Recognition of Manchukuo and the Japanese Children’s Mission: An Attempt to Establish Friendly Diplomacy between Japan and Manchukuo by Using Children of Elementary School Age

KORESAWA Hiroaki

Dispatched in return for the courtesy visit paid by the Manchukuo Girl’s Mission, the Japanese Children’s Mission went beyond mere private-sector international exchange and generated its own momentum as a public-private partnership event. Nevertheless, the organizers of this scheme did not intend to strengthen mutual understanding between Japan and Manchukuo or establish their friendship on an equal footing. They merely aimed for “peace and friendship” based on the vertical relationship in which Japan helped Manchukuo to transform from an underdeveloped to a modern nation.

The members of the Children’s Mission also shared the common understanding that the peace of East Asia and the world could be realized by Japan’s protecting and helping Manchukuo. When they visited the newly recognized country of Manchukuo, they fully understood their national mission to justify the control of the Japanese over Asia. The children-to-children friendly diplomacy between Japan and Manchukuo, such as the Manchukuo Girl’s Mission and the Japanese Children’s Mission, indicates the image of children as being “pure and innocent” that was established around 1930 was used nationwide by both the public and private sectors as means of cultural imperialism to manipulate public opinion and justify the invasion of Manchukuo.

Key words: Japanese Children’s Mission, friendly diplomacy between Japan and Manchukuo, children of elementary school age, national mission, the National Federation of Elementary School Teacher Associations