

The Religio-ethical Significance of the “Ikkō-Ikki” Movement

— Group Effect of the Community —

Since the last war was over, a rapid progress has been achieved in the historical study of the Ikkōshū riots in mediaeval Japan. It is mainly because, in a remarkable development of the study of history in the so-called socio-economic method which had long been suppressed in pre-war Japan as the taboo of “Materialism”, scholars have come to be particularly interested in the Ikkōshū riots against the ruling powers in the feudal political system. The socio-economic method, however, pragmatically intended and politically purposed, is inclined to distortion of facts and misrepresentation of their significance.

For example:

- 1) In view of the basis of the riot's arising, special importance is put on the economic conditions at the time, when the characteristics of the Ikkōshū riot can not be distinguished from those of the *Tokusei Ikki* (徳政一揆) and the *Tsuchi Ikki* (土一揆). Hence, the significance of the Ikkōshū riot remains still vague.
- 2) The Ikkō-Ikki has been regarded as an antifeudalist struggle. The fundamental problem, however, remains unsolved as to whether it is “reformation” or “revolution”.
- 3) The contradiction of the movement is the “Feudalization” of themselves, which they opposed.

Formerly, the Ikkō-Ikki was regarded as the selfdefending movement of a religious community. On the other side, after the Second World War the study is rather inclined to deal with the subject without serious considerations of human setting. The present thesis takes up the problem of the socio-ethical consciousness of the movement, which seems to be lacking in the researches being made today. Without explaining the consciousness underlying the peasants, we can not rightly understand the basis of the

riot's arising as well as its essential characters. What on earth was the psychological reason for taking up arms on the part of those Buddhist peasants whose principle should be "non-violence"?

In order to clarify this point, the present author thinks, it is necessary to distinguish between the leading principle of the Ikkō-Ikki and Shinran's teaching, which was supposed to be underlying the peasants' riots.

A religious community is generally believed to consist of people who are individually inspired by the founder's philosophy. However, as a matter of fact, once a religious order, which is no other than a group of people, is formed, something *dämonisch* is produced, apart from the will of each member, in its faith and thought out of its body itself and it in turn regulates the faith and thought of the individual member. In the case of the Ikkōshū riots, too, such a "group effect" dominated over it in the name of the founder, Shinran. The present author pointed out in this thesis the deeprooted contradiction such as the above in the character of the Ikkōshū riots. The group effect of the Ikkōshū riots, as the author pointed out, is revealed in the following two ways: 1) It always put the Ikkōshū order's group interests before those of its individual member: 2) It always kept the Ikkōshū followers closed to the public and fettered them within the confines of the order. Thus, the Shinshū (Ikkōshū) sect's thinking was not always in accordance with that of Shinran himself. There was clearly a discrepancy between them.

Another point the author raises here is the consequences of the defeat the Ikkōshū rioters suffered: How their consciousness was influenced by them and how they affected the history of the Shinshū order thereafter. The consciousness of defeat was supposed to contain for the rioters who had been convinced of the invincibility of fighters for the sake of the Buddha a precious moment for them to know the truthful teaching of the Buddha, but the "demoniacal group effect" prevented them from turning to truth, opening up instead for them a different path to follow.

The present author thinks that, not in the study of the Ikkōshū movement alone, but in historical studies in general, the problem of people's

consciousness should be more emphasized and that the “psychological” study should occupy a very important position in the study of history.

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