



Title	How the History of Asia Should Be Taught/Learned : Posing a question
Author(s)	Goto, Seiji
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How the History of Asia Should Be Taught/Learned

Posing a question: Seiji Goto (Kyoto Municipal Hiyoshigaoka High School)

In this panel, we will make presentations under the title “How the History of Asia Should Be Taught/Learned: A New Outlook, Approach, and Active Learning—Practices at High Schools in Japan.”

I feel there is a great significance for us high school teachers from Japan to speak about “How the History of Asia Should Be Taught/Learned” here in Singapore in 2015.

Needless to say, this year marks the 70th year since the end of the World War II. In May 1991, Toshiki Kaifu, the Prime Minister of Japan at the time, stated as follows in Singapore: “It has been 50 years since the year the Pacific War began. In this year of milestone, I look back at the history over the first half of this century again and sternly reflect on my country’s conducts which brought unbearable suffering and sorrow to many people in the Asia-Pacific Ocean region.” Subsequently in August 1995, after 50 years since the end of the war, Tomiichi Murayama, then Prime Minister of Japan, made the following remark: “For a period of time not so long ago, our country made a mistake in national policy and took the path to war, putting our citizens in crisis of life and death and causing severe damages and suffering for many countries, particularly for people in Asian countries. To ensure there will be no mistake in the future, I humbly accept this irrefutable fact of history and take this opportunity to express my deep remorse and sincere apology again. I would also dedicate a deep mourning to all victims—both internal and external—of this history.” And this year, the 70th year since the end of the war, the world is watching to see what remark Prime Minister Abe might make. In this commemorative year, I sincerely hope that these three Japanese high school history teachers who are presenting today and I can have a conductive dialogue with people in Singapore as to how we can develop future-oriented history education that takes the past history into account.

Given that there is an extremely close relationship between Japan and Southeast Asia today and a lot of people frequently travel between these areas, we need to better understand each other all the more. For Japanese high school students who might come to Southeast Asia in the future as working adults, the implication of learning the history of Southeast Asia will become extremely important. There had actually been many cases of exchange between Japan and Southeast Asia in the pre-modern era. Based on specific documentation, Mr. Keiichi Kawashima will introduce examples of those exchanges listed in history textbooks in Japan and talk about how the exchanges evolved over time.

Mr. Hiroshi Sasagawa offered us a subject that is appropriate for the 70th year after the war. In Japan, we observe August 15, the day the Emperor announced on a radio broadcast that Japan would accept the Potsdam Declaration, as the day the war ended. However, this was really a “memory” established in post-war Japan. The day the war is considered to have ended actually differs by regions in Asia. How is it possible that the same event is perceived differently by people, country, and region? Mr. Sasagawa will take August 15 in Japan as an example and talk about how there is more than one history and there are private and public histories in addition to official history.

Today, the momentum for reflecting on and reforming history education in high school in Japan is growing. The movement to amend the traditional way of teaching, in which the teacher one-sidedly lectures and forces students to memorize facts single-mindedly, and try to change the contents of the textbook and the way the

classes are taught is spreading in order to foster students' ability to think. Through questions posed by teacher, it aims to prompt a dialogue between the teacher and students, foster discussions among students, and have students proactively participate in class. This has been driven by the internationally-required level of academic ability as defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s Programme for International Assessment (PISA), which places more emphasis on the ability to use the knowledge than the amount of knowledge. Recently, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in Japan also began instructing to introduce this approach by the name of "active learning." Mr. Masaki Minagawa will speak about the potential with communication in history education based on own experiences in Japanese history class. I hope teachers from Singapore will also share examples in high schools in Singapore so that we can exchange information with each other.