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The Armagedon of Oomu-Shinri-Kyo

―Terrorism at the end of a World―

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Introduction:

Oumu-Shinri-Kyo(I will use the Japanese transliteration of Aum, Oumu), one of the new religions in modern Japan, practiced terrorism under the instructions of its Guru, Kosho Asahara.. This new religion was typical in Japanese history where new shamanist religions, Shinto and Buddhist, were mobilizing subaltern groups who were unable to adapt to the rapid modernization of Japan at the end of the 20th century.

The Oumu-Shinri-Kyo was sharing with other subaltern religions, the critique of the political economic order of modernizing Japan which gave birth to a new modernizing elite, alienating the traditional subaltern communities, since the creation of the modern

State of Meiji Japan, especially after the defeat of 1945 followed American Occupation and the rise of a new culture accepting the universal values of democracy and human rights.

 I am a Japanese political scientist actively involved in this process of building a non-exclusivist democratic Japan. My analysis is going neither to be based on anthropology or cultural studies but rather on an interest in studying the subaltern ideologies which challenge the existing hegemony. I will follow the example of Antonio Gramsci who studied the role of the Christ on the Mountain, Nazarelli, opposed to the Vatican and was executed fighting on the side of the republicans fighting for the Resorgimento in early-modern Italy.

 My analysis of Oumu-Shinri-Kyo will be biased by my interest in

the subaltern aspect of this strange religious phenomenon, Armagedon

is part of an escatological belief in the end of the World which is “logically”ipossible in the Hindu-Buddhist tradition of a cyclical rebirth of everything. I used the term “at the end of ***one*** world”to try the impossible legitimization of discussing Oumu-Sjinri-Kyo in this Symposium on the end of the world. I am ideologically committed to universal values of human rights, justice and peace, but I will not treat Oumu-Shinri-Kyo as an organization dangerous for human rights, justice and peace. I will try to propose a structural model which helps to understand the geo-historical specificity of the of Oumu-Shinri-Kyo, as a counter-hegemonic new religion in the post-Occupation Japan which was the negation of the Meiji Japanese fascist hegemonic state. For the subaltern public alienated from the Westernized Modern Meritocratic “civil society”of Japan. It was only natural for the believers in the Gurus Asahara Koushou to be “brain-washed” by him. The presentation proposed here, is based on a hypothesis, which needs careful historical analysis. In other words, the presentation does not claim to tell the “truth” about Oumu-Shinri-Kyo terrorist Armagedon. It only proposes one possible interpretation of the attraction on alienated subaltern Japanese of the late 20 century of the counter-hegemonic teaching of this Guru,

He was simply preaching the return to the pre-Occupation Japan of the Imperial and Imperialist Japan. Under the Guru who would replace the Emperor. This Hindu-Buddhist adaptation of the Christian Apocalips in the Judeic encounter with Roman Imperialism was made in Japan where Japanese Animism was encountering American Imperialism. It is necessary to go into the reasons why the author of this report believess that his hypothesis is at least one possible version which makes sense in the mythological world where everything is only imagery according to the Buddhist epistemology.

2. Ohmu-Shinri-Kyo as a New Religion in Japan.

This new religion was different from all the others, in its terrorist practice based on a syncretic mixture of Buddhist, Hindu belief in karma and a Judeo-Christian belief in a catastrophic end of the World. It was also unique by its emulation of the Meiji State, in its belief in a Paternalist religious Leader combined with his mobilization of scientific technological intellectuals, using their scientific knowledge in achieving his violent goals, thanks to the fact that he was the object of their unconditional irrational veneration.

I may propose in a more systematic manner four major aspects of the specificity of the Oumu-Shinri-Kyo (I will use henceforth the abbreviation OSK).

Firstly, there is a specific “spirituality” of OSK. which is its bio-political treatment of Life and Death. Death is important for both the believers and the enemies, who are saved by their death. The believers are united to their Guru through their acceptance to live with Him and to die for Him.

Secondly, the OSK has a specific “ritual” based on means-end rationality in its religious ritualism which is one with its political activism. It was techno-ritualistic in its formation of believers, and approach to non-believers,sympathizers as well as enemies.

Thirdly, the OSK was a religious remedy to the subaltern “fear of freedom” in Errich Fromm sense. The belief in the “Kairos”, ie the, historical moment of the Armagedon where subaltern peoples were given a sense of reassurance to be part of the OSK linked with the specific mission of the Guru in the unfolding of the Armagedon.

Fourthly, OSK was proposing a Utopia which was isomorphic with a past Ideologcal world. The return, unconsciously proposed, corresponded to a return of Japan to its past glory, where all subalterns had a role in building the hegemonic Order. The Utopia was based on the sublimation of the paternalistic clientelist ties with the Guru. Isomorphic to the Meiji Japan ruled by the Emperor, Pater Familias of all the Japanese subalterns who ware his children.

 Tanato-politics, techno-ritualism, Guru-centered Kairos, and Ideological Utopianism are the four aspects which reinforce each other in making the OSK a unique new religion in the post-Occupation Japan

The Bio-political context of OSK:

 OSK was probably the youngest New Religion in Japan.It was started by Asahara Shoukou (henceforth abridged as AS) in 1987. If we look at the bio-political development of modern Japan. This is the fifth phase

Of modern Japan. I will arbitrarily simplify bio-politics in the macro-history of Japan, in terms of the hegemonic treatment of life and death I the modern Japanese State. The opening of modern Japan in 1868 by the Meiji Government, was accompanied by the “liberation”of the low castes of Eta(full of impurity) and Hinin (non-hfisherfoluman)which were making their living, the impure killing and processing of living organisms.Traditional discrimination of Hunters, and fisher-folks, considered morally bad people breaking the rule of non-killing of Buddhism, was removed and were all people were treated equal as members of the “commonners”if they were not of samurai class or nobility. Life and death of humans were officially monopolized by the newly established State which was also monopolizing the bio-political authority controlling all health-care and educational institutions even those built by private initiatives. . The police and the military were the only subjects of the Emperor who were killng or incarcerating peoples, Japanese or non-Japanese.

 All Japanese subjects of the Emperor were offering their lives, either as members of the workforce or the military. Their dedication included dying for he Emperor.The traditional self-killing of the samurai-class was forbidden, but the suicide of General Nogi who wanted to accompany Emperor Meiji in his after life was parised.

The second phase was the 1930s and 40s period of Japanese military expantionism, when bio-politics was identified with tanato-politics. To kill the enemy and to kill oneself for the allies was the bio-political characteristic of this period where the Carl Schmitt principle of friend vs. enemy was prevailing.The consequence was the multiplied terrorism, including the Nanjing Massacre and the “Confort-Women” military-sexual-slavery.

The Third phase came after the 1945 Defeat of Japan which occluded all the above bio-political and tanato-political practices, and built a liberal social-order where the past tanato-politics and bio-politicla discriminations were forbidden and excluded from the public discource.

This bio-politics was based on a rapid urbanization of Japan, with a growing bio-political state protection combined with the growth of a mass-production/mass consumption/mass disposal economy. It was a period where civil society developed a meritocratic bio-politicsm as a reaction to the political student-led anti-US/Japanese hegemony, using

Violence leading to mutual destruction of the different revolutionary factions. This led the post 1960 Japan to a de-politicised civil society only intrestd in biological enjoyment of life in Japan which had a Constitution excluding tanato-politics.

 The highly selective examination system produced subaltern groups who were the object of State social security. The obligation to die for the Emperor or for corporate orgnizations was not imposed, but the obligation to live for the companies was at the basis of meritocratic selelction in the bio-political arena of a mass-society of mass-production/mass-consumption/mass-disposal. This Japanese prosperity led to an influx of foreign workers, including trafficked women. This diversification of the Japanese bio-political scene led to exclusionary reaction against foreigners. The introduction of neo-liberal principles succeeded to reduce the homogenizing State-led auto-poiesis development of Japan. The “bubble economy” with a positive bio-political enjoyment of life by

A large majority became an economic #bubble# which exploded with the growth of the financial global process of rich/poor polarization at the end of the 1980s.

 It is the fourth stage, following the explosion of the bubble economy, which was the bio-political context within which the OSK appeared.Democratic Japan which succeeded to build a prosperous Japan, was no-more attractive to the subaltern Japanese. A wave of revisionist public opinion trend appeared which denounced the occlusion of the first and second stage Japan by the third stage democratic and meritocratic Japanese hegemonic media.

 The great merit of the third stage Japanese bio-politics was its exclusion of tanato-politics. Nobody was expected to die for any reason. Yet everybody was expected to live for their company. Everybody were free, but this created a situation similar to the pre-Hitler Germany where the Fear of Freedom prevailed as so well analysed by Errich Fromm.

 It was inthis psycho-historic moment that the tanato-political message of the OSK played its subaltern mythological role. The exclusion of killing for political obejectives