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# Conflict between Aum Critics and Human Rights Advocates in Japan

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## A Shift in the “Cult” Issue

- From 1995 to 2000, the Japanese public reacted in a defensive manner toward any new religious group, notably against the Aum Supreme Truth Cult.
- Trials of Aum Members
- “Aleph,” still continues its activities as a religious organization.

- From 2001 through 2005, the local communities and educational institutions campaigned against the residency of former members or rejected their enrollment in local schools.

- However, human-rights groups, critics, and media pundits criticized “morally panicked” Japanese and advocated human rights of Aum members.

## The Anti-“Cult” Movement in Japan

- a variety of social activities promoted by those who are critical of certain groups deemed “cults” and experts trying to educate the public about the “cult” issue (Shupe and Bromley, 1994)
- The Japan Society for Cult Prevention and Recovery (1996- )

## local anti-Aum movements

- Since 1995 Aum diffused into local areas and faced anti-Aum movements.
- Local municipalities, councilpersons, city officials, and local residents confronted Aum and founded prevention councils.
- But the general public know the realities of the anti-cult movement only from books written by human rights advocates.

## Residents' ACM: Why 1999?



Kita-Mimaki	Aum reside in Nov. '98	Anti-Aum began in Jan. '99
Takane Town	Sep. '98	Jan. '99
Miwa Town	Apr. '98	Apr. '99
Asahi Village	Nov. '96	Apr. '99
Tokigawa Village	Mar. '97	May '99
Kosei Town	May '97	May '99
Fukiage Town	Dec. '97	May, '99
Otawara City	June'99	June 99

## Human rights advocates argue



- the resident movement is a government-sponsored movement that the Public Security Investigation Agency and police set up so that new anti-Aum laws could be passed.
- In November 1999, new anti-Aum laws (the Organization Restriction Act and the Victim Relief Act) were passed. Public Security Investigation Agency requested to place Aum "Under Surveillance."

## Interesting idea, but



- Can we say that those anti-Aum residents, or "Mobs" were manipulated by the Japanese government?

## groundless conspiracy theories



- 1 Conservative shift of the government are repeated ideologies since the 1960s; The government must not be coercive.
- 2 Security police information, but no order and support by those agencies.
- 3 Due to short duration of municipalities' support, the anti-Aum/Aleph movement stagnated.

## The Case of Chitose-Karasuyama

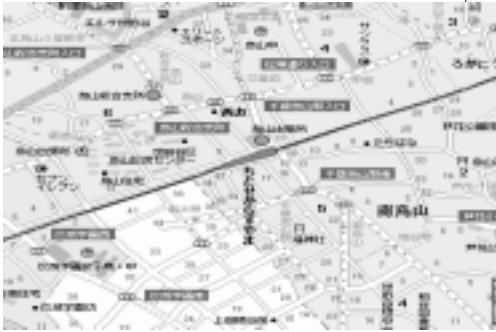


- more than 100 Aleph members residing together under Fumihiro Joyu in the five-story Chitose-Karasuyama GS Heim condominium
- Setagaya Ward was campaigning against the residence registration of Aleph members in 2001 and 2002.
- The Council for Countermeasures explored various options by regularly holding study group meetings on the cult issue.

## Japan, Tokyo



## Chitose Karasuyama, Setagaya



## Defect from Aum and integrate with us



## GS Heim



## First floor: Ceremony Hall



## Shiva and altar



## Honeydew water by Asahara



## Office



## Systematic Learning



## Astral/Aum Music



## Aum special diet



## Cockroach :Ahimsa?



## Watching by locals



## Still Watching



## First stage of Anti-Aum Movement



- Dec.19,2000 Thirteen followers of Aleph separately presented a moving-in notification to twelve branch offices of Setagaya Ward at a same time.
- Dec.21,2000 The ward office cancelled the creation of the resident card.
- Dec.25,2000 Aleph demanded suspension of the resident card deletion to the Tokyo District Court.

- Feb.,2001 The court fixed suspension of execution. In April, the Tokyo high court canceled the District Court decision. In June the Supreme Court canceled the high court decision. By this, the ward recovered the resident cards.
- Dec.,2001 Aleph claimed damages to the ward office. May, 2002 The Tokyo high court rejected ward's appeal and the ward office finally paid a \$140,000 settlement to Aleph.



## Second stage



- May, 1,2003 The ward set up a task force against Aleph, and requested action of the PM., and other security agencies.
- The residential council repeatedly held study meetings of the "cult" problem.
- All residents of Setagaya ward did not always share the same sense of crisis. The anxiety for local residents was different from the condominium residents.

## Substantial troubles by Aleph



- 1) chanting and voices leaking out
- 2) the stench of Aum special diet rises
- 3) the noise of the special instruments
- 4) the comings and goings of Aleph members, news people, and police
- 5) decline in value of property
- They want to move, but it was impossible. Then they ask Aleph to leave.

## Third stage



- In January 2nd, 2003 the residents set up a newly separated council from the local council called "the Meeting Defending Setagaya Ward against Aum."
- The opposition movements by condo residents and locals faced the limit of judicial remedy and public administration. They have no choice but deal with consequences.

## Analysis of Anti-Aleph Movements

### 1 mobilization of resources



- The municipalities took urgent budgetary steps by allocating \$100,000 for residents' anti-Aleph movements. But since this budget was spent on the lawsuit cases, the residents in Karasuyama had to raise funds for their opponent activities.

## 2 cultural framing



- Fear of a “cult” does not convince other people who are not directly affected.
- 1 anti-Aum movement: “public wellbeing for locals” Under “surveillance law” they are protected.
- 2 human rights advocates: “freedom of religion” and “the right to have residence” supported by intellectuals and people

## 3 Structure of political opportunity



- turned out to be a blessing for human-rights advocates.
- 1 It is difficult to take exceptional judicial and administrative measures that go beyond supervision by the Security Police Agency.
- 2 The refusal of residence registration in municipalities was a countermeasure without legitimacy.

## What is our cult controversy?



- Under “surveillance law” and “civil law,” are residential citizens protected?
- Local residents have no means of complaining, remain silent; however, they as well as “victims of Aum” question their moral responsibility of Aum’s criminal acts in the past.

## The Historic Sense in Accusing Aleph



- The “cult” problem stood paralyzed in the face of laws and the human rights movement.
- The sense of responsibility: collective illegal activities collective memory of victims: Is it required careful consideration?
- Japan: responding to collective memory of war crimes, victimized peoples.
- Visit to Yasukuni shrine, legal but---