

Wenn Religionsgemeinschaften zur politischen Reformation ansetzen: Der Fall der japanischen „Kōfuku no kagaku“¹

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Summary

While the relationship between religion and politics has gained more and more attention among social scientists since the early 1980s, the case of Japan has been widely ignored. Given the circumstances (no religious conflicts, constitutional separation of state and religion) this is not surprising, but those religious organizations that participate in various forms in Japanese politics still deserve closer examination as they help us to understand why and how religious groups enter the political world. This article analyzes the „Happiness Realization Party“ (*Kōfuku jitsugentō*), established by the religious „Institute for Research in Human Happiness“ (*Kōfuku no kagaku*) in 2009. From exploring the motivations of the group's political activities, its first steps in the political world as well as the outcome, this paper deducts empirically based hypotheses regarding necessary conditions for the expansion of religious groups into politics. First, the political and social *status quo* of a country or community need to allow for a diagnosis of imminence and grievance. Second, the religious teaching requires a strong orientation towards this world. And third, the religious leadership needs to support the political initiative. The case of the „Happiness Realization Party“ also suggests that political programs deducted from religious teachings tend to contain radical elements and are presented with uncompromising firmness which stems from the religious logic of absolutes. This attitude clashes with the logic of politics and especially in the case of Japan makes it difficult for religious parties to succeed.

Manuscript received on 2010-08-25, accepted on 2011-02-22
Keywords: Religious Parties - New Religions - Japan

Einleitung

Das Verhältnis von Religion und Politik hat beginnend mit der islamischen Revolution im Iran 1979 weltweit an Aufmerksamkeit gewonnen. Die Staaten Asiens stellen in dieser Hinsicht nicht nur aufgrund der hier zu findenden großen Zahl von

¹ Die Fertigstellung dieses Beitrages wurde durch das Erdbeben unterbrochen, das am 11. März 2011 den Nordosten Japans erschütterte, einen zerstörerischen Tsunami zur Folge hatte und dadurch das Atomkraftwerk Nr. 1 in Fukushima zu einer akuten nuklearen Gefahr machte. Obwohl ich mich nach meiner Ausreise aus Japan darum bemüht habe, die Arbeit an diesem Aufsatz zügig abzuschließen, musste ich aufgrund der mir nun nicht mehr zugängigen Materialien inhaltliche Kompromisse schließen. Ich hoffe aber, dass dieser Beitrag durch die hilfreichen Anmerkungen zweier anonymer Gutachter, denen an dieser Stelle herzlich gedankt sei, soviel gewonnen hat, dass er trotzdem der Lektüre lohnt.