CHAPTER FOUR
THE RECONFIGURATION OF RYŌSAI KENBO THOUGHT

As shown in the previous chapter, between World War I and the postwar period the situation for women underwent enormous changes that made necessary a reconfiguration of ryōsai kenbo thought. Previous research regarding the nature of this reconfiguration has concluded that its essential qualities were determined in the recommendations of the Special Deliberative Council on Education (Rinji kyōiku kaigi) in the paper entitled “Matters Concerning Girls’ Education” (Joshi kyōiku ni kansuru ken), issued on October 24, 1918, and put in practice two years later in the revision of the Girls’ Middle School Act. The recommendations of this Special Deliberative Council on Education have been described as follows:

To the very extent that democratic ideas (minpon shugi) had begun to permeate society and influence people’s thinking, it was necessary to strengthen the family system, and cultivate ryōsai kenbo who understood the National Polity idea and were endowed with feminine virtues…. By the Taishō era, the world of girls’ education was already tinted with National Polity ideology.¹

I question, however, whether it is adequate to characterize this transformation in terms of the emphasis on the National Polity ideal or the strengthening of a traditional view of women. Discussions on girls’ education in this era are almost completely lacking in ideological statements on such matters as the feminine virtues or the National Polity ideal. Those concerned with education were actively searching for a new view on women appropriate to post-World War I society. The quotes from the previous chapter have made this clear.

¹ Fukaya Masashi, “Nihon joshi kyōikushiki” (History of women’s education in Japan), in Sekai kyōikushi taikei 34: joshi kyōikushi (Outline of the history of world education 34: history of girls’ education), (Kōdansha, 1977), 297. The same assessment is found in his Ryōsai kenbo shugi no kyōiku (Education in ryōsai kenbo ideology), (Reimei shobō, 1966), and “Joshi chūtō kyōiku no henbō” (Changes in girls’ secondary education), in Kokuritsu kyōiku kenkyūjo, ed., Nihon kindai kyōiku hyakunenshi (100 year history of modern Japanese education), vol. 5, 1974, and in Endō Akiko’s “Rinji kyōiku kaigi to joshi kyōiku” (The Special Deliberative Council on Education and girls’ education), in Nihon Joshi Daigaku joshi kyōiku kenkyūjo, ed., Taishō no joshi kyōiku (Girls’ education in the Taishō period), (Kokudosha, 1975).
Following World War I, one word that exercised great pull throughout Japanese society was *kaizō* – reform. Consistent to the trends of the era, one of the many contexts in which it was used was in impassioned debates on how to bring about the reform of women (*josei kaizō*). Ideas on girls’ education were advanced from a variety of points of view, concerned with what sort of woman would be a *ryōsai kenbo* appropriate to the postwar era, and how such women could be cultivated.

This chapter will examine in detail the discourse on girls’ education of the postwar period, drawing primarily on *Fujin mondai*, *Fujo shinbun*, and *Kyōiku jiron*. By analyzing the arguments of the contributors to these publications, a total of about fifty writers, I hope to show clearly what the aims were of postwar girls’ education. This should make possible a comprehensive reevaluation of such things as the nature of the reformation of postwar girls’ education and the recommendations of the Special Deliberative Council on Education.

I have chosen these three publications because each had its own characteristic approach to women’s issues. *Fujin mondai*, as was shown in Chapter 3, was written in response to a specific set of problems brought to attention by World War I. *Fujo shinbun* was a weekly newspaper with the educational purpose of improving the status of women, and aimed at “female teachers, young women’s societies (*shojokai*) and women’s societies – intellectuals of local prominence who made up the backbone of female society.”

*Kyōiku jiron* was one of the main educational magazines of the time. They provide excellent material for understanding the discourse on girls’ education in its own terms.

I. The Reform of Girls’ Education

1. Implementation of Higher Education

As is well known, in the Japanese educational system prior to World War II, single-sex education was the norm from the secondary level and opportunities for women to enter higher education were extremely limited. At the beginning of the Taishō era, apart from the national women’s higher normal schools in Tokyo and Nara, the only higher educational institutions for women were a few private professional schools like the Joshi

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