

Statement of Protest

The Permanent Board of Directors of the Association for Early Japanese Literature strongly objects to the government's action to reject the appointments of some of the members nominated to the Science Council of Japan. This action is an overt violation of the Science Council of Japan's status as a body legally guaranteed to be independent of political authority, and as such cannot possibly be condoned. As an academic research organization that operates in cooperation with the Science Council of Japan, the Association for Early Japanese Literature demands immediate retraction of this action.

Members of our Association are familiar with the precedent of Tsuda Sōkichi, and the government's suppression of his research on the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* in 1939. Tsuda's questioning of the historicity of Japan's legendary first emperor Jinmu ran afoul of the state's plan to celebrate the "Two Thousand Six Hundredth Anniversary of Jinmu's Foundation of our Country" the following year. In the postwar era, scholars from the Association for Early Japanese Literature, as well as scholars of Japanese history, have believed it indispensable for the development of proper research that an ordeal such as Tsuda suffered should never be repeated, and have made it an unwritten rule that they should spare no effort in cooperating to ensure it should never happen again. The government's recent action tramples on our convictions as researchers and is an outrage that seeks to undermine free and open scholarly inquiry. On this point too, the government's action cannot be condoned.

The rejection of these appointments has been discussed in well-noted scientific publications in the English-speaking world, which have reported that the Japanese government is threatening scientific freedom. Scientists not only in Japan, but around the world, regard the government's action as a senseless and extreme authoritarian measure.

As an academic organization concerned with linguistic expression, we also cannot overlook the fact that Prime Minister Suga has made no effort to explain why the appointment of these scholars was rejected and has instead added insult to injury by repeatedly offering empty and futile excuses. The attitude of the Prime Minister has been, in truth, to refuse to respond and to unilaterally shut down communication. The administration's performance of its farcical response is in fact more malicious than simply remaining silent.

Since the previous administration, the leaders of this country have been conducting an intolerable assault on the Japanese language. It should go without saying that the Japanese language is equipped with ample resources to engage in meaningful communication, yet the administration continues to degrade the Japanese language with its rampant propagation of dissimulating statements full of empty content. Such attempts to drain language of its power and significance are deeply concerning. We therefore ask that the government refrain from torturing the Japanese language any further.

Reiwa 2.10.12 (October 12, 2020)

Association for Early Japanese Literature Permanent Board of Directors