

Note

Individualism of Student and School Identity Based on the “School Color” : A Case Study of an Old-System Middle School in Nagano Prefecture

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to consider the conflict between the individuality of the students and the “school color” (*kōfū*), which consists of the collective identity of the school and the diversity of its members. While modern schools in Japan went through various conflicts, each school has simultaneously been required to perform congruently as a system. This paper focuses on the “school color” to clarify this structure, especially from the 1890s to the 1910s, by looking into an alumni association in a middle school of Matsumoto in Nagano Prefecture.

School color vaguely implies a suitable attitude for students attending a particular middle school. It, therefore, is not a wholesome representation of the school identity. However, from 1899, with the Amendment to the Middle School Order, the number of middle schools increased rapidly and so did occasions of sports events. This is one of the examples of when the students assumed the school color, to differentiate themselves from other schools.

The very spirits of students were closely associated with the performances of their school’s sports clubs, and students demonstrated their spirits through cheering at the events. While the diversity of the students was preserved, the students were, at the same time, indispensable members of the school, and their identity was represented through school color. Moreover, since their identity depended on school membership, the school color was constantly redefined by the students.

Key words and phrases

School Identity, School Color, School Spirit, Alumni Association, Middle School in Japan,
Extracurricular Activities

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Introduction

It seems that every school in Japan has had its own “*kōfū*”, but what is implied by the term “*kōfū*” is unclear. Therefore, I would like to consider the relationship between the term and the school identity.

First, I will briefly explain the background of this paper. The term “*kōfū*” has two meanings. On the one hand, the term is translated “school color”. A “school color” indicates a particular culture or character of a school. In other words, “school color” refers to the character of the school itself. On the other hand, the term “*kōfū*” is translated “school spirit”. A “school spirit” indicates the individual student’s approach to education and life. In other words, “school spirit” refers to the individual character of the students.

The modern school system in Japan started in 1872. At the start, the position of middle-schools in that system was not fixed. From 1886 to 1891, the number of middle schools was limited due to one-middle-school-one-prefecture principle, and middle-school students belonged to the middle to

upper class, in other words, national/local elite to-be (Yoneda, 1992). In addition, each school consisted of a variety of members and had various conflicts. While modern schools in Japan went through various conflicts, each school has simultaneously been required to establish itself as a system.

Why did middle schools need to establish themselves as a system? Many studies showed this tendency from a perspective of the school system building or personal aspects (Kinmonth, 1982). Tsutsumi (2021) discusses the relationship between individuals and a school community. However, the relationship has not been investigated very much. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to focus on the “*kōfū* (school color)” to clarify that relationship.

1) Historical context

The Boshin Rescript, which was promulgated on October 14, 1908, had a great influence on Japanese society and education, but it is unclear how school colors were influenced by that rescript. In my opinion, some of the points of the rescript, particularly simplicity and thrift in nationalism were similar to the contents of many school colors, and that rescript encouraged the students to insist on school colors.

The Taisho Democracy more strongly influenced middle schools. There were two aspects. The first one was that the number of middle schools had greatly increased. Due to the emergence of the new middle class, the enrollment request had been overheated and the number of middle schools increased almost 1.7 times and that of students 2.3 times from 1900 to 1920 (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 1972 and Saito, 1995). That provided middle school students with more chances to differentiate themselves from other school students (Tsutsumi, 2021). One of the reasons for that situation is that middle schools had double purposes. Middle schools aimed at higher core education and vocational education for males. The second one is that there were influences of social reform movements in that period. For example, a “Sports clubs popularization movement” was aroused in Suwa middle school in Nagano Prefecture (Tsutsumi, 2012). This movement aimed at stopping the selected-sports-player system in the school. This movement was based on people’s equality. Also, some similar criticisms appeared with regard to the baseball club in Matsumoto middle school, as will be mentioned later in this paper. In order to cope with this criticism, the relationship between sports clubs and the school color was strengthened.

2) The example’s characteristics

In the 1930s, as the influence of military rule increased, the Matsumoto middle school students resisted the principal at that time. The principals could not go against the government policy, and the principal of Matsumoto middle school did not agree with the students. However, the students felt pressure from outside the school, and finally, they adjusted to their interpretation of the school color and the term “self-ruling” in May 1941, when alumni associations of each school were reorganized into the patriotic association on a national scale. Before May 1941, alumni associations and sports clubs had not been officially organized in the Japanese school system, and the Ministry of Education had not controlled them directly. Therefore, an alumni association was under the control of each principal, and he had power over the alumni association (Tsutsumi, 2015b). In the postwar years, I assume that they tried to recreate the school color, but I have not studied it in detail yet.

I would like to analyze the alumni magazine “*KŌYŪ*” [*The Alumni*] published by an alumni association in a middle school of Matsumoto from November 1895 to March 1898, and from September

1900 to March 1948. This was a semi-official magazine, and therefore suitable to analyze to investigate a representation of a school color (Tsumumi, 2015a). A middle school of Matsumoto was established in 1886 as the only middle school in Nagano prefecture under the one-middle-school-one-prefecture principle. The first principal of this school had taken office from 1886 to 1914. After he died, the second principal took office from 1914 to 1917. (Matsumotofukashi Alumni Association, 1969).

There are two reasons why I focus on the Matsumoto example. The first reason is that the middle school in Nagano Prefecture was a rare case in the 1890s because it had three branch schools. Therefore, we can explain it in comparison to other branch schools in the process of forming school colors by differentiation.

The second reason is the geographical characteristic of Matsumoto City. Matsumoto City is located almost in the center of Japan and is a convenient place from which to travel to Tokyo, Kanazawa, and Nagoya, where the First, the Fourth, and the Eighth Higher School, were located. Matsumoto City has also had its own unique higher school, since 1919, and it is suitable to explore the networks of national/local elites established by higher schools.

Each of these reasons is weak on its own, but the cities which have this combination are rare. Therefore, the Matsumoto example is unique, but I can probably find something which we can apply to other cases from the Matsumoto model.

In this paper, I will refer to the appearance of the school color, from 1890s to 1910s through the Amendment to the Middle School Order briefly. Next, I will examine the utilization of the school color as a measure to control the school by the second principal in the 1910s. Finally, I will discuss transformation of the school color for the school identity.

1. Appearance of School Color

I will discuss the appearance of the school color in the 1890s-1910s, the period of the first principal. In the early part of this period, there were few references to the school color in the magazine. These are excerpts from some of them:

That our school color is not rousing has been caused by the trivial literature, nevertheless, there are many other reasons.

吾か校風の昂からざる、別に幾多の素因あるべしと雖も、小文学の流行亦其の一に居らざるならんか [No.8, April 1894]

Three or four years ago, how our school color was simple and rousing in wartime. ... One of the reasons that our school spirit is not rousing is that some silly students have less ambition, isn't it?

顧ふに三四年前、戦争当時の我が校風が、いかに質朴なりしか、いかに活発なりしか...我が長野県尋常中学校校風なるものが、振起せざる所以のものは、一に四百の校友、割合に期図小なる憫むべき人士多きを以てなるべきか [ibid]

In this situation, their school color was compared with the social atmosphere in the Sino-Japanese war, and they cared about popular culture outside the school, for example, novels. Before the Amendment to the Middle School Order in 1899, their school color was abstract and vague, and the school color was related to the wartime atmosphere.

Through the Amendment, the number of middle schools increased rapidly from 56 in 1886 to 281

in 1906. In the Old Order, there were no or few schools whose levels were the same in one prefecture, and chances of interschool sports events were rare. Therefore, the increasing number of middle schools offered many chances for students to interact with other school students through sports. The school colors had been connected to sports activities.

Our sports clubs put up a great performance last year. Our students are in high spirits, and some said that our school color was roused.

吾校昨（明治——引用者）三十五年の運動界は光榮ある記録を留めたり、健児意氣 旺溢、校風拳がれりと云ふ者あり [No.6 March 1903]

In accordance with the situation, middle school students tried to differentiate themselves from other schools by their school color related with their spirits.

His [the first principal's] baseball's masculine style, which differed from an ordinary baseball style in spirit, represents a specific character of Matsumoto Middle School and is related to a militaristic spirit which has been encouraged by him.

先生の野球は、一般の野球競技と其精神に於て異つて居つた勇らしい競技振りとは、松中の特色であつて、先生が奨励せられる尚武の氣風に一致して居る [No.48 November 1914]

In this quotation, “specific character” has a similar meaning to “school color”, because “baseball style” was related to the “character” and a spirit which the first principal encouraged in meaning.

In summary, when the expression, “school color” appeared, it was an abstract and vague term. However, after the Amendment to the Order, the increasing number of middle schools led to the increase in the frequency with which they interacted with other schools, and the school color has been associated with the sports club activities, especially baseball, which helped them differentiate themselves from other school students. In this period, the school color could be a symbol of Matsumoto Middle School.

2. School Color as a Measure to Control the School

Next, I will discuss the utilization of school color. The first principal died in 1914, and the second principal took office. The second principal's school administrative policy was quite different from the first. The first principal's policy was to entrust some activities to the students and try to control the school by his direct conversation with them. He encouraged the extra-curricular activities in Matsumoto middle school such as the sports clubs and the student union centering on him. Therefore, the students respected the principal, and the school color was tied with the first principal's character. During the period, the school color was featured as “self-ruling” [自治 Jichi].

However, the second principal dominated the school. He intended to control it with strict rules. He merged the sports clubs and student union into an alumni association to control the students and he set himself up at the top of the organization. This alumni association consisted of all the school members, including teachers. The administration of this alumni association was managed by nominated teachers.

Moreover, he banned playing interschool baseball games. As I already pointed out, the first principal was respected by the students and he loved baseball. Accordingly, the second, who banned baseball games, provoked the students' antipathy. Finally, the second principal was purged from the school in 1917.

The most important point in this progression is that the principal established the alumni association to exploit the school spirit to manage the school.

Rules of the Alumni Association in Matsumoto Middle School

Chapter 1 Purpose

Article 1 This association aims to support the intention of this school by making all students enhance the noble school spirit with unanimous cooperation, and gain mature self-ruled behavior without showing dissent.

松本中学校々友会規則

第一章 目的

第一条 本会ハ全校生徒ヲシテ協同一致ノ美風ヲ発揚シ自治的行動ニ慣熟セシメ本校教育ノ主旨ヲ翼賛スルヲ以テ目的トス [No.50 vol.1 February 1915]

The first principal was respected by his students due to his administrative policy which featured “self-ruling”, but the second was not. However, the second intended to dominate the school by using the term “self-ruling”. His intention did not go well, but by organizing the alumni association and making its rules, the school spirit has been linked to all students individually by their behavior (Tsumi, 2021, p.5).

3. Transformation of the School Color

After the second principal was purged from the school, the students were conscious of their school color and individuality. Transformation of the school color took place in the sports activities.

We dare to create a new school color! From this point of view, I keenly insist that the baseball club should not occupy an important position among our sports clubs. ... I will put more emphasis on individual sports such as the shot put or the discus throw, etc. rather than team ones such as baseball, as a means to create a new school color.

吾人進みて新校風を開拓すべき哉。／即是の見地に立ちて、吾人は痛切に野球部の尚松中運動部の要地を占むるに反対す。…時代は既に野球の如き団体的なるを過ぎて砲丸、円盤等の個人的のものに進みつゝある [No. 57 December 1917]

The students began to especially identify themselves with relation to their school color through cheering activities for the baseball club. Their participation in interschool baseball games was permitted in 1918.

Where does this beautiful school color come from? I dare to say that it has come from the good relationship between teachers and students, establishment of self-ruled organizations and prosperity of baseball... In other words, the good use of the self-ruled organizations, and restoration of baseball. / They are both the very essence of our Matsumoto middle school. They color the history of our school and ought not to be separated. They have gradually become an essence of our school color since the first principal had made every effort and encouraged them with his great wisdom.

此の美しき校風の由つて来る源は何処にありや。余は是を以て師弟間の理解円満、自治制の確立、野球の隆盛に帰するに躊躇せざる者也...自治団体の善用、曰く野球の復活。／此の二者は誠に松中の粹。松中の華。松中の歴史を彩つて離るべからざるもの也。小林先生の

卓識を以て大いに奨励尽力せられてより漸く進歩して松中の精神の根源とはなりぬ [No.59
October 1918]

The school color became a representation of the school identity with the history and baseball. Hence, all of the students were required to adjust their behaviors in accordance with the school color and the way to embody the school spirit inside themselves was the cheering activities.

There is an assumption that the school color (or spirit) was there and recognized as “a new school spirit”. It is obvious that their discourse as a student was restricted by the school color and they could not deny the school color presence in public, rather they had to express their school identity by cheering. A notable example of the restriction is so-called “Protest of Hasegawa” (Tsutsumi, 2021, p.7-9). This case happened in 1929. Hasegawa, a student who was transferred from another middle school, refused to take part in the cheering activity. His insistence was that sports activities were for individuals, hence cheering activities were also for individuals, so he refused. As a result of his insistence, he was purged from the alumni association and changed to another school (Matsumotofukashi Alumni Association 1969).

Conclusion

I would like to conclude by making the following remarks. The school color, when it appeared, was abstract and vague. However, as the number of middle schools increased, it was gradually transformed to a symbol or a representation of the school.

For a person as a student, a school identity formed part of his whole identity. Thus, he belonged to the middle to upper class, so he was proud of being a middle school student. The increasing number of middle schools helped differentiate them from each other, thereby strengthening their identity as a student of the school. In this regard, students utilized school identities to satisfy their individual desires, and therefore school identities were needed by students.

Since a school identity was invisible, students tried hard to make it visible and definite by expressing the school color individually (Tsutsumi, 2021, p.9-10). An alumni association has had some strong alumni networks, which is exclusive even after graduation. Every alumna/alumnus was authorized to have and express the school spirit/identity by other alumni. A school color was a representation of a school as one system and its membership was based on the individualism of the students.

Finally, it is necessary to explore the topic of school identities with more samples and alumni networks after graduation, which were not examined in this paper.

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