

World/Global History from a Japanese Perspective

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For this presentation at the first conference of the Asian Association of World Historians I chose the title of “World/Global History from a Japanese Perspective”. Before entering the main part of my paper it may be necessary to add some footnotes to this title.

First of all there is the question of the definition of world history and global history. Are these two concepts interchangeable, or are there any meaningful differences between them? Opinions on this will certainly differ. I myself take the view that these two concepts are more or less interchangeable. Hence the title of my paper. But many people will argue that global history is not the same as or similar to world history that has been studied in the past. This problem will be discussed in the course of this whole conference.

The next part of my title that should be explained is “a Japanese perspective”. One can ask whether it is appropriate to think and talk about world/global history on the basis of a perspective that is related to the unit of a nation state. Of course I am a Japanese, but one has always to ask what is meant by “Japanese” here. Surely an Okinawan perspective of world/global history may be very different from what is commonly regarded as a Japanese perspective.¹ We can also discuss such a problem in this conference.

After all what I am going to deal with under this title is very limited. Since it is beyond my capacity to talk comprehensively about Japanese historiography on world/global history, the emphasis will be put on the past attempts to grapple with

¹ In 2007 Shigakukai (The Historical Society of Japan), which is one of the biggest organizations of historians in Japan, had a symposium on “World History as Seen from Ryukyu (Okinawa)” and papers were read about such topics as the position of Okinawa in the oceanic history of East Asia and Okinawa’s relationship with China in the mid-19th century.

Eurocentrism. It is sometimes said that, whereas world history has been pervaded by Eurocentrism, global history is an attempt to overcome it. Thus this problem relates to the discussion about the similarity or difference between world history and global history, and this statement may contain some truth. But what should be stressed is that there have been constant attempts to overcome Eurocentrism in the debates on world history in Japan. Since nowadays the criticism of Eurocentrism tends to be regarded as rather commonplace, it is all the more significant and necessary to look back on what sort of attempts were made to counter it in the study of world history.

In doing so, I first discuss the works of three historians: Bokuro Eguchi (1911-1989), Yuzo Itagaki (1931-) and Masao Nishikawa (1933-2008). Eguchi constructed a dynamic framework for looking at the modern and contemporary world, particularly the world in the age of imperialism. Itagaki, who is a specialist of the history of the Islamic world, has been relentlessly criticizing Eurocentric view of world history. And Nishikawa insisted on the necessity of removing the barrier between the history of one's own nation (or one's country's history in Nishikawa's own expression) and world history. Then after introducing several attempts to overcome Eurocentrism in writing history textbooks, mention will be made about the relevance of British imperial history with which I have been engaged.

All three historians whose works I am going to deal with graduated from the University of Tokyo, and taught there for the most part of their academic career. So I am ready to take the blame for being too much Tokyo-centered or Tokyo University-centered. When Eguchi's work was treated in detail by Wolfgang Schwentker at a symposium on global history organized by Shigeru Akita a few years ago, Minoru Kawakita sharply commented: "Japanese history of historiography in World History may appear quite different way, if we see it from other corners of Japan than Tokyo, particularly from Kansai District, i.e., Osaka, Kyoto and so on."² It should also be pointed that these three historians were closely involved in the activities of Rekishigaku Kenkyukai (Rekken, The Historical Science Society of Japan), which is one of the leading historical

² Shigeru Akita, ed., Creating Global History from Asian Perspectives. Proceedings of Global History Workshop, 14th-16th December in Osaka, Osaka University, 2008, p.60.

societies in Japan. Eguchi served as its president for nearly a decade in the 1950s and Nishikawa acted as its president, too, in the early 1990s. I myself was its president from 2004 to 2007. Therefore my presentation may be regarded as Rekken-centered as well as Tokyo-centered.

In this sense my choice of three historians may seem to be rather arbitrary, but in my view these three historians raised very crucial and basic points about world history and their arguments are worth being introduced to historians gathering here.

Bokuro Eguchi and Imperialist World System

Bokuro Eguchi was a Marxist with very flexible mind and wrote extensively about world history.³ His works covered various fields in world history from theoretical and philosophical reflection about historical research through the study of nationalism and of peace to historical analysis of contemporary world affairs. But in my view his most important contribution to our understanding of modern world history was his argument about the world in the age of imperialism.

The key aspect in his approach to imperialism was his attempt to portray imperialism as a world system. In Japanese historiography of imperialism the dominant tendency was to discuss the characteristics of imperialism of each imperialist country on the basis of the degree of capitalist development. In this kind of Europe-centered framework, in which advanced European countries were used as yardsticks, Japanese imperialism was often characterized as “militaristic and feudalistic”, for it was thought that Japanese capitalism had not reached the stage from which full-fledged imperialism of European countries had developed. Eguchi repudiated such an approach arguing: “In dealing with imperialism now what is important is not so much grasping the characteristics or specific type of each imperialist country as looking at the actual shape of the imperialistic world as a whole and making its structure clear.”⁴

³ See Eguchi Bokuro chosakushu (Collected Works of Bokuro Eguchi), 5 vols., Aoki Shoten, 1974-75.

⁴ Eguchi, Teikokushugi to minzoku (Imperialism and Nations), Tokyo University Press, 1954, p.137.

In this imperialist world system various elements in the world came to be closely interconnected, and what was viewed as obsolete or “feudalistic” in the framework centered on individual country was given a new meaning in the whole system. And Japanese imperialism, which was regarded as based on old social and economic foundation in the Eurocentric approach, occupied a crucial position. Eguchi even maintained that imperialist world system could not have been formed without the activities of Japan in Asia.

In this way Eguchi’s treatment of Japanese imperialism was a significant departure from Eurocentrism, but he went further. He put emphasis on peoples’ movements in areas that were subdued in imperial world system and depicted the partition of the world in the age of imperialism as the result of reactions on the part of imperialist powers against those movements. In the words of Koji Inoue, a specialist of French history and a close friend of Eguchi, Eguchi tried to define imperialism from the standpoint of those nations that were victimized.⁵ Eguchi himself did not use the term of Eurocentrism, but such a view of world history in the age of imperial was nothing but a penetrating criticism of Eurocentrism.

It should be added that, though Eguchi was very active in promoting studies about Asia and Africa in Japan, his criticism of Eurocentrism never led to Asian-African centrism, which was a trap into which historians critical of Eurocentrism tended to fall. I share the opinion of Yuzo Itagaki, who pointed out that Eguchi aimed at universal perspective of world history free from any centrism.⁶

As for the relationship between Japanese history and world history, Eguchi always put emphasis on Japan’s role and position in the world, and, as the title of one of his books suggested, he stressed the importance of establishing active and positive identity of Japan in the world.⁷ The last book of Eguchi, for which I compiled footnotes

⁵ Koji Inoue, “Tsune ni seido suru rekishi ishiki” (Historical Consciousness Always on the Move), in: Bulletin attached to Vol.3 of Collected Works of Bokuro Eguchi.

⁶ Takashi Saito et al., eds., Shisaku suru rekishika Eguchi Bokuro (Bokuro Eguchi: A Historian Who Always Contemplated), Aoki Shoten, 1991, p.276.

⁷ Eguchi, Gendaishi no sentaku. Sekaishi ni okeru nihonjin no shutaisei kakuritsu no tameni (Choices in Contemporary History. Towards Establishing Positive Japanese Identity in World History), Aoki Shoten, 1984.

with a late friend of mine, was entitled Japan and the Current Stage of World History, and showed his never ending endeavour to interpret world history from a Japanese perspective.

Yuzo Itagaki and the Theory of “N-Area”

As a leading specialist of Islam and of the Middle East and as an indefatigable advocate of dynamic area studies, Yuzo Itagaki has continued to give stimulus to Japanese historians.

According to Itagaki, the Middle East is an ideal area from which world can be observed: “The Middle East is an extraordinarily strange area The problems in the Middle East are continuously globalized and the world is continuously implanted inside the Middle East.”⁸ And Itagaki stresses that the harbinger of modernity in world history was not Europe as is commonly supposed but Islam, which was nurtured in the Middle East. In his opinion the view of world history in which Europe is designated as the leader and the model of modernization was vain and self-aggrandizing conceit on the part of Europe. Itagaki’s criticism of Eurocentrism in world history along such a line has been trenchant and consistent. It was natural that he quickly noticed the importance of Edward Said’s Orientalism immediately after its publication and supervised its translation into Japanese.

On the basis of his research on Islam and the Middle East, Itagaki developed a theory of “n-area”, which attracted wide attention among Japanese historians. This theory was made public in 1973 but had been first conceived around 1968 when the activities of Palestinian people came to the fore of international politics. The letter “n” stands for an indefinite number and in this theory “n-area” designates an area in the modern world, especially in imperialist world system. Whereas in ordinary image of the world in the age of imperialism a given area, which has a fixed shape, dominates another given area, which has also a fixed shape, in this theory “n-area” has no fixed shape or can take any shape. And in this “n-area” one can find multi-faceted factors of

⁸ Itagaki, Rekishi no genzai to chiiki gaku (The Present Stage of History and Area Studies), Iwanami Shoten, 1992, p.vii.

imperialist world system such as domination, resistance, containment, etc. As such “a small village or a more tiny area (theoretically speaking, the smallest area is individual) can be “n-area”, while an extremely huge area such as humanity as a whole or the globe as a whole can also be “n-area”.⁹ As can be surmised from this quotation Itagaki’s concept of “n-area” is a tool for looking at the world or world history without sticking to ordinary categories like state, nation or class, etc.¹⁰

Itagaki’s approach to world history through the use of the concept of “n-area” inevitably strengthens his criticism of Eurocentrism or any other kind of centrism. He urges that it is necessary to have a critical eye that can discern the fallacy of every kind of centrism, either ethno-centrism or area-centrism, which presupposes the superiority of a given nation or area and relegates others to passive positions.¹¹

His criticism of Eurocentrism seems to have become more stringent in recent years. For example he made a speech titled “Euramerico-Centrism in its Death Bed”¹² Itagaki stressed that after 9.11 the process of the self-destruction of Eurocentrism, or in his expression Euramerico-centrism, was under way in parallel with wars against terrorism and that the defects and hypocritical nature of Eurocentrism was being increasingly felt by people in Europe and America themselves.

As for the relationship between Japanese history and world history, as can be easily guessed from what I have talked, his view of world history has no room for the history of Japan as a fixed area. He points out that the genuine communication between Japan and the Islamic world can start only when the Japanese people liberate themselves from the yoke of Eurocentrism and at the same time get rid of the notion of “homogeneous Japanese”.¹³ What is important is, for example, an Ainu’s or an

⁹ Ibid., p.27.

¹⁰ Cf. Yoshiko Kurita, “Itagaki Yuzo shi no chiiki ron wo megutte” (On Yuzo Itagaki’s Theory about Areas”, Rekishu Hyoron, 570, 1997.

¹¹ Itagaki, ed., Chiiki kara no sekaishi, Vol.21, Sekaishi no koso (World History Viewed from Areas, Vol.21, Perspectives about World History), Asahishimbunsha, 1993, p.5.

¹² Itagaki, “Hinshi no oubei chuushin shugi” (Euramerico-Centrism in its Death Bed), Kirisuto-kyo Bunka Kenkyusho Kenkyu Nenpo (Miyagi Gakuin Joshi Daigaku), 41, 2007.

¹³ Itagaki, Islam gonin. Shototsu kara taiwa e (Misunderstanding Islam. From Conflict to Conversation), Iwanami Shoten, 1993, p.243.

Okinawan's perception of the Palestinian problem. It can be said that in Itagaki's framework the relationship between Japanese history and world history can only be discussed by deconstructing our notion of Japan.

Masao Nishikawa and the Relationship between History of One's Own Nation and World History

In the case of Masao Nishikawa, who wrote many meticulous articles on the history of German and international socialism, especially on the Second International, the criticism of Eurocentrism in world history took on a somewhat more nuanced shape. He starts from recognizing that it is rather natural that discussion of world history tends to be Europe-centered in view of the fact that the concept of world history had its origin in the attempt of European people to define the position of "others" in the world employing their own standards.¹⁴ Eurocentrism, or Eurocentricism in Nishikawa's expression, should be criticized and discarded, but one should not try to replace it with a different centrism, and what is important is to place Europe in its proper place in world history.

Nishikawa maintained that it was one thing to criticize Eurocentrism and it was another to evaluate properly the contribution of modern Europe to world history. Especially the birth and development of the notion of human rights was the crucial factor which gave Europe a superior position in the world.¹⁵ Following this line of argument, Nishikawa asserted in the very last paragraph of his last book that socialism should be revitalized in today's world with the slogan "peace, human rights, and liberty".¹⁶

It should be noted that, though Nishikawa denied any sort of centrism, he also doubted the validity of the standpoint which regarded every culture as completely equal.

¹⁴ Masao Nishikawa, "Sekaishi to iu yokai wa imadani haikai shiteiru" (A Ghost Called World History Is Still Wandering About), Rekishi kyoiku sinpojum kiroku shu (Records of Symposia on History Education), Nihon Rekishigaku Kyokai, 2002, p.91.

¹⁵ Nishikawa, "Yoroppa kindai e no toi" (Questions about Modern Europe", in: Nishikawa et al., Chiiki kara no sekaishi, Vol.14, Nishi yoroppa (World History Viewed from Areas, Vol.14, Western Europe), Asahishimbunsha, 1993, p.5.

¹⁶ Nishikawa, Shakaishugi intanashonarū no gunzo (Portraits of Leaders of Socialist Internationals), Iwanami Shoten, 2007, p.246.

“Once it is admitted that every culture has equal value, both difference between higher culture and lower culture and rise and fall of cultures will disappear. This may lead to the state in which active choice of values becomes rather meaningless.”¹⁷ This sort of balanced view of cultures in the world should surely be borne in mind in criticizing Eurocentric view and placing Europe in its proper place in world history.

In addition to criticism of Eurocentric view of history, it was the relationship between history of one’s own nation (or one’s country’s history) and world history that continued to occupy central position in Nishikawa’s argument of world history. Just like Goro Yoshida, whose role in history education will be mentioned shortly, Nishikawa continuously criticized the traditional division of history research and history education in Japan into three categories — “seiyo-shi” (Western history), “toyo-shi” (Asian history) and “nihon-shi” (Japanese history) — as the most serious cause of deforming Japanese view of world history. Here “seiyo” and “toyo” were not equivalent to Europe and Asia respectively; “seiyo” stood simplified images of Europe — mainly Britain, France and Germany — as an advanced area which Japan should imitate and catch up with, and “toyo” pointed to nearby areas, especially China and Korea, over which Japan began to nurture sense of superiority in the late nineteenth century. Japanese history served as a tool for promoting political consciousness of Japanese people who launched on imperialist expansion in “toyo” under the influence of “seiyo”.¹⁸

Nishikawa thought it was first of all necessary to remove this division and then promote research and teaching of world history which fully incorporated the history of one’s own nation (“jikkokushi”) and which would provide a field where mutual understanding of various peoples could develop. In this formula “jikkokushi” for

¹⁷ Nishikawa, “1982 nen kaigi — ‘Jikoku shi to sekai shi’” (The 1982 Conference: “History of One’s Own Nation and World History”, in: Nishikawa, ed., Jikoku shi wo koeta rekishi kyoiku (History Education beyond Domestic History), Sanseido, 1992, p.243.

¹⁸ Nishikawa, “Nittosei’ naru kubun wo haisu” (Down with the Division between Japanese History, Asian History and Western History”, in: Nishikawa, Gendaishi no yomikata (How to Interpret Contemporary History), Heibonsha, 1997; Goro Yoshida, “Jikkokushi to sekaishi” (History of One’s Own Nation and World History), in: Hikakushi·Hikakurekishi-kyoiku Kenkyukai, ed., Jikkokushi to sekaishi. Kyoiku no kokusaika wo motomete (History of One’s Own Nation and World History: Towards the Internationalization of History Education), Miraisha, 1985.

Japanese people was not necessarily the same as Japanese history as was usually conceived and the framework of Japanese history should always be put into question.¹⁹

Taking such a standpoint Nishikawa played a key role in organizing academic meetings with Korean and Chinese historians in the 1980s and 1990s, when such meetings were not yet common. On these occasions Nishikawa maintained that there could not be a uniform view of world history or of human history and that it was inevitable for different peoples to embrace different views on history. He strongly refuted those who advocated writing common textbook of history in East Asia and stressed the importance of recognizing the difference and then of deepening mutual understanding by discussing those differences without hastening to find some common ground. In my view this is the attitude we should ourselves adopt in developing the activities of AAWH.

Japanese Textbooks on World History and Attempts to Overcome Eurocentrism

So far I have introduced the works of three historians, but needless to say they cover only a part of what Japanese historians have been doing in tackling the problem of Eurocentrism. And much of their effort has been reflected in the writing of textbooks on world history for schools. Therefore the next part of my presentation is devoted to a brief discussion of the history textbooks.

Textbooks used in Japanese schools (elementary school, junior high school and senior high school) have to follow the directions spelled out in the “Course of Study” (shido-yoryo), and have to undergo governmental censorship. At the same time the textbooks have to be accepted by teachers who actually use them in classrooms. And history textbooks are no exception. However well planned and well written a textbook might be, if it does not follow the guidelines of the “Course of Study”, it cannot pass the censorship, and, if teachers find it difficult to use, it cannot survive the competition.

Given these constraints and conditions authors of history textbooks have made great efforts to improve their contents. Yasuhiko Torigoe, a teacher of world history who

¹⁹ Nishikawa, “Jikokushi to sekaishi” (History of One’s Own Nation and World History”, in: Nishikawa, Gendaishi no yomikata, p.120.

has been doing research on history textbooks both of Japan and of foreign countries, asserts that as the result of continuous debates about world history since the end of World War II Japanese textbooks of world history have come to cover substantially history of various areas of the world in a meaningful way, whereas in European countries there has not been sufficient attempts to look at history of “others” in history textbooks.²⁰

Though there are many points that should be treated about the improvements of history textbooks, I would like to focus on several attempts to overcome Eurocentrism and then to take a glance at textbooks in whose writing three historians whom I have mentioned and I myself were involved.

One name that cannot and should not be forgotten in talking about overcoming Eurocentrism in history textbooks is Senroku Uehara. Uehara, who was a specialist of European medieval history, devoted much energy in opening up new vistas on world history and applying them to history textbooks. A textbook for senior high school which he wrote with several historians, including Bokuro Eguchi, began to be used at schools from 1956, but, its new version rewritten following the revision of the “Course of Study” in 1956 was repeatedly rejected by governmental censorship and its use as a textbook had to be given up.²¹ Instead it was published as a book for general readers in 1960 with the title of Nihon kokumin no sekaishi (World History for Japanese People).

The purpose of that book was clearly described in the introduction as follows:

This World History for Japanese People starts with the history of East Asian civilizations. It is followed by Indian civilizations, West Asian civilizations and then by European civilizations. The latter part of this book deals with the history after the “modern” period in which all these civilizations came to appear on a single stage

²⁰ Yasuhiko Torigoe, “Rekishi kyoiku ni okeru tasha imeji” (Image of Others in History Education), Rekishigaku Kenkyu, 851, 2009, p.26.

²¹ According to Uehara, the main reason for its rejection in the process of censorship was that the censors thought the book prevented students from having objective understanding about issues in the contemporary world. For example the reference to anti-socialistic and colonialist nature of the international system after World War I was regarded as problematic. Uehara, et al., Nihon kokumin no sekaishi (World History for Japanese People), Iwanami Shoten, 1960, Introduction pp.iv-viii.

in the process of the unification of world history. In adopting this structure we aimed at bringing into relief the shape of Japanese people's consciousness of everyday life and of history and asking in concrete terms how various civilizations in the world contributed to the growth of Japanese civilization and how the historical problems which Japanese people are facing at present have been conditioned by the changes in these civilizations.²²

Here one can detect the attitude of both relegating the position of Europe into a proper place in world history and of connecting world history to the history of Japanese nation.

But, as far as the actual content of the book was concerned, reflecting the level of historical research at that period, such areas as Latin America and Africa were not sufficiently dealt with.

In the 1970s an ambitious textbook was published by the same publisher as that of Uehara's original textbook.²³ It was written under the strong leadership of Goro Yoshida, who was one of the authors of Uehara's aforementioned book, with an ambitious framework incorporating descriptions about the history of peoples in areas that had been neglected in earlier and other textbooks.²⁴ In this textbook the period before the middle of the thirteenth century was called pre-history, and in that part the history of nine areas was discussed in the following order: East Asia, South-east Asia and South Asia, West Asia/North Africa, Europe, Africa, America and the Pacific, and Northern Eurasia. The period after the middle of the thirteenth century was designated the period of the main history, and it was divided into three parts and the first part up

²² Uehara et al., Nihon kokumin no sekaishi, Introduction p.ii.

²³ Goro Yoshida et al., Koko sekaishi (World History for Senior Highschool), Jikkyo Shuppan, 1979.

²⁴ Torigoe pointed out that because of prevalent Eurocentrism the "Course of Study" and textbooks in early post-war years neglected the Islam world, Africa, the American continent, Oceania and Inner Asia. Yasuhiko Torigoe, "Sekaishi ga haijo shitekita mono. Sengo sekaishi kyokasho no bunseki" (What Have Been Excluded from World History: A Study of Textbooks on World History in Post-war Years), in: Hideki Masutani and Sadayoshi Ito, eds., Ekkyo suru bunka to kokumin togo (Cultures Crossing Borders and the Problem of National Integration), Tokyo University Press, 1998.

to the beginning of the industrial revolution had the same structure as that in the section of pre-history.

In such a structure the place of Europe in world history was cut down in size, and by contrast some areas which occupied only small spaces in other books were treated in detail. Especially the stress that was put on Northern Eurasia could easily be detected. It was because Yoshida regarded the role of the Mongolian Empire as crucial in shaping world history, and that viewpoint was decisive in drawing the line between the pre-history and the main history at the mid-thirteenth century.

Since this textbook adopted so fresh a framework, it first faced difficulty in passing the censorship. It failed once and managed to pass in the second attempt.²⁵ But the more serious problem about this textbook seems to be the fact that many teachers found this book difficult to use. As the result that unique book which in my view was the most radical attempt to counter Eurocentrism in the writing of a world history textbook was rather short-lived.

I myself began to write a world history textbook in a team of historians for the same publisher as that of Uehara's and Yoshida's textbooks. Ours started as a much more orthodox textbook and is still surviving after nearly thirty years. But before explaining the change in our textbook over the years, let me briefly touch on textbooks that involved three historians, Eguchi, Itagaki and Nishikawa.

As I mentioned before, Eguchi was one of the authors of Uehara's textbook, but he himself wrote another textbook with younger historians which began to be used in 1957.²⁶ The whole structure of this textbook resembled that of Uehara's book, and Eguchi's view of history could be detected in the emphasis that was put on the movements of peoples in colonized areas in the age of imperialism.

Itagaki first participated in writing a textbook in the late 1960s. This textbook, whose central author was an orthodox historian of Europe, did not display any particular uniqueness,²⁷ but in the textbook first published in 1983 which Itagaki wrote

²⁵ See Ryo Suzuki, Okina uso to chiisana uso (Big Lies and Small Lies), Horupu Shuppan, 1984, pp.210-261.

²⁶ Bokuro Eguchi et al., Sekaishi (World History), Shuei Shuppan, 1957.

²⁷ Tsutomu Yoshioka et al., Kotogakko sekaishi B (World History B for Senior

together with Nishikawa and others his influence could be discerned in the stress put on the Islamic world.²⁸

In the case of Nishikawa, he became the leading author of a textbook that started to be used in 1994. Perhaps because of Nishikawa's interest in combining world history with the history of one's own nation efforts were made to include references to Japanese history in various parts and the columns called "Windows to History" included such topics as "The Ryukyu Kingdom and Japan's seclusion policy", "The Aceh War and the Japanese" and "Swift's and Defoe's views of Japan". As will be mentioned shortly, this sort of treatment of Japanese history in the textbooks of world history has become more or less common in more recent textbooks. In that sense Nishikawa's textbook was an early forerunner of this significant change.

It is true that it is difficult to discern each author's contribution to a textbook, which is co-written by many authors, but in the case of these three historians their views on world history seems to have imprints, though only to a limited extent, on the writing of textbooks.

As for the textbook of world history, of which I am one of the authors, it first appeared in 1982,²⁹ and has been rewritten several times following the revisions of the "Course of Study". Among many changes from the original version, important ones are as follows.

In the edition which was published in 1994³⁰ a new section about Mesoamerica and the Andes area was created as the result of our attempt to shed more light on areas that had been neglected. Such an attempt was further made in the edition of 2004, which was a new edition following the revised "Course of Study" of 1999. While the

Highschool), Kogakusha, 1967.

²⁸ Toshikazu Hori et al., Shinsho sekaishi (New and Detailed World History), Teikoku Shoin, 1983. Of course Itagaki's theory of "n-area" could not be directly applied in textbooks.

²⁹ Naohiro Tsurumi et al., Sekaishi (World History), Jikkyo Shuppan, 1982. This textbook was one of those that triggered off textbook controversy in the summer of 1982, when the censorship problem became an international issue in Asia. See Yoichi Kibata, "Unfinished Decolonisation and Conflicts over Historical Memories", in: Stephen Alomes, ed., Islands in the Stream. Australia and Japan Face Globalisation, Hawthorn, Victoria (Australia): Maribyrnong Press, 2005.

³⁰ The title was changed into Sekaishi B from this edition.

Islamic world, Africa, America and Oceania in the pre-modern period came to be treated more in detail than before, descriptions of the European Renaissance were made shorter.

A new aspect of the “Course of Study” of 1999 was that reference was made to relationship between world history and Japanese history — “to make students understand big frameworks and processes of world history in relation to the history of our country” —, whereas previously the Japanese factor was only mentioned in the context of “nurturing self-consciousness and quality as the Japanese living in international society”. Accordingly the amount of descriptions about Japan in the world, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries has increased in the textbook.

Early this year the new “Course of Study” was made public. It basically follows the direction of the last one of 1999, but requires more direct connection of world history to Japanese history and geography. At present we are preparing another new edition based on this “Course of Study”. It is impossible at this stage to predict what sort of change will take place in the textbook, but at least it can be said that, as the past experiences clearly show, efforts will be made to present a more balanced view of world history devoid of Eurocentrism as much as possible and a more organic linkage between world history and the history of our own nation.

The Study of British Imperial History and the Perspective on World History

In concluding my presentation let me touch upon the study of British imperial history in Japan with which I myself have been closely involved.

In Navigating World History Patrick Manning wrote about the position of British imperial history in the development of studies of world history as follows:

The study of British Empire history, as it is developed in the nineteenth and especially in the early twentieth century, was thus a significant predecessor of modern world history, and the data collected and analyzed by British empire

historians remain central to studies of world history.³¹

Here Manning is referring to the historiography of the British imperial history in Europe and America, and in the case of Japan a different aspect should be pointed out.

In the traditional division history into Western, Asian and Japanese histories, Britain always occupied the central place in Western history, mainly because Britain was regarded as a country that Japan should emulate in capitalist development and in becoming a modern state. In this way the image of Britain played a big part in fostering Eurocentric view of the Japanese. The problem was that British history in that sort of perspective tended to be discussed as the history of a single nation, and imperial dimension of British history was not properly taken into consideration. Under such circumstances the study of British imperial history, which amply took into account the changes and movements in the areas under British domination and their impacts on Britain as well as British power exercised over those areas, could act as a rectifier of Eurocentrism.

It was with such an aim that a study group called the Society for the Study of the British Imperial History was founded in 1989, exactly twenty years ago. As Minoru Kawakita, who was the key figure in establishing this society, mentions, British imperial history was to serve for overcoming the view of history centered on a single country and for fostering a global perspective of history.³² It is difficult to say whether we have fully achieved that aim or not, but the contents of five volumes of Igirisu teikoku to 20 seiki (The British Empire and the Twentieth Century), which show the results of the academic activities of the society, indicate that considerable advance has been made.

I myself have been engaged in the research on British imperial history for

³¹ Patrick Manning, Navigating World History. Historians Create a Global Past, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p.176.

³² Minoru Kawakita, "Teikokushugishi kara teikokushi e" (From the History of Imperialism to the History of Empire", in: Yoichi Kibata, ed., Igirisu teikoku to 20 seiki, Vol.5, Gendai sekai to igirisu teikoku (The British Empire and the Twentieth Century, Vol.5, Contemporary World and the British Empire), Minerva Shobo, 2007.

many years. My study of “imperial mentality” of the British people, which spread among them in the course of the development of the British Empire and which lingered on even after decolonization, is a way of deconstructing the image of Britain in Eurocentric view of world history.³³ I have also been engaged in research of both comparing the Japanese Empire with the British Empire and examining changing connections between these two empires.³⁴ Comparison and interconnectedness are key methods that are promoted by the group on the study of global history led by Shigeru Akita,³⁵ and British imperial history can certainly provide lots of useful materials for that sort of study.

In finishing my presentation it may be fair to confess that in doing my research on British imperial history I have not always been so keenly aware of its implication for world/global history. I would like to thank the organizer of this conference for giving me a good opportunity to think again about it.

³³ Kibata, Shihai no Daisho. Eiteikoku no hokai to “teikoku ishiki” (The Price of Imperial Rule. The Collapse of the British Empire and “Imperial Mentality”), Tokyo University Press, 1987; Kibata, ed., Daieiteikoku to teikokuishiki (The British Empire and Imperial Mentality), Minerva Shobo, 1998.

³⁴ Kibata, Igirisu teikoku to teikokushugi. Hikaku to kankei no shiza (The British Empire and Imperialism. Comparisons and Connections), Yushisha, 2008.

³⁵ Shigeru Akita, “Gurobaru hisutorii no chosen to seiyoshi kenkyu” (The Challenge of Global History and the Study of European History”, Public History, 5, 2008.