

FFWPU Europe and Middle East: Author Debunks Nasty Japanese Media Myths

Knut Holdhus
January 6, 2024



Masaki Kubota

Media myths dispelled by author doing undercover study

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[Sekai Nippo](#)

Each Individual Believer Is Unique

Part 4 of an interview with Masaki Kubota (窪田順生), author of "Infiltrating the Former Unification Church"

by Seisaku Morita (森田 清策)

- Would you describe your view of the [Family Federation for World Peace and Unification](#) (formerly the [Unification Church](#)) as different before and after your undercover study?

I have observed the persons of the International Federation for Victory over Communism for a while, so I honestly wasn't surprised by what I heard from the believers. However, the believers were more diverse than I thought. The way they approach their faith is different from person to person. While there are people who are surprisingly devout, there are also those who are not. The degree of faith varies among believers. Among the Japanese believers who live in South Korea, there are on the one hand those with quite a strong personality, but on the other hand also those with a calmer view of their own way of life.

I had thought that the concept of "mind control" seemed "fishy" even before I started the interviews, but when I listened to each believer, I felt they had free will in abundance, so much so that I wondered how it was possible to say that they were under mind control.

Even within a family, it's completely different how close the father, mother and sons feel to the [religious organisation](#). For example, the donation is supposed to be one tenth of the income, but there are many believers who are not able to achieve this, while others say "three tenths", or even "one third", to the dismay of their families. Some were critical of the [religious organization](#), while others expressed their own opinions on the way the headquarters should be.

The media has frequently reported on the families of defendant Tetsuya Yamagami and Sayuri Ogawa (pseudonym), but clearly each family's situation is different, and it is up to each believer [how much they donate].

Besides, I also work in corporate crisis management, so I understand that scandals inevitably occur in large organizations. Sometimes, there are even people who pass away due to power harassment. Including

Tendentious Reporting By New York Times

October 14, 2023 • Knut Holdhus

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The New York Times echoing narrative of activist leftwing lawyers in its tendentious reporting

The New York Times

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Just look at the headline used by the New York Times 12th

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Just look at the headline used by the New York Times in October 2023: Japan Seeks to Dissolve **Unification Church** After Abe Killing.

This is clearly tendentious reporting. The headline easily gives the impression that the **Unification Church** caused the terror attack on former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on 8th July 2022. The **Unification Church**, now called the **Family Federation**, was not involved at all in the gruesome murder in broad daylight in the city of Nara.

Several of the claims the New York Times is making, is based on the story told by activist leftwing lawyers out to destroy the **Unification Church**. Their narrative is riddled with lies and distorted claims.

The New York Times article asserts that the terrorist, Tetsuya Yamagami, "held a grievance against Mr. Abe for his perceived ties to the **Unification Church**."

This is at best a half-truth. Yamagami, sometimes describing himself as a revolutionary, may well have had other grievances against Shinzo Abe, who was known as an anti-communist and outspoken critic of Communist China.

週刊文春

The logo of the *Shukan Bunshun*.
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Most of the media world seems to have swallowed the activist leftwing lawyers' account of what happened.

But now and then a radically different story emerges, as when *Shukan Bunshun*, a weekly Japanese news magazine known for its investigative journalism, on 19th August 2023 published some confessions made by the relatives of Tetsuya Yamagami.

According to the narrative of the activist leftwing lawyers, Yamagami could not study at university because of a difficult economic situation created by the mother's large donations to the **Unification Church**. According to *Shukan Bunshun*,

"Tetsuya took entrance exams for various universities, but was only accepted at Nara Sangyo University, which was not the school of his choice, so he chose not to go to university."

And there were other problems in Yamagami's family. The father was a heavy drinker, who neglected his family and committed suicide in 1984 jumping off a building.



A logo used by the *Palladium Magazine*.

According to the San Francisco-based *Palladium Magazine*, the flagship publication of *American Governance Foundation* and funded by conservative activist Peter Thiel, Yamagami's father studied at the *Faculty of Engineering* at the elite *Kyoto University*. (Article 2nd Feb. 2023 headlined *Yamagami Tetsuya's Revenge*)

There, he became acquainted with revolutionary communism. According to an article by editor



Logo of the Japanese daily web magazine *Cyzo*.

Masahiko Motoki in the daily web magazine *Cyzo* 26th July 2022, he was a good friend of Yasuyuki Yasuda, who studied architecture and became a *Japanese Red Army* militant, shot dead while carrying out a terrorist attack at Lod Airport in Tel Aviv 30th May 1972. *Cyzo* wrote,

"During his [Yamagami's father] time at Kyoto University, he was a mahjong [Oriental tile game] friend with Yasuyuki Yasuda, who later died in the Tel Aviv airport shooting."

(More about the Japanese Red Army terror attack in *New York Times* 5th June 1972, page 3, article titled *Father Asks Death for Terrorist*)

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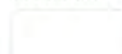


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Judging by his actions, it certainly seems that Ietsuya Yamagami may well have inherited some of that revolutionary spirit.

Another former *Japanese Red Army* member Masao Adachi directed and produced rapidly a fictional-biographical film called *Revolution+1* about Yamagami, premiered in smaller theatres throughout Japan the day before Shinzo Abe's state funeral. In the film, Yamagami is described as a terrorist hero. Some theatres cancelled the screening after receiving many complaints about justification of terrorism. Yamagami himself had said before the assassination that he was starting a revolution. And he has been praised openly by many communists after his act of terror.

It has been claimed that Yamagami was not able to single-handedly construct the home-made gun he used to murder Abe. He must have received help. From whom? The obvious answer would be from some like-minded person.

In addition to all this, we know that the *Japanese Communist Party* is the largest communist party in the democratic world with its close to 300,000 members. For 50 years the party has been fighting systematically to destroy the [Unification Church](#).



Kazuo Shii in 2017. Photo: Attribution: 김영준 (Kim Youngjun) / Wikimedia Commons. License: [CC Attr 2.0 Korea](#). Cropped

In an



The logo of the *Shimbun Akahata*. [Public domain image](#)

interview in November 2022 with Kazuo Shii, the *Shimbun Akahata*, the daily organ and official national newspaper of the *Japanese Communist Party*, it was made clear that the fierce campaign after the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe 8th July 2022 is the communists' "final war" against the [Unification Church / Family](#)

[Federation](#).

Shii said in the Akahata interview that the war had started already in 1978 at the elections of the governor of Kyoto.

"This time", he said after the Abe assassination, "we will fight thoroughly and completely until we win the struggle."

See also [The 'Japanese communists' final war' against the Unification Church](#)

By getting Abe killed and the [Unification Church](#) blamed for the murder, two birds were killed with just one stone.

To avoid fingers been pointed at the leftwing camp, activists have been working very hard to portray the [Unification Church](#) as an antisocial body that does not deserve the right to exist. Even though the members of the [Unification Church](#), now called the [Family Federation](#), preach – and try their best to put it into practice – a moral life harmonious families, stable marriages and peace in the society and the world.

The New York Times in its 12th October article, claims that the [Unification Church](#) is manipulating its members inflicting psychological harm on them. This is a standard allegation of the so-called anti-cult movement and has been used consistently and methodically by the network of activist leftwing lawyers in Japan to portray the [Unification Church](#) in the worst light possible. It is reminiscent of the old allegations of brainwashing, a term that has been abandoned a long time ago by academics of Religious Studies as unscientific.

Regrettably, a political maverick in the current Kishida government, Taro Kono, brought one of the activist leftwing lawyers, fanatically opposed to



the [Unification Church](#), into an expert panel appointed to deal with the [Unification Church](#) issue. This has clearly led to government ministers adopting some of his anti-religious terminology, as shown in the statement by *Minister of education, culture, sports, science and technology*, Masahito Moriyama, whom *The New York Times* quotes.



Taro Kono during the Munich Security Conference 2019. Photo: Kuhlmann / MSC / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC Attr 3.0 Ger

Featured image above: The New York Times building in New York, NY across from the Port Authority, 23rd December 2007. Photo: Haxorjoe / Wikimedia Commons. License: CC ASA 3.0 Unp

"Tendentious Reporting by New York Times" – text: Knut Holdhus

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the former [Unification Church](#), the larger a religious organization becomes, the more unavoidable scandals are.



Front page book cover of Sayuri Ogawa's book in Japanese

When I interviewed Tomihiro Tanaka, the president of the [religious organization](#) [in Japan], he said that he had visited the field more often because of the issue of requesting a dissolution order. Otherwise, he wouldn't understand what's happening on the ground. The second generation believers are starting to express their own opinions, such as planning symposiums themselves. After covering the inside of the [organization](#), I thought it would be nice if the [organization](#) would become even more open from now on.

- Is it a made-up image that believers are mind-controlled and have had their free will taken away?



Tomihiro Tanaka at press conference in Tokyo 7th Nov. 2023

It may be misleading to say "ordinary", but because there are many ordinary people, various problems occur just like in large corporations. The idea that everyone is mind-controlled and acting on orders is, I think, a very distorted view.

- In writing the book, you interviewed more than 50 believers. At a symposium hosted by second-generation believers, the organizer said, "There are tens of thousands of people who have become believers because they were moved by the doctrine." In response to this, Eito Suzuki said, "I haven't seen such people, at least not in the first generation." What about the believers you interviewed?

I was also surprised by Eito Suzuki's remarks. In my interviews, there were only believers who had joined because they were moved (laughs). If they weren't moved, they would quit, and I think it's precisely because they continue to be moved that their faith becomes energy. Regarding that energy, I can only honestly say, "I admire it."



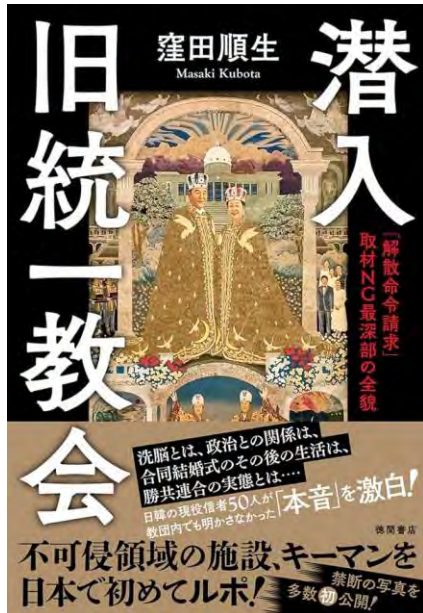
Eito Suzuki, born as Kiyofumi Tanaka

- Where does this difference in perception come from?

Eito Suzuki and I have had different lives and careers. Our ways of thinking are different, so we each have our biases. Former believers who have left the faith may say they were "deceived". If you continue to interview such people for a long time, you might end up making such remarks.

(Interviewer: Seisaku Morita)

To be continued. Part 5 coming soon.



The front cover of 'Infiltrating the Former Unification Church' - Tankobon Softcover, Nov. 2023

Masaki Kubota (窪田順生) is a non-fiction writer who has contributed to weekly and monthly magazines. He has also worked first as a producer, then as an advisor for TV-documentaries. He is journalist for a weekly magazine and a newspaper, and editor of a monthly magazine. In addition, he works as a media consultant, having conducted over 200 public relations consultations and media training sessions (training on how to handle interviews).

His books include

"Spin Doctor - Techniques of Information Manipulation Used by Professionals Who 'Hush up Bad Information'" (Kodansha Alpha Bunko - 2009), which deals with Japan's political and corporate public relations strategies, and

"14 Stairs - Reportage on the Niigata Girl's 9 Years and 2 Months Confinement Case" (Shogakukan - 2006), which won the 12th Shogakukan Non-fiction Award for Excellence.

His new book, "Infiltrating the Former Unification Church - the Complete Story of the Request for a Dissolution Order and the Deepest Secrets of the 'No Good Coverage'", is currently on sale.

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