

Hazuki Mori

Department of Indology and Far Eastern Studies

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

University of Zagreb

hazkim@ffzg.unizg.hr

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A Brief Guide to Japanese Literature Studies: A Case Study of Masaji Iwakura

Abstract: The purpose of this chapter is to help readers explore how to choose topics for the study of Japanese literature by referring to the utopian thoughts of a Japanese writer, Iwakura Masaji (1903–2000). Iwakura studied under D. T. Suzuki (Buddhist priest and scholar) and Jun Tosaka (dialectical materialism philosopher), which resulted in him being torn between Buddhism and dialectical materialism. He eventually learned a considerable amount from both and developed his own unique thoughts. Another aim of this chapter is to examine the development of Iwakura's thoughts and the horizons he reached. Iwakura's work provides guidelines for building a better society and how one can live more subjectively and freely.

Keywords: Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki, research, Marx, thought, Masaji Iwakura, Shinran, Utopian

Introduction

This paper is designed to introduce Japanese literature studies and provide readers with useful material to expand their knowledge. I write this paper intending to primarily reach undergraduate and postgraduate readers. However, I hope that this text will also offer new perspectives and material to researchers who have studied literature – not only Japanese literature – and those who may not be interested in research but love Japanese literature.

The existing research on methodologies, research history, and individual authors with their literary titles is already as abundant as the stars in the sky. Thus, I would like

to leave these themes to the already existing and well-respected works that are on our shelves (see also the Reading Guide at the end of this book) and focus on matters related to how one goes about choosing a research topic when studying Japanese literature. This topic is inspired by students who have expressed an interest in Japanese literature studies but find it difficult to pick topics to explore. Once again, there are many valuable reference books and online resources available that provide useful tips; however, this chapter introduces the reader to my own research and demonstrates how a topic is chosen and explored.

1. Finding topics and a sense of purpose

If asked what my field of expertise is, I would answer that it is the history of religions and discourses in modern and contemporary Japan. Thus, let it be noted that I am not a formal scholar of literature. This does not mean, however, that I have only dealt with religions and discourses found in Japanese history while studying. To add depth to my research I have taken a proactive stance in adopting a variety of research methods and I learn as much as possible about matters that are traditionally perceived as lying outside of the area. Literature is one such field but has furnished me with a range of viewpoints and ample food for thought. For this reason, an expert in the field of religious studies has criticized my writing as material that does not fall within my realm of qualification and is hardly distinguishable from literary criticism. Despite this, I have not felt the necessity to adjust my stance since I believe it is currently the best way to approach my research goals.

What are my research goals? My primary goal is to explore how Japanese people, Japanese society, and by extension, human beings and their society have been involved with religious discourses throughout history. Through this study, I delve into how religious discourses, and phenomena related to them, can provide us with wisdom for having a better life. A significant reason for choosing religious discourse as the focus of my research is that there are numerous lessons to learn from them, whether positive or negative. Throughout all ages and cultures, persons of religion have explored topics surrounding human well-being, the meaning of life and the pursuit of an ideal life, and an ideal society. They have attempted to realize societies regarded as ideal, through all ages and cultures. Ultimately, my goal is to contribute to building better societies by suggesting measures and frameworks of thinking that may improve how societies function by learning from their exploration.

Now, I would like to encourage you, the readers, to ask yourself why you would like to research. Whether it is to satisfy your thirst for knowledge, to fulfill your esteem

needs, to make a living, to contribute to the development of society, to contribute to the future of societies of human beings or a combination of some of them, once it becomes clear, you can see who you would like to deliver your messages to and what messages you would like to convey. No matter what your motivation is, if your messages are somehow compelling, your research could fit your purpose. If not, you should just make efforts to improve the quality of your cogency. As history shows, outstanding research continues to provide subjects for discussion, food for thought, point of view and much more to society. Even though your contemporaries may not appreciate your research, it might inspire someone in the distant future. Although it is difficult to set goals and choose a topic, I recommend you take the first step. If you do not share your ideas with other people, little attention will be given to them. You will learn as you go, and it is always possible to reroute your journey if you need to.

2. A short biography of Masaji Iwakura and a brief introduction of his thoughts

In this section, I will introduce the research that I have been doing based on my motivations. The research is on „utopian thought” expressed in the literary works of the Japanese writer, Masaji Iwakura (1903–2000). Iwakura was deeply involved in religion and things related to it. He put his thoughts into writing and released them into the world.

Before discussing the „utopian thought” of Masaji Iwakura and how it was formed and then expressed in his works, I would like to briefly introduce his life story.

Iwakura was born in 1903 into a family of poor tenant farmers in a remote village in Toyama Prefecture. His home village is in an area where the Jodo Shinshu sect (the True Pure Land sect of Buddhism) had flourished, and his mother was a pious Jodo Shinshu sect believer. Additionally, he was an unusual child who was interested in Buddhist teachings and frequently joined gatherings where priests delivered sermons. It can be said that the teachings of Shinran, the founder of the Jodo Shinshu sect, became a part of him – his flesh and blood – and he was influenced by this environment and his childhood experiences. Due to his parents’ poverty, Iwakura was forced to work in Tokyo after graduating from elementary school. He had to change from one job to another as he had health problems. During this time, he aspired to study further and eventually enrolled at Otani University, which is associated with the Jodo Shinshu sect of Buddhism in 1926. At University, he met two profound scholars: Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (1870–1966), a Buddhist priest and Buddhist scholar who has been world-renowned for his works on Zen Buddhism, and Jun Tosaka (1900–1945), a philosopher who is known to this day for being a theoretical leader of Marxism in Japan. Iwakura’s

encounter with Marxism, which was taught by Tosaka, brought about a severe inner struggle for him. He was deeply concerned about whether he should choose Buddhism (religion) or materialism (anti-religion) to guide his life.

In the early 1930s, after graduating from university without overcoming his inner conflict, Iwakura threw himself into the anti-religious movement conducted mainly by Japanese socialists or communists under the influence of the Japanese Communist Party. He did this with the view of improving himself through practical activities. However, soon after having joined the movement, he was arrested on suspicion of violating the Peace Preservation Law. Iwakura was severely tortured beyond imagination and forced to recant his affiliation with the movement and reject his ideological commitment to Marxism. Unable to bear the guilt of having betrayed his comrades, he visited his teacher, D. T. Suzuki, to seek solace. According to Iwakura's autobiographical work, *Mukoku no Ki* (Tales of people who have no one to tell their sufferings) (1983), Suzuki said to him, „There you are”. Suzuki's words brought about a major turning point for Iwakura. In an instant, he was able to embrace his own weakness and realized that no matter how hard one strives, one cannot give salvation to themselves with self-help endeavours (*Ji-riki*, Jodo Shinshu sect term). This is because they are too weak and because they seek the transcendent being (*Ta-riki*, sect term) who liberates people from an endless cycle of suffering. It is imagined that he experienced „Shinjin-Ketsujō (lit. determining faith)¹”, in the words of Jodo Shinshu, although he did not explicitly mention this in any of his works. The words of Daisetz and this realization led him to a kind of „conversion” that determined the way he would live his life and set him on an adventurous journey of thought. It was a journey to free himself from the shackles of his religion–anti-religion Shinran–Marx internal debate. He began an ambitious undertaking of making the most of and learning from both minds and improving his own framework of thoughts.

In Iwakura's words, it has generally been thought that religion and Marxism are incompatible since religion prioritizes „the salvation for the individual (salvation of the individual soul)”, while Marxism prioritizes „the salvation of society (transformation of the social system)”.² Therefore, they have denied each other. To put it plainly, Marx criticizes it by describing it as an „opiate of the masses” and that it prevents social change. Religion, on the other hand, criticizes Marxism for disregarding the salvation of an individual's soul, which was given by the transcendent being. According

¹ It can be translated as gaining Amitabha Buddha's salvation, to come to be able to rely totally on Amitabha Buddha having very little doubt about being given salvation by Amitabha Buddha and so on, depending on the context.

² He mentioned these concepts in his work *Shinran: Tanni-shō no jinsei*/Jinsei-ron many times. I summarised and paraphrased them to explain more clearly.

to Iwakura, however, these two schools of thought could complement each other. He posed that when we examine things from various perspectives, there is the possibility for both „salvations” to be found. Iwakura continued his journey to find both „salvations” throughout his life, learning from both Marx and Shinran, including the ways they illuminate one another from different angles.

Thereafter, Iwakura’s love of literature, and a necessity to sustain his family, motivated his devotion to literary writing. He gained public attention in Tokyo by publishing notable works, including his debut novel, *Imochi-byō* (Rice blast) (1939), which was nominated for the 9th Akutagawa Prize competition, and *Sonchō Nikki* (a Diary of a Village Mayor) (1940), which won the 3rd Arima Prize competition for Farmer’s Literature. In 1947, two years after Japan’s defeat in the Second World War, he moved to his birthplace, Toyama, in search of a place to work in the local community. Here, Iwakura found his final abode and devoted himself to his creative activities.

What consistently lies beneath Iwakura’s works is his thoughts, called *Jinen-Hōni*³, and *Datsu-Shūkyō* (trance-religion). The term *Jinen-Hōni* has been originally used in Buddhist terminology, which was considered important, especially by *Shinran*.⁴ However, Iwakura added his own interpretation to it. From his point of view, *Jinen-Hōni* can be explained as a state of mind or process in which one recognizes/tries to recognize the Universal Law⁵ and how it works and live in accordance with it’. Nothing remains unchanged. People and society are in constant flux. This concept is what Buddhists call *Mujō* (Impermanence) and is one of the fundamental truths taught by the historical Buddha. It is so arduous for people to perceive it properly that we tend to

³ *Jinen-Hōni* has been translated into English as „naturalness”, „spontaneously as-is”, „realization of what things are by their own nature”, depending on the context.

⁴ In *Tanni-shō* (A Record in Lament of Divergences), from the late Kamakura period, is one of the most important and popular works of the Jodo Shin sect. In this work, we can find Shinran’s explanation of *Jinen*, „If the entrusting heart (of Amitabha Buddha) has become settled, birth (in the Pure Land, i.e. to be given Amitabha Buddha’s salvation) will be brought about by Amida (=Amitabha Buddha)’s design, so there must be no calculating on our part. Even when we are evil, if we revere the power of the Vow (of Amitabha Buddha, i.e. the eighteenth vow among the forty-eight vows Bodhisattva Dharmakara (the name of Amitabha during his ascetic period) had made. In this vow, Amitabha had taken the pledge: „If anyone is not saved in this world, I shall not attain Buddhahood”. Shinran placed utmost importance on the vow and emphasized that Amitabha shall liberate all the mortals of this world from suffering since he already had become Buddha with all his vows fulfilled.) all the more deeply, gentle-heartedness and forbearance will surely arise in us through its spontaneous working (*Jinen*). With everything we do, as far as birth is concerned, we should constantly and fervently call to mind Amida’s immense benevolence without any thought of being wise. Then the Nembutsu (Buddhist invocation) will indeed emerge; this is *Jinen*. Our not calculating is called *Jinen*. It is itself Other Power (*Tariki*).” (ed. cit. p. 34). Information in the brackets other than *Jinen* was added by the author.

⁵ It can be said to be *Dharma*, in the Buddhist context. However, for Iwakura it did not matter whether it is Buddhist or not. He tried to learn it from other religious teachings as well.

live under an illusion that the present state of affairs continues forever. We are prone to clinging to things we have now or to states we presently find ourselves in. As a result, our attachment to them causes suffering since everything can change in a single moment. Iwakura prescribes a cure for this problem. He suggests that by rationally and courageously grasping the reality of this world and subjectively choosing to live in accordance with the Law of Impermanence, we can identify what really matters to us and be free from the burden of leaving ourselves wanting more, which results in one living better and more humanly. While struggling to find ways of living better, one may become discouraged and confronted with their weaknesses, which will encourage ideas of giving up or putting one's desires ahead of the pursuit. The journey should not be stopped at this point. Even if what seems like the correct path is found, it may become unsuitable in a following situation. Therefore, what we discover should continuously be reviewed. During this struggle, one should eventually come to understand that others live with similar difficulties. When we can share the bitterness, and sometimes even a spirit of conviviality, we can reach out and achieve an ideal society, even if it is only one step, or half a step, at a time. Iwakura calls this never-ending struggle, *Jinen-Hōni*.

Furthermore, Iwakura suggested that the carrying of *Jinen-Hōni* forward would naturally lead us to the state of mind that could be called *Datsu-Shūkyō* (trance-religion). Those who suffer from hardships often turn to religion for deliverance. Many assume that as long as they live their lives in accordance with the doctrines of certain religious communities, which they simplify and understand in their own ways, or as long as they follow procedures recommended by the community, they will be able to achieve salvation. Some communities proactively offer the followers „correct” teachings, practices, and so on for salvation. Such procedures appear to be difficult to follow. Yet, they are less difficult than perceived. When the practices become mere ordinary routines, one can carry them out mechanically without thinking of their meanings. One tends to stop questioning the content of what the founder, priest, or teacher preaches because they assume that they already know about it. When one just does what others tell them, they can be less stressed out. They don't need to spend time and effort to seek their own salvation. They don't need to change their way of thinking and life drastically. This is nothing more than „the cessation of thinking” and many people are willing to take this easier path. However, they often come to feel that they are not getting what they want from their religious community in the easier ways. Then, they just start looking for a new one. Iwakura says, „There is no other way for us to obtain salvation than one in which we independently, relatively and freely examine religious teachings (especially provided by the founder) or things you find helpful whether it is a religion or not, and find what we can believe as the „truth” „then”.⁶ Religious instruc-

⁶ Iwakura (1957), pp.156-157. The author paraphrased the original texts.

tions ought not to be, as things that give us only one correct answer and measure. Only when we actively ponder our own problems, while exploring religious teachings, can we „transcend” conventional religious discourses.

3. Allegory of *Kūki ga nakunaru Hi* (The day the air is gone)

These thoughts were expounded in Iwakura’s works on religions. He committed to expressing them in the form of literary works. One of the results of his endeavours is *Kūki ga nakunaru Hi* (The day the air is gone) (1947). In it, we can see his unique „utopian thought” that is distinctly different from conventional ones.

The story is set in a small village somewhere in Japan where Halley’s Comet approaches Earth (1910), which sends its inhabitants into panic mode. It humorously portrays peoples’ ignorance and human nature, and at the same time poignantly deals with contradictions and the structure of society. In the end, it is implied that people gradually notice the state of their society.

The work was first published in the 1947 November issue of the children’s magazine, *Kodomo no Hiroba* (Children’s Square). It was sympathetically received especially among educators and parents. Since then, it has been published in book form, as part of an anthology or in teaching material at least 21 times and has never disappeared from bookshop shelves. It was also made into a film by Nippon Eiga sha (the Japan Film Corporation) in 1949 and gained popularity for being the first film in Japan that used special effects.

The novel begins in a village where there is a rumour that in a week, a comet will come close to the Earth and there will be no air for five minutes. At first, schoolteachers just laugh at the rumour, saying „It cannot be true”. However, when the principal tells the teachers that a prefectural government official told him that scholars from all over the world are saying it will certainly occur, the colour drains from their faces. The principal, „who loves the children so much”, trains his students to put their faces in basins of water and hold their breath for as long as possible. Naturally, no one can hold their breath for more than two minutes. The whole village is in an uproar.

Villagers spontaneously begin to believe that „the most reliable way” to survive this desperate situation is to collect air in rubber bags and suck it out little by little until they can breathe air as usual. The only rubber bags they can get are small ice bags sold at a pharmacy or bicycle tire tubes at a bicycle shop. A shortage occurs with everyone needing these commodities and each person needing more than one to keep them breathing for five minutes. Consequently, the price of the ice bag, which used to be ¥1.20, skyrockets to ¥100, and then to ¥200. A landowner’s son, Daizaburo, and his

family buy the tubes and ice bags in bulk, while the poor people who make up most of the village cannot afford the items.

Poor farming parents want to buy ice bags for their youngest son of eight siblings, even though they must borrow money. When learning about this, the son indignantly says, „How can I become the only survivor in my family?” The parents bemoan the fact that their children would get through the catastrophe if they had been born into the landowner’s family. In response, the boy declares, „I’d rather die than come through by doing the same things the landowner family does!”. Hearing their youngest brother, the siblings agree with him and say that they have already prepared against the likelihood of their death. Most of the peasants in the village turn their empty wallets upside down and shake them, having given up finding a way to live through the disaster before the day even comes.

A strange morning glow heralds the start of the day. When the cadet walks into his school classroom and sees Daizaburo surrounded by many children, he bursts out laughing. Daizaburo is the only one who can prepare the air in tubes. He hangs six air-filled bicycle tire tubes from his shoulders in a cross shape. He sits at his desk, keeping his gaze lowered blushing. Seeing that none of the teachers, including the principal, had air in bags or tubes, he is surprised people are not as rich as he believed.

The time for the comet to arrive finally comes but nothing happens. The rumour was a far-fetched hoax. The child’s family, who were huddled with bated breath, looked at each other and giggle. „What? We’re still alive!” the boy says. Voices begin to say, „Heh heh! I was taken in by the big trick”. With these words, the boy’s father goes out to work in the fields as usual. The boy suddenly remembers Daisaburo and cannot help but feel pity for him.

Although readers may not know of Iwakura, his philosophies, or the themes of this work, it is certainly a heart-warming comedy about people being confused by rumours. It can be imagined that Iwakura did not expect anything more than that. However, this work can be considered as a visualized *Jimen-Hōni* in a more real-life situation.

In his other work, *Shinran: Tanni-shō no Jinsei-ron* (Shinran: A view of life found in *Tanni-shō*) (1957), Iwakura critiques religion by using a camera as an example to explain that it is more important to objectively capture the reality of this impermanent world with less sentiment or interests of your own, than it is to achieve salvation. Likewise, in *Kūki ga nakunaru hi*, Iwakura perched video cameras. He unemotionally depicts what the village is like and what the villagers are doing from a birds-eye view, without expressing his own opinions or providing explanations. It is as if some documentary filmmakers situated cameras to continuously film people’s lives. If nothing special happens, we just see yawningly boring ordinary life where villagers would ba-

sically withstand distasteful things like having minor squabbles, crops being poor, or such like so as to avoid having negative feelings or for fear of hurting others' feelings.

Iwakura does not mean that ordinary life is an example of someone being in *Jin-en-Hōni*. Rather, he sees it as a fictional world, where people mindlessly adopt the conventions of the people around them to gain small short-term benefits. The last thing on the villagers' mind is to consider the reality of their world, or community, rationally and objectively. They do not think of measures to create an ideal society and to live a better life freely. The villagers should not be blamed for their responses. Their historical, social and/or cultural surroundings have deeply affected them, and a paradigm has been firmly embedded in their minds. Therefore, there needs to be volition to relativise them and to restructure „traditional” frames of reference. Iwakura uses „The day the air is gone” to build momentum toward volition.⁷

As anticipated, the villagers panic over potentially losing their lives. Even the more educated schoolteachers are swayed by the rumours. Figments of their world are gradually unveiled, the biggest being the structural contradiction of the village. The fact that only one school child could afford to store air in tubes reveals that there had been a gulf between the haves and have-nots, which illustrates a significant social class division. This division was previously submerged in the depths of the villagers' consciousness or they avoided acknowledging it. The poor farming parents accepted the unreasonably expensive tenant fees and the landowner's overbearing attitude as something they could not complain about. However, when they were desperately worried about the coming comet, they could hardly contain their frustration when they saw the difference in the prices of their children's lives. They, yet, did not have the wisdom or courage to go so far as to criticise the landowner or to voice the obvious injustice. In contrast, the children courageously assert that they do not want to survive by becoming like the landowner's family. Although the cameras only capture the action and no statement is made, the focus of this film is on the choices that the children make.

When nothing happens and chuckles fill the village, the villagers realize that they were conned. The father of the youngest child goes out into the fields as if there had

⁷ It is not clear at this point how Iwakura got the idea for the motif of this work. However, it can be guessed that he might have thought as Ryunosuke Akutagawa did: „... Suppose I need a certain extraordinary incident to express that theme in the most artistically powerful way possible. It will be extremely difficult to treat this extraordinary incident - simply because it *is* extraordinary - as happening in contemporary Japan; and if (...) I do so, in most cases, the readers will find it unnatural, and as a result the theme itself will be lost its life for nothing. Therefore, in order to avoid this difficulty, I have no alternative other than to treat it as something that happened in the past, or in some foreign land, or in the past in some foreign land.” (R. Akutagawa, *Mukashi* (the past): *The collected works of Ryunosuke Akutagawa*, vol. 2, Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1977, p. 124. Iwakura succeeded in naturally depicting people in the midst of „extraordinary incidents” and conveying themes in this work.

been nothing wrong. They view the tranquil landscape of their village and fill their lungs with „sweet and savory air”. They then realize that nature is a blessing, no matter what. In the situation, crucially, the villagers sensed that something had changed after the false rumour about the comet. Iwakura alludes to it with an unobtrusive words: „The boy suddenly remembers Daizaburo. Now he cannot help but feel somehow pity for him”. Had Iwakura responded around the time that he joined the anti-religious movement, he might have denounced the inhumanity of the landlord system loudly. He may have proceeded to emphasize that above all else, societal structures needed to be changed. It was not that Iwakura had changed his views, but rather, it seemed that he had wanted to convey a message based on his own utopianism by including the short caption. Daizaburo, who suffered a sense of alienation due to his father being the wealthy landowner, also needed to be saved. Significantly, people of the same class developed a sense of solidarity during the narrative, but more importantly, there is a message of a brighter future when standing in solidarity with people outside of one’s class, even if this grows little by little, but steadily.

As aforementioned, this work is a visual representation of *Jinen-Hōni*, illustrated through a potential real-life situation. The scenery supports this notion of it being a real-life scenario and Iwakura exquisitely describes the landscape of the village, the clear blue sky, the shiny black soil and the fresh green trees. Once the threat of the comet has come to pass, visually all seems to be the way it was before, but the characters and the readers are left with altered perceptions.

4. Iwakura’s Utopian Thought

Finally, I would like to discuss Iwakura’s utopian thoughts found in his work. To fully grasp Iwakura’s utopian thoughts, a general understanding of what „utopia” is should be presented. Discussing this topic at length would go beyond the scope of this chapter and it is best I leave readers to consult the works of eminent scholars in this field. However, I will share a loose framework that will fulfill the minimum requirements for delving into the significant characteristics of Iwakura’s utopian thoughts.⁸

⁸ For the benefit of interested readers, I have listed some previous studies in the reference list. On utopian thoughts in Japan, I would particularly recommend reading Takahashi (2014). This is the first volume of a series of books „designed to provide Japanese language students with diverse and sophisticated interests in Japanese culture and society with specialized books written in Japanese so as to develop their ability to read and interpret specialized kinds of literatures, to deepen their basic professional knowledge of Japanese culture and society, and to broaden their educational base”. The text is written in transparent Japanese, which is easy to understand even for non-native speakers. Technical or difficult terms and phrases are translated into English, Chinese and Korean, and explanations are provided.

The term „utopia” is most broadly defined by referring to what has been considered as representing utopian thought⁹. The term can be used to refer to „a society in which people can live in an ideal state”. If utopia was a central discussion in this chapter, I would discuss what is meant by „people”, what kind of state is regarded as „ideal”, what is meant by „society”, and how a state of utopia can be achieved. However, the content of this chapter should stick closely to concepts directly related to Iwakura’s concept of utopian thought. From this starting point, it is most important to identify two main categories: utopian thought which argues that it takes a „social system” and its changes to enable or realize an „ideal state”, and utopian thought that regards an „individual mindset” and its changes to be responsible for achieving an „ideal state”.¹⁰

Put simply, it should go without saying that we cannot live totally alone. Humans are social beings, as the cliché goes. Imagine living in a hermitage. A person wears and eats what others have made, uses electricity, gas and water and they have relationships with the people whose providing these necessities. In human relations, conflicting interests and confrontation cannot be avoided. It boils down to the fact that a collision of one’s desires and another’s can be found anywhere, anytime. Those who believe in social systems assume that changes in systems should be able to minimize (or even erad-

Additionally, in my book (2014), I attempt, albeit inadequately, to trace the footsteps of modern Japanese utopian thought by referring to works and ideas that have been dealt with in the context of utopian thought.

⁹ What referred to are listed below: Plato’s *The Republic* (c. 375 BC), Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516), Tommaso Campanella’s *The City of the Sun* (1602) and Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis* (1627). Philosophical and ideological „utopias”, such as Hebraism, kinds of Millenarianism in Christianity and dàtóng (Great Unity) in Confucianism. The historical utopian movements included one advocated by Thomas Müntzer, which Friedrich Engels discussed in *The Peasant War in Germany* (1870), the Taiping Rebellion in China and the Donghak movement in Korea. Religious utopia, such as the traditional Japanese belief in Maitreya and the apocalyptic view of the Ōmoto-kyo and a „new” Japanese religion. Utopian socialism-like thoughts of Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, Robert Owen and others. Communism as a „philosophy” can also be included. When we take all the various attempts to realize an „ideal community” in this world as „utopia in practice”, then, apart from value judgments, it can be natural to name the Kibbutz in Israel, the Amish, the People’s Temple and Mushanokōji Saneatsu’s new village, the Ittō-en and the Yamagishi Society in Japan. The so-called dystopian literature of Aldous Huxley, George Orwell and others could also be referred to as „utopias in reverse form”.

¹⁰ Although it seems to be better not to go more deeply into this topic here, it may be worth mentioning that there is said to be an important attribute of utopian thoughts: both types of thoughts show fairly clear critical spirits on the circumstances surrounding them, ranging from a nation to the smallest social unit, people’s words and actions, mentality and ways of thinking. In this case, we may say that concepts or images of a utopia can become goals for people embracing them when they try to change society and/or people, or, the thoughts can function to reveal problems they have through a comparison between the utopian thought and current conditions of societies and/or people. In many cases, the concepts or images work in both ways, depending on the situation. See, e.g. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (1968) and F. Shozo, *Taisei no Kōsō* (Concept of the regime): *The history of modern Japanese thought*, vol. 8, Chikuma Shobo, Tokyo, 1961.

icate) such conflicts and guarantee an „ideal” state’, while those who focus on an individual’s mindset suggest that it is important to change our mindsets to reduce or curb conflict. Some view these approaches as equally important, basing their opinion on reciprocal influence. They believe that a social system will be altered when individual mentalities change and vice versa. A „spatially enclosed community” is envisaged here.

In contrast, Iwakura’s utopia does not refer only to space, which has been widely accepted as notion or image of utopia. He relates utopia to time and motion, or momentum. In this case, momentum is described as activities of those who acknowledge each other’s weaknesses and seek „greater salvation”, which continues to be built from moment to moment, forever. In this world of impermanence, the immutable „ideal society” is spatial „no place (to be found)”. Therefore, Iwakura urges readers to examine the reality of ourselves and our surroundings from a higher viewpoint, which will naturally form a more rational and free perspective. We must continue to seek the momentum to build a better future.

Closing Remarks

Although this chapter has focused solely on Iwakura’s perception of utopia, numerous inspiring Japanese literary works allow us to think about utopia. In recent years, many works have joined the list of works that explore utopian discourse. I would like to name just a few examples of these works, ones that I intend to pore over in the future: Atsuko Asano’s *No.6* (2003–2011), Keikaku Ito’s *Harmony* (2008), Tomoyuki Hoshino’s *Ore Ore* (Me) (2010), Hisashi Inoue’s *Kumikyoku Gyakusatsu* (Suit „Slaughter”) (2010), Natsuo Kirino’s *Politicon* (2011), Kanae Minato’s *Utopia* (2015). Ito’s *Harmony* (2008) is particularly intriguing as it deals with issues related to incompatibility between individual consciousness and social systems.

In exploring Iwakura and his works, I found a horizon-broadening subject. After reading Iwakura’s work repeatedly, I have rethought my own ideal state of society and what it means to live better and more humanly, and these thoughts have led me to reaffirm my research goals.

Hopefully, those who read this work will also encounter eye-opening literary works. No matter how well you know how to swim, no matter how much you know about the history of swimming, and no matter how well you remember the lives of various swimmers, the ways they swam and their records, if you are not aware of where you are swimming to, you could be drowning in the vast ocean of Japanese literature. May you come across some great works that will guide you in the direction you want to swim.

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