

APPEARANCE OF A NON-WESTERN THEORY
OF EDUCATION IN MODERN JAPAN*:
THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SYSTEM
AND POPULAR RELIGION

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I

During a period spanning the 19th to the 20th century, educational theory in Japan was developed under the extremely strong influence of Western educational theory. While utilizing Shintōist ideology in order to increase its authority, the Meiji Government initiated a policy of modernization by way of school system Westernization under its leadership. Westernization of the theory of education in Japan is one result of such efforts. In actuality, many of Japan's theories termed "*Shinkyōiku*" that appeared during the period from 1910 to 1930 and dealt with below were merely direct translations of the "new education" theories advocated by such Western theorists as P. Natorp and J. Dewey (hereafter collectively referred to as the "Europeanization School" of educators). Due to facts such as these, the view that Japanese society lacked a sufficient source of ideas for establishing a theory of education on its own, while not held by all historians, has become prevalent among many. According to those who reject this view, Japan's theory of education was derived from the theories of human character formation espoused by the national sovereignty school of Confucianist scholars and scholars of *Kokugaku* (Japanese learning) since the Edo Period. This opinion, however, is unfortunately inaccurate. The ideas associated with the "theory of education" that sprung up from roots in 15th and 16th-century Southern Europe and subsequently became widespread were ideas that taught the building of character through independence of the individual. In contrast, the theories of character formation taught by Confucianist and *Kokugaku* scholars of the national sovereignty school were theories that advocated the building of children's character through strict adherence to the dictates of social and national order. This amounted to a more of a means of indoctrination by propaganda than a theory of education.

In the following, I wish to show that a non-Western, uniquely Japanese theory of education based on Japanese culture came into being not in the form of national ideology,

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but rather as mass culture, and further, it originated not in the Edo Period of the 17th–18th century but rather in the early twentieth century. To the Japanese, the twentieth century represents a time in which the Meiji Government was reasonably successful in its policies to Westernize Japan, thus freeing the Japanese people, for the time being, from the pressure that they catch up to and surpass the West.

II

The twentieth century also marked a period in Japan which saw the development of a sense of individualism in various forms. Specifically, this began in the decade of the 1910s. This was a period during which the philosophy of individualism, originally limited to a portion of the urban new middle class, began to appear among the old middle class, made up of peasants and independent businessmen. The same development of individualism was also seen in the area of children's rights, in a "child-centered" ideology in which the child's free will and individuality were held in deep regard. Culture was freed from the confines of the State, religious orders, and academicism, while people began to re-evaluate the meaning of mass culture and faith in folk religion.

Among the elementary school educators that spearheaded the Westernization of Japanese culture in the towns and villages led by the State, a group arose that brought about a series of new developments such as those mentioned above. One such innovator was Ashida Enosuke (1873–1951), who was part of the teaching staff of an elementary school run by the Tokyo Higher Education Normal School (Teacher's College) from 1905 to 1921. He advocated a method of literary composition referred to as *zuii sendai tsudzurikata* (composition on a topic of one's choosing, or "free composition"), which attracted wide support not only from educators, but also from historians, natural scientists, and philosophers from the time of its introduction up to the period shortly following the end of World War II.

Ashida was an ardent student, who, shortly after finishing elementary school, and without any outside tutoring, studied the literary works of the already well-known Western educational scholars Pestalozzi and Herbut on his way to beginning a successful career as a school teacher. He was also granted the highest possible elementary school teaching position at the elementary school run by the Higher Education Normal School. At the same school, however, lacking the higher academic credentials and years of experience of older teachers or even his peers, the talented and able educator was often ill-treated. As a result, in efforts to escape feelings of inferiority due to his limited academic credentials, he was driven to continue his study of Western scholastic thought in yet greater earnest. Such intense efforts resulted in Ashida becoming severely neurotic. He became seized with anxiety and suffered from a continuous lack of sleep. One day he happened to meet a person by the name of Okada Torajirō, and was later saved from this obsessive-compulsive neurosis. Okada was a follower of Zen returning from the United States who had opened up a local *dōjō* (training hall) for the study of *zazen* (*seiza*) (i.e. quiet, seated meditation). Okada's main teaching was that of the *Igyōdō*, a easier path toward the attainment of Zen enlightenment (*satori*) that avoided the type of hardships endured by the Zen priests long ago.

While continuing the practice of *seiza* at the Okada *dōjō*, one day Ashida experienced

a form of enlightenment. In realizing that almost all of the knowledge he had acquired up to this time was not “certain knowledge derived from one’s own actual experience,” but was rather merely an imitation constructed to fit the “norms of the outside world,” he came to the conclusion that continuing his efforts would only result in increasing fatigue. At this point, Ashida vowed to “live from within” (*Uchi ni ikiyō*). From that moment on, Ashida was freed from stress, and was at last able to experience a feeling of energy and vitality. In addition his weight also rapidly increased.

As a Japanese language educator, Ashida Enosuke was able to apply his own experiences to the schoolchildren of Japan, who were struggling under a system of education that vigorously stressed rote learning. He came to the conclusion that in the Japanese language: “the way of reading (characters) is to read oneself, the way of composing is to write (of) oneself, the way of listening is to listen to oneself, the way of speaking is to speak (of) oneself.” He thus applied the “change of heart” generated by his experience to the history of Japanese school modernization, asserting the following:

“Ever since the advent of the Meiji Restoration we have strived to imitate the West in every way; to this day we have had no time to deeply reflect on what that has meant to our country as a whole. In the area of elementary school education as well we busily went about imitating, and did not have time to sufficiently contemplate on what the result of such efforts would be. We were ruled by force of habit, forever following precedent as we moved forward. In the future, a meandering mountain stream of a bottomless ravine lies in wait ahead of us. I fear that once we reach this river the bridge we must cross will not be traversable, leaving us unable to cross this abyss. If anyone doubts my words, I ask simply that they look at the ladies and gentlemen of our day who reached adulthood having been educated according to the “new education” (classroom instruction of the Meiji Period).¹

The above is paramount to a declaration of the feasibility of “Japanese modernization through a process of ‘Easternization,’” rather than through use of the Meiji government’s policies to achieve “Japanese modernization through the process of Westernization.” Ashida’s concept of “literary composition by writing of oneself” based on egoism was embodied in his *zuii sendai tsudzurikata* method. His new method included the following two characteristics:

- 1) it did away with the practice up to that time of having the teacher decide the topics of children’s compositions, instead having the child select his or her own topic
- 2) it freed the child’s process of literary expression from strict adherence to the regulations regarding vocabulary and word usage as specified in State textbooks, allowing them to write freely and “from the heart”

Conservatives harshly criticized *zuii sendai tsudzurikata*, claiming that it would cause children to become arrogant and defiant as well as destroy national order. Their rationale was based on the teachings of Confucianism, that asserted that writing was actually *keikoku no taigyō* (“the great task involved in ruling a country”).

¹ Ashida Enosuke, *Yomikata Kyōjyu* (1916), p. 39.

It would be incorrect, however, to view the egoism of Ashida as equivalent to the idea of independence that is central to the European concept of self. Central to Ashida's assertions was a concept of "existence," drawn from his experience of *seiza* at the local *dōjō*. Thus, even though the egoism of Ashida is not archaic, religious organization-like authoritarianism, it is also not a form of modern European thought, either. As explained by Ashida, the "zuii" (lit. "voluntary") in *zuii sendai tsudzurikata* signifies not freedom to assert one's self, but rather something best expressed as "freedom from one's self." "From the heart" does not amount to an acknowledgement of sensitivity, but rather the freeing of one's ego from sensitivity, something that comes with the "emptying of one's earthly desires."

In his *zuii sendai tsudzurikata* educational technique, Ashida Enosuke expected that both the unleashing of certain abilities and the attainment of one's independence would result when a state of mind, in which one was "free from one's sensitive self," could be induced in a child or youth, and further, that this state of mind could be obtained by the "emptying of one's earthly desires."

III

Schools in which great importance was placed on the free will and individuality of the child through educational techniques, and in which the school itself was continually cultivated as a product of the region and the region's distinctive culture, were at the time referred to as "new schools." One of these new schools, a public school whose heyday was from the year 1930 until around 1931, was *Jinkō* Elementary School. This school was in Northern Kyūshū, with its school district located in the advanced agricultural region referred to as a *Seinan* (lit. "south-west") pattern agricultural village, a primarily landed-farmer farming village that soon developed a commodity-based economy. The central figure responsible for bringing recognition to *Jinkō* Elementary School as a "new school" was Abe Kiyomi (1900–1981). The events of his life leading up to his becoming head of the school will be summarized next.

After completion of elementary school, Abe Kiyomi planned to continue on to middle school and eventually college. Due to his family's limited budget, however, he instead went to the normal school (teacher's college) in his home prefecture of Fukuoka, where upon graduation he assumed a position at *Jinkō* Elementary School. Unable to forget his dream, while still an elementary school teacher he next began a period of self-study with the intention of entering a higher education normal school. This led to his becoming a teacher who loved books but hated children. When the *Jinkō* Elementary School became famous as a new school, in order to become an authority on the theories practiced at such schools, he studied everything he could find on Western new education theory, and in addition was constantly searching for publicity statements issued by the new Western-run new schools then in Japan.

The years from 1925 to 1930 held in store for him three fateful incidents, occurring in rapid succession. The first was the sudden death of one of the students in his class while at school. The accident occurred while the child was practicing for an athletic meet. While professing to hold dear the "child-centered" philosophy of Rousseau and Dewey,

he realized that in fact his heart was not with the children in his class, which, in spite of his bookwormish tendencies, was enough to shake even Abe up. If that was not enough, yet another student caught pneumonia and was diagnosed as terminal by the child's physician. When his mother brought a *omiki* (sacred vial of sake) from the village's church for *Konkō-sama* (a Shinto deity, lit. "deity of golden light"), which Abe had always scoffed at as being common superstition, the child miraculously recovered before Abe's very eyes. Abe dismissed this as pure coincidence. Soon thereafter, Abe learned that two of his former students, who were suffering from the severe illness of pleuritis, were being taken out of the hospital at which they were admitted in order to make regular visits to the *Konkōsama* church to receive treatment. Abe was angered by their actions, which he considered unscientific, and, setting out to rescue the children from their common superstitions, visited the village's *Konkōsama* church. Here he encountered a "beautiful new world offering a more cheerful existence, a world that transcended the gloomy, egocentric one" that he had known that was led by a simple, apron-adorned housewife. Here he was surprised to find that the two students, who he had known to be extremely timid and lifeless, were not ill; on the contrary, they were full of life and vigor. He had "gone for wool and came back shorn" so to speak. "More and more I could feel myself being pulled in hook, line, and sinker" were the words he left behind to describe his feelings at the time.²

Shortly before the year 1930, he experienced yet another incident, this one particularly decisive. Around this time Abe was suffering from chronic hypochondria brought on by the mental burden of the *Jinkō* "new school," and became neurotic. He struggled day by day, groping for a way to escape from the darkness in his heart. One day he was visited by a female well-wisher who spoke of "*Konkōsama*." While listening to his wife and elderly mother clap and recite Shinto ritual prayers to *Konjin* requesting that he be healed by the deity, Abe falls into a deep slumber, thus at long last free from the persistent hypochondria from which he suffered. Abe wrote of this experience: "Words could not express my excitement. Accompanied by my mother, even though exhausted by my bout with illness, I forced myself to the gates of the church." Reflecting his recent change of heart, Abe's way of running the "new school" changed as well. For example, a short time thereafter, a *kamidana* (Chintō altar) dedicated to the deity *Konkōsama* was placed at the front of his classroom. Design of the educational space was spiritual, derived from popular religion. The most important thing, however, was that this change of heart led to no basic changes in the "new school" type of management he had always advocated for the *Jinkō* Elementary School.

Abe asserted that, contrary to the prior practice of primarily letting only the most able students into class, classroom policy should be revised to allow even the average or below-average students to participate in class. In order to accomplish this, he did away with all individual student desks, replacing them with a single, large table around which all could sit around while class was held. He revised classes as well; formerly "Standard Written Japanese" as dictated by the State was taught as correct, in contrast he developed a teaching-learning process that would allow incorporation of the "spoken Japanese" that was in common use among children into subject matter and instructional language. Further, utilizing the various housewife and youth organizations as core groups, he attempted

² Abe Kiyomi, *Nōsonjinkō no Kensetsu Kiroku, Tsuchi no Seijya* (1931), p. 163.

to enact plans for “community education.” As a teacher and second-rate intellectual of the Europeanization School, Abe had once used such Western New Educational principles as the “Dalton Plan” or the “Project Method” to explain the practices of “new education”. Now, with his change of heart, he was rapidly transforming into an educator who advocated Japanese religion, explaining the same practices now as the doctrine of the *Konkō* religion (hereafter “*Konkōkyō*”). He further explained that the ideal form of child-centered classroom instruction at the *Jinkō* Elementary School should be such that the “classroom is an *Ansokusho* (a place where the spirit of the child can be at rest),” borrowing from the terminology of *Konkōkyō*.

At this point, I feel I should mention something about the character of the *Konkōkyō* doctrine from which one of the non-Western forms of “New Education” principles was derived through Abe’s change of heart.

Konkōkyō is a popular (folk) religion which originated during the close of the Edo Period, based on the “*Konjin*” experience (1859) of Kawade Bunjirō, a landed farmer of Bicchū (Okayama Prefecture). This period was a period in which the pent-up energy and fight for life of the masses, who were struggling to survive the trials and tribulations of life in a post-feudalistic society, were released in one of two forms: destruction and peasant uprisings, or rising popular religion movements such as *Fujikō*, *Tenri*, and *Kurozumi*.

The two main characteristics of Bunjirō’s “*Konjin*” experience are: (1) reinterpretation that *Konjin*, originally feared by the peasants as the god “*Tatari*” who spread evil throughout the humanly world, could be a benevolent god spreading happiness if only humans would become actively involved with him, and further, (2) the understanding that *Konjin* was a *jinkakushin* (“personified god”) who associated with the worldly masses while transcending the world itself. Bunjirō brought the necessary prerequisites of modern religion into this popular religion, such as reaching the view of relativism of the consciousness of social and cultural order, accomplishing the separation of politics and religion, reason and faith, and the deities and man.

Because of this, *Konkōkyō* doctrine as propagated by the peasant Bunjirō had elements that were not totally compatible with the public order of the Meiji Government, which based State reason on the new State Shintō, and that were certainly not compatible with the feudalistic order of the Edo Period. Bringing *Konkōkyō*’s relativist stance on order to the modern Japanese school system would not only cause loss of justification for the Imperial Rescript on Education as well as State textbooks, both of which were then used to determine national standards of truth, goodness, and beauty, but would also disrupt the absolutivism of the one-way superior/inferior, ruler/ruled relationship of teachers vis-a-vis children and their parents. This did not bide well with the Meiji Government, who was attempting to use its power to modernize Japan to a level equal to that of the Western nations by establishing a new, autocratic order in the form of the Emperor system. Upon being deemed dangerous, *Konkōkyō* was categorized as one of the *Kyōha Shintō* (a Shintōist sect), one rank below and subject to the dictates of State Shintō. In addition, in order to maintain the legality of its churches’ missionary activities, *Konkōkyō* eventually had to compromise to the order imposed by the Meiji Government. There is considerable doubt as to whether or not this type of compromise and “defection” found among the upper members of the religious organization was also present among the lower-most anonymous believers. The fact that Abe Kiyomi was led to and reached his “beautiful world” not by the religious organization’s

ruling body, or even its lowermost members, but by a group yet further removed, namely a housewife, the elderly, and the children of a small farming village, is a point that should be noted. Another individual, an elementary school teacher of the Mino Region of Central Japan, who reached an idealistic view similar to Abe regarding the relativism of order was Nomura Yoshihō (1896–1986). His view was a result of an encounter with the *Jōdo* faith (the “Pure Land” sect of Buddhism), a sect in which the popularist mentality of Japanese Buddhism is clearly seen. He, like Ashida Enosuke, started out as a second-rate intellectual educator of the Europeanization School, but, after his encounter and subsequent change of heart, became actively involved as a missionary of the *Jōdo* sect throughout the period until the end of World War II. His educational theory, derived from the religious culture of *Jōdo*, named *Seikatsu Kyōiku* (“Education for Life”), and its practices were influential among progressive parents and educators. As I have previously written a detailed account of Nomura’s non-Western educational theory elsewhere,³ I shall stop here with this brief mention.

Incidentally, Abe entered the administrative field of prefectural education during the latter half of the 1930s, and had reached a supervisory role by the end of World War II. As such he was later to be removed from public office (purged), as being inappropriate to the establishment of the new education of “democratic Japan.” He was saved from this fate, however, by a mountain of petitions requesting that the purge order be repealed, sent by his region’s former students and their parents, and by an official in charge of the U.S. Occupation Forces, who determined in his investigation report that “Mr. Abe’s” practices at *Jinkō* were exactly those of a “democratic” community school. The determination that Abe’s running of *Jinkō* Elementary School followed community school theory as advocated by the Progressivists in the U.S. is likely in error. As explained above, I believe it should be viewed as rather educational theory that is the embodiment of a form of Japan’s popular religions. What I believe can be said, however, is that the educational theory that appeared in Japan during the period from the 1920s until the 1930s, in the form described above and through Abe’s individualistic influences, brought about educational practices that were the same as those of the educational theory of the Progressivists in the U.S. of the same period.

IV

While Ashida Enosuke and Nomura Yoshihō developed their non-Western theories of education based on ideas drawn from the pool of mentality of Japanese popular Buddhism, Abe Kiyomi based his on a Shintō sect. Here I wish cite another example of one using the latter approach, namely that of Mineji Mitsushige (1890–1968). Mineji was also an avid scholar, having graduated from a normal school, the forefront of Japanese Westernization. Unlike the three educators mentioned above, who failed in their attempts to become Europeanization School educators, and, as a result, developed popularist mentalities after going through life-changing experiences, Mineji was to follow a different path.

Upon arriving at his job at his home town elementary school, he proclaimed he would become a “native teacher,” married a local farm girl, and in addition to teaching his students,

³ Nakauchi Toshio, *Seikatsu Tsudzurikata Seiritsushi Kenkyū* (republished 1977), pp. 286–323, 892–987.

also worked hard at farming, and put considerable effort into teaching agriculture on a small farm he had built at the school. Further, in addition to collecting an anthology of folk nursery tales and nursery songs from the school district for use as a textbook for Japanese listening skills, he planned a program of regional education at the elementary school where he was principal, getting in touch with the village's farming and commerce/industry associations, as well as ladies' societies. This occurred during the period from the 1910s to the 1930s. These events took place in two locations, one, his home prefecture of Tottori, on the Japan Sea side of *Chūgoku Chihō* (southwest Honshū), and two, a private school in the Tōkyō suburbs where he had once taught.

Because his practices differed from former methods based primarily upon State textbooks, Mineji was at the time, and still today, considered a proponent of the "new school." His practices, however, were derived not from the "new education" theories of the West, but were derived from the very start from doctrine of *Kurozumikyō* (one of the *Kyōha Shintō*), his family's religion. Mineji reformulated the "Ikitōshi" concept within *Kurozumikyō* doctrine into a theory of human character formation, giving it an original name of his own choosing. The technical term in Japanese for this theory of character formation is *seikatsu shidō* (lit. "life(style) guidance"), a term that is now commonly used in a wide variety of fields, such as academic societies, administration, education, medicine, and welfare. The term *seikatsu shidō* has been regarded as a translation of the English term "guidance," being introduced into Japan as part of the U.S. concept of education following World War II; this is in fact due to the bias of Europeanization in Japan. The educational lexicon of "*Seikatsu shidō*" is unique in that it is one of the few examples of Japanese educational lexicon that is not derived from direct foreign language translation. It was developed in the latter half of the 1920s by Mineji Mitsushige, a Japanese elementary school teacher. The doctrine that lent its ideas on human character formation to the concept of *seikatsu shidō* came to be called *Kurozumikyō*, and was derived from a pool of ideas that express one aspect of the Japanese mentality.

As was the case with *Konkōkyō*, *Kurozumikyō* also began as a popular religion of the late Edo Period, and was categorized by the Meiji government as a Shintō sect, a category for faiths that did not fit within the prescribed boundaries of State Shintōism. *Kurozumikyō* is similar to *Konkōkyō* in many respects: For example, it began with the experience of its founder, a simple farmer suffering from a difficult life fraught with mental anxieties, who, one morning while gazing upon the deep-red rising sun with reverence, suddenly experienced a total change of his then-timid personality, thus freeing his (mental) spirit. In addition, as with *Konkōkyō* it spread among the farmers and merchants searching for independence and a better life. The structure of this faith differs greatly from *Konkōkyō*. Unlike the *Konkōkyō* of Abe Kiyomi and the *Jyōdo* faith of Nomura Yoshibē, *Kurozumikyō* did not create transcendental, personified deities such as "Konjin" and "Nyorai". With respect to Buddhist mentality, it is rather more similar to Zen, which also has no personified deities. In this way it comes close to the "single-handed" (by one's own personal efforts) mentality found at the heart of the *zuii sendai tsudzurikata* concept of Ashida Enosuke. This idea of "single-handedness" is found within *Kurozumikyō* as the idea of "Ikitōshi," and has come to be found collectively in Mineji's concept of "*seikatsu shidō*."

The term *Seikatsu shidō* was first used in a report by Mineji in the year 1919. This term was explained in greater detail in his work entitled "*Bunka Chūshin Tsudzurikata*

Shinkyōjyuhō” (lit. “The New Pedagogy of a Culturally-based Method of Literary Composition”), published in 1922. It was used as in the following context:

“If a composition does not have a magnificent soul, it can not be magnificent. Therefore, all most strive to become a person possessing a magnificent soul through the accumulation of genuine experiences derived from one’s everyday life. It is often the case, however, that children live their lives in an irresponsible manner. Here is where one must guide the child in such a way that he/she experiences a worthwhile life. Composition without *seikatsu shidō* (“lifestyle guidance”) is not possible.”

In order to accurately interpret what Mineji intended, one must first know of the rules and regulations that governed the classroom environment of elementary schools in Japan at that time. Strict control over elementary school classrooms was enforced through a system of work management, from which deviance from national standards was not tolerated, and even subject matters were regulated through the use of State textbooks. Due to this, if one were to attempt to initiate practices that were in the least bit new, it was necessary for one to search for areas not already covered by such textbooks. One such area was the field of Japanese *tsudzurikata*, or literary composition. Here the teachers would compete among themselves, in efforts to practice new educational techniques, putting all their energy into teaching this one subject once a week, for at most an hour at a time. The teachers who thus became dedicated to teaching composition came to be called “*tsudzurikata* teachers.” Mineji also naturally put forth much effort in this field, and in attempts to widely spread his own methods among other teachers, it became necessary that he present reports and written works in the field. For this reason, the same Mineji who had once endeavored to become a “native” teacher and had poured considerable energy into agricultural instruction, also then began to write books on teaching composition.

A particularly notable characteristic of Mineji’s quoted passage above is the underlying idea that, in order to develop children’s literary powers of expression to a level worthy of *rippana bunsyō* (“magnificent composition”), it is not enough to have them simply practice model sentence patterns, rather one must also provide them with *seikatsu shidō* (life(style) guidance). In other words, at this stage, *seikatsu shidō* was used as a procedurally-oriented concept of composition education, and was subordinate to the long-standing goal-oriented concept of composition practice referred to as *rippana bunsyō*. Mineji finally realizes his error, however, as is evidenced by the following passages written by Mineji in 1933:

“*seikatsu shidō* started with such general, common-sense ideas as: as *tsudzurikata shidō* (guidance in literary composition) dealt almost exclusively with *hyōgen shidō* (guidance in expression), even if one tries in haste to rush the student in expression only it is not enough; since life itself is the mother of expression, the child’s life must first be cultivated. . . . (this is) in effect something that I believe should have been dealt with collectively as *hyōgen shidō*. . . . this sort of *hyōgen shidō* method was an integral part of *tsudzurikata kyōjyu* (the teaching of composition). However, I believe that this is still not enough. One must also not forget the aspect of “*seikatsu shidō* for life’s sake” (not for the sake of *hyōgen shidō*). *Seikatsu shidō* for life’s sake transcends the question of whether to write using *tsu-*

dzurikata or not; it refers to guidance toward the attainment of a fulfilling life. . . . an ordinary life should be kept ordinary, whereas an extraordinary life should be kept extraordinary; one should teach a way to lead a controlled and organized life, whatever type it may be.”⁴

Seikatsu shidō must be an objective of education, not a method. The assertion that, for all practical purposes, amounts to a theory of “*kyōiku*” (education), namely, the assertion that a schoolteacher’s duty is to develop the power of “*ikitōshi*” according to the various environments and personalities in all types of children, in boys as well as girls, in children with learning impediments and without, in inferior students as well as superior, is an assertion that is a manifestation of the development of ideas based on Japan’s popularist mentality.

For a system in which the State’s elementary schools, located throughout Japan’s cities, towns, and villages, and small islands, were institutions used in indoctrination of the people and the selection of the talented, this was an theory of education that was totally out of place. What was even more troublesome about such a theory was that it was not introduced from abroad as an example of foreign thought, rather, it was a theory that came from the native realm of traditional Japanese thought.

Suppression of these unorthodox ideas by the state’s authority came, though at first indirectly. Beginning in the 1930s, the *tsudzurikata* teachers that came into being throughout the country in the way described above began to build a nation-wide network to keep in touch with one another. One such *tsudzurikata* teacher from the *Tōhoku chihō* (North-East region) was Murayama Toshitarō, an elementary school teacher of Yamagata Prefecture. Another person, from the same region, was an active proponent of the Esperanto movement that linked Vietnam, China, India, Japan, etc. The Sino-Japanese War had already begun. This same person, who often received mail from abroad, was arrested by State investigators on suspicion of being a spy. From the various letters that were confiscated there was a letter from Murayama. The State investigators then arrested Murayama, and proceeded to put out a nation-wide dragnet to arrest all *tsudzurikata* teachers. One of the links of the nation-wide *tsudzurikata* teacher network was in Tottori Prefecture, where Mineji Mitsushige acted in an advisory capacity for the group.

In April of 1942, Mineji, who had already retired from the teaching profession in Tottori Prefecture, was arrested on a train on the way to getting the passport needed to work at the Bureau of Education in Sainan, China. The reason: unbelievable as it may seem, he was arrested on suspicion of aiding and abetting Communist activities in Japan “under the direction of Comintern.” He was banished from the prefecture’s educational community, and the dillagers treated the Mineji family coldly. During the War, he returned to being a farmer in his native land, living a quiet life. Starting in August of 1945, however, the situation completely changed. Monbushō (the Ministry of Education and Culture) and the prefectural authorities, without any mention of the Mineji incident, completely changed their policy from one of foreign exclusionism to one of foreign inclusionism. As a result, Japan was flooded with more translations of Western educational theory than ever before. With Nomura Yoshibē’s help, Mineji began working as an

⁴ Mineji Mitsushige, “*Tsudzurikata ni okeru Seikatsu Shidō no Saikentō*,” *Tsudzurikata Seikatsu* (January issue, 1933).

assistant teacher at a small branch school of an elementary school in the mountains of Gifu Prefecture. Later he returned to his native land, where he died in solitude in December of 1968.

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