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THE NEXT AUM:
RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE AND NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY JAPAN

by

Gregory E. Wilkinson

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Religious Studies in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

May 2009

Thesis Supervisor: Visiting Professor Janine Tasca Sawada

ABSTRACT

The violence of Aum Shinrikyō has had four observable consequences for new religious movements in Japan: a change in posture by the Japanese government toward new religious movements, stricter laws and regulations regarding new religious movements and tighter enforcement of those laws, a growing skepticism by the media and scholars towards new religious movements, and increasing skepticism about new religions movements among community groups and the public at large. This study will show that the crimes of Aum Shinrikyō have created a shift in Japan's society resulting in a contraction of operational space available to Japan's new religious movements.

For this study 'operational space' refers to the sociopolitical boundaries in which a group can operate, in other words, a religion's freedom to believe, practice, organize, and conduct economic activities free from government restriction and undue influence by other individuals or groups.

The proposed thesis will be illustrated by several case studies that look specifically at particular instances of contraction of operational space for Japanese new religious movements including Sōka Gakkai, Hōno-hana Sanpōgyō, The Unification Church of Japan (Tōitsu Kyōkai)

and Panawave Laboratory. Each case study will analyze how interactions between Japanese new religions movements and aspects or segments of Japanese society have changed due to a paradigm shift caused by the crimes of Aum.

The thesis is supported by a theoretical framework that draws on theories of Japanese new religious movements and theories of religion and violence. The research builds upon this framework through in-depth study of writings by leaders of Japanese new religious movements (particularly the writings of Aum leader Asahara Shōkō), Japanese and Western scholarship on new religious movements, as well as government documents, media reports, personal interviews and field observations to produce a unique analysis of the Post-Aum Era for Japan's new religious movements.

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requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in
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Graduate College
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all those who helped make the completion of this project a reality. My advisors and teachers have helped both in the directing and editing of this work as well as teaching and preparing me even to attempt a project like this. I would like particularly to thank Janine Sawada, Stephen Vlastos, Scott Schnell, Morten Schlütter, James Foard, Mark Woodward and Dong Sull Choi.

The assistance of Ellen Hammond and Yuki Mutaguchi was invaluable in helping me complete my research in both America and Japan.

Without the help and assistance of John Wilkinson and Rebecca Clarke this project would not have been completed and I am very grateful for their editing of several drafts.

Finally, I would like to thank Holly and Pam Wilkinson for their significant and necessary support of this project in numerous intangible ways.

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CHAPTER 1

NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN THE POST-AUM ERA

On March 20th, 1995, members of the new religious movement Aum Shinrikyō (オウム真理教) released a deadly nerve gas in five different subway cars on three of the Tokyo Metro Subway Lines killing twelve and injuring thousands. More than a decade after the Tokyo subway attack there remains abundant evidence of its lasting effects. As of 2008, wanted posters for three individuals accused of helping carry out the attacks are still displayed in police booths and train station offices. The train and subway cars in Tokyo contain signs announcing that the Tokyo Metropolitan Police are on high alert and asking for passengers to immediately report any suspicious activity to the police or train officials.[1] While in Tokyo in the Spring of 2006, I would often point to those signs and ask passengers what kind of activity they would deem "suspicious." While all referred to Aum and the subway attack of 1995, most had trouble describing any other activity that could specifically be defined as suspicious. As mundane as these reminders of Aum's crimes may seem, their prevalence portends the significant changes that have occurred in Japan since, and resulting from, the terror caused by members of Aum.

In the short term, the crimes of Aum produced widespread panic, outrage, and disbelief, expressed by the press, courts and general public. Nevertheless, in spite of all the clamor, few useful or comprehensive solutions were put forward in the public record at the time. Over the long term, however, the crimes of Aum raised questions in modern Japan about the relationship between religion, society and the state, and the proper response of society and the state toward new religious movements that seem to contravene normative social values. For example, specific questions have been raised about the activities of new religious movements, how they acquire their wealth and the tax benefits they receive.[2] While the feelings of terror and panic eventually waned, there is a collective memory and an ongoing concern in government, the media, and the general public that has deeply impacted Japan especially its political and religious institutions. The "paradigm shifts" precipitated by the attacks have endured and have affected the whole of Japanese society. But, possibly no individuals or groups have been more affected by these changes than Japan's new religious movements. For religious organizations that have been linked to Aum based on similarities of doctrine, practice or even time of establishment, the Post-Aum Era (*Posuto Oumu Jidai* ポストオウ

ム時代) has constricted the space available for the conduct of their religious activities and associated enterprises. This reduction in operational space has resulted in a transformation of the principles of religious freedom in Japan.

The contraction of operational space for Japan's new religions is evident in the principal systems of Japanese society. The change in posture of the Japanese government toward new religious movements, including stricter laws and regulations and tighter enforcement of those laws; a growing skepticism of the media and scholars towards new religious movements; and the corresponding increase in suspicion of new religions movements among community groups and the public at large has advanced this constriction.

This study will show that the crimes of Aum Shinrikyō led to this shift in perception and attitude across Japan's society. These "paradigm shifts" (to borrow Ian Reader's term) resulted in a contraction of operational space for Japan's new religious movements[3] by altering the interactions and relationships between Japanese society and Japan's new religious movements. The moral panic that resulted from the crimes of Aum promoted a hasty generalization that Aum's violence was caused by dangerous religious beliefs and practices common among the new

religions of Japan. The assertion that certain religious characteristics were inherently dangerous or likely to cause violence led to the persecution of several other new religious movements as Japan aggressively searched for the "Next Aum."

In this study, operational space refers to the sociopolitical arena or confines within which a group can operate, in other words, a religion's freedom to believe, practice, organize, and conduct economic activities free from government restriction and undue influence by other individuals or groups. The contraction of operational space may result from new laws or the stricter enforcement of existing laws. Contraction can also occur through societal changes such as a more critical press, more aggressive anti-cult movements, or a shift in attitudes and opinions among the populace.

Framing an argument about a change in religious freedom or a restriction in operational space for new religious movements during the Post-Aum Era requires a theoretical framework and a general knowledge of the religious climate for new religious movements before the crimes of Aum.

Studies of Japan's new religious movements and studies of religion and violence provide components of a possible

theoretical framework for understanding the changes for new religious movements that have taken place in Japan.

Defining Japanese New Religions

Several decades ago, "Japanese New Religions" was used as a scholarly category in works by H. Neill McFarland and Harry Thomsen.[4] These works reflected on a category already widely used in Japan, *shinshūkyō* 新宗教, but they were also significant in propagating the religious category of "new religions" in the west. Although the term "Japanese New Religions" is commonly used in western scholarship, there is no consensus on the proper definition of the term making understanding of the religious category difficult.[5]

Shinshūkyō is the most commonly accepted Japanese term for new religious movements that have arisen since the declining years of the Tokugawa period. In the 1950s and 1960s, *shinshūkyō* was used by some Japanese scholars to identify new religious movements that appeared during the nineteenth century and *shinkō shūkyō* 新興宗教 was commonly used to describe religious organizations that arose during the twentieth century. Even though *shinkō* alone does not hold negative connotations, when used with words such as *narikin* 成金 (the new rich) or *shūkyō* 宗教 (religion) the term can take on a derogatory meaning. In these cases, the term *shinkō* not only in describes a recent founding or

development, but also implies a value judgment. “New” is equated with a character that is trivial, shallow, and spurious. Often being labeled “new” can be a liability. Therefore, most scholars and the new religions themselves prefer to use the term *shinshūkyō*. However, some western scholars not familiar with the nuances of Japanese terms still may use the romanized *shinkō shūkyō* to refer to Japanese new religions.[6] Despite their interchangeable use among western scholars, the terms *shinshūkyō and* new religions are not necessarily synonymous. Translating *shinshūkyō* into English as “new religions” raises several terminological issues. First, there is a continual debate over the definition of the word “religion.” Little consensus exists on the organizational distinction between what constitutes a religion and what is simply a sect or branch of another organization. Scholars also widely disagree on whether these newly established groups contain teachings and doctrines that are distinct enough from traditional religions to refer to them as “new.” Scholars therefore often replace the term “new religions” with the term “new religious movements” (NRM). The term “new religious movement” or *shinshukyō* does not imply a value judgment in the same way that the term *shinko shukyō* might imply.

Academic use of the terms “Japanese new religions” or “Japanese new religious movements” is complicated by the lack of any consensus on the use of capitalization, italicization, or quotation marks. It can become confusing and even frustrating when there is a lack of clarity on the usage of terms even within a single study.

Further complicating matters, just as soon as *shinshūkyō* and Japanese new religions evolved into terms that could be somewhat effectively used in reference to a broad category or group of religions established within a certain time frame, a new wave of new religions emerged , leading to the adoption of the term *shin-shinshūkyō* 新新宗教 or *new* new religions. *Shin-shinshūkyō* refers to religions established after the 1970s, the best-known example being Aum Shinrikyō, or more peaceful organizations like Kōfuku no Kagaku 幸福の科学 (Science of Human Happiness) and Worldmate. Again there is little consensus on the proper translation of *shin-shinshūkyō* into English and research on these groups has multiplied several different terms, including “neo-new religions”, “’new’ new religions” and “*new* new religions.”[7] While some of these new-new religions may have similarities in thought or practice, they are actually extremely diverse movements. Most are an eclectic blend of Japanese ideas and practices that incorporate

elements from several diverse religious traditions. Categorization of new-new religions is difficult and comparisons between different new-new religions can be problematic.

In this study, "Japanese new religions" (*shinshūkyō*) is used to refer to religions established from the nineteenth century to the present and "Japanese new-new religions" (*shin-shinshūkyō*) is used to refer to religious movements that arose since the 1970s. This creates a framework in which Japanese new-new religions can be seen as a sub-category of Japanese new religions.

MacFarland and Thomsen are aware of the issues with terminology and therefore qualify the meaningfulness of the terms they use. McFarland asserts that "while these numerous religious movements are acknowledged to be generically related, there is no single way in which they can be neatly packaged. . . one must proceed under the imperative of seeking the dialectical rather than the categorical identity of this field of study."[8] Thomsen simply claims that the term "new religions" is both "misleading and inaccurate" and that far from belonging to a single religious category, it is doubtful that these groups can be defined as either new or as religions.[9] Despite these qualifications, both Mcfarland and Thomsen

are able to identify several common characteristics of new religions. For McFarland, commonalities include: charismatic leadership, concrete goals and mass activities. Thomsen identifies as common characteristics: a desire to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth, a focus on optimism, and the establishment of a geographic center or religious Mecca.[10] Both agree that new religions arise in times of social crisis and that they can be divided into separate sub-groups based on the time of their founding or creation. They both argue, through case studies, that new religions are often founded by disenfranchised individuals who seek to reorder or transform their social existence into something more fair or advantageous.

Helen Hardacre provides a more contemporary treatment of new religions in her work on Kurozumikyō 黒住教. She contends that while the specific doctrines or teachings of new religious movements are rarely exactly similar, these groups do share a "worldview" that results in some common interests and practices. The worldview of the new religions refers to an understanding of the self in relation to external levels of existence. This worldview is marked by an emphasis on the self and internalized conceptions that lead to specific patterns of actions including seeing

others as a reflection of the self, gratitude, sincerity, and self-cultivation.[11]

The evolution of Japan's new religions may be divided into five general phases: the nineteenth century, the 1920s and 1930s, the immediate postwar period, the post-"oil shock" era (1973)-especially from the 1980s on, and the Post-Aum Era or after 1995.[12]

The idea that new religions are a single type or category of religious phenomenon with common elements and characteristics and that those commonalities can be demarcated by the founding date of the religious movements is a common view among researchers and is widely accepted by both Japanese and Western scholars. This study critically assesses these suppositions from the perspective of the issue of violence in the new religions. Accordingly, this study is not simply a new look at theories of new religions; it is an analysis of theories of religion and violence and of how these theories may shed light on the Japanese new religions.

Theories of Religion and Violence

Much has been studied and written about the link between religious belief and practice, on the one hand, and a propensity for violence, on the other. Since the New York City terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, interest in

these theories and attention to religion and violence has increased. Themes of violence can often be found in religious narratives and symbols. Mark Juergensmeyer has concluded, "Violence has always been endemic to religion."[13] Researchers have suggested several different explanations for why religious writings and symbolism contain themes of violence. Some have argued that the violent symbolism of sacrifice provides a substitute for real violence.[14] Others have argued that while themes of war and sacrifice are found in the symbols and narratives of religious writings, violence itself is evidence of the perversion of common religious teachings and principles that advocate peace and that violence automatically establishes a diversion from conventional religious tenets or standards.[15] These arguments are similar in that they suggest that violence in the symbols or teachings of religions is intended to lead to an ideology of peace, not empirical instances of violence.

Brian K. Smith, however, has rejected arguments and theories that dismiss correlations between violence and religion; "To dismiss the latter [religious violence] as merely a perversion of the 'true' religion is simultaneously naïve and arrogant. Religious violence, in all its many forms, must be accounted for as religious and

not merely wished away as external to some self-proclaimed ideal form of the true nature of religion."[16] There is a practical utility to Smith's arguments. It is problematic and impractical to disqualify a legally organized and state-recognized religion as 'genuine' or 'legitimate' when leaders or adherents turn to violence. However, the issue here is not whether a specific religious organization used their religious beliefs as a context or justification for violence, but rather, whether its religious beliefs may be correlated to its violence, thus justifying the argument that all religions with certain similar beliefs will have a greater tendency for violence. Researchers who argue that there is a link between certain religious tenets or practices and violence lend support to the argument for a category of 'violent religions' whereby incidents of violence are deemed more likely to occur within groups that possess those beliefs or practices.

It is implausible to try to solve questions regarding the violent tendency of certain types of religions through inference to individual cases or incidents. For with every instance of violence perpetrated by new religious movements there are several other examples of perceivably similar religions teaching, promoting, and even sacrificing for

peace, social harmony and justice both in and outside of their organizations.

I do not deny that religion might lend justification, motivation, or even organizational support to acts of violence. Quite the contrary, I would argue that every violent act is connected in some way to the religious worldview of the perpetrator, just as it is to his or her political affiliation, nationality, race, and all other personal or social identifiers. I would argue similarly to Smith that one should not discount the religious context of incidents of violence; but identifying the religious context of violence does not justify extrapolating that context to other new religious movements, identifying them as violent, or creating a 'violent' category for religious movements.

When violent acts are perpetrated by a religious organization or by the group's leadership, as in the case of Aum, the argument for a link between religious belief and violence is even more compelling. This study is concerned with whether correlations between religious beliefs and violence in specific case studies can be generalized to other new religious movements that have similar beliefs or practices. Theories of religion and violence are effective in explaining why individual

religions choose violence. However, these theories are often generalized and used to argue that whole categories of religions are dangerous. This becomes especially problematic for Japan's new religions in the Post-Aum Era.

William Cavanaugh argues that violence can be linked to religion but with no greater precision than the way in which it is linked to organizations centered on political ideologies.[17] He states that links between religion and violence are often not met with the same strict scrutiny and skepticism as are links between violence and other social identifiers, such as nationality, race, gender, or political ideology.

Although his arguments are centered on an interpretation of the Qur'an, Asgar Ali Engineer claims that violence, while not a product of its written doctrine, is a product of the dominance of a greed-based economy over a need-based economy.[18] The argument that violence stems from a more basic root in human existence than ideologies of any category is used by some scholars to create a demarcation between cults and religions, whereby religions are based on doctrine or teachings and cults are based on power and greed.[19]

These ideas are useful in that they help to create a demarcation between similar religions when one of them

chooses violence. They encourage taking a closer look at how similar new religious movements or individuals are in fact distinct and how these distinctions are essential in understanding why one group or individual chooses violence. Taking a deeper and more complete look at the social context or background of religious groups that choose violence often reveals distinctive interpretations of common creeds, beliefs, or practices and explains their violence in a unique way that is difficult to generalize to other religions. This is true of Aum. We shall see that Aum did share many elements with other religious groups, both new and traditional. In fact, Aum borrowed various teachings and practices from several other religious groups. However, it was the interpretations of these teachings and practices, the unique background of Aum's founder, and specific situations or opportunities in Japan at the time that led to Aum's violent deviancy.

Japan's New Religions before Aum

Before we can apply the understanding of Japanese new religious movements and religion and violence to analyses of operational space or religious freedom in Japan during the Post-Aum Period, we must gain a basic understanding of the pre-Aum religious climate for Japan's new religions.

As we have seen, the groups that have been understood as new religions in Japan began in the nineteenth century. In 1868 an oligarchy centered on the young Emperor Meiji came to power, replacing the Tokugawa shogunate. The Meiji government implemented some political and social reforms and expanded certain human rights in Japan.[20]

From the earliest phases of Japanese history, religious policy was centered on the idea that the government would supervise and control religious groups in the interest of the state and society. Gaining recognition from the state ensured the religion's survival, but placed it under government control and protection. Unrecognized religions were not free to advance their teachings and received no tax exemptions or other benefits from the state. Despite its broad modernization campaign, the Meiji government reaffirmed this principle rather than reforming it.[21] The Meiji constitution (1889) preserved the government's role in supervising religious groups. Article 28 states: "Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief." The article makes clear a hierarchy of obligation for Japanese citizens. Individuals in Japan were "subjects" to the emperor and their religious identity or loyalty

could not supersede or encroach upon their responsibilities to the nation. Beliefs or practices that were in competition with state ideologies or simply impeded full allegiance to the Emperor or complete adherence to one's responsibility as a subject could be deemed *lése majesté* and punishable by law.

The Meiji constitution also did not define or even mention a separation of religion and state. Religious freedom was defined narrowly by the courts and police and little change occurred for religious groups after the establishment of the Meiji Constitution.

Not only did the Meiji government continue the control of religious organizations, they also employed Shinto into the service of the state. Officially Shinto was not recognized as a religion, but as a network of secular organizations that supported honoring the Emperor and nation. The Meiji State argued that Shinto teachings were not religious but rather synonymous with learning the responsibilities of being a good Japanese citizen. In 1900, Shinto was classified separately under the Shrine Bureau (*Jinja Kyoku* 神社局) within the Ministry of Home Affairs while all other religious groups were recognized under the Religions Bureau (*Shūkyō Kyoku* 宗教局) within the Ministry of Education.[22] Religious belief and practice also had to

conform with the tenets of so-called State Shinto, which played a central role in the emerging state ideology. A few local councils in Japan took this even further by attempting to demand the placement of Shinto altars in every home, thus showing the influence of Shinto on all Japanese regardless of personal religious conviction or affiliation.[23]

In 1891, Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三 provided the most notable example of the conflict between personal religious belief and the imperial way or ideologies of Shinto. Uchimura was a well-known Christian theologian and lecturer at the First High School (a precursor of Tokyo University's preparatory school). He refused to bow during the reading of the Imperial Rescript of Education, which resulted in his forced resignation from the school on the grounds that he was deemed unfit to teach young Japanese subjects.[24] His removal resulted in a general discussion among scholars and officials over what religious activities were protected under the Meiji constitution. Many believed that the constitution did not protect religious activity or association but simply inner religious belief.

During the early Shōwa period, several laws were passed that expanded government protection beyond private religious belief and liberalized the legal recognition of

religions. A clearly defined legal status was established in 1939 under the Religious Organizations Law (*Shūkyō dantai hō* 宗教団体法). Religions were permitted under the law to become private corporations, which assisted in ownership of property. The same laws also gave the state regulatory oversight enabling it to supervise and control religious groups. The net result of these laws was a greater restriction of religious freedom manifested in more government interference in the internal affairs of religious groups.[25]

During the 1930s, Japan fell into a "black valley" of fascism and militarism meaning that most civil liberties, including religious freedom, diminished in the face of greater intrusion by the state. Most notably, the new religion Ōmotokyō 大本教 was raided by the police twice in 1921 and even more severely in 1935 when the state attempted to eradicate the group. Thousands of Ōmotokyō members were arrested and the main religious centers were razed to the ground. The rhetoric of the group called for the complete destruction of Japan within fifty years, if the Japanese people did not adopt and adhere to the teachings of Ōmotokyō. The state deemed the group dangerous because of its members' accumulated wealth and weapons as well as their propagation of their millenialist teachings

through newspaper articles that were disrespectful to the Emperor. During this period, the new religions of Japan became the target of the state because of their popular growth outside of the government's hierarchy of recognized religions. The state used charges of *lése majesté* (where groups leaders were revered above the emperor), propagating irrational teachings, practicing unscientific healing rituals, and corrupting of public morals to call for the eradication of new religions.[26]

After Japan's defeat in World War II, American occupying forces moved quickly to remove all restrictions on political, civil and religious liberties. In the case of religion, the Occupation sought not only to increase individual freedom but also to create religious neutrality between the state and all religious groups. It was generally believed that Shinto played a key role in fostering the belief in the divinity of the Emperor and thus the disaster of the preceding fifteen years. In order to reduce the religious and ideological influence of Shinto, the Occupation established liberal registration requirements for all religious groups. This created an increase in influence and power of the already popular new religions and a great increase in the influence and activities of foreign religious organizations in Japan.

The Occupation passed the Religious Corporation Ordinance (*Shūkyō Hōjin Rei* 宗教法人例) that allowed any religious group to gain legal corporate status by simply filing a registration form with a local government office. The ordinance was not backed by provisions for the supervision or control of the internal matters of religious groups.

In 1951, the Religious Corporation Law (*Shūkyō Hōjinhō* 宗教法人法) replaced the Occupation's ordinance and eliminated the abuses caused by registration without requirements or oversight. The law set out the principles of religious freedom, separation of religion and state, and recognition of the autonomy of religious organizations. The express intent of the law was not only to articulate the principles of religious freedom in belief, practice and organization, but to allow religious organizations to become established as corporations with the legal standing to possess, maintain, and dispose of properties and conduct business enterprises for the fulfillment of their purposes and aims.[27] In fact, special benefits in regards to property ownership and special tax breaks or exemptions for business enterprises were the only advantages religions gained from the passage of the law. Religious groups were not required to register as religious corporations and any religious organization could freely carry out its activities whether

or not it was recognized as a religious corporation. There were practically no laws that specifically mandated state supervision of religious groups that were not registered as religious corporations. This omission later became important as Japan struggled over how to supervise Aum once it had been stripped of its religious corporation status.

Although Japanese new religious movements enjoyed legal standing that prevented state interference in their internal affairs, property ownership, and business enterprises, the post-war period did not remove all restrictions or scrutiny. New religions often received critical press coverage. Since at least the 1880s, newspapers had alleged that certain new religions violated cultural conventions and social standards. The most common charges against new religions included: personal immorality, fraud, illicit healing rituals, or simply general religious heterodoxy.[28] The mass media took on the role of "public policeman of religious movements" after the war and often published hostile attacks of the activities and practices of the new religions.[29]

Despite the coverage received in the press, by 1995 Japan's new religions had long enjoyed freedom from state interference or control. Religions were expected to fulfill the requirements of the Religious Corporations Law, but did

not suffer investigations by the police, even when irregular accounting practices or possibly fraudulent healing promises might have warranted scrutiny. Japan's largest and most successful new religions countered the reports or attacks of the press with an adept use of public relations, advertising and utilization of media outlets.

Aum Shinrikyō took advantage of Japan's liberal religious climate. The group often countered legitimate questions or scrutiny by asserting claims of religious persecution by the state or press. The head of Japan's Intelligence Service in 1995, Suganuma Mitsuhiro, defined the religious climate of Japan before the Tokyo gas attack: "Because of experiences during world war II, The police authorities and intelligence service were very cautious about investigating or monitoring religious organizations. It is not overstating the case to say that religious organizations became untouchable."[30] The unchecked freedom of Aum and other new religions would be brought into question after 1995, responses to the crimes of Aum by the government, media, and other sources of influence in Japan would have serious repercussions for all of Japan's new religions.

Studies on Aum

This study builds upon previous scholarly works as well as numerous popular publications about Aum. One of the most complete and authoritative studies of Aum has been conducted by Ian Reader. Dr. Reader has published two books on the "Aum Affair." *A Poisonous Cocktail? Aum Shinrikyō's Path to Violence* was published in 1996 just one year after the subway attack. This first work presents more of a narrative of the group's history, but offers interested students a scholarly look at the group and the context in which it evolved. Publication deadlines limited the depth and scope of that volume and so in 2000, a follow-up book titled *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō* gave the Aum Affair the necessary attention in both analysis and depth of coverage. This later book and Dr. Reader's cumulative publications on Aum supply a significant framework for understanding the history of Aum and its path to violence and terrorism.

This thesis uses Reader's analysis of the Aum Affair and the Post-Aum era as a starting point to develop perspectives on the incident and it implications as the criminal acts of Aum fade further into history and as other new religious adjust to Japan's changing religious climate.[31]

Several assumptions and conclusions of the analysis of Aum in this study are similar to those of Reader. Reader frames the study of Aum as not simply a consideration of a religious movement and its incidents of violence, but as a study of the symbiotic relationship between Aum, other new religious movements, the state (police, political leaders, intelligence bureaucracy), the media, scholars, and other organizations (Japan Federation of Bar Associations and the anti-cult movement).[32]

Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan explains Aum's path to violence by analyzing the beliefs and views of Aum's leadership in order to understand the motivations and justifications for their crimes. Most of the numerous works on the Aum Affair simply portray (more often than not in a sensationalized way) the crimes of Aum. Reader distinguishes his work from these more sensationalized accounts of Aum by focusing on the doctrines and beliefs of Aum rather than on their practices. Often practices and rituals of new religious movements are emphasized over doctrines in research because access to the doctrines of new religions can be extremely challenging.[33] Reader claims that his focus on doctrine is important because Aum's ideas are the key to understanding the criminal acts of the group. Reader argues that, "This criminality was

underpinned and in a sense created by its religious orientations and views, rather than the other way around . . . criminality and terror emerged in Aum out of its primary orientations as a religion."[34]

I depart from Reader's thesis on two points. One, a close look at the purpose of Aum's attacks shows intent that is more logistical than doctrinal. Aum's criminal acts are better explained as practical means rather than as symbolic statements (Chapter Two of this study seeks precisely to illustrate this point). Two, acts of violence or deviancy invite closer scrutiny and perhaps even reinterpretations of the meaning of religious doctrine or belief. One of the central arguments of this study is that the practice of violence or deviancy necessitates a distinction between two otherwise seemingly identical beliefs.

If Aum and Sōka Gakkai 創価学会,[35] for example, advocate a similar Buddhist doctrine and this motivates followers of Aum to perpetrate acts of terror whereas it motivates members of Soka Gakkai to seek social justice through peaceable means, the difference in action necessitates that we differentiate the respective versions of the belief.

My intent is not to argue that once crime or violence occurs, the religious beliefs of the perpetrators are

illegitimate or that studying their beliefs to explain their actions is not appropriate. Rather, I simply argue that once religious beliefs are used to motivate or justify violence they have already evolved in a specific way that distinguishes those beliefs from the similar beliefs of other groups, which are expressed in non-deviant ways. Strict scrutiny should be given to any comparison between religious groups that perpetrate violence and those that do not; regardless of similarities in teaching, practice, or founding context.

There are credible reasons for Reader's assertion that coverage of Aum was often sensationalized.[36] First, the events of the Aum Affair are fascinating. A group of religious adherents wearing white robes and electronic pulse headgear while stockpiling chemical and biological weapons and perpetrating a plethora of crimes commands attention. Reader himself calls these facts extraordinary and incredible.[37] However, I contend that this tendency toward sensationalized coverage is also evidence of the different treatment that is given to criminal and deviant behavior. Aum coverage is sensationalized because of an underlying understanding that there is a limit to what probative value Aum has for non-deviant society. The issue becomes where to draw the line of deviancy. Are Aum's

crimes a single anomaly that stem from the psychological shortcomings or criminal tendencies of its leader, or are Aum's doctrines and beliefs in general also deviant because of their propensity to permit illicit violence?

Reader's study and many other studies overreach when they make links between Aum and other religions. Reader is very thorough in showing all the religious influences and encounters that shaped Aum founder and leader Asahara Shōkō's 麻原彰晃 beliefs and thus the make-up of this movement. A short list of enumerated influences include Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Shinto, Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama, Yoga, Agon shu, New Age thought (including the prophecies of French philosopher Nostradamus), Kōfuku no Kagaku, Sōka Gakkai, Mahikari and Japanese "folk religion". Yet Reader shows that above and beyond these influences Aum was a creation of its founder. He concludes, "While Aum drew at various times on Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Japanese folk religious themes . . . at root Aum Shinrikyō was, like many Japanese new religions, a charismatic religious movement framed around an inspired individual. As such, Aum Shinrikyō can best be described as 'Asaharan' religion and . . . it was these experiences and actions that the movement took shape and developed."[38] While Reader characterizes Aum beliefs as a product of its

founder, even in the above quote he makes the point that other new religions are also the product of charismatic leaders. There is a danger in these comparisons that could be extrapolated to conclude that any unchecked charismatic leader of a new religious movement would have a propensity for violence.

The overall thrust of Reader's analysis of Asahara's personal development and the development of the practices and beliefs of Aum is that the group was significantly influenced by many religions and individuals endemic to, or at least prevalent in, Japanese society. Reader is correct in this analysis of the background of Aum. Aum and almost all new religious movements take what Shimazono Susumu calls the 'pick and mix' approach to creating beliefs, practices and structures, combining various ideas, doctrines, practices, and programs from many groups across the religious spectrum. Reader argues that Aum's criminal acts were underpinned by their doctrine and then analyzes Aum's doctrine as similar to other religious beliefs.

I agree that Aum's path to violence was influenced by various religious influences; in fact, all acts of violence are influenced by the social, political and religious environment of the perpetrators. Reader singles out Aum's religious beliefs and practices as the central influence in

Aum's violence. At the same time, he dismisses common assertions that Aum was a product of Japanese culture and that Aum's violence is evidence of the shortcomings of modern Japanese society. Reader considers the alleged connections between Japanese culture and Aum's violence. He uses words such as "setting", "background" and "environment" to clarify that although Aum grew out of Japanese culture it was not a product of it. He then argues that Aum's apocryphal teachings were more a rejection of contemporary materialism rather than of Japanese culture specifically.[39] He concludes that it would be "problematic to limit analyses of the Aum affair to such Japanese cultural-specific interpretations."[40] However, Reader never thoroughly analyzes Aum's religious influences and therefore fails to show the limitations of the view that Aum's violence and the elements common among new religious movements.

Many have argued that Reader's assertions that certain religious beliefs or practices can lead to violence are problematic. Tomoe Moriya argues that Reader's definition of religious violence is overly broad and could result in inappropriate comparisons between Aum and other religions. She concludes that, "one does not necessarily have to accept Aum's interpretations of 'Buddhism' as a

representation of Buddhist teaching as a whole."[41] Mark Mullins similarly concludes that, "the underlying implication of [Reader's] study is that other religions also have the latent potential for developing in similarly violent directions."[42] Aum's violence resulted in paradigm shifts and these paradigm shifts resulted in tangible changes for Japan's religious movements. Under the circumstances, careful analysis of how Aum transformed its religious influences in order to justify its violence is called for. A complete understanding of Aum's path to violence would include analysis of Aum leader Asahara Shōkō's life experiences and background along with the structure and challenges of Aum's organization.

Shimazono Susumu has also made important contributions to the understanding of Aum as a religious movement and its acts of violence.[43] Shimazono sees the roots of Aum's violence in Asahara's universe of belief and in the social conditions of Japanese society. He states, "these individuals [Asahara and his closest followers] were born of and nourished in the soil of contemporary Japan. . . The poverty of the educational system, the ineffectiveness of established religions, the collapse of traditional values, and the bankruptcy of the political order have contributed to the perpetration of Aum's alleged crimes."[44] This

conclusion expands the field of influence that Reader identifies. Instead of a set of religious ideas, Shimazono sees the full context of Japanese society as an influence on Aum's path to violence.

Shimazono also asserts that understanding Aum has significance for religiocultural trends in Japan and throughout the world. However, Shimazono warns against overestimating correlations between Aum and other new religions, and reminds us, similarly to Cavanaugh, that violent acts are not limited to religious contexts. Shimazono states, "the occasionally destructive results of freedom are hardly something associated with religion alone. The crisis of freedom and the lure of destruction may equally well arise from the siege mentality of national and ethnic groups or from the all-pervading influence of bureaucracy, the media, and scientific rationalism."[45] From this perspective, the attention and scrutiny given to new religious movements after 1995 above any other societal influence is probably not justified and the resulting contraction of operational space unnecessary.

The following chapters will evaluate the consequences that comparisons to Aum have had on new religious movements in Japan by offering an alternative analysis of Aum's violence and the societal responses to it, and by

describing the effect of societal responses on other new religious movements. The study first gives an alternate analysis of Aum's crimes and then looks at three separate societal responses in relation to specific new religions that were directly affected by these shifts in posture, attitude, and policy.

Chapter Summaries

The next chapter will present a distinctive interpretation of the motivations and reasons behind Aum's crimes. The chapter will begin with a brief account of the life of Aum's founder, Asahara Shōkō. This biographical sketch will show that Asahara's path to violence is better understood through a practical analysis of the success and failure of Aum as an organization rather than as an evolution of Aum's universe of belief. In order to provide evidence for an interpretation of Aum's crimes that is not necessarily dependent on its members' religious beliefs, a close analysis of three of Aum's most serious crimes will be presented. These crimes include the killing of Sakamoto Tsutsumi and his family, the gas attack in Matsumoto, and the gas attack in Tokyo. Each of these crimes is interpreted as a criminal act perpetrated within a specific context for finite practical ends. I will argue that any analysis of Aum's crimes as proof of a crisis within

Japanese society or as a fundamental pattern of action that could be generalized to other religious groups is problematic.

Chapters Three through Five look at several societal responses to the Aum affair. Chapter Three describes a political response, Chapter Four analyzes an academic response, and Chapter Five studies a response by the media and community groups. These responses to Aum are not always distinct and the contents of these chapters occasionally overlap. However, I have organized them in this way so that we can look at several different religious groups individually and analyze how they were affected by the violence of Aum in specific ways.

Chapter Three looks at the response of certain government leaders and political parties to the Tokyo Subway attack. Special attention is given to the responses and actions of the political opponents of Sōka Gakkai and their affiliated political party, Komeitō. In the summer of 1995, Japan's majority political coalition made several attempts to connect Sōka Gakkai and its leader, Ikeda Daisaku, to Japanese new religions' alleged propensity for violence. This chapter will also examine the changes made to Japan's Religious Corporation Law (*Shūkyō Hōjinhō* 宗教法人法) in 1995 and the practical impact of the changes in the

law on the way that new religious groups organize and operate.

Chapter Four defines and analyzes specific interpretations of Aum by scholars of religious studies both before and after the Tokyo subway attack. This chapter will investigate how the Aum incident affected religious studies in Japan and how society began to view religious experts. In the aftermath of the Aum affair, religion scholars were criticized, whereas journalists and lawyers gained new credibility. Before the crimes of Aum, certain members of the media were seen as anti-cult writers who had a certain polemical slant and limited relevance. However, because these anti-cult experts were the first to report on Aum's crimes and call for further investigation, after the crimes came to light, the anti-cultists' analyses of Aum attained greater credibility. This led to extra attention being focused on a few other religious groups including the Unification Church in Japan and Hōno-hana Sanpōgyō. In this chapter, I do not attempt to determine whether the actions of these religions were deviant, but simply seek to illustrate the contraction of operational space they experienced because of the increased influence enjoyed by these polemicist writers on religion.

In Chapter Five, I will analyze the influence of the media and community groups on public opinion about new religions following the Tokyo subway attack. This chapter shows how the media widely propagated the view that Aum and other new religious movements share important similarities. I characterize the coverage of the media as a search for the next Aum in which journalists claimed that Aum was violent because of certain religious beliefs coupled with certain social contexts, and predicted that this combination of factors would result in inevitable future outbreaks of violence by other Japanese new religions. Many religious groups were correlated with Aum in this manner both by the media and by local communities. This chapter will illustrate this type of treatment by the media and community groups by describing the interactions of Panawave Laboratory with the police, media and community groups in 2003. I will show that the arguments of the media and local community groups proved of little value in identifying groups that possessed dangerous tendencies and thus in protecting Japanese society from the perceived threat of such groups.

I will conclude by drawing general insights from the case studies and by arguing that Japan experienced a significant paradigm shift in its perception of, and policies toward, new religious movements.

CHAPTER 2

A BRIEF HISTORY OF AUM SHINRIKYŌ

This chapter examines the life of Aum's founder Asahara Shoko, his evolving teachings, and three incidents of external violence perpetrated by Aum members in order to argue that violence was an opportunistic choice made by Asahara for organizational and logistical reasons rather than theological or doctrinal ones.

When Aum first gained worldwide attention in March of 1995, it was immediately labeled a "doomsday cult" and categorized with other millennial movements such as Ōmotokyō[1] or other contemporary movements such as Kōfuku no Kagaku or Sōka Gakkai. The immediate assumption in the press was that Aum's followers were perpetrating acts of terrorist violence because they had written off society and were waiting for the total destruction of human civilization. This conclusion was easy to make; after all, Aum had become a "closed religion," shutting itself off from society and surrounding communities and encouraging members to make a break with all family and societal ties.[2] Additionally, Asahara's recent rhetoric and writings contained many references to Apocalypse and Armageddon. Aum members would often chant, "Armageddon is nearing. I will be a part of the sacred military to kill bad souls, which

is the utmost virtue."[3] However, a closer look into the group's evolution and motivations will show that the acts of violence were not underpinned by any religious doctrine or apocryphal predictions, but by opportunism. Violence was a calculated risk taken in order to preserve and promote Asahara's aspirations.

Asahara's Path to Violence

Many have attempted to explain the motivations and influences involved in Aum's violence. Some look to the psychology of the founder, Asahara; others look to developments in Japanese society or culture as the principal influence on the perpetrators of Aum's violence. This thesis relies heavily on these earlier analyses but argues for more specific reasons for the violent acts of Aum. One of the most important indicators is the early childhood experience of the founder, Asahara. The first section of this chapter will examine the early experiences of Asahara, which were marked by a disconnection from family and community ties, an unbridled ambition to attain success and recognition, and a feeling of complete and unqualified entitlement. The second section of this chapter will look at Aum's acts of violence themselves. A close analysis of three of Aum's crimes: the murder of the Sakamoto Tsutsumi family, the sarin gas attack in

Matsumoto, and the sarin gas attack in Tokyo will make possible a unified explanation for Aum's escalating external violent acts. Based on the analysis of Asahara's childhood and the specific crimes of Aum, this chapter will show the tragic rationale behind Aum's path to violence. This analysis applies strict scrutiny to the possible connections between Aum's violence and its religious ideologies.

By 1995, Asahara Shōkō had arguably become the most famous and the singularly most feared person in Japan. His humble and insignificant beginnings gave no indication of his ultimate notoriety. Asahara was born as Matsumoto Chizuo on March 2, 1955 in rural Kumamoto prefecture, over one thousand kilometers from Japan's capital. His family was desperately poor. Asahara's father exacted a meager living for his seven children by making tatami mats. It has been reported that the family of nine was so poor that they could not even afford their father's wares and lived in an extremely small house with dirt floors.[4]

Asahara and one of his older brothers had congenital glaucoma, which left his brother completely blind and Asahara's own vision impaired. How much Asahara could see has been a matter of wide debate. However, eyewitnesses have reported Asahara reading newspapers, target shooting,

and driving in Tokyo's narrow and busy streets. It is essential to note that he was not blind. Asahara's ability to see, though surely impaired, played a significant role in his early development.[5]

At age five Asahara and his brother were sent to a boarding school for the blind. The school taught a basic liberal arts education along with training in acupuncture and moxibustion.[6] All of the other students and a great number of the educators and administrators at the school were completely blind. For the next fifteen years of his life, Asahara reportedly lived as the only sighted person in a blind world. The importance of this situation cannot be overemphasized; imagine the possibilities, opportunities, and unchecked power available to the only sighted person in a completely blind social context. A failure to understand the unique social context of Asahara's formative years may result in a failure to take into account of the ways his childhood influenced his later crimes.[7]

For example, as described above, Asahara came from an impoverished family. However, to assume childhood poverty is the main or central driving force behind his later crimes is misguided. In actuality, as the only sighted person in a blind world, Asahara experienced a social

context during early childhood and adolescence that was largely void of impoverishment or deprivation. Asahara's sight allowed him to control, or almost rule--in his mind, anyway--his social environment, resulting in influence, power, and money. Even though Asahara was known not to be a frugal person, by the time he graduated from high school he had saved over 300,000 yen, a significant fortune for a young man in 1975 Japan. Several reports suggest that most of this money was gained by guiding students to local restaurants and shops. Some suggest that money was sometimes extracted from classmates through intimidation.[8]

One biographer described Asahara's situation by stating, "In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king, and the adolescent Asahara quickly realized he was king absolute. In the dark world of his fellow students, he possessed the power to shed light, to be the one others depended upon to interpret their surroundings and to guide them to places they could not find themselves. But perhaps the most important lesson Asahara learned in the school of the blind was that power over others could be easily translated into personal influence and money."[9] The desire or lust for money is emphasized in almost all Asahara biographies. One biography starts its analysis by stating

that Asahara's single goal in life was to become rich and that all other pursuits were simply a means to that goal.[10]

While money was definitely a powerful lure to a child from an impoverished family, deeper analysis uncovers the fact that the ambition or drive for money was a product of Asahara's ability to dominate his social context during his childhood. The emphasis on the money to be gained from his position overlooks the influence of his position itself. The idea of being "king absolute" could also be described as being singularly elite, separated from all others, providing Asahara with recognition, power, prestige, position and control. The advantages enjoyed by Asahara in his school environment made it difficult for him to live in the regular world and to associate with others on equal grounds.

The one thing that his singular elite status did not provide Asahara was adoration. He ran for class president three times and lost each time; his classmates saw him as the class bully. However, this can be attributed to his sight as well. As the only sighted person in a blind world, Asahara was used to having things go his way. He also became completely convinced of the efficacy of violence--with little fear of reprisal. Even at the age of five, no one at the school could stand up to Asahara and those that

tried could be controlled through quick and naked aggression when necessary. What would later be described as being prone to violence or quick to aggression was engrained in Asahara in his early childhood because of its simple efficacy.[11]

However, there are also examples and evidence from Asahara's childhood of generosity and a kind heart. He was consistently kind to and a protector of his older brother. Later in his life, Asahara's followers would describe the inconsistency of Asahara's moods and interactions. Many were surprised that such unconditional kindness and cold-hearted aggression could come from the same person. Asahara can be best described as a quiet and kind person that had been well convinced of the efficacy of violence as a child. We will see that Asahara used violence in a consistently practical way, applying the lessons of the playground and schoolhouse over and over again.[12]

As a teenager, Asahara knew there was a larger outside world but he also knew that he did not want any part of a larger world that meant giving up the status he enjoyed within the school grounds. He told schoolmates he would move to Tokyo, enter the prestigious Tokyo University and become powerful, rich and famous. Another classmate recalls that Asahara wanted to create a robot kingdom where he was

supreme ruler.[13] These were not simply aspirations or dreams out of the blue; they were plans to maintain the status, position, and spoils to which he had become accustomed-the status of the king absolute and the position of singular elite.

Asahara's anomalous early life reveals four essential elements that help explain his later crimes. First his separation from his family and his life at the boarding school prevented Asahara from creating close family ties. He became introverted and lacked feeling and understanding for the ties between parents and children. This would be reflected in the relationship between Aum and Japanese society and was central to the disputes that would lead to Aum's first acts of external violence. Second, although he was from an impoverished family, the ability to see protected Asahara from deprivation and impoverishment in early childhood and instead engrained in him a sense of entitlement or elitism. Having existed for so long in a social environment in which Asahara was singularly elite led to great feelings of deprivation and emptiness in him later in life, which motivated him to attempt to create a social context that he could completely dominate and influence. Third, during early childhood Asahara never experienced direct retribution or reprisal for his acts of

aggression or violence. Because he could see while other around him could not, Asahara could utilize violence without worry of retaliation. He became convinced that violence was simply an effective tool for asserting influence or solving problems without negative consequence. Fourth, Asahara's education also included training in acupuncture and moxibustion, which connected him to healing rites and services that eventually lead him to religious practices and trainings. Training in these healing arts also introduced Asahara to religion as a matter of business and trade. Later Asahara would run his religious organization like a business organization, where growth was essential to success and other religious groups were viewed as competition. All these factors would influence Asahara to create a religious movement that possessed unique organizational characteristics and a movement that was categorically distinct from other Japanese new religious movements.

Graduation from the school for the blind finally came and Asahara was forced to enter the larger world. The absolute king became just one anonymous subject, the singular elite had become ordinary, and the sighted person in a blind world became a partially sighted person in a seeing world. Perhaps not surprisingly, it was at this time

that Asahara began to have feelings of emptiness and began to search for a remedy for this emptiness.[14]

Asahara doggedly pursued success; when success could not be found in one avenue of his life he would search for success in another way and another place. Asahara's definition and evaluation of his success would come from his comparison with all those around him. Asahara was in constant competition with those whom he saw as his contemporaries: from his elementary-school classmates to the leaders of other new religious movements, such as Kōfuku no Kagaku's Ōkawa Ryuho or Sōka Gakkai's Ikeda Daisaku. Asahara, apparently through any means necessary, sought to set himself apart from everyone.[15] His later violent acts can be interpreted as practical and rational means to set himself apart from those around him and to control or compartmentalize his social context through the accumulation of power, influence, money, position, intelligence, and any other criteria that might be used to measure success.

This behavior is not unique to Asahara. Almost everyone defines success through comparing their current position to the performance of others or to their own expectations. When we fall short of our expectations or do not match the accomplishments of those we see as our peers,

we experience some form of relative deprivation, a feeling of emptiness. We then seek to solve this emptiness by approximating the benchmarks or reframing the social context.[16] So dominant and complete was Asahara's position in the social context of his formative years that trying to approximate it in the real world would prove to be impossible. Asahara's feelings of emptiness and deprivation were severe and significant. The advantages of his early life were contrasted greatly with his failures and disappointments after high school.[17] Ian Reader has shown that Asahara's relative deprivation was a significant influence on Aum's path to violence. "This change [adoption of violence] was conditioned by the gap between Aum's expectations and aspirations on the one hand, and the realities of its experience on the other...The contrast between expectations and realities demanded explanations and influenced Aum's view of the world at large."[18]

Many founders of religious movements seem to have been motivated by previous experiences of injustice, failure, or disappointment. Deguchi Nao of Ōmotokyō and Kitamura Sayo of Tenshō Kōtai Jingūkyō were both female founders of new religions that were also marked with a volatile style. However, although their style and teachings were apparently similar to those of Asahara, their movements for social

justice derived from a very different source of inspiration. Both these female leaders had personal experiences of impoverishment, poor education, and social injustices.[19] Asahara, on the other hand, did not have these kinds of negative experiences during his school years. His advantage over his teachers and classmates allowed him to avoid feelings of deprivation and impoverishment and established in him a strong sense of entitlement and elitism. His early childhood experiences of personal failure or disappointment are categorically distinct from those of other religious leaders, who later sought social justice by founding new religious movements.[20]

Asahara was determined to replace the rejection he felt from his family with worldly success. He often told friends of plans to join the Liberal Democratic Party and eventually become Prime Minister.[21] He spent years preparing for the Tokyo University entrance exams only to fail them, leaving him embittered and feeling further rejected. Asahara saw himself as part of the elite, so entering a less prestigious university was out of the question. Asahara would have to become one of Japan's elite in some other way.[22]

Since Asahara had learned the trade of acupuncture, he attempted to succeed in the field of healing. During the

1980s he ran pharmacies that offered high-priced alternative remedies for common ailments, which included bogus elixirs, meditation, yoga and acupuncture. He was indicted for fraud, paid small fines and returned to his work.[23]

Asahara also sought out new religions to solve the feelings of emptiness he experienced since leaving school.[24] In 1981, he joined Agon Shū 阿含宗 from which he gained a basis for his later religious thought. He stated, "For the first time I stopped and thought, what am I living for? What must I do to overcome this sense of emptiness? In a situation like that some people will change jobs, and some people will just disappear. However, I set off in a completely different direction."[25] The source of Asahara's emptiness and the motivation behind his investigation into new religions was not religious truth or meaning, rather, he was continuing his search to establish the superiority and elitism he had experienced during his early life. He sought position and influence in these new religions and when it did not materialize by his timetable, he would seek them somewhere else.

By 1986, Asahara had left Agon Shū and had started a small group that would become Aum Shinrikyō. He began by publishing tracts and books and offering people the chance

to reach a higher form of enlightenment that could be accompanied by the ability to levitate and other extraordinary powers. It was these claims that attracted young university students and graduates from some of Japan's top schools such as Tokyo and Keio Universities. Aum as an officially recognized religion had a very short life. It sought to become an official religious organization (*shūkyō hōjinhō* 宗教法人法) under the Tokyo Metropolitan government. In August of 1989, Aum received recognition as an official religious corporation despite the protests by parents of some of Aum's under-twenty members and the objections of a young lawyer named Sakamoto Tsutsumi 坂本堤 who represented some of the parents.[26]

Aum quickly used its new status to buy real estate in several prefectures in Japan, open branch centers, and begin to develop a successful religious movement with Asahara at the head. By 1993 Aum had centers in Japan, Bonn, New York, Sri Lanka, and Moscow. It is believed that at one point Russian adherents numbered 30,000. Approximately 10,000 people in Japan were at least affiliated with the group's activities and 1,100 had left family and home and were living full-time in Aum centers.[27]

By Asahara's own account, he had little interest in religion until after he moved to Tokyo. After failing to

enter Tokyo University, he began to question his own purpose for living.[28] It was at this time that he started studying the teachings of several religions. During his time in the new religious movement Agon Shū, he completed a meditation cycle called *senzōgyō* (潜像業) in which the devotee recites a forty-minute chant for 1,000 days. Asahara claims he became disillusioned with the efficacy of this Agon Shū practice but completed the cycle so that he could test the teaching for himself. Asahara was most influenced by Agon Shū's teachings about karma, yoga, and an emphasis on the teachings of early Buddhism found in the Pali Canon.[29] These Agon Shū teachings became the basis for Aum's doctrines. However, the teachings of Aum proved to be in constant flux as the organization evolved and as Asaraha consolidated his control and power over the movement.

Nevertheless, in 1989 Aum was a small religious movement centered on the removal of karma through the practice of yoga, which could eventually result in *gedatsu* (解脱) or emancipation and *satori* (悟り) or enlightenment. The practice of yoga could also result in super-human abilities--including psychic abilities and physical feats--as manifestations or evidence of the removal of bad karma and the improvement of the mind and soul.[30]

Asahara's teachings and practices shifted from training for personal *gedatsu* and *satori* to rites for the salvation of others and the acquisition of this-worldly benefits. This shift to a more inclusive focus would ultimately prove disastrous. Groups such as Kōfuku no Kagaku and Shinrankai had used the lure of this-worldly benefits and rites for salvation to dramatically grow in terms of converts and finances, and Asahara co-opted these practices in order to achieve similar results. Asahara argued that once a person like him reached the ultimate level of enlightenment, the next logical step was working for the enlightenment of others. This "Mahayana" practice of the salvation of others and the quest for this-world benefits focused on the transmission of energy through rites and amulets.[31] The most common rite in Aum was the leader placing his or her hand on the forehead of the believer during a period of meditation in order for the leader's karmic energy or power to be transferred to the believer. These new rites and teachings did bring more converts into the movement, and performing rituals for a fee selling amulets brought in significant amounts of money.[32]

However, alternative views of Buddhist paths to enlightenment, such as those Asahara was trying to meld

together in Aum, had never successfully co-existed within one religious organization. Buddhist sects either believed that enlightenment was to be gained through personal effort (*jiriki* 自力)--meditation and asceticism, or through other power (*tariki* 他力)--faith alone. Zen Buddhism, with its emphasis on meditation, is often cited as an example of a *jiriki* path to enlightenment while Pure Land Buddhism, with its emphasis on the grace and power of Amida Buddha, is a good example of a *tariki* path. This difference in paths to enlightenment keeps Pure Land and Zen Buddhism doctrinally distinct. When Asahara added the teachings of Mahayana to his previous teachings on enlightenment through yoga and asceticism, he created a schism in his organization. Shimazono Susumu summarizes the organizational tension by stating "If one had taken up a religion in search of a personal *gedatsu*, one would hardly be satisfied with 'salvation work' that amounted to little more than recruiting new members for the group."[33] Shimazono also argues that this tension might have been the catalyst for Asahara's focus on apocalyptic visions. Indeed, evidence of imminent millennial change was essential for Asahara to keep internal tensions from breaking up his organization. Focusing on the utter destruction of non-believers was one way Asahara attempted to force his members to huddle

together.[34] Shimazono's argument can be taken further to assert that violent acts were executed in order to help Asahara improve his control over a fractured organization. Asahara needed the idea of outside hostility toward the group a foreign enemy in order to assure loyalty to the group.

Asahara's interpretation of Apocalypse and Armageddon were not visions of inevitable destruction as a fulfillment of prophecy, but rather the consequences the world would suffer for rejecting the teachings and movement of Aum Shinrikyo. Between 1988 and 1993, Asahara's interpretation of Armageddon changed as the outlook for his organizational success improved or waned. With most of Asahara's predictions one can find caveats and conditions that destruction can be avoided if the world would turn to the truth of Aum.

In 1989, Asahara predicted the destruction of a quarter of the earth's population, a prophecy likely given because the building of Shambhala or the Aum utopia village was not progressing as expected.[35] Following Shimazono it can be concluded that Asahara's apocryphal emphasis was at least influenced by the organizational struggles of Aum and it is probable that organizational challenges and apocryphal emphasis were causally linked.[36]

The internal tension created by a split religious organization continued from 1989 to 1995 as Asahara tried to have it both ways by publishing disturbing apocryphal works[37] at the same time that he promoted this-world benefits such as marriage and ancestor veneration ceremonies for members who had not left the world to join the Aum communes. For Asahara the demand of financial and organizational expansion trumped doctrinal consistency.[38]

By 1994 predictions of impending doom were insufficient to restrain increasing disillusionment and Aum members began to leave the communes. Asahara began to resort to kidnapping and assault of his own members in order to silence dissent and consolidate power under the pretense that his followers were participating in ascetic practice.[39] As internal violence became more common, external mass violence became more imaginable. Asahara used the Buddhist idea of *poa* to justify violence within the group. In Buddhism, *poa* refers to the transmission of consciousness that purportedly occurs when one enters the Buddha world after death. In Aum, *poa* became the justification for ending life. Shimazono explains, "One concept in Tantra Vajrayana is that referred to by Asahara as poa, in which the spirits of the dead are transferred to a higher status through secret rites based on the power of

the guru. The centralization of this power can give rise to the perverted logic that if a person of low spiritual status is murdered by one with gedatsu then the former person's karma improves, making the murder a good deed. It would not be surprising if a teaching of this type was secretly taught to Asahara's closest adherence."[40]

Despite the schism that existed in Aum over paths to enlightenment, both *tariki* and *jiriki* adherents of Aum came together on the principle of the central importance of the guru. As Aum's theology evolved, Asahara, as guru, became more significant and central to gaining complete and final gedatsu. Connection to the guru became the one true path, and connection to the guru in any way became necessary for salvation and enlightenment. As the guru became more central to Aum, the most sensational Aum practices became more prominent, including the taking of the guru's blood or other fluids, meditating on the guru's image, and connecting to the guru's brain waves through a ritual called *Perfect Salvation Initiation* that involved wearing an electrode cap.[41] The absolute power of the guru began to be interpreted as the light of the Tantra Vajrayana or secret diamond vehicle of esoteric Buddhism, believed to be superior to both the Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhist vehicles or paths to enlightenment. This interpretation of

Vajrayana as being embodied in the guru further solidified Asahara's power and significance as the only true source for enlightenment.[42] Tantra Vajrayana gave Asahara unrestricted power within the movement and allowed him to wield unchecked influence over his followers. This absolute authority structure was an essential prerequisite to executing external violence. The establishment of his position in the movement was the culmination of Asahara's plans and desires to set himself apart as singularly elite or absolute king, more than it was an evolution of religious thought.

Incidents of External Violence

Once the true motivations for Asahara creating a new religious movement are understood, the external violence of Aum can be seen in a new way.

Essentially, Aum's major incidents of external violence include: the murder of the family of Sakamoto Tsutsumi, the Sarin attack on judges in the small town of Matsumoto in Nagano prefecture, and the Tokyo subway attack. While these represent the main acts of external violence, Aum has also been accused of various acts of internal violence against its own members and of planning other acts of violence against religious rivals and public officials. However, the line between confinement and seclusion or

abuse and austerity is sometimes difficult to discern resulting in the fact that many of Aum's internal crimes have not been fully investigated or prosecuted.

The concerns of Aum members' family and friends prompted the first incident, the kidnapping and murder of Sakamoto Tsutsumi along with his wife and child. In 1989, Sakamoto was a young and talented human rights attorney. He had recently become the representative of several families (twenty-three in total) that were seeking loved ones who had vanished within the compound of Aum's center near Mt. Fuji in Yamanashi prefecture. These families organized themselves into the Aum Victims' Society (Oumu Shinrikyō higaisha no kai オウム真理教被害者の会).[43] Sakamoto brought several complaints against Aum including fraud and improper detainment of Aum members and he publicized these complaints through the media. While meeting with Aum's lawyer, Sakamoto claimed that Blood Initiation, a process in which Asahara's blood was sold because his DNA was supposedly special, was a fraud and that the uniqueness of Asahara's blood needed to be established or the buyers needed to be compensated. The guru responded by calling for a poa ritual for the lawyer, which would presumably ensure a higher state for the lawyer's soul (only attainable through death). Six of Asahara's closest followers led, by

a twenty-nine-year-old physician named Dr. Tomomasa Nakagawa were called on to complete the task. The doctor drugged Sakamoto, his wife, and fourteenth-month-old son with potassium chloride. The family was killed in their own apartment and Aum members then disposed of their bodies in the remote mountains of central Japan.[44]

The police did investigate and even interviewed Asahara but could find no link between the religious group and the murders. After 1995 the links became quite obvious: one Aum member had left an Aum Supreme Truth beige-colored badge in the Sakamotos' apartment. It is commonly believed that Aum's representatives and lawyers adeptly used arguments of religious persecution and religious freedom to keep the group from the center of criminal investigation and frustrated the government's inquiries.[45]

The second incident was similar in purpose to the murder of the Sakamoto family--as an organizational and logistical move--but was very different in execution. Aum's first attempt at an open-air sarin gas attack was not in Tokyo but in Matsumoto, a small mountain town in Nagano prefecture. Aum had become involved in some legal problems with a local landowner. Like Sakamoto, the landowner had publicly accused Asahara of fraud and filed a lawsuit against Aum. He claimed that Aum had purchased a portion of

this land under false pretences and demanded that the purchase be annulled. It seems that the landowner did not want the religious group to start a training center and begin recruiting the youth of Matsumoto. The lawsuit drove public opinion against Aum and a three-judge panel appeared ready to side against the group.[46]

In response, Asahara devised a solution to keep the judges from rendering their opinion. Aum's scientists were experimenting with two new kinds of technology: a simple way for creating sarin and a modified truck for dispersing the toxic gas without injuring the driver or occupants.[47]

Surprisingly, the goal was to try this out in daylight so that testing could be done on the grade of sarin that was created, which should be odorless and colorless. If successful, the truck would be able to run all day with the only reaction being those of the intended victims. Accordingly on June 27th 1994, the target was chosen and the technology was tested.[48]

Earlier in March of the same year Aum had attempted to test similar technology in an ill-fated attempt to kill or at least incapacitate Ikeda Daisaku, also best explained as a violent act influenced by desire for power--a crude attempt to eliminate the competition. Ikeda Daisaku was the leader of the country's largest and most successful

Buddhist organization, Sōka Gakkai. The truck caught fire during the Sōka Gakkai test and Aum members in the truck had to be treated for ailments associated with exposure to nerve gas.[49]

The Matsumoto attack was doomed from the beginning. The initial plan was to disperse the sarin at the courthouse. However, because of the time required to disguise themselves and the truck, the attackers were several hours late, a situation that undoubtedly saved several dozen lives. However, Asahara's followers knew well that failure is not an option. They quickly created a secondary plan and staked out the judges' apartments. Despite its potential for devastation, the technology being tested was crude. Each member wore a protective suit that was nothing more than a cotton jumper combined with headgear. Each member of the team received an injection of sarin antidote as a precaution, and then placed a bag over his or her head connected to a "clean" air tube attached to the bottom of the truck. Aum Scientist Murai Hideo 村井秀夫 started the heater that would turn the sarin into a gas. The nozzle of the gas from the truck was pointed at the front of the judges' apartment thirty feet away. Luckily for the judges, as the sarin began to disperse from the

truck, the wind suddenly shifted and the sarin began to dissipate to the north.[50]

This was not the only mishap during the attack. The nerve agent was mixed with too much isopropyl alcohol, creating a huge cloud of white vapor around the truck and attracting the attention of neighbors. The mist itself was enough for the team of would-be terrorists to leave in fear of being spotted by residents. As they left they smashed the truck into a concrete barrier. Because Murai forgot to tap the sarin gas nozzle, the truck spewed poison gas as they drove through the streets of Matsumoto.[51]

As troubled and error-filled as the test was, it was successful in its primary mission. Enough of the gas had seeped into the judges' apartments to sicken family members of each of the three judges, one very seriously. In the end this failed test killed seven, seriously injured twenty-two, sent over 500 people to seek treatment, and hospitalized fifty-nine. Perhaps no one was more harmed by the attack than Kono Yoshiyuki 幸野善之. Aum's truck was parked just outside his home, which was adjacent to the judges' apartment building. He was the first to notice the effects of the nerve gas, when he discovered his dog and her new puppy dead in his yard, and he was the first to summon the police to the scene.[52]

The police, firemen, and paramedics at first believed they were dealing with some sort of natural gas leak, but as the death toll and number of injured rose they had to reject that assumption for a more sinister explanation. Because they were unprepared to fathom the possibility that what had happened to the Japanese town was caused by Japanese terrorists, they focused instead on a possibility that was almost as absurd as the attack itself; they focused on Kono Yoshiyuki. Kono had worked for a chemical company several years before. This would have given him the knowledge to create the gas, release it, and then dispose of the evidence. Kono argued that he simply did not have the equipment to create a nerve agent and to have been able to release it and still be breathing. Unfortunately for Kono the police searched his house and did find a "treasure trove" of chemicals including a form of cyanide which is an ingredient in making nerve gas. However, most of the chemicals that Kono had in his possession had innocuous purposes, especially for someone with a large garden and carp pond. These possible uses for the chemicals did not sway the police. Their theory, as impossible as it seems today, went something like this: Kono brewed up a batch of nerve agent, whether accidentally or intentionally, that ended up killing his prized dogs, sending his wife into a

coma, and sickening his children. The police were so caught up with the Kono investigation that they missed several aspects of the attack; for example, several weeks later they discovered that the gas in question was not a simple derivative of cyanide but the sophisticated nerve gas sarin. To create sarin one would need a good knowledge of biochemistry and a secure lab. Chemistry professors expressed doubt that anyone could accidentally or intentionally create sarin out of pesticides and other common chemicals. Science Professor Ishikura Shunji was the most inventive in explaining the flaw in the police theory claiming that accidentally creating sarin was as about as probable as a monkey writing a sentence that makes sense while playing with a word processor.[53] However the press and police had their story, suspect, and theory, and nothing dissuaded them until March 20th 1995, when the reality of Aum's involvement came to light, through the Tokyo subway attacks.[54]

The media had played an important role in focusing and maintaining suspicion on Kono despite obvious evidentiary and logical inconsistencies, and thus deflected suspicion from Aum despite credible evidence connecting the group with the attack.[55]

Understanding how the Japanese news media is structured is essential to understanding how the press was not able effectively to investigate Aum before the Tokyo subway attack. Japan's large elite newspapers hold significant influence over news coverage. The most powerful newspaper is the *Yomiuri Shimbun* 読売新聞 with a total daily circulation of over fourteen million, far more than the circulation of America's top ten newspapers combined.[56] The newspaper is also unrivaled as the most trusted source for news in Japan. A recent poll showed that 88% of Japanese people trust what is printed in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*.[57]

Yomiuri is the largest of five major national newspapers, all with a daily circulation of over two million. Each of these newspapers is affiliated with one of Japan's major television news companies.[58] This creates a consolidation of control over information with few parallels among modern democracies. These newspapers and broadcast news services compete to gain and maintain market share; they all strive to present the news in a way that would not be offensive to any significant demographic in Japan. They also utilize a strict unbiased and nonpartisan editorial policy, which has given these established news services a reputation for being extremely bland.[59]

The connection that these major national newspapers and broadcast services have with their sources further restricts news coverage. Japan has over 800 press clubs (*kisha kurabu* 記者クラブ) that limit the access independent reporters have to news sources. All national and regional government offices as well as Japan's most significant organizations and companies have their own press clubs. Often membership in these clubs is limited to just seventeen news organizations, including the five major national daily newspapers; six broadcast stations (which have ties to the newspapers); the Kyodo and Jiji news services (similar to the Associated Press in the United States, and thus the sources of news for hundreds of regional and local newspapers and broadcast news services); and the four largest regional or Block newspapers (Hokkaidō Shimbun, Kahoku Shimbun, Chūnichi or Tōkyō Shimbun and Chūgoku Shimbun). Some local reporters are also allowed to join certain press clubs. However, other newspapers (whose circulation would justify inclusion), most notably, Akahata Shimbun (which is owned by Japan's Communist Party) and Seikyō Shimbun (which is run by Sōka Gakkai) are hardly ever included in press clubs.[60]

Press clubs are physically located in the agencies or companies that they cover. Press clubs can have anywhere

from fifteen to 150 members (the largest is the Prime Minister's press club with over 500 members from over 100 news organizations). The agency or company provides the press club with an office and covers all expenses. Usually including basic furniture, computers, telephones, televisions, newspaper and magazine subscriptions, shogi boards and mah-jongg sets. Many agencies provide their press clubs with perks like a refrigerator filled with beer and drinks, tickets to entertainment or sporting events and paid assistants.[61] A large proportion of the costs for the reporting process are born by the news sources rather than by the media companies. Information is not available on exactly how much money news sources invest in the reporters that cover them. However, a survey of 529 news sources by Iwase Tatsuya calculated the year 2000 total investment in press clubs at 11 billion yen (approximately 110 million dollars) or a staggering average of over 200,000 dollars per source.[62] Company handbooks for both news sources and news companies encourage relationships that are cordial and even familial between news source and reporter. Reporters from Japan's major press and broadcast news outlets were completely unprepared to effectively interact with an aggressive and adversarial news source like the leadership of Aum Shinrikyō.

The press club system results in complete control and sterilization of the mainstream media. Members of press clubs cannot report on their sources in a negative way or they will lose their membership in the club. Reporters in Japan are assigned to one club in which they may spend over 12 hours a day 6 and 7 days a week waiting for news conferences, press releases or interviews with their source. If they alienate their source they cannot do their jobs.[63]

The press club system also assures that the news found in the mainstream press is completely consistent. The press club creates a system in which journalists police their fellow journalists and eliminate the possibility of a reporter getting any kind of scoop or exclusive story. Information or topics received from the news source is placed on a blackboard and the press-club membership votes on when stories can be included in newspapers and broadcasts. There is a common saying in Japan that if you are a member of a press club you are certain not to get the scoop, but if you don’t belong to a press club you can’t even get the story.[64]

This can make freelance reporters or bloggers more rare than they are in the media in the United States or Europe. Reporters do not investigate their stories and news

sources do not release information outside of the press clubs.

The most significant news publications outside of the mainstream media and the press clubs are Japan's weekly news magazines (*shūkanshi* 週刊誌). These publications are unique to Japan. About half a dozen weekly publications have circulations of over 500,000. They have been described as a combination of *Newsweek,* the *New Yorker*, *People, Playboy,* and the *National Enquirer* in one publication.[65] These publications, most notably *Shūkan Bunshun* 週刊文春 and *Shūkan Shinchō* 週刊新潮, do not have the same kind of access to sources, but because they are not beholden to those sources they can be much more critical and even truthful in their coverage. They also can scoop the mainstream press because press clubs often exclude certain topics from publication at the behest of their sources. For this reason, many Japanese consider the weekly news magazines indispensable. However, most Japanese do not believe that the information contained in the weekly news magazines is as reliable as that in the daily newspapers or broadcast news.

Another difference between the daily newspapers and the weeklies is that 99% of the daily newspapers' circulation is by subscription delivery while 99% of the

weeklies circulation is by newsstand purchase. This means that the weeklies must be much more aggressive in their advertising and more provocative in their content. The table of contents of these magazines are a constant presence in poster ads displayed in Japan's train and subway cars. This publicity increases the influence of these weekly magazines because while only half a million may buy their publication in a given week, tens of millions of people read their headlines.[66]

These characteristics of Japan's media played a key role in Aum's ability to continue its acts of external violence. The Matsumoto attack demonstrates how the media played an important role in the developments that culminated in the Tokyo subway attack. Hours after the Matsumoto attack Kono's name was suggested as a possible suspect to the press clubs of the city government and prefectural police. Kono was an effective scapegoat for the police because the Kono scenario did not raise questions about the police's inability to keep tabs on dangerous groups within the prefecture. The Kono accusation was perfect for the press because accusing him would not offend any significant demographic. The weeklies also began to publish severe attacks on Kono because the incident was so

unusual that it captured the attention of the nation and helped sell papers.

Days after the attack, Kono consulted with a lawyer in order to consider suing the newspapers that were spreading outlandish accusations about his role in the attack. However, in Japan, hiring any lawyer, either a civil or defense attorney, is seen as a significant act by the accused that is often interpreted as proof of guilt. This assured that suspicion of Kono would remain until the next spring when the crimes of Aum could not be ignored.

While media characteristics in Japan made Kono the main target of the investigation of the Matsumoto attack, the mainstream press, used to a cordial and familial relationship with their sources, would often cower in response to Aum's hostile reaction to any investigation or questioning. The weeklies would sometimes focus on Aum (the best example being Egawa Shōko's early reports), but their reporting was not enough to influence the public because they were not as trusted as the mainstream press; nor to motivate further investigation by the police or government officials, since they were unconnected to these sources because of their exclusion from the press club system. The result was that while Aum was an important suspect in the Matsumoto attack, with the motive, means, and opportunity

to commit the crime, the group was able to take advantage of Japan's media system to avoid any effective investigation. Aum was able to continue unchecked on its path of internal violence and plans for further acts of external terrorism.

Almost a year after the attack and months after most Aum leaders were facing capital indictments for the Tokyo sarin attack, police in Matsumoto absolved Kono Yushiyuki of any involvement in the Matsumoto sarin attack. Kono said that, "I feel like I have won an innocent verdict at trial."[67] The Matsumoto incident created two outcomes that did affect the attack on the Tokyo subways almost a year later. First, the Matsumoto experiment helped Aum leaders conclude that the safety of the individuals dispersing the gas could not be insured if they used a sarin as strong as the type used in Matsumoto. Therefore, the gas used in the Tokyo subways was significantly watered down, which possibly saved hundreds of lives. The other outcome of the Matsumoto incident was not as advantageous for the Japanese populace. The Matsumoto land dispute trial was delayed indefinitely. The judges were unable to continue working and the attention given to the attack made the land dispute forgettable. For Asahara, despite the challenges and failures of Matsumoto, one lesson was clear: Aum could use

chemical weapons to sway the attention of the Japanese government, media, and populace. Chemical warfare or the threat of it became his most effective tool in controlling pending government actions against Aum and quieting or at least distracting any group or individual that questioned Asahara or challenged his authority over the group.

The Sakamoto and Matsumoto attacks are often explained as crimes of opportunity that solved specific situations for Aum. The Tokyo attack, on the other hand, is often interpreted as a declaration of world rejection and Armageddon by Asahara. However, a close look at the Tokyo attack will show that it shares much in common with Aum's previous acts of external violence.

By the fall of 1994, it was the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, especially the police, that began to question Asahara and investigate Aum. Tokyo, the government body that had issued Aum's religious corporation registration, began to ask for a full accounting of the group's membership, for-profit activities, and, most importantly, bio-chemical research experiments.[68] As Tokyo's demands became more serious and specific, Asahara was planning his logistical counter-move. The attack on the Tokyo subway was similar to the attacks on Matsumoto and the Sakamoto family. Asahara picked a specific target that he believed was

adversely affecting his commercial and religious operations, and challenging his position as singularly elite within Aum. The target was the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, specifically the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department (TMPD). Aum targeted this organization and the individuals within it as precisely as it targeted the three-judge panel in Matsumoto or Sakamoto Tsutusmi.

Looking at the attack closely reveals its deadly precision and specific motivation. The TMPD is located in Kasumigaseki, in the bureaucratic heartland of central Tokyo. By 1995 most of the bureaucracy of Tokyo's Metropolitan Government had moved to the massive high-rises of Shinjuku, but the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department was still located in the middle of Tokyo's Hibiya ward, on top of a complex web of subway tunnels. A subway gas attack reportedly was not even Aum's first choice of attack or tactic. The members first considered blowing up the Tokyo Police headquarters with a truck full of TNT. They also considered lasers and regular small arms, such as AK-47s that had been acquired through their increasing activities and membership in Russia.[69] Aum tested different biological weapons, and even thought of attacking the Tokyo Police with a form of LSD. Aum was at war, and no weapon could be ruled out.

Aum leaders chose to use sarin in the Tokyo subways for two reasons. First, they could not activate and deliver properly a more dangerous and deadly biological weapon, and second, they did not have the time to test new technology in March of 1995. Aum had learned from internal spies that the Tokyo police were planning a raid on several Aum facilities across the country.[70] It was not unusual for the TMPD to conduct nationwide investigations, although their main focus was the ten to fifteen million Japanese who live and work in the Tokyo metropolitan area. In March of 1995, along with local police departments around the country, they were planning a massive raid of Aum facilities.[71]

Aum was required to act quickly and forcefully in order to stop the raid and distract the TMPD. The plan was to hit three of Japan's busiest subway lines that run under the TMPD building in Kasumigaseki. Trains on the Hibiya, Marunouchi, and Chiyoda lines would be hit, with the real target being the headquarters of the TMPD and the thousands of TMPD officers and workers who would inevitably be riding the trains the morning of March 20th, 1995. Two Aum members would release the gas on trains from each line going in opposite directions but all heading toward Kasumigaseki. The idea was that the gas would quickly incapacitate train

operators and station masters, and the trains holding the deadly gas would all stop under the TMPD building, focusing the gas on its precise and narrow target.[72]

Even the day selected shows that Asahara was specifically targeting the TMPD. March 20th was a holiday in Japan, the first day of spring, and most workers would not be making their normal commute. However, police investigators and other TMPD employees were some of the few Tokyo workers who did not take the day off and would be at their offices in Kasumigaseki and in the subways that morning.

The plan was simple: five of Asahara's closest followers would puncture plastic bags of sarin on five trains that stop under the Kasumigaseki station. The five men, hand-picked by Asahara for their loyalty and ability, set out from the Kamikuishiki 上九一色 Headquarters of Aum Shinrikyo on Sunday evening, arriving in Tokyo in the early morning of Monday March 20th.

On Sunday the 19th, Aum executed an attack that had even more serious and interesting implications for Japan's new religious movements. One of Aum's top leaders, Yoshihiro Inoue, asked a munitions expert and Aum member, Takahisa Shirai, to firebomb Aum's Tokyo facilities. The rationale was simple and succinct. Aum was receiving

attention and criticism from the state and the media and to thwart this attention and gain the sympathy of the general public they would create a situation that made Aum appear to be the victim rather than the perpetrator of persecution and violence. Aum was poised to initiate an attack on its own facilities that would look as if it were performed by a rival religious movement, representing the worst kind of discrimination and bigotry. While four other Aum members stood watch, Shirai threw a Molotov cocktail into the front of the Aum center in Tokyo. The bomb created only minor damage and no injuries, however, around the impact area of the bomb thousands of leaflets littered the ground. The leaflets read: "Death to Asahara Shoko. We will not forgive Aum, a group of criminals. From *Kōfuku no Kagaku*." This act was actually an escalation of a disagreement between Aum and the Science of Human Happiness (*K*ōfuku no Kagaku 幸福の科学).[73]

In Asahara's mind the Science of Human Happiness was his biggest competition. Kofuku no Kagaku had actually struck the first blow in this religious rivalry. *Kōfuku no Kagaku* had recently been making loudspeaker announcements across metropolitan Tokyo accusing Aum of a series of crimes and misdeeds. Aum had responded with a libel lawsuit, and this attack on Aum's own Tokyo headquarters was simply,

to Aum, a logical step in an increasingly bitter public relations war.[74] Aum's overall goal was to cast itself as a victim in the Japanese public mind, but more directly the goal was to create a distraction for the TMPD by where Aum could be positioned as something other than a suspect and perpetrator.

The Aum members fled from the Aum Tokyo Headquarters following the attack and met with Aum leaders late Sunday night to discuss the next step in the plan to divert the attention of the TMPD and to diminish its operational ability to investigate the actions and activities of Aum.

Hayashi Yasuo (later deemed "Killer Hayashi" by the Japanese media) successfully released sarin gas on the Hibiya subway line just one stop before Kasumigaseki without attracting attention from a full train of commuters. Toyoda Toru released sarin on a Hibiya-line train traveling in the opposite direction two stops from Kasumigaseki. Hirose Kenichi released his bag of nerve agent on the Marunouchi line, a full five stops away from Kasumigaseki. Yokoyama Masato was sitting in a Marunouchi subway car heading in the opposite direction. He punctured several holes into one of the bags of poison just three stops from its target. The last member of the team, Dr. Hayashi Ikuo, was in a subway car on Tokyo's Chiyoda line. In perhaps a

ironic coincidence or in an intended attempt to mislead investigators, Hayashi's bags of sarin were wrapped in the Seikyo Shimbun, a newspaper published by Sōka Gakkai, another rival new religious movement.[75] Four stops from Kasumigaseki, Hayashi punctured two bags full of sarin. By 8:10 all five Aum members were back at street level, in cars headed back to their Mt. Fuji headquarters.

The stark statistics of Tokyo's most serious terrorist attack can be interpreted in several different ways. Thousands of lives would be irrevocably changed that morning. Twelve would die. However, through luck or providence the results of the attack would fall extremely short of its potential. Aum's sarin was a mess of impurities and it was not the military grade version of the nerve gas, which is almost impossible to detect because it is both colorless and odorless. The Aum mixture stunk almost immediately, drawing the attention of the passengers in the subway cars. Thousands of people smelled the gas and ran from the train before they reached their destinations. For many, an early departure from the subways saved their lives or at least prevented permanent injury or damage.

The Aum members did not take into account the unrelenting schedule of the trains. Four of the five trains did not stop despite the condition of passengers both on

the trains and those on the platforms trying to escape the subway stations. Stop after stop, the sickened ran from the train, the nearly dead were helped from the train and then the scheduled departure was made. Fortunately, because of the strict train schedule, very little gas had the opportunity to leak or spread into the stations. The sick and dying fled from the gas and the gas just as quickly dissipated.[76]

However, other situations within the subway showed little signs of luck at all; on the Marunouchi train the gas was never discovered. The sarin kept spilling from its plastic bag while the train ran from one end of its line to the other, stopping at Kasumigaseki three times. The bag leaking the strange liquid was found on the train and cleared by a stationmaster and the train continued on; the dispersed gas killed two people and injured dozens before the train finally stopped near the diet building at 9:27 a.m.[77]

In the end, despite the crude manner of delivery, twelve people died and many more were seriously injured. An estimate put the number of people sickened or injured at 5,500.

What did Aum gain from the attack? It hardly distracted the TMPD. In fact, once it was discovered that

Tokyo was dealing with a sarin attack, Tokyo only focused on Aum. Raids of Aum's centers and facilities were only days away and before the end of April almost everyone involved in the attack would face capital charges. Media attention focused solely on Aum both for the Tokyo attack and now the Matsumoto attack, surely because the TMPD provided information on the investigations into Aum through their press club.

Asahara's intention was to preserve if not increase his power, position, and influence. Many have claimed that Aum was a doomsday cult focused solely on the end of the world and the destruction of society. They look to writings of Aum members like Hayakawa Kiyohide who mused about a complete coup d'etat of Japan utilizing sarin gas and nuclear weapons procured from Russia.[78] However, Aum these writings have little connection to reality and must be seen as little more than techno-fantasy. Despite the incomprehensible ranting of Asahara after his arrest, his actions before his arrest show little but cold calculation to maximize his position, power and profits. The killing of the Sakamotos, the attack on Matsumoto, and the attack on the Tokyo subways show an increase in desperation but a similar goal: Asahara was attempting to build an empire with himself at the head; more than he was attempting to

destroy Japanese society or the world. Several of Aum's critics argued that Aum would end with thousands of their members committing mass suicide.[79] No one knew what Asahara would do as desperation increased, but his followers' acts of internal violence and external terrorism were consistently focused on preserving the organization, not on destroying it.

Asahara's hostile attitude and violence against his religious rivals is also an important clue to his motivations. There is ample evidence that Asahara envied the success of his religious contemporaries. His acts of violence might better be understood as a means to practical ends rather than as attempts to fulfill apocryphal prophesy. Asahara's focus was always on the things of the world, on his position within a specific social context. His choice of violence probably had more to do with his self-perception in relation with his contemporaries than with any philosophy, prophesy or teaching. If his violent actions can be effectively explained without reference to his teachings, the assumption of a penchant for violence in other religious groups based solely on the superficial resemblance of their teachings to those of Aum is problematic.

However, many in Japanese society immediately turned to Aum's religious teachings and practices in order to explain its acts of terrorism before they understood the specifics and motivations for the acts themselves. The panic that resulted from the Tokyo subway attack would not only bring scrutiny and investigation to Aum but to other Japanese new religions. Starting with an inquiry by the Japanese government, Japan's new religions began to realize that Aum's crimes would have a direct effect on their own organizations and activities, on their operational space and freedom.

CHAPTER 3

JAPAN'S NEW RELIGIONS AND JAPANESE LAW: THE CASE OF SŌKA GAKKAI

The effect of the Tokyo subway attack was the exact opposite of what Aum's leadership had anticipated based on their experience in Matsumoto. Far from distracting the Metropolitan Police from investigating Aum, the attack brought swift and intense scrutiny from the media and government; the authorities and press quickly concluded that Aum was the only possible source of the attack. Some 2,000 police officers from the metropolitan police department, National Police Agency, and various prefectural police departments participated in an immediate investigation of Aum. Within six weeks of the attacks, dozens of Aum facilities across Japan had been raided or searched, over 200 Aum members had been arrested, and various conventional, chemical, and biological weapons or components for weapons had been seized.[1]

By the summer of 1995, Asahara and over 100 followers were indicted on various charges including the Tokyo subway attack, the Matsumoto attack, the killing of the Sakamoto family, production of dangerous biological and chemical agents and other drugs, and other acts of violence against members of Aum and others outside the group.[2] While some

members of Aum remained at large, the police and courts prosecuted most of the Aum members responsible for criminal acts. The criminal charges brought against Asahara and other individual members of Aum seemed to be a proper penal response to violations of the Japanese criminal code.

The swift action of the police was based on their certainty that the sarin attacks were Aum's doing. This raises two questions: one; why, given evidence that Aum had initiated other violence, did the authorities wait so long to take action against Aum? two; why did it take a catastrophic event like the Tokyo subway attack to produce this response? Many of those frustrated by these questions have pointed to the numerous pieces of physical and circumstantial evidence that suggested Aum's involvement in the disappearance of the Sakamoto family and the Matsumoto attack. Aum's possible connection to these crimes had been proposed by certain members of the media before 1995.[3] Moreover, several "mysterious letters" (*kaibunsho* 怪文書) had been sent to the investigators and the mass media connecting Aum to the Matsumoto attack. However, these accusations had not spurred any effective investigation of Asahara or Aum.

The basic conclusion of most of those who have endeavored to understand why Aum escaped stricter scrutiny

before the Tokyo attack is that operational paradigms used by investigators kept them from looking at religious groups as perpetrators of terrorism and violence.[4] Many have argued that Aum's adept use of legal recourse and media outlets allowed them to claim that any investigation was religious persecution. Post-war Japan had developed a lenient posture towards religious groups in order to avoid any possible suggestion of a connection to the religious suppression and state indoctrination that was prevalent during the war period. As we have seen in the previous chapter, these views, paradigms, and traditions of late 20th century Japan had created religious groups that were virtually untouchable.[5] We also saw in the previous chapter that certain characteristics of Japan's media hindered serious investigation by the mainstream press and prevented alternative media reports from being taken seriously.

The Tokyo subway attack triggered a dramatic change in which Japan sought not only how to deal with a single religious group that had perpetrated terrorist attacks, but what the proper relationship should be among new religions, the state, and the populace at large. The response of the government for several months following the attack is significant for understanding Aum's impact on Japanese

society and its role in the changing posture of Japanese society and government toward new religious movements.

This chapter will look at two separate responses by the government to Aum in 1995 and the effects on its stance towards new religions in general. First, the response of the Kōan Chōsachō 公安調査庁 or Public Security Investigation Agency (PSIA) is considered. In the summer of 1995 the PSIA attempted to apply the Anti-Subversive Activities Law (Habōhō 破防法) to Aum. Second, the response of the ruling party in Japan around the same time to amend the religious corporation law (shūkyō hōjinhō 宗教法人法) will be described. The overall intent was to improve government supervision of religious groups, like Aum. However, both responses show that even weeks after the horror of Aum's terrorist attack, the fear of Aum Shinrikyo or other "similar" new religious movements had to compete with bureaucratic or political concerns.

Bureaucratic Self-preservation and the Habōhō

Despite the swift action of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police and the National Police Agency against the Aum perpetrators of violence, the deep shock of the Japanese public and the intense media coverage of Aum's crimes created a demand for government action against Aum itself to prevent the possibility of violence by similar religious

groups. One of the agencies that received intense scrutiny from the media and public was the Public Security Investigation Agency or PSIA. This national investigative agency was created soon after the establishment of the independent Japanese government in 1952. The agency was established as part of the Ministry of Justice and was charged with implementing the controversial Anti-Subversive Activities Law. This law was originally intended to curb the activities of communists in Japan and had the power to dissolve groups and prevent the creation and dissemination of ideologies that advocated violence against the government or Japanese public for political ends. The PSIA had the task of investigating groups that seemed to have violent tendencies or terrorist potential, and then to request the Ministry of Justice to apply the Anti-Subversive Activities Law to the group.[6]

In the 1950s and 60s several radical groups and student movements began to advocate open struggle against the Japanese government. These groups espoused a complex mix of nativist ideologies as well as Marxist-Leninist and Maoist principles. The most prominent of these groups were the Kakumaru-ha 角丸派, or Revolutionary Marxist Faction and the Sekigun-ha 赤軍派, or Red Army Faction.[7] By the late 1960s both of these factions had evolved into full-fledged

terrorist groups. During the 1970s the Kakumaru-ha focused on revolution in Japan by conducting attacks on state symbols and officials. The Sekigun-ha focused on worldwide revolution. Several splinter groups from the Sekigun-ha moved overseas to expand their terrorist activities and join with other terrorist groups or communist regimes in North Korea or China. From overseas, these groups carried out hijackings of Japanese airliners and attacks on overseas holdings of Japanese companies.[8]

By the 1980s, the PSIA had become firmly focused on political revolutionary groups that conducted terrorist activities from overseas with the support of communist regimes. But by 1995, the importance of the PSIA had waned with the fall of the Soviet bloc. As a result, the PSIA lost both resources--including several hundred agents and staff--and influence in the Ministry of Justice. Political pressure on the agency was mounting. During the cold war, intense surveillance of the Japan Communist Party (JCP) was an accepted and essential part of national security policy. With the end of the Cold War, the agency was beginning to come under increasing media scrutiny and criticism from some government officials for its focus on the JCP. This political pressure made the agency less aggressive and

diligent in seeking other terrorist threats or groups that had potential for carrying out terrorist attacks.[9]

In summary, the PSIA was unable to focus on and prevent the Aum attacks for several reasons: most of the PSIA surveillance was conducted overseas not domestically; the PSIA's focus was on political groups (in fact the laws that mandated PSIA activities were written so that it could only investigate the actions of political groups); recent international political events, including the end of the cold war, had reduced the resources of the PSIA; and political pressure had made the PSIA less aggressive in investigating threats they had located. It can be confidently concluded that even if the PSIA had received information about the potential of Aum, they probably could not have overcome the political and legal hurdles necessary to effectively investigate the group and take action to prevent the attacks.

After the Tokyo subway attack, the PSIA saw this new kind of religious terrorist group as an opportunity to establish a new role for itself and reestablish its legitimacy in post-cold war Japan. However, there were several opponents to the PSIA. As mentioned above, for the PSIA to take a role in investigating and supervising any political or religious groups, it had to gain approval from

the Ministry of Justice to apply the Anti-Subversive Activities Law. The application to apply the law is an open process. The Tokyo and national police were opposed to the application of the law because they believed it would be counter-productive, potentially resulting in Aum members and activities moving further underground or overseas and making it more difficult for police agencies to investigate Aum and protect Japanese communities from future attacks.[10] Other groups and individuals in Japan had always been against the PSIA and the Anti-Subversive Activities Law, which they viewed as unconstitutional. To these groups the law was a holdover from the Public Security Maintenance Law (Chian Ijihō 治安維持法) of the prewar period, which had the sole purpose of preserving the power and position of the ruling class or factions.[11]

Because of the controversy surrounding the creation of the law, the Habōhō had only been applied eight times to factions of the Japan Communist Party and other radical groups, and never with the full weight of its provisions. With the perceived threat of JCP and other radical groups waning in the 1990s, the calls for terminating the Habōhō and disbanding or reassigning the PSIA gained significant support from politicians and activists.[12]

Given this pressure to remove its bureaucratic vitality, it is not surprising the PSIA would take the unprecedented step of expanding their traditionally investigative role by calling for the Habōhō to be applied to Aum. When applying the Habōhō to Aum was suggested just days after the Tokyo attack, Prime Minister Murayama said that it was not an appropriate line of legal action to pursue. However, in a reversal of his position just days later, he stated that applying the Habōhō was a legal rather than a political question.[13] On May 5, 1995, the PSIA moved forward with its application to apply the Habōhō to Aum.

The PSIA had to prove two things about Aum for the Habōhō to be applied; first, that Aum's violence was politically motivated and, second, that Aum had the potential for further violence in the future. Both points would be very difficult to prove.

While the analysis in chapter two that the Tokyo attack was a direct assault on the TMPD could be interpreted as a political act or at least an act of resistance against the government, the Habōhō was written to specifically apply to political resistance or revolutionary movements that sought to overthrow the Japanese government. My analysis, along with most other

analyses of Aum, concludes that Asahara's motivations were to remove potential obstacles to his own organization, not to overthrow any other political faction or organization.[14]

The swift action of the Tokyo, national, and other prefectural police after the Tokyo attack made the second point, the potential for future violence, also difficult to prove. Within weeks of the Tokyo attack, Aum had been severely weakened. Most of its leadership was in jail, their financial assets frozen, their caches of weapons seized, and its activities under meticulous surveillance by not only the police but also community groups and the media. Given the success of the government's actions against Aum and its adherents it was difficult to assert that Aum posed a continued threat.

While incidents similar to Aum's subway attack occurred around Tokyo for months after the Tokyo attack, these were minor copycat incidents and the potential for future catastrophic attacks perpetrated by Aum were not viewed as credible. I happened to be outside the Yokohama train station in May 1995, when the station was evacuated because an unknown chemical was released on one of the platforms. The commuters around me that day seemed more annoyed and inconvenienced than fearful of the potential for mass murder by a "doomsday cult."

Many legal experts, even those who were not friendly to new religious movements, saw the use of the Habōhō as extreme and believed other legal and penal remedies for controlling or prosecuting Aum and its leadership should be exhausted before even considering an application of the Habōhō.[15] Despite the opposition from political activists and legal experts to using the law, the application for applying the Habōhō remained active or "under investigation" until the Ministry of Justice concluded (after over two years) that Aum presented insufficient threat for future danger and that it therefore would not apply the Habōhō to Aum.[16]

The actions of the PSIA placed many Japanese religions in the unfortunate position of opposing the use of the Habōhō and in turn being seen as supporting Aum or at the least not supportive of the full prosecution of Aum's crimes. However, most religious groups could not allow the precedent of the Habōhō being applied to a religious group regardless of its crimes or terrorist acts. The law had provisions for disbanding a group, keeping the group from disseminating its message, and curbing communication among its members.[17]

In the summer of 1995 over seventy percent of the public supported using the Habōhō to completely disband Aum

and outlaw all Aum activities within Japan.[18] As the PSIA pushed ahead with procedures to apply the Habōhō to Aum during the summer of 1995, Japanese religious groups had no choice but to object to the use of the law against any religious group, placing them at odds with the vast majority of the Japanese people and fueling suspicions of being sympathetic to Aum and of having a similar potential for violence.

As previously noted, there was no lack of investigation or surveillance of Aum. The full force of Japan's and Tokyo's justice departments were utilized to bring swift action against the group and criminal charges against their leadership.

New religious movements received a much needed ally during the time that the Ministry of Justice was considering applying the Habōhō to Aum. The Japan Federation of Bar Associations (Nihon Bengoshi Rengōkai 日本弁護士連合会 or JFBA) disagreed with the use of the Habōhō against Aum, arguing that the crimes of Aum were best handled by current penal law and that invoking the Habōhō would be simply giving in to media coverage and public opinion at the expense of the rule of law and creating a bad constitutional precedent.[19]

The PSIA's application to apply the Habōhō hung over Aum for nearly two years. Finally in January 1997, the Ministry of Justice and the Public Security Commission concluded that there was insufficient evidence to prove that Aum was capable of carrying out continued or repeated attacks and therefore applying the Habōhō was unnecessary. This did not help other new religious movements because the conclusion of the government did not rule out applying the law to religious groups if they met the standard of continued threat to Japan's government and society.

The ruling also did not help the PSIA. Calls by government officials and political activists for the scaling back or the abolishment of the PSIA intensified.[20] However, the PSIA continued to use the perceived threat of religious groups to justify its survival in a post-cold war environment. In 1998, they created an investigative group that focused on the activities of religious movements. There have been reports that Sōka Gakkai and the Unification Church were targets of PSIA surveillance.[21] The PSIA also made efforts to revise the Habōhō so that it could be more easily applied to religious movements and other groups.

In 1999, the Ministry of Justice and the PSIA introduced two laws directed at Aum.[22] The JFBA did not

object to the new laws because they were specifically written to apply to Aum and would expire after three years making the issue of legal precedent less significant. The two laws, the Victims Compensation Law (Higaisha Kyūsai hō 被害者救済法) and the Organizational Control Law (Dantai Kisei hō 団体規制法) worked very closely together to create surveillance of Aum. Under the law, Aum was required to allow inspection of their facilities and submit lists of their assets and membership roles every three months. The new laws did seem to prompt a substantial change in the posture of Aum leadership. Seeing that the PSIA could enact legislation that could result in confiscation of all assets and facilities of the group in the name of victim compensation, Aum finally denounced the crimes of their previous leadership and issued apologies to the victims of Aum's criminal acts.

Political Opportunism and Sōka Gakkai

The PSIA was not the only organization to try to use the crimes of Aum to their own personal or bureaucratic advantage. The ruling coalition used the crimes of Aum to gain political advantage over the Diet's minority coalition, which included the Sōka Gakkai-backed Kōmeitō political party.

In order to understand the actions of the coalition government in the summer of 1995, we must first understand the role that Sōka Gakkai has played in Japanese politics in the post-war period. Most important is their connection to the Clean Government Party or Kōmeitō since its founding in 1970. Controversy had come to surround Kōmeitō and Sōka Gakkai, beginning especially in the 1990s when Kōmeitō became a significant coalition member that could swing the balance of power within the Japanese government.

From the 1950s, the second leader of Sōka Gakkai, Toda Jōsei, used the organization and resources of this large new religious movement to support the campaigns of Sōka Gakkai members to be elected to the two houses of the Diet. Sōka Gakkai candidates were eventually successful in their bids for office and by 1962 Sōka Gakkai councilors comprised the third largest group in the Upper House of Japan's Diet. In order to expand Sōka Gakkai candidates in the more influential and powerful Lower House, Sōka Gakkai increased its organizational support and investment in candidates who belonged to the group, forming Kōmeitō in 1964. With fewer than twenty years having passed since the totalitarian abuses created by the Shōwa Imperial Government and State Shintō, Japan was understandably leery of any religious group having significant influence on the

government. The aggressive and successful entrance into the political sphere of Sōka Gakkai, Japan's largest new religious movement, was seen as controversial and was criticized by many in the media and government as an unconstitutional breach of the separation of religion and state.

Toda rejected the criticism of Sōka Gakkai's entrance into politics, claiming that it was the duty of every member to be actively involved in the political process and to assist in the betterment of the government. Kōmeitō's charter called for world peace through resolving the conflict between socialism and capitalism. These lofty ideals would prove problematic. Toda and the Kōmeitō charter referred to the Nichiren Buddhist concept of *ōbutsumyōgō* 王仏冥合 or the fusion of religion and politics. Adding to the controversy, Toda often used the idea of *ōbutsumyōgō* in connection with the Nichiren term *kōsen rufu* 公宣流布, which basically refers to the "propagation of the truths" of Nichiren Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra. The tone of Toda's discourse, especially his references to the creation of a National Hall of Worship or Kokuritsu Kaidan 国立戒壇, made it easy for critics and political opponents to conclude that Sōka Gakkai's foray into politics was another

means to establish Nichiren Buddhism as the national religion.[23]

Kōmeitō established a strong presence in the Lower House, gaining 2.5 million votes and twenty-five seats in the 1967 election. Just two years later they doubled the number of both their popular votes and seats. In 1970, a book and several newspaper articles about Sōka Gakkai's motivations for its political activities compelled the new religion to announce resolutions including statements that Sōka Gakkai was not seeking to establish a National Hall of Worship though parliamentary resolution, that Kōmeitō was completely independent from Sōka Gakkai, that members of the group maintained a freedom of conscience to vote for any candidate they chose, and that Kōmeitō office-holders would not concurrently hold any leadership position in Sōka Gakkai.[24]

In 1993 Kōmeitō, for the first time since its creation, became a member of the majority in the Lower House of the Japan Diet. Along with the Democratic Party of Japan, Shinseitō 新生党, the Sōka Gakkai-supported political party became part of the ruling coalition. Four members of the party became members of the cabinet and the political influence of Kōmeitō became extremely significant in the balance of power in the Japanese government. This new

position only exacerbated the criticism of Kōmeitō by its political opponents and other new religious movements. One activist associated with the Buddhist new religious movement Reiyūkai reacted to Kōmeitō's new position in the majority by stating:

> If you take a look at the percentage of votes garnered by the Kōmeitō you see that it usually hovers around ten percent of the electorate. The Nazis also attracted about ten percent of the vote in the beginning. Just as the Nazis suddenly one day swept over Germany, there is the danger that with the new system of small electoral districts Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō will increase their power and we'll end up with Ikeda as our dictator. [25]

This may seem like extremist rhetoric. But to those familiar with the criticism often levied at Sōka Gakkai, the Kōmeito and their influential former leader, Ikeda Daisaku, this is typical fare. Although Ikeda did resign as the third president of Sōka Gakkai in 1979, he remains the honorary president and leader of an affiliated organization that oversees Sōka Gakkai's growth and organization outside of Japan, called Sōka Gakkai International. We shall see that Ikeda will play an important role in the process to amend the Religious Corporation Law during the summer of 1995.

In 1994, the New Party Sakigake and the Japan Socialist Party broke with the majority coalition that included Kōmeitō and sided with the Liberal Democratic

Party (LDP) making a new majority coalition. This placed Kōmeitō back into the minority. Later that year, however, both parts of the split joined the New Frontier Party, or Shinshintō, to create a powerful opposition to the LDP ruling group. The political support of Sōka Gakkai for the Shinshintō became significant in the balance of power within the lower house.

In the summer of 1995, the ruling coalition of the LDP had been weakened by what was seen as the government's inadequate response to the Hanshin or Kobe Earthquake in January of that year and the economic downturn that followed. The LDP decided to exploit the media attention and public hysteria around Aum for its own political gain, arguing that the crimes of Aum were evidence of the inadequacies of the Religious Corporation Law (Shūkyō Hōjinhō 宗教法人法). The call for revision of the law was supported by the public and the media, who were also supporting any actions aimed at controlling and even punishing Aum.

Aum was already under investigation for violating conditions of the current Religious Corporation Law and stripping Aum of its legal status was only a matter of procedure. However, the LDP would use the risk of other

similar new religious movements being prone to violence to justify an adjustment to the Religious Corporation Law.

The impetus to weaken Sōka Gakkai increased in July of 1995 when the Shinshintō, backed by Sōka Gakkai resources and voters, dominated the Upper House elections, almost doubling its representation. Several newspapers projected that if Sōka Gakkai could deliver for the Shinshintō in the fall Lower House elections, it would take over as the majority coalition.[26] Curbing Sōka Gakkai's support for the Shinshintō became a political necessity for the LDP's coalition. The veil of changing the Religious Corporation Law in order to avoid violence from religious movements similar to Aum was thin and LDP officials often admitted that the main reason for the changes in the law was to "rein in the activities of Sōka Gakkai."[27]

Sōka Gakkai's main trouble was not its possible loss of political power or influence, but rather the LDP attempts to link Sōka Gakkai with Aum in the eyes of the media and the public. Because the LDP was in the majority, it had the ability not only to direct the revisions that would be adopted, but to control the forums in which the revisions would be debated as well. The LDP's first attempt to discuss the revisions occurred in open committee session of the Upper House. While Aum and terrorism were seldom

mentioned, LDP officials referred to the "increasingly aggressive political activities of a large religious organization."[28] The LDP was able to use its control of parliamentary procedure during the public forums to openly criticize Sōka Gakkai's political activities and influence. Its members questioned the legality of Sōka Gakkai's influence on Japan's national government and even called for formal investigations into the constitutionality of some of the religious group's activities--insinuating that its members might be violating the separation between religion and government.[29]

The LDP strategy worked well through the summer of 1995. In the fall the LDP took a step that would not be tolerated by Sōka Gakkai or the politicians and government leaders that supported Kōmeitō. In November, the Upper House proposed issuing a subpoena for Ikeda Daisaku to testify in front of the Diet on the proposed revisions to the Religious Corporation Law. Ikeda had technically resigned as President of Sōka Gakkai. However, as indicated above, he remained honorary chairman and President of Sōka Gakkai's international proselyting and humanitarian activities. He was also still seen as the spiritual leader of Sōka Gakkai. The members of Kōmeitō did not want Ikeda

to testify because of the media attention it would provoke and the type of coverage the media would give his testimony.

Although the LDP's real motivations for revising the Religious Corporation Law was apparent to many, the media in Japan had been fixated on Aum, dedicating vast amounts of daily print space and broadcast time to every detail and development concerning the group and their leaders. If Ikeda Daisaku testified on the Religious Corporation Law revisions it would be reported by the media as a conclusive link between Sōka Gakkai and Aum.

Government officials affiliated with Kōmeitō physically blocked the meeting room where the vote for issuing a subpoena for Ikeda was to take place and prevented the Committee Chairman from entering the room. They were successful in preventing the vote. The LDP realized the lengths that Kōmeitō and Shinshintō would go to prevent the debate on the revisions of the law. The minority coalition was committed to protecting the image and standing of Sōka Gakkai, not only as a political organization, but more importantly as a legitimate religious organization. The LDP was therefore forced to drop plans to have Ikeda Daisaku appear before the government. The ruling coalition compromised by calling for the current president of Sōka Gakkai, Akiya Einosuke, to

appear in front of the committee during a private session, instead of Ikeda.[30]

Although the LDP had failed in its attempt to have Ikeda answer questions about Sōka Gakkai's political activities, they had succeeded in two things. First, they had shown the media and public the lengths that Shinshintō would go in order to protect the leader of Sōka Gakkai. This showed just how important Kōmeitō was to Shinshintō's political viability. This also raised questions about the independent nature of Shinshintō and the proper role of religious groups within politics. Second, the LDP was able to frame the message that Shinshintō was against revising the Religious Corporation Law. These two effects of the process for revising the Religious Corporation Law effectively weakened the Shinshintō and the Sōka Gakkai.

The Revisions of the Religious Corporation Law

When the revisions were adopted in December of 1995, the LDP claimed that they were only revisions necessary to prevent another episode of the violence perpetrated by the leadership of Aum. The Shinshintō claimed that the revisions would result in the loss of religious freedom by all religions in Japan without addressing the possibility of violence by religious organizations. Several articles of

the law were affected by the revisions. We will look specifically at each major revision.

The revision of Article 5 in the law changed the jurisdiction for any religious group that operates in more than one prefecture from the prefecture in which the religious organization originally gained corporation status to the national government under the Ministry of Education. This revision seemed simple and straightforward, but, it was the one most directly aimed at Sōka Gakkai. Ninety-six percent of the 180,000 religious organizations that were incorporated under the law were already registered under the Minister of Education. The 4% that were not nationally incorporated included both Sōka Gakkai and Aum.

Aum had used this loophole to carry out its illegal activities. For example, the Matsumoto attack was motivated by a dispute over a piece of property that Aum had purchased. Because Aum was not registered as a religious organization nationally or in Nagano prefecture it would be almost impossible for the seller to know the connections of the buyers with Aum. Sōka Gakkai, it seems, had used the loophole to carry out its local political activities through Kōmeitō without provoking the scrutiny of its political adversaries.

Opponents to the law claimed that the centralization of authority restricted religious freedom. However, because most religious organizations had already been operating under the authority of the Ministry of Education, it was hard to argue that this was a significant change to how the current law is enforced. Many have argued that the small staff and resources of the Ministry of Education prevented them from effectively overseeing the over 180,000 organizations that fell under the law. Sōka Gakkai argued that the law was revised in a direct attempt to curb their activities and so the net result for them was a loss of religious freedom.[31]

By the time the revisions to the law were passed, Aum had lost its religious corporation status, so the only logical conclusion is that this revision was aimed at Sōka Gakkai. Perhaps the way Sōka Gakkai had used recognition in only one prefecture to avoid scrutiny of their political activities was an inappropriate use of the law. However, we will never know, because debate over the passage of this part of the revision did not occur. The main point for our purposes is that the crimes of Aum ultimately helped the opponents of Sōka Gakkai pass a law that affected Sōka Gakkai more than it affected Aum without necessarily making Japan safer from future attack from religious groups.

Revisions to Article 25 of the law focus on financial transparency. The revisions require each religion to create and submit a statement of revenue and expenditures for their religious activities and associated enterprises. The real change in this article regards access to these annual statements. Religions were previously required to submit these statements to their local prefectural authority. However, now they must submit the statement to the Ministry of Education, and any member of the religion or any person with "related concerns" can access the statements and other documents the government maintains on religious corporations.[32]

This revision raises questions over the rights of a private religious organization as well as what would constitute authorization for someone outside the realm of government oversight to access the records of a religious organization. The Japanese media has often published exposés of new religious movements. Would it be legal for reporters to demand the financial statements of religious organizations for any purpose?

Article 78 is probably the most controversial of the changes because it has far-reaching implications for the restriction of religious freedom. A new section added to this article allows for a government authority to question

the leaders of a religious organization, or demand a report of its activities, if they have reason to believe that the religious organization has violated any of the provisions of the Religious Corporation Law. An additional provision states that religious groups are obligated, if required by the government, to prove that their activities are in fact "religious" in nature. The article could now be interpreted to refer to any action considered antithetical to the common good, like the crimes of Aum. It could also be interpreted to mean that if a religious organization participated in activities deemed primarily political rather than religious, its Religious Corporation status would be jeopardized.[33]

While it is possible to interpret each revision in the law as a response to the crimes of Aum, the rhetoric of the LDP cannot be ignored. During the process of revising the law, LDP leaders often remarked that religion had no place in a democracy. Officials often referred to a provision in Japan's Constitution that stipulates that "no religious organization shall...exercise any political authority." It seems that the revisions targeted the political activities of Sōka Gakkai and that Aum provided a convenient cover for the ruling coalition to improve and secure its position.[34]

A symposium was held in the fall of 1995 in which experts in the field of Japanese religion came together to discuss the motivations and reasons behind the revision of the Religious Corporation Law.[35] The presentations were later published as a book entitled, *Shūkyō Hōjinhō wa doko ga mondai ka?* 宗教法人法はどこが問題か or "What is the problem with the Religious Corporation Law?" Most symposium participants agreed that while the revisions were supposed to address the possibility of another Aum-like attack or crime perpetrated by a religious group, in fact the revisions had little power to stop the crimes of Aum or prevent possible violence by other religious groups. Many of the scholars expressed the opinion that the real motivation and purpose behind the revisions was to weaken the political influence of Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō. One participant even expressed the worry that the revisions represented a first step towards a pre-war-type government control of religious organization and expression in Japan.

In an interesting twist of Japanese politics, the Kōmeitō and members of the New Frontier Party 新進党 (Shinshintō) joined together in 1998 to form the New Kōmeitō, thereby creating the third largest party in Japan. While still supported by Sōka Gakkai, the New Kōmeitō put forward a more moderate platform and in 1999 joined the LDP ruling

coalition. The New Kōmeitō became an essential partner in the Koizumi government (2001-2006). It could be that the fight with the LDP in 1995 prompted Sōka Gakkai to revaluate its political positions and partnerships, ultimately leading to an increase in its political influence and position within the government.[36]

While the actions of the PSIA and the LDP both occurred in the summer of 1995, they were in no way connected. They did not even share the common aim of trying to minimize the threat of violence by Aum or other similar religious groups. The PSIA was mainly motivated by a need to legitimize itself in the context of the post-Cold-War environment, while the LDP was motivated by the political drive to weaken a political adversary that was backed by Sōka Gakkai.

There are several important conclusions that can be reached from these two examples. First, each government group concluded that other goals or motivations trumped the need for effective united efforts to supervise and control Aum. There were legitimate concerns that applying the Habōhō to Aum would be less effective than simply letting the Tokyo and national police handle surveillance. However, the PSIA placed its own bureaucratic needs above the most

effective means for controlling any possible future threat from Aum.

Likewise, many scholars have persuasively argued that the changes made to the Religious Corporation Law would do little to stop crimes or violence from being perpetrated by religious or civil groups in the future and that the real motivation for the changes was to weaken the political activities of Sōka Gakkai. Like PSIA, the LDP did not have a problem with placing its own political goals above the need for a unified response to the threat of future attacks by Aum or by similar new religious movements.

New religious movements were placed in the difficult position of opposing the actions of both the PSIA and the LDP. This made them seem “soft” on the criminal prosecution of Aum and allowed their critics to argue that despite the horrible crimes of Aum, these religious groups opposed swift action to protect the Japanese people from the possibility of future terrorist acts. New religious movements, already under suspicion from the media and public, had to protect themselves from the imposition of strict, long-term restrictions that could result from the unprecedented application of the Habōhō to religious groups and from the changes to the Religious Corporation Law. The PSIA’s and LDP’s maneuvers further weakened the position of

several of Japan's new religious movements, which sought to protect their own rights from eroding in the post-Aum hysteria.

Are there any lasting effects or changes for Japan's new religions in the decade since making changes to the Shūkyō Hōjinhō? There is little research or reporting on this issue in Japan.[37] The specific changes to the law seem to have had little or no effect on Japanese religious groups for a couple of reasons. Most importantly, 99% of religious groups were already following the new requirements (five or more members on the corporation board; registration through the Ministry of Education; full disclosure of assets; etc.). This does not mean that there have not been changes in the legal parameters for religious groups, but only that the most significant changes stem from the enforcement of existing laws rather than from the new provisions themselves.

One example of the new enforcement can been seen in tax exemptions given for land assets. In the past, religious groups enjoyed tax exemption for land holdings that were related to their religious and worship purposes. The most common worship-related holdings are parking areas for temples, shrines and churches. Especially in Tokyo, religious groups are often looking for possible parking

locations near their headquarters or other religious centers. Before 1995, religious groups could simply apply for property tax exemptions on parking spaces whose primary use was for members to attend religious services or activities. These applications were processed and approved as a matter of course. In Tokyo, convenient parking is a relative term and these parking locations were often several blocks from the actual temple, shrine, or church. Today in Tokyo, conservative governor Ishihara Shintarō has changed the approval process and any parking that is not physically adjacent to the religion's worship center does not receive tax-exempt status. Ishihara's motivation could be to curb the expansion of new religions or it could be simply conservative economic policy, but it is probable that this kind of enforcement of religious corporation tax law would not have been acceptable before 1995.

The Tokyo case applies to all religious bodies, but Japan's national and local governments now similarly use existing zoning, tax, and trespassing laws to control and curb the activities of new religions. While most often Aum and its splinter groups, such as Aleph, are the target of these newly enforced laws, we will see in the next two chapters that other new religions have also been subjected to stricter interpretation and enforcement of existing laws.

Another interesting development in post-Aum Japan is the renewed importance of Sōka Gakkai and its political arm New Komeitō. While most religions do not actively support or publicly associate with Sōka Gakkai, all religions benefit from its representation of religions' rights and tacitly back Sōka Gakkai on many issues that come before the government. In 2003 Sōka Gakkai successfully lobbied to amend Japan's Personal Information Privacy Act to exclude religious groups. The act makes it illegal to distribute information about an individual that is contained in a database list of forty people or more. The law could potentially make distribution of membership lists to local leadership illegal. Also, Japan has a national law regulating door-to-door sales. First passed in 1976, revisions to this law are proposed every few years. While some new religions fear that revisions of the law will prevent door-to-door proselytizing, as long as Sōka Gakkai maintains its political influence through Kōmeitō, religious groups will likely remain exempt from such laws.

In general there has been a restriction of the operational space of new religions as police and government officials take a more critical stance toward them and enforce existing laws more strictly. While this has created a different legal climate, several factors including the

greater political clout of Kōmeitō has prevented differential enforcement of existing laws, the revision of laws, or the creation of new laws from having an undue effect on the legal standing of Japan's new religions. However, as we will see in the concluding chapters, religions that attract the attention or suspicion of the media or community groups invite a level of investigation and prosecution by Japan's police and government unseen before 1995.

CHAPTER 4

ANTI-CULT MOVEMENTS IN THE POST-AUM ERA: THE CASES OF HŌNO-HANA SANPŌGYŌ AND THE UNIFICATION CHURCH

The violence of Aum significantly changed social judgments and understandings of new religions in Japan. The shifts in posture by the Japanese government toward new religions were significant; however, new religions and Aum itself were affected more severely by societal elements outside the government. Aum's violence changed the public assessment of who had the authority to analyze new religions and describe them to the outside world. This chapter looks at these shifts in perception, from the loss of legitimacy felt by scholars of religious studies to the rise of influence and credibility of journalists and anti-cult activists. Groups formed to curb certain activities of the new religions, including the organizations that attempted to keep people from joining new religions, that solicited members to withdraw, and that sued religious organizations on behalf of former members.

This chapter will begin by looking at how Aum's violence affected religious studies in Japan and how a loss in credibility by scholars of religious studies provided an opportunity for alternative voices to gain greater authority to analyze new religions and their alleged

propensity for violence. These new “experts” were journalists, lawyers, and anti-cult activists and, at least initially, they proved to be right about the violent propensity of Aum’s leadership. These new observers turned a skeptical eye not only on Aum, but also on other new religions, calling for greater social control of these religions. To illustrate, this chapter will look at the treatment of two religions after 1995, Hōno-hana Sanpōgyō and the Unification Church. The examples elucidate the shift in societal standing and operational space of new religions that resulted from the increased credibility and activity of anti-cult groups, in particular.

The Loss of Credibility of Scholars of Religious Studies

Scholars of religious studies are for the most part inclined to hold liberal positions on civil and human rights,[1] and are typically empathetic toward their research subjects. This empathy may derive from the academic ideal of objectivity and the desire to remain neutral, to analyze without criticizing, and to be impartial rather than polemical.

Traditionally this claim to neutrality has engendered trust in scholars of religion and they are sought out as reliable authorities who can help the outside world understand insular and uncommon groups like Aum. Like the

medical doctor whose first principle is to do no harm, scholars of religious studies are prone to give their subjects the benefit of the doubt. Harsh critique is the exception rather than the rule. One religious studies scholar commented on the "Aum-bashing" that occurred in the media after the Aum candidates' crushing defeat in the lower house elections of 1990: "They lost: but why did their noses have to be rubbed in the dirt? Give them some space to be themselves, I thought-that was my knee jerk, bleeding heart reaction to a new religious movement that would in time become hideously self-destructive."[2] This common attitude among scholars of religious studies made them less inclined to openly criticize new religions--at least not to the degree that is common in the press or among observers in other fields.

Some scholars were leery of believing the reports of Aum violence, coercion, and confinement that appeared in the media before 1995. Even after the subway attacks, scholars of religious studies, in a persistent attempt to remain objective and impartial, denied allegations that Aum was forcibly detaining and brainwashing their adherents.[3] However, the Aum affair provided evidence that once violence and crime are inserted into the equation, the

scholarly principle of *epoché*, or the suspension of judgment, becomes a liability rather than a virtue.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, for some time after the subway attacks nothing less than complete repudiation of Aum seemed justifiable. Unfortunately for the religious studies community in Japan, a small number of researchers made statements in support of Aum and against media criticisms shortly after the subway attacks. These "supporters" of Aum were not defending the group against legitimate criminal indictments but were simply raising concerns about the possible violation of legal and human rights during the panic after the subway attack. Anti-cult activists like Takimoto Tarō openly criticized scholars of religion, referring to them as a support team for Aum.[4] The Japanese scholar who received the most attention and criticism was Shimada Hiromi.

Shimada was a specialist of modern Japanese religion and had written widely about new religious movements that were successful in attracting Japanese youth, including Aum Shinrikyō. Shimada not only made positive statements about Aum, he supported Aum in its often-contentious disputes with Kōfuku no Kagaku, mentioning how the austerity and knowledge of Buddhism of Aum's followers greatly exceeded the discipline and learning of Kōfuku no Kagaku adherents.

While this point may have been accurate (these two religions adhere to very different understandings of Buddhism), within the context of the rivalry between Aum and Kōfuku no Kagaku the comparison resulted in Shimada appearing less than objective.[5] Probably most damning for Shimada is that he met with Asahara on several occasions and allowed photographs to be taken of himself smiling next to Asahara. Aum made a habit of using photographs of Asahara with scholars of religion, political figures, and even the Dalai Lama to add credibility to its organization.

After the Matsumoto attack in 1994, there were several reports that Aum was responsible for the attack and was stockpiling chemical agents and other weapons at their facility near Mt. Fuji. The group invited Shimada to inspect the site and Shimada concluded after his visit that it was solely a religious center whose exclusive purpose was worship. Because so many of Shimada's actions and statements were supportive (and even appeared to endorse Aum), after the Tokyo subway attack he was unable to effectively respond to intense criticism and was forced to resign his position at Nihon Women's University in Tokyo.[6]

Anti-cult activists criticized Shimada for his statements and writings about Aum before the Tokyo subway attacks. These activists did not accept the validity of

writings about Aum that did not condemn its violence and distinguish it from “legitimate” religious organizations. Shimada’s statements were criticized not only for being misleading about Aum, but also for being insensitive to Aum’s victims.

In 1995, after the subway attack, Aum appealed to the Association of World Academics for Religious Education (AWARE), claiming it was being unfairly targeted by both the government and media. AWARE had often served as a defender of the religious freedom and human rights of individual believers and religious groups around the world. Several U.S. scholars traveled to Japan, under the auspices of AWARE, to investigate possible civil rights violations of arrested Aum adherents. These scholars focused on possible civil rights violations independently of the issue of the guilt or innocence of the Aum leadership for their crimes. The emotionally-charged atmosphere led to further claims that scholars of religious studies were ignorant of Aum’s violent nature and would support Aum regardless of the evidence linking it to terrorist attacks. This further damaged the reputation and perceived legitimacy of religious scholars, both Western and Japanese.[7]

After it became clear that Aum was perpetrator of dozens of criminal acts, there was a great demand for

analysis of the religion and its path to violence. However, careful, objective analysis by the scholars of religious studies seemed impossible. At a time when an understanding of the violence of Aum, its relationship to other new religious movements, and its meaning for Japanese society was so needed, the group best suited to conduct the analysis seemed without portfolio. Because scholars of religious studies in general had been discredited by their liberal positions on civil and human rights and their empathetic stance towards their research subjects, the resulting vacuum of credible voices, opinions, and analyses was filled by activists, lawyers, and journalists. These new "experts" were generally biased not only against Aum but against new religions in general. This bias was manifest in the labeling of Aum and other new religions as "cults" (カルト) in which mind control was used to retain adherents and gain converts. Criticism by anti-cult activists asserted that other new religious movements were similar to Aum. Since scholarly investigation into the influences on these groups that may lead to violence was no longer accepted, the rise of a new source of analysis was inevitable.

Substitute Authorities and the Rise of Anti-cult Experts

Anti-cult lawyers, journalists, politicians and other activists filled the information vacuum. The media and the people turned to these "experts" on Aum, not because of their expertise in religious studies or Japanese new religious movements, but because they had been correct, early on, in their assessment of the role of Aum in criminal acts, including the murder of Sakamoto Tsutsumi and his family and the attack in Matsumoto.

Illustrating this shift toward journalists and other public critics, two of the most prominent new authorities on Japanese new religious movements after 1995 were journalist Egawa Shōko and the aforementioned lawyer and anti-cult activist, Takimoto Tarō. Both became vocal critics of Aum during the creation of the Aum Victim's Society and the disappearance of Sakamoto Tsutsumi.

Takimoto supplied legal help to the Association of Aum Shinrikyō Victims (*Oumu Shinrikyō Higaisha no kai* オウム真理教被害者の会), which was represented by Sakamoto. Takimoto carried on the work of representing parents who were seeking children who had left home to join Aum centers and spoke out strongly about Aum's involvement in the disappearance of various members and eventually the Sakamoto family.[8]

Egawa had become a personal friend of Sakamoto when she reported on his legal representation of ex-members of various new religious movements in the early 1980s. She wrote extensively about Aum and was consistent in her assessments that it was a dangerous organization, not only for the youth it converted but also for Japanese society as a whole. Egawa and Takimoto were thus quick to link Aum to the disappearance of the Sakamoto family in 1989. Egawa published a book in 1991 that implicated Aum in various criminal acts, called *Ambitions of a Messiah* (*Kyūseishu no yabō*).[9]

Egawa and Takimoto were not alone in their criticism of Aum. Even before the disappearance of the Sakamoto family in November 1989, the Sunday Mainichi published a seven-week series on Aum entitled *The Insanity of Aum Shinrikyo* (*Oumu Shinrikyō no Kyōki*). The newspaper reported on Asahara's criminal record of selling imitation medicines and asserted that he continued to defraud followers by requiring the payment of large sums of money for training devices and purification rituals. The report also included a sympathetic treatment of several families who were seeking children they believed to be held within Aum centers. The newspaper demanded that Aum give these families back their children.

After the disappearance of the Sakamoto family, the critical coverage of Aum continued. However, between 1990 and 1995 Aum was successful in countering these criticisms in the press by enlisting the support of religious studies scholars, by opposing members of the mainstream media, and by discrediting reports by journalists outside the mainstream press. Aum also solicited the support of lawyers who believed that criticism of Aum was a violation of religious freedom. Activists like Egawa and Takimoto, who vocally criticized Aum during this period, were often derided in the media and publicly disparaged by Aum spokesmen. While their opinions were sometimes not popular, neither Egawa nor Takimoto were swayed from their argument that Aum was connected to serious crimes and possessed a real potential for violence.[10]

March 1995 ushered in indisputable evidence of Aum's involvement in the murder of the Sakamoto family, the gas attack in Matsumoto, and the Tokyo subway attack. These revelations were quickly followed by full confessions by several members of Aum who had taken part in the crimes. Takimoto and Egawa suddenly emerged as two of the most credible authorities on Aum and, by extension, other religious groups (that would come to be known as "mind-control cults") in Japan. Egawa and Takimoto became

constant fixtures on Japanese television during the summer of 1995; they were consistently portrayed as experts on Aum and on the dangers represented by new religious movements. They would often appear in television debates with Aum members, calling for a general rejection of the group and for a release of brainwashed members of Aum.[11]

Shortly after the subway attack, Steve Hassan and Asami Sadao[12] appeared on Japanese television arguing that mind control was the method used to turn Aum members against Japanese society and make them attack their fellow citizens.[13] The analysis of these anti-cult experts and activists seemed to answer one of the most difficult questions to arise from the crimes of Aum: How could a religious group convince educated and idealistic Japanese citizens to commit acts of violence against citizens of their own country?

Some scholars argued that Aum's terrorist attacks were ample evidence that Japanese society had become depraved.[14] The ideas of Asami and Hassan provided an alternative explanation for Aum's rise and subsequent crimes. They argued that the Aum phenomenon was not caused by a rapidly devolving Japanese culture and society, but by the Aum leadership's ability to control and manipulate their followers to carry out actions that were against their own

will and best interests. Hassan argued that any group that utilizes outright deception to reach its goals or pursue its ends is a "destructive cult" and that these groups consistently use "mind control" to control the will of their followers. Mind control was defined as "a system of influences that disrupts an individual's identity (beliefs, behavior, thinking, and emotions) and replaces it with a new identity."[15] This analysis seemed to fit well with the experiences and opinions of family and friends of Aum converts. The ideas of Hassan and Asami seemed further validated by several Japanese specialists in psychiatry and social psychology who argued that mind control can maintain just as powerful an influence over an individual as drug addiction.

The media took hold of the ideas of mind control and destructive cults and repeated them countless times as an authoritative explanation for the rise of Aum. The benefit of this approach was that responsibility was attributed to the intense influence of Asahara and the top leadership of Aum instead of being ascribed to general problems in Japanese society. This seemed to create a separation between the culture of Japan and the culture of Aum and provided a much needed explanation for how a dangerous and

violent group could evolve in a society purportedly characterized by harmony and social order.

The idea of “mind control” also meant that the propensity for violence could be limited to Asahara and his closest followers, all of whom had been arrested on numerous charges or were being sought by police. This allowed for a distinction between the general followers and the upper tiers of the membership, regulating the blame to the latter.[16]

In spite of the advantage of this approach, limiting the blame to a few leaders, the ideas of destructive cults and mind control can create several challenges. The first challenge is that it turns the followers of the group into victims who need help from the outside society. This perception can be used by anti-cult groups to call for the complete abolishment of the group in order to protect its mind-controlled followers. The idea of mind control can also be interpreted to justify taking followers from worship centers by force. Terms like “destructive cult” and “mind control” are also problematic because the operational definitions of the terms are hardly clear. The distinction between mind control and genuine religious conversion is almost impossible to establish. Prospective members of new religions now become potential victims susceptible to mind

control that can lead them to perpetrate violence against their better judgment--or even against their will. It then becomes the duty of community activists, members of the media, and government officials to prevent the victimization of Japanese citizens by protecting them from the influence of destructive cults.

Takimoto Tarō became a vocal advocate for ideas of mind control and destructive cults. He criticized religious scholars and other supporters of Aum, arguing that scholars and activists had a responsibility to the victims of Aum, both followers and the families of followers, which far outweighed any consideration for the civil rights of the group. Takimoto was a vocal proponent of using the Anti-Subversive Activities Law (Habōhō) against Aum and calling for the complete disbanding of the group and confiscation of its centers and assets. He also advocated rescuing people from Aum centers in a book entitled *Escape from Mind Control.*[17] Ian Reader concluded that "Takimoto was not a detached observer of events, and his criticism of scholars of religion was by no means impartial. Nonetheless, they broadly reflected the public mood in Japan after the full horror of the Aum affair had come to light in 1995, and they particularly illustrate how the integrity of scholars of religion came to be publicly questioned."[18]

This new authority and legitimacy of self-styled experts such as Hassan, Asami, Takimoto, and Egawa coupled with the insatiable appetite for all things Aum by the Japanese media led to a proliferation of anti-cult publications by numerous writers of varying credentials. A proper polemical position and a sharp critique was often more important for publication than in-depth analysis or correct information about a group. These publications were intended for mass consumption and many of them are formatted or organized in a way that makes them look more like longer extensions of newspaper or magazine columns than research-based articles or books containing objective descriptions or analysis.

Even the way books and research publications on religion were marketed was affected by the post-Aum anti-cult movement. To illustrate the effect that the anti-cult movement had on publishing, Ian Reader explains that books on Aum are categorized under "True Crime" with other books about murderers and the yakuza (or mafia) at Kinokuniya, one of Tokyo's biggest bookstores in Shinjuku.[19] On one of my trips to what was likely the same bookstore in 2004, I was surprised to find that books on religion had been organized in a similarly revealing way. There was a section that contained books by Ikeda Daisaku (the leader of Sōka

Gakkai) and Ōkawa Ryūhō (the leader of Kōfuku no Kagaku) along with other devotional books of various types in a section titled *Shūkyō* or *Religion*. It seemed to me that this section was similar to a section one would find in U.S. bookstores labeled *Spirituality* or *Inspirational*. It was interesting to see several books by two of the most prominent leaders of new religious movements in this section. Based on the sheer quantity and variety of books by Ikeda and Okawa, their inclusion in this section might have more to do with simple economics than anything else. However, across the aisle from the *Religion* section was another section with books about the Jehovah's Witnesses, Hōno-hana Sanpōgyō, the Unification Church, and Panawave Laboratory. These books would best be described as investigative; a couple might even be described as exposés, and several were written by prominent anti-cult activists. This section was labeled *Shūkyō-gaku* or *Religious Studies,* as opposed to "Religion". This system of classification is a telling sign of one of the key shifts of the post-Aum era. There is a new credibility lent to anti-cult activists who take a more polemical view and approach to covering new religions than do conventional religious studies scholars.

In fact, as Richard Gardner states, polemical coverage of Aum lent credibility to the "messenger" as never before: "The perception of Aum and the opposition to it became inseparable from the personalities, idiosyncratic gestures, facial expressions, and styles of talking of a handful of individuals."[20]

Anti-cult Movements in the Post-Aum Period

The crimes of Aum motivated many people in Japan to take action against what they saw as the danger of groups like Aum. The most active anti-cult movements really separate themselves into two different kinds of groups, community groups and legal groups.

Community groups have a very casual mode of organization. A few individuals in a community may come together to oppose the development of an undesirable religious organization in their town or neighborhood. Anti-Aum groups started in the late 1980s, as certain communities created organizations to oppose the establishment of Aum training centers in their towns. The legal dispute that resulted in the Matsumoto attack originated in the opposition of a landowner and a community group to Aum's procurement of land in the town and the legal challenge the community made to the purchase. After the Tokyo attack, these community groups became much more

influential. They used social pressure and legal action not only against Aum's worship centers, where members trained and lived, but also against members of Aum who owned their own homes or rented apartments in their communities, calling for the removal of Aum members from their neighborhoods.

The tactics of community groups also became bolder after the Tokyo subway attack. Before the attack, community groups launched peaceful petitions and appeals to the media and the government to block a purchase of property by Aum or other groups, or called attention to the trouble that certain religious centers caused their neighbors. After the Tokyo attack community groups often paraded in the streets around Aum centers asking for an audience with Aum leaders. Certain community groups set up 24-hour surveillance of Aum centers. These protests by community groups often escalated to something resembling a mob and Aum members complained that they felt threatened by the actions of community groups.[21]

Attention and coverage has been given to the exchange between Aum and community groups. A book entitled "Aum and Village Logic" for example, presents how community groups have affected Aum's organization and activities.[22] One of the best illustrations of the effect of community groups on

Aum comes from a documentary by Tetsuya Mori in 2001.[23] In 1998, Mori had released a film that offered a rare glimpse inside Aum, focusing on Aum's spokesperson, Hiroshi Araki. The film gained wide attention in the Japanese media and provoked discussions about what form Aum would take in the future and what responses to Aum from the government and society would be appropriate or effective. The film even attracted the attention of researchers of Aum in the West.[24] The response to the first film and Mori's unprecedented access to Aum's leadership and centers led to the making of a follow-up documentary, "A2," which gives several illustrations of the influence of community groups on Aum. One scene shows Aum leader and spokesperson Araki Hiroshi being stopped at a checkpoint before entering Aum's main center in Yamanashi. Several men stop his car and search it, asking questions about specific items. Araki and other members in the car calmly explain that they are simply bringing food to the center as they have done several times before. After the car has been completely searched and every item of food removed from several boxes in the trunk, they are allowed to enter their facility. Because of the authority asserted by the men at the checkpoint, Mori asks if they are the police. Araki responds that they are simply

members of a community group that checks everyone coming in and out of the center.

Another scene in “A2” shows a protest of several hundred anti-Aum activists outside the Aum center in Tokyo. In it the protesters assume that Aum leader Fumihiro Joyu is in the center and they demand that he come out and answer their questions. The group wears matching headbands and jackets, and shout anti-Aum slogans. The Aum leaders come out to explain that Joyu is not in the building and cannot appear to answer their questions. The police finally have to intervene to keep the group calm and clear the streets. Nevertheless, the group remains indignant and difficult to disperse.

These examples illustrate the power and influence of community groups in the post-Aum era. While some of their actions could be objectively interpreted as a violation of Aum’s civil rights, both the community groups and the members of Aum know that intervention by local authorities in favor of Aum is improbable. In this sense, community groups enjoy a generous amount of liberty to restrict Aum’s actions and pressure its members.

Legal groups, sometimes called victim groups, also started to form in opposition to Aum in the late 1980s. Several former members or relatives of current members came

together, acquired legal representation and filed lawsuits against the religious organization. They also petitioned the government to increase investigations and prosecutions against the group and even to pass laws restricting the group's activities. One of these legal or victim groups was represented by Sakamoto Tsutsumi. After the Tokyo attack, victim groups increased in number and influence.

Takimoto Tarō has been active in these legal groups both in the media and in the courtroom. He participated in legal groups by representing victims of Aum and other new religious movements, acting as their spokesperson in the media and serving as their lawyer in class action suits. Relatives of current members used legal action to gain access to their relatives. Parents of Aum members also used legal action to challenge the conversion of their underage children in an attempt to remove them from Aum communes. Class action lawsuits against Aum claimed almost all of their assets and civil action against Aum continues even today. The victim groups expanded to include not only relatives of Aum members but also the injured victims of their attacks in Matsumoto and Tokyo. After the Tokyo subway attack, Takimoto became the "expert" of choice for press interviews not only regarding Aum but about other new religious movements as well. Takimoto's influence has grown

as he has become an aggressive critic of several new religious movements, claiming their teachings and practices amount to mind control and fraud.[25]

The anti-cult movement that arose in the post-Aum era created a new kind of legal group that represented former members of religions who sought return of their contributions to the groups while they were members. As discussed in chapter two, Aum was sued by Sakamoto Tsutsumi for fraud because Asahara was selling his own blood to his members under the pretense that it had special properties due to his higher karmic state. The success of the early fraud lawsuits led to more lawsuits that demanded quantitative proof of the claims made about the benefits of religious practices or rituals. These new legal groups argued that new religious movements deceived their members by convincing them that donations to the religion or fees for religious training, rituals, amulets or remedies were essential to their physical or spiritual well being. This legal tactic discounted the efficacy of the services provided by the religion, which could not be proven, and charged that the transactions with religious group members represented fraud.

Criticism of religions for offering health and wellness cures to members in exchange for devotion and

monetary support was not new to Japan. The *Yomiuri Shimbun*, in a series of reports, had criticized Risshō Kōseikai 立証構成会 for this practice in the 1950s. The central claim against Risshō Kōseikai was that one of their leaders had told a member that her son would become sick and die if she did not increase her devotion and support of the group including taking part in several rituals and training activities. Most press reports conclude that predictions of impending trouble or misfortune are commonly employed as a tactic to increase a member's participation and devotion; the member in this case committed suicide shortly after the prediction and Risshō Kōseikai was blamed by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* for her death.[26]

The press has often played a key role in defining or establishing a new orthodoxy for religious groups. As far back as the 1890s, Japanese newspapers were targeting specific religious groups as heterodox. Studies of the nineteenth-century new religious movement Renmonkyō 連門教 have argued that media criticisms included charges of "personal immorality, fraudulent and corrupt money practices, illicit healing, and religious heterodoxy and heteropraxy."[27] We shall see that the same categories of criticism are used against new religions over one hundred years later. Prolonged attacks in the press eventually

contributed to the decline and eventual extinction of Renmonkyō.[28]

In their study of economic exchange between religions and devotees George Tanabe and Ian Reader conclude that all religions necessarily have an economic element, and that there are "tasteful as well as reprehensible ways of doing business." Tanabe and Reader recommend that religions be held to standards similar to those that apply to other economic corporations, but that they should not be criticized simply for engaging in economic activity.[29]

An increase in fraud lawsuits in the post-Aum era has created significant problems for the new religions of Japan. Health and healing rituals are a key characteristic of new religions[30] and many religions promise or at least offer benefits to body and mind if the devotee follows specific practices or rituals.

Defining religious fraud is complicated because matters of religion always include elements of practice and commitment. Commitment and devotion are practically impossible to define or measure, which allows giving religious groups a justification for instances of unmet expectations. Fraud by religious groups can and does occur but in the post-Aum era, in a climate that is already disapproving of new religions, legal authorities would

presumably need to require a high level of proof before legal remedies are used.

Hōno-hana Sanpoōgyō and the Unification Church

Several specific examples of the economic activity of new religions attracting the attention of both anti-cult groups and the law are evident in the post-Aum era. Two notable examples are Hōno-hana Sanpoōgyō and the Unification Church.

One new religion that was quickly categorized with Aum as a destructive cult that utilized mind control is Hōno-hana Sanpoōgyō. This group was founded in 1987 by Hogen Fukunaga. Hōno-hana Sanpōgyō 法の花三法行 basically means the three paths of the flower of the law, but most Japanese consider this group the “foot reading cult” or the “foot cult” because that is how it was commonly referred to in the media. Hōno-hana gained thousands of followers in the 1990s. The leader gained a reputation for claiming to hear a voice from heaven, which resulted in his ability to diagnose almost any disease by studying the soles of the feet.

Reflexology is a much more respected and established form of therapy in Japan than in other parts of the world. However, the claims made by Hogen Fukunaga were unusual, even for Japan. Fukunaga also claimed to be the envoy of

heaven and the reincarnation of the Buddha and Jesus Christ. Fukunaga was charging over 100,000 yen for reading the soles of people's feet at the group's headquarters, called "The Village of Heavenly Voices," near Mt. Fuji in Shizuoka Prefecture. Fukunaga and his closest followers claimed that the temperature of the feet, unique vein patterns or color, and different toe shapes were indicators of all kinds of ailments including cancer, AIDS, possible suicide, financial problems, and even relationship issues. They asserted that any ailment or problem that was revealed by the foot examination could be remedied through the healing powers of Fukunaga—which could be accessed through expensive training sessions, rituals, and amulets.[31]

By the year 2000, over 22,000 people had been treated by Fukunaga and Hōno-hana. Some followers had paid the group in excess of ten million yen (approximately 100,000 U.S. dollars) for various rituals and training sessions.

One of the first claims brought against the group by legal organizations and anti-cult groups was fraud, not in relation to the healing rituals, but because of the process the group used to gain religious corporation status more than a decade earlier. In 1986, police investigated money given by group members to Oishi Matsuo, who was chairman of the Fuji City Assembly in Shizuoka Prefecture. Police

theorized that the money was given to the chairman as a political contribution in exchange for helping the group gain religious corporation status with the Shizuoka Prefectural Government. Oishi did visit the prefectural government offices with Hōno-hana representatives several times during the summer of 1986.[32]

Anti-cult groups called for an investigation of Hōno-hana and ultimately for stripping the group of its religious corporation status. It is unusual for an elected official to assist or vouch for a religious group trying to gain religious corporation status. We have seen in chapter one that, before the crimes of Aum, prefectural governments exercise very little oversight of religious groups that seek corporate status and have few resources to look into possible reasons for not approving a group's application. Usually, if the paperwork is filled out completely and properly, a prefectural government will approve a group's application. However, Hōno-hana sought the assistance of local officials to help get approval of their religious corporation application. This led to criticism of the group's status as a legitimate religious corporation and initiated the debate over the removal of this status.

Questions into the group's legal status started a wide range of investigations by both the police and legal groups

representing ex-members. Starting in the spring of 2000, several courts made rulings against Hōno-hana, calling them an illegal moneymaking machine. Hōno-hana claimed that the foot treatments were only an ascetic practice similar to what one would find at a spa; however, judges concluded that the group was making unacceptable medical claims and defrauding its clients/members of their money. Several decisions against the group required that it pay hundreds of millions of yen in damages to its former members.[33]

Fukunaga and his closest followers were also arrested for various charges in the spring of 2000 in what the media defined as a crackdown on fringe religious groups.[34] Hōno-hana continued to lose civil suits brought by its followers. Ultimately it lost its religious corporation status and became defunct. The government deemed that most of its activities did not qualify as economic activities that supported legitimate religious ends and prosecuted the group for millions of yen in tax evasion. Fukunaga Hogen received twelve years in prison for defrauding his followers and several other leaders were convicted of fraud as well (most received suspended sentences).[35]

Regardless of whether or not the civil and criminal charges were justified, it is amazing how completely the group was wiped out. Leaders were convicted of crimes and

imprisoned, all assets and money were seized by victim groups or collected as taxes. The group completely ceased to exist. Its fate was even worse than that of Aum, which continued to survive as *Aleph* and a smaller splinter group led by Fumihiro Joyu.

It is important to reiterate that criticism of religions based on their wellness and healing claims is not new to Japan. What is new is the severity of the attacks on new religions believed to be conducting activities that are not socially acceptable. Ian Reader concludes that the extent of media attention, the investigation by the police, and the fraud charges against Hōno-Hana's leader would probably have not occurred previous to 1995.[36]

The change in the role of victim groups, anti-cult groups, and the change in focus of the police and other government authorities since the mid-1990s is significant. Richard Mitchell has concluded that Japan has a high tolerance for political bribery and other less than exemplary behavior by government and business officials as long as levels of efficiency are maintained and public expectations for results are met.[37] A similar tolerance was given to religious organizations in the post-war period. The government and populace were tolerant of various kinds of religious activity as long as religious followers met

certain expectations for social responsibility and had a positive influence in the community. Aum violated the public's expectations and the high tolerance for religious diversity waned.

The contraction of operational space for new religious movements in the decade since the crimes of Aum can also be seen in recent action taken against the Unification Church. This church is a worldwide organization whose full name is The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, and it has a sizable organization in Japan. In 1998, the anti-cult movement in Japan created a legal group called the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales 全国霊感商法対策弁護士連絡会（Zenkoku reikan shōhō taisaku bengoshi renrakukai), and this group of 300 lawyers from across Japan is focused solely on the activities of the Unification Church in Japan. These lawyers brought several lawsuits against the religious group and have protested against and criticized several groups and organizations in Japan that have ties with the Unification Church. In the summer of 2007, the group protested the participation of the J-League soccer team Shimizu S-Pulse in the Peace Cup Korea 2007 because it was sponsored, in part, by the Unification Church.[38]

In 2008, this legal group represented a former member of the Unification Church. The network claimed that the church had defrauded the member by convincing her that only by making large donations to the church would the sins of her ancestors be redeemed. The suit is similar to suits brought against several other new religious movements in the post-Aum era. The significant outcome of this suit is that the Unification Church chose to settle for 230 million yen (approximately 2.3 million U.S. dollars, well above the amount the former member made in donations to the group). The settlement was allegedly carried out in order to keep the former member and the network of lawyers from registering complaints or filing suits with the Ministry of Education, the government agency that has oversight over religious groups and decides who gains and keeps religious corporation status.[39]

Before Aum's crimes, oversight or action by the Ministry of Education against a religious group simply did not happen--regardless of the actions of the religion. The ability of anti-cult groups to use the threat of filing suit with the Ministry of Education to motivate or solicit a settlement in a civil case indicates that the position of new religious movements in Japan has significantly changed.

These illustrations raise questions about the proper activities of officially recognized religious groups in a free society. It is possible that extracting donations by predicting harm to a person's physical or spiritual well-being should be discouraged in a free society. It is also reasonable for free societies to limit the healing claims and medical advice that religious groups can offer their members or to the population at large. In any event, for our purposes the larger point is that during the last decade a significant shift in position and influence took place between new religious movements and anti-cult forces. The crimes of Aum diminished Japanese tolerance for new religious movements. These movements must now anticipate the reaction of former members and anti-cult groups to their activities, and the possible ramifications that aggressive proselytizing, fund-raising, and promises of physical or spiritual well-being can have on the overall success of their organizations.

CHAPTER 5

THE MEDIA AND NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS: THE CASE OF PANAWAVE LABORATORY

In the work of those studying the effect that government and anti-cult groups have had on new religion in the post-Aum era, the role of the media arises regularly. The influence of the media is an important part of this study for two reasons. First, this study draws heavily upon media reports in order to describe the actions of new religions and the actions of community groups or the government toward them. Second, the media plays a consistent role in influencing government officials, police, and anti-cult activists by publicizing the actions or programs of certain new religions. The influence of the media is examined more directly to show how it shaped the way Japan interprets certain activities of new religions and how the resulting interpretations have affected the operational space available to new religions movements in the post-Aum era.

So much attention was given to the media's extensive coverage of Aum in 1995, this chapter argues, that since the Tokyo subway attack the media has been fixated on chasing stories that would replicate the ratings and revenues that came with Aum coverage. While publishing for

profit is not new to the media, in this instance the focus on the sensational practices of Aum created a situation in which any similarity between it and other new religions was emphasized and even exaggerated. The media coverage of the new religion, Panawave Laboratory, (パナウェーブ研究会) in 2003 illustrates how similarities to Aum are used by the media to attract the attention of the public, resulting in an adverse effect on the religion specifically and new religions in general.

After the subway attack in March of 1995, Aum received intense media coverage throughout the rest of the year. Thousands of hours of television and radio airtime, daily newspapers, weekly magazines, Internet stories, and research articles examined Aum and its leaders from every conceivable angle and viewpoint. From the investigation of Asahara and other top leaders, to the search for yet-to-be-located indicted members, to lengthy descriptions and investigations of Aum's centers and activities, few religions have ever received the kind of attention and scrutiny that Aum received in 1995. The coverage of Aum was quantifiably more extensive and concentrated than coverage of the Kobe earthquake that took the lives of over 6,400 in January of the same year.

Media coverage of Aum was not new, as Aum had already made extensive use of media coverage and mass advertisement in order to promote itself. In fact, Watanabe Manabu makes several sound observations about how Japan had never before seen a new religion use the media as Aum did.[1] Watanabe asserts that it is "obvious that [Aum] was quite conscious of the mass media, and tried to use the media for its own ends."[2] Aum used the media in ways quite different from those used by other new religions. In the past most had used the mass media to reduce tensions between themselves and the general populace and to attempt to assimilate their group's beliefs and practices into Japanese society.[3] Aum's leadership, however, used the media to answer detractors, compete with other new religious movements, and justify their actions.

Asahara Shōkō was very aware of his own media image and, early in the development of Aum, used the media to attract new members and improve his credibility. In 1985 when Aum Shinsen no Kai had fewer than 20 members, Asahara solicited coverage from several magazines, which then reported that his own version of training had resulted in his achieving a high mental consciousness and supernatural powers--including the ability to levitate.[4] Early coverage

of Asahara in these publications contributed significantly to the success of Aum's initial recruiting success.

Media coverage took a turn in 1989 when the first Aum victims group was formed and the *Daily Mainichi* published a series of articles about the group's practices. Aum's use of the media evolved in response to these developments: Asahara shifted to a more adversarial strategy. This was evident in Aum's intimidation of reporters in order to assure the publication of stories agreeable to Asahara and the leadership of Aum.[5] Aum was also adept at exploiting criticism and turning it into an opportunity for self-promotion. Its truculence toward the media during this period may have actually helped the group gain credibility with Japanese youth who saw Aum as an alternative to traditional culture as represented in the mainstream press.

In 1991 Aum successfully exploited a Japanese television show to gain support and positive coverage for the group. Aum spokesperson Fumihiro Joyu appeared with representatives from the Science of Human Happiness (Kōfuku no Kagaku) on a panel about youth and religion. Joyu was successful in making Aum appear credible to most viewers and Aum gained in status from the resulting media analysis of the appearance. Several studies on the coverage of Aum between 1991 and 1995 conclude that Aum improved its public

image, especially within academic circles. Asahara was often invited to speak at universities both in Japan and abroad during this time, and received favorable analysis from scholars, which was frequently repeated in the press. Aum's public image improved and helped the group deflect serious questions about its connection to several crimes in the early 1990s.[6]

After the deadly subway attack in 1995, continuous television coverage of Aum provided compelling images of massive raids of Aum centers that uncovered stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons as well as facilities to create an unlimited supply of these lethal substances. The bewilderment over why the members of a Japanese new religion would stockpile deadly weapons and then use them against their own country set in motion around-the-clock analysis and coverage in both print and broadcast media.

Almost a month after the Tokyo subway attack, Aum's second in command and its science and technology chief, Murai Hideo, was killed by a Korean-Japanese member of the Yamaguchi-gumi (山口組) (Japan's largest yakuza group). Jō Hiroyuki attacked Murai in front of Aum's Tokyo headquarters in the middle of the day, stabbing the Aum leader several times while he was surrounded by dozens of police officers and hundreds of media members broadcasting

the event live. For a week it seemed like the Murai attack could be seen at any time, day or night, on one of Japan's television networks. Needless to say, the Murai attack and the non-stop reporting further sensationalized Aum. Instead of providing in-depth analysis of the group and the factors that led to its terrorist attacks and other crimes, the media fed the interest and incredulity of its consumers by simply replaying images of raids of Aum centers, scenes of the aftermath of the Tokyo attacks, and the assassination of Murai. Helen Hardacre asserts, "Whoever orchestrated the assassination stole control of Aum coverage away from the TV networks, which were momentarily unable to stamp the event with their own interpretation. Instead (like the scene of Jack Ruby killing Lee Harvey Oswald) they simply played the tape of Murai's murder again and again."[7] The audience for Aum coverage was unprecedented and the appetite for information on Aum seemed insatiable. Hardacre argues, "The media have since been self-critical of their sensationalism, and also for having allowed themselves to be used by Aum."[8]

Despite the problematic aspects of the Aum coverage (that only became clear in retrospect), members of the media were eager to report similar stories that would provide them with the potential for such a large and stable

audience. They increased their coverage and investigations of new religious movements, as if searching for the next new religion with a propensity for violence. Many members of the media openly questioned where or when the next Aum would arise.

More than seven years after the apex of the Aum affair, Japan once again underwent complete media saturation about a new religion when for several weeks in the spring of 2003 Panawave Laboratory became the object of the media's relentless attention and was in fact characterized as Japan's next Aum Shinrikyō.

Panawave Laboratory was the scientific or research arm of a small religious movement called Chino Shōhō (千野証法) or Chino True Law). Panawave shared a pattern of growth and other characteristics with dozens of new religious movements in Japan. Chino Yūko 千野裕子 founded Chino Shōhō in 1977 after joining and studying several new religions, including GLA or God Light Association; several of Chino's later teachings drew heavily on what she had learned while a member of GLA.[9] Chino Shōhō, an eclectic combination of Buddhism, folk religion, and new age practices, was an extremely secretive group. They operated small centers across Japan governed by a modest headquarters in rural Fukui prefecture. In the mid-1990s, Chino Shōhō created a

scientific arm called Panawave Laboratory. This group, Panawave, focused on researching scalar electromagnetic waves.[10] Chino's teachings and messages had warned of the harmful effect of these waves on personal health and the future of the planet.[11] Unlike Aum, Panawave Laboratory did not attract promising scientific minds and by 2003, Panawave was simply a group of thirty to forty individuals who attempted to avoid electromagnetic waves by traveling to mountainous areas of rural Japan. The group moved out of eyesight of power lines, and blocked electromagnetic waves with white fabric or paper, and/or reflected the waves with large mirrors. In the months and years leading up to 2003, Panawave seemed to become the center of Chino Shōhō; understanding and controlling electromagnetic waves were increasingly viewed as critical to the survival of the group's founder and, according to her, the planet. Chino Yūko began to predict that electromagnetic waves could control forces on earth and influence a series of catastrophes including hurricanes, earthquakes, and tidal waves. The catastrophes would culminate in the reversal of the earth's magnetic poles and a complete apocalypse.

It was the illness of their leader that led the small number of followers to travel to remote mountain areas in Japan in fifteen to twenty vans. The health of Chino had

failed; the group reported that she had contracted cancer and that avoidance of electromagnetic waves was the only remedy for her ailments. They would seek places that would completely separate them from electrical lines, cell phone towers, or any other source of electromagnetic waves. Possible wave pollution or influence, they assumed, could be blocked by surrounding their caravan with white sheets and mirrors. In October 2002, the group took the extreme measure of traveling to a stretch of rural mountain road that had been closed and remained there for the duration of winter.[12]

Until the end of the mountain retreat in April 2003, despite their unusual activities, Panawave Laboratory received very little, if any, attention from community groups, the government, or the media. The group was not registered as a religious corporation with the Ministry of Education or the Fukui prefectural government and essentially operated below the radar of national attention despite the increasingly apocalyptic messages published by the group.

Panawave's anonymity ended with a story published by the weekly news magazine Shūkan Bunshun in late April of 2003.[13] The focus of the story was not the group's attempts to save their founder by blocking off wave pollution with

white sheets. Instead, the magazine devoted its coverage to Chino Shōhō's interest in an animal that had recently gained media attention: an arctic seal. In the fall of 2002, an arctic seal had turned unexplainably off course and ended up stuck in Tokyo's Tama River. The seal immediately became a media darling. As Shūkan Bunshun prepared one of dozens of stories about the lost arctic seal, who was named *Tama-chan* (*Little Miss Tama*) after the river where she had first been discovered. Its writers started to look into a group that had been set up to help the seal, called *Tama-chan no koto o omou-kai* 多摩ちゃんのことを思う会 (Association of persons concerned about Tama-chan). They contacted one of the group's members, Moriya Eitarō, who had become a spokesperson for the Tama-chan association. Reporters made the connection between the Tama-chan group and Panawave through their discussions with Moriya. This led to the discovery of several very odd looking buildings that Moriya owned in the rural village of Oizumi in Gunma prefecture. The octagonally shaped domes were described in the media as "specially reinforced, Buckminster-Fuller-style geodesic domes."[14] Panawave apparently wanted to take the seal from the Tama River and place her in a specially created pool in one of the Oizumi domes. The domes had a capacity of 1,200 people each and

Panawave believed the structures to be catastrophe-proof, meaning that they would protect the membership and the seal from natural disasters that the group believed were imminent. Eventually, when the disasters had passed, the group would return the seal to its natural habitat. Panawave believed that saving both their leader and the seal were essential elements in a series of events that could prevent the complete destruction of the planet on May 15, 2003.

Shūkan Bunshun made several efforts to link Panawave with Aum Shinrikyō. They called the Oizumi buildings *satyam,* a word Aum had used to describe the buildings in their compounds in which chemical and biological weapons were produced.[15]

Shūkan Bunshun's reporting commenced the spread of media attention to Panawave and over the next several weeks the magazine's coverage was consistently the most critical. Not only did it report on the actions of the group, but on the personal past of the leader, Chino Yūko, as well. However, the Shūkan Bunshun articles were significant in launching a media frenzy over Panawave more because of its timing than its content. Tama-chan had just become a national news event in April of 2003. While the lost seal was first spotted in the fall of 2002, media attention

intensified during the spring of 2003 because of a consensus among zoological experts in Japan that the seal could not survive the summer in the rivers of Tokyo. At the same time, in April of 2003 the trial of Aum's founder Asahara Shōkō finally came to a close with the prosecution requesting the death penalty. This event brought Aum back into the limelight just as Panawave was attracting attention.

Panawave was drawn into high-profile stories in part because of the easy correlations that could be drawn between Panawave and Aum in its early days. Japan's print and broadcast media devoted several times more resources to Panawave than the facts of the story would ordinarily have warranted. The members of an obscure rural group that hardly caught the attention of their closest neighbors had become potential kidnappers of Tama-chan and the second incarnation of Aum!

While Shūkan Bunshun and other media reports depicted Panawave's interest in Tama-chan as nefarious and beyond eccentric, the facts seem to show that Panawave's actions were purely altruistic. Panawave adherents did believe that electromagnetic waves were the cause of the seal becoming confused and leaving its natural habitat. However, the group's members' intentions seemed to be simply to help the

seal return home. They even contracted a marine rescue team from the United States called "Marine Animals Lifeline" to help safely rescue the seal. Many Japanese in fact also believed the group was trying genuinely to help Tama-chan. One newspaper reported that seventeen-year-old Mika Fujimoto took a day off work and drove ninety minutes to get a glimpse of the group's caravan. She said she was supportive of the group only because the members were trying to help Tama-chan. She concluded that "I don't know about the end of the world stuff, but at least on Tama-chan we can agree."[16]

Not only had Tama-chan become a celebrity in Japan, she had also become big business. Souvenir and food stands grew on the riverbanks where Tama-chan could be seen, national news had daily updates on the seal's location, and the City of Yokohama conferred legal resident status on the seal.[17] In this climate of monetary interest in the seal any group that would attempt to remove her--for whatever purpose could be viewed negatively.

A group opposed to Panawave's Tama-chan group arose called *Tama-chan o Mimamoru-kai* 多摩ちゃんを見守る会 (Association for watching over Tama-chan). This group consisted of self-proclaimed fans of Tama-chan, although many of them undoubtedly had a financial stake in the

continuation of Tama-chan sightings, that brought hundreds of tourists who would buy seal souvenirs and dine in food stables set up along the river. The two Tama-chan groups apparently competed with each other: their members would often exchange barbs in the press. The *Tama-chan o Mimamoru-kai* publicly accused Panawave and its Tama-chan group of having similarities to Aum Shinrikyō.[18]

While the Tama-chan incident had mixed results for the public image of Panawave, the report that Panawave's caravan went to unusual lengths to avoid scalar electromagnetic waves created nothing but problems for the group. The Shūkan Bunshun investigations of Panawave's activities, the media frenzy over Tama-chan, and the prosecution of Asahara coincided in 2003 with "Golden Week," a major holiday period in late April and early May when millions of Japanese travel out of the cities to enjoy rural Japan or international destinations.[19] While Panawave's caravan had been blocking part of a rural highway for several months in Fukui prefecture, its presence did not create an undue nuisance until Golden Week when the road became congested with people traveling in the countryside.

Intense coverage was given to the several vans covered in white paper and surrounded in white sheets parked on the

highway. The members of Panawave were also dressed completely in white. Several hundred members of the print and broadcast media traveled to Fukui to cover the group and seek an interview with their leader. Soon the forty or so members of the Panawave caravan were out-numbered at least ten to one by the media, police, and curious onlookers.

The scene presented the media with an astounding story and opportunity. As mentioned before, Panawave had already been linked to one of the most newsworthy events of the year, the lost Tama-chan, and the spectacular images from Fukui seemed to build on the momentum. Unlike Aum, this group had no media savvy and its members were reluctant to make statements to the press. This allowed the media several days to shape the story the way they wanted. It became readily apparent that the press wanted to create a new narrative about the second coming of Aum.[20]

Almost all coverage of Panawave in the last week in April and the first week in May made some connection to Aum. Some reports would simply combine a report on Panawave with an update on the trial of Asahara Shōkō. Most reports fashioned characteristic comparisons between Aum and Panawave. The most obvious and common comparison was the wearing of white robes. This point was made so often that

most Japanese newspapers referred to the group as *Shiroshōzoku Shūdan* or *Karuto* 白装束集団 or カルト (The White Robed Group or Cult). Many newspapers also pointed out the emphasis on the apocalypse that was found in both Asahara's and Chino's writings and concluded that this was a sign of a similar potential for violence.[21] In short, the press tended to list the similarities between Panawave and Aum as a preface to asking such leading questions as "Could this be the next Aum"? Or "How long before this group turns violent?"[22]

The National Police Force (NPA) contributed to the media's campaign to connect Panawave and Aum. The NPA, still smarting from the severe criticism it had received for not realizing the violent potential of Aum and for being slow to investigate Aum's crimes, sent officers to Fukui as soon as Panawave gained national attention. On May 1st, the NPA chief Hidehiko Sato remarked that Panawave looked strange, showed disregard for Japan's laws, and "resembled Aum in its early days." He gave no specifics to back up this comparison to Aum, but made assurances that the NPA would completely investigate the activities and teachings of Panawave and would not tolerate or overlook any violation of the law.[23] These statements and the actions of the NPA provided corroboration, though not evidence, for

the media's assumptions that Panawave was akin to Aum and that violence from the group was therefore possible, even probable. The statements of Chief Sato were repeated numerous times in broadcast and print. Every action the NPA took against Panawave was reported by the press as the first investigation, clash, raid, etc. of a new religious movement by the NPA since Aum Shinrikyō.[24]

The media also effectively constructed links between Panawave and Aum by publicizing commentary from the same experts and journalists that had come to prominence during the intense media coverage of Aum in 1995. Shimada Hiromi (whose support of Aum was discussed in chapter three) claimed that the comparisons between Panawave and Aum were inevitable and once the connections were made by the media, community leaders and the NPA had to take every precaution to assure the populace that the group posed no threat. However, he concluded that the turmoil surrounding Panawave was mostly due to the comparison with Aum and not its actual potential for violence. Shimada's carefully detached stance toward Panawave can only be understood within the context of the history of his own relationship with Aum. He seemed to want to argue that Panawave was being unnecessarily targeted and investigated, but did not want to be seen as being a supporter of the group.[25]

Takimoto Tarō is another media figure and "Aum expert" who expressed his views often about Panawave. Since 1995, Takimoto had been busy lobbying for the interests of former members of new religions including Aum, Hōno-hana Sanpōgyō, and the Unification Church. Takimoto now appeared repeatedly on television and was interviewed for dozens of print articles. He claimed that the writings of Chino Yūko contained apocalyptic predictions of the destruction of all of mankind. He stated, "What [Chino's writings] say is dangerous, and we have to keep a close watch on [Panawave] even though it is not powerful enough yet to cause a disaster.[26] Takimoto reinforced the connections between Panawave and Aum made by the media and the NPA by arguing that similarities between the writings of the two groups indicated that Panawave had the potential for violence.

The other Aum media star, Egawa Shōko, took a different stance on the potential of Panawave. Egawa criticized the haphazard conclusions the media made about Panawave before preliminary investigations of the group had been completed. She argued that it had not been the external appearance of Aum that made it dangerous, but the things that were hidden from view. The potential for violence of Panawave could not be understood from its members' appearance or on the basis of teachings that

seemed similar to those of Aum. She argued that the Aum offshoot group Aleph had a much greater potential for violence than Panawave and was much more deserving of the attention of the media and police.[27]

By looking at each of their relationships with new religions in the post-Aum era, we can understand the difference in the positions taken by Takimoto and Egawa. Both were seen as critics of Aum. However, since 1995 Takimoto had worked as a lawyer for religious victim groups. Like the media, Takimoto would benefit from identifying new religions that had a potential for violence or for becoming liabilities to local communities and former members. Egawa on the other hand, had continued to work as a journalist but had not tied herself to the anti-cult movement in the way that Takimoto had. She had covered the trial of Asahara, but did not report on Panawave or report on any other new religions. By 2003, Egawa was investigating the plight of children and other civilians in Iraq. She had almost no connection to the anti-cult movement or the media frenzy surrounding the new religions. She apparently approached the Panawave story with no assumptions and did not stand to gain personally for her coverage. Depictions of Panawave as potentially dangerous and similar to Aum had more to do with the motivations and

aims of individual reporters and media experts than with a careful analysis or adequate understanding of the group.

Treatment of Panawave by community leaders was also affected by the media attention. After the press and television started emphasizing Panawave's similarities to Aum, it was impossible for the group, though it had existed peacefully with its neighbors for years, to find a community that was willing even temporarily to accept the presence of its members' caravan. The NPA told the Panawave caravan drivers that they could not remain on the highway in Fukui. They moved on May 1st to a small road in Gifu prefecture. Two mayors close to the caravan's new location opposed the group's presence in their municipalities claiming it would create a nuisance for local residents.[28] At this point, the nuisance included the hundreds of reports and government officials that were following the caravan. For several days the caravan moved from one place to the another, and at each stop local authorities refused to allow the group to stay in their communities. It appears from their statements that community leaders were responding to the media representations of Panawave rather than rejecting the group for any actual illegal activities or problems caused by its members.

Some newspapers did report that Panawave had maintained a good relationship with its neighbors before the beginning of the sensationalistic press campaign. The United Kingdom newspaper, *The Independent*, interviewed some of the former neighbors of Panawave, and reported that:

> despite the looming doomsday, however, Fukui residents report nothing odd from their years living next-door to their kooky neighbors, unlike the locals around Aum facilities, some of whom were gassed in Sarin leaks. 'They look weird, but they never did anything to me,' says 70-year-old Miyoko Miyashita, as she bundles up vegetables on her allotment near the Panawave camp. 'They seem to go away for long periods, then come back. To be honest, I hardly even noticed them any more until you media people came round.' The president of the local neighborhood association, Kiyoshi Maeda, is equally laid back. 'They need watching but essentially they're not dangerous,' he says. 'The only things I'm worried about are their numbers increasing and their cars blocking the traffic. They have to get permission from us now to move, but they're mostly co-operative.'[29]

After Panawave's doomsday date of May 15th passed, the media attention died down almost as quickly as it started. However, *Shūkan Bunshun* continued to investigate Panawave, and the NPA continued their surveillance. The NPA and local authorities frequently charged Panawave with minor violations of car registration rules. The group was also accused of harsh treatment of its members. Authorities claimed that Panawave's version of austerity was actually abuse that contributed to the death of some of the group's members.[30] However, Panawave has never tried to fulfill its predictions of catastrophe through acts of violence.

In an interesting footnote to the Panawave story, the reporting of the *Shūkan Bunshun* in 2003 included the extraordinary assertions that Chino Yūko was a streaker and that the group was responsible for the collapse of the Shikoku Railway in February 1998. Panawave sued the weekly magazine for defamation and ended up winning the case. However, the decision became something of an embarrassment to the group for the court found that their leader had in fact been a streaker in her early life, but that the allegations of Panawave's connection to the collapse of the Shikoku Railway were baseless. *Shūkan Bunshun* was required to pay the group two million yen (approximately 20,000 U.S. dollars).[31] Panawave's successful suit against *Shūkan Bunshun* shows two things; first, Japanese new religions recognize the necessity of responding to media coverage they perceived as unfair by defending themselves in the media or in court; and second, there are limits to what the media can suggest about Japanese new religions even in the post-Aum era.

However, the damages awarded in defamation or libel suits are insignificant when compared to the revenues these media companies make from their critical coverage of new religious movements. In order to effectively counter abuses by the press, the government would have to increase the

penalties imposed on newspapers in civil cases of libel.

Almost no academic studies of Panawave has been carried out by Western scholars. An article on the group by Benjamin Dorman concludes that the media frenzy was simply part of a "moral panic" that arose organically from several factors in the teachings and activities of Panawave.[32] I believe a better explanation of the response to Panawave comes from a close examination of the interests and economic forces that propel the media. Panawave provided the press and broadcast media with a continuing story that could hold the attention of viewers and readers. The Aum events of 1995 had shown the media that the activities of new religions could provide some of the most compelling, profitable stories they could generate. Ever since the Aum affair, the media have been looking for stories with a comparable capacity for attracting large audiences and readerships. The attention of the media, as we have seen, can precipitate undue public concern by influencing local and police authorities as well as anti-cult groups.

Adverse reactions to new religions by community groups can be inspired by media coverage, and the media benefits in turn from these adverse reactions; we can see a circular support system for the perpetuation of negative stories and actions against these groups. The attention of the media

has had a demonstrable effect on new religious movements in Japan, contributing to the contraction of their operational space and the restriction of the religious freedom they might have enjoyed. While the beliefs and practices of Panawave were odd and eclectic and thus elicited adverse reactions, it was the superficial comparisons to Aum that damaged the group's standing most effectively.

The post-Aum context in which all new religions find themselves in Japan requires a new diligence on the part of the Japanese media, government, and citizens to ensure that these groups will be able to conduct their legitimate activities without undue restriction or harassment.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS:

CURBING VIOLENCE AND PRESERVING RELIGIOUS OPERATIONAL SPACE

The intensity and breadth of the anti-Aum sentiment in the government, the media, and the general populace is illustrated by the case studies in earlier chapters of this study. These case studies demonstrate the growing effort in Japan to exercise control over new religious movements in general. They also reveal how various interest groups have exploited the public fear of these movements. For example, it has been shown that in the summer of 1995, the LDP-dominated government used the anti-Aum campaign to advance its positions with respect to Sōka Gakkai and its affiliated party Kōmeitō. The Liberal Democratic Party succeeded in couching its own aims in anti-Aum rhetoric, forcing Sōka Gakkai to oppose changes to the Religious Corporation Law and thus appear to be soft on domestic terrorism.

The anti-cult movement and the related prosecution of Hōno-hana Sanpōgyō is another instance of the restriction of operational space for new religious movements precipitated by the anti-Aum sentiment. Several years after the Tokyo subway attack, anti-cult movements led an investigation into the programs and actions of Hōno-hana

Sanpōgyō, which lead to prosecution of the group for bribery and fraud. The resulting court proceedings of Hōno-Hana, based on accusations by previous members of the group, led to the eventual imprisonment of several leading members and the virtual dissolution of the entire group. Anti-Aum sentiment provided community and legal groups with the legitimacy, influence and clout to do what would not have been possible before Aum. This study has shown that in the wake of Aum, other new religious movements have been constrained to settle expensive claims brought by former members who were encouraged and supported by anti-cult movements. The Unification Church, for example, settled a case brought by a former member who was represented by a legal group created with the sole purpose of opposing the church's organization in Japan. This legal group had existed long before the Tokyo subway attack, but its size and influence greatly increased after 1995. The new animosity toward new religious movements empowered the legal group to pressure the Unification Church by threatening to challenge its religious corporation status.

The ability of anti-cult groups to influence the courts and government, including by encouraging investigations into the legal status of new religious

movements and organizing boycotts, increased significantly as a result of the continuing anti-Aum sentiment.

The media's treatment of new religious movements also changed after the Aum incident. The experiences of Panawave Laboratory clearly demonstrate that members of the media were actively looking for the next Aum even eight years after the Tokyo subway attack. Major print and broadcast news sources leveraged the power of anti-Aum sentiment to increase their viewership and readership.

I have recounted how the media purposefully exploited the lingering fears of new religions in their coverage of Panawave, spurring investigations by the national police force and action by local government leaders. The slant of the media's coverage changed the public image of Panawave. This religious group had lived peacefully with its neighbors for years and yet the media coverage led to a situation in which members of the group were unable to relocate several times in 2003: Panawave had been deemed the next Aum.

I have critically examined the common view that Aum violence was motivated by certain religious beliefs. Many asserted that Aum's monastic practice, which required members to leave home and reject the world, as well as its belief in Armageddon or an apocalypse, were driving forces

behind the group's eventual violence. However, a closer look at Aum's attacks shows that the violence is better understood as a strategy for organizational self-preservation. Surprisingly, but in keeping with Asahara's expectations, and only until the subway attack, violence succeeded in temporarily silencing criticism of the group and removing obstacles to its organizational development. I have argued that Asahara's biography reveals a person more concerned with seeking his own success than advancing any religious belief or tenet.

Although the use of violence by Aum was unrelated to its religious teachings, the power of anti-Aum sentiment lent credibility to the assumption that its religious beliefs explained its violence. In other words, it was easier to assume that this group's horrific actions were primarily caused by some anomalous, deeply held, evil belief system-rather than by circumstances, social or economic, that might be common in Japan. This thinking, in turn led to accusations that certain new religious movements had a tendency and even likelihood for violence because they espoused certain beliefs or practices, such as millennialism, asceticism, world rejection, or support of a powerful leader. The anti-Aum sentiment called for the

elimination of Aum from Japan and any group that appeared to adhere to similar ideas.

New religious movements have been especially affected by the reactions to Aum's crimes. However, no demographic or institution has been immune to the consequences of Aum's violence. Even constitutional principles or legal rules that may have seemed absolute have been unable to stand up to the passionate anti-Aum sentiment that is still evident in Japan today. Among the best examples of the effects of continuing anti-Aum sentiment are the difficulties experienced by the children of Aum leader Asahara in trying to gain entrance to college. It became national news in 2004, when Wako University declined enrollment to Matsumoto Rika, whose scores on national entrance exams would normally have assured her acceptance. Rika ultimately resorted to the courts to challenge the university's rejection.

While the pressures and unyielding standards of Japan's college entrance exams may have several flaws, the system *is* universally meritocratic. In the process for gaining access to Japan's most prestigious universities, all men and women are ostensibly on an equal footing. Even the Prime Minister's son stands on common ground with children from rural or poor families.

Rika's exam scores had already been accepted and she was enrolled at Wako University when university officials and the media discovered she was, in fact, the daughter of Chizuo Matsumoto, better known as Asahara Shōkō, the founder of Aum Shinrikyō. It is not surprising that the school did not immediately recognize her name on the application. She was only ten in 1995, when Aum members perpetrated the Tokyo subway attack. Her name and image had rarely appeared in the media, broadcast or print.

While her relationship to the guru Asahara may not have been readily apparent, it was not insignificant. Asahara had often claimed that his daughter was chosen to be the next guru of Aum and she would help Aum return to a position of power and importance. She had occasionally appeared next to Aum spokesmen at press conferences.[1] Because Aum was widely identified with acts of terror, Asahara's daughter was feared by most Japanese.

"Because of who the young woman is," stated Wako University in a public statement, "her presence might deprive other students of the opportunity to study in a calm environment."[2] Mihashi Osamu, dean of the school, predicted and accepted the fact that the school's decision would provoke criticism, but nevertheless they sent a

letter to Rika explaining that she could not be accepted due to various circumstances.

Wako University dismissed later claims that Rika had been rejected because of who she was or who her parents were, which would constitute a violation of the school's long-held norm of equality of educational opportunity. Instead, the school responded that they had rejected Rika for her ties to Aum Shinrikyō. It must have seemed to Wako that it was better for public relations to say Matsumoto Rika was rejected, not because of her paternity, but because of her religious affiliation, given that the religion was Aum. It is doubtful that, before the Aum incident, rejection of a student for her religious affiliation would be considered any less a violation of equality of educational opportunity than rejection because of paternity.

Most Japanese take pride in the fairness of their educational system and would probably have a negative view of the rejection of a hypothetical student from a university after he or she had passed the entrance exam. However, when it comes to a child of Asahara, views and attitudes change. The Rika incident is further evidence that no tradition, institution, or convention in Japan is immune from the influence of anti-Aum forces.

While Rika was eventually accepted by another Tokyo University with the help of a legal injunction, Wako University Administration upheld Rika's rejection and paid a 300,000 yen (approximately 3,000 U.S. dollars) fine to maintain their decision to prevent her from enrolling at their university.

Asahara's other children have had similar problems finding schools to accept them. In 2006, Asahara's son was rejected from a junior high prep school when the identity of his father was discovered, even though the boy was only two years old in 1995 and probably had only communicated with his father through lawyers. He sued and received a settlement, but the junior high, like Wako University, also decided to pay a fine rather than admit the son of Asahara Shōkō as a student, even a decade after the Tokyo subway attack.[3]

These examples show the extent, in both intensity and scope, of Aum's impact on Japanese society. The group's terrorism fundamentally changed the position of new religions within Japanese society. This change or paradigm shift clearly resulted in a contraction of operational space for Japan's new religions. The question that arises from the examples we have seen is whether this contraction

has created necessary oversight of new religions or undue scrutiny.

Necessary Oversight of Religion

We have seen that since the end of World War II there has been a climate in Japan where religions have been practically immune from oversight by law enforcement agencies both local and federal. During the U.S. occupation, the bar for creating a religious organization was made intentionally low in order to counter the institutional power that so-called "State Shinto" enjoyed during the first half of the twentieth century. In the Occupation's zeal to remove the imperial regime's power to dictate religious beliefs and practices, a religious environment was created that could be manipulated by individuals or groups with less than constructive aims. Fortunately, most religious leaders seek for the betterment of their members and the improvement of society. However, Asahara's unique qualities and the opportunities that an open and unchecked religious climate provided him became a recipe for disaster.

Even though Japanese law enforcement agencies were caught by surprise by the Tokyo subway attack, they will probably never be surprised in the same way again. In the wake of the Tokyo subway attack, local and national police

have taken a more critical view of religious organizations and will more easily launch serious investigations of any report of wrong doing by members of new religious movements. This change in posture by law enforcement agencies cannot help but affect operational space and religious freedom. But, if the alternative is groups like Aum having the opportunity to perpetrate terrorism, should we conclude that this contraction is necessary and perhaps even beneficial?

Comparisons to other pluralistic countries that value religious freedom do not show the kind of hesitation to investigate religious movements that was common in Japan before the crimes of Aum. There are examples in the United States where the police and other government agencies have investigated and taken swift, and sometimes extreme, action against religious organizations considered to be violent or that may have the potential for violence.

The most well known investigation of a new religious movement in the United States is the 1993 pursuit of the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas by the federal government's Division of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). The ATF's investigation led to a failed raid of the group's Mount Carmel property followed by a 51-day standoff and eventual siege by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which

resulted in the death of all the Branch Davidian Members who remained at the Mount Carmel center and the razing of their buildings.[4]

Despite the tragic results of the government's confrontation with the Branch Davidians, the incident shows that investigative agencies in the United States are not reluctant to focus on new religious movements when they suspect a group may be involved in criminal activity or possess the potential for violence. The Waco incident is surely the best-known government investigation into a new religious movement, but it is hardly a unique example of either federal or local authorities investigating a new religious movement based on a perceived potential for violence.

In the 1970s, a new religious movement came under the suspicion of the police in Philadelphia. MOVE was founded by Vincent Leaphart (also known as John Africa) and Donald Glassey in 1972. The group was comprised of young, mostly black, members who took on the surname Africa and lived a communal lifestyle. They supported environmental awareness and preached against the use of technology.[5] Their rhetoric was often radical and threatening. The group's denunciation of the government and its authority along with their stockpiling of weapons drew the attention of Philadelphia

mayor Frank Rizzo. The Philadelphia police made several attempts to search a house owned by the group in West Philadelphia, leading to a fourteen-month standoff between the police and MOVE in 1978.

After over a year of the police blockade of the house, which was occupied by several MOVE members, a compromise was reached that would require them to relocate. When MOVE members refused to leave, the police attempted to enter the house on August 8, 1978, resulting in an exchange of gunfire that left one police officer dead and several others injured. Nine MOVE members were later convicted of third-degree murder.[6]

The group continued to be closely investigated and monitored by the Philadelphia police and federal authorities for years to come. In 1985, during another standoff, the Philadelphia police dropped a tear gas bomb on a MOVE row house that resulted in a fire that eventually consumed an entire city block and killed John Africa and ten of his followers. The subsequent investigative commission and civil courts concluded that the police department was not justified in using these tactics and level of force on an occupied row house.[7]

Many in Philadelphia and around the country also disagreed with the city's action against the group, seeing

it as a violation of the group's rights. The mayor and other authorities were unmovable in their stance that, despite the religious motivations of the group, the actions of its members constituted violations of the law.

In 1989, another small religious group's turn to violence had in fact been preceded by surveillance by local and federal authorities. On April 17, 1989 Jeffrey Don Lundgren turned on five members of his small splinter group of the Reorganized Latter-Day Saint Church (RLDS). Lundgren had convinced his followers that all five members of Dennis Avery's family had to be killed as a ritual of Blood Atonement, roughly similar in rationale to Asahara's purification killings, so that the Avery family could gain full forgiveness from their sins.[8]

Federal and local agents raided the group's rented compound just one day after the murder and hasty burial of the Avery family, in order to search the compound and question members. Authorities had no knowledge of the act of internal violence perpetrated the day before. But, because of reports that the group had been stockpiling weapons in order to take over the RLDS temple that was close to their compound in Kirtland, Ohio, law enforcement officials had been watching the group.[9]

Unfortunately, the police search was insufficient and did not turn up any evidence of the murders, but the police raid was enough to send the group into hiding, preventing the arrest of its members until January of 1990.

All three of these examples of apparently violent new religious movements show that there is a baseline for the conduct of religious groups in the United States. No extra leeway or benefit of the doubt is given to religious movements when it is rumored or alleged that they have either planned, or have the potential for, violent acts. Both local and federal agencies have consistently come down on the side of safety even at the risk of violating a group's right to freedom of religion.

Some may argue that this represents a violation of the constitutional principle of freedom of religion, others would respond that a firm rule of law for new religious movements or any other group actually preserves the rights of the vast majority of groups that do not pursue plans or acquire tools to carry out violence.

The courts have concluded that the raid on the MOVE house in 1985 was overreaching and inappropriate. However, in the case of the Lundgren group, the authorities' prompt investigation of the group almost certainly prevented further blood atonement killings. Regardless of the

possible abuses of government power, new religious movements are given no preferential treatment by government agencies and this ensures that the operational space for new religious movements is both consistent and adequate. As a result, the United States provides an environment in which a great variety of religious institutions and movements generally are free to conduct their own activities as well as the various economic enterprises that support their organizations.

In post-Aum Japan, oversight of religion has clearly increased and improved. First and foremost the surveillance of Aum itself has improved. Japan's local and national police have diligently investigated Aum. Although there has been significant support for completely disbanding the group, the Japanese government has not taken that step. However, law enforcement agencies closely scrutinize how the group operates, raises and spends capital, and any other activity that could increase the group's capacity for violence.

We have seen in the previous chapters that Sōka Gakkai, Hōno-hana Sanpoōgyō and Panawave Laboratory have also been targets of interest for law enforcement and investigative agencies in Japan. Interest in Sōka Gakkai arose from questions over its early failure to register on

a national level as a religious corporation, allegedly for political advantage. Interest in Hōno-hana came from the great number of claims of fraud by legal groups and ex-members. Interest in Panawave derived from concerns over members' apocryphal beliefs and acts of public nuisance. Only the investigation of Hōno-hana resulted in criminal convictions and none of these investigations resulted in the kind of violent altercations between the new religious movements and the police that occurred between the U.S. government and MOVE or the Branch Davidians. The oversight of Sōka Gakkai is probably best explained as opportunism on the part of its political foes and the oversight of Panawave had more to do with "moral panic" caused by slanted media coverage than with any real threat of violence from the group.

It would be hard to argue that there continues to be insufficient oversight of new religious movements since the crimes of Aum. It would have been much better for Japan's new religions if Aum's stockpiling of weapons had triggered the suspicions of local or federal authorities leading to an investigation of the group's violations of Japan's weapons laws well in advance of their terrorist acts. In any event, the change in posture of law enforcement agencies since 1995 has ensured that new religious

movements receive appropriate oversight, thus preserving an operational space that is both consistent and adequate for Japanese religions as a whole and at the same time assuring the public that these groups pose no threat of violence.

Undue Scrutiny of Religion

The examples in the previous chapters also provide ample evidence of undue scrutiny of new religions. The anti-Aum sentiment in Japan that continues to this day has been exploited by certain sectors of Japanese society. Chapter three explained how the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) used the outcry over Aum to gain support for tougher laws against new religious movements. However the real aim of their action was to restrain the political influence of their then political foe, Sōka Gakkai, and its affiliated political party Kōmeitō. Sōka Gakkai was eventually able to curb the effectiveness of the LDP's political opportunism but in the final analysis the resulting changes to the Religious Corporation Law had more to do with politics than assuring proper oversight of religions that might become violent.

Chapter four illustrated how the increasing influence and legitimacy of anti-cult groups has resulted in the proliferation civil suits against new religious movements by former members. Religious organizations should comply

with all laws that govern the operations of other social or economic organizations in Japan. However, Japanese religions are not seen as positive influences on Japanese society and lawsuits filed against them have become more common and more successful. In the case of the Unification Church, lawsuits were evidently settled in order to prevent government audits or investigations into the group's operations. Societies that value freedom of religion must be cautious of the ability of ex-members to extract damages from new religious movements. Such civil action can prevent new religious movements from operating freely and openly and may therefore not validate the supposed justice such civil suits may provide.

Finally, chapter five illustrates that coverage of Aum after the Tokyo subway attack was a significant opportunity for the media. The popularity and draw of Aum coverage made the "more credible news" (major daily newspapers and broadcast news) possibly more interesting, as reporters were able to follow the mesmerizing events of the subway attack, the search for missing Aum members, and the daylight murder of Murai Hideo. Aum coverage also made the "more independent news" (Weekly news magazines and freelance investigative journalists) possibly more credible because these sources had conducted the earliest reports on

Aum and thus became the new “experts” on new religious movements in Japan. It is not surprising that a story that led to increased readership and ratings would motivate the media to extend Aum coverage as long as possible and also to look for other new religious movements with the same potential to fascinate the populace and improve journalists’ value or significance in Japanese society. The actions of Panawave Laboratory seemed to provide that kind of opportunity.

The media focus on Panawave in 2003 might have resulted in a reasonable level of oversight. But the media’s overzealous attempts to find the ‘Next Aum’ and mesmerize Japan with evidence of another “doomsday cult” was not consistent with the true character of Panawave. The media’s coverage prompted unnecessary panic among the people and unwarranted criticism and trouble for a group that had maintained peace and harmony with its neighbors.

. . .

In sum, the paradigm shift ultimately resulted in more oversight of new religious movements in Japan. Changes had to be made to prevent another group like Aum (religious or otherwise) from evading government attention and manipulating media coverage so that it could perpetrate criminal acts, whether those be acts of violence, fraud or

simple community disputes. The initial reaction to the Tokyo subway attack by the media and law enforcement agencies was certainly sufficient to establish effective oversight. Religions are no longer “untouchable” in Japan.

However, the paradigm shift also resulted in undue scrutiny. Without diligent effort by the new religions of Japan to first show themselves a positive influence on their communities and Japanese society, undue scrutiny may prevent some of them from practicing their beliefs free from outside influence. New religions must also stand together to limit the effects of undue scrutiny on groups that are singled out for excessive investigation by the government or unwarranted criticism by anti-cult groups or the media. All too often this scrutiny has more to do with the advantages gained by the agents of the scrutiny than any real threat posed by the new religious movement.

Panawave’s victory over the media in civil court and the government’s refusal to apply the anti-subversion act (Habōhō) to Aum is proof that there are limits to the extent that the change in operational space has affected new religions. However, continual diligence may be required to make sure that the assumptions that certain religions have an intrinsic tendency toward violence does not prevent individuals from enjoying reasonable freedoms of religious

expression or organization, and that Japan remains a pluralistic society.

As tragic as the crimes of Aum were, Japan has the opportunity to use the lessons of Aum to improve their religious environment by setting a standard of lawfulness for all organizations, religious or otherwise. This will allow for the prosecution and possibly the prevention of violence while preserving religious freedoms.

NOTES

Chapter 1

1. Three Aum members accused of helping in the 1995 attack, Hirata Makoto 平田信, Takahashi Katsuya 高橋克也, and Kikuchi Naoko菊池直子, still commonly appear on wanted posters in Japan. Most cars on Tokyo's trains and subways post a sticker that states in part, "If you notice any suspicious unclaimed objects or persons, please inform the station staff." These notices are written in English and Japanese.

2. Ian Reader, "Consensus Shattered: Japanese Paradigm Shift and Moral Panic in the Post-Aum Era," *Nova Religio* 4, no. 2 (April 2001): 225.

3. Ibid.

4. H. Neill McFarland, *The Rush Hour of the Gods*: *A Study of New Religious Movements in Japan* (New York City: Macmillan, 1967); Harry Thomsen, *The New Religions of Japan* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1963).

5. See Trevor Astley, "New Religions," In *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions*. Edited by Paul L. Swanson and Clark Chilson (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005): 91-114.

6. Ibid., 93.

7. Ibid., 94.

8. McFarland, *The Rush Hour of the Gods*, 8.

9. Thomsen, *The New Religions of Japan*, 16.

10. McFarland, *Rush Hour of the Gods*, 71-87; Thomsen, *The New Religions of Japan*, 20-29.

11. Helen Hardacre, *Kurozumikyo and the New Religions of Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 7-25.

12. Astley, "New Religions," In *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions*, 94-96.

13. Mark Juergensmeyer, "Sacrifice and Cosmic War," *Violence and the Sacred World* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 111.

14. See René Girard, "Violence and Representation in Mythical Text," *Modern Language Notes* 92, no. 5 (1977): 922-44.

15. See David C. Rappaport, "Some General Observations on Religion and Violence", In *Violence and the Sacred in the Modern World*, Edited by Mark Juergensmeyer (London: Frank Cass, 1992) 118-40.

16. Brian K. Smith, "Monotheism and Its Discontents: Religious Violence and the Bible," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 66 (1998): 404.

17. William T. Cavanaugh, *Does Religion Cause Violence* (Perth: University of Western Australia, 29 May 2006).

18. Asgar Ali Engineer, "On Developing a Theology of Peace in Islam," *Secular Perspective* (October 1-15, 2001).

19. Ibid., 2.

20. Kawawata Yuiken, "Religious Organizations in Japanese Law," In *Religion in Japanese Culture: Where Living Traditions Meet a Changing World,* Edited by Noriyoshi Tamaru and David Reid (New York City: Kodansha, 1996), 201.

21. Ibid,, 202

22. Ibid., 204.

23. Sheldon Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 65.

24. See John F. Howes. *Japan's Modern Prophet: Uchimura Kanzō, 1861-1930* (Vancouver, BC: ABC Press, 2006).

25. Nakano Tsuyoshi. "Religion and State." In *Religion in Japanese Culture: Where Living Traditions Meet a Changing World*, Edited by Noriyoshi Tamaru and David Reid (New York City: Kodansha America, Inc., 1996), 130.

26. Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds*, 72-84.

27. Kawawata, "Religious Organizations in Japanese Law," In *Religion in Japanese Culture*, 204.

28. See Sawada, Janine Tasca. *Practical Pursuits: Religion, Politics, and Personal Cultivation in Nineteenth-Century Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004) p. 245-255 for an example of press coverage of Renmonkyo in the late nineteenth century.

29. Reader, "Consensus Shattered: Japanese Paradigm Shift and Moral Panic in the Post-Aum Era," *Nova Religio*, 227; see also Morioka Kiyomi, "Attacks on the New Religions: Risshō Kōseikai and the Yomiuri Affair", *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 21, no 2/3 (1994): 281-310.

30. Jonathan Hacker. *Zero Hour: Terror in Tokyo*. prod. and dir. Jonathan Hacker, 50 min., History Channel, 2004. videocassette.

31. Ian Reader, *A Poisonous Cocktail? Aum Shinrikyō's Path to Violence* (Copenhagen: NIAS Books, 1996); Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000).

32. Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō*, 2.

33. Ibid., 2-3.

34. Ibid., 25.

35. Sōka Gakkai or Value Creation Society is a very influential Japanese new religious movement founded in 1930 and based on the doctrines of Nichiren Buddhism.

36. Ibid., 226-227.

37. Ibid., 2-3.

38. Ibid., 69.

39. Ibid., 228-9.

40. Ibid.

41. Moriya Tomoe, review of *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan,* by Ian Reader in *Sociology of Religion* 63 (Winter 2002): 545-6.

42. Mark R. Mullins, review of *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan,* by Ian Reader in Japanese Jounral of Religious Studies 27 (Spring 2000): 118-20.

43. Susumu Shimazono, "In the Wake of Aum: The Formation and Transformation of a Universe of Belief," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 22, no. 3/4 (1995): 381-415.

44. Ibid., 382.

45. Ibid., 413.

Chapter 2

1. See Emily Groszos Ooms, *Women and Millenarian Protest in Meiji Japan: Deguchi Nao and Ōmotokyō* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell East Asia Series, 1993).

[2] Shimazono Susumu defines closed religions as "a group that, unable to exist in a relationship of fundamental trust with society at large, creates a closed community and tries to increase its influence by crossing swords with the outside world." While this does not ensure violence it does make assumptions about anti-social behavior more prevalent. See Susumu Shimazono, "In the Wake of Aum: The Formation and Transformation of a Universe of Belief," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 399.

3. Murakami Mutsuko, "The Cult at the End of the World, "*Asia Week* (21 December 1998).

4. D.W. Brackett, *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo* (New York City: Weatherhill, 1996), 59.

5. Ibid.

6. Acupuncture is commonly practiced by the blind in Japan. Moxibustion is a process of applying heat to acupuncture points in order to increase circulation.

7. Ibid., 60-1.

8. David E. Kaplan and Andrew Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World* (New York City: Crown Publishers, 1996), 8.

9. Brackett, *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo,* 60.

10. Kaplan and Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World*, 9.

11. Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō*, 41.

12. Ibid., 41-3.

13. Brackett, *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo,* 61.

14. See examples in Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō*, 44-5.

15. See Ibid., 42 for examples of Asahara's competition with even his closest followers and Ibid., 184 for Asahara's competition with other new religious movements like Kōfuku no Kagaku.

16. See Iain Walker and Heather J. Smith, *Relative Deprivation: Specification, Development, and Integration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) for contemporary analysis of relative deprivation.

[17] See Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō*, 45 for examples of Asahara's failures between 1977-1979.

18. Ibid., 231.

19. See Ooms, *Women and Millenarian Protest in Meiji Japan: Deguchi Nao and Ōmotokyō*.

20. Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō*, 58-9.

21. Kaplan and Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World*, 8-9.

22. Ibid., 9.

23. Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō*, 53.

24. Shimazono Susumu, "The Evolution of Aum Shinrikyō as a Religious Movement," In *Religion and Social Crisis in Japan*: *Understanding Japanese Society through the Aum Affair*, ed. Robert J. Kisala and Mark R. Mullins (New York City: Palgrave, 2001), 22. Asahara called religion a completely different direction he selected to overcome a sense of emptiness.

25. Asahara Shōkō, *Chōnōryoku: Himitsu no Kaihatsuhō* (Tokyo: Oumu Shuppan, 1993), 21.

26. Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō*, 146-47.

27. Shimazono, "The Evolution of Aum Shinrikyō as a Religious Movement," 21.

28 Asahara, *Chōnōryoku*, 24.

29. Shimazono Susumu, "In the Wake of Aum: The Formation and Transformation of a Universe of Belief," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 22, no. 3/4 (June 1995), 385-387.

30. Shimazono, "The Evolution of Aum Shinrikyō as a Religious Movement," 25.

31. See Asahara, Shōkō, *Mahayana Sutora* (Tokyo: Aum Shuppan, 1988) for specific Asahara teachings on salvation rites and this-worldly benefits.

32. Shimazono, "The Evolution of Aum Shinrikyō as a Religious Movement, 32

33. Shimazono, "In the Wake of Aum: The Formation and Transformation of a Universe of Belief," 395.

34. Ibid.

35. See Asahara Shōkō, *Metsubo kara koku e: Zoku Metsubo no hi* (Tokyo: Oumu Shuppan, 1989), 54.

36. Shimazono, "In the Wake of Aum: The Formation and Transformation of a Universe of Belief," 395.

37. See Asahara Shōkō, *Kirisuto sengen* (Tokyo: Oumu Shuppan, 1991)*;* Asahara Shōkō, *Nosutoradamusu himitsu no daiyogen* (Tokyo: Oumu Shuppan, 1991).

38. Shimazono, "In the Wake of Aum: The Formation and Transformation of a Universe of Belief," 401.

39. See Kaplan and Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World*, 73-81 for examples of confinement and torture of Aum members.

40. Shimazono, "In the Wake of Aum: The Formation and Transformation of a Universe of Belief," 406.

41. See Brackett, *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo,* 74-6.

42. See Shimazono, "In the Wake of Aum: The Formation and Transformation of a Universe of Belief," 406.

43. Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō,* 146.

44. See Brackett, *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo,* 74-6 for a detailed account of the attack on the Sakamoto family.

45. Shimazono, In the Wake of Aum: The Formation and Transformation of a Universe of Belief, 399.

46 See Brackett, *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo,* 27-44 for a detailed description of the Matsumoto attack.

47. See Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō,* 187-88 for details of Aum methods for developing and delivering sarin.

48. See Brackett, *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo,* 28.

49. Kaplan and Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World*, 132-3.

50. See Brackett, *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo,* 33-4.

51. Kaplan and Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World*, 141.

52. Adam Gamble and Takesato Watanabe, *A Public Betrayed: An Inside look at Japanese Media Atrocities and Their Warnings*, (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2004), 134-43.

53. Brackett, *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo,* 41-2.

54. While the police never arrested Kono, the lingering suspicion about him effectively turned him into a pariah in his community.

55. After the Matsumoto attack several anonymous letters were sent to members of the press and police investigators asking them to take a closer look at Aum.

56. Gamble and Watanabe, *A Public Betrayed: An Inside look at Japanese Media Atrocities and Their Warnings*, 34.

57. "Yomiuri-Shimbunsha Public Opinion Poll 読売新聞社世論調査." *Yomiuri Shimbun 読売新聞,* November 1, 2000, 36.

58. Japan's major daily newspapers are the Yomiuri Shimbun (affiliated with Nippon TV), Asahi Shimbun (affiliated with TV Asahi), Mainichi Shimbun (affiliated with Tokyo Broadcasting Systems), Nihon Keizai (affiliated with TV Tokyo) and Sankei (affiliated Fuji TV).

59. Iwase Tatsuya, *Shimbun ga omoshiroku nai riyū新聞が面白くない理由 (The Reason Why Newspapers are Boring*), Tokyo: Kodansha, 2001, 21.

60. Gamble and Watanabe, *A Public Betrayed: An Inside look at Japanese Media Atrocities and Their Warnings*, 45-56.

61. Laurie Ann Freeman, *Closing the Shop: Information Cartels and Japan's Mass Media* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000) 82.

62. Iwase Tatsuya, *Shimbun ga omoshiroku nai riyū*, 55

63. Gamble and Watanabe, *A Public Betrayed: An Inside look at Japanese Media Atrocities and Their Warnings*, 45-50.

64. Ibid., 53.

65. Ibid., 35.

66. Ibid., 92-8.

67. See Kono Yoshiyuki, *Tsuma yo! Waga Ai to Kibō to Tatakai no Hibi* 妻よ！和が愛と希望と戦いの日々 [My Wife! Days of my Love, Hope, and Struggle] (Tokyo: Ushio Shuppansha, 1998).

68. Kaplan and Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World*, 218.

69. Brackett, *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo,* 91-103

71. Kaplan and Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World*, 186-187

72. Brackett, *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo,* 127

73. Kaplan and Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World*, 241-242

74 See Trevor Astley, "The Transformation of a Recent Japanese New Religion: Okawa Ryūhō and Kōfuku no Kagaku," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 22:3-4 (1995): 343-380 for more information on Kōfuku no Kagaku.

75. Kaplan and Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World*, 246

76. Brackett*, Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo, 130-142.*

77. Ibid., 140.

78. Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō,* 217.

79. Ibid., 192. Takimoto Tarō argued in 1994 that Aum would end in a mass suicide of their members. See Takimoto Taro and Fukushima Mizuho, *Habōhō to Oumu Shinrikyō* (Tokyo: Iwamani Booklets No. 398, 1995), 4-6.

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1. Brackett*, Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo,* 143-160.

2. Mark R. Mullins, "The Legal and Political Fallout of the 'Aum Affair,'" and Christopher W. Hughes, "The Reaction of the Police and Security Authorities to Aum Shinrikyō,"In *Religion and Social Crisis in Japan: Understanding Japanese Society through the Aum Affair* (New York City: Palgrave, 2001).

3. See Egawa Shōko, "Hyūman Ripoto: Yokohama bengoshi ikka rachi jiken (Tokyo: Shin Nihon Shuppansha, 1992). Egawa reported ties between Aum and the abduction of the Sakamoto family several years before the Tokyo subway attack.

4. Hughes, "The Reaction of the Police and Security Authorities to Aum Shinrikyō," 60. The Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations in 1995 reported that American intelligence concluded that Aum was simply not on anyone's radar screens until after the Tokyo attack.

5. Hacker, Zero Hour: Terror in Tokyo

6. Hughes, "The Reaction of the Police and Security Authorities to Aum Shinrikyō," 63.

7. Tashiro Noriharu, *Kageki-ha Shūdan no Riron to Jisen* (Tokyo: Tachibana Shobō, 1985).

8. William R. Farrell, *Blood and Rage: The Story of the Japanese Red Army* (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1990).

9. Hughes, "The Reaction of the Police and Security Authorities to Aum Shinrikyō," 54.

10. Ibid.

11. Lawrence Ward Beer, *Freedom of Expression in Japan: A Comparative Study of Law, Politics, and Society* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984), 190-3.

12. Mullins, "The Legal and Political Fallout of the 'Aum Affair,'" 76-7.

13. Ibid., 74.

14. Torii Kiyokazu, "Ugokidashita Habōhō sono Kiken," *Hōgaku Seminā* 2 (1996), 38-43.

15. Kitō Masaki, *Nijūisseki no Shūkyō Hōjinhō* (Tokyo: Asahi News Shop, 1995). 157.

16. Mullins, "The Legal and Political Fallout of the 'Aum Affair,'" 76-77.

17. Ibid., 78.

18. Watanabe Osamu, "Habōhō ha naze dekita ka? Ika ni Tsukawareyō to shita ka?" *Horitsu Jiho* 68, no. 9 (1996), 9-15.

19. Hughes, "The Reaction of the Police and Security Authorities to Aum Shinrikyō," 63.

20. Hughes, "The Reaction of the Police and Security Authorities to Aum Shinrikyō," 65.

21. Ibid., 62.

22. Helen Hardacre, "After Aum: Religion and Civil Society in Japan," In *The State of Civil Society in Japan*, ed. F. J. Shchwartz and S. J. Pharr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 149.

23. Daniel Alfred Metraux, "The History and Theology of Sōka Gakkai: A Japanese New Religion," (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1988), 58-60.

24. Ibid., 64.

25. Robert J. Kisala, "Aum Alone in Japan: Religious Responses to the 'Aum Affair," *Nanzan Bulletin* 19 (1995): 11.

26. Japan Times, 25 July 1995, 1.

27. Japan Times, 21 October 1995, 2.

28. Ibid.

29. Kisala, "Aum Alone in Japan: Religious Reponses to the 'Aum Affair," 13.
30. Ibid., 16.

31. John LoBreglio, "The Revisions to the Religious Corporations Law: An Introduction and Annotated Translation." *Japanese Religion* (22:1, 1997). 38-59.

32. Ibid., 50

33. Ibid., 54

34. Mullins, "The Legal and Political Fallout of the 'Aum Affair,'" 78.

35. Participants in the symposium and authors of chapters in the resulting book include – Abe Yoshiya, Kirigaya Akira, Fujiwara Takanori and Shimazono Susumu.

36. Minoru Matsutani, "Sōka Gakkai keeps religious, political machine humming," *Japan Times Online*, December 2. 2008.

37. Kent Gilbert, Attorney, interviewed by author, 4 April 2008, Orem, Utah. Kent Gilbert is lawyer and has worked and lived in Japan since 1983. He has represented several new religions in Japan. In the 1990s, he served as legal council for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

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2. Richard Fox Young, "Lethal Achievements: Fragments of a Response to the Aum Shinrikyō Affair," *Japanese Religion* 20, no. 2 (1995): 233.

3. Ibid., 241 (footnote 3).

4. Takimoto Tarō and Nagaoka Tatsuya, *Maindo kontororu kara nigerete: oumu shinrikyō dakkaishatachi no taiken* (Tokyo: Koyu Shuppan, 1995).

5. Ian Reader, "Scholarship, Aum Shinrikyō, and Academic Integrity," *Nova Religio* 3, no. 2 (April 2000): 370.

6. Ibid., 372.

7. Ibid., 375.

8. Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyō*, 206.

9. Egawa Shōko, *Kyūseishu no yabo: oumu shinrikyō o otte* (Tokyo: Kyoiku Shiryo Shuppansha, 1991).

[10] Watanabe Manabu, "Opposition to Aum and the Rise of the 'Anti-Cult' Movement in Japan." In *Religion and Social Crisis in Japan: Understanding Japanese Society Through the Aum Affair*, edited by R. Kisala and M. R. Mullins (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 92.

11. Reader, "Scholarship, Aum Shinrikyō, and Academic Integrity," 270-278.

12. Steve Hassan and Asami Sadao are active critics of new religious movements claiming that many groups use mind control to manipulate their members. Steve Hassan started an anti-cult group called the *Freedom of Mind Center*.

13. Egawa, *Kyūseishu no Yabo: Oumu Shinri Kyō o Otte*, 9.

14. Shimazono Susumu, "The Evolution of Aum Shinrikyō as a Religious Movement," 18.

15. Steven Alan Hassan, Freedom of Mind Center, www.freedomofmind.com/resourcecenter/faq/

16. Shimazono Susumu,, "Maindo kontorōru Kō," *Kokoro no Kagaku* 56, (1994): 3-13.

17. See Takimoto and Nagaoka, *Maindo Kontororu kara Nigerete*.

18. Manabu Watanabe, "Opposition to Aum and the Rise of the 'Anti-Cult' Movement in Japan." In *Religion and Social Crisis in Japan: Understanding Japanese Society Through the Aum Affair*, ed. R. Kisala and M. R. Mullins, (New York City: Palgrave), 91.

19. Ian Reader, "Consensus Shattered: Japanese Paradigm Shift and Moral Panic in the Post-Aum Era," *Nova Religio* 4, no. 2 (2001): 231.

19. Ibid.

20. Richard A. Gardner, "Aum and the Media: Lost in the Cosmos and the Need to Know," In *Religion and Social Crisis in Japan: Understanding Japanese Society Through the Aum Affair*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 133-162.

21. See Manabu Watanabe, "Opposition to Aum and the Rise of the 'Anti-Cult' Movement in Japan", 92.

22. Kumamoto Nichinichi Shimbun, ed., *Oumu Shinrikyō to Mura no Ronri* (Fukuoka: Asahi Shobō, 1995).

23. Araki Hiroshi, *A*, prod. and dir. Tatsuya Mori, Facets Video, 136 min., DVD. and Araki Hiroshi. *A2*, prod. and dir. Tatsuya Mori, Facets Video, 131 min., DVD.

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25. See Richard A. Gardner, "Aum and the Media: Lost in the Cosmos and the Need to Know," 150-152.

26. Morioka, Kiyomi, "Attacks on the New Religions: Rissho Koseikai and the Yomiuri Affair," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 21:2/3 (1994): 284-310.

27. Sawada, *Practical Pursuits*, 245-55.

28. Takeda Dōshō. "The Fall of Renmonkyo and Its Place in History of the Meiji-Period Religions," In *New Religions: Contemporary Papaers in Japanese Religions* (Tokyo: Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics, 1991).

29. George Tanabe and Ian Reader, *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 230.

30. See Hardacre, Kuruzumikyō and the New Religions of Japan, 12.

31. Jonathan Watt. "Tokyo Cults in Japan con public with alternative health remedies," *Lancet* 355, no. 9217 (20 May 2000): 1797.

32. Japan Times. *Cult may have paid to get religious status*, May 8, 2000.

33. Mainichi Shimbun. *Ho-no-hana to foot the bill*. April 29, 2000.

34. Mainichi Shimbun. *Foot cult guru busted*. May 10, 2000.

35. Japan Times. *Honohana foot-cult guru gets 12 years for fraud*. July 16, 2005.

36. Reader, "Consensus Shattered: Japanese Paradigm Shift and Moral Panic in the Post-Aum Era," 229.

37. Richard H. Mitchell, *Political Bribery in Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 132.

38. Letter of Protest to the Shimizu S-Pulse. http://www1k.mesh.ne.jp/reikan/english/index-e.htm

39. Mainichi Shimbun, *Cult to pay woman huge compensation over forced donations for ancestors*, April 11, 2008.

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1. Manabu Watanabe, "Aum Shinrikyō and its use of the Media: Five Phase of Development." *Bulletin of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture* 22 (2005): 42-53.

2. Ibid., 43.

3. See Kiyomi Morioka, *The Development of a New Religious Movement [新宗教運動の展開]* . Tokyo: Sōbunsha. 1989.

4. See Reader, Ian. *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 71-75. Reader documents magazine and television coverage of Asahara's ascetic practices and his ability to levitate.

5. Watanabe, *Aum Shinrikyō and its use of the Media*, 45-6 .

6. Ibid., p. 48.

7. Helen Hardacre, "Aum Shinrikyo and the Japanese Media." *Japan Policy Research Institute* (April 1996).

8. Ibid., 8.

9. See http://www.gla.or.jp/top.html and Shimazono Susumu, *From Salvation to Spirituality: Popular Religious Movements in Modern Japan* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2004) for information on GLA (God Light Society).

10. Scalar electromagnetic waves are based on several unproven theories that electromagnetic waves have additional oscillations. Panawave believed that these waves can have adverse effects on individuals and the environment.

11. Yuko Chino, *Nihon hatsu chikyū kaimetsu* (Chino Shoho Shuppan, 2000).

12. See "Panawave to Tama-chan o kangaeru kai", *Panawave: Shiroshōzoku no nazo to ronri*, (Cosmo Books).

13. Shukan Bunshun,"Tama-chan no koto omou kai no shōtai wa karuto shūkyō dantai Chino Shōhō," (1-8 May 2003).

14. Howard W. French,. "Japanese Cult Vows to Save a Seal and the World," *New York Times* (13 May 2003).

15. Benjamin Dorman, "Pana Wave: The New Aum Shinrikyō or Another Moral Panic?" *Nova Religio* 8, no. 3 (2005), 91.

16. Cited and translated in French, "Japanese Cult Vows to Save a Seal and the World," 1.

17. "Tama-chan, star of river and screen." *Daily Yomiyuri*, 8 May 2003

18. "Panawave to Tama-chan o kangaeru kai", *Panawave: Shiroshōzoku no nazo to ronri*, (Cosmo Books), 23-36

19. Golden week is the seven-to-ten-day period at the end of April and beginning of May. This week includes three official Japanese holidays: Green Day on April 29th; Constitution Memorial Day on May 3rd; and Children's Day, or Boy's Day, on May 5th.[19] Most Japanese will take a week off between April 27th and May 7th depending on what day of the week these holidays occur.

20. See "Panawave to Tama-chan o kangaeru kai", *Panawave: Shiroshōzoku no nazo to ronri*. The dust jacket for this book suggests that Panawave represented the next Aum.

21. Ibid., 1.

22. See White Robed Cult hits the road, *Asahi Shimbun*, 2 May 2003; Shiroshōzoku Shūdan: Panawave Kenkyūkai, *Akahata Shimbun*, 3 May 2003.

23. Dorman, "Pana Wave: The New Aum Shinrikyō or Another Moral Panic?," 94.

24. See "NPA promises to keep monitoring Panawave Cult", *Japan Times*, 9 May 2003. Group Mentality: Police search White Cult's Facilities, *Asahi Shimbun*, 15 May 2003.

25. Horomi Shimada, "Shiroshozoku shūdan sawagi no haikei" (Background behind Turmoil Surrounding the White-clad Group). *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 3 June 2003.

26. "Another Bizarre Cult raising Eyebrows and Concern in Japan". *American Free Press*, 1 May 2003.

27. Egawa Shōko, "Shiroshozoku Shūdan: Fuan o aoru yori jujitsu chōsa o (The White Robed Group: Investigate the Facts rather than provoke public concerns)," *Asahi Shinbun*, 10 May 2003.

28. "Two Mayors ask White-clad Cultists to Leave". *Japan Today*, 1 May 2003

29 David McNeill, "So will the World End Tomorrow," *The Independent*, 14 May 2003.

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31. Guru's Streaker Past Exposed as Cult Wins Defamation Case Against Tabloid Mag, *Mainichi Daily News,* 15 May 2005.

32. Dorman, "Pana Wave: The New Aum Shinrikyō or Another Moral Panic?", 96.

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1. Araki Hiroshi. *A*. DVD, 2006. Rika appears at a press conference that was included in the documentary.

2. "University accepts then rejects Asahara daughter," *Japan Times Online*, March 17, 2004

3. "Guru's son sues school over rejection." J*apan Times Online*, April 8, 2006

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6. Michael Boyette. *Let It Burn: The Philadelphia Tragedy* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1989), 61-106.

7. Ibid., 144-182.

8. The use of the idea of Blood Atonement to justify murder is actually similar to Asahara's interpretation of *Poa* as a path to better karma through death.

9. See Pete Early, *Prophet of Death: The Mormon Blood-Atonement Killings* (New York City: William Morrow and Co., 1991); Cynthia Stalter Sassé and Peggy Murphy Widder, *The Kirkland Massacre* (New York City: Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1991).

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