

A Historical Study of the Popular Thought in Early Tokugawa Era

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What I am aiming at in this article is to find out the characteristics of the history of the popular thought in early Tokugawa Era, based on the *kanazosi* 仮名草子, a literal work in concerned period.

Pre-modern individuality described as independence of spirit is a thought that one tries to develop his individuality by controlling himself under transcendental authorities. Independence in modern Japan is rather independence in Tokugawa Era than ideological independence, so both them should be though to be different from each other.

In the reformation to Tokugawa Era from medieval age, the authority of united feudal lords prevented the general public from solving various problems for themselves and established the systems would be solved peacefully only by the authority of united fudeal lords, and fulfilled request for the independence of the general public. The general public could cherish some degrees of illusion that they would be free. It seems that the general public coping with such a situation early Tokugawa Era gave a particular characteristic to the independence they had.

At the period of this reformation the church of Buddhism was deprived of its weapons and privilege. But ideologically it was not destroyed, because the people believed in it unconsciously. When the general public tried to

maintain their independence in such a situation, they could not depend on the church of Buddhism. They had to put a new construction on Buddhism, depending on their own thought of Buddhism. This was how the Buddhism was developed by the general public in Tokugawa Era. A further research must be done on its process.

This has something to do with the development of medieval thought. In the latter medieval age a monotheistic religion which created Almighty God was forming so as to seek for the divine immanence and have polytheistically and pantheistically religious feelings. But Almighty God was the god that personified the ultimate principles of the universe, it was transformed into the divine immanence as soon as it was established as a personified god.

Chapter I

In this chapter I, I mention one of the *Kanakyōkunsyo* (lessons written in kana) 仮名教訓書, i. e. the *Singaku-gorinsyo* 心学五倫書 which was written before 1619 and do research on it from the viewpoint of the ideological subject of the general public. In this book the author says “Bad people prosper, while good people suffer poverty,” and tells how to cope with such a reality which is contradictory to causal theories.

What I have to pay attention to is the following five points. (1) A theory of agreement between heaven and mind which enables people to establish their independence of spirit, (2) the understanding for a contradictory realities that moral training does not result in good, (3) a major proposition that there exist causal theories, (4) the endeavor to overcome the aporia, based on a proverb which goes “He who gives to the poor lends to the lord.” (5) after-life idea that one’s soul returns to the heaven after death.

The *Singaku-gorinsyo* is typical of self-control idea in Tokugawa Era, and it recognizes Shinto and thinks that is in harmony with Buddhism. In the *Singaku-gorinsyo* you will find a person maintaining his independence of spirit, though he is controlled by the rule of cause and effect.

Chapter II

In this chapter II, I mention “*Uraminosuke*” 恨の介 in early *kanazōsi* and bring light to the way that people who are aiming at the establishment of an independence of spirit managed to humanize Buddhism to search for evil passions and Bohdai 菩提.

The *Kanazosi* originated from “*Uraminosuke*”. It is such a literary work that many scholars have been engaged in studying it. Some scholars paid attention to the way that the hero *Uraminosuke* prayed to kannon 観音 for the realization of his love, though he was conscious that love was blind and delusive. I concluded that in this story, love was not regarded as evil passions and that love should be thought to be human and thence Buddhism should be considered from another point of view. From the viewpoint that the humanization of Buddhism the conclusion that the fulfillment of love is relief, i. e. Bohdai can be derived.

But the hero and heroine in this story had to die because they broke the law of cause and effect. But their death did not mean catastrophe. They had their birth in the Pure Land through the realization of their love. Their death was a symbol of the humanization of Buddhism. But this humanization of Buddhism was not realized in this life, and it was in the after-life that it was humanized, which represented the ideological features in this story and at the time when it was written.