

# 日本のトラウマ，恥，罪悪感と社会的無意識

## Trauma, Shame, Guilt, and the Social Unconscious in Japan

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### ABSTRACT

本稿は、日本の社会的無意識に潜む、大規模トラウマ、特に第2次世界大戦のトラウマの影響をいくつか例示することを目的とした。2011年の大災害は大規模トラウマの記憶を想起させ、沖縄が無視されてきたことに直面する機会を与えた。戦後の大集団アイデンティティの混乱を生んだ恥と罪悪感はいまだ解決されておらず、悲劇的英雄像を増長させ、プライドを「捏造」することさえあることを示した。Hopper (2003b) のI: A/M理論は理解の一助となる。映画「羅生門」や古事記の例を通して、「見たくないこと」が個人レベルで歪曲され、抑圧されることを示し、原爆のトラウマを正しく扱い、伝えることの難しさについて考察した。

This paper aims to illustrate some aftermaths of massive trauma, especially in the Second World War which underlie the social unconscious in Japan. The 2011 mega-disaster reminded of the memories of massive trauma in the past and led us to the recognition of having ignored the hardships of Okinawa. Shame and guilt feelings that caused confusion of large group identity after the war are still left unresolved and were proved to have increased tragic hero figures and have even been “fabricating” a sense of pride in the society. Hoppers’ (2003b) theory of I: A/M (Incohesion: Aggregation/Massification) is helpful in illuminating these processes. The process of distorting and repressing “the things hard to watch” through examples such as Film *Rashomon* and the Japanese Myths was illustrated, and the difficulties in handling and conveying properly the A-bomb trauma were discussed.

## 1. The Social Unconscious

The concept of *social unconscious* was first studied in the field of group analysis. Foulkes (1964) noted that “the group-analytic situation, while dealing with the unconscious in the Freudian sense, brings into operation and perspective a totally different area of which the individual is equally unaware....one might speak of a *social or interpersonal unconscious* [italics added]” (p. 52).

Later, Hopper (2003a) noted that

The concept of the social unconscious refers to the existence and constraints of social, cultural and communicational arrangements of which people are. Unaware, in so far as these arrangements are not perceived (not ‘known’), and if perceived not acknowledged (‘denied’), and if acknowledged, not taken as problematic (‘given’), and if taken as problematic, not considered with an optimal degree of detachment and objectivity (p. 10).

Thus, the social unconscious is not something that exists somewhere, but an interactive process between an individual and the society (Weinberg, 2007). We can “sense” the force of social unconscious by observing how people react in a characteristic way to a given incident. Especially recapitulation of massive traumas in a society also serves as an opportunity to rediscover the feelings that remain unchanged deeply in minds.

## 2. The Mega-Disaster

The 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake reminded many people of the unique “chosen trauma” (Volkan, 2001) of the social unconscious: *the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake, tsunamis after the 1896 Meiji-Sanriku Earthquake, the 1933 Showa-Sanriku Earthquake*. In addition, the destruction of villages and towns reminded people of the destruction

wrought by wartime air raids and A-bombs. Through this process, we can find in us a series of memories about the shared experiences.

After the disaster, Japanese Association for Group Psychotherapy launched Mutual Support Group Committee which holds one-day group sessions where mental health professionals in the local area can talk about their experiences. In that group, not only the experiences of the 2011 disaster but also various massive traumas in the past and the present are reminded and addressed, such as past disasters, the Second World War, hardships of Okinawa and so on.

## 3. Traumatized Okinawa

After the 2011 disaster, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was paid attention to again. A psychiatrist moved to Okinawa and found that 40 percent of the people who experienced the battles during the war were still suffering from PTSD symptoms (Arizuka, 2014). One reason that such a high rate of people maintains PTSD symptoms is that the US military base still remains there. Loud noises of military planes are everlasting; furthermore, some crashes and even incidents which involve local inhabitants caused by US soldiers are seen. It is more surprising that their symptoms have been ignored for more than seventy years. It is a good example of the *social unconscious* on a massive scale.

## 4. Psychological Maneuvers to Avoid Shame after the Second World War

As seen above, when we consider the social unconscious in the contemporary society of Japan, the defeat in the Second World War cannot be avoided. The experiences of loss, destruction, massacre of the people at that time have been conveyed in many ways to individuals in the

present. However, the narratives of the war, especially the stories of dead persons, cannot avoid being distorted and romanticized. There must remain guilt feelings in the survivors there.

Unfortunately, the death of soldiers in the stories did not contribute to protect the nation where people were suffered by bombs every day. However, the failure of the headquarters of the army that caused lots of soldiers' death in vain is often denied and we, living in the present, are absorbed into a part of large group identity at that time. The soldiers were afraid of both violence in the army and loss of large group identity (social elimination: shame) that they might face if they disobeyed their superiors' orders. Therefore, they chose to stand in the line to death to maintain their own identity. After the war, the general people as well as the soldiers felt betrayed and humiliated by the nation. If they acknowledged the shame they felt by capitulating to the power of absurd system, it would mean the death of dead people becomes meaningless. It is too cruel. The survivors were afraid of the resentment the dead people might have had.

## 5. Romanticizing “Tragic Heroes” and “Fabricating” Pride

Nishimura (2016) discussed the role of romanticizing “tragic heroes” in many Japanese stories. When a person who is loyal to the norm of his group is defeated by a strong opponent, he is praised for his pure-mindedness. There are many historical figures of this type, such as *Minamoto no Yoshitsune*, *the 47 Ronin*, *Yukimura Sanada*, and the members of *Shinsengumi*. Japanese people sympathize with their *munen* (chagrin and resentment) when the hero sacrifices himself. It is cathartic for people to remember those stories because they also have suffered the chagrin and resentment of defeat. Similar reactions are observed in dead soldiers, and

victims of natural disasters, who are betrayed by their homeland.

But even today the stories of *Kamikaze* attacks, *Banzai* attacks (honorable attacks), *Zero Fighters*, *Battleship Yamato* and so on are romanticized, and sometimes dramatized and made into a film. They tend to be made up as beautiful tragedies and evoke a sense of awe in the audience, who might be paralyzed and misperceive that they can live in peace founded on their sacrifices.

Hayao Miyazaki, who produced and directed many masterpieces at Studio Ghibli, strongly criticizes those works that admire the glory of wartime, such as stories of *Zero Fighters* and *Battleship Yamato*. He even says it is just like dispersing poisonous illusions. The shame feelings which any unresolved misery of the defeat evokes in people urge to “fabricate” pride and “chosen glories.” It might lead people to fail to learn mastery of anxiety which is necessary to survive in real world.

## 6. Hopper’s I: A/M

To shed light on the nature of traumatized group or organization, Hopper (2003b) called for an important concept “I: A/M (Incohesion: Aggregation/Massification).” He explained the concept as follows: “These processes of incohesion are likely to be characterized by ‘aggregation’, in response to fission and fragmentation and, then, by ‘massification’, in response to fusion and confusion and, in turn, by oscillations between massification and aggregation” (p. 66).

In the Japanese army, the tendency of massification was outstanding. According to Hopper (2003b), “in massified societies, the regulation of aggression can be seen in various forms of nationalism which are associated with the purification of language, race, ethnicity, custom and even aesthetic values” (p.76). “Aggressive feelings and aggression

become more essential to the maintenance of massification...to anonymise a person is to destroy his identity as a unique person. Anonymisation reduces the sense of personal responsibility for thought, feeling and deed” (p.77-78). To maintain norm, violence was conducted both physically and psychologically, which was chronically prevailing in the army. Personal identity was disrespected and replaced with group identity there.

Even after the social system has changed, the way of humiliating subordinates did not go away easily; this method has been used in companies and schools. Even now, it is not rare to see such a way of leading sport clubs in schools by use of physical and verbal humiliation, which sometimes leads to a bullying among students with a risk of suicide. That is unstoppable as if the abused child cannot keep away from the parent. The more the child finds something wrong in the parents, the more he/she clings to the illusion that the parents are perfect and love him/her.

## 7. Reflections on Rashomon Revisited

Kibel (2016) discussed the confusion of national identity of post-war Japan by analysis of the Film *Rashomon* in 1950. *Rashomon*, directed by Akira Kurosawa, won the Golden Lion in Venice International Film Festival in 1951.

The film is set in 12th-century Japan with a story of fatal encounter in a forest between a bandit and a samurai who is traveling though the region with his wife. Over the samurai’s death, four different events are presented, and each seemingly believable yet contradictory to one another. Representing this process, the word *Rashomon Effect* was incorporated into the English lexicon. Kibel (2016) described the symbolism of the film:

The image of death and destruction symbolized by the *Rashomon* gate would remind a 1950’s Japanese audience of the firebombing of

Tokyo and other cities that began in November 1944 and continued until the horrific devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic bombs in August 1945 (p. 82).

He pointed out a downfall of the past glory of the Japanese traditions by interpreting symbolism of the samurai as nobleness, the bandit as American forces, and the samurai’s wife as both nobleness and ignobleness; the woodcutter’s offer to adopt the abandoned infant at the last part of the film serves as an act of redemption, paving the way to forgiveness and deliverance. Also, he noted that the different narratives embodied the changing views of Japanese military, which by now had been radically changed.

His discussion is quite to the point. The ancient image of the destroyed *Rashomon* and the devastated city reminds the audience of the destruction in the wartime. In that sense, *Rashomon* serves as something like a symbol for “chosen trauma,” a part of the social unconscious in Japan.

However, it may be inadequate simply to identify the characters in the film with the situations of Japan after the war because the film consists of two original stories which were written by a novelist Ryunosuke Akutagawa about thirty years before the war and of an additional part which was written by Kurosawa for this film. Nevertheless, it is worth considering why the two old stories of Akutagawa were reminded for a film after the war.

I am rather interested in why the Western people were fascinated by the film than its content analysis. I wonder if the Western people recognized, for the first time, what Japan is likely to be and that is different from the past image of Japan during the war. I even wonder if they questioned their own “distorted” image of Japan they had had during the war. If so, it is the *Rashomon Effect* between the Western and the Japanese.

In the article, Kibel (2016) tried to explain the brutality of the Japanese army through analysis of

personality, family, and social structure. But I must say that brutality is universal, and it should not be depicted due to a country's culture. Rather, it should be explained and understood by the insanity of society facing huge anxiety. Hopper's theory of I: A/M is considered to be helpful to understand that. "Pure" patriotism was violated and the whole country fell into a state of aggregation and massification.

## 8. Japanese Myths

Kitayama (2010), Japanese psychoanalyst, noticed the important role of "masochistic caregiver" in the Japanese myths and folklores. In most cases, a woman plays that role: she makes every effort to devote herself to her partner, and even injures herself to keep caring, with her injuries hidden to her partner. When the partner witnesses her injuring herself, she leaves him. The stories imply the masochistic caregiver's tendency to die with her image left faultless.

The Japan's oldest myth starts with a story of creating the land. A pair of founding god *Izanagi* and goddess *Izanami* performed sexual intercourse in the heaven. Babies, the lands, fell onto the sea. Because of too many births, *Izanami*'s genital burned, which eventually caused her death. She had to go down to the land of dead. Unbearable *Izanagi* visited the land of dead and found her. *Izanami* begged him not to see her because her body was rotten. But *Izanagi* didn't understand the meaning of her plea, finally saw her dirty body, felt terrified and escaped from her. *Izanami* felt shamed and got frantic and chased *Izanagi*. *Izanagi* attacked her by throwing peaches. After escaping from the land of dead, *Izanagi* felt himself dirty (unclean), he purified the whole body. This ritual is called *misogi*.

Kitayama (2010) explored the meaning of the story and other similar folklores and called this kind of taboo "prohibition of don't look." This

subject includes gender issues, as well as coping with shame, standing rapid disillusion, and facing one's loss (mourning work). And he demonstrated that psychoanalytic work is to "contain" and "digest" intense experiences of this kind for patient wishing to perish due to shame feeling so that the patient could survive and not disappear from his life.

Although this idea is opposite to the idea of "tragic heroes" in gender, both are connected to the foundation of the Japanese mentality and each reflects respective aspects. That is, the fear of loss of homeland has existed since the ancient period, and it might have been often derived from natural disasters. We may have still been struggling with "mourning work" and sharing this kind of stories of self-sacrifice may help us form cultural (ethnic) identity.

## 9. *Hadashi no Gen* (Barefoot Gen)

A series of well-known comic named *Hadashi no Gen* (Barefoot Gen) was furnished in the classroom library of every elementary school all over Japan. *Hadashi no Gen* was a comic about a boy who went through A-bomb in Hiroshima, which is based on the personal experiences of author Keiji Nakazawa. This comic was believed to convey the misery of war and educate children. Eventually, quite a lot of Japanese children have read that in school.

In a workshop of the social unconscious I conducted in Japan, one participant talked about her experiences about this comic. She was interested in that comic put in the classroom bookshelf and read it. Then, the pictures were found so horrible and grotesque and the whole story was so miserable that she felt very bad and unbearable. However, she kept away from sharing her reactions with others including her homeroom teacher because it was so painful. Several years later, it was broadcasted that many school children were psychologically injured by reading *Hadashi no Gen*. Once that news prevailed, most of schools immediately removed it from the classroom library without any

deliberate explanations to children. She felt disappointed with irresponsible deeds by school teachers, who didn't ask children anything, just hiding something dangerous. The problem was not the terror that Hadashi no Gen conveys to children, but the fact that it was "not considered with an optimal degree of detachment and objectivity" (Hopper, 2003a, p. 10), although teachers *acknowledged* the children's injuries. Certainly, facing a traumatic event can be traumatic. But it is not the material per se, but the human process that traumatizes the children. It is exactly "sweeping the problem under the carpet" and the process of "prohibition of don't look."

## 10. Concluding comments

It is when one's pride is injured that nationalism is escalated in a country or a society, and not because one is superior to another. In these years, Japan is drifting to the right; because of economic depression and an increase of hopeless young, and not a few people have been demonstrating aggressive right-wing comments. They are called *Online Right-Wingers*. They do not have any personal relationships with one another in the real world. This is an example of aggregation and massification. Hate speech is widely heard, especially toward Korea and China.

Nevertheless, the fact that Japan was a victimizer of these countries tends to be set aside. Although it is quite difficult to acknowledge to be a victimizer, holding a sense of guilty when claimed, it is important to recognize that we can always be a victimizer to someone and can be a victim of someone else at the same time. The society creates a chain of victimizing and being victimized, of which each of us is a part.

Kitayama (2010) emphasized the significance of "holding" conflicts in mind and "staying on stage." Bearing shame in mind is quite difficult. The society creates a chain of victimization and victimhood, of which each of us is a part. Although no one can live without that ambiguity, we often fall into a one-sided

perspective. It is needed and highly valuable in the contemporary society to understand mass group process, as well as groups in clinical context, from a viewpoint of the *social unconscious*.

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## Note

- 1 The first version of this paper was presented on August 16, 2017 at the 17<sup>th</sup> International Symposium of the Group Analytic Society International, Four-Day Panel on the Social Unconscious led by Earl Hopper and Haim Weinberg, in Berlin. Some sections added to the first version were presented on March 17, 2018 at Münchner Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Psychoanalyse (MAP) in Munich.