

Teaching World History in the Meiji Era in Japan
----- Examination of the “Bankokushi” Textbooks-----
明治期の日本における世界史教育：「万国史」教科書の検討から

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1. The “Trilaminar Structure” 三層構造

Japanese historical studies and history teaching has been divided into three spheres: European history, Asian history and Japanese history, which is called the “trilaminar structure.” In this structure, European history was looked upon as a target for the Japanese to learn from, Japanese history was viewed as a process of formation of the Japanese nation who learn from Europe to modernize itself, and Asia and its history was seen as a target which Japan would modernize and dominate. You will notice the Euro-centrism (and Japan-centrism) has been firmly built in this “trilaminar structure”.

This “trilaminar structure” has been criticized by Uehara Senroku (上原専禄), Eguchi Bokuro (江口朴郎) and others since early 1950s and lots of endeavors were made to correct this structure. One of the most important tackling of the problem was to overcome the “trilaminar structure” and Euro-centrism in the framework of world history¹.

It was those who were involved in the textbooks of world history for the high schools that were consciously tackled the problem, though the textbooks are under the “authorization system” of the Ministry of Education and Science so that the final forms of the textbooks are not satisfactory from the viewpoint of the authors. This raises the criticism from Asian countries.

Beside textbooks, lots of “series of world history” (世界史講座) have been compiled and published in Japan since the 1950s. So far more than 20 series have been published, 6 in the 1960s, 4 in the 1970s, 8 in the 1990s. In these series the intention to

¹ Uehara Senroku ed., *History of the World for the Japanese*, Iwanami Publishing House, 1960 (上原専禄編『日本国民の世界史』岩波書店、1960年).

overcome the “trilaminar structure” has been maintained.

But, unfortunately, with the exception of a few series, most of the “series of world history” are mere collection of articles on national or regional histories and they are not free of euro-centrism. It is true that the non-European area has got more pages and has been studied deeper, but the method of studying it has become even more European.

The present report aims to investigate the characteristics of the education of world history in the Meiji Era when the Japanese people began to formulate world history and to learn historical thinking. It was at the end of this period that the “trilaminar” structure was established.

2. The Changing Characteristics of “Bankokushi [万国史] ”

The way of understanding history by the Japanese in the first years of the Meiji Era was composed of

- 1) studies of Japanese classic literature and writings (Kokugaku 国学)
- 2) Chinese studies (支那学)
- 3) universal or world history (this was called “Bankokushi”, meaning the history of the all countries of the world)

The third one was introduced from Europe and the USA. Although information of the world affairs had been brought to Japan through the writings by missionaries staying in China even before the opening the country in 1853, the Japanese government after the Meiji Restoration (明治維新) of 1867 endeavored to introduce more information on the world history rapidly through the “Bankokushi”. This was the project that was led by the Ministry of Education².

Various textbooks were produced for the teacher’s schools and grammar schools that made use of European and American history textbooks. The “World History” or the “Universal History” books by Alexander Fraser Tytler, Samuel Griswold Goodrich (pseudonym Peter Parley), William Swinton, Edward A. Freeman and George P. Fisher

² Miyachi Masato, “Structure of historical recognition of the Japanese in the End of Edo and in the Meiji Era”, in *Series of Modern Thoughts in Japan*, 13, Iwanami Publishing House, 1991(宮地正人「幕末・明治期における歴史認識の構造」『日本近代思想体系 13 歴史認識』岩波書店、1991年) p.510-561 ; Matsumoto Michitaka, “Nurturing Foreign Recognition of the Nation in the Meiji Era: through the analysis of “Bankokushi” textbooks”, in Masutani Shigeki/ Ito Sadayoshi ed., *Borderless Culture and National Integration*, Tokyo University Press, 1998(松本通孝「明治期における国民の対外観の育成——「万国史」教科書の分析を通して」増谷英樹・伊藤定良編『越境する文化と国民統合』東京大学出版会、1998年)p.185-203.

were translated as textbooks in many versions under the guidance and censorship of the Ministry of Education.

A close examination of these “Bankokushi” textbooks shows a radical change of their contexts during the 30 years.

1) Early Meiji Era

The first “Bankokushi” that appeared after the Meiji Restoration was that of Nishimura Shigeki(西村茂樹) that appeared in 1869³. This was the translation of the textbook by Tytler. Although it was more or less Euro-centric, it still paid attention to the history of Asia and Africa amply in connection with the European history.

In the 1870s, such “Bankokushi” were introduced that described the histories of the whole countries and regions on the Earth evenly. For example, Parley’s *Bankokushi*(1876)⁴ dealt with every region on the Earth starting from Asia without any discrimination as if traveling by a balloon all over the world following the world atlas; it paid attention even to the history of peripheral regions like Oceania. The teacher’s school textbook *Bankokushi-ryaku* (1874) and Okamoto Kansuke’s *Bankokushi-ki* (1878) were of the same character⁵. Nishimura Shigeki’s *Kosei-Bankokushi-ryaku* (1873) was a revised edition of his earlier textbook, shifting a little to Euro-centrism, though it still kept eyes on Asia and Africa⁶. Tanaka Yoshikado’s *Bankokushi-ryaku* (1875)⁷ was the most Euro-centric in this period but Euro-centrism was not exclusive yet.

2) In the middle of the Meiji Era

³ Nishimura Shigeki, *Bankokushi-ryaku*, 1869(西村茂樹『万国史』1869年)。Original text is Alexander Fraser Tytler, *Elements of General History, Ancient and Modern*, new ed., 1866(1st ed 1801). Tytler, who was one of the leaders of the “Scotish orientalism”, paid attention to Asia as much as possible from the European point of view. Nishimura was in charge of textbooks in the Ministry of Education.

⁴ *Palei Bankokushi*, Ministry of Education, 1876 (『巴来万国史』文部省刊、1876年) Original text is Samuel Griswold Goodrich(Peter Parley), *Universal History on the Basis of Geography*, 1870.

⁵ Teacher’s School ed., *Bankokushi-ryaku*, Ministry of Education, 1874(師範学校編輯『万国史略』文部省刊、1874年); Okamoto Kansuke, *BankokuShiki*, 1878(岡本監輔『万国史記』1878年)。Writing in Chinese, Okamoto, who was a so-called Asianist, pays attention not only to Asia but also to peripheral Europe such as Poland to which he devoted one whole chapter.

⁶ Nishimura Shigeki, *Kosei-Bankokushi-ryaku*, 1873 (西村茂樹『校正万国史略』1873年)。

⁷ Tanaka Yoshikado, *Bankokushi-ryaku*, 1875 (田中義廉『万国史略』1875年)。

In the 1880s Euro-centric “Bankokushi” became influential with the introduction of textbooks by Swinton and Freeman. As was the case with Swinton’s *Bankokushi* (1883,1886)⁸ and Freeman’s *Bankokushi-yo* (1885,1888)⁹, the world history was composed of the histories of the European people (Aryan races) that led the progress of “civilization” of the world, supplementing it with histories of Asia if necessary. This approach was called “Civilization History” and became so influential. Tajiri Inajiro’s *Bankokushi-ryaku* (1884) and Amano Tameyuki’s *Bankoku-rekishi* (1887)¹⁰ belong to the textbooks of this approach. Although Parley’s *Bankokushi* was still translated and used in the 1880s, it lost its influence and Swinton’s Euro-centric textbook became dominant.

In connection with this, it should be noted that it was in 1885 that Fukuzawa Yukichi wrote his famous declaration of “de-Asianization (脱亜)” of Japan in the “Jijishinpou”. At the same time, it should also be noted that Tokai Sanshi’s *Kajin no Kiguu* (東海散士『佳人之奇遇』Fancy Meetings of the Beauties) (1885-91) insisted the solidarity of small or ruined people of the world in these years when Euro-centrism was becoming fashionable.

3) Late Meiji Era

In the 1890s, although the Swinton line of “Bankokushi” was still influential as was shown by Matora Yujiro and Ienaga Toyokichi’s, *Bankokushi-ko* (1893), Nagasawa Ichizo, *Shinpen-Bankokushi* (1893) and Kimura Takatarou, *Bankokushi* (1897)¹¹, there appeared a reaction against the Euro-centric “Bankokushi”, asking for the equal treatment of the history of “Mongolian” races in relation to “Aryan” history, or insisting the special characteristics of Japanese history. “Bankokushi” textbooks by Nakahara

⁸ William Swinton, *Outlines of the World History*, 1874 was translated by several people. The earliest ones are 西山義行訳『万国史直訳』(1883), 植田榮訳『須因頓氏万国史』(1886年).

⁹ Sekifuji Shigeo, *Freeman Bankokushi-yo*, 1885, 1888 (関藤成緒訳『弗氏万国史要』1885, 88年). Original text is Edward A. Freeman, *General Sketch of History*, 1874. Freeman was known as an Aryan racist.

¹⁰ Tajiri Inajiro, *Bankokushi-ryaku*, 1884(田尻稻次郎『万国史略』1884年); Amano Tameyuki, *Bankokurekishi*, 1887(天野為之『万国歴史』1887年).

¹¹ Matora Yujiro/ Ienaga Toyokichi, *Bankokushi-ko*, 1893 (元良勇次郎、家永豊吉『万国史綱』1893年); Nagasawa Ichizo, *Sinpen-Bankokurekishi*, 1893(長沢市蔵『新編万国歴史』1893年); Kimura Yotaro, *Bankokushi*, 1897(木村鷹太郎『万国史』1897年). Nagasawa’s textbook is based on George P. Fisher, *Outlines of Universal History*, 1885. Fisher studied historical method in Germany in early 1850s.

Sadakichi, Imai Tunero, Ohara Teima were the typical cases¹². This movement was the reflection of the rise of “Japanism” or “cult of national polity of Japan” that criticized the Euro-centric “Civilization History” in the 1890s, especially after Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95(日清戦争). But it should be remembered that this nationalist trend didn’t reverse the Euro-centric nature of the “Bankokushi”.

What was significant of the historical teaching in Japan in these years was that there appeared the concept of “Sekaishi” (世界史) instead of “Bankokushi” in the second half of the 1890s. Both mean “world history” or “universal history”. I have not found what was the exact difference between these two terms, though “Bankoku” (万国) sounds more cosmopolitan than “Sekai” (世界) .

This “Sekaishi” had two trends in the beginning. One composed world history mainly by European history adding something of Asian history as was the case with textbooks following Swinton, while the other tried to write the world history as an amalgam of European and Asian histories. The first example was Ametani Yotaro’s *Sekaishi-yo* (1899) that declared that the world history is nothing other than European history since people should first of all know well the affairs and the spirit of Europe. The second example was Sakamoto Kenichi’s *Sekaishi* (1903). Sakamoto criticized both “Sekaishi” and “Bankokushi” as being Euro-centric and Aryan-centric, and maintained that they should discuss both the histories of the East and the West. His book tried to describe the Western and Eastern histories in a good combination¹³. But Sakamoto’s method of writing world history was not succeeded by new followers; whereas, Ametani’s trend was followed as “European history”.

“Sekaishi” did not spread as widely as “Bankokushi”, because soon “Asian history” was established as a follower of Chinese studies and “European history” became independent of “Bankokushi”¹⁴. The “Civilization History” that was difficult for

¹² Nakahara Sadashichi, *Bankokurekisi*, 1892(中原貞七『万国歴史』1892年) dealt with Chinese and Japanese history in the first volume, while European and American history in the second volume. Imai Tsunero, *Bankokushi*, 1894(今井恒郎『万国史』1894年) insisted that the Japanese and Chinese civilization was not so backward, saying “those who occupied most important places in the history were Caucasians and Mongolians” and Chinese civilization was several thousands earlier than European one. Ohara Teima, *Bankoku-shoushi*, 1896(大原貞馬『万国小史』1896年) also placed Chinese civilization and Mongolian race on the equal position with white Caucasian race and their culture.

¹³ Ametani Yotaro, *Sekaishi-yo*, 1899(雨谷羊太郎『世界史要』1899年); Sakamoto Kenichi, *Sekaishi*, 1903(坂本健一『世界史』1903年).

¹⁴ For example, Kojima Kenkichiro, *Toyoshi-ko*, 1895(児島献吉郎『東洋史綱』1895年); Fujita Tohachi, *Toyoshi*, 1897(藤田豊八『東洋史』1897年); Shubunkan ed., *Shinsen Tokyoshi*, 1898(修文館編『新撰東洋史』1898年); Hara Yuroku, *Seiyoushi*,

“Japanism” or the “cult of national polity of Japan” to deny at all ought to be enclosed within the boundaries of “European history”, while history based on the “cult of national polity of Japan” left no room for Japanese history be situated as a part of Asian history¹⁵. Interest in “Bankokushi” or “Sekaishi” passed. And after the Russo-Japanese War (日露戦争), the European, Asian and Japanese histories were established into the “trilaminar structure”, where Euro-centrism (and Japan-centrism) was maintained.

3. Methods of “Bankokushi”

The Japanese historical learning through the introduction of “Bankokushi” since the Meiji Era was under a strong influence of European and American historiography in terms of the method of thinking about and constructing history. With the introduction of works by Parley, Swinton, Freeman and others, Western concepts such as people, race, nation, feudalism, liberty, democracy, civilization, period and others were brought into the historical terminology by translating them into Japanese. Of course, most of these terms were not used in the same meaning as we use them nowadays and it is necessary to follow the change of meaning, it cannot be denied that these terms provided Japan with conceptual frameworks for analyzing history. Here I should like to examine how they were introduced and contributed to establishing Euro-centrism in the Meiji Era.

1) Who were the actors in history?

In the “Bankokushi” textbooks of the 1870s, history was a story of events and the actors were, basically, states, monarchs and military men. In the translated book of Parley, 人民 was used for the terms mankind, inhabitants, people and nation irrespective their meaning. But this 人民 was not actors like monarchs but a term to refer to people in general. Some authors (or translators) used 人民、平民、民 (most of these terms were the translation of “people”) to refer to those actors that were in opposition to power. Translating Tytler’s book, Nishimura Shigeki, beside 人民, 平民, 民,

1896 (原勇六『西洋史』1896年); Ogawa Ginjiro, *Seiyoushi- yo*, 1989 (小川銀次郎『西洋史要』1898年); Shiratori Kurakichi, *Shinsen-Seiyoshi*, 1899 (白鳥庫吉『新撰西洋史』1899年).

¹⁵ Interesting questions remain here on the division between Japanese and Asian histories from the viewpoint of “Asianism”. “Nationalism” expounded by Kuga Katsunan 陸羯南 is said not to have been exclusive, which gives rise a question what was its significance to the universal or world history.

all meaning people, used 国民 as a translation for “nation”. 国民 was thought in these years in two ways. On the one hand it meant inhabitants within a state, while on the other it was a concept that meant people in opposition to the government as was shown by Fukuzawa Yukichi’s famous words “ there is no 国民 but government in Japan”¹⁶. Interestingly, trying to see the society from more diversified points of view, Okamoto Kansuke used 府民 probably meaning “citizen”, 国人 meaning “nation”, and 民族 meaning “nation” (this was used in the context of Polish history)¹⁷.

In 1880s, through the translation of Swinton’s textbook, relations between concepts of 人民(people), 国民(nation), 人種(race), 文明(civilization) were clearly defined. Swinton says, history in general is a story of the life of human being, but in a special meaning, is a story of famous people whose works constituted the history of “civilization”. People are divided into several races but not all these races constitute nations. The nation is “man in civilization” who constituted political societies stepping out of barbarism.

In 1890s, the concept of nation(国民) was developed. This was probably because since the end of 1880s, with the rise of 「国民主義」 (nationalism) expounded by Kuga Katsunan(陸羯南), nation(国民) came to be seen not only a mere inhabitants nor a mere civilized people but a group of people who had “independent and special characteristics against other nations”. Nagasawa Ichizou’s book based on Fisher’s textbook, dwelt upon 国民 (nation) more in detail than Swinton.

According to Nagasawa, history is concerned with the history after associations called nations were formed. But what is a nation? It is the group of people “who occupy a certain territory, accept the same political rule, and are bound together by a common ... such as a shared language, religion, customs.” It is interesting that he did not use the term 民族 in this sense of “nation”. Anyway, on the basis of the definition of nation, Nagasawa argued further. “What the Bankokushi should deal with is those nations that were related to the progress of society as a whole and contributed to the formation of the world that we see today.” Thus his argument reinforced the Euro-centrism¹⁸.

The concepts seen above, of course, should be examined in the linguistic

¹⁶ ” 福沢諭吉『文明論之概略』 *Bunmeiron no Gairyaku* 1875。

¹⁷ Let me add here that 民族 would not often be used in Meiji Era and 市民 would not appear in Meiji Era as a translation of “citizen”.

¹⁸ Nagasawa Ichizo wrote in the Preface to *Sinpen-Bankokurekishi*, following the lessons of Fisher, that history is indeed “a biography of human life” but is not a mere description of the past events. History has to “investigate the causes and results and the mutual relations of individual events, thus the relation of a ism that was dominant in a particular age to those isms that were influential in the ages before and after that.”

context of the time, it cannot be denied that through the “discovery” by the Japanese of these actors of the history which European historiography had already used, the Euro-centrism was built into the Japanese historical thinking.

2) How the motivation of history was conceived?

In the 1870s the keyword for explaining history was 自由 (liberty). Through the translation of Tytler’s textbook, Nishimura Shigeki introduced the concept of “liberty of the people”. Parley’s “Bankokushi” emphasized liberty much more strongly than Tytler. It seem that liberty was the most important common value in the 1870s, which was shown in the stress of freedom in the report of the governmental mission to America and Europe that was sent immediately after the Meiji Restoration¹⁹.

But in the 1880s, the concept of “civilization”(文明) appeared beside “liberty”(自由) and became the most dominant idea. Since Fukuzawa Yukichi’s *Western Affairs* 『西洋事情』 (1866), the Japanese interest toward European “civilization” had started. And in the 1880s “Bankokushi” came to be dominated by the “history of civilization(文明史)”. “Bankokushi” was described as the history of such nations as contributed to the development of “civilization”, the history of other nations or people being combined if necessary. This was what Swinton expounded²⁰. This “history of civilization” was widely accepted in the 1880s when the “Movement for freedom and democracy” (自由民権運動) was widespread, since the “history of civilization” showed democratic ideas, liberty, equality, human rights and the power of nation that were realized by French Revolution as the most important achievements in the development of “civilization”.

Although nationalist Kuga Katsunan and others tried to introduce the concept of “culture”(文化) to identify Japanese history in opposition to the Western influence²¹, the “history of civilization” remained influential even in 1890s. Motoyoshi and Ienaga declared in their *Bankokushi-ko* that world history is nothing but the history of world civilization²².

¹⁹ Kume Kunitake, *Kenoushiseitodann: Beioukairannjikki*, 1878 (『遣欧使節団・欧米回覧実記』 1878).

²⁰ According to Swinton, it was “Caucasian, or white race” who gave rise to nations with high civilization, civilization being the product of the brain of this race, while people of other races were “stagnant” with no contribution to progress. Thus every textbook of “Bankokushi” came to have chapters to describe the development of “civilization”.

²¹ Nishikawa Nagao, *How to Cross the Border*; Chikuma shobo, 1992 (西川長夫『国境の越え方』筑摩書房、1992年). Nishikawa Nagao doubts if detailed examination was done in translating civilization into 「文明」, while culture into 「文化」 in the Meiji Era.

²² They said, in their *Bankokushi-ko*, there were two ways of describing history. One

Thus Euro-centrism gained legitimacy through the concepts of “liberty”, “civilization” and “law”.

3) The problem of the periodization of history (時期区分)

In the 1870s there was no clear idea of how to divide history into periods. Almost all textbooks of “Bankokushi” were void of period thinking. Even Parley’s textbook had no periodization, only setting stages of development of mankind into “savage state”, “barbarous state”, “partly civilized” and “highest state of civilization”. Only Nishimura’s *Bankokushi-ryaku*, following Tytler, divided history into ancient times (上古)、medieval times (中古) and modern times (近世). The ancient times was up to the collapse of West Roman Empire and the modern times started from “Columbus” in the 15th century, the medieval times was between these times.

But in the 1880s, following Swinton’s and Freeman’s textbooks, all the textbooks of “Bankokushi” introduced clear periodization. It was almost the same with that of Tytler’s textbook. The fall of the Eastern Roman Empire, Maritime Discoveries, The Revival of Learning and Decline of Feudalism were the factors behind the opening of the modern history of the world.

This kind of periodization was carried on into the 1890s, though only one textbook written by Nagasawa Ichizo set the occupation of Constantinople by the Turks as the starting period of the modern times. The more important development was that Ametani Yotaro’s concept of the contemporary period after modern times that that begin with the French Revolution and Napoleon. This concept was quickly adopted by others.

Thus the period division of “Bankokushi” was established borrowing the European concepts such as Renaissance, Reformation, “Geographical Discoveries” and French Revolution and Napoleon. Interesting enough, Sakomoto Kenichi’s “World History” in the 1890s avoided European period division. It may have been difficult for him to adopt European standard, since he wanted to bring Asia into his world history as

was to describe precisely policies, achievements and wars of kings and knights, while the other new style aimed not only to describe events precisely but to add comment on them, argue the merits and demerits of them and find the causes and effects. The latter is called the style of the “history of civilization.” The essence of this style is to observe “law” in history. Things in society would not happen accidentally, but under certain “law”. It is the task of historians to find the relations of causes and effects taking into consideration of the major “law” of history. Matora Yujiro and Ienaga Toyokichi introduced modern historical method, saying there are two kinds of history. On the one hand, history is the phenomena themselves that happened in the past concerning the development and transformations of states, while on the other, history is the record of the phenomena.

much as possible.

This is how Euro-centrism was established in the Meiji Era in spite of some exceptions. And it was not prevented by the rising “Japanism” or nationalism in the 1890s. The Euro-centrism thus established through the textbooks of “Bankokushi” in the Meiji Era laid foundation to the historical sciences since then and is hard to overcome even nowadays.

4. Overcoming Trilaminar thinking in favor of World History

As we have seen above, the textbooks of “Bankokushi” in the Meiji Era drifted toward Euro-centrism by the political demand of the government giving up alternative choices, such as “Asianism²³”, without serious discussion at the academic level. When we want to overcome the Euro-centrism in our historical sciences today, it may be necessary to reevaluate those alternatives that were thrown away in the Meiji Era including those belonging to “Asianism” in the sense it aimed at equal cooperative relations among Asian nations.

For the moment I have in mind such works as *Bankokushi* by Parley, *Bankokushi-ki* by Okamoto Kansuke and *Kajin no Kigu* by Tokai Sanshi in the 1870s, *Bankoku-shoushi* by Ohara Teima in the 1880s as well as *World History* by Sakamoto Kenichi in the early 1900s. They were not Euro-centric but a combination of Eastern and Western histories. Although not all of them were truly “Asianism” in nature, they aimed at a comprehensive world history that did not exclude viewpoints to and from Asia.

And since Japan belong to Asia, this world history based on “Asianism” should lead to world history including Japanese, Asian and European histories that have been divided for about a century, although the another problem remains of how to integrate

²³ Has the Japanese historiography sufficiently faced the point of viewpoint to and from Asia that was proposed by Uehara and Eguchi? If we put forth such a question, we have to reconsider the argument by Takeuchi Yoshimi (竹内 好) who also emphasized the importance of Asia like Uehara and Eguchi but from a rather different viewpoint. Takeuchi paid attention to “Asianism” that appeared in the Meiji Era. To avoid misunderstanding, Takeuchi considered real “Asianism” only those that advocated equal cooperative relations among Asian nations (especially Koreans and Chinese), rejecting such hegemonic relations as the “Great East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere” (大東亜共栄圏). See. Takeuchi Yoshimi, “Asianism in Japan” in Maruyama Tetsushi and Suzuki Masahisa ed., Collection of Works of Yoshimi Takeuchi, II, Nihonkeizai Hyouronsha, 2006 (竹内好「日本におけるアジア主義」丸山哲史他編『竹内好著作集』2、日本経済評論社、2006年). It first appeared as “Commentary—Perspectives of Asianism” in *Survey of Modern Japanese Thoughts*, 9, Chikuma Shobo, 1963.

these histories into a world nistory.