

## ***Terakoya* : Japan's Endogenous<sup>1</sup> Learning Institution and Its Implications for Our Developing World**

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Looking back over the past several centuries, we can see that Japan has accumulated a rich history of literacy education. *Terakoya* (寺子屋) education, particularly in the 17th to 19th centuries, and the educational activities of the *Seikatsu-Tsuzurikata* Movement (生活綴方運動) and the *Buraku* Liberation League (部落解放同盟) in this century are some of the examples of this tradition. This paper will deal only with literacy education prior to Japan's modernization, generally said to have begun at the time of the Meiji Restoration (1868). In doing so, it will focus centrally on *terakoya* education, as this form of education appears to hold particularly interesting implications for education in the developing world today.

"*Terakoya*" is the name which was given to Japan's learning institutions for commoners prior to the Meiji Restoration. According to some studies and research on the *terakoya*, the education which took place there contributed strongly to laying a foundation for Japan's modernization.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of

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<sup>1</sup> According to The *Oxford English Dictionary* (Second edition, 1989, Clarendon Press), 'endogenous' means "growing from within." The term is usually used in a biological sense. However, in this paper, the author uses it in a more cultural sense with reference to *Unesco's Medium - Term Plan* (1977-1982) (Paris: Unesco, 1977) where it is adopted as a key word connected with human development.

this essay, however, lies in pointing out yet another aspect of *terakoya* education – namely, its ability to vitalize commoners' lives, something which may provide a useful point of reference with regard to commoners' education in the developing world today. The present author hopes this paper will be of use especially to those involved in literacy activities in these countries.

First, this paper will provide an overview of the *terakoya* so that those unacquainted with the institution can visualize what *terakoya* were like and how they were organized and operated. Secondly, focusing in upon currently prevailing concepts of human development, some of the pertinent features of *terakoya* education will be illustrated. Finally, the paper shall attempt to clarify what implications this important part of Japanese educational history may hold for education in developing countries at present.

## I. An Overview of *Terakoya* Education

### A. Development of *Terakoya* Education

Under the reign of the feudal Tokugawa government during the 18th century, Edo<sup>3</sup> was at the apex of its civilization. It had achieved a certain level of economic activity and had produced a rather sophisticated literary culture. Privately owned wooden printing machines were turning out a variety of publications, and book-lending businesses were flourishing in towns. Cities such as Edo and Ōsaka were so deluged with printed matter such as children's books, tour guidebooks, novels, poetry, obscene books, academic books, etc. that even commoners were able to obtain access to some sort of

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see R. P. Dore. *Education in Tokugawa Japan*. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1965), and Herbert Passin. *Society and Education in Japan*. (New York: Teachers College Press, 1965).

<sup>3</sup> The seat of Tokugawa government, now Tokyo.

reading material. It can be said that people's interest in literacy was relatively high in the Tokugawa period (1603–1867) in Japan. It was also natural that the demand for literacy increased as social and commercial activities intensified over the course of this period. It was at least partly in response to this demand that the learning centers called *terakoya* began to mushroom throughout the country<sup>4</sup>.

*Terakoya*<sup>5</sup> is actually a compound word consisting of the two parts: 'terako' and 'ya'. The former means 'pupils learning in a temple,' and the latter 'a hut.' In the early medieval ages in Japan, temples served as learning institutions particularly for the children of *samurai* or aristocrats. From about the 14th or 15th century, however, temples opened their doors not only to those children but also to commoners. In the Tokugawa period, in addition to temples, ordinary houses in towns and villages were also converted into learning institutions. Although the original religious connotation vanished, the traditional name, *terakoya* nonetheless remained with the institutions as they became popular all over the country.

The number of *terakoya* in Japan generally varied according to the economic situation in different districts and at different times. The Ministry of Education in Japan (Mombushō) conducted a nationwide survey on *terakoya* in 1883, and made an investigation into the numbers of *terakoya* and the years in which they were established. A result of the research, which is shown in Figure 1, gives only approximate numbers and locations of *terakoya*, but it helps account for how rapidly *terakoya* spread all over the country through the 19th century.

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<sup>4</sup> In some villages, however, there were some *terakoya* which were started based upon charitable ideals.

<sup>5</sup> In the city of Edo, they were usually called 'tenaraijo.'



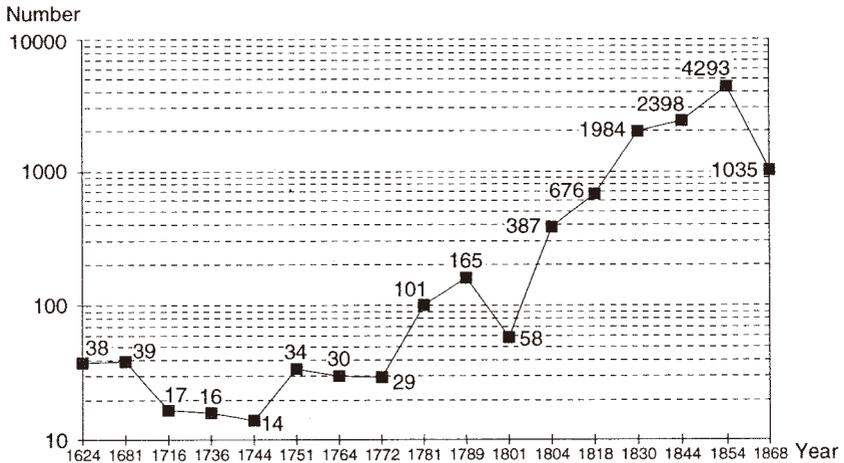
**Figure 1. Geographical Distribution of *Terakoya* by Prefecture**

Source: Mombushō, comp., *Nihon Kyōikushi Shiryō*.

Note: \*... Prefectures (Ehime, Ibaragi, Iwate, Kagawa, Nara and Saitama) for which data were not available.

Figure 2, also based on the research, indicates the numbers of *terakoya* in relation to the years in which they were established. In general, the number increased at the end of the 18th century, and went up rapidly through the first half of the 19th century. Adding the number of *terakoya* whose year of establishment was "unspecified", the total number after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 can be estimated to be well over 15,000. A survey shows that at that time approximately 40 percent of the Japanese boys and 10 percent of the girls were receiving what is now called non-formal education in these *terakoya*.<sup>6</sup> The majority of merchants who had permanent jobs

<sup>6</sup> Dore. *Education in Tokugawa Japan*. p. 254.



**Figure 2. Change in Number of *Terakoya* according to establishment years : 17th – 19th century**

Source: Monbushō comp., *Nihon Kyōikushi Shiryō*.

and even most of the middle-class peasants are said to have been 'literate', at least partly as a result of these *terakoya*.

## B. Pupils and Teachers

Pupils entered *terakoya* at the age of 6 or 7, and went through ordinary course studies up to the age of 12 or 13. The period they spent in *terakoya* was usually from 3 to 7 years. However neither the age limit nor the study period was set, and the pupils could come and go during the year as they pleased. Some left earlier, others stayed longer. The average number of pupils at a *terakoya* was approximately 30.<sup>7</sup>

Other than in some cases where wives or older pupils helped out with the teaching, most *terakoya* were run by a teacher who lived in a hut or house. In the morning, a *terakoya* teacher would remove the *shōji* (a paper

sliding door) to make an open space and set up a makeshift classroom at her/his own place with several desks arranged on *tatami* mat (straw matting). Teachers gave lessons, most of which were penmanship practice, from around 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. In some remote villages where even young children had to be engaged in field work, there were night classes instead.

As a rule, no set tuition fee was collected at *terakoya*. Some students paid a certain amount of money, approximately 200 *mon*<sup>8</sup> a month, and others paid instead with donations in kind such as rice, vegetables, dried fish, sweets, or crops from the peasants' fields. Poor families were given special consideration by the teachers, and the tuition fees were often given back, or instead, ink for writing was given as a gift.

Some studies point out the individual-oriented nature of the education the *terakoya* offered.<sup>9</sup> Considering the relationships between pupils and teachers, however, the atmosphere that prevailed in the *terakoya* was by no means individualistic; rather there existed some sort of strong bond between pupils and teachers. In the days when there were no diplomas nor teachers' certificates, the only factor providing teachers with a prestige was their own personalities. T. Ishitoya compares *terakoya* teachers with primary school teachers in the modern period after the Restoration, describing that in the former case, the teachers' authority depended upon "personality" while in

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<sup>7</sup> There were some exceptionally large *terakoya* which accommodated over 100 pupils, but this kind of large-size *terakoya* was rather rare; probably less than 10 percent of the *terakoya* were of this size.

<sup>8</sup> *Mon* is a unit of the copper currency used by commoners. It is quite impossible to know the precise value of 200 *mon* in those days. However, Konno Nobuo attempted to figure out that 200 *mon* would be equivalent of 4,000 to 5,000 yen in today's terms and added that successful carpenters at that time would earn about 140,000 to 150,000 yen a month. *Chie no Hōko: Edo ni Manabu*, pp. 127–32.

the latter case, it relied more upon the "system."<sup>10</sup>

Since most of the learning took place in dialogue-based lessons, some teachers who possessed strong personalities had a direct and dynamic influence on the pupils. There were famous teachers in Edo called the "thunder-teacher" who gave moral instructions quite severely to pupils face to face with a firm resolution.

Even in such a tense atmosphere, most of the teachers were paid so much respect and trust that these relationships lasted throughout their lives and even after the teachers' deaths. When a teacher passed away, as a token of their memories, former pupils would set up a stone monument called *fudeko-zuka* (筆子塚) with the teacher's name and accomplishments engraved on it. This fact implies, as K. Ishikawa remarks, that in the *terakoya* there was "etwas" beyond give-and-take materialistic relationships between teachers and pupils.<sup>11</sup>

### C. Instructional Methods

*Terakoya* had quite a different character from most contemporary large schools under the formal system. Unlike Bell's or Lancaster's monitorial system,<sup>12</sup> pupils in *terakoya* were not under such strict observation. In most

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Emori Ichirō. *Benkyō Jidai no Makuake*. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1990) p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> Ishitoya Tetsuo. *Nihon Kyōinshi Kenkyū*. (Tokyo: Noma Kyōiku Kenkyūjo, 1958) pp. 40–41.

<sup>11</sup> Ishikawa Ken. *Hankō to Terakoya*. (Tokyo: Kyōikusha, 1978) p. 205. On this issue, there is no gainsaying the fact that this kind of ethical value was formed in the culture of Confucian ideas which was dominating the society then.

<sup>12</sup> A method of organizing for mass instruction based on the use of more capable pupils as minitors. This system was developed in England by A. Bell and J. Lancaster during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

cases, teachers and pupils did not confront each other in the manner characteristic of most modern schools. In the typical *terakoya*, the arrangement of desks was not of an orderly fashion, and the desk of the teacher was put in the same room as those of the pupils' but in a different position. For example, the desk would be set on a slightly raised stage or partitioned from the other desks by *shōji*. Usually there were a few more desks on both sides of the teacher's, where pupils were instructed in what to do that day upon their arrival at the *terakoya*. This was purely individual instruction.

After having had the teacher's short lessons, individual pupils went back to their own desks to do the assigned duties. Some *terakoya* employed a method in which pupils were allowed to return home once they had fulfilled their tasks and had had them checked. Besides these individualized methods, there were other cooperative learning methods, too. For example, in some cases all the desks were removed so that the pupils could sit in a circle and recite stories or the multiplication table to one another.

#### D. Curriculum

*Terakoya* had an infinite variety of subjects. In their early history when most of the pupils were from the aristocracy, mainly general culture courses like the art of ceremonial tea-making were taught. After the 16th century, however, subjects concerning practical life or martial arts also became popular. Some of the *samurai* managers in *terakoya* gave instruction in Japanese traditional martial arts as well as in reading and writing skills. Furthermore, after the beginning of the Tokugawa period, although the 3Rs

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<sup>13</sup> Not all *terakoya* dealt with numeracy. In the city of Edo, out of 363 *terakoya* 206 (56.7%) took up numeracy in their curricula. In rural areas the percentage can be expected to be lower. Umihara Tōru. *Kinsei no Gakkō to Kyōiku*. p. 314.

were still the most essential subjects, practical skills or knowledge concerning commoners' daily lives and/or moral instruction were also generally included. As for girls, in addition to the basics, some *terakoya* featured flower arrangement, tea-ceremony or needlework which were the necessary accomplishments expected of higher-class women in those days.

In class, students began by studying *hiragana*, the 48 Japanese letters, and then went on to study hundreds of *kanji* (Chinese characters) and numbers.<sup>13</sup> In the following step, they learned words and phrases, short sentences and special sentences of use for the writing of correspondence. After having acquired these basic skills, some practical lessons were offered in geography, agriculture or commerce. Besides these studies, pupils played a variety of games. Sometimes they had a chance to go on an excursion and also attended seasonal events peculiar to their locality.

### E. Textbooks

In the Tokugawa period a greater variety of textbooks was used. Some teachers made their own textbooks, but others used traditional ones, some of which can be traced back to a few centuries before. The oldest textbook was a collection of letters for aristocrats which included such subjects as the greetings appropriate to the different seasons.

The Tokugawa period textbooks were called *ōraimono* (往来物),<sup>14</sup> and there existed over 7,000 different publications out of which over 1,000 were

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<sup>14</sup> *Ōrai* means an exchange of letters. *Ōrai-mono* means basic textbooks containing models that would be of practical use in life of commoners. Unlike older textbooks, textbooks made in Edo period did not necessarily deal only with letters. Through the course of time, they rather became more useful vocabulary books on culture or specific vocations. The term, *ōrai*, however, remained in the titles of the textbooks.

for women.<sup>15</sup> These *ōraimono* could be categorized into several kinds. The most basic type focused on vocabulary, and indicated basic letters, essential words, and phrases so that pupils could learn how to write them with a brush pen and ink. The epistolary type, also very common, showed how to write a letter correctly and politely, and usually included a collection of excellent models. In addition to these types of textbooks, there were other *ōraimono*. For example, some *ōraimono* dealt with poetry or literature. Others provided information on commerce, social customs, special content for girls' education, etc.

A geography type of *ōraimono* was also developed in response to a social context where people had become much more interested in the unknown world than before. This was largely due to the growth of a commodity market and the mobilization of the society at large. The geography *ōraimono* described the landscape, history, main products, specialities, etc. of different districts. Thus, even pupils who had not actually seen the largest city, Edo, were able to imagine what it was like through the pictures and explanations of textbooks.

*Dōshikyō* (童子教) and *Jitsugokyō* (実語教), two of the oldest textbooks, dealt with moral issues. Both books were so popular that they strongly influenced the ethical values of the commoners in the Tokugawa period, and certain content of the books formed a part of the common knowledge of the people.<sup>16</sup> *Jitsugokyō*, one of the most popular textbooks in those days, impressed upon pupils in *terakoya* the importance of education. It

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<sup>15</sup> According to Emori, the estimated number of women's textbooks is at least 3,000–4,000. Emori, p. 34.

<sup>16</sup> Dore states the reason Japan after the Meiji Restoration continued as a Buddhist nation owe much to both the textbooks. Dore. *Education in Tokugawa Japan*. p. 258.

opened with the lesson: "Mountains are superb not because they are high but because they have trees; human beings are respectable not because they are rich but because they are intelligent."<sup>17</sup>

In the following words from one *ōraimono*, *Sasayama Baian Terako Seikai no Shikimoku* (笹山梅庵寺子制誨之式目) published in 1695, one can observe a few more of the moral lessons in those days:

"To be born human and not be able to write is to be less than human. Illiteracy is a form of blindness. It brings shame on your teacher, shame on your parents and shame on yourself."

"A friend is to friend as brother to brother, as fish is to water. Be nice to your friends and always put their interests first at the expense of your own."

"Men deserve the name of men only when they behave like men. Show due respect for your fellows, and in particular be kind to your juniors and do all you can to help them along."<sup>18</sup>

These quotes summarize the spirit of Confucian humanism prior to Japan's modernization, a spirit to which the *ōraimono* made an important contribution then.

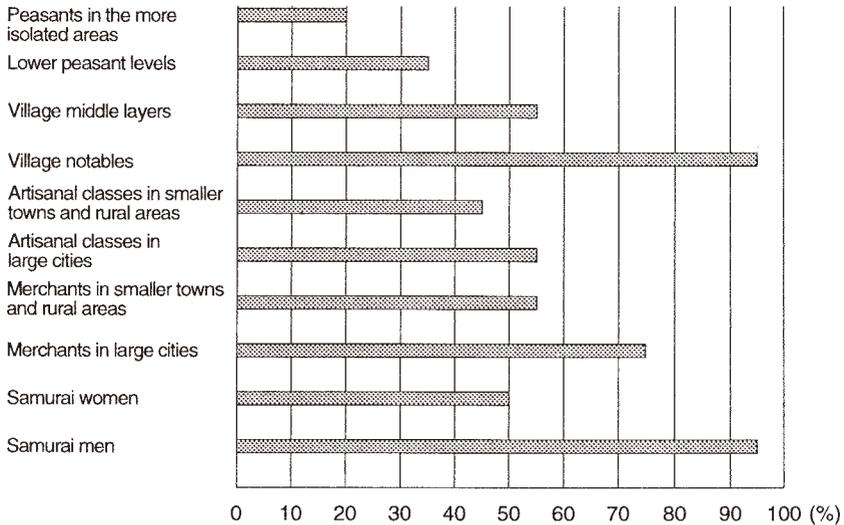
## II. Ideas of Human Development as Visible in *Terakoya* Education

An overview of *terakoya* education having been given, in this section the author would like to focus upon three significant aspects of *terakoya* education which are intimately connected with the now prevalent ideas of

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<sup>17</sup> Ishikawa Matsutaro(ed.). *ōraimono Taikei*, vol. 31. (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1993. N.pag.)

<sup>18</sup> Cited in Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*. pp. 323–26.



**Figure 3. Estimated Literacy Rate by Social Group**

Source: Passin, Herbert. *Society and Education in Japan*.

human development.

### A. Literacy for Commoners

Whether one had the basic skills of reading and/or writing or not was of vital importance for commoners in Tokugawa Japan. Looking at the literacy rate in the Tokugawa period, which can be estimated as shown in Figure 3, one may be able to understand the social problems that commoners in those days were confronted with. Although these calculations are only average figures, it can be inferred from the figure that the majority of *samurai*

<sup>19</sup> There are some records which show how hard it was to live without reading and/or writing skills even in villages. For example, see Fukawa Kiyoshi, *Kinsei Minshū no Kurashi to Gakushū* (Kōbe: Kōbe Shinbun Sōgō Shuppan Center, 1988) pp. 14–15.

men and village notables were able to read and write. This means, however, that all the other people, especially peasants, might find themselves under the command of the ruling class unless they were to some extent literate. Since illiteracy inflicted a loss upon many peasants and since they would often be placed at a disadvantage in society as a result of being illiterate,<sup>19</sup> learning institutions such as *terakoya* were invariably important for their lives.

Whereas authorities in a way approved of the *terakoya* because they wished commoners to acknowledge the meanings of their orders shown on notice boards,<sup>20</sup> literacy for the commoners was a 'tool' enabling them to protect themselves against unjustified demands from the authorities. In some cases *terakoya* education cultivated realistic views in the commoners' minds, stimulating them to be critical of the existing system. It was also necessary for commoners to be literate in order to submit petitions to local authorities for the protection or improvement of their lives. In fact, in some villages, the bill used in event of riots turned into an *ōraimono*.<sup>21</sup> Thus, there were a few but significant cases in which through *terakoya* education commoners were enlightened and took upon themselves the responsibility of protection or reformation of their own community.

## B. Education for Women

The Tokugawa period, especially in the latter part of the 17th century,

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<sup>20</sup> Passin. *Society and Education in Japan*, pp. 48–49.

<sup>21</sup> Yakuwa Tomohiro. 'Ikkisojō no Ōraimonoka to Sono Ruhū no Kyōikushiteki Igi: "Shiraiwa Meyasu" o Jirei ni' [The Educational Activities on the Petition of Revolt in the Tokugawa Era: The Case of Shiraiwa Peasant's Revolt] in Kyōikushi-gakkai Kiyō Henshūinkai (ed.) *Nihon no Kyōikugaku*. No. 30, (Tokyo: Kyōikushi Gakkai, 1987) pp. 24–41.

saw some changes in women's lives particularly in cities. With the stabilization of the society, the quality of life on the whole changed from hand-to-mouth living to living with a little bit of time to pursue other matters of interest. As a result of this change, commoners who had been too occupied with the preservation of their situation were to some extent liberated. In the process, some women came to recognize problems in domestic life. The demand for the improvement of domestic life led to the appearance of some popular books on medical care and child rearing. Thus, through reading, women in those days came to be able to acquire knowledge concerning childbirth, household matters, children's education, etc.

In addition to books on these subjects, women had a chance to read a variety of other special books for women in the *terakoya*. One *ōraimono* for women, *Jokunshō* (女訓抄), insisted on the importance of literacy for women, instructing that women, whether rich or poor, first of all, should learn how to write. Also *Onna Shōbai Ōrai* (女商売往来) printed in the beginning of the 19th century as a special text for women asked women to attain the same intelligence as men.

In cities, the number of female *terakoya* teachers was by no means small. In Edo, it is estimated that as many as one out of three teachers was a woman – which means that there were quite a few female intellectuals then. In rural districts, however, the number of female *terakoya* teachers was quite limited.<sup>22</sup>

It is not that difficult to find historical documents describing how

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<sup>22</sup> For example, in Saitama Prefecture, the percentage of female teachers is 0.98, 11 out of 1,120. Tone Keizaburō. *Terakoya to Shomin Seikatsu no Jisshōteki Kenkyū*. (Tokyo: Yūsankaku Shoten, 1981) p. 127.

<sup>23</sup> For examples, see Nagaoka Takato. *Iwatekeniki Terakoya Monogatari*. (Morioka: Kumagaya Insatsu Shuppanbu, 1984) p. 61.

distinguished female teachers' services were.<sup>23</sup> In Gunma Prefecture, for instance, there remain some records regarding female teachers. Most of these teachers were women of erudition, such as the wife of a doctor, the daughter of a *terakoya* teacher, etc. Some were also well-known as poets. In a *terakoya* called *Shōseidō* (松声堂), the founder was a splendid woman, Kajiko Tamura, who started serving as an official secretary of the central government at the age of 17, and when 31 returned home and started teaching. Her teaching was extremely strict but very kind; she was so dedicated a teacher that she was awarded by the lord of the manor. In the *terakoya*, Tamura had about 100 pupils every year for 45 years, many of whom were girls. Among the pupils was Teruko Maehara who later founded her own *terakoya*, *Baikadō* (梅花堂) at the age of 17, and devoted her life to the village pupils for a period of 31 years until her death.<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunately, women's education on the whole did not reach the stage of exerting pressure for social reform. Apart from a few examples, the education of women tended not to reach beyond one accomplishment of social etiquette. It cannot, however, be emphasized too strongly that there were some extremely talented women who played an important role in women's education in the *terakoya* of the Tokugawa period.

### C. Commoner's Education

Compared to pre-modern Western education, *terakoya* education stands in a very unique position, particularly when seen from the viewpoint of social class. In pre-modern Europe, for example, public schools and other educational institutions belonged to the privileged few. Commoners, therefore, had few chances to receive education. However, commoners in pre-

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<sup>24</sup> Yanai Hisao. *Gunma no Terakoya*. (Maebashi: Miyama Bunko, 1990) pp. 25–28.

modern Japan did have such an opportunity through the *terakoya*.

In those days, of course, there were other educational institutions. To take a few examples, *shijuku* (私塾 : private academies) were educational institutions where people learned specialized subjects as well as writing skills. It is true that there were commoners among the pupils there. Compared to the *terakoya*, however, the number of commoners was limited, and the majority of the teachers were *samurai*.<sup>25</sup> There were also another educational institutions called *hankō* (藩校 : domain schools). The education which took place there, however, was intended not for commoners, but for a limited number of elites who were expected to support their own feudal domain. Again, it is true that some commoners were taught in *Gōkō* (郷校 : *han* schools in rural areas). But these were run by the *Han* (domain) not by the commoners themselves. On the other hand, *terakoya* were mostly institutions independent of the *Han*'s (feudal lord's) or *Shōgun*'s (the central government's) control.

Of all the learning institutions in the Tokugawa period, the *terakoya* probably had the greatest percentage of commoners. In *terakoya* a large percentage of the teachers as well as learners were commoners. Looking at Table 1, which shows the breakdown of *terakoya* manager's social status, one can observe that in most cases commoners occupy first place in each time period. It can be said that a number of *terakoya* were the product of the commoners' own efforts.

It is no wonder that after the modern educational system was introduced, the *terakoya* were cherished as a dear memory of the old days. In *Society and Education in Japan*, for instance, H. Passin describes how com-

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<sup>25</sup> Rubinger, Richard. *Private Academies of Tokugawa Japan*. (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982) p. 11.

**Table 1. Class Background of *Terakoya* Managers**

Years(Duration)	Numbers (and Percentages) of <i>Terakoya</i> Managers					Totals
	Samurai	Commoners	Priests	Shinto Priest	Doctor	
1469(155)	2 (18.18)	3 (27.27)	1 (9.09)	4 (36.37)	1 (9.09)	11 (100.00)
1624( 57)	3 (10.34)	10 (34.49)	11 (37.93)	5 (17.24)	...	29 (100.00)
1681( 35)	3 (10.00)	13 (43.33)	2 (6.67)	10 (33.33)	2 (6.67)	30 (100.00)
1716( 73)	44 (22.11)	72 (36.18)	22 (11.06)	28 (14.07)	33 (16.58)	199 (100.00)
1789( 55)	835 (28.09)	1,137 (38.28)	479 (16.11)	228 (8.34)	294 (9.18)	2,973 (100.00)
1844( 24)	1,810 (25.03)	2,939 (40.64)	1,371 (18.96)	515 (7.11)	597 (8.26)	7,232 (100.00)
Totals	2,697 (25.74)	4,174 (39.86)	1,886 (18.00)	790 (7.54)	927 (8.86)	10,474 (100.00)

Source: Ishikawa Ken, *Nihon Shomin Kyōikushi*.

Note: ... Data not available

moners viewed the *terakoya* as the ideal form of education. He quotes a report from Aichi Prefecture officials in 1875 which analyzed the reasons many people resisted the newly introduced compulsory schooling. This report listed as a cause that the people "miss the old *terakoya*."<sup>26</sup> The people were given a modern schooling system, but it clearly must have felt to them like 'something given' rather than their own product, as the *terakoya* had been. *Terakoya* were no institutions passed down from those who govern to those governed, but grass-roots organizations of the commoners, by the commoners, and for the commoners.

To sum up, such factors as literacy, women's education, and common-

<sup>26</sup> Cited in Passin, *Society and Education in Japan*, p. 30.

er's education indicate several features of the *terakoya* education which are deeply connected with what is called 'human development.' Unfortunately we have only limited documents to know exactly how commoners were actually vitalized through these factors. Also, to investigate further into the factors is beyond the scope of a brief paper. However, what has been said earlier in this paper may help us to understand that it is those factors that vitalized commoners' lives and made them feel themselves part of the society, and that those factors even helped them to regard themselves as 'subjects' of the reformation of the community at the village level, and even of society as a whole.

As is shown in international declarations recently issued in connection with the importance of literacy, nowadays most people realize that such factors as literacy, women's education and commoner's education are essential for national development.<sup>27</sup> What is not so widely understood, however, seems to be where the foundation of development lies. This is a question to which the *terakoya* experience may also give some hints.

### **III. A Reassessment of *Terakoya* Education: Human Vitalization as the Foundation of Development**

History has witnessed the tragedies of many cultures which were dominated or destroyed at the cost of socio-economic advances. However, up to the Meiji Restoration, with little influence from modernistic ideas concern-

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<sup>27</sup> For instance, *World Declaration on Education for All* issued in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand, emphasizes the importance of literacy, basic education for all, and education for girls and women. Inter-Agency Commission, WCEFA. *Final Report—World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs*. (New York: UNICEF House, 1990) pp. 41–50.

ing reform or domination by another culture, *terakoya* served as places where the Japanese could nurture their own culture and cultivate their own identity. In this sense, the *terakoya* education was an endogenously developed form of education.

After the collapse of the feudal government in 1868, the Restoration Government implemented a nationwide educational reform in 1872. From that time, *terakoya* were sacrificed to the wave of modernization. While education for commoners was one of the factors which accelerated the reformation under the new government, *terakoya* were nonetheless destined to perish under that modern educational system. In a way, the modern Japanese school system was established on the widespread and deeply rooted foundation of *terakoya* education. However, as is often the case in other cultures, the endogenous nature of the *terakoya* was largely lost in the process of modernization.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the loss of the endogenous aspect of education of the *terakoya*, there is no denying that the *terakoya* education paved the way for the universalization of basic primary education in Japan. In fact, there were many cases where *terakoya* were directly transformed into modern primary schools, *terakoya* teachers into primary school teachers, and *ōraimono* into school textbooks. Approximately 70 percent of modern primary schools were temples or private houses which had been used as *terakoya*.<sup>29</sup>

Because of the clear connection between *terakoya* and the new system of primary education in Japan, it is not surprising that much scholastic effort has been made to find the correlation between the development of the na-

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<sup>28</sup> For the study of the conflict between the modern educational system and endogenous customs concerning children's lives, see Takahashi Satoshi. *Nihon Minshū Kyōikushi Kenkyū*. (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1978) pp. 246–75.

<sup>29</sup> Nagaoka. *Iwateken-iki Terakoya Monogatari*, p. 224.

tion and the *terakoya* education. Some scholars maintain that *terakoya* helped the commoners to prepare for new social changes and therefore played the role of driving the social reformation forward, while others hold the opposite view that the *terakoya*, though bearing some modern characteristics, basically contributed to the maintenance of the feudal system.<sup>30</sup>

Aside from these two major views, the present author would like to draw attention to the importance of other aspects of the *terakoya* which have been previously mentioned as vitalizing factors in the commoners' lives. It is important to bear in mind that, although Japan has indeed made remarkable progress since the Meiji Restoration, its progress was the unintended consequence of *terakoya* education. The point is that *terakoya* education first and foremost animated the commoners, vivified their lives and served as an activator of the society. Then, only as a result of this, did it lay the foundation for constructing a modern nation.

In 1969, R. P. Dore, during his stay in Tanzania, experienced firsthand feelings pertaining to the difficulties of national development. He referred to a precondition for developing countries to "take off," and was perfectly correct in asserting that such a nation was lucky, where the aim of education was to create human beings who could find pleasure in learning *per se* and who incorporated the best of what he had learned into his work, and where this aim had been established in the traditional society before the advancement of the economy, the bureaucratization of society at large, and the formalization of educational system.<sup>31</sup>

Watching the severe conditions of the least developing countries with

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<sup>30</sup> For a discussion on this point, see Umemura Kayo. *Nihon Kinsei Minshū Kyōikushi Kenkyū*. (Matsudo: Azusa Shuppansha, 1991) pp. 12–14.

<sup>31</sup> Dore. Preface to the Japanese edition of *Education in Tokugawa Japan (Edo Jidai no Kyōiku*. Trans. H. Matsui, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970.) p. x.

our own eyes, it is quite understandable that Dore judged Japan to be one of the 'lucky' nations.<sup>32</sup> However that luck was perhaps brought about because Japan's advances started not with the nation, but with the people. The author considers this point to be a good lesson for policy-makers of educational programmes, for participants in project design and/or for those charged with implementing and evaluating projects. Whatever programme it may be, the development of the commoners as well as that of the nation has to be taken into consideration carefully. The *terakoya*, in this sense, must have significant implications when observed not as the driving force of the development of the nation, but as a vitalizing factor of the commoners' lives. Thus, *terakoya* should be reassessed as one of the ideal learning institutions not for the modernization or the industrialization of a country, but for empowerment of the common people.

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<sup>32</sup> The author would like to stress that what has to be noted here is the character of Japan's modernization. Taking into consideration what Japan did during the war period, the importance of the question of the quality of Japan's modernization, to which *terakoya* have more or less contributed, should not be overlooked. Dore and Emori hold similar views. See Dore, chap. 10, and Emori, pp. 200–02.

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