

Recycled Images: 21st Century Edition of Fukuzawa Yukichi's Geography Textbook

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Abstract: This essay takes a constructionist approach to Representation Studies, examining Fukuzawa Yukichi's elementary geography textbook *Sekai kunizukushi* (1869) and its hierarchical images of the West, juxtaposed against representations of Japan as framed by concepts of race and civilization. Furthermore, it compares these images to their "recycled" versions as constructed in the vast extra-textual apparatus of *Fukuzawa Yukichi no Sekai kunizukushi de sekai wo manabu* (2017), a recent translation of Fukuzawa's textbook into modern Japanese. The move to reintroduce older textbooks is here examined as an "image-building" strategy, one that allows the (re-) construction of influential images in support of an ideological agenda.

Keywords: Elementary school textbooks, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Meiji period, race, textbook revision, textbook translation, image-building

Introduction

In the field of textbook research, it is a long-held view that schoolbooks are culturally defined, so their function is both pedagogical and cultural (Hong, 2009:87, Makarevich 2012:12). Recent socio-historical scholarship of early Meiji school textbooks provides insights into the formation of social consciousness and the transformation of Japan's political, economic and educational positions vis-à-vis its geopolitical *Others* at the time, with these changes ushered in *inter alia* through

hierarchy-based discussions of race and civilization (Baxter 2007, Uchiyama 2009, Takezawa 2015). However, these researchers pay little attention to how Japan's past social and geopolitical positions correspond to the contemporary Japanese palette of varying ideological states-of-mind, in the 21st century.

One of the most influential Meiji textbooks was an elementary geography book *Sekai kunizukushi* (世界国盡, *All the Countries of the World*), which was composed by Fukuzawa Yukichi and published in 1869, the second year of the Meiji period. In 2017, some 150 years after *Sekai kunizukushi*'s initial publication, a new edition was published under the title *Fukuzawa Yukichi no Sekai kunizukushi de sekai wo manabu* (『世界国尽』で世界を学ぶ, *Learning about the World through Fukuzawa Yukichi's Sekai kunizukushi*). This edition included commentary, "translation into modern language" (*gendaigoyaku*), and other extra-textual features. This essay takes a constructionist approach to the hierarchical images of the West, juxtaposed against representations of Japan in terms of race and civilization, introduced in the original publication. It compares these images and representations to their more recent, "recycled" versions, in order to reach a broader understanding of contemporary Japanese conditions, to provide further insights into image-building strategies in contemporary Japan, particularly in relation to *Others*. It argues that the republication of Fukuzawa's *Sekai kunizukushi* serves as an "image-building" strategy that promotes certain ideological and political agendas, even if some of these views are considered controversial or

problematic to a large part of the population.

Fukuzawa's Textbook

Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835 - 1901) was a journalist, author, philosopher, translator, modernizer and, according to historian Alan Macfarlane, "an analyst of modernity" (Macfarlane, 2013: 83). In his monumental work, *The Making of Modern Japan*, historian Marius Jansen claimed that Fukuzawa's "influence permeated every aspect of Meiji life" (Jansen 2002:322). The man, indeed, has become an iconic figure in Japanese culture, especially after his portrait appeared in 1984 on Japan's 10,000 yen note, the country's largest banknote denomination.



Figure 1: Front side of 10,000 yen banknote with Fukuzawa's portrait, 2004.

Fukuzawa is also known as a passionate and talented educator.¹ In 1858, he founded the Keiō Gijuku school, which was destined to become Japan's first private university. However, his educational projects extended far beyond the university level. At its foundation, Keiō Gijuku became renowned as a school of Western knowledge in the Anglo-Dutch style, and as a place where students of different ages

all studied together. Gradually, age-based divisions were introduced and the style of education changed (from the Anglo-Dutch style). In 1868, a children's dormitory was created for junior boarders, and in 1874, the Keiō Yochisha Elementary School was established, a full 16 years before Keiō Gijuku added university faculties in 1890.

Eventually, Fukuzawa composed, or more accurately, compiled and translated Japan's first modern school textbooks. His 1868 textbook on science, *Kinmō kyūri zukai* (訓蒙窮理圖解, *The Illustrated Study of Natural Laws for Beginners*), was based on Western sources, and introduced phenomena as explained by thermal, solid, and fluid mechanics. The following year, the geography textbook *Sekai kunizukushi* was released as the first publication under Fukuzawa's publishing business (owned by Fukuzawa), which he had established in November 1869 (Hiasa 2009:4).

Both textbooks were used in Keiō Gijuku. The first of its kind to introduce the lifestyles and temperaments of five races, *Sekai kunizukushi* soon became a bestseller. Some sources estimate that it sold as many as a million copies (Minamoto 1997: 2). The text was very effective in spreading general geographical knowledge across Japan at the time and proved to be very popular among children (Nakagawa 2002: 409). Many historians and scholars of Japanese children's literature consider these two textbooks as the beginning of modern children's literature in Japan (Torigoe 2001).

In 1872, three years after the publication of his second book, the newly established Ministry of Education announced the Fundamental Code of Education, which made elementary education compulsory. At the same time, Fukuzawa's textbooks were adopted under the national curriculum and taught in schools all over Japan. This suggests that the nascent Meiji government shared Fukuzawa's images and

ideas of countries and regions (including the West) as introduced in the latter's textbook.

Textbook: Content Analysis

The Textbook as a Set of Representations and Locus of Evaluation

Elementary school textbooks introduce children to new insights into their world; they are a gateway to a wider socio-cultural context that transcends family and school. At the same time, textbooks transmit culture-specific values, models and stereotypical images (Baxter 2007). By embodying socio-cultural perceptions and perspectives peculiar to a given nation at a given time "they may serve as indicators of the formation of cultural, social and national identity/consciousness" (ibid). Close examination of Fukuzawa's geographical textbook demonstrates that despite being a collection of selected translations from different Western geography books, *Sekai kunizukushi* still functioned as the record, the indicator of formation, and the marker of cultural determination.

According to Fukuzawa's explanatory note, *Sekai kunizukushi* was a collection of selected translations from different books on geography and history from the United States and Great Britain (Fukuzawa 1869, folio 5). He didn't name his sources,² however previous research on *Sekai kunizukushi* suggests convincingly that *A System of Modern Geography* by the American author S. Augustus Mitchell (also known as *Mitchell's School Geography*; hereafter referred to as MSG) was the main source of Fukuzawa's geography textbook (see Uchiyama 2009:68). In his introductory explanation, Fukuzawa emphasizes that his "ideas (*sakui*) are not included at all" (*Sekai kunizukushi*, v.1 1869: 5 right). However, his selection of materials, his method of text compilation and his additions as translator (particularly those

that described Japan's situation as lacking technological knowledge and the inability in the English language at that time) are scattered throughout the text, rendering the work as something more than a "mere translation." Arguably, exploiting the binary opposition between *Self* and *Others*, Fukuzawa's text generates a foreign-centered viewpoint from which his readers might evaluate Japan's domestic culture at this point in history.

Structure of Sekai Kunizukushi Compared to Mitchell's School Geography (MSG)

Let us look first into the principles behind the materials' selection. Fukuzawa's textbook consists of six volumes. He devoted one volume each to five of the continents (Asia, Africa, Europe, North and South America), presenting information on nations, geographical conditions, history, race and lifestyles; the sixth volume introduced and explained a variety of geographical disciplines, such as physical and human geography.

The first five volumes are structurally interconnected, presented as the route of a trip around the world, going from East to West, and starting with Japan as the departure point.² However, the order of volumes differed in the MSG. Mitchell's textbook ordered the subjects as follows: Geographical definitions - Descriptive geography of North America - Descriptive geography of South America - Descriptive geography of Europe - Descriptive geography of Asia - Descriptive geography of Africa. In contrast, Fukuzawa ordered his volumes differently: Descriptive geography of Asia - Descriptive geography of Africa - Descriptive geography of Europe - Historical and cultural account on North America - Descriptive geography of South America. The central point and the keyword here is the "West," as evidenced in the text's structure, which:

- highlights the West and minimizes information on other regions (the combined size of the volumes on Europe and North America slightly exceeds that of three other volumes)
- depicts the West as superior to the other regions in terms of technological development and civilization,³ but not in terms of race,⁴ at least not explicitly

Interestingly, Japan is not discussed in the Asia section, nor in the section dedicated to race and stages of society.⁵ Therefore, readers remain “for the most part unaware of how European and American gazes positioned Japan across the different stages of civilization” (Takezawa 2015). Most likely, the texts’ features, as described above, triggered the process of differentiation and led Fukuzawa’s readers to evaluate their domestic (Japanese) culture vis-à-vis Others.

Visual and Textual Changes

In her research into Fukuzawa's text, Uchiyama Akiko found that Fukuzawa made a very interesting alteration to *Mitchell's School Geography* – namely, he moved the illustrations of civilization stages from the “Stages of Society” section to the volume on “Europe.” Moreover, he appended explanatory text (not originally in MSG) to the illustrations and emphasized that Europe had passed these stages to achieve its current level of civilization (Uchiyama 2009: 71). Another example of a similar textual change appears in the third volume, on Europe. Before introducing Russia to his readers, Fukuzawa dedicates a whole paragraph to the country’s history (the following and all subsequent translations are mine, unless otherwise specified):

Until two hundred years ago, Russia, too, was

a small rural northern country where learning did not prosper. Its people were rough and led harsh lives. However, by the end of the 17th century (more or less around the Genroku period in Japanese history), a talented and clever ruler named Peter appeared and reformed the country in no time. [Russia] then became a civilized nation just like England, France and Holland. Peter founded schools and built the Russian navy. He protected domestic lands, attacked foreign ones and laid the groundwork [for Russia] not only to join other European countries, but also to become one of the great powers, known today for its power and strength. (*Sekai kunizukushi* v.3 1869: 28 left-29 left)

However, Fukuzawa had another reason to close his Europe account with Russia – a deliberate choice given that the mission’s last stop in Europe was Lisbon and not St. Petersburg. Russia appears as the last and among the more extensively described countries on this route to serve as an example that helps Fukuzawa to emphasize the important point that the advancement of civilization has a progressive and not an absolute – race-specific – nature (see also Uchiyama 2009). He presents Russia as a vivid, encouraging example of a country that used its potential to advance and become an empire. Russia, in Fukuzawa’s description, is a civilized state that achieved this status only recently. This means that the advancement of civilization is not absolute, but progressive in nature. And, consecutively, Japan, although being only half-civilized now, one day will become a fully civilized country, just as it happened to Russia. In his section on the stages of Japanese civilization, Fukuzawa did not clearly assign the categories of “civilized” or “half-civilized,” which instead received only brief mention, but he nevertheless trusted that readers would draw the correct conclusions on

their own.



Figure 2: *Sekai kunizukushi*, vol. 3, folio 29 featuring a portrait of Peter the Great (Image credits: Fukuzawa Memorial Center for Modern Japanese Studies, Keio University).

This addition highlights the progressive nature of civilization advancement, as I will explain in what follows, and its importance is also reflected in the volume's structural organization. As a case in point, the order of the countries presented in *Sekai kunizukushi*'s "Europe" volume differs significantly from that in MSG. The latter begins with a description of Norway and proceeds through the other countries in a north-to-south order, ending with Turkey. Fukuzawa, however, opens the volume with a section on England and, after traveling in a counterclockwise arc through the Mediterranean region, moves on to Central Europe and Scandinavia, before closing with Russia. In part, this section's trajectory maintains the textbook's overall structure previously discussed, serving as the representation of a journey. Following this "route," Fukuzawa incorporates his

experiences of travelling to Europe with the 1862-1863 Shogunate mission into the translated text.⁶

To help his audience arrive at the "right" conclusion, Fukuzawa left a "hidden" comparison between Japan and Russia in *Sekai kunizukushi*. The nature of this comparison is rooted in the initially inferior status of both Russia and Japan in relation to Europe and America. At the point when *Sekai kunizukushi* was written, Russia had already completed her quest of joining the civilized nations, and Japan was on her way to do so. By this Fukuzawa offered a *comparison of equality*—Japan is like Russia. However, in his later writings, he compared Japan to Russia explicitly and "favorably." In his autobiography, we find the following well-known passage:

As I consider all the other peoples of the Orient as they exist today, I feel convinced that there is no other nation that has the ability or the courage to navigate a steamship across the Pacific after five years of navigation and engineering experience. Not only in the Orient would this feat stand as an act of unprecedented skill and daring. Even Peter the Great of Russia, who went to Holland to study navigation, with all his attainments in the sciences could not have equaled this feat by the Japanese. Without doubt, the famous Emperor of Russia was a man of exceptional genius, but his people did not respond to his leadership in the practice of Science as did our Japanese in this great adventure. (Fukuzawa [c1899] 1934:118-119)

Here again, we can see Fukuzawa embracing what is now called a "relational concept of identity" (Hagstrom & Gustafsson 2015:17), whereby self-image is constructed and evaluated through differentiation from the

Other. In 1869, Fukuzawa believed that Japan's goal was to attain the level of civilization he had identified in Western countries. In 1899, when he wrote (or, more accurately, dictated) his autobiography, he believed that Japan had almost attained this goal, leaving some of her previous counterpart countries far behind.

Images of the West and Japan's Image-Building in Sekai kunizukushi: A Summary

The images of the West introduced in *Sekai kunizukushi* may be summarized as follows:

- Europe is emblematic of technological and scientific progress, a highly civilized society. However, for it to achieve such a high level of civilization, it had to pass through all the stages from chaos to enlightenment.
- The "North America" volume (*Sekai kunizukushi* v.4) focused on individual freedom and autonomy. Unlike MSG, Fukuzawa's account of North America was mostly historical, and highlighted active, independent individuals, such as Christopher Columbus, George Washington, and colonial children.⁷ In his critical essay on Fukuzawa's role and importance in shaping modern Japanese political concepts and world views, Earl H. Kinmonth re-examines Fukuzawa's aspirations for personal advancement as a driving force behind some of his writings (Kinmonth 1978: 681).

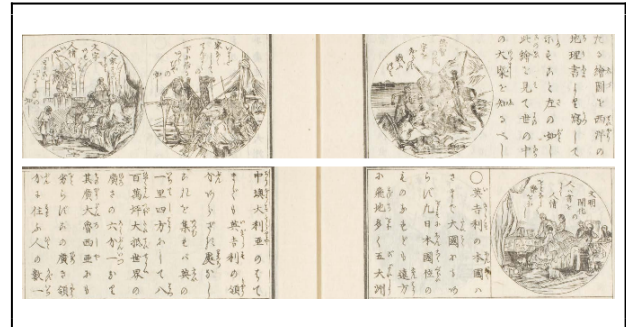


Figure 3: *Sekai kunizukushi*, v. 3, upper fragments of folio 5 and 6, featuring illustrations of the four stages (Image credits: Fukuzawa Memorial Center for Modern Japanese Studies, Keio University).

Although he classified civilizations in a hierarchical manner, Fukuzawa did not present evidence of racial hierarchy as later textbooks did, particularly those published in the third decade of Meiji.⁸ Rather, he described race as one of many other categorical human parameters, such as appearance, lifestyle, religion or language. Although the topics of civilization advancement and race are connected, he represented the stages of civilizations in relative, rather than specific terms. *Sekai kunizukushi*'s case demonstrates that, contrary to popular perception of thinkers in early Meiji Japan, not all geographers and people associated with the Ministry of Education "uncritically adopted the racial hierarchy of Europe and America" (Takezawa 2015: 17).

Recycled Images: *Sekai Kunizukushi* 150 Years After

Sekai kunizukushi's enormous popularity following its first publication was due, in part, to its use as an official elementary school

textbook, dating as far back as 1872. However, unlike the other Fukuzawa bestsellers – such as *Gakumon no susume* (学問のすゝめ *An Encouragement of Learning*, 1872) and *Bunmeiron no gairyaku* (文明論之概略 *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, 1875), which were translated into modern Japanese, long discussed and referred to by scholars, and known to the wider public even today – *Sekai kunizukushi* did not receive such scholarly or intellectual recognition until recently, and has never had a contemporary translation (*gendaigoyaku* version). Saito Hidehiko, a research fellow at the Fukuzawa Memorial Center for Modern Japanese Studies (Keio University), and the editor of the first contemporary translation of Fukuzawa’s textbook, mentions two reasons for this in his foreword to the 2017 publication:

1. The textbook was disregarded by researchers since it was a translation from English and did not express Fukuzawa’s own ideas.
2. The gap between contemporary conditions and the realities of Japan some 150 years ago, under which *Sekai kunizukushi* was published continues to widen (Saito 2017: i-ii).

Over the past two decades, different aspects of *Sekai kunizukushi* have been discussed in several academic articles (Minamoto 1997, Uchiyama 2009, Takezawa 2015, Kang 2017), but no extensive research has been conducted thus far. Thus, the factors Saito mentioned still continue to hold sway. Even so, *Sekai kunizukushi*’s 2017 translation into modern Japanese was published by Mineruva Shobō (Minerva Publishers), a Kyoto-based publisher of intellectual literature specializing in History, Thought and Biography, Social Science, Law, and Psychology. Moreover, it was published not merely as a text for academic purposes, but as a specialized textbook⁹ that could be incorporated into elementary school curricula. Minerva titled its translation, *Fukuzawa*

Yukichi no Sekai kunizukushi de sekai wo manabu (『世界国尽』で世界を学ぶ *Learning about the world through Fukuzawa Yukichi’s Sekai kunizukushi*). (Hereafter *Sekai kunizukushi de sekai wo manabu*). This contradiction makes Fukuzawa’s textbook republication an interesting case that reveals how influential images may undergo (re-) construction to support specific ideological agendas.

Reasons for Republication

The following is an examination of the republication and modern translation of Fukuzawa’s geography textbook, which translated certain parts of the original into *gendaigo* (modern Japanese) and “republished” some poetic parts as is, without translation. The textbook also contained an introductory note and commentaries by the translators. The reasons for the republication can be categorized as either explicit or implicit, with the former being:

- To revive the textual devices (such as rhyming and old “spelling” of geographical names, etc.) and visual features (such as illustrations or specific layout of pages) introduced by Fukuzawa
- To deepen understanding of the world’s geography through a comparison between “then” and “now” (Saito 2017: ii-iii).

As for the implicit reasons, there is possibly a formal one: the Meiji Restoration’s 150th Anniversary in 2018 (a year after the publication). Additionally, republication could have been undertaken for “image-building” purposes, that is for the purpose of recycling, reusing, and repurposing images to promote a desired ideological agenda.

Image-Building: Frames of Reference

Although the republished version kept Fukuzawa's original structure, the twenty-first century edition introduced the five commentary chapters appended to the first five volumes. These commentaries created the following frames of reference:

- Image repurposing (The case of Africa)
- Image reuse (The case of China)
- Image-making (The case of Fukuzawa Yukichi)

Africa: Adapting to Contemporary Discourse

The recent discourse of political correctness and self-image of contemporary Japan as a mature and moral country (Hagström & Gustafsson, 2015:17) conflicted with the vague concept of race and stages of society that Fukuzawa introduced in *Sekai kunizukushi*. However, the team of translators and commentators, led by chief-editor Saito Hidehiko, decided not to politically correct Fukuzawa's text, and to keep intact such expressions that today "may look discriminating towards countries that remain at a lower advancement stage of civilization" (Saito 2017, v), so as to allow readers the opportunity to compare now against then, and analyze their differences. In this sense, this process can be viewed as "image repurposing": the images of *Others*, reintroduced through the original text, are expected to draw a critical eye by default. At first, they are used to evaluate present-day images of *Others*, and then (not necessarily in their entirety, but only some of them), to be compared with the existing self-images of Japan. In terms of "image-building" there is no sense to compare today's Japan to *mid-Victorian England*.

To achieve a balanced view on Japan vis-à-vis *Other* and to adapt the historical picture to contemporary discourses, the authors behind the republication turned to commentary: each

volume includes notes and an afterword that provided additional information verbal and visual. The changes and additions to the Fukuzawa original text, intended to make the twenty-first century edition more politically correct, were structural, as well as semantic, in nature.

On the structural level, the shorter sections (specifically Asia, Africa and South America) were all accompanied by longer commentaries, such that the length of each volume was more or less the same (16-18 pages).¹⁰ On the level of semantics and tone, commentaries provided readers with a different perspective, either positive or critical, of the continent or a particular country.

The volume dedicated to Africa (*Sekai kunizukushi de sekai wo manabu*, 30-45) serves as an example of providing a seemingly positive perspective. In his original section on Africa (especially in its "poetic" part, see Fig. 4), Fukuzawa referred to the continent as "savage." He described its black inhabitants as "uncivilized" and "backward people," who in some regions were "practicing slavery" and "cannibalism." The textbook also explains (*inter alia* through illustrations) that Africa had a "harsh nature" that housed "fierce animals" (*Sekai kunizukushi* v. 2). Unlike other volumes, the republished Africa volume has an editorial commentary (*Sekai kunizukushi de sekai wo manabu*, 38-43) that was almost as long as the main text (6 vs. 7 pages). It features pictures of African children in a classroom, introduces Ancient Egyptian civilization and elaborates on Africa's special connection with nature (*ibid*, 38-39). It also provides a brief introduction to African history and its decolonization (*ibid*, 40-41). After introducing notable people from Africa, such as its Nobel Prize winners (*ibid*, 42), the volume closes with a passage on tourism. The editors were thus able to create a new image of Africa as more civilized, harmonious and secure. The new representation also juxtaposed the continent

(through its new image, which implicitly elevated it to, in Fukuzawa's terms, a more advanced stage of civilization), and supported Japan's self-image view of itself, as politically correct nation.

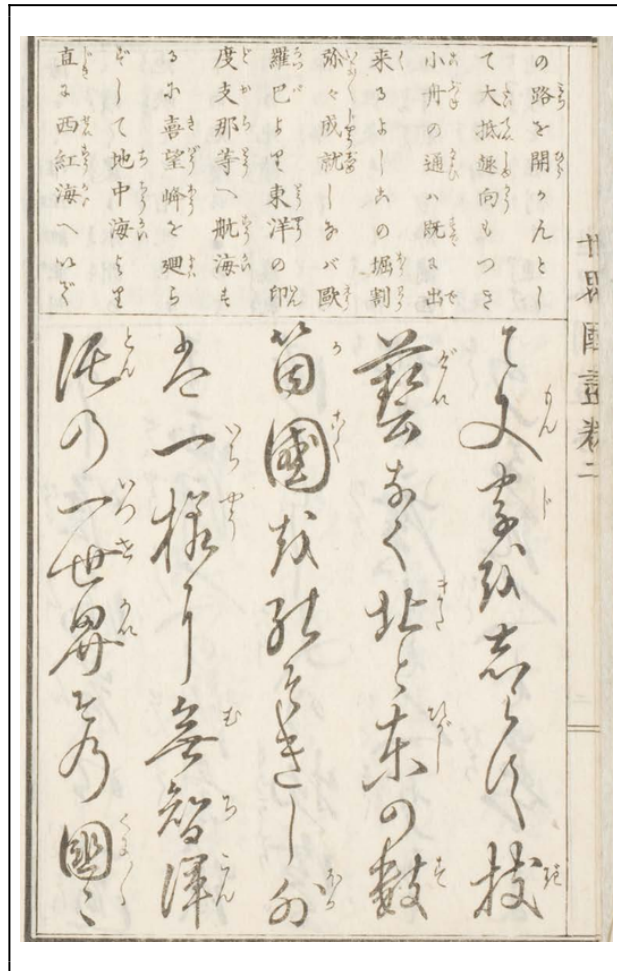


Figure 4: *Sekai kunizukushi*, vol. 2, folio 3, right

(Image credits: Fukuzawa Memorial Center for Modern Japanese Studies, Keio University).

China: Silence as Strategy for the Reuse of Critical Images

In general, there is an ongoing identity shift in

Japan from the second half of the 20th century, one that generates Japan's image as a "mature, moral and law-abiding country that is threatened and victimized by its morally inferior neighbors" (Hagström & Gustafsson, 2015:17). However, as also evidenced by the Asia volume of *Sekai kunizukushi de sekai wo manabu*, Japan's self-image still entails the belief that it is a "superior civilization" (ibid).

Some traces of Western sources are evident in Fukuzawa's description of China in *Sekai kunizukushi*. For example, Fukuzawa reported "the political regime in China is what is called "despotic" in Western languages" (Uchiyama 2009). In general, he saw China as a half-civilized country, with a great tradition that "in the end, earned the contempt of other countries because there truly [were] no people who held patriotic thoughts" (translated in Takezawa 2015:11), whose "civilization has gone backward, and their customs and manners are failing" (translated in Uchiyama 2009:72). As Uchiyama points out, the image of China (and other non-Western countries) in *Sekai kunizukushi* is clearly negative (2009:74).

However, although the editors of *Sekai kunizukushi de sekai wo manabu* attached one of the longest commentaries (6.5 pages) to the Asia volume (*Sekai kunizukushi de sekai wo manabu* 10-25), they did not attempt to correct China's image. Indeed, China receives little attention, as the commentary is almost entirely dedicated to Singapore, both in the past and present (ibid, 19-25). I argue that this kind of silence implies consent and tacit approval of China's unfavorable image as a country "morally inferior" to Japan, in other words the image developed in Fukuzawa's original textbook from the 1860s. The evident recycling of certain images, especially of a purportedly "morally inferior neighbor" such as China, supports Linus Hagström and Karl Gustafsson's conclusion noted above.

Fukuzawa Yukichi: Counter-Critical Stance

Fukuzawa Yukichi is regarded as one of the intellectual founders of modern Japan (*Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Fukuzawa Yukichi”). Earl Kinmonth describes him as “possibly the best-known, most widely studied, and most frequently quoted writer of the early Meiji period” (1978: 677). Certainly, his philosophical and educational legacy is highly appreciated by researchers and the public, both within Japan and abroad. However, in recent decades, critical voices have emerged, and Fukuzawa’s image as “the Meiji intellectual” (ibid.) has been gradually overshadowed by his image as a scholar who promoted controversial ideas about imperialism, militarism and national expansion (Fukuzawa did it through various media, for example, newspaper editorial as in the case of *Datsu-A Ron* (De-Asianization), Fukuzawa, 1885). Beginning in 2014, the Japanese scholar Yasukawa Jyunosuke, known for his highly critical approach to Fukuzawa, together with his like-minded colleagues Sugita Satoshi and Kariya Tetsu, began publishing a series of “mini-comi”¹¹ called *Sayōnara, Fukuzawa Yukichi* (Goodbye, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Fig.5). These publications introduce critical views of Fukuzawa’s support for Japanese colonialism in Asia, as well as for occupation of adjacent islands and territories in mainland Asia, which eventually developed into the ideology of Pan-Asianism. The publications also demand Fukuzawa’s removal from the 10,000 yen note.¹²



Figure 5: The cover of a 2016 book from the *Sayonara Fukuzawa Yukichi* series.

Keeping all of these developments in mind, together with the fact that *Sekai kunizukushi de sekai wo manabu* appears to have been supported by Keio Gijuku and the Fukuzawa Memorial Center for Modern Japanese Studies, one can assume that the team of translators/authors behind the commentaries adopted supportive approach that partly spells out Fukuzawa’s ideological agenda. It is not a coincidence that the Fukuzawa textbook that targets elementary school children appeared just three years after the beginning of Yasukawa’s energetic anti-Fukuzawa campaign.

This approach is evident in the way the historical figure of Fukuzawa is represented in the textbook in a supportive manner. In the

opening of his foreword the editor-in chief refers to Fukuzawa Yukichi as “Japan’s best expert in foreign countries at the time”, an extraordinary intellectual with surprising ability “while in underdeveloped Japan to summarize the conditions of the whole world through the usage of foreign books on geography and history” and an educator in a broad sense, who “wanted that many people including children will get the knowledge of world’s geography” (Saito 2017 i,ii.). In the foreword’s final part entitled “Fukuzawa’s views of the world’s condition” Fukuzawa is represented as a person who may be excused for some of his controversial words and ideas, since he was driven by a sense of impending crisis and a strong will to save his country from “being swallowed by Western Great Powers” (Saito 2017 iv, v).

This rhetoric is clearly supportive of some of Fukuzawa’s views and his historical figure in general. Thus, the team of editor and translators tacitly support to his views on China in the way they address, or, rather choose not to address China in their commentary, as mentioned above. And even the positive account on Africa is not completely free of Fukuzawa’s hierarchical ideas of civilization advancement. The closing section of the commentary that deals with tourism is accompanied by a peaceful photograph of an elephant with Mt. Kilimanjaro in Amboseli National Park, Kenya in the background (*Sekai kunizukushi de sekai wo manabu*, 43), that easily may be interpreted as an “Orientalist” image that stereotypes Africa as one-dimensional.¹³

By introducing one of Fukuzawa’s “trickier” works¹⁴ to very young individuals, who have only begun to acquire critical thinking skills, the textbook authors can push a “tricky” or “biased” stance onto their readership that, in its turn, may take it up. At present the textbook *Sekai kunizukushi de sekai wo manabu* is used only in private elementary schools as a part of

special curriculum. But given the power of textbooks, as well as the fact that under the School Education Law textbooks for national schools are approved by the Ministry of Education,¹⁵ the introduction of Fukuzawa’s thinking through national elementary school textbooks will effectively legitimize it.

Conclusion

As the case of *Sekai kunizukushi* shows, Western civilization itself, although being represented and understood as racially different, nevertheless provided a strong template for Japanese reforms in the early Meiji period.

Such views on and roles of Western civilization in Meiji Japan suggest that in the first decade of the Meiji era, “race” was interpreted as a kind of classification based on phenotypic features. It also suggests a desire among Japanese intellectuals to identify with the highly civilized West by simultaneously distancing itself from non-Western civilizations, notably those of China and Africa.

Examining the republication of Fukuzawa’s textbook 150 years after its initial release, we can find some points relevant to the contemporary Japanese political climate. In their notes to the textbook’s latest edition, the translators (from Meiji to Heisei Japanese) state: “In the original text, there are many inadequate expressions that are considered discriminatory today, but [...] we decided to publish it as it is.” (*Sekai kunizukushi de sekai wo manabu*, vii) However, they fail to indicate examples of such phrases, much less provide critical commentary. Therefore, *Fukuzawa Yukichi Sekai kunizukushi de sekai wo manabu* ultimately appears no less “tricky” than Fukuzawa’s original work. Even though the textbook is described by its authors merely as a useful teaching tool to introduce contemporary school children to comparative historical

research and to deepen their knowledge of geography (Saito 2017 iii), it leaves much room for teacher and parent interpretation, and allows through the reconstruction of complex and influential concepts such as “race,” “nation,” and “stages of civilization,” support for Fukuzawa’s controversial ideological agenda.

Textbooks legitimize not only the present reality, but also certain versions of the past, as well as the projected future (Makarevich 2012). Used as a strategic instrument of “image-building,” publication of a contemporary annotated translation of Fukuzawa’s textbook encourages a positive view of a specific historical person (in this case, Fukuzawa himself), and legitimizes his cultural, social, and political views. To better understand this process of legitimization and its possible outcome, the conceptual analyses presented in this essay should be augmented with empirical research on the textbook’s availability and use, as well as its effects on Japanese elementary school students.

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This article is a part of **The Special Issue: Race and Empire in Meiji Japan**. Please see the [Table of Contents](#).

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Notes

¹ Even so, some researchers have expressed doubts as to Fukuzawa's pedagogical competency and made considerable effort to revise Fukazawa and his writings (I will elaborate on this later).

² I am not sure that Fukuzawa neglected these, but it was not common in Japan (nor in other places) to state the sources or even to mention the author's name (unless he or she was respected and well-known among the intended audience, and Mitchell was not such a person for Japanese readers).

³ Similar features are found in some Korean textbooks as well (see e.g. Kim 2013)

⁴ For an analysis of Fukuzawa and S.A. Mitchell's respective views on race, see Kang 2017.

⁵ Uchiyama (2009: 70) notes that even though MSG details and explains racial characteristics as relevant for civilizational progress that seems to be racially confined, in *Sekai kunizukushi*, five races are mentioned elsewhere without specifying racial characteristics.

⁶ The Takenouchi Mission was sent to Europe by the Tokugawa shogunate in January 1862 and returned to Tokyo in January 1863. The head of the mission was Takenouchi Yasunori, governor of Shimotsuke Province. The head of the mission staff was Shibata Sadatarō. Fukuzawa Yukichi was acting as one of the two interpreters appointed by the Foreign

Translation Department. The mission's main goal was to delay the opening of Japan's cities and ports to foreign trade, as well as to negotiate with Russia over the disputed northern territories (Okatsuka 2019:130,135). However, the bakufu ordered the mission members to investigate how other countries were faring in different fields (such as trade, educational systems, production, and machinery, with a focus on the military). The bakufu intended to use the subsequent findings for national reform and consolidation of authority (Kutsuzawa, 2015:12)

⁷ The story about colonial children is central to the volume, taking up nearly 20% of the whole text. Supposedly set in Boston, it tells the story of children meeting with the commander of local British colonial troops, specifically to file a complaint against the British soldiers who had destroyed their snowmen. Interestingly enough, snow activities constitute a recurring setting – extending into the present-day – where American children continue to passionately defend their rights (for further details, see Diaz 2018)

⁸ For a detailed analysis and comparison of race representation in textbooks from the first half of the Meiji period, see Takezawa, 2015.

⁹ This is a translation of the term used by the publishing company employee, who responded to the inquiry about this title's circulation. Unfortunately, Mineruva Shobō kept the more detailed information confidential, so the only available data was that circulation for the first edition did not exceed 2000 copies, which is rather small.

¹⁰ The difference between the shortest volume and the longest without commentaries amounts to 7 pages.

¹¹ The term “mini-comi” (an abbreviation of the Japanese expression “mini communication media”) refers to publications that are produced and distributed independently by an individual or a group.

¹² As was announced recently, in 2024, Fukazawa's portrait will be replaced with that of Shibusawa Eiichi, “the father of Japanese capitalism.” (Ministry of Finance, Japan 2019)

¹³ In my opinion, though, by including the caption (that *inter alia* implies that the Kenyan administration is sufficiently developed to manage national parks) and incorporating this into the text of the whole commentary, it rather serves the authors' intention to provide elementary school children with a wider variety of relevant historic and socio-cultural information about Africa. It is worth mentioning that *Sekai kunizukushi* is an elementary school textbook, so to encourage a positive and realistic image of contemporary Africa among young children, the authors use devices (such as photographic illustrations and *romaji* in text) and discuss topics (such as school life and animals) that appeal to younger audiences.

¹⁴ As Uchiyama Akiko puts it: “Whether Fukuzawa actively promoted a negative image of non-Western cultures is a tricky matter to decide. As Fukuzawa explains in his notes, *Sekai kunizukushi* is a translation ...and his opinions are not included at all. Of course we cannot take his words literally...” (Uchiyama 2009: 73)

¹⁵ The government generally authored textbooks until the end of World War II. However, after the enactment of the School Education Law in 1947, the current system of textbook approval was introduced, and under this system, non-government publishers can create textbooks and submit them to the Ministry of Education for official examination and approval. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan 2005)