The Historical Background Regarding the Issue of “Hinomaru & Kimigayo”

The Wars of aggression into Asia and the role which “Hinomaru & Kimigayo” played in the war

Japan, as an absolutistic imperial state, made its way into the construction of a modern state after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, but “Tenno” or the Emperor, as the only sovereign, presided over sovereignty of the state. He was “sacred and inviolable” presence, whereas people were all “subjects” of the Emperor.

The aim of school education was to bring up people as “subjects” who devoted their lives to the Emperor. School ceremonies held on national holidays aimed to arouse the feelings of worship and awe of the Emperor, a living god, and to develop the spirit obedient to the ruler.

“Kimigayo” or “The Reign of the Emperor”, which has been the national anthem since the prewar period, is a song of celebration for the Imperial Family with the words “A thousand years of happy life be thine! …” (The reign of the Emperor will last and prosper forever…)

The national flag “Hinomaru” or “The Rising Sun” was noticeably raised without any exception at the ceremony hall and the school gate on the occasion of a school event. It symbolized Japan, an imperial state.

“Hinomaru” always appeared when soldiers charged at the enemy position, and it was a flag which symbolized Japan’s invasion and rule over Asia. Many people in Asian countries invaded by Japan during the Second World War still have the feeling of rejection against “Hinomaru,” Japan’s national flag.

Such past causes different opinions about “Hinomaru & Kimigayo” among Japanese people nowadays. Some people strongly oppose the uniform coercion of the flag and anthem.

How “Hinomaru & Kimigayo” were treated in school education after the war

After Japan’s defeat in World War Two, the new Japanese Constitution was established in 1946, and Japan became a country based on the principle where sovereign power resides in the people. In 1947, the Fundamental Law of Education was enacted, and the aim of education was transformed from the development of ‘subjects” loyal to the Emperor into “the full development of personality.” Most teachers deeply regretted as “crimes” that they had provided militaristic education for children and had driven them to battlefronts, and they made a pledge, “Never send our children to the battlefield again.” Thereafter, through the regret about militaristic education, they started a movement for “entrance and graduation ceremonies without ‘Hinomaru & ‘Kimigayo’” throughout the country.

In contrast to prewar education, all of the school events, including entrance and graduation ceremonies, became completely free from the commitment of the state, and were held by each school independently. However, in 1989, “the official guidelines for school teaching” or “the Course of
Study” designated by the Education Ministry was revised, and then “raising the national flag and singing the national anthem” at entrance and graduation ceremonies became an obligatory stipulation, stricter than before. After that, the Education Ministry urged the local education boards to put it into practice without fail.

Particularly, after the Law Regarding the National Flag and Anthem was legislated in the Diet in 1999, according to the Ministry’s strong guidance demanding 100% practice of “raising the national flag and singing the national anthem,” the coercion of “Hinomaru & Kimigayo” at entrance and graduation ceremonies was intensified. After the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education in 2006, patriotic and nationalistic education was promoted than ever.

**Intensification of Nationalistic Education in Tokyo**

**The nationalistic trend in Tokyo’s educational administration**

Shintaro Ishihara, the former Tokyo governor, dictatorially promoted nationalistic education in Tokyo.

In 2001, he deleted the words “respect for the Constitution of Japan and the Fundamental Law of Education” and “respect for the Convention on the Rights of the Child” from the educational objectives of Tokyo, and instead, inserted the words such as “Patriotism.” This meant that he intended to introduce chauvinistic nationalism into education.

In July, 2003, a few Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly members and some staff members of the Metropolitan Education Board with news reporters suddenly visited Tokyo Metropolitan T School for handicapped students and confiscated teaching materials, criticizing the school’s sex education for children with mental retardation for being “extreme.” The teachers concerned were reprimanded. This incident was the beginning of a serious intervention in the contents of education by the administration in collusion with external political forces.

The coercion of “Hinomaru & Kimigayo” in Tokyo took place in the process of a series of measures taken by the educational administration under the metropolitan government led by Ishihara.

**The 10.23 Directive and the coercion of “Hinomaru & Kimigayo” on teachers**

On October 23rd, 2003, the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education issued a directive to the principals of Tokyo Metropolitan Schools titled “With Regard to the Practice of Raising the National Flag and Singing the National Anthem at Entrance, Graduation and Other Ceremonies (Directive)” in the name of Yokichi Yokoyama, Superintendent of Schools. It notified the principals to make all of the teachers know that they should be reprimanded if they disobeyed the principal’s working order. Moreover, in practicing the ceremony, all members of the school staff should stand up for the national flag at the center stage, and should sing the national anthem played on the piano by a music teacher,
according to “the attached guidelines concerning the raising of the national flag and the singing of the national anthem at entrance, graduation and other ceremonies.” In the guidelines, there were other provisions such as “a music teacher should play the national anthem on the piano,” “the diploma should be handed over on the stage,” and so forth. Consequently, as mentioned in D-1-(1), no fewer than 450 school staff members (mostly teachers) in total have been reprimanded by May, 2013, for disobeying the working order.

**Human Rights Violations Spreading Nationwide**

In Osaka, in 2011, so called “Ordinance for Standing Up for “Kimigayo”” was passed under the leadership of Mayor Hashimoto (then Governor), which requires every employee of Osaka City or Prefectural Government to stand up at the time of singing “Kimigayo”, the first of its kind across the country. In 2012, “Fundamental Ordinance on Public Employees” and other regulations on education were enacted, which allow dismissal of those who disobey the same order three times. Teachers who did not stand up and sing “Kimigayo” were asked, in the training session after punished, to sign a written pledge “I will never repeat disobedience to the order”, and at the third disobedience they are to be dismissed. In 2011 and 2012, 49 teachers were reprimanded for disobedience to the order to stand up for “Kimigayo”. Violations of freedoms of thought and conscience, and expression have been increasing both in number and in intensity at public schools throughout Japan.

**Actual cases in Osaka**

Until 2009, when for the first time a certain principal ordered some teachers to stand up, OPBE hadn’t made punishment on teachers who neither stood up nor sang “Kimigayo”. But the “Ordinance for Standing Up for ‘Kimigayo’” and the Directive of the President of OPBE drastically changed the situation.

The “Ordinance for Standing Up for ‘Kimigayo’”(The Ordinance Regarding the Raising of National Frag at the Facilities Belonging to Osaka Prefectural Government and the Chorus Reading of National Anthem by Teachers of Public Schools) was strongly promoted by the then Prefectural Governor, Toru Hashimoto, and his local party, Reformist Party of Osaka. As a result, the ordinance was established in 2011. This ordinance forces teachers to stand up and sing “Kimigayo” at the time of the chorus reading of the National Anthem in entrance or graduation ceremonies. The aim of the ordinance is to make teachers pay respect to “Kimigayo” and to make children have “a patriotic spirit and a feeling of loving Osaka”.

Following promulgating and enforcing the ordinance, on 17/1/2012, OPBE held the special meeting of principals of Osaka prefectural senior high schools and special education schools, and there notified them the Directive of the President of OPBE”.

This directive has two different versions, to all the teachers and to principals. The former is that all the teachers in a ceremony hall must stand up and sing “Kimigayo” at the time of the chorus reading
of the national anthem in accordance with the government course guidelines and the “Ordinance for Standing Up for ‘Kimigayo’”. The later is that principals must order teachers to do so in order to make them obey the directive.

The directive is based on the ordinance. As a result of both the ordinance and the directive, almost all the teachers have been obliged to stand up and sing “Kimigayo” at entrance or graduation ceremonies. Principals of Osaka prefectural schools order some teachers, who they think might not stand up and sing, to work outside ceremony halls. Accordingly, such teachers cannot attend the ceremony. If a teacher doesn’t say clearly just before the ceremony, “I will stand up and sing”, who is ordered to work inside the ceremony hall, the principal hands a document to the teacher that states an order to stand up and sing “Kimigayo”. And a teacher who dare not stand up based on her/his belief is punished by OPBE, such as a salary cut or a reprimand. More than 60 teachers have already received a reprimand and three have been punished with a 10% salary reduction for one month. Furthermore, OPBE refused the re-employment of at least eight teachers after retirement age.

By the fact that almost all the teachers are forced to stand up and sing “Kimigayo”, students and parents also are obliged to do so.

The “Fundamental Ordinance on Public Employees”, which was established in February 2012, enacts as follows:

1) When a public employee does not obey an order by his/her superior, she/he should be admonished as a rule.

2) The public employee who receives a disciplinary action should receive instructions or staff trainings etc.

3) When the public employee who received a disciplinary action does not obey an order by his/her superior again, he/she is warned by a document that she/he may be dismissed next time.

4) Despite that, when he/she does not obey an order by his/her superior totally five times, or against the same order totally three times, she/he should be dismissed as a rule.

This article will apply only to teachers who dare not stand up and sing “Kimigayo”.

By the fact that almost all the teachers are forced to stand up and sing “Kimigayo”, students and parents also are obliged to do so.