

STUDIES OF "JOSE RIZAL" I

JOSE RIZAL'S CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORKS AND VISION COMPARING WITH A JAPANESE HERO'S

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Abstract

I compare here two heroes' characteristics of their works. The one is Jose Rizal's and the other is Ryoma Sakamoto's. The two persons are regarded as one of the heroes, who did valuable works for the people and the country at the turning point of the 19th century.

1

The 16th century was the first expanding period of Europe, and the late 19th century was the second big wave period.

Spain sent Fathers and militia to South Asia and began to govern in the 16th century earnestly. Some Catholic Fathers came to Japan¹⁾, taught Christianity and got some Christians. Soon they showed some military and political power. One of them was Ukon Takayama, one of the big leaders of the Samurais. He served the general much to bring Japan into Unity.

But some other Christians did not often accept the orders of the government. So the government was afraid of them spreading their influence and soon prohibited Christianity²⁾. So they were obliged to hide themselves in deep mountains or to be exiled to foreign lands. Moreover the government prohibited all contacts with foreigners and closed all ports except one small port³⁾.

From that time until the middle of the 19th century Japan had not been suffered by foreigners and political confusions. During these peaceful centuries agriculture and commerce had greatly developed.

And these gains enabled the new modern Japan to import the modern western civilization rapidly.

2

When the Spaniards came and began to colonize the Philippine islands, it was unlucky for the Filipinos not to have a big government. The people had naturally a friendly hospitality. The people had consisted of successive immigrants. The former occupants had accepted new immigrants and their culture hospitably.

So it was no unreasonable for the people not to detect their territorial ambition.

These conditions allowed the Spaniards to invade the Philippine islands. They had moreover powerful weapons and mysterious religion. Mighty military and conquest ambition led to dictatorship. And strange, mysterious religion had enough reason to charm the pure people.

From that time the people suffered the pains of being governed by foreigners. They had been in fact ruled by a different culture over 300 years.

Jose Rizal saw that unreasonable affairs and injustices were caused by the Spaniards⁴⁾. Through those experiences he doubted the justice of the colonist government.

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1. Portuguese, F. Xavier and two Catholic Fathers came to Japan in 1549.

2. Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the general ordered to get Christian Fathers away from Japan in 1587. Tokugawa Shogun prohibited Christianity in 1613.

3. Tokugawa government ordered it in 1633.

4. Three Filipino Priests were excuted on a charge of agitation of a rebellion in 1872.

And he had a deep love for the Filipinos and the islands. He wished for the independence of the Philippines.

He wrote a novel, "Noli Me Tangere", in which he described the injustice of the colonist government from two sides-the political and military side, and the spiritual, religious and moral side.

By spiritual and mental grasping and controlling they could easily get informations about the people's way of thinking and relations. They were able to discover the weak point of the people. And they condemned the people through their own moral sense authoritatively.

The Catholic Fathers and governors were combined. So these moral condemning took the form of detective or financial punishment.

Thus the communities were broken and the properties were snatched. There is no more dangerous affair as that of the conivation of political power and religion and morals.

Religion or moral is essentially personal, or at least it is native and peculiar for every community or people.

Morals, customs, life styles and religion originate in the climate and enviroment, because people must eat, dress, live and pray in the native land.

The governor intends sometimes to unite the moral and ideology of the people hoping for eternal holding of the government. But this is dangerous for the people. The freedom of ideology, religion and speech is of course a natural right of human beings and it constitutes the foundation of democracy.

Jose Rizal naturally wished for freedom of the press. His novel, "Noli Me Tangere", had been prohibited.

It is well known that for many years the Spanish colonial government kept the policy of making the people ignorant. Rizal thought that people must be first of all enlightened through knowing the true situation. For that purpose, freedom of the press by the people was at first an indispensable factor. Through the unlimited informations and free opinions and discussions, people would be able to know the world and position in it, they would be able to find their direction in life.

At the same time Rizal appealed for the importance of education. Ignorance and conventional views hindered the progress of the people forward the better life.

Freedom of the press and the right to education were the most important matters that Rizal appealed to be realized.

After he published "Noli Me Tangere", he saw the rising of the national consciousness and moving for independence of the Philippines.

What way did he plan to realize the independence ?

Did he agree with revolution immediately ?

We must say "No" to this question.

In the novel, "El Filibusterismo", we can read his thought that the people must pay a big sacrifice to the revolution. And when Rizal was asked by Dr. Pio Barenzuela in Dapitan, he opposed to begin fighting before the military conditions were not prepared¹⁾.

And more than anything else the object of establishment of the "Liga Filipinas" in 1882 was reforming of the society.

Rizal's intention was preparing for the conditions for the new age.

Then what system did he plan for the new age ?

We can find "Federalism²⁾" of the islands as the Vision for the future system of the country. ("The Philippines a hundred years hence", 4.)

The Philippines consist of many islands. And many immigrant groups had settled in each islands and

1. Refer "A Short Story of the Philippines", Chapt. 5. by T. A. Agoncillo.

2. "The Philippines a hundred years hence", 4. by Jose Rizal.

constituted Barangay. Later Barangays were organized into Barrio, Pueblo, Encomienda, Provincia.

So provinces have each peculiarity and local color.

By the reason of this feature Antonio Regidor held "Regionalism and Provincialism", to which Rizal opposed in the letter to Marion Ponce. ("J. Rizal's Character, Teaching and Example" by Prof. Diosdado G. Capino) Diosdado Gapino pointed out that Rizal thought that good virtue and customs should be influenced widely.

If they thought of modern system of the country, Rizal was right.

What did he think moreover as "Federalism"? Did he think of the system as that of the United States?

3

Ryoma Sakamoto was one of the most valuable heroes for the birth of new modern Japan. He was born in a local city in 1835 as a under class Samurai and assassinated in 1867. Some months later the reform was accomplished.

In the late 19th century many western ships came to the islands of Japan and violently demanded that the ports be opened¹⁾.

The government of Tokugawa Shogun did not make good judge how to deal with the situation and was obliged to conclude unequal treaties²⁾. This caused confusion and terrorism.

Ryoma had a view for the new age of Japan.

He understood the circumstances of Asia and the world.

He was a realist and a practitioner who gathered and combined the different powers in a creative way to produce modern Japan.

He was an expert at using swords, but he did not like to use them. He knew a stone (terrorism) can not change a big stream (the way of the history) and that violence bears only more violence.

In this era there were some big feudal states (clans) which had new visions and dynamic powers. But the political opinions were different.

So Ryoma himself visited them and mediated with them. And thus a big unification was realized³⁾. This meant that the anti-government power had much more power than the old-style Shogun power.

Moreover the new power got the order of the Emperor to strike the old power.

Ryoma already had contacts with the most important politician Kaishu Katsu in the government, and knew his view for a new age. So if some different new powers could be concentrated in the same way, he believed it would not be so difficult to change the right of the government.

By Kaishu Katsu Ryoma was taught how to operate a modern ship. And perhaps he was also taught that Japan should go abroad and trade in the world. Ryoma had the state buy a modern ship and organized a party of shipmen who had any abilities. They were allowed to join it from all Japan. He trained the shipmen and planned to sail to trade all over the world. And so he planned to sail all over the world for trading. He also planned to develop local areas and to establish industries. These plans were not realized because of his death. He was not able to see the birth of a new Japan. Some terrorists took all of him.

But his dreams and plans were not stopped. Some months later a new Japan was born. The new government and Emperor opened 5 Doctrines⁴⁾. These Doctrines were meant to declare the birth the new modern Japan. These Doctrines were almost the same as Ryoma's Eight Policies⁵⁾ of the ship company. These Policies say that a conference must be held and policy must be decided through public discussions; that all people must project good policy and economy; the old thoughts and motions must be laid aside and everything

1. Four warships of the United States came in 1853.

2. This contained extraterritoriality.

3. Satsuma and Choshu combined.

4. "Gokajo no Goseimon" was promulgated in 1868.

5. "Senchu Hassaku" was proposed in 1867.

should be based on the public law of the world ; knowledge of the world should be sought and make stability of the basement of Japan. These principles showed that the new Japan was aiming for a constitutional parliamentary monarchy. And in fact the history went on the way. About 20 years later the constitution was established and the parliament was constituted of members elected by people.

These Policies were planned to deal with the crisis of Japan of that era.

Among these Policies we notice his interest in the economic policy. During these years plenty of gold and silver went out of Japan.

So he felt the state (government) must control the system of making gold and silver coins and the rate between countries.

His business sense came from his family line. It had been a business line. He knew the importance of economy in government. We have often seen new governments fell down for lack of a financial basement.

His personal interest seemed to be in commerce. He said sometimes that he would sail and trade all over the world for his next business. Lately Ryoma has been revived amongst us.

It is a wonder that such a masterless samurai having no fame, post, power and money was able to do such a big work to change the age almost peacefully.

4

Comparing two heroes' characteristics, Rizal was a romantist as a excellent writer and Ryoma was a realist as a politician and businessman.

Both wrote many letters to accomplish their purposes. Rizal wrote novels, poems, political and historical writings and essays. They are very different. So he has many factors as a writer. His literary writings and historical writings have eternal value.

Ryoma was not a literary man. His letters were written in order to persuade another men. He made rules for his ship company and some proposals for the new system of modern Japan. These were political and practical. With his effort big powers were united and the administration was changed. But the characters in the history were anothers.

He had been dead some months ago before the reform was accomplished. So Ryoma had been forgotten many years. But recently he got a great valuation. His peaceful way, foresight and commercialism remind us of ourselves of today.

Jose Rizal and Sakamoto Ryoma were both the same to have the foresight to the future, to watch the realities and to grope peaceful ways.

(This paper is based on my paper that was spoken in "THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE CENTENNIAL OF DR. JOSE RIZAL'S EL FILIBUSTERISMO, September 18-22, 1992, University of the Philippines-Diliman.")