

Thomas L. Friedman 著 「From Beirut to Jerusalem」

Anchor Books, Random House 1990年刊を読む

1. “ We have not sold a window in weeks, ” Hijal moaned. “ In fact, do you really want to know how bad it is? It is so bad that all the windows in my own apartment are shot out and I am not even replacing the glass. It's true. It's the fourth time my windows have been broken and this time we just put up plastic nylon instead. We're getting rockets every day. How can I put up glass anymore? ”
2. How indeed? As the mushroom clouds from the Marine bombing and the Shouf fighting spread over Beirut in early 1984, I began to wonder whether the whole city wasn't finally going to suffer the same agonizing death as the man in the brown suit.
3. But why should anyone care about the death of the city?
4. Because Beirut was never just a city. It was an idea—an idea that meant something not only to the Lebanese but to the entire Arab world. While today just the word “ Beirut ” evokes images of hell on earth, for years Beirut represented—maybe dishonestly—something quite different, something almost gentle: the idea of coexistence and the spirit of tolerance, the idea that diverse religious communities—Shiites, Sunnis, Christians, and Druse—could live together, and even thrive, in one city and one country without having to abandon altogether their individual identities.
5. The spirit of Beirut is what was known as the Levantine spirit. The word “ Levantine ” derives from the Old French word *levant*, which literally meant “ rising. ” The Levant, where the sun rose, was the geographical name given to all those countries bordering the eastern Mediterranean. The Levantine political idea, which grew naturally among the communities of the eastern Mediterranean, was an original way of dealing with diverse tribal, village, and sectarian identities, and it inspired the Beirutis and ultimately the Lebanese to believe that they could build a modern Arab republic, melding together seventeen different Christian, Muslim, and Druse sects. The Levantine idea posited the notion that if men cannot break with their tribal pasts, they can at least learn to check them at the door of the cities in which they live. That was Beirut at its best—a “ plural society in which communities, still different on the level of inherited religious loyalties and family ties, co-existed within a common framework, ” in the words of my Oxford professor, the Lebanese historian Albert Hourani.

6. This Levantine spirit developed gradually in Beirut after the Industrial Revolution, as the burgeoning Lebanese silk trade and the invention of the steamboat combined to bring men and women of America and Western Europe in large numbers to the Levant. These settlers from the West were Catholic and Protestant missionaries, diplomats, and merchants, Jewish traders, travelers and physicians; and they brought with them Western commerce, manners, and ideas and, most of all, a certain genteel, open, tolerant attitude toward life and toward other cultures. Their mores and manners were gradually imitated by elite elements of the local native populations, who made a highly intelligent blend of these Western ideas with their own indigenous Arabic, Greek, and Turkish cultures, which had their own traditions of tolerance.

“ To be a Levantine, ”wrote Hourani.“ is to live in two worlds or more at once, without belonging to either. ”

In Beirut, the embodiment of the Levantine idea was the city center. The Levantine spirit of coexistence was both produced in, and reproduced by, the covered markets and stone-arched alleyways, the red-roofed houses and craft workshops, the arabesque Ottoman fountains and bookstalls of old downtown Beirut, woven around Riyad—Solh Square. In the Beirut city center seven thousand shops once stood shoulder the shoulder, with the Maronite cobbler next to the Druse butcher and the Greek Orthodox money changer next to the Sunni coffee seller and the Shiite grocer next to the Armenian jeweler. The Beirut city center was like a huge urban Mixmaster that took the various Lebanese communities from their mountains and villages and attempted to homogenize them into one cosmopolitan nation.

7. “ When I was a little boy, I discovered Lebanese society there, the different accents and cultures and forms of dress, ” remarked Salim Nasr, a Lebanese sociologist. “ It was where the country met the rest of the world and the different components of the country met each other. ”

8. With the destruction of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, the Levantine idea was gradually choked to death in Smyrna, Basra, Salonika, Alexandria, and Aleppo, by Greek, Turkish, and Arab nationalists who had no patience for, or interest in, heterogeneous cultures and the spirit of tolerance of a bygone era. But in Beirut the idea lived on—primarily among the elite Christian and Muslim classes. These Lebanese Christians and Muslims intermarried, interacted, became business partners, and produced new ideas together, and they were the ones who really made Beirut a cosmopolitan Manhattan of the Arab world—a refuge for the politically radical and a springboard for the Arab avant-garde. Effete Arab politicians ousted by coups d'etat came there to write their memoirs, and aspiring Arab artists and poets came there to make it on the Arab Broadway.

9. Beirut was the ideal hothouse for this Levantine spirit to survive, because the near-perfect balance of power between Muslim and Christian sects made it impossible for any one group or

nationalist ideology to impose itself and smother the diverse mix of cultures necessary for a Levantine society. Moreover, there was a powerful economic base for the Levantine idea in Beirut. Because it was a city which had no real natural resources other than the cunning of its multilingual inhabitants and their ability to make money serving as a bridge between Europe and the Arab world, Beirutis is had to learn to come together peacefully in the city center and to cooperate with one another in order to play the profitable role of middlemen between the Arab East and the Christian West. That role was further enhanced by Beirut's banking secrecy, casinos, and wild , salacious nightlife, which made it an attractive oasis for an Arab world that had yet to discover London and Marbella. Every region of the globe one note city where the rules don't apply, where sin is the norm, and where money can buy anything or anyone. Asia had Hong Kong, Europe had Monaco, and the Middle East had Beirut.

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[コメント]

トマス・フリードマン氏の英語は実に読みやすい。内容は極めて深刻だが絶えず 可能性を

- 2010年7月4日 林明夫記 -