

TOWARDS REFLECTIVE COMPARISON —POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN JAPAN AND ROMANIA —

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1.Introduction:Two mountain villages towards comparison

I have been occupied with the study of **Romanian Society and Culture** for just 30 years .I visited Romania for the first time in 1983 and have been many times in Romania.But it was in 1995 that I made first long fieldwork in village in Romania. In pararell, I have been occupied with studies in comparing various societies or countries from the political and religious point of view. I did not know at that time,but there must have been the reason why I had consciously or unconsciously chosen this village as the filedwork place.

As the factors which influenced my choice,I should point out the enviroment where I had spent in youth.I was born in a small mountain village in **Okayama** prefecture in West part of Japan. This village had mild and rich natural environment,but it was not a rich village.It belonged to the administrative unit which had 5000 population and is based on agriculture, commuting labor and so on. Main Religion in this village was Buddhism(Shingon Sect¹ and Souka Gakkai² as a secular group of Nichiren Sect³). Remarkable social problems are flux of population, people's aging ,lack of work places for young people and lack of solidarity as anywhere in coutryside of Japan. Especially,in my village religious division between established religions (Shingon sect and Shintoism)and new religion(Souka Gakkai) was influencial. Soukagakkai was born in 1930's and especially came into law classes after the second world war.It also entered into my village and influenced some families and forced them to deny traditional customs around village shrine.

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¹ Shingon Buddhism is one of the mainstream major schools of Japanese Buddhism and one of the few surviving Esoteric Buddhist.

² Soka Gakkai (Japanese: 創価学会) is a Japanese lay Nichiren Buddhist movement. The movement was founded by educators Tsunesaburō Makiguchi and Jōsei Toda in 1930 as a lay organization belonging to the Nichiren Shōshū Buddhist denomination. Further expansion of the movement was led by its third president Daisaku Ikeda. While Ikeda has been remarkably successful in moving the group towards mainstream acceptance in some areas, the organization is still widely viewed with suspicion in Japan as a cult of personality centered around Ikeda.

³ Nichiren Buddhism is a branch of Buddhism based on the teachings of the 13th century Japanese monk Nichiren (1222–1282).

Because of this personal condition ,I might have chosen a small village in **Maramureş** in Northwest part of Romania as a anthropological fieldwork place in 1995. This village belonged to the community which had about 3000 population and of which the Industry was Agriculture, commuting labor and so on. Villagers' religions were Greek Catholic⁴, Orthodox, and some sects. Social Problems were also here poverty, flux of population, people's aging, lack of work places and various conflicts,especially religious conflicts.

Through my personal experiences, at first it seemed to be easy to understand the situation in village,but in fact there remained a lot of things difficult to understand because of the social and cultural differences between two countries.

I focused on religious phenomenon in my study several years since then and tried to explain the reason of conflicts of people in villages in relation to Romanian society,because conflicts among religious groups became obvious in Romania after the 1989 democratic revolution. For example, relations between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic Church are strained. Leaders in both Churches are involved, as are believers in villages where both churches are present. This conflict has strained the collectivity of many villages and has divided communities into opposing groups. In addition, the number of sect followers has increased since the revolution, and this also a threat to the traditional collectivity of village communities.Through my study about Romanian villages, I reached the conclusion that the religious conflicts in village occured in the social conditions influenced by the politics and people's economic strategy.

Moreover, I found that religions and society in Romania had the deep interactive relations and the people's mentality which support religions was a important factor.It was necessary to realize this relationship and their mentality for the comprehension of Romanian culture and history. With these recognitions, I became more interested in the relation between Religions and Politics and the people itself. At last, it led me to compare Legionary movement with Ketsumeidan movement from political and religious point of view.

2.Comparison of political and religious movements in Japan and Romania

2.1.Historical similarities of two countries:Japan & Romania

The history of Japan and Romania has some similarities.Firstly, Meiji restoration in Japan was in 1868 and the unification of Wallachia and Moldova of

⁴ Or Eastern Catholic Churches are autonomous, self-governing particular churches in full communion with the Pope. Together with the Latin Church, they make up the entire Catholic Church. They preserve many centuries-old Eastern liturgical, devotional, and theological traditions.

Romania was in 1859. It means that starting point as the modern nation is approximative at the same time. Secondly, both countries experienced wars which responded the modern condition. Japan experienced Sino-Japanese war in 1894, the Russo-Japanese war in 1904 and 1st World War from 1914 to 1918. Romania experienced the Balkan war, and the 1st World War from 1914 to 1918 resulting the Unio of Transylvania with Romania in 1918. Thirdly, both were occupied by other country after the 2nd World War. Japan was occupied by USA in 1945 and Romania was occupied by Soviet Army in 1945.

As for the modernization of two countries, the starting point of Japan was Meiji Restoration in 1868 (known as the Revolution, Reform or Renewal), a chain of events that restored imperial rule to Japan in 1868 under Emperor Meiji. Turning point was Defeat in Second World War in 1945 (known as the Pacific War), which brought transformation into a democratic state with a revised democratic Constitution of Japan, after the collapse of the Empire of Japan. Meiji Restoration accelerated industrialization in Japan and led to its rise as a military power by the year 1905, under the slogan of "Enrich the country, strengthen the military". Japan experienced three big wars, the Sino-Japanese war, the Russo-Japanese war and 1st World War.

Democracy and Social crises lead Japan to Fascism. During the 1910s and 1920s, Japan progressed towards democracy movements known as 'Taishō Democracy'. Parliamentary government was not rooted deeply enough to withstand the economic and political pressures of the late 1920s and 1930s during the depression period. State became increasingly militarized, due to the increasing powers of military leaders. Anyone who has formed an association with altering the kokutai (Imperial regime), or the system of private property, and anyone who has joined such an association with full knowledge of its object, shall be liable to imprisonment with or without hard labor, for a term not exceeding ten years.

Political incidents lead to the loss of the liberty of speech and discourse. In the assassination plot in Japan 1932, wealthy businessmen and liberal politicians were targeted. The group chose 20 victims but succeeded in killing only two, former Finance Minister and head of the Rikken Minseitō, Junnosuke Inoue, and Director-General of Mitsui Holding Company, Dan Takuma. The arrest of the assassins led to the discovery of the existence of a civilian ultranationalist group led by Buddhist priest, Nisshō Inoue. The May 15 Incident 1932 (Goichigo Jiken or 5-15 Incident) was an attempted coup d'état on May 15, 1932 which brought the end of Parliamentary politics by assassinations. The February 26 Incident 1936 (Niniroku Jiken or the 2-26 Incident) was an attempted coup d'état on February 26, 1936 which caused Martial law.

Modernization in Romania had begun in middle of the 19th century. Heavily taxed and badly administered under the Ottoman Empire, in 1859, people's representatives in both Moldavia and Wallachia elected the same "Domnitor" (ruling Prince of the Romanians) : Alexandru Ioan Cuza. In an 1866 coup d'état, Cuza was exiled and replaced by Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, who became known as Prince Carol of Romania. In the 1878 Treaty of Berlin, Romania was finally officially recognized as an independent state by the Great Powers. In 1916, Romania entered World War I on the Entente side, after the Entente agreed to recognize Romanian rights over Transylvania, which was part of Austria-Hungary until that time. In May 1918, Romania did not try to continue the war, and negotiated a peace treaty with Germany. In October 1918, Romania joined the war again and by the end of the war, the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires had disintegrated.

Governing bodies created by the Romanians of Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina chose union with the Kingdom of Romania, resulting in Greater Romania. The Union of 1918 united most regions with clear Romanian majorities into the boundaries of a single state. However, it also led to the inclusion of various sizable minorities, including Magyars (ethnic Hungarians), Germans, Jews, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, etc., for a total of about 28% of the population (Magyars mostly in Transylvania; Germans in Transylvania, Bukovina, and Banat; Ukrainians in part of Bessarabia and Bukovina, Bulgarians in Dobrudja).

Two periods can be identified in Romania between the two World Wars. From 1918 to 1938, Romania was a liberal constitutional monarchy, but one facing the rise of the nationalist, anti-Semitic parties, particularly Iron Guard, which won about 15% of the votes in the general elections of 1937. From 1938 to 1944, Romania was a dictatorship. The first dictator was King Carol II, who abolished the parliamentary regime and ruled with his camarilla.

2.2. Points of view for comparison of two movements

Two representative political movements in Japan and Romania was Ketsumeidan movement and Legionary movement. The period of Ketsumeidan movement was from 1924 to 1932. The highlight of this movement was the assassination plot executed in 1932. Extremists targeted wealthy businessmen and liberal politicians. The arrest of the assassins led to the discovery of the existence of a civilian ultranationalist group led by Buddhist priest, Nissho Inoue.

On the other hand, the period of Legionary Movement was from 1927 to 1938. Originally founded by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, in 1927, as the Legion of the Archangel Michael and was led by him until his assassination in 1938. Adherents to

the movement continued various changes of the (intermittently banned) organization's name until the collapse of the group by the attack of the general Ion Antonescu, Leader of Legionary nation.

Points of view for the comparison that I want to insist are (1) Historical significance of the movements, (2) Leaders' characters and inclination, (3) Leaders' mythical experiences, (4) Religious collaborators, (5) Organization, (6) Process of movements, (7) Social backgrounds, (8) Intellectuals around the movements, (9) Reasons of the breakdown of the movements, (10) Supporters' mentality. Among them, what I want to compare especially are (3) Mythical experiences (Nissho Inoue and Ion Codreanu), (4) Religious collaborators, (8) Intellectuals around the movements (Nichirenism network in Japan and Nae Ionescu, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Constantin Noica, Iuguen Ionesco etc. in Romania), (10) Supporters' mentality. These themes came from the interests in my study until now.

I will discuss each point briefly following the works about Ketsumeidan of Ootani [Ootani 2001, 2010] and the works about Legionary Movments of Sumiya and Fujishima [Sumiya 1994, Fujishima 2012]

Firstly, I discuss about the leaders' mythical experiences. The leader of Legionary movement, Codreanu was imprisoned on October 8 in 1923 because of the plot of assassination. The thought of Codreanu (Legionarism) was inspired in this prison. Codreanu was awakened by the mythical experience, Appearance of Angel Michael. It has symbolic meaning in the Christian world. Statue of Michael was sometimes put on the mountain or building because of the image of defender.

The political activities of Codreanu fighting against Jews which was brought by his mythical experience became more religious-oriented and entered into the new steps. He was occupied with the new task to elaborate the Romanian ethnic morality and spirituality as well as to overcome the politicians' corruption. Such a spiritual and serious aspiration for new man attracted the intelligentsia like Eliade, etc.. Codreanu prayed every morning in the chapel of prison and took the Icon of Archangel Michael as the symbol of his activity. Besides, he founded the cross brother group and did various activities through this group.

The leader of Ketsumeidan, Nisshou Inoue, went to China for searching the meaning of life. But he came back from China in vain and found the hatred against the contemporary Japanese society. He went home to dissolve the agony which he had had since his childhood through the meditation in the small cabin from 1922. His hardship did not disappear and grew much more. At last, he remembered the dream during his stay in China and begun to repeat loudly *Nammyouhourengekyou* (Buddhist prayer). He continued this saying everyday with the fear of madness. But

he had the decisive experience finally. He cried Nisshou with no intention. His body was filled with the extreme joy and lightening. He found that every problem was dissolved at that moment.

Both mythical experience had the different religious customs and practices according to Christianity and Buddhism, but seems to be the same character as the shamanic transformation brought by the trans experience. Miracles were seen in the Legionary movement and supernatural thing was told in the Ketsumeidan movement. Nissho was said to have healed many people. The differences between them is that the case of Codreanu is the type of prophet in the tradition of Judaism-Christianism and that the case of Nissho is the converted experience seen in the founder of Japanese new religions.

The most important colleague for Codreanu who had the mythical experience was Mota. He was born in 1902 and became a leader of student movement at university in Cluj. In Legionary movement, he led the Orthodoxism and anti-Judaism. He was known for the translation of Old Testament and participated the Legionary volunteers of General Cantacuzino in Spanish civil war. But he died in war. His death redirected the policy of Legionary movement from the parliamentarism into the religious-oriented movement. A lot of people were influenced by him and joined the Legionary movement. Among them there were many orthodox priests who hesitated to join before his death.

As for the religious tendency of Ketsumeidan, the man whose name was Furuuchi and who got contact with Nishho first and became subleader showed the religiosity. He was a man who had agony, too. He was born in 1901 and graduated the educational school and became a teacher at elementary school. He asked himself why he was born and what is the purpose of life. He became sick until 1928. During his effort to recovery, he was impressed with the personality of Nichiren and dogma of Hokke kyo. Besides, he read the book of Chigaku Tanaka (1861-1939) and found the light of Life. He continued reading and became believer of Nichiren.

The personality of Codreanu attracted many intellectuals including Nae Ionescu, professor of Bucharest university and Eliade. One of the group admiring Codreanu was the people who gathered at the journal Axa including Vasile Marin, Radu Gill. Codreanu became friend with them and was influenced by them. As a result, Legionaries became a sophisticated political group. Another group Criterion was found by Mircea Eliade, Mircea Vulcanescu, Mihail Sebastian, Dan Botta, Constantin Noica. Both groups had common feature that they are anti-semitism, right wing, irrational philosophy, disciples of Nae Ionescu who supported Legionaries by his death. His influence was extremely strong on elites in Bucharest in relation to Legionary movement.

In Japan, it was the Nichirenism⁵ by Chogyu Takayama (1871~1902) and Nichirenism network by intellectuals that contributed the spreading of Nichirenism in Japanese society at that time when Nisho's movement developed. The thought of Takayama who was influenced by Chigaku Tanaka was summarized in the book by Masaharu Anesaki (1873~1949) and became first step for spreading of Nichirenism from Meiji era. Honda found the society to study the book of Nichiren. There were Chigaku, Ryozan, Anesaki, and so on. The number of members was 49 and was increased into 120 next year. Their profession included bureaucrats, officers, prosecutors, educators, doctors, journalists, businessman, artists, writers. Nissho Honda (1867–1931) organized them into the network. Nichirenism network and Nichirenism association became the social basement of spreading the Nichirenism.

Finally, I discuss the people's mentality. It is related to the social background of the movements. Both movements are based on the naive villagers mainly. But in fact intellectuals were the group who had done political activities. From the social point of view, villagers were the conservative existence politically, but it connected intellectuals' emotion and political movements. Intellectuals had the illusion that they could save the poor miserable villagers. But villagers did not understand what intellectuals preached to them.

3. Conclusion: Towards reflective comparison

Finally, I try to summarize the meaning of the comparison which I tried in this paper. I follow the discussion of some anthropologists [Deguchi 2006, Kurita 2006].

Comparison as a method of anthropology is specific to the social sciences in 19th century. But, of course, comparison has been the universal and general attitude in the intellectual activity of human being.

Among them, anthropology assumed commonality of human cultures (identity of human mentality). Besides, anthropology in 19th century divided culture into various elements and tried to compare each element. On the contrary, anthropology in 20th century criticized this method as elementalism and evaluated the systemicity of culture and clarified the relation among cultural elements.

Methodologically, comparison is operation which deals differences on the assumption that common parts can be found in objects by comparison. The possibility of controlling the factors for comparison is believed, but limiting the

⁵ Nichirenism is the term invented by Chigaku Tanaka who belongs to the Kokuchukai in 1901. It is the modern nationalistic and comprehensive Buddhism thought which came from the traditional Nichiren Buddhism reinterpreted and reedited. The idea or dogma of Nichirenism spread in Japanese society by Chigaku Tanaka and Nissei Honda. It influenced on intellectuals, students, women, officers, and people in middle class. [大谷2010]

foactors is criticised because it ignores the each cultural and social context. On the contrary, if the factors are limited according to the area, it is criticised as just a area study.

Next choice of dealing differences is reductionism, which try to understand the difference with the similarities. But it is criticized as ignoring the originality of cultures. On the other hand, relativism, which try to understand the difference with the difference is criticized as totology or lacking of scientific correctness. That comparison is lacking the method is not changeable since 19th century to 20th century.

Nevertheless, we try to understand other cultures according to the cultural categories that we have. The famous sociologist Max Weber who studied the methodology very deeply tried to realize the differences between western world and non western world by using the concept of ideal types. He thought the ideal type is not the concrete entity, but the manipulating concept. If we follow his discussion, comparison is work to find new things in the ordinary objects which can be thought as easy to understand. The important thing is not saying similar or unsimilar, but finding the unexpected things in other cultures by reserving the consciousness of limit of understanding.

Another problem is the attitude of observers who compare the cultures. Comparison is a way of understanding the Others and, at the same time, is the trial of finding something new in the objects that we deal with, as we discussed. Originally, the task of anthropologists is interpreting the Other Cultures. It means that they tried to understand the other cultures and translate the Cultural phenomenon by using the framework of their own cultural categories. So, for anthropologists, comparison is necessity at any time. But comparison is the arbitrary operation because it need selection of factors to compare. There must be the intuition or the interest before selection of the factors for comparison. The intuition or the interest came from the observers' total personality or experiences who are trying to compare the objects. As a result, the observers have to know their tendency or bias to compare cultures before or through comparison.

Discussion come back to political movements in Japan and Romania. Anybody can notices the similarities between Ketsumeidan and Legionary movement as I pointed out. But just similarities can not tell the meaning of both movements. Before anything, we have to fix the point of view and verify our sense of value. So, when we try to compare, we have to be keenly conscious of our intentions and motivations. By limiting the purpose of comparison, we could get the meaningful results.

In my paper, I tried to follow the reason why both countries had taken the road to the fascism. In history, relation of causes and results is not so clear. Some kinds of events brought the affairs into reality by chance. One can not find the

decisive cause of affairs, but we have to search the factors which bring realization of event for the explanation according to our intention.

Summary

The experiences of fieldwork in Romania and the experiences in my childhood led me the comparison of mountain villages in Romania and Japan. The further recognition of the reality about Romanian society made me to study politics and religions in two countries.

Ketsumeidan in Japan and Legionary Movement in Romania represents the radical right wing political and religious movements in interwar period in both countries. Ketsumeidan led by Nishho Inoue assassinated politician and businessman and was dissolution. Legionaries led by Ion Codreanu did assassination at first, but later developed parliamentary activities in vain.

Comparison of leaders' personality, religious tendency of members, intellectuals around the movements and the mentality of people are very attractive themes for me because of my interest in my study.

Comparison could be sometimes seen as arbitray. Because one can compare what he wants to compare, the expected conclusion is fixed before comparison. So, we have to limit the factors to compare and reflect observers' prejudices when we compare. We have to discover something new instead of saying similar or not similar.

In the case of my trial, we can find the limit of the choices of political direction in interwar period for any countries influenced by the modernity.

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