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The influence of philosophy on the transformation of the Japanese society at the turn of the XIX and XX century. Enryo Inoue – shadow of the Meiji era.

Summary

Introduction:

In the nineteenth century Japan faced the necessity of certain changes in its legal system and customs. Planned and extensive westernization not only was supposed to direct the country towards the technological development, but also transform the social system and influence the cultural traditions.

Meiji is a period of deep changes in the perception of philosophy as well as the religions other than the dominant Shintoism, like Buddhism or Christianity. Philosopher Enryo Inoue, for whom Immanuel Kant's philosophy was a European framework, transformed the perception of Buddhism by dividing it into two spheres: religious and philosophical. However, Inoue's considerations were reaching far beyond the interest in Buddhism. In the Meiji era one may observe not only the development but also the deepening of nationalist and imperialist attitudes. Due to that in Inoue's deliberations, one will also find war-related themes justifying attempts of colonizing Korea or China. Although Japan had to change after World War II, some elements of Inoue's thought are still present today, mainly in the sphere of education.

Aims of the study:

- The analysis of the impact of westernization on Japanese self-awareness;
- Changes in Buddhism under the influence of the Enryo Inoue's thought;
- Presence of the Enryo Inoue's philosophy in the modern Japan.

Material and methods:

Main source were researches in Japan; it was possible thanks to grants from the Rzeszów University. The method - participant's observation, allowed to specify:

- relevancy of Meiji symbols in Japan,

- whether former national-imperialists' attitudes have really changed
- how deep the westernization have had influenced the Japanese culture.

Query done in non-digitized museum collections had been made to indicate the still-present imaginary of the Great Japan, as well as to show the real internal Japanese view of its own history. Ancillary sources, like philosophical, historical and anthropological publications available at the time were also used to complete the image.

Outcomes:

Westernization as a process, without surprise, might be recognized as an element which strongly influenced Japanese culture. Omnipresent attempts of rationalization transferred entities once considered as to be present clearly in the sacred sphere into the profane. Example of such may be, among others, changes and limitations in the celebration of the particular festivals. Meiji Restoration has been a source of numerous alterations, however still precisely defined the collective “we” in continuation of the way of thinking proper for Edo period. After World War II, under the influence of the American occupation, Japan has made numerous transformations in the perception of *shimin* (citizen). As a result modern Japan may be perceived as full of contradictions. Japanese want to be considered (and consider themselves) as tolerant and progressive society. However, from the perspective of postmodern western societies - archaic attitudes like:

- subordination to the state and community,
- exclusion (or at last strong limitation) of the one's “self” and personal aspirations for the general good,
- particular sense of national superiority over both Asian and Western countries,
- aversion to all disabilities and the perception of disabled people as socially useless.

During the studies it has shown that Japan is filled with reluctance and the lack of recognition of its own history. Confrontation with dark sides of history is rejected. Good example of this is historical policy taking as the principle “organized forgetfulness”. Such attitude applies to elements not corresponding well with desired and assumed ideal image, for which the postulate of rewriting history textbooks to show the “the real” history of Japan, in other words: the history presenting only positive image of the country, is one of the clear examples.

Enryo Inoue's thought is still present and may be seen as relevant today, among others as an inspiration for changing the view of Buddhism – considered once as a threat to Japanese cultural “self”, as well as an attempt to challenge and eradicate what he perceived as superstitions from the culture.

Japan embraced selected philosophical and social ideas from the West making the country more accessible for foreigners in the process. Mimicry which we can observe in nature is also present (as Homi Bhabhi pointed out) in research on cultural changes. Culture analysis always take place from researcher's perspective. We translate existing phenomenons through a formula “the same but...”

Conclusions:

- Japan's westernization should be understand rather as a process of careful assimilation of practical solutions, than any form of attempt to merely copy the West under foreign pressure
- Today, Buddhism is not only seen as a religion, but also as a philosophy;
- Japanese, despite of their declarations of striving peace, still maintain in their memory hostility towards West;
- Japan's opening up to the world as such is somewhat questionable. Despite friendly tone towards foreigners, they accept them only as guests. In communities that define themselves as a moderately or moderately conservative people who don't have both Japanese parents are considered foreigners. While in more subtle form, the old idea “Japan for Japanese” is still present and influential.

Keywords: Japan, Meiji era, Far East, philosophy, westernization

