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History Regimes in High School World History
Textbooks in Contemporary Japan

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1. Introduction

This paper aims to make clear the history regimes adopted by contemporary Japanese high school world history textbooks. The term “history regime” means a shared image of the narrative structure of time-space: a common mode of comprehension and explanation of a temporal structure articulating the past, present, and future, combined with a spatial one that articulates areas or regions. This regime consists of three components: a temporal structure, a spatial structure, and a concrete narrative style.¹

We address this topic in the following steps: in Section 2, we present the objects of analysis, i.e., two textbooks, and their historical and historiographical backgrounds. Then, in Sections 3 and 4 we comparatively analyze their temporal and spatial structures. Next, in Section 5 we elucidate their concrete narrative styles. Finally, in Section 6 we summarize our arguments by recapping the fundamental characteristics of the history regimes found in these two texts.

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2. Objects of Analysis: Two Editions, Two Generations, and Two Historiographical Trends

As our object of analysis, we took a textbook entitled *Sekai no Rekishi (World History)* published by Yamakawa Shuppansha (Tokyo, Japan), the leading publishing house for high school history textbooks in Japan, whose market share is always over 50 percent. *Sekai no Rekishi* was first published in 1973, with a second edition (renamed *Shin Sekai-Shi [World History New Edition]*) in 1982 and a third in 2014.²

¹ Use of the term “regime” here is inspired by François Hartog’s (2003) concept of a “regime of historicity.” According to the author, a regime of historicity is “the mode or configuration of categories which organize and verbalize the experiences or, more exactly speaking, that articulating three universal forms or categories of the past, the present, and the future,” which “varies according to the places, the ages, and societies.” (Hartog, 2003, Introduction).

² Certainly it would be better to analyze all textbooks in the field, but we decided that taking one textbook as an example would be sufficient, for after WWII Japan adopted the governmental check system for school textbooks (*kyokasho kentei seido*). Publishing houses, referring to the education guidelines (*gakushu shido yoryo*) issued by

We will compare the 1973 and 2014 editions of this textbook. The former was edited by Shibata Michio (b. 1926) and Kanda Nobuo (b. 1921), and eight other contributors born between 1923 and 1935. The latter was edited by Kishimoto Mio (b. 1952), Haneda Masashi (b. 1953), Kubo Fumiaki (b. 1956), Minamikawa Takashi (b. 1955), and three other contributors born between 1963 and 1967. As to why we made this choice, it was because these books were written by historians from different generations, influenced by different historiographical trends.

Among historians in postwar Japan, we can classify four generations: first, those who were born around the turn of the century and led historical research until 1960s in various stances (e.g., Marxist, progressivist, or positivist). Second, those who were born in the 1920s or early 1930s, heavily influenced by the first generation's stance on history. Third, those who were born in the 1940s, who took part in the student revolts of 1968 as activists, and encountered and absorbed the new emerging trends in historical theory and methodology. And fourth, those born after the 1950s, who familiarized themselves with new trends in historical research from the very onset of their professional careers. The 1973 edition of the chosen textbook was written by second-generation historians, and the 2014 edition by fourth-generation historians. This difference in generation has led to variations in historiographical position.

As is well known, historical research was dominated by modernism, that is, scientific-progressive-national/nationalistic trends, since the mid-19th century all over the world. However, around 1970, we can see the emergence of anti- or at least non-modernist historiography.³ We could call this phenomenon the post-modernist (in a very broad sense) turn, which involved: a renewal of social history (e.g., labor history from below in England, the *Annales* school of historical anthropology in France, the Bielefeld school of *sozialgeschichte* in Germany, etc.), the birth of gender history in the US, the introduction of Emmanuel Wallerstein's world system theory into historical analysis, and so on.⁴ This tendency toward post-modernist historiography was

the government, edit textbook drafts (written mainly by university historians) and send them to the Ministry of Education. Then ministry textbook examiners, trained as academic scholars but whose main task is to follow the education guidelines, check the draft and request modifications if necessary. In this situation, school textbooks are not so different from one another, for they all have to respect the guidelines in order to be accepted by the Ministry and be published.

³ In this paper we use the term "post-modernist" in a very broad and loose sense, and avoid using the term "post-modern" because it can have a narrow and particular meaning that does not fit our objects of analysis, i.e., the 2014 edition, its authors, and third- and fourth-generation Japanese historians.

⁴ Hartog says that there have been three regimes of historicity in Western historiography: pastism (*passéisme*), futurism, and presentism. The first, dominant until the 18th century, regards the past or history as a teacher. During the Renaissance, for example, ancient Greece was regarded as a model to be followed at the political, cultural, and social levels. The second, emerging at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries and becoming dominant with the scientification of historical research in the Rankean manner in European countries, regards the past as the precondition of the future. Historical materialist historians, for example, claimed themselves as scientific because

immediately introduced in Japan and resonated widely, especially among third-generation historians who were about to start their academic careers, and the coming fourth generation. What is more, the outputs of these new trends came into fashion in the 1980s under the name *shakaishi boom* (social history craze).⁵

The 1973 edition was written by modernist historians and the 2014 one by post-modernist historians. We have a textbook and its revised edition, which are products of different generations and stances. This is why we judged these two editions as worthy of comparison.

3. Temporal Structures: Toward De-linearization

In this section we analyze the temporal structures of the two editions, focusing mainly on periodization. The main questions are: What kind of periodization do they adopt? And how does it function in the structuralization of the whole text?

The 1973 edition consists of four main parts containing one to three titled chapters, with an introductory chapter concerning prehistory:

- Part 1: chap. 1 (ancient world)
- Part 2: chap. 2 (European world), chap. 3 (Islamic world), chap. 4 (East Asian world)
- Part 3: chap. 5 (formation of modern Europe), chap. 6 (development of modern European society), chap. 7 (changes in Asia)
- Part 4: chap. 8 (beginning of imperial age and WWI), chap. 9 (Versailles system and WWII), chap. 10 (contemporary world)

Judging from the chapter titles, we could say that part 1 treats the ancient age, part 2 the medieval age, part 3 the modern age, and part 4 the contemporary age.⁶ This means that this edition adopts a tetrameric periodization of world history.

At this point we would like to point out three characteristics of the 1973 edition.

they could predict the arrival of a socialist mode of production using their knowledge of the past and historical laws. The third, blossoming in the 1970s and 1980s with the diffusion of post-modernisms (in plural form) in a broad sense and the fall of the Berlin Wall, claims that the past changes according to our “here and now,” i.e., the present. This very typical post-modernist stance can be found in many contemporary historical texts.

⁵ As for the post-modernist shift in Japanese historiography, see, for example, Hasegawa (2015).

⁶ The chapters composing part 2 do not use the word “medieval,” but chap. 2 begins with a section entitled “Western Europe in the early medieval age,” chap. 3 starts with a column entitled “the medieval Orient and Islamic worlds,” and chap. 4 covers the 3rd to 18th centuries in Asia. What is more, part 3 begins with the phrase “From the medieval age to the modern one.”

Firstly, its authors claim in the preface that learning history in the high school class is not for finding lessons or predicting the future, but for instilling in students a historical way of thinking. This edition thus does not refer to the future, considering itself as objective.

Secondly, the four parts are not just arranged chronologically; the authors say in the preface that they are logically connected in a linear way: the contemporary world is an entity (part 4) created in line with the development of West European modernity (part 3). However, each region has retained its original character at the social and cultural levels (called *bunmei ken* or civilizational sphere), set in place before European expansion (part 2) and based on the historical preconditions found in each region (part 1). We could and should find here a linear temporal structure constructed by the authors.

Thirdly, part 3 begins with *Dai-Kokai Jidai* (Age of Navigation).⁷ The modern age began around the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries. This means that the authors of the 1973 edition adopt, as criteria of modernity, the European (Western) values and ideologies that emerged in these days, such as Renaissance humanism, state-consciousness (post-Westphalian system), and, to some degree, Christianity (from the Reformation). According to the authors, these values and ideologies were exported to the rest of the world by European countries: this is nothing less than a modernization process that created the contemporary world.

As for the 2014 edition, it consists of five main parts, each containing four or five chapters, with an introductory chapter concerning prehistory:

- Part 1, entitled “ancient age”: chap. 1 (the Orient and Ancient Greece), chap. 2 (Ancient Rome and West Asia), chap. 3 (South Asia, South-eastern Asia, and Oceania), chap. 4 (East and Central Asia), chap. 5 (Africa, North America, and South America).
- Part 2, entitled “medieval age”: chap. 6 (trends in East and Central Asia), chap. 7 (trends in West Asia), chap. 8 (trends in South and South-eastern Asia), chap. 9 (the formation of Europe);
- Part 3, entitled “early-modern age”: chap. 10 (Age of Exchange and Commerce), chap. 11 (trends in East and South-eastern Asia), chap. 12 (trends in West and South Asia), chap. 13 (the growth of Europe);
- Part 4, entitled “modern age”: chap. 14 (Europe and America in the Age of Revolution), chap. 15 (Europe in the Age of Nationalism), chap. 16 (state-formation by settlement and migration), chap. 17 (turmoil in Asia);⁸ and
- Part 5, entitled “contemporary age”: chap. 18 (imperialism and the world), chap. 19 (world wars), chap. 20 (the Cold War and the independence of the third world), chap. 21 (today’s world).

⁷ *Dai-Kokai Jidai* (Age of Navigation) is the same meaning of the “Age of Discovery” common in English-speaking academia. Japanese historians have avoided using the latter term, because it seems Euro-centric.

⁸ Chapter 16 deals with North and South America, Australia, and New Zealand.

Contrary to the 1973 edition, this version adopts a five-division periodization of world history, introducing the concept of the early-modern period.

Here we would like to point out three characteristics of the 2014 edition, and compare it with the 1973 one.

Firstly, its authors claim in the general preface that we learn history in the high school classroom in order to acquire the capability to understand the present, as is the case with the 1973 edition.

Secondly, it is constructed as a non-linear historical narrative: each period (ancient, medieval, early-modern, and modern) is directly connected to the contemporary age, and we are told how it informed the development of today's world. The temporal structure adopted by the authors is clearly shown in the prefaces to each part:

- The ancient age gives us classical philosophy, a model of political unity (the Roman Empire), etc.;
- The medieval age is characterized by the growth of world religions, which still exercise centripetal power in all regions today;
- The early-modern age is depicted as the starting point of contemporary globalization; and
- The modern age is dominated by the ideology of progress, which still captivates most of us today.

Thirdly, it adopts the concept of the “early-modern age.” The 1973 edition’s modern age is divided into early-modern and modern ages. This leads us to the questions: What distinguishes the two ages in this textbook? And what are the authors’ criteria of modernity?

In the preface to part 3, the authors give us an answer, saying that:

- The modern age in the broad sense began around the 16th century;
- However, we find many important events at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, such as the Industrial Revolution in England, American Independence, and the French Revolution;
- These events had a huge impact on our everyday lives by creating new technology, nation-states, democracies, etc.;
- We should thus distinguish the early-modern and late-modern (“modern” in this textbook) ages in order to properly understand world history.

Taking into consideration the fact that they use the term “modern” to express “late-modern,” we are forced to say that the criteria of modernity in the 2014 edition are the values and ideologies created and diffused under the (late-) modern age, rather than those of the early-modern one.

Comparing the two editions at the temporal level, we find both similarities and differences. The former concerns the absence of the future, which they both avoid. This may be the result of the authors’ need to portray themselves as objective and neutral. The latter concerns the linearity of

temporal structure. The 1973 edition adopts a temporally linear structure of history where ages are connected in a line. The 2014 text, on the contrary, adopts a temporal structure where past eras are directly connected to the present in a non-linear structure. We find here a tendency toward the de-linearization of history regimes.

4. Spatial Structures: Toward De-Western-modernization

In this section, we analyze the spatial structure of the two editions, focusing principally on the relation between East and West. The main question is: What share of the books do the descriptions on East and West have?

Of course, dividing East and West is always an arbitrary and artificial act. In Japan, however, Western and Eastern historical studies have been clearly divided in academia at the institutional and practical levels since scientific and academic historical research began after the Meiji Restoration (1868).⁹ Thus, in the Japanese context, West and East are clearly distinguished from each other. The former means Europe, plus North America after US independence. The latter means the rest of the world, i.e., Asia, Africa, and so on.¹⁰

The 1973 edition allocates 312 pages to its four parts. Of them, 133 (43 percent) are allocated to the East and 179 (57 percent) to the West.

Periodically speaking:

- In part 1 on the ancient age, 33 pages on the East and 16 on the West;
- In part 2 on the medieval age, 52 pages on the East and 28 on the West;
- In part 3 on the modern age, 24 pages on the East and 80 on the West; and
- In part 4 on the contemporary age, 24 pages on the East and 55 on the West.

We found the following two characteristics of the 1973 version here.

Firstly, heavy emphasis is given to the modern age in the West (80 pages, that is to say, almost 25 percent of the text). The Renaissance, Age of Navigation, Reformation, emergence of the Westphalian sovereign-state system, Industrial Revolution, American Independence, French

⁹ Japanese historical academia has thus been divided into three fields: Japanese history, Western history, and Eastern history. As for the reason for and history of this tripartite system, see, for example, Lim (2012) and Wang (2012).

¹⁰ This does not mean that there has been no debate over the arbitrariness of the East-West divide in Japanese historiography. “Is Russia part of the West?” and “How about South American history?” are examples of questions that have been raised. At the institutional level, however, Eastern and Western history are still clearly distinguished today. Almost all history departments at Japanese universities are divided into Japanese history, Eastern history, and Western history sections.

Revolution, birth of nationalism/nation-states, etc., are regarded as the main line of world history that created the foundation of today's world. We could say that the 1973 edition is "Western-modernized." An example of this point is the explanation of the French revolution. In the 10 pages given over to this topic, we find a very detailed description of the course of events, containing the names of Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette, Lafayette, Mirabeau, Barnave, Robespierre, Danton, Babeuf, Napoléon, and even Joséphine, Napoléon's first wife.

Secondly, the East, which looms large in the ancient (67 percent) and medieval (65 percent) parts, diminishes suddenly after the arrival of the modern age: 23 percent of the modern age and 30 percent of the contemporary one. The Islamic and East Asian worlds, narrated and depicted in detail in part 2, are reduced in parts 3 and 4 to a kind of appendix, or to no more than a target and playfield of the Western powers. In brief, the 1973 edition says that the East changed from an active historical actor to a passive one around the 15th and 16th centuries.

Turning now to the 2014 edition, it allocates 374 pages to 5 parts. Of them, five pages are used for explaining the Age of Navigation from a global (i.e., non-Western/Eastern) perspective and five pages for today's globalization. As for the remaining 364 pages, 161 (44 percent) are allocated to the East and 203 (56 percent) to the West.

Periodically speaking:

- In part 1 on the ancient age, 32 pages on the East and 25 on the West;
- In part 2 on the medieval age, 40 pages on the East and 36 on the West;
- In part 3 on the early-modern age, 27 pages on the East and 40 on the West;
- In part 4 on the modern age, 20 pages on the East and 46 on the West; and
- In part 5 on the contemporary age, 42 pages on the East and 56 on the West.

We identified some impressive characteristics of the 2014 edition, and will now explain two.

Firstly, we find the emergence of a truly global perspective. The Age of Navigation is explained, not as a process of discovery and conquest of East by West, but principally as a phenomenon where East and West came into contact, deepened trade and cultural transfer, and influenced each other as equal actors. Contemporary globalization is covered from a global point of view—needless to say, there is no other way to depict this trend.

Secondly, in all parts, East and West are treated almost evenly, when we compare these figures with the 1973 edition where the East's share falls off sharply in the modern and contemporary ages. While it is true that part 4 of the 2014 edition allocates many more pages to the West, both are treated rather more evenly than in the 1973 edition. As for the pages assigned to the French Revolution, it mentions only five names: Louis XVI, Turgot, Necker, Robespierre, and Napoléon.

Comparing the two editions at the spatial level, we detected a tendency toward de-Western-modernization. The 1973 edition adopts a spatial structure that stresses the modern age in the West, claiming that the importance of the East decreased from the ancient and medieval ages

to the modern and contemporary ones. The 2014 edition, on the contrary, adopts a spatial structure where East and West are treated rather equally throughout the text.

5. Concrete Narrative Styles: Always a Chain from Cause to Result

In this section we will analyze the characteristics of the concrete narrative styles adopted by the two editions to see whether they differ. We take, as the object of analysis, the accounts of American Independence. The 1973 edition narrates this event as follows:

After the Seven Years' war, the British home government tightened its mercantilist policy toward the colonies in order to avoid a budget crush, which could occur through war and colony protection expenditures. The North American colonies, united by the battles against the French army, judged this new stance as violating their autonomy. The Stamps Act of 1765, especially, caused a protest at the constitutional level around the principle of "No taxation without representation." ...In 1774, representatives of the colonies gathered in the Continental Congress, and the next year an armed clash occurred between the colonies and the home government. (p. 200)

Here historical events are connected to one another in a linear causal chain. In this chain, the cause (past) precedes the result (present or near-past) in the text.

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Now let us proceed to the explanation of the same event in the 2014 edition:

After the end of the Seven Years' war in 1763, the British home government, seeing its financial situation worsen because of war expenditure, shifted its colonial policy to a positive interventionist one in order to increase national revenues through international trade control and tax hikes. The North American colonies, regarding this policy change as an attack and violation of their autonomy, criticized it and showed their discontent with the home government. Colonial assemblies, standing against tax hikes, made public a protest note on the basis of the principle of "No taxation without representation." ...In 1774, 12 colonies (Georgia abstained) gathered in the First Continental Congress, protesting as a unified body against the home government. When the home government's army and Massachusetts state militia entered into armed conflict at Lexington and Concord the following year, the colonies moved toward winning independence by force. (pp. 255-6)

Here, too, historical events are connected to one another in a linear causal chain where the cause (past) precedes the result (present or near-past). Comparing the two accounts of American Independence, we could say that the two books adopt almost the same concrete narrative style.

This might sound a little strange, for, as was said in the preceding two sections, the two editions adopted different temporal and spatial structures. Surely temporal and spatial structures and concrete narrative styles are located at different levels, but there must be some affinities or relations

between the two because they all compose the history regime. We thus have to pose the question: Why do they use the same narrative style?

Here we would like to introduce an argument by Watanabe Masako (2004), a specialist in cognitive psychology and comparative education. Watanabe compared elementary-school-level history education in Japan and the US, and found some remarkable differences. In Japan, history education is constructed according to the causal chain from cause (past) to result (present or near-past). In the class, teachers usually pose the questions “Then?” or “How?” regarding the result. In the US, teaching history according to the causal chain remains the guiding principle of education, but the direction is opposite: the causal chain must be traced from the result (present or near-past) to the cause (past). In the class, teachers usually pose the question “Why?” regarding the cause. According to Watanabe, the causal chain is chronological in Japan, but regressive in the US.

We could, based on this, infer that the two editions adopt the same narrative style, with a chronological causal chain, because it fits the Japanese education style and, possibly, comprehension of history. Temporal and spatial structures can be modified rather easily because they are abstract, but a narrative is hard to modify because it is concrete and thus tightly connected to our way of thinking, or “structure of conviction” to use Watanabe’s terminology.

Is the narrative style found in the two editions (i.e., that tracing the causal chain chronologically) inherent to Japanese culture? The answer may be “No,” for the narrative style may be a historical and artificial construct in itself. So then, how has it been constructed in Japan (and, of course, in other countries)? And why has each narrative style been adopted in such and such country? These important questions await answers.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, we will now summarize and compare the characteristics of the history regimes found in the two textbook editions.

The 1973 edition contains a history regime composed of three elements: a temporally linear structure; a spatial structure characterized by the importance of the modern Western age and the chronologically diminishing importance of the East; and a concrete narrative style featuring a causal chain from cause to result.

The 2014 edition also features a history regime composed of three elements: a temporally non-linear structure where the past is directly connected to the present; a spatial structure where East and West are fairly equally treated in every age; and, like the 1973 edition, a concrete narrative style with a causal chain from cause to result.

The two editions’ different temporal and spatial structures are surely due to the generation gap among authors. The 1973 edition was written by authors who shared a belief in the linearity of time

and history, and in the importance of the Western modern age (and contemporary one, to some extent). This is typical of the modernist (i.e., scientific-progressive-national/nationalistic) historians preponderant from the mid-19th century to the 1960s. The 2014 edition was written by people who, after absorbing the new trends in history and surrounding disciplines starting with cultural anthropology (Claude Lévy-Strauss), philosophy (Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, etc.), or linguistics (Ferdinand de Saussure), came to doubt the linearity of time and history; take for granted the importance of the modern and contemporary East and globalization; and be sufficiently self-reflexive to find themselves still caught up in Occidentalism, Westernization, and modernity, which need to be overcome.

On the contrary, the books share a concrete narrative style (i.e., a chronological causal chain), perhaps because it fits well with the structure of conviction in the contemporary Japanese education system (and perhaps in contemporary Japanese society, too).

After comparing these two editions of a world history textbook, we found that historiographical trends can be reflected rather easily at the level of temporal and spatial structures in general, but that a concrete narrative style is hard to change. As for the history regime in general, we can say that it is changing in the sphere of Japanese textbooks, albeit slowly.

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