance Center should not handle the case passively based solely on the fact that the person is over 18 years of age. The Center should verify what the person's issues are and arrange the necessary contacts, such as connecting the person to relevant institutions and organizations, including the Japan Legal Support Center, welfare offices, and others.

Q 6-4: Is there any room for including among cases of child abuse those in which a guardian commits a series of acts against a child's body or mind based on religious and similar beliefs, and each act has little influence on the child, but the

sum of the acts as a whole may be regarded as inappropriate from the perspective of child-rearing environment and welfare?

(Answer)

In determining whether an individual case constitutes child abuse, a comprehensive assessment is needed based on the circumstances of the child, of the guardian, and of the living environment, and this regardless of whether the case is related to religious or similar beliefs or not. For this reason, even if the case appears to be minor, it is necessary to pay sufficient attention to the fact that there may be circumstances which may qualify the act as child abuse, and to come to a conclusion by considering comprehensively the effects of the act on the child.

Q 6-5: What kind of projects as public support programs are available for those who have experienced child abuse with religion or beliefs in the background?

(Answer)

Various types of consultation support and daily life support and others for issues related to religious beliefs and similar are listed below. Child Guidance Centers need to offer their assistance so that those who need them can use these supports appropriately. In addition to the above, we are checking specialized agencies and others from which Child Guidance Centers can ask advice and consultation support for children. We will supply a list separately.

[Contact for general help (if you don't know where to find a consultant)]

-Japan Legal Support Center "Hotline for spiritual sales and other cases."

The Japan Legal Support Center set up a toll-free number to provide information on consultation contacts for those (including the children themselves) who suffers from problems related to the "former Unification Church" or similar problems.

Those who are in a financially difficult situation but have legal problems may be able to use free legal consultations and waivers of legal fees and other expenses provided by the Japan Legal Support Center.

Tel: 0120-005931 (toll-free number)

E-mail inquiry: see

https://www.houterasu.or.jp/houterasu_news/reikandaiyarumail.html

[Supports for those who experience financial and legal problems]

-Consultation contacts on children's rights of the bar associations.

Many local bar associations give free legal consultation on issues related to children, such as domestic problems and child abuse, by phone or in person. Children can consult without the cooperation of their guardians, and some help desk also accept consultations from Child Guidance Centers and similar agencies. For details on how to consult, please see below.

List of consultation contacts:

https://www.nichibenren.or.jp/legal_advice/search/other/child.html

[Support for high school students]

If you have a domicile in Japan and meet certain criteria, you may be eligible for support for tuition fees and other educational expenses for high school and other schools.

Tuition support (high school tuition support fund) is a system for students whose family income is below a certain amount. If the student completes the necessary procedures at the school after enrollment, the national government supports tuition fees paid to schools through each prefecture or local authority (in other words, the school receives the tuition fee on behalf of the student). In addition, a student from a household on welfare or a household on no-income-based levy of the resident tax is eligible for scholarship (with no need to return it later), and support for educational expenses other than tuition fees, such as expenses for textbooks and teaching materials (high school supplemental scholarship fund).

(Contacts for consultation and other support regarding details of the system and other details):

https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/mushouka/1292209.htm

https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/mushouka/1292214.htm

(1) In case of tuition support (High school enrollment and similar, grants)

Public high schools and similar:

https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/mushouka/1292209.htm

Private high schools and similar:

https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/mushouka/1292214.htm

National high schools and similar:

School Support and Teaching Materials Division, Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau, & High School Study Department First, High School Study Support Office, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan (Tel: 03-5253-4111 [ext. 3577]).

(2) In case of support for educational expenses other than tuition fees (high school supplemental scholarship fund):

https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/mushouka/detail/1353842.htm

*In addition to the above, please consult with each prefecture's offices as there may be other types of supports such as loan-type scholarships and the prefecture's own commuting expenses and other benefits.

[Support for attending universities and similar]

New system of higher education study support:

Students at universities, junior colleges, colleges of technology, and vocational schools are eligible for tuition fee reductions and exemptions, and are provided with grant-type scholarships, if the student is from a household on no-income-based levy of the resident tax.

(Loan-based scholarships are also available for students from a wider range of household incomes)

*Consultation contacts for support contents and procedures

Student affairs division and scholarship contact of each university, vocational school and similar:

Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) Scholarship Consulting Center

Tel: 0570-666-301

[Support for the needy]

Consultation contacts about the support for the needy (*1) are set in municipalities with welfare offices throughout Japan, and support staff provide consultation by telephone and in person. In addition to this, they offer temporary living support projects for those with limited assets and income and in need of housing (providing temporary accommodation and foods, and supporting self-reliance through starting jobs, and other benefits).

In addition, Hello Work (*2) provides employment support according to the need of each individual. And the Local Youth Support Station (commonly known as “Saposute”) (*3) deals with young people (unemployed persons aged 15-49) who have concerns and difficulties in starting a job, provides professional consultation support and similar offered by career consultants and other specialized personnel.

(*1) Consultation contact of self-reliance consultation support organization:

<https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/000936284.pdf>

(*2) Nationwide Hello Work:

https://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/seisakunitsuite/bunya/koyou_roudou/koyou/hel lowork.html

(*3) Nationwide Saposute:

<https://saposute-net.mhlw.go.jp/station.html>

[Support for those who need psychological care]

Mental health and welfare centers (*) located in each prefecture offer telephone consultation services. In addition, the Social Inclusion Support Center offers the services of a special consultation support project (“Yoriso Hotline”) (**), which is a 24-hour, 365-day toll-free telephone consultation service, for those who have few social connections or other problems. The center offers, if necessary,

interview consultations and accompaniment support, as well as telephone consultations, and provides support to help solving specific problems.

(*) Contact information for the Mental Health and Welfare Center:

<https://www.zmhwc.jp/centerlist.html>

(**) Yorisoi Hotline:

0120-279-338 (for residents outside Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima prefectures)

0120-279-226 (for residents in the above three prefectures)

[Education consultation at school]

At schools, school counselors provide psychological care for students and guardians, including about worries and anxieties related to religion, and school social workers may put them in contact with the appropriate agencies. In addition, the toll-free 24 Hours Children SOS Dial (*) provides support for students who consult by telephone.

(*) 24 Hours Children SOS Dial: 0120-0-78310

7-Additional issues

Q 7-1: How should cases be handled when adoptive parents abuse children who were adopted through regular or special adoption, based on religion or belief, or adoptive parents try to inculcate religious beliefs into the adopted children?

(Answer)

In the case of adoptive parents who abuse children who were adopted through regular or special adoption, based on religion or belief, or adoptive parents who encourage adopted children to adopt their religious beliefs, the way of handling such cases is the same as in the cases when biological parents operate in the same way towards their biological children. Therefore cases should be handled according to answers to questions Q 1-1 through Q 6-4 above.

Q 7-2: How should cases be handled when foster parents and similar, who were entrusted with the upbringing of a child under the Child Welfare Act, abuse children entrusted to them based on religion or belief, or encourage the children to adopt their religious beliefs?

(Answer)

Social care is a form of social protection and upbringing of children on public responsibility. When foster parents, family homes, and foster homes and similar, who are in charge of social care, take care of the children entrusted or placed with them, it is important that they respect the children's inner freedom and independence, and ensure a safe and secure living environment to the children.

As mentioned in Q 6-1, it is necessary to pay sufficient attention to the fact that it may be difficult for the children to recognize their own situation as a problem and to make claims about it, in cases when they are strongly influenced by the ideas and values based on religion or belief of their caregivers.

If an act that constitutes abuse as described in Q 1-1 to Q 6-4 is committed with a religious or similar background against a child entrusted to foster parents or a family home, or placed in foster care or similar, it is necessary to take appropriate measures in accordance with the provisions of Articles 33-10 to 33-16 of the Child Welfare Act, dealing with abuses of children under social care and similar.

To prevent abuses against children under social care, including those with a religious background, Child Guidance Centers and foster parent support agencies shall provide regular consultation supports, visiting support, and interviews with the children and so on, even after the children have been entrusted to foster parents or family homes, or placed in foster homes and similar institutions, to identify signs and other indications of inappropriate foster care of the children as early as possible. And if necessary, the centers and agencies should intervene and offer guidance, advice, and other support to foster parents, family homes, or children's homes and other such institutions at an early stage.

In addition, Child Guidance Centers and foster parent support agencies should tell regularly to children entrusted or placed into social care that they encourage them to actively consult with their staff about any worries, difficulties, infringement of their rights and similar, including those deriving from religion or

beliefs, inter alia by offering opportunities for interviews. It is also necessary to make efforts to build a relation in which children would feel it is easy to seek a consultation.

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