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Japan: "Sacrifice to the Nation," an Extraordinary Book. 3. True and False Witnesses

by Bitter Winter | Jan 22, 2026 | Testimonies Global, Albanian

Dubious reports by disgruntled ex-members were accepted at face value. The testimony of loyal second-generation members was ignored.

a review by Bitter Winter

Article 3 of 5. Read [article 1](#) and [article 2](#).



"Sayuri Ogawa." Screenshot.

Our series on Masumi Fukuda's Japanese bestseller "Sacrifice to the Nation" continues. It explores a national drama where testimony, politics, and public emotion merged into a powerful narrative.

In Chapter 4, Fukuda focuses on the person who became the face of Japan's anti-Family Federation movement: "Sayuri Ogawa."

In 2022, a young woman using the name 'Sayuri Ogawa' appeared almost everywhere. She was identified as the "daughter of a former Unification Church pastor," a second-generation victim who claimed the church's teachings had distorted her life. Her media presence grew; her testimony reached the Diet's halls; and her words became the driving force behind the government's swift mobilization.

Ogawa's story prompted questioning of the Family Federation and led to the swift passage of a new law, the "Act on Prevention of Unfair Solicitation of Donations by Corporations, etc." In the public eye, she became a symbol of a generation supposedly harmed by the Unification Church. Her presence seemed to legitimize calls for dissolution.

However, Fukuda, being a diligent reporter, noticed something that few others checked: the timeline didn't match up. Ogawa's statements had chronological inconsistencies, and documents submitted as evidence contradicted key parts of her story. Doubts about her credibility emerged early but were mainly ignored.

Looking for clarity, Fukuda interviewed Ogawa's parents. Their account contrasted sharply with the public story. They described a daughter who had battled mental health issues and whose feelings about her family and the church changed suddenly after two events: the assassination of former Prime Minister Abe and a press conference by the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales.

Fukuda's concern is not with Ogawa herself but with the system that exploited her testimony. Politicians and media outlets, she states, used her statements without checking their accuracy, allowing misinformation to influence national policy. The chapter ends with a question that lingers: Who is shaping her narrative from behind the scenes?

In Chapter 5, Fukuda shifts her focus to those whose voices were not heard: active second-generation members. If Ogawa became the representation of

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victimhood, the active members of the Family Federation—especially second-generation followers—remained largely invisible. Fukuda documents the discrimination they faced as the national sentiment hardened.

In December 2022, Ogawa led the collection of 200,000 online signatures calling for the dissolution, which were presented to the Agency for Cultural Affairs. Cameras captured the moment; headlines followed. But when 23,000 active members submitted their own signatures—handwritten and with real names—the Agency refused to take them in person, insisting they should be mailed to avoid “the potential for uproar.”



Family Federation believers from different generations protest for religious liberty in Chiba.

The difference was apparent. Anonymous online petitions were welcomed, while actual people with real names were turned away. Fukuda calls this what it is: discrimination.

Interviews with Agency officials showed no willingness to acknowledge this double standard. Instead, Fukuda found a bureaucracy eager to speed up the Kishida administration’s push for dissolution, regardless of procedural fairness. The outcome was predetermined; the process merely filled in the details.

Fukuda then gives attention to the voices of active members. They describe a climate where followers were often called “anti-social” or members of a “cult,” where job offers were withdrawn and housing applications denied. Even when they agreed to speak with journalists, their remarks were edited or ignored. Second-generation members with positive views of their faith were excluded entirely from coverage.

Fukuda argues that the issue lies not in religion itself but in a society that stigmatizes it. Young people who want to contribute to their country through their faith are instead pushed aside. A democratic society, she asserts, cannot afford to treat them as contaminants.

In Chapter 6, Fukuda reveals a judicial system following the unspoken rule: “If you’re a cult, you lose.” The chapter looks at the courts, focusing on the Family Federation’s request for a provisional injunction regarding statements made by Sayuri Ogawa. The request was dismissed almost immediately—without deeper consideration.

Fukuda analyzes the ruling and uncovers a series of concerning patterns. The court’s findings conflicted with objective evidence. It assumed facts that were not present in Ogawa’s mother’s statement. And it went out of its way to defend Ogawa, even as inconsistencies in her testimony became more apparent.

Behind this, Fukuda sees a deeper issue: the unwritten judicial rule that religious groups labeled as “cults” cannot win. Judges, fearing public backlash, avoid ruling in their favor even when the evidence supports them. Past lawsuits against the former Unification Church show a similar trend: labels take precedence over evidence, and bias replaces legal reasoning.

The outcome is a quiet but devastating reality: equality under the law does not apply to certain religions.





Attorney Hiroshi Yamaguchi, one of the founders of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales. Screenshot.

In Chapter 7, Fukuda examines how fear and false beliefs led to a series of unjust judgments. The journalist examines a collection of biased decisions spanning decades of legal battles involving the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales. Fukuda points out that the sudden decision in 2022 to examine the Family Federation was not driven by worsening conditions but rather by public opinion and political pressure. Ironically, earlier requests from the Lawyers' Network—made when victimization numbers were higher—had been rejected by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Only in 2022, when conditions had actually improved, did the ministry decide to act. Fukuda argues that this was a deeply unfair response compared to how other religions are treated.

She then returns to a recurring theme in her book: the misuse of former believers who had been abducted, confined, and forcibly de-converted as “victims” in lawsuits and media narratives. The “Give Back Our Youth Trial” serves as an example. Many plaintiffs were individuals who had renounced their faith under pressure. The decision in that case, Fukuda notes, includes numerous questionable claims and signs of potential evidence tampering.

Her criticism of the Lawyers' Network is trenchant. While they claim to provide relief to victims, the Network may have been creating future plaintiffs, perhaps even participating in the very abductions and confinements that led to them. Under these circumstances, Fukuda writes, their claims have lost all credibility.

[Anti-Cult, Japan, Religious Liberty, Unification Church](#)



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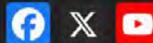
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