



## Language textbooks following the Meiji Restoration

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Innovations from the Gakusei period

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Original release: Christian Galan, « Les manuels de langue aux lendemains de la Restauration de Meiji. Les innovations de la période du décret sur l'Éducation », *Cipango — Cahiers d'études japonaises*, n° 8, 1999, p. 215-257.

- 1 The Education System Order (*Gakusei* 学制) period ran from 1872 to 1879, period during which this statutory text, promulgated on 4 August 1872, remained in effect. The main, and most pressing, task of the newly created Department of Education at that time was to implement a standardised national curriculum accessible to all children, while simultaneously unifying the astonishing patchwork of schools that had arisen during the Edo period.<sup>1</sup> The promulgation of the Education System Order marked the culmination of a twin reflection process: on the one hand, the investigation since the mid-nineteenth century of foreign education systems, and on the other a review of Japan's traditional Confucian-inspired education system.
- 2 The education system established by this decree included three levels of schooling: elementary school, middle school and university. All educational institutions were made the sole responsibility of the Department of Education,<sup>2</sup> which set curricula and supervised both teaching and teachers. Seen as the keystone of the entire system, elementary school education was the subject of intense scrutiny.
- 3 In order to make an irreversible break with Edo-period education, Meiji leaders wanted to see schools adopt textbooks that differed radically to those used up until then. However, the compiling and manufacturing of such textbooks proved to be too slow and their distribution too insufficient to immediately cover needs.<sup>3</sup>

- 4 When it became clear to the government that for both practical and financial reasons the new system was headed straight for failure, in May 1873 the Department of Education issued an “Amendment to the Elementary School Regulations” (*Shōgaku kyōsoku kaisei* 小学教則改正). However, differences with the “Elementary School Regulations” (*Shōgaku kyōsoku* 小学教則) of 1872, which accompanied the decree, remained minimal and consisted essentially of a reduction in teaching hours.
- 5 The classroom reality was that the world of teaching practices was split into two separate camps. On one side were the new teachers trained at normal schools, veritable teaching laboratories where the methods imported from overseas were presented and discussed. On the other side teachers from the old schools, trained in traditional teaching methods, continued to form the majority.<sup>4</sup>
- 6 One of the rare pedagogical innovations from this period to gain rapid currency and truly be implemented in every classroom was the so-called “simultaneous teaching method” (*issei kyōjuhō* 一斉教授法), in which the teacher addressed the entire class rather than each student in turn. An efficient way of imparting knowledge to the greatest number, this method enabled the content of lessons to be systematised and standardised while simultaneously extending the amount of time each pupil spent studying or reflecting, since the teacher was constantly addressing the entire class. The drawback, on the other hand, was that it confined children to an essentially passive role.
- 7 The period running from 1872 to the beginning of the 1880s is often referred to by Japanese specialists as the “translated textbooks period” or the “Western-inspired textbooks period”. These terms can be misleading if taken literally, however, for this period was above all one of great freedom – and confusion – in everything relating to the editing, publishing and use of teaching materials. Textbook supervision was non-existent (or proved to be extremely flexible); the official directives mentioned certain titles but did not impose them. Primary school teachers could thus choose from a range of widely diverging materials that can be grouped into three broad categories:
  - Edo-period textbooks, Chinese classics and *ōrai-mono* 往来物,<sup>5</sup> or any texts which, although written at the very beginning of the Meiji era, could be considered as such;
  - books that could be classed as “Westernizing”, in other words, that described Western morals and customs or served as teaching aids for new subjects such as geography and the sciences. The majority were not written specifically for children and their content could be highly complex. They were frequently used during the first few years of the *Gakusei* period to compensate for the lack of appropriate textbooks while conveying the spirit of the Japanese age of civilisation and enlightenment (*bunmei kaika* 文明開化);
  - and finally, new textbooks devised and written to be used by children in the type of school environment established by the official directives: close to 280 textbooks for beginners and more than 550 language textbooks were published between 1868 and 1885, in addition to around 300 maths textbooks and 520 geography textbooks.<sup>6</sup> Amongst these, language textbooks were fundamental in modernising the education system of the early Meiji era.<sup>7</sup>

## New textbooks for teaching Japanese

- 8 Article 27 of the decree organised the teaching of the Japanese language into seven subjects: *kana* transcription (*kanazukai* 綴字), vocabulary (*kotoba* 単語, literally “words”), conversation (*kaiwa* / *kotobazukai* 会話), reading (*tokuhon* 読本), grammar (*bunpō* 文法),

writing (*tenarai* 習字) and composition (*shotoku* 書牘).<sup>8</sup> All of these terms, with the exception of *tenarai* and *shotoku*,<sup>9</sup> had been newly created based on the subjects taught in Western schools.

- 9 These subjects were reprised and further divided in the elementary school regulations of 1872 and 1873, bringing to fifteen the number of lessons directly linked to language instruction.<sup>10</sup> The regulations indicated the titles of textbooks that could be used for each of these subjects.<sup>11</sup> The fragmented and, it must be said, somewhat vague nature of language instruction – it was difficult to grasp the actual content of each “subject”, or even to understand the pertinence of creating separate disciplines – was further reinforced by the great confusion that reigned over the subject names.<sup>12</sup> There was a clear desire to go beyond the reading/writing dichotomy (*kaki* 書き / *yomi* 読み or *tenarai* 手習 / *sodoku* 素読)<sup>13</sup> of the traditional education system using new terminology;<sup>14</sup> however, in retrospect it also appears to have reflected an extremely fragmented view of the Japanese language and how it should be taught.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Kana-zukai***

- 10 The first *kana-zukai* textbooks were published in 1873.<sup>16</sup> The most representative among them was by Sakakibara Yoshino 榊原芳野 (1832-1881), *Shōgaku kana-zukai* [sic] *sho* 小學綴字書 (*Kana Usage Textbook for Elementary School*), published in August 1874 by the Department of Education.
- 11 In his foreword the author informed readers that learning how to read and write *kana* was the first step to learning the language and that the textbook they held in their hands had been written with a view to teaching these skills. The first pages were taken up with charts presenting *kana* 仮字 (the most common *hiragana* given in the *iroha* いろは format),<sup>17</sup> *katakana* 片仮字 (the most common following the *gojūon* – fifty sounds – ordering), *hiragana* variants (*kana bettai* 仮字別体) and *katakana* variants (*katakana bettai* 片仮字別体).<sup>18</sup> Next combinations of *kana* were presented. Words (each combination had a meaning) were presented in the *gojūon* order based on their first symbol: *aka*, *aki*, *asa*, *ashi*; *ika*, *iki*, *ike*, *ito*, for example. Each word in *hiragana* was accompanied by its transcription in Chinese characters (*kanji*) written slightly to one side. When two commonly used *kanji* shared the same *kana* transcription they were both mentioned. Thus 紙 (paper) and 神 (god) appeared opposite *kami* かみ. Each page contained one or two drawings illustrating some of the words presented.
- 12 Once all of the possible two-*kana* combinations had been exhausted, words beginning with voiced sounds<sup>19</sup> and transcribed with two *kana* were presented in the same manner. The textbook then presented several lessons on words containing three *kana* and ended with a series of lessons on the *kana* transcription of *kanji* containing, for the most part, complex sounds.<sup>20</sup>
- 13 While Sakakibara's textbook was heavily inspired by American spelling books, its contents were entirely Japanese and its form (word lists and illustrative vignettes) even made it appear to be derived from the vocabulary *ōraimono*. Nevertheless, in contrast to *ōraimono*, words were not presented thematically or in the *iroha* format but instead were systematically presented following the *gojūon* ordering and in such a way as to cover all (or almost all) the possible combinations of Japanese syllables. The desire to imitate contemporary Western textbooks by presenting an exhaustive catalogue of letter

combinations was strong, and the influence of the syllabic methods at the heart of these Western texts was decisive in the years following the promulgation of the Education System Order.

- 14 It is not clearly known in what proportion, or in what manner, these textbooks were used. Given that no mention is made of them in the elementary school regulations of the Department of Education or the Normal School, nor in the regulations issued by the various local authorities, doubt exists as to whether they were actually used in any great number.

## ***Kotoba***

- 15 The term *kotoba-hen* (“word textbook”) appeared for the first time in the 1872 regulations which, once the *kana* syllabaries and rules for transcribing them had been learnt, stipulated the use of these textbooks to teach *kanji*.
- 16 The first of these “word textbooks”<sup>21</sup> was the three-volume *Kotoba-hen* 単語編 published by the Department of Education in 1872 (author unspecified). The first five pages of volume one (twenty-five pages long) contained various charts: the *iroha* chart in *hiragana*, the *gojūon* chart in *katakana* and a presentation of the various verb categories. These were followed by lists of nouns (transcribed in *kanji*) connected to everyday life and classified according to themes: numerals, directions, shapes, colours, geography and anatomy. Volume two also consisted of words transcribed in *kanji* and grouped thematically. These words were more difficult and bore less relation to everyday life than in the previous volume. Finally, volume three continued to present words transcribed in *kanji* and was divided into three parts: historical eras and names of emperors, family names, and names of places, towns and regions.
- 17 By dividing the book into three separate volumes its makers underlined the importance attached to the need to progress by level, gradually increasing the difficulty of the material presented (in this case words) with each subsequent book. Although the influence of Western textbooks was clear, it should be pointed out that the words presented referred to concepts and objects that were common in everyday Japanese life (or uncommon, but in this case had strong cultural connotations). It was by no means a translated textbook. In fact, in some ways it was yet another example of a textbook that followed the compilatory tradition of the *ōrai-mono*, consisting solely of lists of words in *kanji* grouped by theme and semantic field. The third volume of the *Kotoba-hen* in particular so closely followed this tradition that it can be considered an *ōrai-mono*.
- 18 In this sense, despite its unfamiliar name the *Kotoba-hen* was not the textbook that caused teachers the most difficulty, since the teaching method it implied (having pupils memorise, recite and write lists of words) was familiar and had been practiced for decades, if not centuries. In fact, the *Kotoba-hen* was very well received and enjoyed a wide distribution throughout the country. On the other hand, it is easy to imagine the degree of difficulty that these lists of words studied in isolation, without any context, must have represented for first year students.

## ***Kotoba-zukai [kaiwa]***

- 19 The Department of Education itself did not compile any *kotobazukai hen* and those that were published came from private publishing houses.<sup>22</sup> Although there could be

substantial differences between these textbooks, the most widely used among them seems to have been one by Ōta Zuiken” 太田随軒 (birth and death unknown), *Ōta shi kaiwa* [*kotobazukai*] *hen* 太田氏會話篇 (Mr Ōta's Conversation Textbook), published in August 1873.

- 20 The first volume opened with three tables of figures<sup>23</sup> and the second with a presentation of eight word “categories”: nouns (*meishi* 名詞), personal and demonstrative pronouns (*daimeishi* 代名詞), adjectives (*keiyōshi* 形容詞), verbs (*dōshi* 動詞), adverbs (*fukushi* 副詞), particles that function as determiners (*zenshi* 前詞), conjunctions (*setsuzokushi* 接続詞), and interjections (*kantōshi* 間投詞). Each of these two volumes was then composed of short sentences that supposedly constituted the basis of any conversation. The sentences were presented in a strict grammatical progression. Their style, expression and structure were heavily influenced by Western grammar, to such an extent that today this textbook more closely resembles a book on formal grammar than a guide to conversation. The introduction of numerous interrogative sentences from the second half of the first volume onwards is the only thing that suggests the book was designed to teach conversation.
- 21 The content of the two volumes showed little coherence and the presentation consisted simply in placing various model sentences side by side. Furthermore, the desired objectives were not clear and the texts suspiciously resembled translations from a foreign language, including excessive use of personal pronouns that are often unnecessary in Japanese and structures grafted literally onto Japanese. Directly translating sentences that were already somewhat stilted in English stripped the Japanese of all coherence and produced utterances that were not only strange, but often incorrect and at times incomprehensible. For example, almost all the sentences began with *ware* 我 (I), *warera* 我等 (we) or *nanji* 汝 (you). Moreover, quite astonishing phrases appeared, such as *nanji wa zutsū o motsu* 汝ハ頭痛ヲ持ツ or *ware wa haita (shitsū) wo motsu* 我ハ歯痛ヲ持ツ (lesson 5, volume 2). Translated literally back into English these would produce something along the lines of “you possess a headache”, “I possess a toothache”, as opposed to the standard expressions *atama ga itai* 頭が痛い (you've got a headache), *ha ga itai* 歯がいたい (I've got toothache).
- 22 Nonetheless, this textbook has great historical importance due to its clear desire to create a “conversation” lesson in the new elementary school curriculum, and in doing so establish oral communication as one of the starting points of language instruction. Despite its failings, its pedagogical intentions were undeniably ahead of their time and would subsequently lead spoken Japanese to once again take precedence over the written language.
- 23 Other *kotobazukai* textbooks featured dialogues that were more relevant to everyday life and contained some rudimentary writing exercises, making the *kotobazukai* subject seem like a preliminary step in this type of exercise. The subject matter of the dialogues made some of them feel rather academic. All, however, had been compiled under the influence of Western conversation books and had, to differing extents, the same artificial feel of a translation. According to Nanette Twine,<sup>24</sup> *kotobazukai* provided the ideal terrain for advocates of unifying spoken and written Japanese (*genbun itchi* 言文一致), in other words, simplifying the latter to bring it in line with the former. In fact, certain members of the Department of Education hoped that teaching this subject would encourage the dissemination of the national language at the expense of regional dialects. On the whole, however, the *kotobazukai* texts were unable to meet these linguistic challenges. Poorly

distributed and in small numbers, they disappeared from the proposals of the Normal School in 1873, and from teaching curricula in 1881.

### *Bunpō*

- 24 The 1872-73 regulations introduced the teaching of grammar from the first term of the third year of lower elementary school to the end of upper elementary school. This subject had never existed as such before and the education chiefs of the time had decided that, in view of Western practices, it was lacking from Japanese language education.
- 25 More than any of the other newly created subjects, “grammar” implied conducting an in-depth reflection on the subject matter to be taught, something that had never been undertaken before in Japan.<sup>25</sup> The confusion of those in charge of setting curricula was evident. Although they had clearly stipulated the teaching of grammar at elementary school, they had failed to set out a precise timetable. Accordingly, implementing instruction in this subject was fraught with difficulty.
- 26 A number of “grammar books” (*bunpō sho* 文法書) were produced, however, by private publishing houses. Since the elementary school regulations had not specified any set texts, and with good reason, certain prefectures supplemented the list of textbooks to be used at upper elementary schools with works such as those by Tanaka Yoshikado 田中義廉, *Shōgaku Nihon bunten* 小學日本文典 (Book of Japanese Grammar for Elementary School, 1874), or Nakane Kiyoshi 中根淑, *Nihon shō-bunten* 日本小文典 (Book of Elementary Japanese Grammar, 1876). However, the content of these works, which wavered between that of the *kanazukai* textbooks and *kotobazukai* textbooks with which they overlapped, amounted simply to presenting the different word categories and the ways in which they could be employed in sentences. In the classroom they served merely as teachers' guides and are thought to have been distributed to students only rarely.

### Inadequate yet essential textbooks

- 27 The aforementioned textbooks were never truly used as stand-alone texts in lessons, in other words as textbooks for “subjects” that were distinct from one another. The division of subjects imposed by the regulations proved impossible to implement in reality. Poorly defined, the teaching content of the new subjects overlapped and duplicated each other as the subjects struggled to exist and find their coherence. The confusion that reigned over the different course titles and textbook names was symptomatic of this state of affairs. *Kotobazukai* textbooks that in reality more closely resembled grammar books coexisted with grammar books which themselves were virtually indistinguishable from *kanazukai* texts. The combined influence of Western and Edo-period textbooks, the conflict between new ideas and a traditional view of education, and the discrepancy between what teachers on the ground were truly capable of and what officials drafting the regulations wanted – and were themselves capable of – were all at the root of this confusion.
- 28 However, this confusion was also synonymous with intense activity and intense reflection. The Japanese tested, experimented, studied and made proposals. These flawed and seemingly incomplete textbooks clearly demonstrate – undoubtedly better than those compiled later – the frenetic activity that characterised the world of education and publishing during the *Gakusei* period. Beyond their shortcomings and awkwardness, they



perfectly reflected the two major concerns of education specialists at the time: providing children with appropriate educational materials and systematising Japanese language instruction to make it simpler, more rational and more progressive.

- 29 Finally, from a pedagogical point of view they introduced the learning progression that would subsequently become the norm, namely: syllables in *kana* > words in *kanji* > sentences. Leaving aside the issue of whether these textbooks were used, how and by whom, they constitute a vital link in the history of Japanese language teaching, or even the language itself!

## The educational wallcharts of 1873-1875

- 30 This learning progression relating to the introduction of writing also featured in the “educational wallcharts” (*kakezu* 掛圖) published by the Tōkyō Normal School at the beginning of 1873. These were a completely new innovation. This type of American-inspired teaching aid was unheard of in Japan and deviated from the tradition of individualised teaching and the book as the sole vehicle for conveying knowledge.

The American models for the Japanese wallcharts, the *School and Family Charts: Accompanied by a Manual of Object Lessons and Elementary Instruction* (1870s) by Marcius Willson (1813-1905) and N. A. Calkins, (1822-1895) were introduced to Japan at the beginning of 1872 on the initiative of the American G.H.F. Verbeck (1830-1898).

- 31 Immediately translated and adapted, the Japanese version comprised twenty-eight charts (56 cm x 74 cm):

Fifty sounds chart (*Gojūonzu* 五十音圖)

Fifty sounds chart in the cursive style (*Gojūon sōtaizu* 五十音草体圖)

Voiced sounds chart (*Dakuonzu* – *handakuon* 濁音圖半濁音)

Word charts (1-8) (*Kotobazu daiichi* – *daihachi* 單語図第一・第八)

Sentence charts (1-8) (*Rengozu dai ichi* – *daihachi* 連語図第一・第八)

Lines and angles chart (*Sen oyobi do zu* 線及度図)

Shapes and solids chart (*Katachi oyobi tai zu* 形及体図)

Numerals chart (*Sūjizu* 数字図)

Arabic numerals chart (*San'yō sūjizu* 算用数字図)

Roman numerals chart (*Rōma sūjizu* 羅馬数字図)

Addition tables (*Kasan kukuzu* 加算九九図)

Multiplication tables (*Jōsan kukuzu* 乗算九九図)

Colour charts (2) (*Irozu* 色図)

- 32 Published at a time when the Department of Education and the Tōkyō Normal School each produced their own teaching materials independently of one another, these wallcharts were designed to encourage dissemination of the simultaneous teaching method and compensate for the lack of textbooks. The series of charts by the Tōkyō Normal School were reissued the following year, in 1874, under the authority of the Department of Education. This second version of the charts was distributed by the Department until December 1878. The content of these charts, the number of which had grown in the interim to forty-seven, was based on that of the 1873 version but with a certain number of differences. Thirty of them were devised by the Normal School and seventeen by the Department of Education.

## The *iroha* and the fifty sounds chart

- 33 Whereas instruction in reading and writing generally began with the fifty sounds chart in *katakana*, followed by the *iroha* in *hiragana*, the first series of charts from the Tōkyō Normal School in 1873 featured only the fifty sounds. The disappearance of the *iroha* reflected the preference of “Westernizers” for the fifty sounds chart. However, the fact that children were more familiar with the *iroha* through card games, songs and everyday activities led education officials to reintroduce it with the new series in 1874.

## The word charts

- 34 The first two of the eight words charts (73 cm x 58 cm) each presented thirty or so words, while the remaining six contained twenty-five, making a total of 210 words and 310 *kanji* for all eight charts. The words were always presented in the same manner. Each square on the charts contained a drawing representing the object, plant or animal in question along with a transcription of its name written in square-style *kanji*. The first of these eight charts was designed chiefly to help children distinguish between similar sounds (*i* イ, *hi* ヒ and *wi* ヰ; *e* エ, *he* ヘ and *we* エ), while the second sought to teach some of the words with particularly complicated *kana* spelling (*wa* ワ or *ha* ハ, *o* オ or *wo* ヲ).
- 35 Although the vocabulary itself drew on the everyday world of children, the *kanji* presented were often graphically complex. The first two charts, for example, contained the words *shokudai* / 燭臺 (candlestick), *ebi* / 鰯 (shrimp), *kanae* / 鼎 (three-legged metal pot), *tarahi* / 盥 (washbowl), and *iwashi* / 鰯 (sardine).
- 36 The remaining charts presented dialogues (*mondō* 問答) between pupils and teachers. These dialogues were essentially designed to teach children the function and characteristics of objects taken from the world around them<sup>26</sup> and have them memorise the *kanji* used to write their names.
- 37 The second series of charts authorised by the Department of Education in 1874 differed from the first series on a certain number of points: with new illustrations and certain words replaced, the new version was ultimately considerably more difficult than the first. Examples include 糸 *ito* (thread) replaced with 絲 and 大根 *daikon* (a large radish) with 蘿蔔 *rafuku* (same meaning). The few words to appear in *katakana* in the first version had also been replaced by words in *kanji*. In fact, the first version more closely resembled the Japanese language of today than the second.
- 38 These changes were the first signs of the reversal in situation that the world of Meiji education would experience, with the specialists in Chinese studies (*kangakusha* 漢学者) at the Department of Education gradually regaining the ground previously abandoned to the “Westernizers” (*yōgakusha* 洋学者) at the Tōkyō Normal School.

## The sentence charts

- 39 These charts served as material for training children in sentence construction using the “word linking” technique (according to a very literal translation of *rengozu*). Their presentation was identical in both versions of the charts and featured a list of words in *kanji* followed by short, literary-style sentences that recycled these words. The first chart, for example, featured the words 神 (*kami*, god), 人 (*hito*, person), 天地 (*tenchi*, universe),

万物 (*banbutsu*, all creation), 主宰 (*shusai*, master), 靈 (*tama*, soul / spirit), followed by sentences like: 神は天地の主宰にして、人は万物の霊なり (*kami wa tenchi no shusai ni shite, hito wa banbutsu no tama nari* / the gods are the masters of the universe, men are the kings [literally the “soul”] of creation.

- 40 In all, 191 words were presented in isolation across all nine charts,<sup>27</sup> as well as 271 *kanji*. Only ten words were written in *kana*, in chart no. 3. Many variant written forms (*hentaigana*) appeared in the parts transcribed in *kana*. Just like the word charts, these sentence charts, which in addition to the number and difficulty of the *kanji* used introduced quite complex moral and scientific concepts, were extremely difficult for language teaching materials that were supposedly designed for very young children.

## Distribution of the wallcharts

- 41 The first annual reports published by the Department of Education in 1873 (*Monbushō nenpō* 文部省年報) show widespread distribution of the charts throughout the entire country. Teachers who had not graduated from the Normal School spent several weeks learning how to use them at seminars organised by the prefectures. These seminars taught elementary school teachers how to teach a whole class using the simultaneous method and how to have children read by showing them the words with a stick and/or having them run their fingers along under the sentences.
- 42 As evidenced by the one million copies distributed as of 1874, these charts were not simply supplementary teaching materials but rather educational resources on a par with textbooks. To my knowledge this was the first time in the history of Japanese education that teaching materials other than textbooks were produced and used in classrooms on this scale. Ideally suited to simultaneous teaching, they enabled all teachers to familiarise themselves with this method without unnerving those who had only ever known the traditional method.
- 43 However, the difficulty of the *kanji* taught in these charts and the complexity of the historical *kana* orthography used (*rekishi kanazukai*) soon proved to be inappropriate for children aged six to eight years old. Mounting criticism led the Department of Education to publish a new set of ten charts (72 cm x 50 cm) called *Shōgaku shikyōzu* 小學指教圖 (educational wallcharts for elementary school) in January 1879. The first six were word charts in *hiragana* and the other four served as teaching aids for arithmetic lessons:
- Chart no.1: *iroha* in *hiragana*  
 Chart no.2: fifty sounds in *katakana* (simple sounds only)  
 Chart no. 3: voiced sounds in *katakana* and numerals in *kanji*  
 Charts 4 to 6: words transcribed exclusively in *hiragana* and illustrated with a drawing, such as *inu*, *hashi* or *hon* (24 words per chart)  
 Charts 7 to 10: tables of maths operations (multiplication, addition, subtraction and division).
- 44 The major difference with the 1873 charts was that instead of being transcribed using what were often very difficult *kanji*, all of the words were written in *hiragana*. This time there was a real desire to adapt the teaching material to the developmental stage of children and their abilities, and in this respect these charts prefigured the language teaching policy subsequently introduced in the “Elementary School Curriculum” (*Shōgakkō kyōsoku kōryō* 小学校教則綱領) decreed in May 1881. Moreover, the elements

relating to arithmetic that remained in the 1879 *Shōgaku shikyōzu* were directly linked to the traditional practice of using an abacus and moved away from “Western” arithmetic. With their focus once again on language instruction using elements that directly prepared children for reading – *iroha*, fifty sounds chart, voiced sounds, *kana* words, short sentences –, these charts foreshadowed the *tokuhon* 読本 style readers published later.

## The *Shōgaku nyūmon*

- 45 The wallcharts of 1873-1875 were also published together as a collection in the form of textbooks. The first among these was the *Shōgaku kyōjusho* 小学教授書 (Book of Lessons for Elementary School) by Tanaka Yoshikado 田中義廉 (1841-1879) and Morokuzu Nobuzumi 諸葛信澄 (1849-1880), published by the Department of Education in August 1873. It grouped together into one single volume all the charts from the Tōkyō Normal School published that same year, except for the table of colours.
- 46 In October 1874 the Department of Education published a second series of charts in a single 150-page book entitled *Shōgaku nyūmon kōgō* 小學入門 甲号 (Elementary School Primer – A),<sup>28</sup> the foreword to which stated:  
The charts are large and impractical to fold and transport. Furthermore, they are difficult to purchase due to their high price. We have therefore assembled them in this practical and lightweight book.
- 47 The following year, in January 1875, an abridged version of this textbook (62 pages) was published with the title *Shōgaku nyūmon otsugō* 小學入門 乙号 (Elementary School Primer – B).
- 48 Whichever version we consider, the *Shōgaku nyūmon* served as an introduction to all the subjects taught at elementary school but, like the original charts, continued to focus essentially on learning the language. Reading instruction clearly began with characters (*kana* followed by *kanji*) then words, progressing to compound words, expressions and finally short sentences, each time combining the elements studied separately during the previous stage.
- 49 This concern for starting with concrete objects and associating the signifier with as precise a representation of the signified as possible (influenced by the Pestalozzian method)<sup>29</sup> was clearly visible in the presentation of these word charts and their multiple and highly detailed illustrations. As such, the charts, along with the *Shōgaku nyūmon*, were evidently teaching resources developed in line with the so-called “object lessons method” (*shobutsu shikyō* 庶物指教),<sup>30</sup> which emphasised visualising the concrete object or, in this case, a simple representation of it. In fact, the American charts that had served as a model bore the subtitle “accompanied by a manual of object lessons and elementary instruction”.
- 50 The *Shōgaku nyūmon* continued to be extremely popular until around 1877-1879, and even until the beginning of the 1880s. Much has been written about its content and use. However, the majority of these works – teachers' guides or commentaries – focused essentially on the word charts and on providing highly detailed explanations of their use.
- 51 The educational charts and various versions of the *Shōgaku nyūmon* had been developed and published at short notice following the Education System Order, and were chiefly intended to provide teachers at the newly created elementary schools with textbooks whose content conformed to the new regulations. The problems that arose once they

were in circulation and being used in classrooms stemmed essentially from the fact that their editors had been more interested in breaking with traditional teaching practices (notably individualised instruction) than in creating materials truly suited to young learners. It must be acknowledged that the reflection conducted on the actual abilities of young learners was non-existent (or inadequate). Simply copying Western teaching resources without truly taking into account the children themselves had led to the publication of materials that were unsuitable and excessively difficult.

- 52 Nevertheless, the pioneering and modern nature of the *Shōgaku nyūmon* and the educational charts must not be forgotten. Their presentation of subject matter for beginners makes them of prime importance in the history of language textbooks. They introduced and established a new way of assembling and presenting the elements necessary for teaching the language, in addition to the first notions of the other subjects on the curriculum, in particular arithmetic and science. A summary of basic knowledge and an introduction to the sciences, if only through basic vocabulary, continued to characterise all readers published until the early twentieth century.
- 53 A much clearer and more coherent idea of the way textbook authors and the majority of officials at the time viewed language teaching can be obtained by flicking through the pages of the *Shōgaku nyūmon* (in any case much more than through the charts purchased by schools individually and not as a set). The influence of Edo-period textbooks was by now only really perceptible from a graphic point of view. The *Shōgaku nyūmon* had all the characteristics of the compendium-like primers used in the West, and of all the textbooks presented in this paper, it is probably one of those in which the influence of the so-called “civilisation and enlightenment” (*bunmei kaika*) movement is the most visible, whether in the content of lessons and underlying ideology, or the pedagogical approach and conception of knowledge on which it was based. In fact, its disappearance from lessons was concomitant with that of the very notion of *bunmei kaika* and the loss of influence of its adherents. This textbook definitively fell out of use after the Department of Education published the *First Manual of Reading* (*Yomikata nyūmon* 読方入門) in 1884.

## The *shōgaku tokuhon* of 1873, the first true elementary school “readers”

- 54 Of all the textbooks written during the *Gakusei* period, the most important for language teaching in general, and reading in particular, were the *shōgaku tokuhon*, or “elementary school readers”, the first of their kind.
- 55 First published in 1873, they quickly stood out from other language textbooks and rapidly superseded them in everyday classroom practices. Originally, however, these textbooks which prefigured the future combined “national language” (*kokugo* 国語) texts were simply a teaching aid for one of the seven subjects that made up language instruction. However, the coherence of the subject “reading” compared to the fluctuating nature of the six other subjects gradually established readers as the core texts for teaching the language. From the second year onwards, in other words, once children had been introduced to writing, readers became, in the vast majority of schools, *the* textbooks for language instruction.
- 56 These new textbooks – they did not exist in the old school system – were designed to be used in teaching “school-based reading” (*yomikata*) in the strict sense, as well as the

“group reading-comprehension-explanation” activity known as *rinkō* 輪講. The term *tokuhon*, which in this new meaning was a neologism<sup>31</sup> to translate the English term “reader” (*riidā* リーダー), subsequently became a generic term for all elementary school reading textbooks as well as the subject itself.

- 57 None of the textbooks cited in the official regulations of 1872 for the subjects *tokuhon no yomikata* and *tokuhon no rinkō*, taught from year two onwards, contained the word *tokuhon* in their title. It was only in the supplementary list of textbooks proposed by the Normal School and appended to the 1873 teaching regulations that a text entitled *Shōgaku tokuhon*, published shortly earlier in Tōkyō, appeared for the first time. Written by Tanaka Yoshikado, it was published just before Sakakibara Yoshino's *Shōgaku tokuhon*. Though fundamentally different, both of these textbooks were distributed on a tremendous scale throughout the entire *Gakusei* period. Widely used throughout the country until 1879, they are considered to be the most representative readers from the period.

### Tanaka Yoshikado's *Shōgaku tokuhon*

- 58 Tanaka Yoshikado's *Shōgaku tokuhon* was initially published between March and June 1873 by the Tōkyō Normal School, then revised and republished jointly by the Department of Education and the Normal School in August 1874. All the *hiragana* used appeared in their current form and no variants featured in the text.
- 59 The first three volumes were essentially composed of texts focusing on the everyday life and games of children. The fourth consisted almost exclusively of texts of a scientific nature (celestial bodies, air, water). Tanaka had faithfully reproduced the style of the *Willson Reader* by Marcius Willson,<sup>32</sup> the American textbook that had served as a model.
- 60 Highly representative of the *bunmei kaika* mentality, this textbook was the most utilised and imitated of all the readers. Its opening sentence, the only one that was not translated from the *Willson Reader* (and which Tanaka thus wrote himself), was memorised by all elementary school children:
- The humans inhabiting the Earth can be divided into five races: the Asian race, the European race, the Malay race, the American race and the African race; the Japanese belong to the Asian race.
- 61 For the Japanese of the time, this sentence alone symbolised the end of a long period of closure and isolation, the opening up to the West and the rest of the world, a breath of fresh air as well as an entirely new sum of knowledge to be acquired.
- 62 Except for this opening sentence, the first volume of Tanaka's reader was merely a complete and virtually word-for-word translation of the *First Reader* of the *Willson Reader* series, while the second volume reproduced the first half of the *Second Reader* with a few modifications and additions. Aside from a few differences, the third volume reproduced the second half of the *Second Reader*. The fourth volume, on the other hand, owed little to Willson's work, though with its focus almost entirely on the sciences it respected the same principle.
- 63 The texts and illustrations used contained many elements belonging to a culture and civilisation that were different, foreign. They lent the book a slightly odd feel that disconcerted many Japanese, but at the same time were responsible for its appeal and success. The images, which were identical to the ones used in the *Willson Reader*, showed children playing baseball, sleeping in beds, using music boxes and wearing western



clothes, all unheard of in Japan at that time. The texts all had a certain strangeness that was most often due to their being literal translations from English. Their artificiality was somewhat toned down in the revised version of 1874 and changes to their content made them more closely coincide with the culture and everyday life of the Japanese.

- 64 Overall, however, the textbook still read like a translation (overuse of personal pronouns, sentence structures translated literally from English) and in some respects the second version proved itself to be even odder than the first, notably due to the fact that its prose combined Old Japanese (the interrogative *ya*, for example) and Modern Japanese (the interrogative *ka*). More generally, there was a kind of anachronism in the second version between the numerous old forms used (in particular the verbal suffixes *beshi* and *nari*) and a “modern and Western” content that would undoubtedly have been better served by a more contemporary language.
- 65 With regards the Japanese script, Tanaka introduced certain *kanji* right from the very first lesson of volume one, which was logical since in the Normal School learning progression the *Shōgaku tokuhon* was only tackled once *kana* had been studied. However, Tanaka employed these *kanji* with no effort to progress from the simple to the more complex in terms of the form or number of characters presented. Right from the opening lessons of his textbook, all words that would have been written with *kanji* in a text aimed at an adult readership were transcribed in the same way. No spaces separated words and punctuation was limited to commas and full stops (which were in fact circles the same size as a character).
- 66 Distributed nationwide, Tanaka's *Shōgaku tokuhon* found itself at the centre of a wealth of literature: explanatory guides, teachers' editions and dictionaries. Although it progressively fell out of use at the beginning of the 1880s, given that it was still being reprinted in places until around 1885-1886, its representative nature is coupled with an astonishing longevity for the period: over ten years.

### Sakakibara Yoshino's *Shōgaku tokuhon*

- 67 Published for the first time in 1873 by the Department of Education, Sakakibara Yoshino's *Shōgaku tokuhon* consisted of six volumes, including an introductory volume.
- 68 The introductory volume (*kubimaki* 首巻) began in the same way as the Department of Education's *Kotoba-hen*. It borrowed almost all of the introductory section; in other words, it began with the *iroha* in *hiragana* (including voiced sounds but not the variant written forms). This was followed by the *gojūon* chart in *katakana*, then a certain number of lessons presenting one-, two- or three-*kanji* words classified by theme,<sup>33</sup> giving a total of 1,078 words and at least as many *kanji*. Remember that this was a beginners' textbook used during the *first six months* of school!
- 69 Volume one presented the names of things and objects (one or two per page) classified according to their first syllable in the order of the *iroha*. Each word was illustrated by a panel containing a drawing and the first *kana* character of the word. Beneath this a few lines provided a simple explanation of the word.<sup>34</sup> The second half of the textbook presented other words in the same way but following the *gojūon* ordering, with the *kana* character inside the panel no longer a *hiragana* but a *katakana*.
- 70 This process of presenting over one thousand *kanji* in less than six months (in the introductory volume), then returning to a slower pace to study *kana* or the same *kanji*

seems extremely bizarre, if not incoherent. However, it seems to perfectly reflect the still widely held view at the time that the characters had to be learnt before learning to read. From this point of view it was thus logical to have seen as many of them as possible before recycling them in texts “to be read”.

- 71 Volumes two and three were composed of short texts containing the words and *kanji* studied in the introductory book and volume one. The texts had been adapted to make them accessible to children and focused on everyday life or very simple subjects. At the top of each lesson, separated from the body of the text, were questions such as: “Which is the largest planet?” or “How many satellites are there?”, with the answer provided in the text of the lesson. These questions, which were designed chiefly to underline the essential points of the text, were one of the main characteristics of this textbook.
- 72 Volumes four and five,<sup>35</sup> on the other hand, had been compiled according to a different editorial policy that favoured moralistic narratives, anecdotes and Chinese, Japanese or Western historical accounts. This policy was justified in the foreword in the following terms:  
  
In this volume we have used materials that can be read easily by children and have presented them simply.  
We have employed a vocabulary that is neither common nor sophisticated and have endeavoured to choose easy-to-pronounce words that can be understood by children without difficulty when they are heard.  
This textbook presents things in a certain order, without distinguishing between the old and the new, or between the Japanese and the foreign.
- 73 “Easily”, “simply”, “without difficulty”: these few lines reveal a clear concern for children, which is all the more remarkable considering that, until then, little concern had been shown in the texts targeting the moral edification of these same children. As in the previous volumes, questions underlining the main points figured in the upper margin of the texts: “Why are there wise men and fools?”, “Why do natural things deteriorate?”
- 74 In contrast to the artificial, translated feel of Tanaka's textbook, Sakakibara's text, based as it was on Japanese teaching materials, seemed much more traditional. Initially consisting of simple sentences, its style then evolved towards more sophisticated language. Nevertheless, like all the textbooks published prior to 1885, the spirit of “civilisation and enlightenment” was not completely absent since there were numerous foreign stories (albeit with a moralistic tone).
- 75 This textbook was widely distributed and utilised, in particular volumes four and five which, with their accounts of China and Japan, seemed to remedy one of the shortcomings of Tanaka's book, thus winning over many teachers. In fact, many schools moved straight on to volume five of Sakakibara's textbook after finishing the four volumes of Tanaka's reader. One compensated for the weaknesses of the other, and they were often used if not jointly, at least successively. In contrast to Tanaka's reader, however, use of Sakakibara's increased as the return to tradition in terms of morals and education became more pronounced, in particular from 1877-1879 onwards. The five volumes of Sakakibara's textbook, which were re-issued many times, were abundantly imitated in the different prefectures and even gave rise to a multitude of explanatory books and other teachers' editions. Being pervaded as they were with traditional and Confucian thought enabled them to completely eclipse Tanaka's book between 1881 and 1886.



- 76 The immense popularity of the *Shōgaku tokuhon* by Tanaka and Sakakibara was such that they were simply referred to as *Tanaka-hon* (Tanaka's book) and *Sakakibara-hon* (Sakakibara's book). They perfectly represented the two currents of thought apparent in language textbooks at the beginning of the Meiji era and which, more generally, were at odds in the world of education: an innovative current, initially dominant then increasingly minor – one inspired by the Western textbooks that were translated or adapted (Tanaka) – and a more traditional current, initially minor then increasingly powerful, which continued in the tradition of the previous era's education system (Sakakibara).<sup>36</sup>
- 77 The two main shortcomings of Tanaka's book were its use of unnatural language unlike the everyday language spoken by children, and the inclusion of content that was on occasions beyond a child's grasp. As for Sakakibara's reader, it could be criticised for adopting a system and overly rapid pace of introducing *kanji* and acquiring difficult vocabulary which, beyond the writers' stated intentions, showed little consideration for the abilities and developmental stage of children. In both cases, moreover, their specificity as language textbooks was eclipsed by their resemblance to general teaching textbooks that combined several subjects and differed little from the traditional readers of the Edo period. This is also undoubtedly one of the factors that eventually drove teachers to gradually use *tokuhon*-type readers as the sole language textbooks and then to establish them as the core elementary school textbooks.

## Conclusion

- 78 An analysis of language textbooks from the *Gakusei* period shows that not only did they evolve along the same lines as the official directives, but in pedagogical terms they were even ahead of them. Indeed, by contenting themselves with merely indicating what books teachers could use, the 1872 and 1873 directives effectively aligned themselves with the textbooks available on the market. This was a unique moment in the history of Japanese education, a situation that would continue for another few years but would never again be repeated.
- 79 The new textbooks also reflected the ideological and philosophical views dominating the world of education and, more generally, society at the beginning of the Meiji era. The major influence at that time was American and Pestalozzian. But while the majority of textbook writers did indeed take inspiration from Western works, this was not the case for everyone. The influence of Edo-period textbooks was still palpable in these so-called new publications. Considered in its entirety, the corpus of language textbooks published between 1872 and 1879 above all reflects the considerable educational freedom that existed in Japan at that time: dissemination of new ideas and practices inspired from abroad, freedom in the writing and use of textbooks, relative independence of the prefectures, and considerable autonomy of teachers in the classroom.
- 80 The consequence of this educational freedom was that a gulf existed during this period between, on the one hand, what education specialists and officials advocated through their documents and new textbooks, and what actually happened in classrooms on the other. Indeed, the content and spirit of the new textbooks, suffused with the “civilisation and enlightenment” ideal, were rather poorly perceived on the ground. The materials directly developed from the translation of Western textbooks in particular were found

disconcerting and shocking. Parents, children and teachers, who had already taken a battering from the new system, were extremely disconcerted by these books whose content was for many incomprehensible. Many teachers thus continued to use the old textbooks with which they were familiar.

- 81 The investigation conducted by the specialists themselves into language and language instruction appears to have focused essentially on ideological (breaking away from the traditional education model) and practical aspects (being rapidly applicable everywhere, by all and for all subjects) that left little room to consider the subject taught (written Japanese) as well as the learners and learning process. In fact, general principles of education were simply applied to language teaching, just as they were for other subjects. Japanese specialists in fact refer to this period as “*gogaku kyōiku jidai*” 語学教育時代: literally the “language education period”, in other words, the period in which education focused on systematically studying the components of the written language, a method modelled on the way foreign languages were studied at that time.
- 82 The extremely synoptic presentation of the writing system thus proposed was based on an abstract conception of the written code which saw characters as visual or phonetic units isolated from their function. Despite the recommendations of certain Japanese specialists, notably those from the normal schools, teaching was mechanical and involved little active use of the language apart from extremely formalistic “questions and answers” (*mondō* 問答), prepared and learned by heart.<sup>37</sup> However, this situation also revealed a perverse effect of the old Western syllabic method which, encouraged by the extremely syllabic nature of the Japanese language, was used at that time as a model. Accordingly, *kana* were presented in the “syllabic” order of the *iroha* and the *gojūon* (Western influence + Japanese tradition) rather than progressing from the easiest to the most difficult.
- 83 Similarly, the graphic complexity and frequency with which *kanji* appeared in the actual texts were not yet truly taken into account (influence of the traditional method). *Kanji* were either presented in isolation, without context, or within words grouped together according to a particular theme, the number of syllables they contained or shared semantic elements; or else in short utterances that more closely resembled expressions than sentences. The process of learning to read and write was thus simply based on an accumulation of graphic and visual elements. Each as poorly suited to the needs, abilities and developmental stage of children as to the knowledge and practical experience of teachers, the new language textbooks, especially those most faithful to their Western models, continued – paradoxically – to focus essentially, just like the Edo-period textbooks, on Japanese characters as both the point of departure and aim of education.
- 84 The adoption of the simultaneous teaching method and appropriate teaching material is thus often presented as the main, if not the only, educational advance of this period. The previously mentioned difficulties and the failings or weaknesses of the new textbooks from the *Gakusei* period should not, however, mask other advances made in language teaching, advances that are clearly visible in the textbooks of those years and which were equally important and definitive, albeit decidedly less spectacular. These include breaking away from the traditional model of teaching written Japanese, promoting the spoken language and oral communication, which were on their way to taking precedence over the written language, and *kana* being seen as the sole gateway to the written language for all children. The traditional model was in fact abandoned in stages, the first, which took place during the period studied in this paper, being the inversion of the

“writing > reading” teaching order (which became “reading > writing”). It was not until the end of the 1880s that the need to teach these skills concurrently was established.

- 85 Finally, an examination of the textbooks of this period shows that the major obstacle to implementing an efficient method of language instruction on a truly nationwide scale remained the Japanese language itself. All efforts and attempts were doomed to failure from the start due to the excessive instability of the language. This is something that is difficult to imagine today, but the Japanese elementary school teachers of the period were teaching a language that was not fixed, that varied according to place, period and purpose, whom it was written by and to whom it was addressed, a written language that vacillated between several traditions and whose usage implied a cultural and ideological choice on behalf of the writer. A language that, in contrast to contemporary Japanese, was graphically much less certain. None of the diacritical marks subsequently chosen were used, for example, while the link between the written form of *kana* and their pronunciation was as complex as French orthography. In fact, the textbooks presented in this paper provide an extremely tangible illustration of these difficulties linked to the nature of the Japanese script, since they present little homogeneity in terms of form. The size of characters, presentation of texts, calligraphy style, preference given sometimes to *hiragana*, sometimes to *katakana* when writing in the *kanji kana majiri-bun* style (a mixture of *kanji* and *kana*), and punctuation: all of these elements varied considerably from author to author. Not to mention the problems relating to the language employed (spoken, written or “translated”), the syntax, and the *kanji* chosen. It would be some years before the first signs of a standardisation of these elements would become visible.

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## NOTES

1. See Christian Galan, « Le paysage scolaire à la veille de la Restauration de Meiji – écoles et manuels » (Japan's Educational Landscape on the Eve of the Meiji Restoration: Schools and Textbooks), *Ebisu – Études japonaises*, n° 17, spring-summer 1998, p. 5-48, and « L'enseignement de la lecture à la veille de la promulgation du *Gakusei* (1872) » (Reading Instruction on the Eve of the *Gakusei* Promulgation, 1872), *Ebisu – Études japonaises*, n° 18, autumn-winter 1998, p. 5-47.
2. From 1872 to 1885, in other words until a true cabinet system of government was adopted in which ministers were directly involved in organising affairs of state and public services, it is not really possible to use the term “Minister of Education” to describe the person at the head of the Monbushō. This body, translated here as “Department of Education”, was headed by a (mere) director or secretary general (a position which in fact was often vacant).
3. An Editorial Section (*henshūryō* 編集寮) was created in October 1871. However, the work of editing and publishing textbooks truly began with the establishment in October 1872 of a Textbook and Editing Office (*Kyōkasho hensei-gakari* 教科書編成掛) within the Department of Education itself. An Editing Bureau (*Henshūkyoku* 編輯局), set up at the Normal School, was also given the task of editing and distributing school textbooks.
4. In 1876 only one eighth of Japan's 52,000 primary school teachers had graduated from a normal school.
5. *Ōraimono* is a generic term for the books, other than the Chinese classics, used as elementary education textbooks prior to the Meiji era (see C. Galan, « Le paysage scolaire », *op. cit.*)
6. Japanese National Commission for Unesco, *Development of Modern Textbook System in Japan 1868-1961*, Tokyo, Ministry of Education of Japan, 1961, p. 14.
7. All of these textbooks were analysed in detail for my doctoral thesis (*L'Enseignement de la lecture au niveau élémentaire dans le système éducatif du Japon moderne depuis Meiji (1872-1992)* [Reading Instruction at Elementary School in the Modern Japanese Education System since the Meiji Era (1872-1992)]), supervised by Jean-Jacques Origas, Inalco, 1997). This thesis includes numerous illustrations taken from the textbooks cited in this paper (and others merely mentioned in passing), as well as their full bibliographic references and their authors' biographies. See also Christian Galan, *L'Enseignement de la lecture au Japon – Politique et éducation* (Reading Instruction in Japan - Politics and Education), Toulouse, PUM, 2001.
8. This term literally means “letter, missive, or correspondence”. As in the Edo period it continued to be used for some time as a synonym for composition (*sakubun* 作文). The choice of this term reflects the fact that in the traditional education system, and this continued to be true

at the beginning of the Meiji era, the first (and often only) texts that children were encouraged to write were letters of a personal, professional or official nature.

9. The textbooks on writing (*tenarai*) and composition (*shotoku*), subjects which were a fundamental part of the traditional education system, continued to present considerable similarities with Edo-period textbooks. They will not be analysed here since the reform of language instruction took place essentially through the other subjects.

10. *Kotoba* and *kaiwa* were both subdivided into three subjects: *yomikata* 讀方 (reading), *anshō/sorayomi* 暗誦 (recitation) and *kakitori* 書取 (dictation/copying); and *tokuhon* into two: *yomikata* (reading) and *rinkō* 輪講 (group reading-explanation).

11. With the exception of *anshō* and *kakitori*.

12. The readings given in *furigana* differed from the usual readings of the selected terms: *kotoba zukai no yomikata* for 会話読方 (*kaiwa yomikata*), *kanazukai* for 綴字 (*tsuzuriji*), *kotoba yomikata* for 単語読方 (*tango yomikata*), or even, more astonishingly, for in this case two different *kanji* could simply have been chosen, *tenarai* for 習字 (*shūji*).

13. Or *su yomi*, “reading aloud without comprehending”, “reading-deciphering”, literally “simple reading”. In the traditional teaching model it was considered the first step in the study of *kanbun*. See C. Galan, « L’enseignement de la lecture à la veille [...] », *op. cit.* and *L’Enseignement de la lecture au Japon, op. cit.*, p.44-46.

14. Only *tenarai*, *rinkō* and *shotoku* already existed in this context.

15. This epistemological problem of defining the content of the different subjects was resolved in the 1879 regulations by simply abandoning this terminology and returning to a more traditional reading/writing-composition dichotomy. In fact, this terminology had already been unofficially abandoned as early as in 1873 in training programmes at the Normal School.

16. The three *kana-zukai* textbooks indicated in the 1872 regulations – *Uhimanabi* うひまなび (First Lessons, 1868), by Yanagawa Harukage 柳河春蔭 (1832-1870), *Eiri chie no wa* 繪入知恵の環 (The Magic Rings – with Illustrations, 1870) and *Chie no itoguchi* ちえのいとぐち (The First Steps to Learning, 1871), both by Furukawa Masao 古川正雄 (1837-1877) – were published between 1868-1870, before the new subject was defined in the official directives. They will not be analysed here. See Christian Galan, « L’ébauche d’un nouvel enseignement de la langue écrite à la veille des réformes éducatives de 1872 » (The Beginnings of a New Way of Teaching the Written Language on the Eve of the 1872 Educational Reforms), *Ebisu – Etudes japonaises*, no. 22, autumn-winter 1999, p. 77-124.

17. The *iroha*, or *iroha uta* いろは歌 / 伊呂波歌, named after its three opening syllables (like our “ABC”) is the oldest method of ordering the Japanese syllabary characters. Mnemonic in character, it takes the form of a Buddhist-inspired poem from the late tenth century in which each syllable appears just once.

18. Each *kana*, depending on its own particular evolution since their creation in the eighth century, had several written forms derived from different Chinese characters or which had been simplified in a different way. The majority of these were labelled “*hentai-gana*” 変体仮名 (irregular *kana*) or “*itai-gana*” 異体仮名 (different *kana*) at the end of the nineteenth century when one single written form (for each *kana* character) was classified as normal and standard.

19. They had been studied previously in words in which they appeared in second position.

20. Two successive vowels, final nasals, contracted sounds, long vowels, repeated consonants.

21. The 1872-1873 regulations distinguished between three separate “subjects” relating to the teaching of “words” (*kotoba*): “reading of words” (*kotoba no yomikata* 単語讀方), “recitation of words” (*kotoba no sora yomi* 単語誦讀), and “dictation of words” (*kotoba no kakitori* 単語書取). “Reading of words” consisted in the teacher writing words on the board, reading them aloud and then having students read/recite them together after having explained their meaning. “Recitation of words” amounted to the children reciting one by one from memory words they had learnt the previous day (they could also be asked to write them on the board). As for

“dictation of words”, this involved the teacher calling out previously studied words and having students write them on their chalkboards. The teacher then wrote the words on the board and asked students to correct their work. These three “subjects”, which in reality formed one single discipline, corresponded to the three stages, in this case spread out over time, of a teaching method that consisted in having children learn words, recite them from memory and then write them in the form of dictations.

22. The 1872-1873 regulations introduced three “subjects” relating to “conversation”, or more literally, “word usage” (*kotobazukai* 會話): “reading of conversations” (*kotobazukai no yomikata* 會話讀方), “recitation of conversations” (*kotobazukai no sorayomi* 會話暗誦), and “dictation of conversations” (*kotobazukai no kakitori* 會話書取). Just as with “words” (*kotoba*), these subjects actually formed one single discipline aimed at having pupils memorise supposedly “conversational” sentences.

23. Cardinal and ordinal numbers, plus a series of numbers with the counter word for frequency.

24. *Language and the Modern State*, London and New York, Routledge, 1991, pp. 86-87.

25. Admittedly studies had been conducted, essentially from the 18th century onwards, on the subject of particles, verbal variations, word categories or vocabulary, notably within the field of poetry, but grammar such as it had developed in the West had never been fixed or, for this very reason, taught in a normative or formal manner.

26. Chart no. 3: fruit and vegetables; no. 4: utensils and crockery; no. 5: writing implements and everyday objects; no. 6: clothing and anatomy; no. 7: insects and plants; no. 8: birds, animals and fish.

27. Chart no. 1: gods, man and family; no. 2: school; no. 3: places and space; no. 4: stars and the climate; no. 5: food and hygiene; no. 6: clothing and shoes; no. 7: living places, tools and the home; no. 8: life; no. 9: moral lessons; no. 10: units of measurement.

28. The letter (A) did not appear on the first version. It was added at a later date when version (B) was published.

29. See Christian Galan, « Pestalozzi, Herbart et la pédagogie japonaise » (Pestalozzi, Herbart and Japanese Educational Methods), *Japon pluriel* 3, Arles, Philippe Picquier, 1999, p. 53-61.

30. Term chosen to translate “object lessons method”, a method developed in the United States, at the Oswego Normal School (New York State) in particular, and which was directly descended from Pestalozzian thought.

31. The compound word 読本 existed during the Edo period, probably with the sole reading *yomihon*, and referred to “reading books” as opposed to “picture books” (*ehon* 絵本).

32. Marcius Willson, *The Readers of the School and Family Series*, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1860 (alternative edition: *The First Reader, The Second Reader*, New York, 1863).

33. Numbers, directions, zodiac signs, the ten Heavenly Stems of the Chinese calendar, shapes, colours, angles, quantity, weight, measurements, currencies, heavenly bodies, units of time, geography, buildings, society, anatomy, fabrics, clothing, food, taste, objects (4), metals, vegetables (2), fruits, plants and trees (1), plants and trees (2), animals, birds, fish, and insects.

34. Or in any case an explanation of the word that was *intended* to be simple. The first word “house” (*ie*) was presented in the following manner: [drawing of a house, *kana i* い], “This is the generic word for the place where people live. It consists of pillars, joists, beams and rafters. On the roof there are also tiles, wooden planks or straw. The place where light enters is called a window. The place from which one can leave is called a door”.

35. Only the first three volumes were by Sakakibara, the remaining two were written by Naka Michitaka 那珂通高 (1828-1879) and Inagaki Chikai 稲垣千穎 (birth and death unknown).

36. Sakakibara was one of the most fervent supporters of historical *kana* orthography.

37. See Christian Galan, « Le nouveau paradigme éducatif du début de Meiji : analyse d’une liasse de copies de compositions d’écoliers des années 1876-1877 » (The New Educational Paradigm at

the Beginning of the Meiji Era: Analysis of a Bundle of Copies of School Children's Writing Compositions from 1876-1877), *Cahiers du GREJA*, n° 2-3, « Éducation au Japon : éléments d'histoire (XIX<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècles) » (Education in Japan: Historical Elements (19<sup>th</sup>-20th Centuries)), 2006, p. 21-47.

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## ABSTRACTS

The Education System Order (*Gakusei*) was promulgated in 1872 and remained in effect until 1879. This period is often referred to by specialists as the “translated textbooks period”. An analysis of language textbooks from that period shows that they reflected the ideological and philosophical views dominating the world of education at the beginning of the Meiji era. The major influence at that time was American and Pestalozzian. But the influence of Edo-period textbooks was still palpable in these so-called new publications. The *Gakusei* period was a unique moment in the history of Japanese education, a situation that would continue for another few years but would never again be repeated.

Le décret sur l'Éducation (*Gakusei*) fut promulgué en 1872 et resta en vigueur jusqu'en 1879. Cette période est souvent appelée par les spécialistes « période des manuels traduits ». L'analyse des manuels de langue de cette période montre qu'ils reflètent les conceptions idéologiques et philosophiques dominantes dans le monde de l'éducation. L'influence majeure est alors américaine et pestalozienne. Mais l'influence des manuels scolaires de l'époque d'Edo se fait encore sentir dans ces productions que l'on dit nouvelles. La période du décret sur l'Éducation fut un moment unique dans l'histoire de l'éducation au Japon, une situation qui se prolongera encore quelques années, mais qui ne se reproduira jamais plus.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** Japon moderne, système éducatif, *Gakusei*, manuels scolaires, langue nationale, Kokugo, école primaire, enseignement des kana, Pestalozzi Johann Heinrich (1746-1827), Tanaka Yoshikado (1841-1879), Sakakibara Yoshino (1832-1881)

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