

Canons in Writing History of Japanese-Western Music After the Second World War

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70 years have passed since the first musicological society in Japan, 'the Society of Eastern Music' was founded in the 1930s. This society, aiming at the foundation of study about Japanese traditional music as well as Asian music in terms of ethnomusicology, however was on one hand a son of the era, when Japanese imperialism was on the way of expanding its power throughout Asian nations. On the other hand the society was to be appreciated on account of its influence upon exploring the methods of studying musical manners and culture in Asia.

The foundation of the second musicological society, 'the Musicological Society of Japan' after the World War witnessed critical attitudes about the first one on the side of post-war generation of musicologists, whose subject was not only Japanese traditional music or ethnic music of Asia but ranged so far to music of the Middle East, let alone western music.

Having surveyed the history of coexistence of both musicological societies after World War II it is a matter of interest that there has been some subjects the both societies didn't take as their theme or thoroughly counted out. As one of these, as it were, neglected subjects we can find the history of western music in Japan, i.e., compositions in western style in Japan. While there has always been deeply concentrated discussions about contemporary music amongst Japanese composers and while a large variety of compositions were developed and flourished in the course of time, none of the musicologists consider such a development as history. It is only recently that we tried to bring data during post-war era together and reconstruct matters in order to put them together into 'a history' of Japanese contemporary music in western style.

In this paper I discuss about some problems of historiography we must take into account when we make a description of such history of Japanese contemporary music; continuity and discontinuity between pre- and post-war era, possibility of reference to social history, which style of compositions to be selected and discussed, traditional elements in western music in Japan etc.