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KAIBARA EKKEN (1630-1714)

By YOSOHACHI YOKOGAWA, Clark University

I. HIS LIFE. Kaibara Ekken was born at Fukuoka, Kyushu district, November 14, 1630, two years earlier than John Locke of England. His house was one of hereditary knighthood, himself a retainer to the feudal lord in Fukuoka. His two brothers were well educated, gentle Samurai, or knights, both admirers of literature. Like Locke, he was a quiet boy of weak constitution, while mentally he showed genuine keenness and love of study. From his fourteenth year, after five years of elementary education, Ekken studied classical Chinese with Sonsai, his big brother, who was the tutor to the successor of his feudal lord. With eagerness young Ekken studied many books, and mastered several sacred books of Buddhism. He carefully studied medicine as he was very anxious about his own weak body, just as Locke studied the same science under similar conditions. Ekken compiled an elaborate book of hygiene, "A collection of hygienic principles" (Isei shuyo), and at the advanced age of eighty-four he simplified it for children's use. This is called "Instructions on hygiene," the most popular and most valuable book on hygiene in the pre-Meiji age of Japan.

It was not unreasonable that his attainments in medical science should have been much more advanced than those of his contemporaries. He had wide and comprehensive knowledge and personal experience in several branches of medicine, especially hygiene, therapeutics and pharmacy; while physicians in his age were mostly ignorant men of the hereditary class of their profession. Once Sonsai, his brother and instructor, had a severe fever, and no treatment of his doctor was effective. As Sonsai was growing weaker, Ekken took his physician's place, and by his skillful treatment Sonsai soon began getting strength and recovered entirely in only ten days. One recalls the similar story of John Locke, that when the Earl of Shaftesbury, to whom he was physician, confidential adviser, and tutor, was sick, Locke successfully treated and cured him.

Ekken spent three years (1658-61) in Kyoto, a center of learning in his age, where the home schools of the greatest contemporary scholars, namely Kinoshita Junan, Matsunaga,

Sekigo, Yamasaki Ausai and others, were attracting students from the various parts of the country. He did not enter any schools in Kyoto because his learning was so advanced and he wished only to polish it through personal intercourse with these authorities and by attending their lectures. After three years' devotion to his own culture in Kyōto he returned to his feudal lord and served as tutor for forty-four years, receiving appreciation and respect from all around him.

In his long life, Ekken went up to Kyoto twenty-four times, twelve times to Edo, and traveled in almost all parts of Japan. Again like Locke, Ekken was a social scholar and had many friends among nobles and scholars.

In 1701 A. D., at the age of seventy-one, Ekken resigned from his long service of tutoring to three generations of his feudal lords, and died in 1714, ten years later than John Locke, having enjoyed the last fourteen years of his life in writing books. He left some poems, one of which, written at his last hour, was this:

From my childhood, I kept a sublime aspiration in my bosom;
I regret that I could not realize the early hope in my character and
undertaking.

What was my work in a career of eighty-five years?
Quiet pleasure in study was my own life.

Hatsuko Kaibara, the wife of Ekken, was a highly educated woman for her age, a skillful composer of couplets. Several times she accompanied her husband on his trips and aided him greatly in his books on geography and travels.

II. HIS WRITINGS. A complete list of his writings might be divided into six groups:

1. Selections. 7 editions.
2. Commentaries and translations. 7 editions.
3. Literary collections. 6 editions.
4. Original contributions and compilations. 6 editions.
5. Travels.
6. Popular textbooks on education. 26 editions.

Among these writings The Collection of Hygienic Principles in the first group; Encyclopedia of Botany in the second group; Meditation, and A Treatise on Doubt in the third group; Japanese Botany in the fourth group; and all the books in the fifth and sixth groups, were most powerful educational writings in Pre-Meiji Japan.

III. THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF STUDY. As the writer understands him, the fundamental principles of study shown by Ekken through his own life and writings may be

condensed under three heads: 1. Education should be a wide cultivation of the human mind and body; 2. All studies ought to have a teleological end; in other words, the ultimate aim of all studies should be the promotion of human welfare; 3. Doubt is the fountain of intellectual development. The first and second principles are the fundamental principles of all grades of education, and the third of higher education.

His time was during the most remarkable age of philosophy and literature in Japan. For instance, Hayashi Doshun (1583-1653) and his hereditary successors were the eminent Chue school scholars and were teaching from the standpoint of empiricism, as the tutors to Shoguns and the presidents and professors in the central government university were. In contrast with the Hayashi family in Edo, the capitol, Nakae Toju, a retired knight, established a home school in a rural district on the western shore of the Lake Biwa, in the vicinity of Kyoto.

Toju and his famous disciple Kumazawa Banzan of Okayama were the most eloquent lecturers of the Wan Yan Min school, of idealism or rationalism. From the disciples of Toju, many reformers and many politicians developed and played an important part in the revolution of 1867. Other great scholars contemporary with him had shown equally high attainment in their own lines, philosophy and literature; but none of them were as broad minded as Ekken and they made no contribution to the study of hygiene, geography, botany, or agriculture. The age of Ekken was by no means a period of broad education, and no school or home taught children after broadly planned curricula. Especially no one dreamed of a curriculum of elementary education or had a definite idea of the educational age of children, except that some rough plans appeared in the Chinese classics; so that Ekken's *Dojiken* (The instructions for children) was the epoch-making book in education of that century.

Ekken's pragmatic emphasis was on daily practical matters such as domestic affairs, hygiene, and agriculture. Contemporary scholars had for the most part exerted a very good moral influence, except a few who devoted too much attention to the arts and literature; none of them pointed out practical and minute suggestions as Ekken had done; Ekken says in his preface to a guide book of agriculture translated from the Chinese by his friend: "The principles of wise state administration are only two, instruction and feeding. In the order of necessity, feeding first, and instruction should come next to it; because sufficient clothing and food foster refinement. Therefore, kings of ancient times felt their responsibility to promote

industry and the material welfare of their people. I believe the first step in the promotion of the people's industry is the reformation of agriculture. So I wished to write a plain book on practical agriculture, but I did not have time enough to carry out that purpose, owing to my slow nature and want of energy."

Ekken claimed personal freedom of study in higher education and strongly emphasized the value of doubt. He says in his *Dai gi roku* (A treatise on doubt), "Doubt is a most valuable motive in study; if a student begins to doubt profoundly, he can make more progress in his work; even a little bit of doubt might be a motive to some progress; but there is no progress without doubt. Hence the human soul always needs doubt and must evolve it for the sake of its own advancement. Probably if a student does his intellectual work diligently and struggles for the realization of his ideal, he would necessarily have to doubt, so that one who has no doubt in his mind is a student who lacks sincere effort." Ekken's "A treatise on doubt" was written in his later life when he began to doubt the empiricism of the Chue school which he kept long after he had shaken off the introspective rationalism of Wan Yan Min that he enjoyed in his early life.

IV. HIS PEDAGOGY. John Locke did not deal with education in general, but only with the education of young gentlemen. Ekken, likewise, practically treated education for the young Samurai and for the young rich men, thinking the education of this class the most important part of the education of people in general. Ekken says: "All people of four castes (Samurai, farmer, workman and merchant) ought to teach their children etiquette and ethics; for these are the foundation of character building; and they should also teach mathematics; and the children of Samurai, besides this, should be taught archery, horse-riding, fencing, spear performance and Jujitsu." He says also: the first duty of parents to their children is to give them moral education from very early childhood. These words are contradicted by the custom of that age, when the people thought culture was necessary for Samurai, but men of lower castes might remain in ignorance, and no clear sense of duty was developed among parents for the next generation.

Accordingly, he is the first man who dealt with education in general, and as early as the 17th century advocated parental duty in education in Japan.

Ekken realized the importance of school education for two main reasons:

1. In the home children will become too familiar with the educator, easy going, and selfish.

2. The school will stimulate the children's spirit of emulation and the spirit of self-control.

Moral Education. According to Ekken, the teaching of etiquette and ethics is the foundation of character building. He was an enthusiastic follower of the Confucian moral principle. "The ancient proverb," he says, "is true. The impressions received early in childhood are like heredity, the habit becoming like nature." Hence a "good habit makes a man good, a bad habit makes a man bad. Habit has a strong power over man." Again in the "Instruction for Children," he says, "The education of a child must begin as early as possible, but against this statement, many ignorant people claim that if the education begins at so early an age, it will repress the child's activity, therefore it is better to leave the child's mind to unfold gradually, and when grown its wisdom will help it to adapt itself. To be sure these are the words of a foolish man and it is a great interference with education. Instruction must begin when a child begins to eat and to speak, before its mind becomes preoccupied with bad influence through sight and hearing."

Thus we can see that the formation of good habit is the central idea of the moral education in the pedagogy of Kaibara Ekken. Consequently he suggested providing good surroundings, saying. "The tutor must be chosen from among virtuous men; the friends must be selected.

Parallel to the above mentioned doctrine of habit formation, Ekken recognized the necessity of training. His argument on this point in his "Instruction for Children," "Meditation," and some other books might be divided into four points:

First. Parents ought to observe the orientation of desire in their children, and repress some bad tendencies, such as sexual indulgence, luxury and cowardice; repression of cowardice is most important for the children of Samurai.

Second. Ekken says a strict drill is very necessary in education. The great majority of parents and attendants of the children spoil them with short-sighted kindness and sympathy. "Flattering children produces unspeakable misfortune in their future."

Third. If you praise the goodness of your children, they will lose their virtue; if you praise their arts, they will lose their skill. The man who praises his son is the most ignorant of three fools.

Fourth. He thought in education the spirit of endurance and patience must be trained and a man is useless unless he has gone through painstaking training. For instance, in "The Instruction for Children" he says: "Children ought to be in service to their parents and guests, they must study several kinds of lessons. Waste of time is harmful for children. Clothing, food, implements, rooms and attendants might better be insufficient for an aristocratic house, because the men trained through painstaking care in their youth, easily endure hardship and can be strong, loyal servants to their lords, and sons of filial piety. For the same men there is no fear of indulgence in luxury; surely they can keep their home safely; and the same men might get rid of poverty or endure it when it was unavoidably by unfortunate accidents or on the battle field. Strict training is the best way of expressing love." Ekken in his educational writings used to say: "Be peaceful in mind but busy with hands." Accordingly he wished to occupy children's time with play, to furnish them a good time. For boys, kite-flying, toy-archery, and all kinds of ball games and tops; for girls, dolls and battledore-shuttlecock were recommended by him, and he disapproved of betting and expensive kinds of play.

Intellectual Education and Curriculum. Ekken wished to give wide and manifold education, putting reading in the center. Through it he taught ethics, politics, economy, history, and geography. In the primary grade he put writing in the center and by it he suggested the teaching of reading, something in history, and in geography. In the grammar grades his plan was to teach letter writing, commerce, and agriculture.

In "The Instruction for Children," and in "Meditation" he says: "Loving simplicity and hating complexity is human nature; therefore in primary education complex material and long sentences ought to be avoided, for these dull the interest of children. Unless it is memorized, knowledge is useless. In giving your lesson, always consider children's power of memory. Morality is the universal culture required of all people; but art relates to individual character.

Roughly, these are Ekken's principles of intellectual education: The four years from 6 to 9 represent the elementary grade; four years from 10 to 14, secondary; and five years, 15 to 20, the higher grade of education; in each of these years five subjects, writing, reading, etiquette, and ethics were taught, and various kinds of art commonly were given from the tenth year. As I have already pointed out, in these subjects writing and reading are the central subjects with which many studies are connected.

Hygiene. His hygienic ideas were the most highly developed of that time, though their value cannot be estimated from the scientific standpoint of the present age. But in his time—the seventeenth century—it must have been a wonderful doctrine in an isolated country of the far east.

Among his teachings were the following:

1. Thick clothing and heavy meals are very common unhygienic errors among aristocrats. For children some measure of cold and hunger is necessary. This is the wise method to protect the stomach and make their spirit strong.

2. Out-door work is very much encouraged during fine weather; for wind and sunshine make the blood pure and the skin healthy.

3. Before six years of age, children are better to go to bed early and get up late. Give them food in response to their appetite; etiquette should not be required of them.

4. Children must not be still; they should be encouraged to play.

5. Be pleasant in heart; worry is unhygienic; be diligent in body; too long rest is unhygienic.

6. Singing and dancing are recommended because these make mind and body supple and promote digestion.

7. A room is better to have light from the south; it should be neither dark nor too bright, because darkness shuts the spirit up, while too bright light wastes one's energy.

8. Harm from moisture is slow but serious. People must be careful about it, etc.

Education of Woman. Two articles were contributed by Kaibara Ekken to the education of woman: one is "How to Teach Woman;" the other, "The Greater Study of Woman." An unknown contemporary writer compiled a book on woman's education called "Imagawa's letter to Woman." In comparing these three, I have noted that, in general, they agree in their main points. Perhaps their doctrines represent the strong public opinion of that time and may be condensed into the following statements:

1. Woman's destiny is decidedly to be a wife and mother; consequently her entire life is for the home and for faithful service to her husband, her parents-in-law and her own children.

2. The most important virtues of woman are chastity and obedience.

3. Except to the members of her family she ought to be segregated from the other sex, so that, unless unavoidable

business forces her to be out, it is always better for her to stay at home.

4. Education in all kinds of refinement is required for woman; but she has no need of higher intellectual education.

5. Halberd and dagger performance and sometimes Jujitsu are encouraged for woman in the Samurai class, in order that she may protect herself and her beloved ones.

His influence on the education of woman was great. Ekken's "Onna dai gaku" (The woman's greater study) was used as the most important and most common textbook in woman's moral education. It was so powerful that whenever girls or women were admonished, some part of Onna dai gaku was generally quoted as the text of instruction.

Woman's three ways of obedience to men, namely: when she is young she ought to be obedient to her father; when she is married she ought to be obedient to her husband; and in her old age, to her son; and the seven causes of divorce, were thought by the people during more than two centuries to be laws of inviolable truth. This was so profoundly ingrained in the Japanese mind we can conceive a good deal of the teaching remaining in the subconsciousness of men and women in that country.

The Influence of Ekken on the Education of Japan. Through the whole Tokugawa epoch (1602-1867), the secondary and the higher education of Bushi or the knight, was carefully managed by the central and local government; but the education of the girls and boys of the three castes, farmers, workmen and merchants, was not entirely cared for by the government or public bodies, so that, naturally, this was left to the influence of the home and private schools, and the teaching of them fell into the hands of men of leisure, such as the priest, the inkyo (a retired person from the head of the house) and the ronin (a brave man or retired knight).

Ekken's influence on elementary education was great. His fundamental principles in elementary education were faithfully followed by all teachers of the elementary schools or terakoya (a cottage of a Buddhistic temple) teachers. Accordingly, if we glance at the practice of the terakoya education, a school of men of leisure, we can soon realize how the pedagogy of Ekken influenced it.

We can note the following heads:

1. The choice and arrangement of the teaching material. The forty-eight different syllabics in a poem were given in the first step of the writing lesson with reading; next, the figures, the directions, and the clan and the street names (village names

in the rural terakoya) in the Chinese ideographs; to them a brief history and geography of the children's native place and the country were connected; and then simple commercial, industrial and agricultural correspondence follows. These are the center of all necessary knowledge concerning business, industry, and agriculture.

2. The practical method of teaching. Ekken's careful procedure in teaching and writing was completely adopted by almost all elementary school teachers in tarakoya. Generally writing lessons are given to very young children, using a stick for a pen and a tray of sand or rice-bran.

The children must write, following a copy book written by an excellent master, with the stick in the sand tray. The size of each character at the first steps in writing is very large, being about five or six inches square; therefore the child uses for the most part the fundamental muscles connected with the shoulder, elbow and arm, accompanying the pronunciation or reading of the syllabics that he is writing. His posture must be straight except for a slight bend of the head. At the next stage, children are taught to make ink by the friction of a cake of indian-ink on the ink-stone, one part of which is filled with water; and with a brush he has to write on an old paper copy-book called the soshi. Oftentimes new white paper is given for test and encouragement.

3. The moral training. The cleanliness and good order of the teacher's seat and the children's desks, the sweeping and dusting of the class room, are the children's responsibility. Sometimes they must serve their teacher's private needs and go on errands. Generally, obedience and politeness were regarded as the most important virtues, and corporal punishment was practiced.

Why was his doctrine so powerful in Japan in the past and the present? Of course any one can point out that some part of his thought is unreasonable and impracticable in the present age, yet I think he saw the eternal truth of the necessity of hygiene in education, and of the spirit of manliness for the prevention of decadence; and he recognized the light of the sacred torch of genetic psychology at a time as early as the seventeenth century.