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Tense Positioning: Labeling and Tension in Kofuku no Kagaku's Development

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Tense Positioning:

Labeling and Tension in Kofuku no Kagaku's Development

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Chancellors Honors Thesis

Looking at the top sellers from the category *shinko shukyo*, it is remarkable how Okawa Ryuho's 大川龍法 writings consistently stand at the top of the charts. Unfamiliar observers may be startled at how eclectic the topics seem. They include spirit interviews with diplomats and responses towards criticism from media personalities. Others hint at understanding the secrets of popular idol group AKB48, promise revelations from Einstein, or claim to shed spiritual light on Israeli-Iranian tensions. At the time of writing, Okawa's publications are reported to number 1400 different books, many of which boast high sales figures.

Kofuku no Kagaku¹ 幸福の科学 is a member of a group of religions known as the New Religious Movements (NRMs). *Shinko Shukyo* 新興宗教 literally means newly arisen religion, and came to describe religions that had emerged in three periods: from 1800-1860, during the 1920s, and the postwar period (Hardacre 4). These periods are marked by large societal changes with political or ideological roots. These periods also provide the environment for people to seek out alternative means of self-alignment. NRMs have a highly central structure, and are associated with charismatic leaders who experience a revelation of a long forgotten truth. Some NRMs developed as sects or as splinter groups from Buddhist and Shinto traditions, while others draw influence from exogenous religions and traditions.

Kofuku no Kagaku was founded in 1986 as a study group with the goal of studying God's Truth. Due to its rapid growth it quickly blossomed into a religious group under Okawa's guidance. During this time the social contract that had valorized the workforce around the virtues of the middle class ensured political stability began to dissolve, allowing for conceptions of self that drew individuals to NRMs like Kofuku no Kagaku. But upon being acknowledged as a

¹ Kofuku no Kagaku translated its name originally as "The Institute for Research in Human Happiness" which reflected the study group mentality of the organization early on. However it has recently changed its translated name to the more colloquial "Happy Science". Kofuku no Kagaku will be used here.

religious group, Kofuku no Kagaku had to contend with a web of criticism and controversy, prompting Kofuku no Kagaku to begin acting as the arbiter of good taste to position itself as a socially normative group.

Using the ideas of religious economics, at Kofuku no Kagaku's earliest juncture it was a club who sought to provide club goods in the form of social alignment. But upon growing, the organization needed to lessen barriers to entry for membership. Other groups and organizations sought to place Kofuku no Kagaku in a position of high tension, which Kofuku no Kagaku worked to refute by placing these groups and others in high tension.

Tension is "the degree of distinctiveness, separation, and antagonism between a religious group and the outside world" (Starke and Finke 143). Tension is the same as deviance, a moving target that groups use to position themselves in distinction to others. For groups involved in the act of labeling, being perceived as morally normative allows for the maximum access to resources (Kent 395). Against this standard, groups such as Kofuku no Kagaku accuse others of deviant non-normative practices, placing them in tension against a moral standard.

The label New Religious Movement points to groups that exist outside of the religious mainstream of society. The Japanese media have long been in a contentious relationship with NRMs, enacting a type of "self-censorship" which prevents positive images of NRMs from reaching a mass audience (Fisker-Neilson 7-9). This portrayal of NRMs places them in tension with constructions of moral standards, which limits NRMs access to resources and new members (Kent 396).

Ian Reader observed that in the wake of the Aum Affair and the following unpopularity of NRMs, a section in a bookstore dedicated to criminal groups not only contained works about Aum Shinrikyo and the *yakuza*, but also books about NRMs such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and

the Unification Church, the latter being particularly interesting when taken with international and domestic political issues (Reader 2001). Soka Gakkai's reputation for being aggressive, intolerant, and coercive in its *shakubuku* not only left a lasting impression on potential converts, but also threatened the social order of Japan during an unsteady period (McFarland 199). In these situations, these groups were considered threatening to the social order, building off of longstanding narratives about NRMs.

As NRMs like Kofuku no Kagaku provide an outlet for individuals dissatisfied with the status quo, the act of setting socially disruptive groups outside the mainstream in turn limits the ability of NRMs to move to lower levels of tension.

Economic shifts and Identity rifts in Post War Japan

Kofuku no Kagaku was founded in 1986, just as the asset bubble started. In 1991 Kofuku no Kagaku became a widely known organization, in the same year the bubble burst. Post-bubble Japan saw Kofuku no Kagaku become noticeably more socially active. Kofuku no Kagaku's development sits within the bubble timeline snugly, and the Japan that it had to convert is a Japan deeply influenced by these economic shifts. At the bursting of the bubble, when individuals became most likely to look to alternative means of self-alignment, Kofuku no Kagaku would encounter its harshest criticism.

Post-Bubble Deregulation

For many years, the three great pillars of Japanese economic security –the *Keiretsu* system, the MITI, and the human resource system - worked together to ensure that unemployment remained low. MITI, or the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, ensured growth by subsidizing businesses and controlled competition between companies by regulating domestic competition. The *keiretsu* 系列 banking system integrated companies together through

a shareholding system in case of economic instability. The Japanese human-resource management system ensured that companies would take care of their workers until retirement. Together, they buttressed the economic growth and social contract that spurred young Japanese into studying hard as students to enter the best universities and the best companies. The post-war social contract is the middle class lifestyle. If individuals acted in their role as student, worker, or mother, they would thrive. Extended onto society, the middle class served to bring a sense of unity to Japan as well as to rally labor for the rapid post-war economic growth. These three institutions worked together to make the middle class dream tangible through increased quality of life.

In 1996, the Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro was faced with a problem. Labor prices in Japan were high, and the market was overregulated. Further, economic growth was negligible, and had begun to enter a deflationary spiral. Ryutaro began to adopt policies championed by the United States and made great strides to liberalize Japan's economy. While Ryutaro saw neoliberal policies as a solution to Japan's economic ills, companies found themselves in tough positions. The human resource system that guaranteed workers a spot on the payroll was no longer viable. Companies would, to avoid layoffs, force employees into early retirement or move them to lower positions within the company. Many companies also instituted hiring freezes. Young people who previously performed the duties associated with the social contract turned to alternate ways of thinking about the individual within society, as the old way was no longer viable.

The New Religious Movements have emerged in periods of social distress. The social contract did not fail in one year, but had become increasingly irrelevant or unappealing in the past decades. Women were reluctant to enter into married life. Inequalities and pollution

apparent after rapid economic growth troubled many Japanese. The all-encompassing net of the middle class had begun to tear.

Class and Identity

The growth of the postwar economy linked Japanese identity to ideas about middle class society. The symbol of post war Japan's economic strength was the middle class. The middle class consciousness was associated with class, but more reflective of the mainstream consciousness (*churyu* 中流) that developed after the war. John Lie identifies notions of a middle strata society as informing the discourse of Japaneseness (28). Influenced by the economy's unprecedented growth, and concomitant increase in most Japanese consumers' purchasing power, the middle class status was aligned with images of the prosperous salary-man. Such imagery lost its appeal as alternative means of thinking about the self became more common. The middle class values that which had acted as the glue between the individual and society simply became less applicable to most individuals.

In pre-war Japan, inequalities based upon status were common. The social hierarchy in Tokugawa Japan largely implicitly carried over into the Meiji restoration, with the *ie* and prior status hierarchies limiting the ability of individuals to marry, and limiting social mobility in general (Lie 28). The Meiji restoration and the prewar years brought many political and educational reforms, but informal restrictions remained, with the network of elites enjoying more affluence as a result of the relationship between government bureaucracies and imperial universities (Lie 28).

The post-war years brought an end to formal status differentiation. Reimaginings of society that had been prevalent before the war were made manifest by consumer's increasing ability to obtain status goods such as the three sacred jewels of postwar Japan (refrigerators,

washing machines, and television sets). Mass media enjoyed immense popularity in the post war years, and portrayed the new middle class positively. Depictions of families cemented the relationship between family members and larger society (Ivy 1993). By the 1970s, 95% of households contained the three sacred jewels, status symbols whose advertisements interpellated housewives on the basis of middle class values (Franks 162).

Most Japanese identified themselves as middle class (Lie 35), and the new middle class values were so prevalent that medical problems (usually in conjunction with a form of *nihonjinron*) were steeped in discourse about the obligations of a salary-man or housewife (Lock 52). Not committing the self to the circumscribed roles fully would not only have negative effects on the body, it would impact the family.

In the post-economic miracle the disjuncture between the image of a middle class Japan and the reality of a diverse and variegated Japan became more prominent (Lukacs 7). The Minamata disease, caused by the company Chisso pouring high levels of mercury into the water supply of the fishing village Minamata, brought attention to the effects of rapid economic growth in the most grizzly of manners. Consumers began to demand higher quality food products and organized cooperatives, showing a desire for intimacy with goods (Franks 185). An influx of foreign workers and inequality in the domestic sphere was the subject of much media coverage (Lie 32).

The power of the discourse surrounding the middle class served the goal of economic growth in powerful ways. The middle class was a cultural construct that mobilized labor for the post-war development project and legitimized the preexisting social order. Politicians, the bureaucracy and companies worked together in networks formed at elite universities and in the *keiretsu* (Fisker-Neilson 10-11). The middle class lifestyle provided willing workers for these

firms under the assumption of being provided economic security. Further, the mass imaginings of middle class Japan created an emphasis on a Japanese collective consciousness (Kelly 238). The mass imaginings of a Japanese character continued a tradition of fostering social harmony in service to the state prevalent in pre-war writings about *kokutai* 国体, the idea of fostering a unified sense of Japanese ritual that influenced the Meiji state (Kelly 237; Josephson 121). Mass imaginings of a unified group and economic security were a tool that helped promote social harmony, ensure economic growth, and guarantee political stability.

The Middle Class Family

The images of middle class society and values existed within the framework of the nuclear family, where specific roles - from student to salary-man or housewife - were the glue of the social contract. The emphasis on the middle class household in imagining modernization closely linked the family to civilized society by placing each family member in specific roles with specific duties. Students and mothers were bound together, while the father's obligations to his job provided economic security for his family. The average student could theoretically study hard and get into the best universities, a meritocratic ideal that affirmed the benefits of the new middle class society (Lie 31).

The new households were led by the housewife, a position idealized in the 'good wife, wise mother' imagery of the Meiji years. Women's proper roles involved applying rationality to household affairs, which promoted women as the family's financial decision makers (Francks 142). The popularity of the three sacred treasures -black and white TV, washing machine, and fridge- owed much in how they related the housewife to the idealized middle class lifestyle (Francks 175). However, with the reorientation of families into an urban lifestyle, women

became targets of social critique. For example, mothers were held accountable for their children's education, and success or failure of the student reflected upon the mother often more than the student herself (Hayes 192). In the post-war family, a particularly deviant child would often be symptomatic of a middle class mother who suffered from a host of medical ailments, which were often associated with nonperformance of familial obligations (Lock 51).

The husband, in contrast to the wife, was defined in terms of his societal obligations, such as his performance as a salary-man. His role is played in absence of his family (Lock 52). The father connects the family to the imagined Japanese society by providing the resources to afford social markers like the sacred treasures. The husband's obligation to his company is rewarded by the advancement into senior positions over time. In such a way, the salary-man, a symbol of the middle class Japanese male, obtains and maintains social obligations. Often the mother cites the father's dedication to his job as something to be emulated by the children, even as the father became more and more absent in the affairs of the family (Lock 52).

This system of family organization was divided along lines of gender, but also important is the "life cycle" of the middle class. Popularized in the 1970s, the "life cycle" emphasized specific states in life with specific obligations, in comparison to more general ideas about age. It envisions the life of a Japanese, starting from student, then to worker, then to spouse, then to parent. Each state has its function in society, with a parent providing the student the atmosphere and guidance, with the spouse (especially women) taking care of older members of the family (Kelly 239). The political, bureaucratic, and corporate leaders were actively involved with shaping the middle class lifestyle, through promoting a social security system on the basis of the nuclear family. Wives who made more than \$10,000 dollars were taxed at a higher rate than the primary earner. Women

whose husbands worked at larger companies could learn “professional” household management skills (Gordon 122).

Nihonjinron and the New Economy

Japan’s economic success in the post war years embedded economic prosperity into national identity through the image of Japan as a middle class society. The Japanese preoccupation with self-perceptions is not a modern phenomenon and not unique to Japan. The flood of western influences brought by the end of locked country policy led Japanese scholars to study enlightenment ideology (Lie 35). In the late shogunate period, Aizawa Seishisai, a scholar of the *mitogaku* 水戸学 school of thought (which had originated in the Mito prefecture), popularized the concept of *kokutai* or the body politic, and believed that the Japanese state needed to remove internal divisions to find the essence of the Japanese people (Josephson 121). One impetus for Aizawa’s writing was his concern about increasing foreign presence in Japan, and the belief that internal cohesion had given way to destabilizing worldviews like western science. National Science, in turn, linked up western scientific progress with Japanese deities and cosmology, claiming that the writings of the *Manyoshu* and the *Kojiki* aligned with and explained scientific western cosmology (Josephson 111). These schools of thought called for the removal of exogenous influences from Japan, and were deeply woven into the Japanese nationalist narrative. In the Meiji restoration, the slogan “*wakon yosai*” 和魂洋才 (Japanese spirit, western learning) shows acknowledgement of the Japanese as a unique group set apart from the west (Lie 35).

Beyond self-assertion is the fact that the Japanese above all else wished to catch up to the west in terms of civilization. Fukuzawa Yukichi, considered to be one of the most influential thinkers in the formulation of the modern Japan, ranked civilizations as either *bunmeikoku* 文明

国 (culture civilization), *hankai no kuni* 半壞の国 (semi-cultured civilization), and *yaban no kuni* 野蛮の国 (savage civilization). Fukuzawa listed Japan as a semi-civilized country, in distinction with the civilized west and the savage Africa (Lie 35). As the west was the benchmark with which progress was measured, the Meiji state's implementation of policies to move Japan towards western norms, such as mandating the western male haircut (O'Brian 1309), were part of larger feelings of backwardness in comparison to the west (Lie 36).

To move further to post-war Japan, feelings of superiority to geographic neighbors like Korea were supplanted with old feelings of inferiority reinforced by military defeat. The Japanese, no longer able to justify Japanese identity with claims of regional supremacy, found a substitute in the economic miracle. Emulating the west became more akin to emulating the “bright life” seen in occupation through films, music and pop culture (Francks 162). Simultaneously, *nihonjinron* 日本人論 writings that emphasized positive attributes of the Japanese became incredibly popular in the 1960s (Lie 151), with positive ideas about the Japanese character reflecting positive associations with middle class life. The middle class Japanese society as portrayed in mass media created the illusion of a society with no meaningful internal divisions, harkening back to the *kokutai* that Aizawa wrote upon nearly a century before. The illusion of the middle class society would pervade identity in post-bubble Japan, with writers like Michael Lewis claiming that “the domestic, social, and economic arrangements...hadn't changed in 200 years” (18), when in fact the opposite is readily apparent. The contradiction that these middle class values were distinctly Japanese and distinctly not Japanese is common in *nihonjinron* (Lie 154), showing the flexibility of *nihonjinron* in connecting the individual with the larger society, and the permissibility of similar ideas in academia.

The popularity of *nihonjinron* literature soaring during and after the economic miracle demonstrates the ways in which national identity and shared imagined history pervaded the lives and habits of individuals. Any personal trait could be reoriented within the mainstream. These images left little space for competing voices, and were constructed to prevent any meaningful divisions within society. Groups such as immigrants (Lie 32) and NRMs who can cause social divisions were antithetical to a social harmony founded on a unified group. In this way, *nihonjinron* and the discourse of a singular Japan worked as delegitimizing agents, helping to imagine a mainstream in contrast to those outside of it.

New Tribes and New Selves

The Japanese consumer raised in the security of the middle class lifestyle gave way in the eighties and nineties to an increasingly affluent and lifestyle conscious consumer. In the aftermath of the oil shocks of the 1970s, the societal cost of the economic miracle became readily apparent, with educational and financial inequalities hidden in the economic miracle years manifesting themselves in the growing reluctance of young people (especially women) to enter into the type of social contract that defined the post-war middle class (Lukacs 5). These *shinjinrui* 新人類, or new tribes, demanded more from their urban lifestyle than the generation prior (Francks 185), voicing concern for the environmental and social impacts of the rapid economic growth. Furthermore, the abundance and variety of goods that accompanied the newfound power of the Japanese economy allowed Japanese consumers the privilege to consume according to individualized lifestyles instead of the middle class values of the post-war years.

Japanese consumers became more discerning during this period, with English slogans or markers of traditional “Japaneseness” like kimono denoting educational attainment or cultural sophistication (Francks 191). Companies’ advertising strategies of appealing to a more precise

group of consumers by associating television shows with the *tarento* タレント (celebrities such as singers and actors²), trendy places, and popular music carried on through the bursting of the bubble economy in the nineties (Lukacs 121). Dramas like *Tokyo Love Story* portray characters and relationships that are not based in the middle class values of the post-war years, but instead are based on lifestyle, defined by Gabriella Lukacs as “the practice whereby individuals reinforce and cultivate their individuality through taste preferences and define their identity through lifestyle choices” (43). Lukacs looks to the *tarento* as the means by which intimacy is created between individuals and goods in the televisual medium. This intimacy, she argues, owes itself to the familiarity that the *tarento* acquire by their circulation as media personas in music, game shows, advertisements, and movies. These figures interpellated viewers on the basis of personality, with consumers identifying with the *tarento*’s search for a particular satisfying lifestyle (41).

The post-war labor contract that kept salary-men on the payroll and circumscribed the careers of the emerging *shinjinrui* prompted young salary-men and women to look at self-determinism as a means to happiness (Lukacs 145). In mass media, prior associations of prosperity and middle class values were replaced by images of young sophisticates who asserted themselves to find happiness. According to several prominent scholars on New Religious Movements, a similar conception of the self could be found in the Japanese NRMs.

Helen Hardacre wrote her work on the new religious movement Kurozumikyō before the emergence of Kōfuku no Kagaku, but her understanding about the changing notions of self in these organizations works similarly to the New Tribes’ sense of self. The New Religions’

² The word *tarento* comes from talent, but the *tarento* do not need to be specifically skilled in a certain area. More important to the popularity of the *tarento* is their personality and private life, which are often seen as normal and relatable.

worldview would situate the heart, soul, or ki (*kokoro* 心, *tamashii* 魂, and *ki* 気) within the body, and the body within the social order (12-13). Drawing from Neoconfucian ideas, the cultivation of the mind into sagehood extends the self to the larger social order. The traditional religious organizations depict a self under control, while New Religious Movements posit the self in control (Hardacre 16). There is a noticeable parallel between the New Tribe's preoccupation with lifestyle as an alternative means of self-alignment, and the New Religious Movements' alignment of self and society. The New Tribes formulated the sense of self in relation to perceived barriers in society; NRMs in turn extended the cultivation of self onto society.

This alignment of self and society was present in the "New New Religious Movements" (*Shinshinko shukyo* 新新興宗教) such as Kofuku no Kagaku and Aum Shinrikyo. The exogenous religious influences upon both traditions are readily apparent, with Kofuku no Kagaku's Okawa Ryuho blending spiritual figures from throughout history into one unified group, and Aum Shinrikyo's Asahara Shoko using traditional eastern, western, and new age ideas of spirituality. The affluence of the Japanese consumer extended to works about doomsday, as the Gulf War and the exposure to outside cultural commodities fostered a curiosity in several religious traditions, as well as familiarity with them. As both Kofuku no Kagaku and Aum Shinrikyo had global influences, as well as rapid growth, they were seen as being in direct competition with one another. Both groups also benefited from a membership that was motivated, educated, and close knit. Kofuku no Kagaku and Aum Shinrikyo's early "disagreements" caused Kofuku no Kagaku to undergo restructuring to fit a more traditionally Buddhist formation, while Aum Shinrikyo's 1995 sarin gas attacks pushed public opinion against cult-like, antisocial groups.

As the middle class system grew increasingly inapplicable to people's lives, individuals looked towards more personal means of self-alignment. For the consumers' selves sought out by companies, lifestyle was an acceptable alternative. It could be negotiated back into the mainstream through the *tarento* and more personal consumptive choices. However, the NRMs were groups that stood outside of the mainstream, and while they held a similar view of the self that was attractive to modern Japanese individuals, they were marked with high tension. They sought to change society, which threatened the social formation that buttressed the system of elites.

The Economics of Religion

Kofuku no Kagaku's development happened very rapidly, moving from four members in 1986 to claiming (as the definition for membership underwent a considerable loosening) ten million in 1995. At different points, Kofuku no Kagaku's strategy in seeking to obtain and retain members changed. Kofuku no Kagaku's evolution can be seen as a transformation from a club formation to a firm. Joining Kofuku no Kagaku at the earliest period involved an application process where Okawa would personally review applications and demand essays from prospective members. As the group grew, membership demands were lessened to signing a form and undergoing a ceremony. Creating a utopia is Kofuku no Kagaku's goal in society, and as a result membership is increasingly important. But as costs to entry are lowered, the satisfaction from club goods is lowered. The bonds connecting members loosened, and doctrine's importance lowered. In order to show how Kofuku no Kagaku's development can be understood in terms of the religious marketplace, the religious marketplace itself should be understood.

Individuals and Organizations

The economic study of the religious marketplace is similar to the economic study of secular institutions. Religious organizations seek out and retain members by drawing them into social networks and building relationships between the organization and the individual. Individuals are assumed to already have a demand for religion. Religion, as described by Stark and Finke, “consists of very general explanations of existence, including terms of exchange with a god or gods” (91). While this definition may be found lacking in many ways, for the purpose of this analysis this definition is useful for how it envisions the relationship between men and gods as exchange. The emphasis on exchange focuses religious practice and religious organizations within the framework of humans seeking rewards. Kofuku no Kagaku brings many different deities into one group with the express goal of creating a utopia in society and creating individuals who are happy.

Humans in this model seek out explanations for obtaining rewards, and turn to supernatural means in order to obtain rewards that are scarce or not available. Explanations are inherently tied into rewards, as explanations seek to explain a set of circumstances for a given situation. An explanation’s validity depends upon whether or not it fits the individual’s need. Envisioning religion through an explanatory framework grants religious organizations an important place in explanation’s creation and adaptation. Kofuku no Kagaku provided a means to obtain a reward, and underwent many different strategies to make its explanation more valid.

Religious organizations “are social enterprises whose primary purpose is to create, maintain, and supply religion to some set of individuals and to support and supervise their exchanges with a god or gods” (Stark and Finke 103). The religious organization is the middleman in the exchange between gods and men. The religious organization must convince the

individual that the gods are dependable, as well as cement the validity of certain explanations over others.

The religious individual will be more responsive to a religious organization to the extent the gods are reliable. That is to say, individuals will pay higher prices to be in an organization if a god is “dependable”, “responsive”, and are of greater “scope.” Dependable gods can be “Relied upon to keep their word and to be consistent in their orientations towards humans”. Responsive gods “are concerned about, are informed about, and act on behalf of humans.” Gods of greater scope have diverse powers and a higher range of services (Stark and Finke 278).

At this juncture, the definition of religion is noticeably theocentric in how it posits that religion implicitly includes terms of exchange with spiritual beings of some sort, along with general explanations of existence. This definition presupposes exchange with a divine figure as the basis of all religious action. Understandably the focus on an exchange with gods creates a rather reductionist portrayal of religions. For example, *ema* (絵馬), a pentagonal token bought at Buddhist temples and written on for a multiplicity of reasons -from success at school to a good family life- does not presupposes a specific deity who will work to see the wish come true, but rather leaves a message that the figures enshrined at the temple – who are not sought out for an explicit exchange – can read (Reader 1991, 23). Further, ancestor veneration can be considered a type of exchange that allows parents and grandparents to join the innumerable legion of ancestors, but beyond this it doesn't specifically envision a god or individual spiritual rewards. Not all religious stories, art, and practices explain existence or concern terms of exchange with gods.

However, Stark and Finke seek to show that the exchange in this view of religion is the groundwork on which religious culture builds upon in the form of myths, symbols, and

explanations for the meaning of life (91). Familiarity with the myths and traditions of such groups –when paired with the necessary social context- only increases the perception that the god is dependable, responsive, and of a greater scope. *Ema* indeed may not be from an individual to a god, or even a group to a god, but the manner in which it is used provides for a sense of community and a symbol of commitment, which are powerful indicators to the efficacy of the gods (Reader 1991, 46). Ancestor veneration connects the individual with a shared history, which reaffirms the explanations given by religious organizations by tying them into familial obligations. Religious organizations use a host of tactics to make their explanations for exchanges between gods and men more believable, and practice serves this purpose well.

Religious organizations act as middlemen between gods and an individual. Religious organizations offer many benefits for their membership, such as in the social relationships that are within them. But religious organizations also have a hand in asserting that their gods are dependable, responsive, and have great scope. They enhance their god's image by building monuments, doing social work, and portraying the organization as upholding social norms (Witham 61-62). One can look toward the Dhammakaya temple, which completed the large Mahathammakai Chedi to honor the Dhammakaya community and as a symbol of the temple's power to foster world peace (Scott 90). This monument both demonstrated the Dhammakaya temple's affluence (which appealed to the desire for prosperity common in Thailand), but also the power of the god to be responsive. Social work similarly signals to the outside community the power of the god by means of the community that it brings together. Kofuku no Kagaku became involved with social issues, acting as the arbiter of good taste such as with disputes with publishing company Kodansha, and as community minded activists such as in the earthquakes of Osaka and Kobe (Fukui 152).

Ian Reader further shows how temples in Japan market themselves and the efficacy of their rites through events like festivals. Events where the *kaicho* 開帳, sacred items hidden away, and brought out from hiding, are times of increased revenue for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, by controlling access to a particular image or work the temple controls the image's power and boosts its reputation. Such practices were popular in the Tokugawa period, as they gave the laity the ability to receive blessings through sacralized images, in turn providing the religious organizations opportunities to receive donations. But in modern day Japan, the temples can pull from this history to further connect religious practitioners to the past. Through these means, temples have fundraised on the merits of indebtedness to the lay community's ancestry (Reader 1998, 214). Reader identifies a trend of temples further accentuating the cultural and historical roles of temples over the explicitly religious in order to attract pilgrims (Reader 2014, 195), not only providing an interesting frame with which to view the need for temples to "pay their bills", but also demonstrating the connection to a larger history that these temples claim.

Religious organization use practice to foster intimacy between the individual, the social group, and the gods. This intimacy is important, as religious explanations require risk. This intimacy lowers the risk by making the validity of the exchange stronger. Prayer or the recitation of sutras fosters a sense of affection and confidence between an individual and gods. Religious rituals in turn provide a sense of community. These activities create confidence that the religious organization's explanations are valid. During this process, the individual is learning more about the religious culture of the organization. Rodney Stark and Rodger Finke define religious capital as "the degree of mastery of and attachment to a particular religious culture" (120). Consisting of both emotion and culture, religious capital is the intimacy between gods and the individual. As a practitioner becomes more adept in the religious culture of an organization, and becomes more

involved in the stories, beliefs, arguments, and contradictions within the culture, the religion becomes crucial to the practitioner's view of self, both by emotional associations and on reinforcing the truth of the practiced religious culture.

Religious systems or organizations that have a similar system of religious practice or belief to mainstream society have a better chance of winning converts than a group whose religious practices are perceived as radically different. The act of portraying an organization within or outside the good graces of society is a complex dialogue involving religious groups and secular organizations. Stephen Kent gives a model for thinking about how New Religious Movements use and negotiate claims of deviant behavior to position themselves for maximum allocation of resources (397). This constant evaluation and reevaluation of religious groups is done to position themselves in society as a normative religion, and therefore as a trustworthy group. For example, NRMs seek recognition by "obtain[ing] recognition from existing gatekeeper religions" (Kent 398-399). Another common strategy that groups employ is seek out secular institution's approval. "Occasionally groups will deny their religious roots and instead claim connections with other societally acceptable structures or normative practices such as science, business, medicine, psychotherapy, or other forms of healing" (Kent 400). Even established religions adopt these strategies. Japanese Mahayana Buddhism incorporated local deities and customs into their teachings, building a natural bridge from one practice to the other. Kofuku no Kagaku frequently asserted that its "four principle truths", as well as its portrayal of heaven, were completely compatible with science and philosophy (Astley 362).

The Club and Firm

To fit this metaphor onto religious organization's development, religious organizations move from small close-knit communities to more open groups, or in the discourse of economics,

from a club to a firm. Clubs are defined as “the economic model of a limited-size group that requires high investments of commitment by members to benefit from *club goods*, products of the club that those outside the club are excluded from consuming” (Witham 201). Sects and early NRMs are clubs. Firms are “any organization that takes in inputs to produce outputs, has internal personnel as well as outside contracts, and exists to seek profits” (Witham 205). Club formations demand high costs from their members that drive away “free riders”, or those that seek out the benefits of membership without paying the upfront costs (Starke and Finke 143). For New Religions, the costs are often social. Larger mainstream groups can ostracize members of NRMs from the mainstream social order, which also raises costs of membership. Individuals join these groups for the benefits received, seen by the public goods offered by mega-churches, the intangible such as social and cultural alignment, and otherworldly such as a good afterlife or rebirth (Witham 37).

Religious organizations want to develop from this club stage to a firm stage for the simple reason that a larger congregation can do more. Organizations at the firm stage have lower costs of entry and tension. Many members directly support the organization, but as costs of entry become lower, free riders become a larger problem. In order to remain profitable, organizations such as mega-churches sell goods and services like coffee and books. Kofuku no Kagaku’s costs of entry were initially high in both financial aspects -with an entry fee of 3,500 yen, accompanied by a monthly fee of 2000 yen- as well as educational requirements. Prospective members at the earliest point had to show familiarity with Okawa’s works, and as a result were highly motivated, supplying “club goods” to gain access to Okawa’s deeper teachings. As membership requirements became less strenuous, the cost of membership decreased to 1000 yen

per month (Astley 359). Membership changed as well, with the costliest demand moving from educational requirements to social ostracism.

Club movements by definition exist in tension with their surroundings. As tension is equivalent to deviance: Steven Kent shows how deviance is not an arbitrary category, but a moving target that different groups use in order to compete for and distribute resources (397). The higher levels of tension a group has, the higher social costs one needs to pay to be a member (Starke and Finke 144). In this way, if a group is set aside as separate from the mainstream, the social costs will be higher. In the Japanese context, sitting outside the mainstream carries an incredibly high cost.

The religious mainstream still must negotiate its actions, but may frame its activities outside of purely religious frames. Japanese temples offer several goods and services to trade. But the religious authenticity of such services has been the subject of debate. As NRMs are criticized on the basis of their means of revenue, profit carries with it a stigma. Ian Reader considers *ema* an inherently religious token that hosts a wide variety of secular figures and traditional religious imagery (1991). Interestingly, Richard Anderson shows that monks who staffed these temples did not consider *ema* religious, and sold them for financial necessity and as a cultural trinket (1991). While the debate about what constitutes religion rages on, there is no doubt that *ema* is a large source of revenue for temples. Furthermore, positioning *ema* as secular or as a cultural item insulates temples from criticism around profit. As religious organizations have special tax considerations, Kofuku no Kagaku maximized on its potential income by self-publishing books –both allowing for incredible income for the organization, as well as opening it up to criticism. The threat of religious inauthenticity as a result of profit exists against the need for profit, and being within the accepted mainstream grants powerful advantages.

Constructions of Religion and Capitalism

There is a whole aspect of religious choice that is shaped by societal factors, and the economic view of religion cannot accurately represent this side of an individual's religious life. Attempting to explain why someone may pick one religion or place of worship over another with the religious marketplace can be done in terms of "variations in payoffs or satisfactions, but no more than that" (Stark and Fink 41). For example, while a majority of Japanese would not consider themselves religious in the doctrinally specific sense that the Japanese word *shukyo* implies, many Japanese have a host of otherworldly beliefs outside of an "essentialist" frame of discourse (Kasulis 14). In Iceland, frequently cited as the paradigm of a secular society, church attendance on Sunday is incredibly low –also a trend in other Scandinavian countries (Witham 156, Bruce 36). Yet the participation of the individual in religious life is in seasonal pilgrimage, and the Icelandic personally hold a great variety of spiritual beliefs. As religion - far from being a cultural constant - varies from culture to culture, the conceptualization of religious practice should be taken in tandem with cultural considerations.

The modern construction of religion in Japan was borne out of a political necessity. On Commodore Perry's grand entrance to Japanese shores, the Harris Treaty was presented to the Japanese that sought to guarantee religious freedom for Americans in Japan. As Japanese translators did not have an equivalent term to religion, *shukyo* 宗教 was created, and the discourse surrounding its adoption paid special attention to the political and ideological issues of the time. Early Japanese thinkers had reasoned that there was no religion in Japan, as Buddhism was an extension of political power, Confucianism was a system of (outmoded) ethics, and Shinto was not a fully formed religion (Josephson 193).

For the Japanese state, the development of the term *shukyo* ran parallel to the project of modernity. The state constructed a view of religion as belonging in the private sphere, in contrast to a secular sphere (which contained cultural values) and sought to weed out practices that were viewed as superstitious (Josephson 176). This was done to maintain Shinto practices as cultural, to allow Buddhist institutions to survive, and to grant the state the authority to regulate threatening groups.

At the time of the development of *shukyo*, *kokutai* was very much a guiding principle for the state, and it pervaded the discourse on how religion should relate to society. The state's circumscription of what was and was not religion was done in the service of the Tokugawa and new Meiji state. The network of ideological and political elites framed religious groups as a potentially socially destabilizing force, and relegated the freedom of religion to the private sphere. Public religion potentially could be regulated. Religious organizations that were serviceable to the state's project of modernity were allowed, while heretical and superstitious groups (including Christianity) were regulated. The state would assert that the leaders of such groups were leading people astray (Josephson 184). Modern criticisms of NRM similarly depict them as socially destabilizing groups who either trick their members or misunderstand reality or doctrine.

Where does the secular arise? The distinction between the sacralized and the secularized spheres are historical movements, embedded within political competition and economic motives. Indeed, the notion of religion and the secular as separate entities is a modern development, come about in a political divide alongside rationalization (Dawson 583). In Japan, the ideas of secularization occurred at the same time as religion, with both concepts created to grant Christianity the right to be a religion, to allow the state to preserve the political power of Shinto,

and to distinguish between a third group of practices that were neither religion or secular, but instead were culturally backwards practices (Josephson 251).

In the Japanese context, the secular was employed in service to modernization. The secular was grounded in scientific “truth”, and was used to classify and designate separate spheres that were easy to regulate. Instead of eliminating Shinto as religion, the state marked it as a secular truth (Josephson 137). The Meiji state – which sought a unified national identity centered around the emperor - saw “religion” to be a political destabilizer and a threat to the state, and regulated and persecuted NRMs as well as Buddhism, Christianity, and folk beliefs (Josephson 186). Similarly, Shinto’s secular nature was developed to rally the nation around the emperor and make it an unquestionable practice. The project of modernization required a unified nation, and the promotion of Shinto secularism was a means to this.

The system of elites and intellectuals who were trained at the best universities and who staffed the highest echelons of the public and private sectors was deeply entrenched in the post-war economy. MITI played a central role between labor and management by “controlling the competition among domestic corporations” (Lukacs 5). Nicknamed Japan Incorporated Derisively nicknamed Japan Incorporated by western critics, the collaboration between the public sphere and the private sphere was a key component in Japanese politics and economy (Fisker-Neilson 10). While the state’s interest in promoting economic growth is undeniable, the stream flowed in the opposite direction as well. After a career in the bureaucracy, high-ranking public servants would enter high paying positions in the corporate world. This practice, called descending from heaven, or *amakudari* (天下り) show the interconnectedness of the public and private spheres. For the state, the social order and economic stability were roughly analogous. The valorization of middle class

consciousness in the media served to bring a workforce together in the service of the private sector.

The distinction between the economic and religious spheres is not universal. Market exchanges are portrayed as impersonal events, which contrast with the personal morality found in religion. Yet the concept of separate religious and economic spheres is a product of modernity. Islamic law required each “market exchange” to be done face to face (Witham 170). Max Weber looked to the Calvinist belief system to explain the Protestant work ethic (Witham 161). Jesus called for the wealthy to give to the poor on moral grounds, while the Buddha forbade the Sangha from physically handling money. These examples point to connections between religion and economics, as well as the practice of religious organizations to apply moral values to market exchanges. The randomness of the marketplace apparent in Adam Smith’s invisible hand provides an avenue that religious movements use. People worried about job security or business ventures in Thailand seeking guidance from fortune (Comaroff and Comaroff 21). Prosperity gospels align religious virtue with financial success, supplying a spiritual explanation not only for disparities in the global economy, but a way with which an individual can acquire wealth. The blending of religion and economics is a common practice.

A frequent critique of religious groups, including New Religious Movements, is that religions that collect excess profit are inauthentic. Indeed, Christian prosperity gospel is frequently criticized for portraying faith as a stepping-stone for economic gain, and as a perversion of doctrine. In Thailand, the Dhammakaya temple’s New Religious *Monument* drew heavy criticism for the advertising methods used in its construction, as well as the temple’s accrued wealth, pointing to a corruption in the values of the temple (Scott 2). As these institutions are associated with mainstream religious traditions, the specific groups are seen as

having diverged from the correct way. For Japanese NRMs however, this discourse works itself out by portraying a leader as a charlatan or an organization as ignorant. As NRMs have a highly centralized leadership, criticism of the group or leader is equivalent to criticizing the validity of the teaching. This discourse has its roots in the discourse of “heretical” religions, superstitious groups, and the activities of NRMs such as Reiyu-kai -who were raided, and were discovered to be hoarding cocaine and gold bars, à la Scarface (McFarland 77). While groups like Reiyu-kai were by no means the norm, the Japanese press implicitly portrayed them as such.

For example, Aum Shinrikyo’s actions quickly made it the poster child of the danger’s NRMs might pose. Ian Reader views the Aum affair as a watershed moment, where the policies of the 1946 Japanese constitution (where religious institutions were guaranteed protection from the state) were abandoned in favor of more oppressive policies (2001, 227). While this may be true for the state, the media portrayal of NRMs has been negative from before the war. As stated earlier, the controversies between NRMs and older heretical and superstitious traditions have similar elements. For one, they represent a potentially destabilizing influence. While the Aum affair may seem to have created an anti-cult movement (Ian Reader 2001; 225), distrust of NRMs had already been prevalent due to media self-censorship of NRMs, portraying them only in a negative light. Further, Soka Gakkai’s political ambitions are undercut by the “religious” nature of their political party, which was widely mocked in the tabloid press (Fisker-Nielson 94). While the Aum affair did create incredible animosity toward NRMs, distrust of these groups has long been a part of the Japanese religious landscape.

Stephen Kent gives a model for thinking about how New Religious Movements use and negotiate claims of deviant behavior to position themselves to allocate resources or to deny others resources (397). It is a process of constant evaluation and reevaluation by different groups

to position others as deviant and implicitly place themselves as morally normative. As stated earlier, groups seek recognition from gatekeeper groups, and will deny their religious roots and instead claim connections with societally acceptable structures or practices like science (Kent 400).

Kofuku no Kagaku employed these strategies in positioning itself against other religious groups. The constant tension that different religious and secular groups place upon one another not only is deployed in an attempt to access resources, it is done to limit others' access to those very same resources. Aum Shinrikyo and Kofuku no Kagaku competed for a very specific group: authorities on religion. But this explanation of why groups criticize one another is divorced from larger societal concerns. In Rachelle Scott's work on the Dhammakaya temple, she focuses particularly upon how criticism of the temple existed within concerns about real Thai Buddhism, as well as the Asian financial crisis (3). Such discourses of legitimacy cannot be separated from these external contexts.

H. Neill McFarland, in his book *Rush Hour of the Gods*, shows that the New Religions emerged in the face of large changes in society that had shaken the status quo. McFarland writes, "because there were many aspects of the New Religions that seemed base and unsavory, the press and the public had an unsympathetic attitude toward them...There were many desperate people in Japan after the war. The established religions seemed incapable of helping them" (67). The club goods such as social alignment that these religions provided were valuable to those joining the NRMs, while the "deregulation" of the religious marketplace afforded by war's end allowed these New Religions a space to flourish (McFarland 52). The relationship between the media and New Religious Movements sits largely unchanged. Both before and after the war, the NRMs created a sense of community that had the potential to undermine the authority of the

established power structure, making them especially dangerous to the uniformity needed for Japans postwar economic growth.

Kofuku no Kagaku

The fanfare accompanying Kofuku no Kagaku's seemingly overnight appearance in 1991 was a full blown advertising campaign, with billboards, newspapers, and stickers in taxis sporting taglines such as would be found in a political campaign: *Jidai wa ima, Kofuku no Kagaku* 時代は今、幸福の科学 (The era is now, Happy Science) (Astley 350). Accompanying this campaign were two books, each millenarian in topic: Allah's Great Warnings (*Ara no daikeikoku*, アラーの大警告) and Nostradamus' s Warnings of Dread (*Nosutoradamusu senritsu no keiji*, ノストラダムス戦慄の揭示). These books topped the best sellers list for the first half of 1991, and were so popular that several bookstores opened an Okawa Ryuho section dedicated to his many collected works and tapes, which covered a range of topics on philosophy, morality, and religion (Astley 351). Okawa himself was one of Japan' s top 100 taxpayers for 1991, an impressive and worrying fact for many Japanese (Astley 358). With this sudden popularity, Kofuku no Kagaku became the focus of nonstop media coverage (which the organization used to its advantage), and began to receive criticism from the media, academics and other NRMs about its understanding of Buddhist doctrine and the mental soundness of Okawa. Kofuku no Kagaku in turn criticized other groups and institutions, and acted as a overseer for good taste.

If we use the markers of New Religious Movements derived from an understanding of heretical religions and superstitious groups, Kofuku no Kagaku easily fell into the NRM category. Its dynamic and polemical leader Okawa Ryuho was painted as both a money hungry trickster in charge of a business venture, and a mentally disturbed individual. Kofuku no Kagaku's novel religious view and worldly orientation fit into stereotypes of "superstitious" groups that were said to trick confused or uneducated individuals. When Kofuku no Kagaku became embroiled with the publishing company Kodansha, it also fit the image of socially disruptive NRMs.

Okawa Ryuho and Centrality

Okawa Ryuho is the founder and main spiritual authority of Kofuku no Kagaku. New Religious Movements are commonly founded by singular figures who become synonymous with the organization as a whole. Okawa - Kofuku no Kagaku's central leader - presents himself as a reincarnation of the Buddha, as well as the Greek god Hermes and other figures from Kofuku no Kagaku's constructed past. He also claims to be a physical embodiment of El Cantare, a ninth level spiritual being (Astley 364). He is a charismatic figure who is the source of Kofuku no Kagaku's doctrine. Okawa is usually associated with his suit, which sets him and his organization apart from older established religions. Indeed, his trademark suits reflects his background and signifies Kofuku no Kagaku's modernity.

Okawa's background is unique among NRM founders, as he came from relative affluence. Before embarking on his "career" as a religious leader, he worked for the trading company Tomen, and studied at Tokyo University. As a young boy, Okawa saw himself as mediocre, and would study long hours to be a diplomat or scholar. For college, he moved to Tokyo and attended Tokyo University, where he entered his "first stage in the 'awakening' of wisdom". He modeled his life after Kant by walking for an hour composing poetry, spending an hour at an *onsen* reflecting on the day, and then purchasing two books to spend the afternoon reading them. After three years at Tokyo University, Okawa failed entrance exams into civil service, and started work at the Tomen trading company.

In 1981, before entering into Tomen, Okawa experienced what he would later describe as his "Buddha Enlightenment". Nikko, one of Nichiren's disciples, communicated with Okawa by using Okawa's writing. A week later, Okawa received communication from Nichiren himself, with the three commands "love others, nurture others, forgive others" (Astley 346). After this, Okawa received messages from a variety of different spirits such as Jesus, Shinran, Moses, Nostradamus, and Confucius. Okawa recorded these conversations and eventually turned them into his first publications. The "second stage in the 'awakening of wisdom'" took place as Okawa was in New York for English training. His extensive reading history coalesced at once, and Okawa's poor perceptions of himself dissipated.

He returned to Japan, and was put in charge of several banks, but in 1986 various spirits advised him to leave the company and focus on teaching God's truth, advice he promptly followed. At this point, Okawa founded Kofuku no Kagaku and began publishing books of all sorts, which outlined the doctrine of the soon to be officially recognized religion.

Okawa's beginnings are distinctive in that one of the sources of his knowledge is his mastery of literature, philosophy, and religious materials. Indeed, Okawa's powers as a medium allowed him insight into many of the works from which he claimed inspiration. His mastery of these works contrasts with the experiential nature of other NRMs founders' revelations. Helen Hardacre, when identifying patterns in New Religious Movements, shows that wisdom is usually based upon experiential forms of learning over literacy of a doctrine (21). Indeed, this is not only a common aspect of mainstream religions, found in various forms of Buddhism as well as Shinto (Kasulis 9), but found in the stories of secular figures such as Aida Makoto³ and Haruki Murakami. Later groups (particularly Aum Shinrikyo) would criticize Okawa on his understanding of doctrine, which was damaging due to the means of Okawa's "awakening of wisdom".

Okawa started Kofuku no Kagaku as an institute dedicated to learning God's Truth. In this early stage the group considered itself more a "graduate school of life" than an official religion (Astley 356-357). This early period is the club stage: the group concentrates on building membership and refining doctrine, and the club supplied club goods through social alignment and community. Okawa had a personal hand in instructing and working with these early

³ From Aida Makoto's Exhibition at Mori Tower in Roppongi Hills, which ran from November 2012 to March 2013. Aida Makoto explained his "awakening" as occurring while riding in his friend's car. He couldn't explain his experience, but it made him understand what he wanted his art to be. He said he understood everything at that moment.

members, fostering a strong sense of community. The group's earliest methods of granting membership were based on a rigorous examination process, wherein prospective members would have to read ten of Okawa Ryuho's books on spirituality and then write their impressions. The organization's officials, including Okawa, would examine the applications and determine whether or not to accept prospective members. Those who did not gain membership could only reapply after an extended period, lending the membership a motivated and active character. As membership grew, the organization created a system of specialized training seminars that distinguished between regular members and advanced members. This created an organizational hierarchy with which members could rise, giving the organization a system for training teachers.

At this early juncture, Okawa's active involvement (and the centrality of Okawa's teachings) oriented individuals unwaveringly under Okawa. Okawa revealed himself as an incarnation of El Cantare at the 1991 Birthday Festival, and later solidified this pronouncement at the different El Cantare Festival, emerging not in the suit with which he was usually associated, but with robe, crown, and scepter (Astley 362). While before this point Okawa was only a vehicle for spirits, he became the source of Kofuku no Kagaku's spiritual authority. However, Okawa's entrance into the religious landscape was met with criticism. Okawa's regal appearance was uncharacteristic of the early religion, and the change in character provided fodder for the press. More harshly, Okawa and his teachings came under heavy criticism. Asahara Shoko of Aum Shinrikyo wrote a book by the name of *The True Buddha's Teachings are This! Kofuku no Kagaku's Members, Please Listen!* (*Genjitsu no budda no oshie wa koda! Kofuku no Kagaku no kaiinyo, kikinasai!* 真実の仏陀の教えはこうだ！幸福の科学の会員よ、聞きなさい！) on Okawa's "misunderstanding" of the eightfold path (Astley 378). The weekly magazine *Friday* published a series of articles that claimed Okawa sought help for a mental

condition (Astley 369). 1991 also saw Okawa become one of Japan's highest taxpayers, which opened up criticism that Kofuku no Kagaku was more interested in money than religion (Astley 348).

In these examples Okawa Ryuho's person was called into question by two familiar means. On one hand, the articles featured in *Friday* depicted Okawa as being mentally defective. While these articles were revealed to be fraudulent (Astley 348), the essence of their criticism (and Kofuku no Kagaku's reaction) were incredibly damaging to their public perception. The articles implicitly labeled Kofuku no Kagaku as a "superstitious" organization that rejected scientific knowledge. "Superstitious" groups were seen as standing in the way of progress because they opposed "civilization and enlightenment" (*bunmei kaika* 文明開花), and were seen as standing in the way to progress (Josephson 169). If *bunmei kaika* was a means to transform and create a harmonious society, these superstitious religions were socially destabilizing forces.

On the other hand, Asahara Shoko's criticism that Okawa fundamentally misunderstood Buddhist doctrine is important mainly because of Asahara himself. Asahara gained respect from many academics and influential Japanese for both undergoing ascetic practices and for being familiar with Buddhist doctrine (Astley 368). As Asahara had obtained recognition from "gatekeeper groups", Asahara's criticism was successful in labeling Kofuku no Kagaku as a deviant group. The criticism that Okawa did not understand Buddhist doctrine (or the teachings of the spiritual beings he cited) is reminiscent of the religious communities' attacks on the "superstitious." It further draws on

longstanding notions of heresy by claiming that Okawa's teachings are a perversion of a correct doctrine. Put another way, the religious establishment portrayed Okawa as a charlatan fooling his followers, as he was not an authentic religious leader. Looking at Okawa's substantial income would lend this claim credibility based upon the idea that "authentic groups" are removed from the religious sphere. Superstitious and heretical groups are antithetical to social harmony, and are threatening to society.

Novel Cosmology, Familiar Worldview

Kofuku no Kagaku's reaction to the *Friday* incident put it into the narrative of a socially disruptive group. But the worldview of Kofuku no Kagaku placed it into the tradition of other NRMs that sought to change society through self-cultivation. Its novel pantheon set it apart, and was instrumental in designating it as a New Religious Movement by placing the group in high tension—which it sought to lower by aligning its beliefs to Buddhist terms.

Kofuku no Kagaku's cosmology has been topic of heavy criticism. Kofuku no Kagaku asserts that the physical world in which humanity resides is not the real world. Indeed, recognizing that the spiritual world is real is one of the most important parts of Kofuku no Kagaku's doctrine. When someone dies, they carry with them the mind that they cultivated in "this world". The more cultivated a mind is, the better afterlife it obtains. The fourth dimension is time, and is also hell. It contains individuals who deny the existence of the spiritual world, and live for worldly gain. The fifth dimension is the dimension of spirituality and goodness, where good people reside. The sixth dimension is the realm of the knowledge of God, where those who have knowledge of the divine reside. The seventh dimension is the dimension of altruism, eighth the dimension of mercy, and the ninth the dimension of the universe. This hierarchy has changed

over time in response to criticism from outside groups, which makes unraveling how the hierarchy has changed a topic of research all in itself. However, Kofuku no Kagaku entered a renegotiation period where it aligned its doctrine to Buddhist discourse, and steeped its existing doctrine with Buddhist terminology (Astley 369).

Kofuku no Kagaku's hierarchy is an attempt to bring many different religions into one, with the beings that attained the highest mastery of God's truth being "Moses, Sakyamuni, and Jesus Christ" (Astley 363). When we consider how religious organizations seek to make their gods dependable, creating a hierarchy including all gods of one sort or another allows potential members to preserve a small amount of their religious capital. Furthermore, placing different religious traditions into one pantheon allows religious organizations to subsume individuals who may have a variety of preferred explanations about the world into one group. And while this served to lower the costs of entry into the group, the realignment into Buddhist terms attempted to lower tension by placing the organization alongside mainstream religious practices.

On a TV appearance on *Asamade Namaterebi* (朝まで生テレビ), members of Kofuku no Kagaku, dressed like salary-men in suits (in distinction to the more traditional clothing of Aum Shinrikyo members also present). Matsugi Fuminori, the "leadership division director" (*shidokyoku kyokudo* 指導局局長), explained Kofuku no Kagaku as "a gathering of people to understand the truth of Happiness" (SnakeCollection25). Further, Fuminori outlines the four principle truths of happiness, which are love (*ai* 愛) knowledge (*chi* 知), Self reflection (*hansha* 反省), and development (*hatten* 発展) (SnakeCollection25). Kofuku no Kagaku's understanding of Happiness sees the development of a mind that understands the "happiness that penetrates this world and the other world" as of the greatest importance. Such a mind is free of anger, anxiety, and desire for worldly things. Kofuku no Kagaku extends itself onto society by attempting to

create a utopia where everyone has heard of happiness (Fukai 156). Furthermore, Kofuku no Kagaku portrays materialism and atheism as evil on the basis that they deny the existence of a spiritual world (Fukai 156). On this premise, Kofuku no Kagaku distinguishes between a correct teaching and an incorrect teaching (which promotes worldly gain or denies the existence of the spirit world). This allows Kofuku no Kagaku the moral authority to become involved with political and social issues, as well as positioning itself against other competing religious traditions.

Hardacre identifies some form of the following patterns of action as being a part of NRMs: the idea that “other people are mirrors,” the exchange of gratitude and repayment of favor, the quest for sincerity, the adherence to the paths of self-cultivation (22). The idea that “others are mirrors” means that if an individual has a conflict of some kind with another person, the individual is just as much to blame as the other. These conflicts are the cause of psychological and physical damage in many cases, and so an individual must look to the self to understand the problem. Kofuku no Kagaku’s concept of love has traits similar to this. Love is considered the most important of the four principles, as it asks the individual to give love. Kofuku no Kagaku teaches that many people crave love, and as a result take love from others. But the correct path is the opposite, and individuals should give love, as “the love you give becomes yours” (Fukai 158). More importantly, this concept places the individual with the responsibility in interpersonal conflicts, and makes the individual in control of this outcome.

The exchange of gratitude is the acceptance of the social order, and the gratitude toward the religious leader for blessings. Kofuku no Kagaku’s principle of knowledge says that the individual cannot correct wrong thoughts without knowing the teachings of God’s truth. God’s truth is related closely to Okawa’s teachings. Literacy in Okawa’s works (as well as the

traditional eightfold path and the ten commandments) is seen as necessary for an individual's growth. In these manners, *shi* can be roughly analogous to the path of self-cultivation.

The quest for sincerity seeks to make action reflect the mind. Indeed, this is a prevalent notion throughout Japanese religions. For New Religious Movements, the cultivation of self may still be rooted in ideas of purity, or to remove barriers between the self and action. Kofuku no Kagaku's third principle, self-reflection, seeks to develop the individual by looking at the self and seeing how one can better develop a happy mind. This path is important because Kofuku no Kagaku believes that the individual chooses his or her own struggles in life to improve themselves. Indeed, this concept relates to viewing others as a mirror, as well as the path of self-cultivation.

Lastly, adherence to the path of self-cultivation is the constant development of the self. Kofuku no Kagaku's four principle truths of happiness are similarly correlated. Kofuku no Kagaku's development asks individuals to constantly adjust and improve themselves, which is not only the quest for sincerity, but also an adherence to the path. These four principles work together to make a mind clear of any negative thoughts.

These four principles are the main means by which the individual develops the self and works toward Kofuku no Kagaku's end goal. The reason for Okawa's founding Kofuku no Kagaku stems from a conviction to usher in a new age by creating a utopia on earth. This goal orients the group within society, and with an obligation to society. Hardacre's conception of the self in NRMs is one where the self sits within the individual, and the adherence to certain practices will transform society (Hardacre 15). Such a religious organization would be aware of its capacity (and indeed its obligation) to act as a force of change in society. Kofuku no Kagaku's utopian rhetoric sets it in conflict with the social order.

Kofuku no Kagaku's orientation and focus upon the individual as a means to effect social change was attractive to those who were disillusioned with the political and economic climate of the period. This is not a great departure from accounts offered for why NRMs emerged in the post war period and earlier (McFarland). The new assertive selves promoted by media aligned with themes of self-cultivation prominent within Kofuku no Kagaku and other NRMs. While Kofuku no Kagaku's spiritual hierarchy was novel, its syncretic nature allowed it to claim authority from a multitude of gods, while the means of self-cultivation were similar to other prominent religious traditions.

Kofuku no Kagaku and other NRMs' capacity to act as social destabilizers placed them in tension with the mainstream culture. Kofuku no Kagaku's conflict with Kodansha cemented anxieties that NRMs could impact the status quo. While Aum Shinrikyo's actions had more of a substantial impact on NRM's public perceptions, Kofuku no Kagaku's conflict with Kodansha was the organization's entrance into the social sphere.

Kofuku no Kagaku's Community Involvement

Kofuku no Kagaku was criticized heavily for its actions in dealing with Kodansha, the company that publishes *Friday*. Many members of Kofuku no Kagaku claimed Kodansha's articles caused them mental anguish, and 3,000 Kofuku no Kagaku members filed suit. Calls and faxes from Kofuku no Kagaku members poured into the company for several days, and Kodansha reported that Kofuku no Kagaku's interference in day to day activities cost the company money, and accused Kofuku no Kagaku of obstructionism. Kofuku no Kagaku also filed suit against Kodansha for libel, and in turn Kodansha countersued Kofuku no Kagaku.

But heavy fallout from this controversy caused Kofuku no Kagaku to downsize and realign its doctrine with Buddhism, and Buddhist services such as the *gohonzon* and funeral rituals became available at Kofuku no Kagaku's buildings (Astley 370).

The Kodansha incident also demonstrated Kofuku no Kagaku's ability to act within civil society. While Kofuku no Kagaku's methods were frowned upon, many people shared their criticism of unethical media practices. Although the damage done by the *Friday* incident – when compounded by the criticism Kofuku no Kagaku faced from other religious groups – prompted Kofuku no Kagaku to restructure and revise, the organization did not shy away from future activism. Instead, Kofuku no Kagaku emerged in 1994 with a series of programs and activities that gained higher recognition.

For example, Kofuku no Kagaku instituted an “anti-hair nude” (*han hea nuudo* 反ヘアヌード) campaign. Japanese laws require the genital areas of female models in magazines to be blurred out, but unblurred photos of a fully nude model were published with the justification of artistic expression. To protest the media's disregard for the law, Kofuku no Kagaku staged a series of demonstrations boasting 70,000 participants, which Kofuku no Kagaku cite as heavily influencing the formation of the Media Ethics Research Group (Astley 373). Kofuku no Kagaku even became involved in the political realm by creating The Association for the Protection of the Nation from Heretical Religions

(*Jakyo kara kokusei wo mamoru kai* 邪教から国政を守る会) where Kofuku no Kagaku claimed that the nation was being infected by heretical religions: Soka Gakkai's Komeito – who was in the midst of controversy – specifically (Astley 374). It is important to note that Kofuku no Kagaku was not just acting as an arbiter of good taste, it was positioning itself to act as a religious gatekeeper by claiming that Soka Gakkai was a heretical group. These actions are natural extensions of Kofuku no Kagaku's attempt to position itself as a socially active organization with the capacity to effect positive change.

In general, the public saw Kofuku no Kagaku's actions in the *Friday* scandal as a portent of the group's capacity to disrupt the social order. When *shukyo* was being discussed, one concern faced was that these heretical or superstitious groups would sow social unrest and interfere with the affairs of the state. Without forgetting that Kofuku no Kagaku and New Religious Movements seek to change society through the cultivation of the self, acting as a social destabilizer seems inevitable. The belief system stressed the individual in relation to the rest of society, and claimed that society would be transformed.

The development of the Japanese concept of religion relegated it to the private sphere. Religious organizations that posed a danger to the project of modernization were banned or outlawed. Even Buddhism experienced a period of persecution. Religious leaders considered threatening to the society were removed, imprisoned, or outlawed by a variety of laws and regulations

(Josephson 167). These laws protected the project of modernity by stopping superstitious or heretical religions from interfering with the project of modernity.

Similarly the label of New Religious Movement brings with it associations that discredit religious groups. But with the traditional means of social alignment losing their appeal, and changing notions of self placing the individual in control rather than in a position of being controlled, these New Religions offered individuals a way to assuage concerns about the state of Japan, as well as the of the world. Japan's global perspective created interest in the happenings around the world. Kofuku no Kagaku met this need while retaining traditional practices.

To draw on the model of the religious marketplace, when religions are founded they are in a state of tension with their surroundings. This tension drives away free riders, providing for the creation and distribution of club goods. Tension is an important part of the early club stage religious formation. And yet this tension, perceived as a destabilizing force, is one of the anxieties that inform our understanding of Japanese New Religious Movements. Effectively, by identifying the New Religious Movements such as Kofuku no Kagaku as outside of the mainstream, the discourse prevents groups founded to change society from doing precisely that. ¥

Conclusion

In Kofuku no Kagaku's history it moved from a small club formation to a more open group. However, the web of labeling that the organization found itself within severely limited it. By setting Kofuku no Kagaku within the older narrative of heretical and superstitious groups, these organizations raised the social costs of membership for Kofuku no Kagaku. And when Kofuku no Kagaku began acting as the arbiters of good taste against other NRMs and media outlets, it joined its own critics in the game of labeling.

Further, higher levels of unrest marked the economic and social climate of this period. Individuals looked to these NRMs as a means with which to effect social change. Kofuku no Kagaku's community involvement may have proven it to be a socially disruptive group, but it equally provided a vision of a better society to which its members worked toward.

The discourse about NRMs worked as a delegitimizing agent. In the economic model, New Religions emerge as a response to societal factors. These groups are marked by high tension with their surroundings, as they are often critical about some aspect of the mainstream social alignment. The discourse of NRMs dismisses such criticisms by delegitimizing the criticism and the growth of the group.

In this way, the fears and associations with heretical and superstitious groups work to insulate the existing status quo, and therefore power structure, from criticism. The discourse of mainstream society set specific roles that worked in service to economic growth. When these roles became less applicable to an individual's everyday life, they turned to alternative means of self-alignment. The discourse of NRMs in effect raised the social costs of Kofuku no Kagaku. The further labeling by the multitude of media, religious organizations, and religious authorities pushed these costs higher.

While the NRM label may seek to be descriptive, it sets aside organizations as separate from the mainstream. This is perhaps a non-negotiable source of tension. For Kofuku no Kagaku, both the term's negative connotations and the media's relationship to the organization both evidence the inescapable tension that these groups find themselves in.

Kofuku no Kagaku may not survive Okawa Ryuho's passing. The organization relies upon his charismatic style. But retaining members past the point of his "departure," while absolutely possible, may prove to be difficult if the organization is kept within high levels of tension. For mainstream groups, evoking such tension would limit the growth of emergent religious organizations.

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