

【Summary】

The Promotion of Private Institutions to Universities in Meiji-Taisho Period:
The Modern History of Private Universities Revisited

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The purpose of this study is to examine the emergence of Japanese private universities from 1890s through 1910s with particular focus on the period prior to the promulgation of the University Order (*Daigakurei*) in 1918. This order officially admitted private universities for the first time in history, but some major private institutions and vocational schools, such as Keio and Waseda had started to call themselves universities before the order was enacted. In this period, lasted about 15 years, those private schools underwent some transformations, but there is an unsettled argument over how to evaluate those changes.

This is a period of self-designated private universities, or so-called “alleged university” period. Most researchers of Japanese educational history consider that this is a period of preparation only, a stage at which those schools changed their titles but no substantial transformation to establish “real” universities took place. However, close observation of this study reveals that the transformation of private schools were much more substantial than conventional preoccupations. In this period, private schools steadily reformed their organizations and facilities to meet the university standard. At the same time, private schools established their own educational missions, developed new curricula, and train their faculties to meet the diverse demand for quality education in the changing society.

To conclude, Japanese private universities in this transition period were not modeled after the Imperial Universities which were in turn based on German universities. They rather based their system on American colleges and adjusted later in order to meet their educational missions. Their visions and challenges to create private universities had set a new standard of what universities should be in Japan.