

Title	Teaching Migration History to High School Students : Problems and Practices in Japan
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Citation	大阪大学歴史教育研究会 成果報告書シリーズ. 2016, 13, p. 33-34
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://hdl.handle.net/11094/62162
rights	
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Teaching Migration History to High School Students: Problems and Practices in Japan

Panel Organizer: SAWANO Osamu (Kanagawa Prefectural Samukawa High School)

Chair: ISHIBASHI Isao (NPO Kanagawa Research Institute for History Education)

Discussant: IIOKA Naoko (independent scholar)

Preface

This panel aims to look for a possibility of dissolving the divide between “World History” and “Japanese History” in Japanese high school curriculum, by examining class reports from high schools. Teaching staffs at high schools developed sample lectures in cooperation with scholars from universities.

In Japan, history education at the high school level is divided into two subjects, namely “World History” and “Japanese History”. “World History” is one of the first subjects for students to take in high schools. They learn comprehensively history of the world by region. In “Japanese History”, they deepen the knowledge they accumulated through history classes at elementary and junior high schools. In many cases, those two subjects are taught by different teachers and in different academic year.

The problem is that, before high school enrolment, students learn hardly anything about history of foreign countries. Therefore, many students tend to regard “World History” as the subject to learn history of foreign lands without reference to Japan. At the same time they also regard “Japanese History” as the subject to learn what happened in Japan regardless of the history of the world. Such view is often shared by teachers, in spite of the fact that the official curriculum guidelines stipulate to teach Japanese and World Histories in a way that both are relevant to each other.

One of the reasons behind this situation is that high school teachers have little willingness to learn from new research trends in academia, such as maritime history, global history, etc., any teachers, from elementary schools up to high schools, focus more on applying new educational methods than on introducing new academic research trends into classrooms.

In order to improve the current situation, the History Sub-Committee, comprised of history teachers from Kanagawa Prefecture, which is located next to Tokyo, in collaboration with university lecturers, has organized a lecture series during summer break since 2007. These lectures are intended for both high school teachers and students. In order to share our experience, we presented a panel entitled “Teaching the Meiji Restoration in the Context of World History: Practices in High Schools” at the First AAWH Congress in Osaka (2009). For the Second Congress in Seoul (2012), we organized a panel entitled “Teaching Asian History in the 19th Century: Practices in High Schools in Japan”.

In this panel three case studies are presented, Yamauchi will discuss historical export of Japanese sulfur, Sato’s paper studies the spread of *Mazu* worship in the Edo Era, and lastly Fukumoto talks about the formation of Yokohama Chinatown. We hope to share and discuss our attempt to integrate foreign and domestic history in the high school education.

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