The Nature of Sports Groups in Japan

-Or Its Relation to Violent Phenomena-

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Abstract: In December 2012, a high school student, a member of basketball club, committed suicide because of corporal punishments by his teacher. This gave a great shock to not only the academic world of sports science but also the whole Japanese society. Associations made statements to get rid of corporal punishments. It has been pointed out, however, that corporal punishments are not present - day problems and have been a dangerous issue since long ago. Furthermore, in Japan, acts of violence among players in sports groups occurred over and over as well as corporal punishments. These show that sports groups in Japan have violent nature. Media made a great fuss and ostensible right or wrong arguments were repeated when acts of violence occur. But, problems of violence are not solved at all. Why? It is because violent phenomena occur in daily human relationships, which are not distinguished completely from abnormal ones. This paper clarifies the nature of sports groups in Japan and its relation to the violent phenomena. We reveal the fundamental structure of human relationships in sports groups and explore the moment of violent phenomena in its structure by focusing on arguments of Sigmund Freud, René Girard and Takeo Doi. Keywords of Freud's group psychology are being in loved and identification. Freud's group psychology is a kind of social philosophy and describes collapse of the ego of members. The keyword of Girard's theory is triangle desire. According to Girard, triangle desire describes a situation that people are in a state of confrontation which occurs by imitative desire. Their arguments will be a clue to excavate the moment of violent phenomena in usual human relationships. Moreover, these keywords can be related to amae which plays an important role in Doi's theory on Japanese culture and human relationships. We can grasp the nature of sports groups in Japan and its relation to violent phenomena with Doi's notion of amae.

Key words: sport, violence, corporal punishment, bullying, amae

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1. Introduction

In December 2012, a high school student, a member of Osaka Sakuranomiya high school basketball club, committed suicide because of corporal punishments by his coach¹. This accident was broadcasted by media and gave a great shock to not only the academic world of sports science but also whole Japanese society. Sports associations immediately made statements to exterminate corporal punishments in sports groups². It has been pointed out, however, that corporal punishments are not present-day problem and have been dangerous issues since long ago³.

Furthermore, in Japan, acts of violence among players in sports groups have occurred over and over as well as corporal punishments. For example, acts of violence among players occurred at PL Gakuen high school baseball club in 2013. This club was banned to play games with other schools for six months by this accident⁴. In 2015, Sora high school's baseball club and other clubs were banned to take part in games with other schools for six months by acts of violence among players⁵.

These violent accidents indicate that sports groups in Japan have a highly violent nature. Media made a great fuss and ostensible right or wrong arguments were repeated in the academic world when violence occurred. But, problems of violence are not solved at all. Why? Because, violence is not a right or wrong-problem. I want to state that violence should be discussed as an ontological problem. It means that violence should be put in the extension line of usual human relationships.

Hitoshi Imamura (今村仁司, 1942-2007), who was the leader of social philosophy in Japan by taking in the philosophy of Hegel (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, 1770-1831), Marx (Karl Marx, 1818-1883), Benjamin (Walter Bendix Schönflies Benjamin, 1892-1940), Bataille (Georges Albert Maurice Victor Bataille, 1897-1962), and etc, says that violence is the very humanistic phenomenon and immanent moment in human relationships. Namely, violence is nothing less than social phenomenon⁶. Imamura emphasizes that:

It is more important for us to pierce the function of violence and struggles in phenomena, incidents, and social scenes where are not seemed to be involved in violence at first glance. It is essential to pierce Hell in peaceful social life scenes like seeing through the situation of war, in peaceful situation at first glance⁷.

Influenced by Imamura, this paper clarifies the nature of sports groups in Japan and its relation to violent phenomena. In this paper, we search for the fundamental structure of human relationships in sports groups, and explore the moment of violence in its structure by focusing on arguments of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), René Girard (1923-2015) and Takeo Doi (土居健朗, 1920-2009). We can understand the fundamental structure of human relationships in sports groups with Freud's group psychology and Girard's theory on violence. Keywords of Freud's group psychology are being in loved and identification. Freud's group psychology describes the collapse of the ego of members. The keyword of Girard's theory on violence is triangle desire. According to Girard, it will produce antagonism. This gradually develops to serious situations and violence will occur. Their arguments will be a clue to excavate the moment of violent phenomena in usual human relationships. Furthermore, these arguments can be related to amae, which plays an important role in Doi's theory on Japanese human relationships. We can understand the nature of sports groups in Japan and its relation to violent phenomena with amae.

Previous Researches

Most research on violence is apt to deny or solve it so far. But, as I said, violence is not a right or wrong-problem. It is nonsense, in a sense, to state the negation of violence because violence has already occurred in front of us. If we try to solve problems of violence, we must understand why and how violence occur above all. The, it is essential for us to clarify the mechanism of violence.

Some research tries to explain why and how violence occurs and remains in Japanese sports groups. They try to explain it in terms of Japanese group's collectivity. Nishiyama says, for example, that Japanese sports groups give priority to its own rather than any individual member and violence in Japanese sports groups cannot be got rid of because of Japanese group's collectivity. This explanation, however, does not explain so much. I guess, in the explanation, there is a researchers' awareness of problems to explain why violence firmly remains in Japan compared to foreign countries. Compared to foreign countries, we can think that the explanation is valid when we look problematic situations of violence. But, this explanation is not enough for us at the point that it does not explain why Japanese group's collectivity produces and keeps violence. Moreover, if we say that violence in Japanese sports groups remains because of Japanese group's collectivity, logically speaking, we Japanese have to stop to play sports in Japan to get rid of violence. Of course, it is not realistic clue for us.

Therefore, we have to think that how we can solve violence in Japanese sports groups. To do it, we should clarify the mechanism of occurring and remaining of violence and we should think problems of violence by relating to the mechanism.

3. The Fundamental Structure of Human Relationships in Sports Groups

In this section, to clarify the fundamental structure of human relationships in sports groups, we focus on Freud's group psychology. Freud discusses about psychic mechanism of the formation of group by applying the notion of *libido*⁸ in his individual psychology to group psychology. According to Freud, it is important in the formation of group that leaders should give all members equal love and it will form bonds among members. Freud explains it by modeling Church and army⁹. Freud states that in both groups, there is a leader who loves all the individuals in the group with an equal love and there is no doubt that the tie unites each individual one another. Freud names this psychic tie between a leader and members being in loved and psychic tie among members identification. First, Freud explains about being in loved that it is what is called common, sensual love¹⁰. Common, sensual love is the impulse working when we love or long for someone irrespective sex. Then, we love the object on account of the perfections which we have striven to reach for our own ego, and which we should now like to procure in this roundabout way as a means of satisfying our narcissism¹¹. From these arguments of Freud, we can understand that being in loved is players' respect for their coach. Players set their coach as the ego ideal because their coach is the specialist in sport and players become to want to be a good player.

On the other hand, according to Freud, psychic tie among members is called *identification*. Freud says that "we can only see that *identification* endeavours to mold a person's own ego after the fashion of the one that has been taken as a model¹²" and "one ego has perceived a significant analogy with another upon one point—in our example upon openness to a similar emotion; an *identification* is thereupon constructed on this point" ¹³. In sports groups, we can think that significant analogy is *being in loved* as the players' respect for their coach. It is natural that respecting for

same object makes a cohesive group. As Freud says, the group is, namely, "a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego¹⁴". Based on Freud's arguments, we can understand that sports groups are formed by *being in loved* as the respect of players for their coach and *identification* with each other.

4. Violence between Coach and Players¹⁵

We understood human relationships in sports groups with Freud. Then, where is the moment of violence in it? Now, we should think the relation between being in loved and corporal punishments because being in loved is the relationships between a coach and players. I have already thought that being in loved is the players' respect for their coach. The respect is one of the emotion that we usually have, but, Freud points out demonic function of being in loved. Freud says that:

In connection with this question of being in loved we have always been struck by the phenomenon of sexual overvaluation—the fact that the loved object enjoys a certain amount of freedom from criticism, and that all its characteristics are valued more highly than those of people who are not loved, or than its own were at a time when it itself was not loved.

Freud says here that "the tendency which falsifies judgment in this respect is that of idealization¹⁷". In *idealization*, "the object is being treated in the same way as our own ego, so that when we are in love a considerable amount of narcissistic libido overflows on to the object¹⁸ ". We can imagine same situation in sports groups, namely, players do (can) not criticize their coach or affirm corporal punishments although they have a sense of incongruity for them. But, the influence of *idealization* is not be suppressed in this phase. How the ego would be when *idealization* advances more and more? Freud describes about it as following:

... the ego becomes more and more unassuming and modest, and the object more and more sublime and precious, until at last it gets possession of the entire self-love of the ego, whose self-sacrifice thus follows as a natural consequence. The object has, so to speak, consumed the ego¹⁹.

Freud states that the feature of *being in loved*, for example the humility and the self-injury, intensify in this phase²⁰. In *idealization*, the criticism is silent; everything that the object does and asks for is right and blameless²¹, so that players cannot criticize their coach and his/her corporal punishments in spite of suffering from them. As a result, players devote themselves to corporal punishments by their coach as the *ego ideal*. Finally, the object (a coach) consumes the ego (players).

On the other hand, why do coaches use corporal punishments? Generally speaking, most coaches think to want to be a good coach. Then, he/she sets the *ego ideal* as his/her image of good coach. But, this *ego ideal* cannot ignore players because it is essential for coaches to be loved by players. If not so, coaches cannot be called good coach and loved by players. Therefore, the *ego ideal* swells up by gathering *being in loved* from players. This swelled up *ego ideal* must be protected from any crisis as a dead lock of coaching and poor performance of the team. When these occur, coaches use corporal punishments to protect their *ego ideal* and maintain *being in loved* from players by weakening players' ego. That is the art to protect the self of coach. Coaches, who use corporal punishment, have loved the *ego ideal*, not players.

5. Violence among Players²²

From here, we search for the moment of acts of violence among players. To do it, we should think how *identification* produces acts of violence among players. *Identification* as the concept of Freud leads us to Girard's theory on violence. Why did players identify with each other? That is why they loved same object (their coach) and they found out a significant analogy in that point. This composition reminds us of *triangle desire* in Girard's arguments. Tagawa summarizes Girard's arguments on the relation between *mimetic desire* and violence as following:

The subject desires an object because a mediation (the other) desires the object, not because the object is desirable itself to the subject. A desirable object is shown to the subject by the mediation, which means that both the mediation (the other) and the subject desire same object. Because of this, the twofold aspect will occur, namely, the mediation is not only a model but also a rival at the same time to the subject²³.

This triangle relation is the same situation as Freud's *identification* that members love same object (their coach) and they found out a significant analogy in that point. *Triangle desire* and *identification* express relationships among players. All players love same coach, which means that all players struggle for a coach with each other, so they are rivals each other. In this relation, the mediation is not just mediation. This mediation attempts to curb the desire of the subject because the subject desires same object desired by the mediation. And, the more the subject is disturbed by the mediation, the more the object becomes desirable one to the subject²⁴. At the early level in this triangle relation, although there is an adversarial relationship, there is a certain mental distance between the subject and the mediation (the other). Girard names this relationship *external mediation* ²⁵. In this level, sudden violence, for example simple quarrels and sudden assaults, occurs sometimes. But, *external mediation* develops to *internal mediation* ²⁶ by narrowing the mental distance between the subject and the mediation. In this level, the object desired has gone and the opposing relation between the subject and the mediation become the purpose. As a result, *reciprocal violence* ²⁷ spreads in the group. Girard mentions about it as following:

··· mimesis is stronger than ever but no longer exerts any force at the level of the object; the object has simply dropped from view. Only antagonism remain; we designate them as doubles because from point of view of the antagonism, nothing distinguishes them²⁸.

In the group that is filled with *reciprocal violence*, players are enemies to each other and relationships among them are filled with frictions. Therefore, the order in the sport group gets worse just before its collapse. According to Girard, to prevent the collapse, *reciprocal violence* is transformed to *unanimous violence* ²⁹ that maintains and restores the group's order. Girard names this transformed violence *collective violence* ³⁰, for example bullying and lynch. Then, *collective violence* calms down *reciprocal violence* before its collapse³¹.

Based on above arguments, let me make a summary on acts of violence among players. Generally, players desire to take part in the game, in other words, they desire to be selected by their coach. Therefore, players are enemies as the violator to each other, and eager to relegate with each other. This situation leads to the friction in players' relationships. When the relationships reaches to just before its collapse, a player as an immolation is bullied or got lynch.

6. Amae as The Factor of Promoting Violence

We have just understood the structure of human relationships and the moment of violence in sports groups. Now, we will explore the nature of Japanese sports groups and its relation to violent phenomena by focusing on Doi's theory. Doi's work is a quest of explaining human relationships in Japan from psychopathological perspective. Doi focused on a Japanese: *amae* which means dependence in English.

Doi was a psychiatrist and psychiatry pathologist. He wrote *The anatomy of dependence*(『「甘之」の構造』), and it was published in 1971. According to Doi, *amae* is the nonverbal and non-reflectional emotion which joys approaching in human relationships or desires the approaching³². Doi states that foreigners don't have words corresponding with *amae* perfectly, but we can find the same emotion in not only Japan but also foreign countries. Referring to Freud's arguments, Doi says that *amae* express same emotion expressed by *identification* of Freud's notion³³. Freud also says that *identification* is an emotional tie with another person and the original form of emotional tie with an object³⁴. Based on these fundamental definitions, we can understand the function of *amae* as the factor of promoting violence.

In the case of corporal punishments, players received it because of *being in love*. It was a players' respect for their coach. The respect is not denied as harmful one generally. But, here, we can insight a demonic influence of it and its influence comes from *amae*. Doi says as following:

By his nature, man seeks the group, and cannot survive without it. If rejection of the "small self" in favor of the "large self" is extolled as a virtue, it becomes easier for him to act in concert with group. In this way friction in human relations within the group is kept to a minimum, and the efficiency of group activity enhanced³⁵.

Players lose small self, when get corporal punishments. Why? Because, for them, belonging to the team is necessary to play sports and to improve their performance by coaching. Therefore, they apologize to their coach even when they get corporal punishments because corporal punishments mean the reproof to poor performance of players. Players apologize over and over not to be deserted from their respectable coach, even though he/she is a violent coach. This is *amae*, in other words, the dependence to their coach. Doi says that concentrating on closely emotions between the same sexes, for example teachers and students, will lead the destruction of self. Now, we can say that *amae* of players produces remaining of violence and *amae* composes violent nature of Japanese sports groups.

On the other hand, coaches use corporal punishments because they have loved their own *ego ideal*, not players. But, they do not ignore players at all. That is why coaches cannot get players' respect without relationships with players. Therefore, coaches behave to be loved by players. After getting players' love, they behave as the charismatic leader with acts of violence, the acts are ecstatic to him or players. The success of using corporal punishments cannot be without *being in loved* of players. This dependence of coaches to players can be called *amae*.

In the case of acts of violence among players, how can we understand it in terms of *amae*? As Doi says, Japanese is not interesting to someone in far mental distance³⁶. When the mental distance shrinks, however, the attitude changes abruptly³⁷. As we saw, the translation of *external mediation* to *internal mediation* comes from approaching of mental distance among players. In this situation, players are enemies to each other. Doi describes as following:

The man who "eats (kuu)," "drinks (nomu)," or "licks (nameru)" others seems active and confident on the surface, but inside he is alone and helpless. He has not really transcended amae; rather, he behaves as he

does in order to cover up a lack of amae³⁸.

In antagonism, players are alone and helpless because others are enemies. Enemies, of course, cannot be the object to depend on. It is no chance to form good relationships although players hope it. We regard acts of violence among players as the expression that players manage to protect themselves before they attacked in antagonism. We have no choice but to say that this is a kind of tragedy.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, we have thought that how violence occur and remain in sports groups. Corporal punishments are kept by *idealization* as too much respect from players to their coach, and *identification* as solidarity consciousness among players. Acts of violence among players are produced by *mimetic desire* and triangle relation. We have also thought that both corporal punishments and acts of violence are reinforced by *amae*. However, *being in loved*, *idealization*, *mimetic desire* and *amae* are factors in human relationships in certain situation. This is why violence in Japanese sports groups do not disappear in spite of there are a lot of efforts to get rid of them.

Although *identification*, *being in loved*, *idealization* and *amae* are related to violent phenomena, they are essential to form sports groups. For example, as Doi says, in forming of new human relationships, *amae* is invariably at work at least at the very outset. Thus, *amae* plays indispensable role in a healthy spiritual life³⁹. Therefore, we should think the point where they change its function from as bonds among members to violence. To think it is important to consider how sports groups should be formed instead of its violent nature.

By the way, recently, in sport world of Japan, many accidents occur. For example, a player of American football team of Nihon university, did a dangerous assault to an opponent in a game. Moreover, it was terrible that the player who did an attack followed the direction of his head coach. This accident was to be a social problem and made us think about the violent nature of college sport. Media and many people sympathized both of players and victims. I think so too. But, he is a university student who is required to be independent. Why could not he resist the direction from the head coach? It is clearly because that the relationships between the coach and the player were filled with being in loved and idealization. This mental situation, however, will be broken along with the flow of time. On that evidence, the player held a big press conference that criticized the coach directed him to do an assault. If being in loved was health one, it will be kept itself. As Freud pointed out, being in lived will be melancholy. The player could hold a press conference because he felt suspicious to his head coach. But, though being in loved have a function stealing the players' ability of criticism, what if he had a brave heart to resist to a terrible direction from his head? It is necessary for players to get over the negative function of being in loved as amae to be independent player.

Finally, I want to end this paper by pointing out that a huge problem remains in this paper. We referred to theories of Freud, Girard and Doi. Their theories do not come out of psychology or psycho-analysis. Therefore, they have the limitation of explaining the relation between mental situations and an action. Needless to say, this limitation is the common with various disciplines. If we try to clarify the relation between *idealization loved* and violence or *ego ideal* and *violence* even more, we should plan the empirical research. In fact, I am planning the large flame of the research and question papers to do it. I hope to present its result as soon as possible.

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- 1朝日新聞、2013年1月8日、10頁。 (Asahi newspaper, January 8, 2013, p.10.)
- ²On April 25, 2013, 5 associations, composed by Japan Sports Association, Japan Olympic Committee, Japanese Para-Sports Association, All Japan High School Athletics Federation and Nippon Junior High School Physical Culture Association, held the meeting for the extermination of violent actions in Sport. In the meeting, *The Statement for the Extermination of Violent Actions* was adopted. You can see it following: http://www.joc.or.jp And, Japanese Ministry of Education established a conference to think what school athletics clubs should be, and on May 5, 2013, in the conference, *The guideline for coaching in school athletics clubs* was compiled. You can see it following: http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/sports/jyujitsu/1335529.htm
- ³ 中村敏雄『日本的スポーツ環境批判』大修館書店、1995 年、123 頁。 (Toshio Nakamura. *The Criticize to Japanese surroundings of Sport*, Taisyukan Shoten, 1995, p.123.)
- ⁴毎日新聞、2013 年 4 月 10 日、21 頁。 (Mainichi newspaper. April 10, 2013, p.21.)
- ⁵朝日新聞、2015年3月3日、21頁。 (Asahi newspaper, March 3, 2015, p.21.)
- ⁶今村仁司『暴力のオントロギー』勁草書房、1982 年、212 頁。 (Hitoshi Imamura. *Ontology of Violence*, Keiso Syobo, 1982, p.212.)
- ⁷同書、99 頁。 (*ibid.*, p.99.)
- 8Libido is the term advocated by Freud. Freud advocated it, influenced by theory on energy. If 'libido' is defined widely, it is an energy that shaking human mind and making human being do actions. As Tokunaga says, however, the meaning of libido is various. Then, we should confirm the meaning of it in his group psychology. Freud says that "libido is an expression taken from the theory of the emotions. We call by that name the energy, regarded as a quantitative magnitude (though not at present actually measurable), of those instincts which have to do with all that may be comprised under the word 'love'. The nucleus of what we mean by love naturally consists (and this is what is commonly called love, and what the poets sing of) in sexual love with sexual union as its aim. But we do not separate from this—what in any case has a share in the name 'love'—on the other hand, self-love, and love for humanity in general, and also devotion to concrete objects and to abstract ideas. Our justification lies in the fact that psycho-analytic research has taught us that all these tendencies are an expression of the same instinctual impulses..." Like this, Freud regards *libido* as not only relationships between the sexes but also wide meaning love. It is a synonym of Plato's eros, then Freud states that "we will try our fortune, then, with the supposition that love relationships (or, to use a more neutral expression, emotional ties) also constitute the essence of the group mind". In Freud's group psychology, we can understand that *libido* is the impulse working when we have relationships with the other. If you want to see more specific references, please see following. Sigmund Freud.(trans. by James Strachey.) Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, New York: W.W.Norton & Company, Inc., 1959, pp.22-23.

(Sigmund Freud. "Masssenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse", In: Alexander Mitscherlich et al.(Hrsg.) Sigmund Freud Studienausgabe BAND IX Fragen der Gesellschaft Ursprünge der Religion, S.Fisher Verlag GmbH, 1974, SS.85-86.)

⁹Freud says as following: "In a Church... as well as in an army, however different the two may be in other respects, the same illusion holds good of there being a head—in the Catholic Church Christ, in an army its Commander-in-Chief—who loves all the individuals in the group with an equal love. Everything depends upon this illusion... This equal love was expressly enunciated by Christ... It is not without a deep reason that the invoked, and that believers call themselves brothers in Christ, that is, brothers through the love which Christ has for them. There is no doubt that the tie which unites each individual one another. The like holds good of an army. The Commander-in Chief is a father who loves all soldiers equally, and for that reason they are comrades among themselves ". *ibid.*, pp.25-26. (*ibid.*, SS.88-89.)

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<sup>10</sup>ibid., p.43. (ibid., S.104.)
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¹¹ ibid., pp.44-45. (ibid., S.105.)

¹²*ibid.*, p.38. (*ibid.*, S.99.)

¹³*ibid.*, p.39. (*ibid.*, S.100.)

¹⁴*ibid.*, p.48. (*ibid.*, S.108.)

¹⁵Arguments in this section have already been discussed more specificly. Please refer to the following. Taiki Matsuda. "The psychic structure that keeping the corporal punishment in sports groups: Focusing on Freud's group psychology", In: *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education*, 37(2), 2015, pp.85-98.

¹⁶Freud, op.cit., p.44. (Freud, op.cit., S.105.)

¹⁷*ibid.*, p.44. (*ibid.*, S.105.)

¹⁸*ibid.*, p.44. (*ibid.*, S.105.)

¹⁹ ibid., p.45. (ibid., SS.105-106.)

²⁰ ibid., p.45. (ibid., S.106.)

²¹*ibid.*, p.45. (*ibid.*, S.106.)

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²⁶*ibid.*, p.9. (*ibid.*, p.18.)

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- ³⁴Freud, op.cit., p.37-39. (Freud, op.cit., SS.98-99.)
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- 37 同書、44 頁。 (ibid., p.44.)
- 38 同書、28 頁。 (ibid., p.32.)
- ³⁹同書、72 頁。 (ibid.,p.75.)