

The Nuclear Myth and Postwar Japan's Nationalism

Professor Nobuko Kosuge

Abstract

Much concern has focused on therapy and mental recovery for the people traumatised either by the tsunami or by the TEPCO nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant in 2011. Nobuko Kosuge, Professor of History and International Relations at Yamanashi Gakuin University examines what effect the recent nuclear disaster has had on the Japanese public's mindset as a whole, which is still affected by the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The debates surrounding the Fukushima Daiichi disaster have taken place within the backdrop of anti-nuclear sentiment in postwar Japan. This has guided people's reaction to the disaster by enabling prejudice towards the victims in Fukushima, which features regularly on social media in Japan. Professor Kosuge looks at postwar nationalism as the source of this phenomenon. The country's postwar narrative has been to avoid talk of the causes and consequences of the war itself and concentrate on Japan's victimisation from the atomic bombings, of which the Fukushima disaster is a painful reminder of that time. At the same time, she encourages to remember the fact that after more than three years and a half captivity of the Imperial Japanese Army, how the Allied PoWs were glad for Japan's 'prompt and utter destruction' by the A bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki when they hardly knew any

reality of the disasters, and then how they were shocked and traumatised for what had happened in the cities under the nuclear mushroom clouds. Those who had felt that they were at last 'saved' by the A bombings' destruction and due to such feelings they had held, they would have to even suffer from their liberty from the harsh and horrible experiences under the hands of the Japanese. We must keep in mind that they have been prisoned in the nuclear victorious myth, in other words, the 'prompt and utter destruction' against civilians in the Japanese cities. Exactly, this was the other 'hidden' trauma which they would have to be suffered for long time after the war end when Japan was proudly appealing their anti-nuclear weapon movement for postwar peacemaking.

In this book, Professor Kosuge, who has been deeply concerned about postwar reconciliation among the nations who had once fought with, will, explicitly and inexplicitly comparing the victorious nuclear myth with the defeated nuclear myth, attempt to write in detail about how the country Japan can rationalise the peculiarity and change the Japanese public's attitude towards the victims of Fukushima, facing up to their wartime/colonial past.

Professor Nobuko Kosuge

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Britain at War and Peace (Routledge, 2008; Hosei University Press, 2010).

She published two papers on Japan's 'emblem' issues and also on the early medical relief in Nagasaki on 9 August 1945 and after at the *International Review of the Red Cross* (No.849, 2003; Volume 89-2, 2007).

Introduction: Nuclear accident that happened in “the only nation to have been hit by nuclear bombs”

3-11. The date, the 11th of March, now holds a special place in the history of Japan. (More than) Three years after the Triple Disaster of a devastating earthquake, a massive tsunami and the meltdowns at a nuclear power plant, the Japanese society is still loaded with a deep sense of loss, pain and suffering, agony and anger. 15,884 lives were lost, according to the National Police Agency's report in January 2014, while 2,640 people are still missing. 6,150 were injured, and 274,088 are displaced. These people have suffered more than enough. It is against today's accepted values of humane peace for us to make them to suffer more unnecessary pain. The fact that so many were killed by the tsunami and quake makes it obligatory for me to thank the survivors for being alive. I want them to be happy to be alive after the catastrophe.

For this, I find it unacceptable that some are willing to spread false and malicious rumours about how radiation effects on human lives. I can't stand with the abuse against people of Fukushima, incorrect and misleading reports in the press, dishonest remarks merely seeking attention by inciting fear and arousing curiosity among the general public.

Verbal abuse discourages and dispirits people from speaking out. We often say “A drowning man will catch at a straw,” but in the first place, we must not make a drowning man to catch at a thing like a straw. The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant crisis has not ended yet. It is still ongoing despite Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s claims that the situation at Fukushima was “under control”.

False rumors kill people by making them to die. There are recent trends that I am very concerned about, one of which is how some people would like to make Fukushima sound as if it were foreign and unrelated to them. In the Japanese language, as you may know, we have three ways of writing: hiragana, katakana and kanji. Japanese place names are usually written in kanji, but sometimes, when you want special attention, you write them in katakana, just like when you do with overseas place names. Thus, you often see Hiroshima and Nagasaki written in katakana when talking about the atomic bombings in 1945. The same has happened to the name of Fukushima; not a few people write it in katakana regarding to the nuclear disaster in 2011. You may never know who started this trend in what media. But one thing is for sure; it’s not the people of Fukushima, or local media there, who got affected by the plant’s disaster first, and in a most serious way.

Fukushima is a large area: 13,782.54 km². It is the third largest prefecture in Japan. It’s larger than North, South, West Yorkshires combined: North Yorkshire (8,608 km²), West Yorkshire (2,029 km²) and South Yorkshire (1,552 km²). Only a small part of it was directly affected by the meltdowns,

but calling the accident by the name of Fukushima makes it sounds like the whole area of Fukushima Prefecture has been contaminated.

For the local people -- near-by residents and plant workers -- the crippled plant is known as “Tepco Ichi Efu”. It’s a short for “The Fukushima Daiichi NPP (nuclear power plant) owned by Tokyo Electric Power Company, or Tepco”. Daiichi means the First. There is a second plant close-by, and it’s called “Tepco Ni Efu”. “Ni” means two. The locals differentiate the two plants by calling them “Ichi Efu” and “Ni Efu”. The “Efu” in both cases stands for Fukushima NPP. For my book I use the name “Tepco Ichi Efu”.

I am aware that the use of katakana for Fukushima is reasonable to some extent. In the 20th century, the fallout from a number of atmospheric nuclear tests affected human lives internationally. Nuclear disasters, too, know no national boundaries. The Chernobyl blast in 1986 resulted in Europe-wide contamination. Radioactive isotopes released from Tepco Ichi Efu have since reached North America, and even Western part of Europe. Fukushima became an international concern. Anti-nuclear movements around the world are to share the same concern about the nuclear safety. The place name Fukushima, written in katakana and symbolised like Hiroshima and Nagasaki, shows their collective will for international solidarity. A Japanese word “hibakusha”, which means “surviving victims of atomic bomb blasts”, became part of international vocabulary in a similar context. Now, Fukushima could be added to this list.

The problem is, in Japan, and especially in Fukushima, this internationalisation makes the people living there feel deeply isolated. “That Fukushima they are talking about isn’t the Fukushima we know and live in,” they say. “That’s how outsiders want to treat us.” This deep division between the Fukushima in kanji for local people and the Fukushima in katakana for outsiders will not help make the situation better.

Nevertheless, not a few people want to listen to those who use shocking language and strong metaphors to “warn” of the danger of radiation exposure, because it makes them feel assured. They are in fear, and they want to be told that they are not wrong. This is the negative spiral in which a good part of Japanese society has been in since March 2011.

No matter how loud you cry out against nuclear power, or no matter how strongly you insist that nuclear power generation dependency be reduced, it will not stop the ongoing disaster and radiation leak. But people desperately need to feel reassured that their future is secured, and when the government and national media managed to do very little to give the much needed assurance, many people turned to sensationalist remarks on the Internet, on TV, in daily and weekly publications and books. It may sound paradoxical, but this is how the spiral of distrust actually works; the more threatened you feel, the more sensationalistic language you want to hear to feel reassured.

What makes it desperate is the fact that this process isolates Fukushima and the most directly affected. This trend was obvious soon after the Triple

Disaster of 3-11, especially on the Internet. In this “war” on radiation contamination, Fukushima is your “enemy” land, where “idiots” who refuse to evacuate keep on farming “poisonous rice” that they dare to try to feed us; they insist they stay there, calling the evacuated people names and risking the lives and future of girls, pregnant women and little children -- these are some of the actual expressions found on the Japanese Internet. It’s remarkable that this behaviour hasn’t ceased yet, after more than three years.

Why the mass, national hysteria? Professor Wade Allison, in his book “Radiation and Reason: The Impact of Science on a Culture of Fear”, points out that when in fact nuclear-power-related incidents are far less likely to lead to deaths than those that are non-nuclear, the former get much larger attention. He analyses that it’s because of “the association in the public mind of radiation with the dangers of nuclear weapons” that is still rife more than two decades after the Cold War ended. Professor Allison’s book was published in 2009 here in the UK, and got translated in Japan in July 2011, right after the Fukushima meltdowns.

It is assumed that this “association” works most prominently in Japan, which is “the only nation to have been hit by nuclear bombs”. Twice nuclear-attacked, and losing as many as 200,000 lives just in days after the bombing, Japan’s national identity after World War II has been built partly upon the fear for nuclear weapons. The memorial cenotaph at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park carries the epitaph that we “shall not repeat the error.” * Many of us Japanese associate August with the atomic bombings

(and the end of the war); school children read horrible and sad stories from Hiroshima and Nagasaki every summer as part of peace education curriculum. The “error” of war and nuclear weapons, rather than that of the Japanese themselves, is deeply engraved on our collective memories.

So, the proposition of “Radiation and Reason” itself could be the hardest one for Japanese public to take. For, the collective aversion and hatred to radiation exposure and contamination is at the core of the healthy, peace-oriented nationalism of Japan as “the only nation to have been hit by nuclear bombs”. It’s firmly set in our collective mind. If we, as a nation, are to accept to face radiation with reason rather than aversion, we must also face with the divine memory of “the only nation”, the most peaceful, pacifist national identity of the post war Japan and its nationalism. We need to do this because Fukushima disaster is a national disaster.

I have been asked by a number of people why anti-nuclear groups sound high-spirited when there’s news of severe radioactive contamination. Does it mirror the excitement and elation when nationalism gets activated? At the same time, as I stated, the nuclear threat be it from weapons or from energy use is transboundary in its nature. Thus, this nationalism can turn inter-nationalism, or trans-nationalism. This is where Fukushima written in katakana, in internationalised form, could suffer most. It could be made an international sacred place for the anti-nuclear peace movements.

There is no such Fukushima. There are facts that the now crippled power plant was built for the Tokyo metropolitan area, and that it has been run

largely by the local people, many of whom are themselves survivors of the tsunami and are still on site along with many others from around the country to work on the disaster clean-up in very harsh conditions, in a now uninhabitable land. The real Fukushima is the real people, left with radiation contamination and tsunami damage, still trying to overcome this critical situation and recover, or people who are displaced and now lives separated from their history, families, relatives and home. Treating Fukushima as if it were foreign, isolated land, or anti-nuclear sacred place is the last thing people of Fukushima want.

Regrettably, as I stated, there are some who accuse those who remain in Fukushima as wrongdoers. It is only to exclude, oppress, and exploit them. It is just a popular movement jumping on the bandwagon rather than a sincere anti-nuclear movement.

Standing together with the affected people is one thing; depending upon their suffering is another. As a person who has spent no little time as a researcher on modern history*, I'd like to bring up the fact that if you depend excessively upon the "victims" and victim-hood, you are to make the matter overly politicised. I have seen this happen quite often, and think it deeply problematic. What is important is try to understand the complex nature of what is happening now. If you opt for simplicity and sensationalism, you might be merely to strengthen the prejudice, or to produce another kind of prejudice. Slurring and dissing the "victims" who disagree with you is too eccentric, unhelpful and unproductive when we need healthy and rational debates.

The most devastating for healthy debate would be this: populist attitude just to seek attentions, or don't-rock-the-boat attitude that refrain from asking questions against a leading opinion*, along with commercialism where they think what sells is what is good and right. Now it's clear that the nuclear threat is posed not only by nuclear warfare but also by the activities under the name of "atoms for peace". It's time to re-think realistically, rationally, critically and carefully the problems for the peace in an atomic age. I would like to examine how we could break the cycle of mistrust that is affluent after an unprecedented situation in Japan.

The fact that Japan is fundamentally prone to natural disasters has helped build nationalism in Japan. After the modernisation in the 19th century, many cases of social phenomenon of what we call "disaster patriotism" were recorded. Patriotism in modern Japan is very closely linked to natural disasters and its aftermath -- rescue efforts and relief operation. The Japanese Red Cross Society first operated in 1888, not in a war, but in a volcano eruption of Bandai-san Mountain, located in Aizu (, now Fukushima Prefecture, coincidentally), and three years later in 1891, when a huge earthquake hit the central part of Honshu island. These predate the Japanese Red Cross's efforts in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894 to 95. In those days the Society didn't have the rules and regulations for disaster relief, so they acted upon the royal order from the Empress. The Red Cross Society was one of the earliest established their national integration in Japan. Thus, it is observed that nationalism in modern-era Japan was forged and strengthened every time a natural disaster hit. In this context, the current problem we are facing is thought to be because of the nature of

the Triple Disaster itself: a nuclear disaster triggered by a huge natural disaster.

So how can we break this cycle of distrust prevailing in Japan at the moment? Firstly, we need to acknowledge the fact that this nuclear disaster is part of complex disaster. Secondly, we need to stop mythicising the nuclear power and start scientising it. Thirdly, we need to look more objectively at our national identity of "the only nation to have been hit by nuclear bombs". Fourthly, we must see the real Fukushima, and stop treating it as if something abstract. And lastly, and most importantly, we must reaffirm this basic principle; it is human dignity, rather than mythical gods or legends, that human beings must always protect.

One of the most respected nation-wide newspapers in Japan the Asahi has been running an investigative series named "Prometheus Trap". It was the leading scientists, including Shinichiro Tomonaga, Japanese Nobel Laureate in Physics in 1965, that first used this allegory to warn of the danger of nuclear power. I respect their efforts to communicate with the general public, but I resist the unscientific attitude of using allegories in talking nuclear power. It is either nature power or humans, or both, but in no way unreal mythological gods, that would destroy civilisation. There's no Prometheus whose "trap" can endanger human beings. Nuclear power is man-made, so there will be no miracle to stop the ongoing disaster. Humans can be saved only by humans.

Part I

1. Hate speech against Fukushima

Who protect whom under the catastrophic event?

11th March, 2012. It was the first anniversary of the devastating earthquake and massive tsunami which caused the meltdowns at the nuclear power plant. I was walking on the beach. I was visiting Minamisoma City, Fukushima Prefecture. I was walking with my 17-year-old son, in complete silence, on the deserted, tsunami-stricken beach. Walking in the wilderness was my prayers. Facing the surging sea was my ways of making a wish. Our being there is a solid proof that there was a hope. At least I tried to think so. It was snowing. How many times had I been to Fukushima Prefecture since March 2011? Soon after the devastation I went as a volunteer aid worker. Then I visited the area as a 'tourist' many times. But for my son, it was the first time in a year.

At the time part of Minamisoma City was still in the state-designated "off-limits" zone because of the high radiation. In fact, the traditional-style restaurant in Haramachi Ward of the city, where we were treated to a gorgeous meal, was just a few kilometers away from the "off-limits" gate.

The local lady who entertained us was called Shizue Abe. She had been working so hard since the quake and tsunami, connecting Fukushima, Tokyo and Yamanashi, where I live. She had done a lot for the evacuees and residents as a volunteer worker. She was so kind to my son as well as to me.

In a now sparsely populated area – fewer houses had the lights on at night – she, smiling beautifully, feasted us to delicious food from the mountains and the sea. It felt like as if we were invited to the Dragon Palace in a Japanese ancient fairy tale.

After listening to my son talk, Shizue, the lady who was about the same age as me, the lady a few years junior to me, said, “You rely on your mother very much. That’s why you came all the way here,” in a soft voice. “But in fact, it’s your mother who rely upon you. She was able to go to the beach because you were with her. You are the protector of your mother.” My son looked puzzled. Shizue repeated, “You are protecting your mom.”

He looked as if he couldn’t find any word to say. For a while he was looking at her silently. Then he smiled in a way I had never seen before, and replied, “Yes.” He was showing a little bit of self-confidence in a way I hadn’t expected to see. Long time ago I heard these same words: “A child protects his/her mother.” I no longer remember when but I clearly remember the words: A parent is protected by, rather than protects, his/her own child.

In March 2012, Japanese society was almost soaked up in slogans like “Protect your children from radiation” and “Save kids in Fukushima”, when I heard Shizue say “A child protects his/her mother.” These words resonated within me.

Shaming “the porn- scholars of the government”

One year after the disaster, heated discussions and exchanges against

nuclear power were taking place in the mass media and among pundits everywhere. The most renowned academics and intellectuals were talking eagerly about how *long* they had been against nuclear power and (the notion of) the so-called “atoms for peace”. On TV, in the printed media and on the Internet including blogs and Twitter, they were insisting that they had *long* been skeptical about the pro-nuclear policies of the government, the power utilities and the “government’s porn-scholars”.

I thought they must be taken with a large pinch of salt. If they had really known that much, why hadn’t they started advocating the anti-nuclear or post-nuclear stance earlier? Was it one of many ‘unimportant matters’ usually left unsaid publicly? If so, why everybody is speaking out now?

What is more, by then, some people were beginning to accuse the locals, who had been struck by the tsunami and had lost a lot, for being responsible; they said it was them who had invited the nuclear plant to be built in Fukushima Prefecture. Parents who “refused to evacuate the contaminated areas and failed to protect their own children from the foreseeable risks of radiation” bore the brunt of the verbal attack. At the same time, Fukushima evacuees were being treated with unconcealed curiosity; people watched them as if there were signs of abnormalities about them. Everywhere I could see, there were inexplicable enthusiasm, fever, categorisation, false rumours, verbal abuses, and hate speech. These were done, to my astonishment, publicly under the name of “freedom of speech”, “academic freedom” and “press freedom”. Does the “freedom” tolerate these vile words and insults, I wondered, that sicken you to the

core when you merely hear or see them?

In fact, as a historian, I personally have experienced something similar regarding to those Japan's historical debates. The abuses against Fukushima felt as if the same had been repeated. I almost felt physically sick, reminded of how some academics heaped abuse on me in order to discredit my works. I was actually subjected to a spiteful campaign of harassment done under the name of "academic freedom". To defend the "justice" they believe in, they would intimidate you; they would use tears, or indeed anything, to attract the mass media's attention. They'd insist it would be okay for you to be inconsistent when you seek other people's attention because the end justifies the means. When they fail to do this, they start screaming and putting blames on the media; they would insist that they are gagged because the media is controlled by the government who decides which information is available to the public, and who wants to prevent the victims' voices from being heard. They would tell you that is why their opinions are ignored in the academic world or by the mass media. "Those lobbyist scholars," they would yell, "They are complicit. They can't be trusted!" And then, typical conspiracy theories follow.

Some people can be surprisingly ardent to accuse you. In my case, it annoyed me very much. So I felt sorry for the ones who are accused as the "porn of the government," who in fact in no way seemed to be under control by anyone else but themselves.

"Kill them before they kill you"

By that time, a professor at a national university had started to call Fukushima farmers “murderers”. He insisted he would “kill them before they kill me”. His logic was that because the farm produce from Fukushima was radiation-contaminated, those who sell it were murdering the general public. He took on Twitter, the micro-blogging platform that had already been very popular in Japan, to shout abuses like “their rice is poison”. His rant was tweeted and retweeted round the clock. Even though his behaviour was unreasonable beyond belief, many people supported him. He was treated like a hero in a popular graphic novel, because of, at first, his own “map” warning radioactive proliferation over the vast area, when he was insulting and threatening people of different opinions.

Many academics had been on Twitter by then. One of them was another professor at Tokyo University who randomly tweeted to accuse me for not understanding the ranting popular professor’s “true intentions” behind his vile words. I was called “an embarrassment as a scholar”. Or I might have been even called “stupid”. Indeed, on Twitter, I was subjected to a wide variety of verbal abuse regarding Fukushima. For me it was nothing to be called names and categorised because I had experienced a lot as a historian as stated above. But I really couldn’t understand the Tokyo University professor’s point. He calls me “an embarrassment as a scholar”. What does it mean? Am I “an embarrassment” as an academic? If so, what makes me “an embarrassment”? Is it embarrassing for an academic to criticise another academic who unreasonably called somebody “a murderer” and declared that he “would kill them before they kill me” for no apparent reason? I just didn’t understand.

Away from Twitter, soon after the news of nuclear accident, somebody built a website, using a free web service called “@wiki”, which listed “*Goyo Gakusha*” or “the academic friends of the nuclear lobbies”. The web service only requires your e-mail and screen name. Once you have registered, you can use wiki, a web application which allows people to add, modify, or delete content in collaboration with others, to build a website for free of charge. The anonymous people behind the website, which has now been deleted, were basically blacklisting the “bad guys”, or the “friend” of nuclear industries, and white-listing the “good guys”, who spoke against the nuclear power and urge the general public to avoid radiation. According to the website, I was neither good or bad. I found my name listed as “Others: fantasy theorists”, or in Japanese, *Tondemo*.⁽¹⁾

The section apparently listed ultra-nationalists and those who the anonymous website thought supported them. One unknown author, quoting an anonymous tweet, wrote on the top of the page, “Never ignore them as fools. They are strongly connected with those self-proclaimed ‘conservatives’.”

“Nobuko Kosuge, historian,” the page listed me, and linked to another page. It was a compilation of comments posted on the biggest anonymous internet community in Japan, 2 Channel, and random tweets and blog excerpts. The first post begins, “Is she a air-*Goyo* or *Tondemo*?” They defined⁽²⁾ “air-*Goyo*” as “academics, especially scientists, who serve the pro-nuclear community without being asked or paid”. The “air” prefix means “pretending” or “fake”, as in the popular Air Guitar Championships, where people pretend to play the guitar without the instrument like the

most famous heavy metal rock musician. The post continues, “Well, I think she’s *Tondemo*. Look how she quotes Wade Allison.” Then the author invites readers to read my essay on my personal website.

Having read my essay, another anonymous Twitter user, known only by a screen name, is quoted saying, “Wow, she really quotes Wade Allison’s *The Radiation and Reason*.” In a separate tweet copied-and-pasted just below, the same person says, “Well, she gets nothing correctly. IMHO I can’t read her essay because the logic is fundamentally flawed.”

“Who posted these comments anonymously on the Internet?” I had to wonder. “And for what? What was the author feeling while typing? Was he or she smiling?”

Professor Wade Allison is a British academic whom I respect. He rightly points out that the fear of radiation is unreasonably strong among the general public. Indeed it’s so strong that people lose rational thinking. My observation is that the fear works as psuedo-religious [quasi-religious] concept when you absolutise the fear of radiation and provoke anxiety.

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The myth of the “only nation”

Nuclear power (or atoms, radiation—whatever you call it) has always been treated something beyond human wisdom, especially in Japan. In this narrative, nuclear power is something mystical and mysterious that is nearly divine. Indeed, the atomic bombings on the cities of Hiroshima and

Nagasaki in August 1945 were history-changing events as well as the most devastating acts upon tens of thousands of civilians. The atrocities clearly showed the world that human beings now had the actual power to destroy the civilisation quickly and completely. Soon after the bombings Japan surrendered. Now the war was over. The Emperor had declared he was a human; he himself now officially denied the prewar and war-time concept that he was a living god. Thus, as people got to know what really happened in the two cities, the most sacred and inviolable for the Japanese completely changed; from the absolute and divine status of the Emperor to the horrors of atomic bombs.

Atomic power and the atrocities it had brought on the two large cities seemed untouchable, almost divine. Being “the only nation to have been hit by nuclear bombs” became the national identity of the post-war Japan, which worked as the ‘symbolic function’ just like the Emperor before and during the World War II. At the same time, the idea of “atoms for peace” was being introduced globally. “Uranium can produce the energy that builds peace and prosperity,” they were told. But how could the people of “the only nation hit by nuclear bombs” handle the idea of “atoms (for peace)” with reason? Just as some people kept deifying the Emperor long after the war, nuclear power belonged to the world of myths.

Atomic power was now compared to the “Prometheus’ fire”, a kind of “original sin” of science and civilisation. Prometheus, in Greek mythology, stole fire from Zeus for human beings to use, and was punished by being chained to a rock and made to suffer forever. This allegory was first used in

post-war Japan by the leading scientists, including Shinichiro Tomonaga, Japanese Nobel Laureate in Physics in 1965, and by the avid supporters of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs in 1957, where scholars and public figures, inspired by the Russell-Einstein Manifesto in 1955, came together to work toward reducing the danger of armed conflict and to seek solutions to global security threats. It was the moment when the scientific world became aware of their social responsibilities and tried to play a role in bringing and building world peace. In this context, Japan was the absolute victim of the violence brought by the power of nuclear blast and radiation, rather than the nation that invaded other countries, started the war and lost it. Against the backdrop of the Cold War, Japan as the bearer of the divine memory was now allowed to narrate the non-nuclear, pacifist ideals.

For Japan to be able to behave as a victim of the nuclear blast, a prohibited power to the humanity by the wrath of God, was supported by this allegory. So the nuclear power should be defeated in the end. When looking at the current situation in this context, I could somehow understand how some academics and scholars had been gripped by the anti-nuclear fever so as to repeatedly rant and rave on the Internet or in the traditional media, where they are bizarrely treated like rock stars.

Living in Fukushima

It was around the summer of 2011 that I happened to read a short essay in the Fukushima Minpo, a local paper in the prefecture. Titled “I’ll Farm in Fukushima,” and written by Mr Koshi Fujita, a farmer living in Koriyama

City, which is XXX km from the cripple TEPCO 1F, it was a revelation turning point to me. Here, I'm quoting the English translation by the newspaper in full:

I'll farm in Fukushima.

'Murderer!' In all my thirty odd years, never did I think anyone would call me that. I'm a farmer, eighth generation. No one actually said that to my face but that's what certain individuals called farmers in Fukushima.

The earthquake and tsunami were a nightmare. Then the nuclear accident. That first week was utter chaos: we didn't know whether we would be able to stay in our homes, let alone whether we'd be able to go on farming. Then just when it looked as if we could carry on with the farm and just as I'd made the decision that it would be better to make a go of it rather than do nothing and regret it later, my world turned upside down when I saw those words on the internet. That first month I was under a lot of pressure.

But some people had kind things to say. 'We like the rice and vegetables you grow and we'll keep eating them: We'll do anything we can to help: Things like that really cheered me up. And one person made the comment: 'Seven billion people in the world - can't please everyone.'

One thing I do know. Radioactive materials rained down on Fukushima. That's a fact and we can't change it. But what we see in that, what we make of that – well, the possibilities are infinite.

To those who say farm produce from Fukushima is too dangerous to eat, I say Fukushima should aim to have the best safety certification of any agricultural produce in the world.

To those who say they won't let their children live in such a place, I say I'll make my family a happy one so my kids will be glad they were born in Fukushima.

Some may stigmatize 'Fukushima' and look on us with anger, pity or despair. But to me, Fukushima is beautiful, and I look on it with thanks, joy and hope.

Who's going to get Fukushima farming back on its feet? The government? The local authorities? No. It's up to us, the farmers of Fukushima.

Are we to pass on this image of 'Fukushima' the tragic victim? You must be joking. No way. I want people to admire the way Fukushima, which suffered so much as a result of the nuclear accident, became an even better place. We have the chance to participate in such a project. Surely this is something worth spending your life on?

Leave Fukushima and break new ground? That would be such a waste. Me, I'll farm in Fukushima.

The author also expresses his firm will against Fukushima written in katakana, though this official English translation above has little in it to tell about the alienating effect of katakana. Reading this powerful essay, I came to question the situation: While the non-stop abuses, false rumours and incorrect information are still repeated here and there, based on their ignorance and lack of sensibilities, why the local people, who are most badly affected and most suffered by the meltdowns at the crippled nuclear power plant, must be accused as “murderers”?

Freedom of speech is vital in our society. But these abuses and insults to people of Fukushima, newly created or reproduced, were getting out of hand in my eyes. They would keep popping up, getting more and more aggressive, in some parts of Japanese society. Their medium-to-long-term effect could be serious, though like what Yukio Edano, the then Chief Cabinet Secretary, said of the radiation levels after the accident, these insensitive words pose “no immediate threat”. Edano’s words were, at the time, repeated by the media and ridiculed and mocked by the general public so many times that they got selected as one of the “words and phrases of the year 2011”.

One other thing that I remembered when I met the slander of “murderers” against the Fukushima farmers was, again, long time ago, the exactly same word that I had heard from an old British ex-POW of the Japanese Army

during at the WWII. The British ex-POW of the Japanese who had lived in the city of Cambridge in the 1990s, and he confessed me that he had been accused by an old Japanese man saying that “you, the prisoners are murders!” As I asked him why you had to be condemned “murderes”, he promptly answered me: “Because we the prisoners were relieved from the camps in the sake of the A-bombs. I knew the old Japanese had lost all his family in Nagasaki.” Then I was clearly remembering that both of the words “a child protects his/her mother” and “murders!” were what I had heard in Cambridge whose local regiment The Fen Tigers had been all captured at the fall of Singapore and sent to the construction of The Death Railway between Thailand and Burma.

(To be continued)

注

- (1) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>; <http://genkuroki.web.fc2.com/goyo.html>

See also

<http://web-beta.archive.org/web/20120920024851/http://www47.atwiki.jp/goyo-gakusha/>

- (2) *<http://web-beta.archive.org/web/20120920052620/http://www47.atwiki.jp/goyo-gakusha/pages/360.html>

Notes

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<http://www.dajf.org.uk/event/the-nuclear-myth-and-japans-postwar-nationalism>

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This paper will be continued.