

“Anti-cult measures” by Japanese universities

Shunsuke Uotani

Universal Peace Federation-Japan

Human Rights Without Frontier’s report, “Japan: Abduction and Deprivation of Freedom for the Purpose of Religious De-conversion,”¹ issued on December 31, 2011 revealed basic facts about the kidnapping and forced de-conversion of Unification Church members in Japan. In this paper, I would like to reveal another serious religious persecution experienced by Japanese Unificationists. The targets of this persecution are young university students, and the persecutors are university authorities.²

First, I would like to cite a passage from the Japan section of the International Religious Freedom Report for 2011 (<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?dliid=192631>), issued by the US State Department. “The Unification Church also asserted that cult prevention workshops and campaigns held at universities throughout the country urged students to avoid groups affiliated with the church and contributed to a hostile campus environment for Unificationist students.” The US State Department reported these “anti-cult measures” by Japanese universities as an example of “societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief or practice”

Under the pretext of “anti-cult measures,” an official campaign has been carried out against religion-oriented college clubs and their members on campuses across the country, since 2006. Although several groups have been targeted, by far the most victims have been from the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP), a student organization affiliated with the Unification Church. The “persecution,” to varying extents, has been observed in as many as 60 universities across the country.

The systematic measures against CARP are roughly divided into the following categories:

1. Public warnings to the student body in general by means of signboards, pamphlets, posters, booklets, websites, emails and campus broadcasts.
2. Cautions issued by professors and teaching staff during enrollment orientations, anti-cult seminars and regular classes.
3. Various forms of academic harassment and intimidation against CARP members through interrogation,

¹ <http://www.hrwf.org/images/reports/2012/1231%20report%20final%20eng.pdf>

² Persecution of Unificationist students in university campuses has a long history. It goes back to the 1970s; however, the actors at that time were not university authorities but mostly leftist students on campuses. It was a part of the ideological battle between communists or socialists and Unificationists. Today the leftist force has almost disappeared from campuses, but university authorities are strengthening their control over religion-oriented college circles.

pressure to leave the church or speak against it, and constant surveillance.

- Facilitating coordination between students' parents and anti-UC Christian ministers, including forced meetings with Christian ministers for the purpose of “exit counseling” or assisting in kidnapping of the student.

Let me show you some examples of “anti-cult” signboards, flyers, and posters on campuses.

Photo 1 is an “anti-cult” signboard at Chiba University (national university). In this signboard, you see a “road sign” —a red circle with diagonal stroke—which means “Cults Prohibited.”³

Photo 2 and 3 are “anti-cult” flyers posted on bulletin boards of universities. Photo 2 is from Ryukoku University (private university) and says, “No Cults!”⁴ and photo 3 is from Tokyo Metropolitan University (public university) and says, “Be warned against cult groups.”⁵



Photo 1

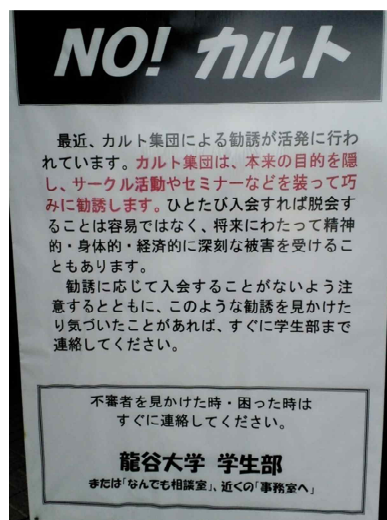


Photo 2

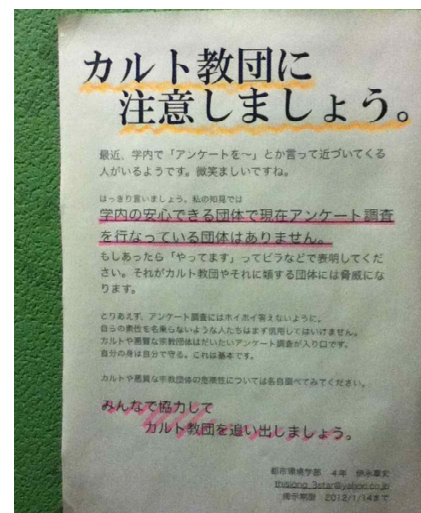


Photo 3

Okayama University (national university) distributed a “Warning Poster” which instructs students to stay away from CARP, declaring that joining the Unification Church can result in “serious economic, mental and physical damage.” (Photo 4) The university posted it on their official website before the year 2006. On December 29, 2010, the Unification Church officially wrote a letter of complaint to the university; the poster was then erased from the website in March 2011.

³ This signboard at Chiba University was placed before April 2007, and is still there now as of September 2012. CARP is not allowed on campus.

⁴ This photo of an “anti-cult” flyer at Ryokoku University was taken on Oct. 15, 2010. CARP is not allowed to operate on the campus.

⁵ This photo of an “anti-cult” flyer at Tokyo Metropolitan University was taken on Dec. 8, 2011. CARP is not allowed on campus.

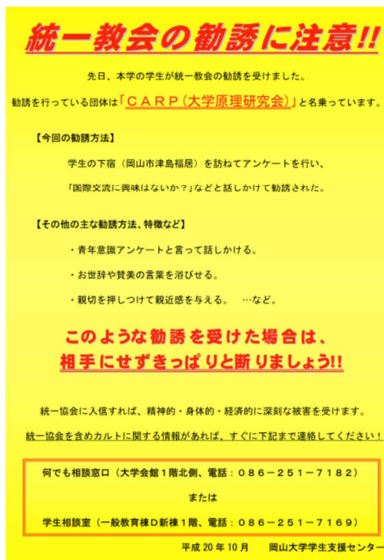


Photo 4

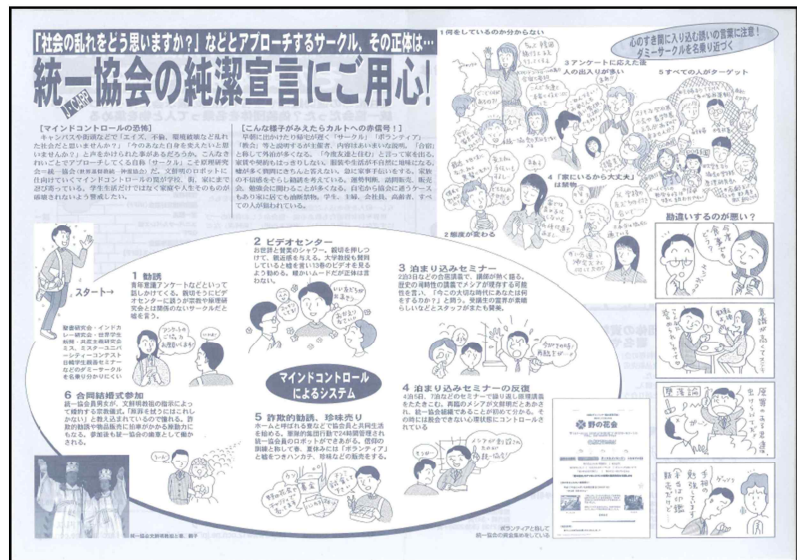


Photo 5

Photo 5 is an “anti-UC” flyer produced by the National Network of Lawyers against Spiritual Sales, which is an anti-UC organization. It criticizes the Unification Church and CARP by name and gives a lot of exaggerated and derogatory information: for example, its states that members of these groups are “mind controlled” and “robots of the church.” This flyer is distributed by this organization to many universities throughout the nation, and is handed to new students, or posted on university bulletin boards.

“Cautions against cults” in enrollment orientations is a widely used method in Japanese universities. Photo 6 and 7 show a power-point presentation given by Professor Yamatodani, at Kyoto University (national university) on April 17, 2010.⁶ The title reads, “Reality of Cults on Campus.” This presentation listed the names of “problematic cults” on campus; such as Aum Shinrikyo, Unification Church, CARP, and some other groups,⁷ urging students to avoid these religious groups.

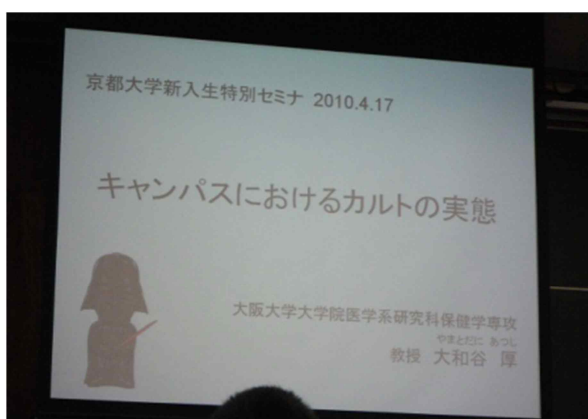


Photo 6

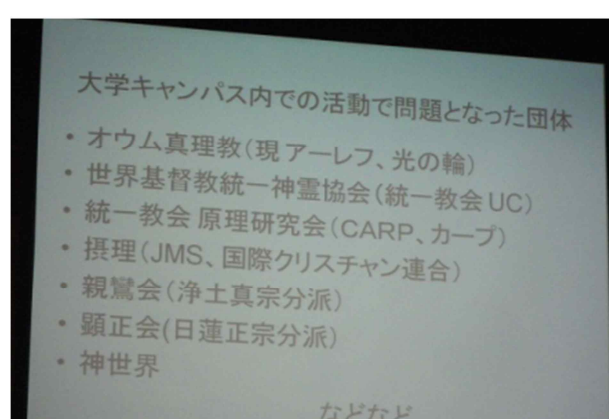


Photo 7

⁶ April is the time of entrance into schools in Japan.

⁷ It also refers to JMS (NRM of Korean origin), Shinrankai and Kenshukai (Buddhist organizations).

Takashi Yamaguchi, who is one of the most active anti-UC lawyers in Japan, was invited by Nagoya University (national university) to warn about the “danger of cults” in 2011 and 2012. He mentioned the Unification Church as the “cult of cults,” and stated that everything it does is illegal.⁸

Some universities designate “anti-cult measures” as a required subject. In Osaka University (national university), all newly-enrolled students were required to attend a course misleadingly entitled “Life Environment,” offered by Professor Yamatodani. He criticized specific religions in this for-credit course, and students were obliged to submit reports regarding their thoughts about ‘cults’. These reports were then utilized to identify CARP members in the university. The CARP members were called to his office and pressured to leave the organization, to renounce their faith and even to be an informant on their fellow members during interrogation sessions. Two years ago, however, the professor who teaches this “Life Environment” course was changed and the situation at Osaka University has improved.

In April 2011 Chiba University (national university), which has been notorious for its particularly strong anti-cult measures, announced new guidelines on student club promotion, which include the following requirements:

1. Any promotion of activities for students, *both on and off* campus, requires permission from the university administration.⁹ (emphasis added)
2. Students not complying with the above rule shall be “guided” by their advising teachers and staff.
3. If such students do not comply, their parents shall be notified.
4. If they do not behave according to the guidelines, students shall be subjected to guidance by outside experts.

In September 2011, Mr. Tanaka, a staff member of the student support section of Hiroshima University (national university) called parents of at least five CARP members of the university. He talked to the parents on the phone and said, “it seems that your child is involved in a religion. Are you aware of it?” He warned the parents against their child’s affiliation with a religious group. Among these five students, three students were second generation members of the Unification Church. Usually the university can identify CARP students, but they cannot easily distinguish between first and second generation members.¹⁰

The response of the parents of first generation members and parents of second generation members

⁸ He said that proselytization of the Unification Church is illegal; mass weddings of the church are illegal, collection of donations by the church is illegal, and “Spiritual Sales” practiced by the church is illegal, etc. Although it’s true that the church has lost some civil cases, it is quite unfair to describe the behaviors of the church as generally illegal.

⁹ This means that Chiba University interferes with students’ off-campus activity.

¹⁰ First generation in this case means those who converted to the Unification Church and their parents have nothing to do with the church. Usually these parents oppose to their child’s involvement with CARP because of its bad reputation. Second generation means those who were born into the church and inherited their parents’ faith. This incident was reported to CARP and the Unification Church by the parents of second generation members.

were dramatically opposite. In the case of second generation members, the parents got angry about the university's intervention into their students' personal matters and complained to the university. In one case of a first generation member, the student's parents got very upset by the phone call, dragged their son to their hometown and put him under house arrest. The student's father forced him to choose between leaving CARP and leaving the university. As a young student dependent on his parents, he had no choice but to leave CARP.

On June 25, 2011, an open lecture was held in Kyoto by The Japan Society for Cult Prevention and Recovery, an anti-cult organization. This lecture invited Pastor Tadaharu Takayama, who is a dedicated anti-UC Christian minister famous for practicing "exit counseling" under coercion. The title of his speech was "Collaboration between Religious Figures and Universities." In his speech, he professed that he practiced "exit counseling" in collaboration with officials of Osaka University, Okayama University, Ehime University, Shimane University, and Doshisha University. These universities are located in the western area of Japan, which is his scope of activity as an exit counselor. His church is located in Okayama. Amazingly, the official website of Okayama University provided a link to the website of Pastor Takayama's church, suggesting a strong connection between the university and his church.¹¹

A last resort of anti-cult measures by universities is "on campus kidnapping." I would like to give three examples of this. In 2002, Miss I of Okayama University was abducted on campus by 15 people, including her family members.¹² In September 2006, Mr. N, a graduate student of Osaka University, was kidnapped by 6 people including his parents, at the entrance to the research building of the university. He was confined and subjected to exit counseling by anti-UC Christian ministers. He escaped after a one-week confinement. In August 2008, Mr. K of Nagoya University was kidnapped by 15 people including his parents, from the laboratory of the science and engineering department of the university. He was confined and submitted to exit counseling for one month.

Although family members of the student carry out the actual kidnapping, cooperation is needed from the student's supervisor or instructor for the prompt and efficient execution of an "on campus kidnapping." In the case of Mr. K of Nagoya University, his supervisor and parents had met in advance to make arrangements for the kidnapping operation.

Why have Japanese universities gone so far? What is the motive of universities to fight against "cults?" Let me explain the social background of this phenomenon.

- Student numbers are falling because of Japan's declining birthrate so colleges are desperately trying to secure students. They struggle for survival. Their management needs to promote a positive image of producing qualified and employable students.

¹¹ This link has existed since 2006. On December 29, 2010, the Unification Church officially wrote a letter of complaint to the university; the link was erased from the website in March 2011.

¹² 2002 was the peak year of kidnapping in Okayama CARP. At least 7 CARP members of Okayama University were kidnapped in this year.

- In most countries the age of majority is 18, but in Japan it is 20. Thus Japanese universities play the role of “in loco parentis” to a greater degree than in most other countries.
- Japanese college students’ mental ages are viewed as younger than before so colleges are expected to take good care of students. “Student support” is strengthened, and colleges try to ensure a “risk-free” campus environment in order to protect their students.
- This social background is utilized by anti-cult organizations to propagate the “danger of cults” on campus. “Prevention of cults” is seen as positive risk management by colleges.

As a result, students belonging to campus clubs associated with minority religions are persecuted.

Let me explain the key players in this phenomenon. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology is the governing agency of all universities in Japan. We don’t have any convincing evidence that the ministry itself is promoting “anti-cult measures” by universities, but it is quite possible.

The Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) is an independent administrative institution under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. Its main operation has been providing student loans. But recently it expanded its business and is engaged in guiding and supporting the “anti-cult measures” of universities. Since 2005, JASSO has carried out a questionnaire survey to determine the state of implementation of “anti-cult measures.” *“Daigaku To Gakusei (University and Students)”* is a monthly magazine published by JASSO. In the September 2010 issue of this magazine, three articles emphasized the importance of protecting students from “cult recruitment” in the campus environment. It is inappropriate for an agency that provides student loans be also engaged in activities that designate certain religions as unacceptable.

Backed by the semi-official JASSO policy, nationwide anti-cult measures were launched on university campuses. In other words, without JASSO’s anti-cult undertaking, the anti-cult measures in national universities would not have become so pervasive.

The institutions that carry out the “anti-cult measures” vary from college to college. Some colleges have set up a specialized in-campus unit such as “Anti-Cult Council,”¹³ while others assign the task to their student support section or health administration center. In any case, these activities are conducted on the common pretext of “student support”.

It is important to understand that Japanese universities don’t recognize “anti-cult measures” as religious persecution. They consider it to be “student support.” In other words, they do it for the sake of students’ safety and for the prevention of trouble. However, the purpose of “student support” is to help students. It must be done under certain rules, and a situation where the “student support”

¹³ Okayama University and Ehime University officially established an “anti-cult council” and announced their policy on their official websites. See also:
http://web.csaa.ehime-u.ac.jp/karuto/karuto_page/karuto_2.html
http://kymx.adm.okayama-u.ac.jp/hp/s_center/cult_00.html

injures its students must be avoided. We have to ask, “Is it really helping the student?”

The Ministry of Education, JASSO and national universities are supposed to be “neutral” organizations. At least they should be neutral to any religious organizations because they are public institutions. However, there are some politically oriented organizations among the key players of this phenomenon.

The Japan Society for Cult Prevention and Recovery (JSCPR) was established in November 1995. Its purpose is “to study cult activities, to exchange information on cults, to pursue more excellent techniques for exit counseling” (from their website).¹⁴ The chairman of the board of directors of this society is Dr. Kimiaki Nishida, who is known as a leading expert on “mind control theory” in Japan, and other directors consist of many anti-UC activists, lawyers, scholars, and ex-members of NRMs. A numbers of scholars are affiliated with this society. They practice “anti-cult measures” in their universities, and contribute articles to JASSO’s magazine to promote their “anti-cult measures.” It is obvious that JSCPR is pushing JASSO to promote “anti-cult measures” in Japanese universities.

The National Anti-Cult College Network (NACCN) was founded in 2008 by Prof. Kenji Kawashima of Keisen University.¹⁵ This network is virtually an electronic mailing list system, by which teachers and the staff of colleges can exchange information about cults and the preventive measures they use to prevent them. Currently (as of July 10, 2012), 151 universities and colleges have joined this network.

The National Network of Lawyers against Spiritual Sales, an anti-UC organization, submitted a petition in December 2006 to the National Universities Association and three other college associations, urging universities to take systemic measures against cults.¹⁶

In March 2007, JASSO announced a new program to deepen collaboration between universities and outside players.¹⁷ It actually paved the way for universities to collaborate with outside anti-cult organizations, as well as anti-UC ministers who practice “exit counseling” under coercion.

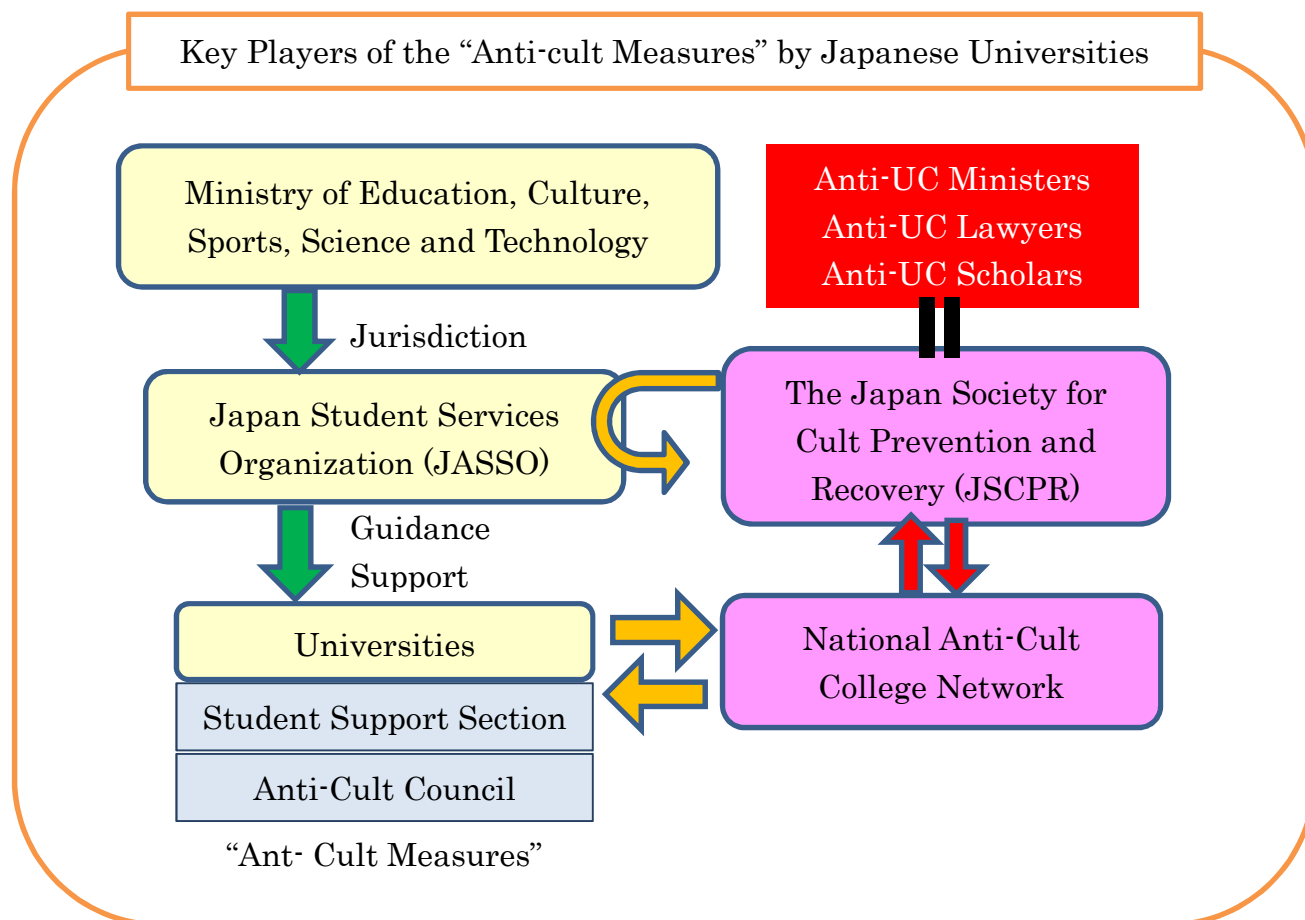
If you understand these key players of “anti-cult measures” in universities, you may notice that it is essentially a collaboration between the anti-cult movement and universities.

¹⁴ http://www.jscpr.org/index_E.htm

¹⁵ Prof. Kawashima is a director of JSCPR; and most of the founders of this network are also directors or members of JSCPR. So NACCN and JSCPR are like twin organizations.

¹⁶ The petition pushes the universities for production and in-campus distribution of brochures concerning anti-social religious organizations; enlightening lectures by specialists; recommendations for inter-college information exchanges; cautions in planning curriculum; consultation with experts and advising faith renunciation to religious students. These have become the basic components of the prevailing anti-cult measures.

¹⁷ This program is mentioned in JASSO’s report entitled “How to Strengthen Students’ Counseling System in Colleges - Towards further Collaboration and Cooperation between Comprehensive Student Support Programs and Specialized Student Counseling Programs”.



These “anti-cult measures” by Japanese universities raise a host of legal issues.

1. They are an invasion of freedom of religion because university professors and officials are not only forcing students to confess their faith but also pressuring students to leave the group.
2. They are also a violation of the constitutional principles keeping religion and government separate because many national universities are overtly persecuting some religious groups.
3. They are a violation of academic freedom; the right of university students to believe and speak their minds without fear of retribution from university authorities.

Finally I would like to explain about the countermeasures taken by our movement in Japan.

First, student representatives of CARP rose up in more than 30 universities and initiated public relations activities to protest against excessive and unlawful “anti-cult measures” by university authorities. In January 2011, they sent a document addressed to the student support sections of their universities, asking many questions about “anti-cult measures.”¹⁸ In March 2011, they sent

¹⁸ They sent a document entitled ‘Questionnaire on student support.’ They received virtually no replies in writing from university authorities. When they visited the office of student support and asked questions, the answers of the university staff were like; “No need to reply!” (Shimane University) or “Cannot answer about college management!” (Osaka University).

written documents addressed to university presidents requesting they stop “anti-cult measures” which cause students’ mental stress. Thanks to public relations efforts by CARP representatives, the situations have gradually improved in some universities. However, some universities have paid absolutely no attention to these appeals.

Second, parents of CARP students also took a stand. At Chiba University public relations efforts by the CARP representative had no effect on changing the universities’ attitude. In February 2012, three parents of persecuted CARP students established the “Parents’ Association to Protect Children from Human Rights Violation by Chiba University” and requested a meeting with university representatives. It took a lot of time and effort to get the university to come to the negotiating table, but the first meeting was held on August 16 of this year. This is just the beginning.

The third method is to file a civil lawsuit. On May 17, 2012 a female Unificationist student of Saga University (national university), filed a lawsuit against her supervisor and Saga University. What happened to her? Her supervisor, Associate Professor Mori, called her to his office on February 20. He one-sidedly criticized the doctrine of the Unification Church. Knowing that she is a second generation member of the church, he blamed her parents’ faith and even insulted their marriage in the church as a “marriage of dogs and cats.” She was emotionally wounded by the verbal abuse from her supervisor, and demanded an official apology through her lawyer. Since the supervisor and university failed to respond seriously to her demand, she finally brought an action for damages against them. This case has just begun and is still ongoing.

I believe this situation is a shameful for Japan and its institutions of higher education. It must be stopped. However, this issue is not yet well known internationally. I hope scholars of new religions in CESNUR will take an interest in this issue. I hope that some of them will visit Japan, interview college students and university officials, and write a report on this matter.