Flexibility of Boundary between "Traditional" and "Modern"

A Case of Separation of Voluntary Groups in the Urban Festival, Kokura Gion Daiko

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CONTENTS

Ⅰ. Untraditional Groups as Voluntary Associations

In this paper I shall consider voluntary associations in Japan through the case of untraditional groups, which have come to play an important role as well as traditional groups formed on the basis of neighborhood and blood relationships on Kokura Gion Daiko Festival(小倉 祇園太鼓)[1], an urban festival. Urban society is a complex society of voluntary associations. How to keep the network of urban society is implied in dynamism of these associations. I have previously described the creative process of voluntary associations[2]. In this paper, I give attention to the activities of associations.

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[1] This festival is held for three days every July in Kokura, Kitakyusyu‐ city. It is not simply a shrine‐related purification ceremony, but also many attractions that bring up to the tourists. The Taiko, a kind of drum, is of central importance for this festival. On the first day, shrine related ceremony is held, on second day, drums‐beating competition is held by the traditional groups, on final day, drums performance is held by the voluntary groups. Their performance is referred to as "suedaiko (据え太鼓)". The traditional groups base in centrally located residential areas. The voluntary groups base on private networks.

[2] Ref. [Nakano1996, 2001]

I discuss on the social network from the view point of urban anthropology and analyze the interrelation of participants in this festival rather than the community . From the same point of view, T. Ayabe, a cultural anthropologist, already explained the meaning of "Club".

I regard Yushi-team(有志チーム) as an example of "Club" which Ayabe mentioned[3]. "Club" is a private part-time group, which is managed by the members who participate voluntarily and equally, not for earning but for attaining a common purpose, by Ayabe's definition. Alliances based on friendships, company networks, etc. distinguish "Club" from those based on neighborhood and blood relationships. He regards "Club" as a voluntary association. In this paper I regard untraditional groups (new groups), in contrast with traditional groups, as voluntary associations.

The voluntary associations in Western societies which exist on individualism are not equal to those in Japan, although we can find the similarities of alliances between Western societies and Japan. Focusing on the processes of separation of untraditional groups, this study will be the first step to clarify the acceptance of voluntary association in Japan.

II. Conflicts between Institutionalization and Creativity : A Case of Separation of Groups

Many first leaders of old Yushi-teams(有志チーム) are independent of traditional groups and organized their groups. After independence, they keep connections with traditional groups. The more members of the group increase, the more difficult it becomes to have consensus about the group's direction. As a result, some members try to organize a new independent of old one. I show   new voluntary associations (untraditional group) as a way to root in the society.

Separation of groups

I present the case of Tamachi-team (田町チーム). Tamachi-team was organized by leader **A** who died in 1996. Tamachi-team was divided into two groups for twenty years. One of them is Tamachi-kai (田町會). After this division, the main members of the Tamachi-team left the team and members who remained behind had a hard time to reorganize the team. When I met them, the Tamachi-team was affiliated new members and was reactivated by them. All members of the team were, and still are, male. Most of them are teenagers or in their twenties. The leader **K** at present is in his fifties. He is the son of the first leader **A**.

After **A** died, his team has lost its center of force. The reason was that many members had

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[3] Ref. [Ayabe1998]

respect for **A** and thought their teacher of Taiko（太鼓）was not **K** but **A**. The son **K** followed his father's style, for example, beating style and the way of team organization. But he could not resolve the conflict between all members how to train to beat the Taiko and who goes to various non-festival events. As soon as finishing the festival in 1998, main members left Tamachi-team. Because main two members were on bad terms with each other, when one of them decided to leave from the team to organize own his team, ten members followed him. **K** talked to me about this problem as below follows.

> They said " we wanted to organize a new team to beat "sousaku Daiko" (創作太鼓),[4] which arranged "seityo(正調)"(which means "legitimacy") for tourism, we don't want to be members of an uninteresting team like Tamachi-team." That is why they left our team. But they beat "seityou" as same as we do. It is important to regard "sousaku" as belonging to "seityou." Contrasting Gion Daiko with Ondekoza（鬼太鼓座：which is a professional drummer performance group), Gion Daiko can't attract spectators' attention. They know only Kokura. Attraction of Gion Daiko is not for "sousaku" but for "seityou."
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> A cause of conflict between members is the distribution of money which is paid by the theaters. Who goes to event to play Taiko? Who can get the chance to earn money? The leader selects good drummers to have a good performance. If he always brings same people to events, other people critique the leader's selections.
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> Assistant leader **B** cannot do train because he is busy. A member advised me "change assistant leader **B** to **C**." But **B** has been member since leader **A**'s times, I can't change assistant leader unreasonably. The same problems occur. Therefore many members leave. Trouble like this occurs once every ten years.
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> I often heard that some members who left with **C** want to come back. Two people came to apologize to me "please, let us be members again," while lowering their heads to the ground. When they left, they said to me, "we don't want to be members of an uninteresting team like Tamachi-team." I asked them,

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[4] The Taiko, a kind of drum, is of central importance for this festival. The drum is played to a distinctive rhythm referred to as "seityou," which means "legitimacy". On the other side of preserving tradition, the new groups play "sousaku-daiko," which is regarded "illegitimate" by the traditional groups.

"Do you come back to be members of an uninteresting team?" They couldn't answer and went away.

In X's team (one of the yushi-team), everything goes on well. If someone critiques leader X and upper members of his team, X banishes him from his team. For example, member Y was on bad terms with Z. Y was banished by X. Therefore nobody critiques him. X also goes everywhere to teach how to beat Taiko. He induces good players to be members of his team and gathers many good players. I can't do like him.

I have not been asked by the "Kokura Gion Daiko Preservation and Promotion Society" to participate in various events for two years. As the number of Yushi-teams increase, it is difficult for the "Preservation and Promotion Society" to select which teams participate in events.

Also I am not asked to be a judge of the "Society" competition. The "Society" asked me in advance, "Please, be judge in 2000 and 2001."But I answered "No." After of all, they didn't come to ask me officially. I don't know what they did.

I also know another case in which a promoter asked Society members, "Please participate in the Tamachi-team in events in Malaysia." Another person said to me "you will probably be asked soon." However, the Tamachi-kai was selected.

I can understand leader K's pride for his team and beating the Gion Daiko. All members select their favorite teams as individuals and take part in teams. As soon as they become members, they have to behave in accordance with team's rule and they have to be conscious of what other members will think of their behavior. In his narration, he mentioned X's team and provided us information about them. He gave attention to the teams, which have the same problems as his team, and he is interested in how they deal with those problems. Although everyone can become a member and also leave a team of their own will, being a member is a reason for their behavior to be defined. They can not be based upon their individualism.

Boundaries between "traditional" and "untraditional"

The traditional groups regard new groups as being "illegitimate." New groups also have consciousness of the boundary between "seityou" and "sousaku" and insist that they are preserving tradition in their own way. A person C who was a member of the Tamachi-team before

talked to me as below as follows.

I retired from Tamachi-team to have new team for beating not for Gion Daiko but for Wadaiko（和太鼓）. But young members want to beat Gion Daiko. We may participate in the competition next year after registering our team's name with the "Preservation and Promotion Society." We have to register to participate in it. Registration gives us many definitions.

I think the relationship between "seityou" and "sousaku" turned upside down. All of things have changed. We beat only Gion Daiko. If leader **A** is alive now, I would not think about leaving from the Tamachi-team, because **A** is my teacher whom I respect.

I found some contradictions. The leader of Tamachi-team **K** said that members had left selfishly, but **C** explained that he "retired." They plan to make a new team for "Wadaik," but actually they beat Gion Daiko and further, they deplored that the tendency is that "sousaku" is being given more priority than "seityou." This shows us **C** has a hard time to manage his team and he could not decide how his team works.
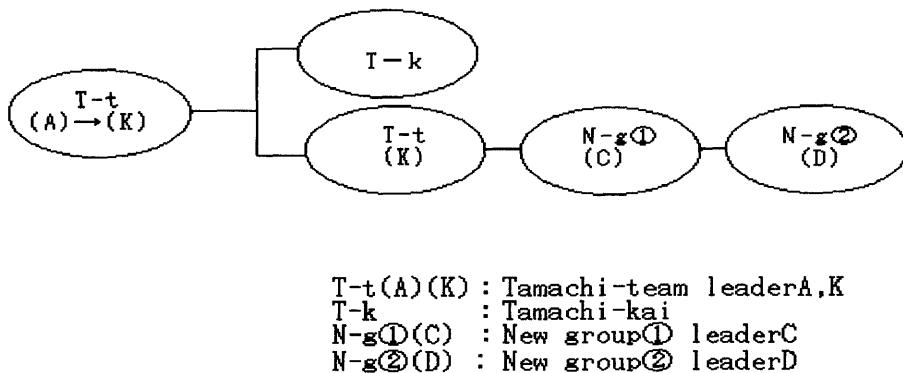


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T-t(A)(K) : Tamachi-team leaderA,K
T-k       : Tamachi-kai
N-g①(C)  : New group① leaderC
N-g②(D)  : New group② leaderD
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Figure:A Example of Separetion of Voluntary Assosiation

D also made a group, in the spring of 2000, after leaving **C**'s team. **D** was one of the members who left from Tamachi-team with **C**. The Tamachi-team, which I met at that time, was

separated into three teams. D told to me about his thoughts as below.

> I will register with the "Preservation and Promotion Society" and participate in the competition. By registering it, the "Society" rules give us many definitions.
> (Looking at other team's performance)
> The best performer is Tamachi-kai, I think. Each member is a good player. But their performances don't attract us. Murasaki-kai（紫会） attracts us because they enjoy beating Taiko by themselves.

I find that "enjoying" is important for D to estimate levels of other teams. That is his frame of reference, when he estimates the others.

Ⅲ. Opposition and Acceptance for Definitions

C and D, who are leaders of new groups, hesitate to have their works restricted by registrations, but yearn to participate in the competition. Parallels can be seen between their movements and young people's one, who people do not take part in the festival because of conflicts between the adults in the traditional groups and them.

One day D asked me, "please introduce me to X," when I was talking about X who was the chairperson of the judges at the competition. Nowadays "suedaiko" is accepted in this festival, but members of new groups are afraid of being critiqued. His case shows us it is important to be polite for a new group to be accepted officially as a Gion Daiko team. The new group like this, which is based on alliances chosen by the members' own selves, is a symbol of contemporary society. Registration in the "Preservation and Promotion Society" implies not only formalities but gaining social positions. Therefore, D made his compliment to X who played an important role in this festival. It showed us he yearned to make sure of his position by relating with someone or something culturally in the center.

C, who made his group prior to D, hesitated about what his group should be and how to build networks. When C was a member of the Tamachi-team, he took the role as leader K ordered. Making networks in this festival is one of important roles of leader. Now C has to take a role similar to K in his own way. K expresses himself "awkward." The word expresses that it is difficult to make good relationships with the others.

The New groups are not limited by geographic or spatial boundaries and they are organized far beyond community, because they are "multiple plates" which can adapt to the needs of people, as I have described[5]. The members of the new groups are shown as they can behave freely without any restrictions, actually they have to give attention to relationships with other teams to be accepted in the community. Gion Daiko is characterized by the rhythm of Taiko and the style of beating. Beating "seitou" is traditional rhythm (it means "legitimate"), "sousaku" is untraditional ("illegitimate"). In other words, the traditional groups, which are based on neighborhood and blood affiliations and beat "seityou," play an important role in preserving "tradition." On the other hand, the new groups, which are organized far beyond community, are not supporters of "tradition." Also the audiences decide the members and groups social and cultural positions based upon their beating style. Their positions are not firmly established. Many members of new groups are spatially and culturally on the periphery of the festival and they try to become the center. Therefore, each team makes new boundary between itself and the others, inside and outside. They need the others for gaining positions as the insiders. It shows that the every team cannot exist isolated and must coexist within the context. They come to find their values and meanings for their existences through the conflicts with the others. Thus we can see the flexibility between "traditional" and "modern" and find the dynamism of urban culture.

IV. Conclusion

The voluntary association is advocated on the model of Western societies. R.Iwata developed the theory about Japanese relationships from E.Hamaguchi's theory[6]. Hamaguchi argued that an individualistic model about the relationships is not adapted to Asian societies[7]. Hamaguchi proposed an Asian model of relationships that he named "kanjin" (間人) in contrast to the Western individualistic model. He pointed out that the relationships "aidagara" (間柄) in Japan were built and then used to define people's behaviors. Taking Hamaguchi's theory, Iwata explains the connection between a person and the group in Japan as follows; firstly, a person tries to participate in the significant group and then the person tries to associate with the group in non performance activities. He mentioned that being a member of a group in Western society means

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[5] The members are organized by the young people who left the community and came back with difficulty, live beyond the border of Kokura , become employees of certain company. I named the groups as "multiple plate." [Nakano,1996,2001]

[6] Ref.[Iwata1987]

[7] Ref.[Hamaguchi1977]

"participating (参加)" at particular times; however, it means "belonging (所属)"in Japan [Iwata1987] .The kinds of groups they belong to is important for Japanese. For Japanese social positions and their valuations are decided by the group they belong to.

In the case of the voluntary associations in Gion Daiko, everyone can become a member of their favorite team and can leave it. After being member, they spend much time as a player. Especially, at the beginning, they have to learn techniques for drumming. Behind the scenes of all these activities lies their pride, which make them perform well for the enjoyment of tourist. They are told never to forget that they are a member and must brushing up techniques of drumming.

This case implies that the members' social positions are decided by the group to which they belong. The traditional groups are spatially and culturally in the center of this festival. They do not want to accept new groups. Nowadays they come to admit little by little that new groups participate in the festival, but they worry that the "tradition," which they have preserved, might be destroyed by young people who come from other areas and become troublemakers. Participating in the new groups is not considered "legitimate." Therefore, the more "illegitimate" new groups gain position in the festival, the more they have to give attention to their behavior so that they are not critiqued as "illegitimate." Being a member of the voluntary association is not a part-time role. Although their affiliations are voluntary, their consciousness as a member is emphasized by the relationships between members; the reflexibility is needed for maintaining the associations in Japan. The members, who want to drum for a long time, try to associate with their team all the time. Therefore, the new groups can take the role of a player as important as the traditional groups in Gion Daiko. This demonstrates the Japanese style of maintaining the voluntary associations.

This is the primary conclusion as seen through the case of the separation of Tamachi-team, and next step will be to show the relationships between voluntary associations and other organizations and will be to analyze them in more detail.

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