

Fukuzawa Yukichi's Geography Textbook: Visualizing Race, Time, and Space in the Early Meiji Period¹

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All the Countries of the World (Sekai Kunizukushi, 1869) is a geography textbook written by Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), a thinker and educator who is best known as an influential proponent for Western science and of the Western Enlightenment during Japan's Meiji period (1868-1912). Originally composed as six volumes,² the work taught a broad readership about the continents, countries, and people of the world. It was one of five geography textbooks endorsed by the government for elementary schools in 1872, and one of the first examples where the word *jinshu*, the translation of the English word "race," appears.³ *All the Countries of the World* was a bestseller, with an estimated one million copies sold during the Meiji period.⁴ It remains relevant in the present day, receiving a translation into modern Japanese in 2017.

Drawing academic interest for its translated nature, narrative structure, and discussion of the human race, *All the Countries of the World* has been cross-examined with its original sources by several scholars. Minamoto Masahisa and Albert Craig have concluded that the book was mostly made up of translations from two American geography textbooks: *Cornell's High School Geography* (1856) by Sarah S. Cornell, and *Mitchell's New School Geography* (1865) by Samuel A. Mitchell. *All the Countries of the World* is notable for its 108 woodblock print images which were copied from these and other American geographic texts.⁵ Translated textbooks were common between 1872 and the 1880s, so much so that the period is retroactively referred to as the "translated textbooks period" or the "Western-inspired textbooks period."⁶ *All the Countries of the World* has attracted scholarly attention as a textbook introducing a Japanese audience to the rest of the world, with Christopher Hill categorizing it as a type of national history, a form of narrative

¹ Images in this article were provided courtesy of the Library of Congress and the Fukuzawa Memorial Center for Modern Japanese Studies, Keio University.

² Minamoto Masahisa, "Fukuzawa Yukichi cho 'Sekai Kunizukushi' ni kansuru ichikenkyū: Shoshigakuteki chōsa" (A study of Fukuzawa Yukichi's "Kunizukushi": Study of source materials). *Kūkan, Shakai Chiri Shisō* 2 (1997): 3-4. *All the Countries of the World* was reprinted in 1871, 1872, and 1876. The 1871 print differed only in a slightly reworked introduction and conclusion. The 1872 version made further small tweaks to the body and bound the six volumes in three books, while the 1876 edition was compiled into a single volume.

³ Takezawa Yasuko, "Translating and transforming 'race': Early Meiji Period textbooks." *Japanese Studies* 35:1 (2015): 5-21. The other designated elementary school textbooks were *Account of the Country of Japan*, *Beginning Geography*, *Imperial Geography*, and *Condensed Geography*.

⁴ Nakamura Kikuji, *Kyōkasho no shakaishi Meiji Ishin kara haisen made* (The social history of school textbooks from the Meiji Restoration to the end of World War II). Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1992, 5. Minamoto, 2.

⁵ Minamoto, 12; Albert M. Craig, *Civilization and Enlightenment: The Early Thought of Fukuzawa Yukichi* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 41-43; 51-52; 174.

⁶ Christian Galan, "Language textbooks following the Meiji Restoration: Innovations from the Gakusei period." *Cipango – French Journal of Japanese Studies* 2 (2013): 2. The output of children's geography textbooks during this period was prolific, with around 520 developed, eclipsing an estimated 300 math textbooks and coming close to an estimated 550 language textbooks.

that spatializes the world and creates a sense of national unity by teaching a domestic audience about the world exterior to Japan.⁷

In this essay, I locate the significance of *All the Countries of the World's* to early Meiji elementary school education and analyze the main differences between Fukuzawa's text and the American sources that informed its creation. My goal is to show the various measures he took in transforming a textbook from an American context to a Japanese one, showing Fukuzawa's role as a localizer, rather than viewing *All the Countries of the World* as a simple, uncreative translation with little input from the author. Few scholars have analyzed the images found within the textbook, and so I also highlight the importance of visual elements in the text's composition. I conclude by providing resources in accessing Fukuzawa's text and others like it as well as ways to incorporate *All the Countries of the World* in classroom teaching.

Constructing a Geography Textbook

All the Countries of the World was not Fukuzawa's first book about geography. His earlier publication, *Conditions in the West* (*Seiyō Jijō* 1866-1870),⁸ was an account of Western politics, economics, and culture, written after his return from a series of trips to the United States (1859-1860 and 1867) and Europe (1862).⁹ Based on his experiences as part of the Tokugawa government's diplomatic missions, *Conditions in the West* included a map of the West and lessons about world geography, a subject Fukuzawa believed critical to understanding the modern world.¹⁰ This was followed by *Pocket Almanac of the World* (*Shōchū Bankoku Ichiran*) in 1869, which served as a prototype for *All the Countries of the World*, as it was also largely sourced from Cornell and Mitchell. It provided statistics about the world's continents, countries, and their economies, and it introduced readers to the idea of human races, into which the various people of the world were categorized. *All the Countries of the World* was a more fleshed out attempt at creating a world geography and became Fukuzawa's most popular geographic work. It was endorsed as a textbook by the Meiji government in the 1872 "Rules for Elementary School Education" that designated it as a recommended geography textbook. As a world geography, it supplemented domestic geographies that focused solely on Japan and instead focused entirely on the world outside of it.¹¹

An important aspect of Fukuzawa's early intellectual output was his access to American sources. Having traveled to the United States twice in the 1860s, Fukuzawa amassed a large collection of English language books.¹² As such, many of Fukuzawa's early texts were translations of influential English language essays and textbooks that dealt with themes of scientific, economic, and moral development in the modern world. In his autobiographical memoir, Fukuzawa boasted that his acquisition of American textbooks during his foreign trips contributed to their use in early

⁷ Christopher L. Hill, *National History and the World of Nations: Capital, State, and the Rhetoric of History in Japan, France, and the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 1-4; 155-157.

⁸ The book is also sometimes translated as *Things Western*.

⁹ Fukuzawa Yukichi, *The Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi*, Translated by Eiichi Kiyooka, Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1934, 133-175. Craig, *Civilization and Enlightenment*, 8-10.

¹⁰ Fukuzawa, *The Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi*, 133-149. As part of the state delegation working to negotiate port openings, exchange rates, and territorial borders with the West, Fukuzawa and the other delegates were reminded of their subordinate position vis-à-vis the West by their hosts, who cited civilizational differences.

¹¹ Takezawa, 9. The two endorsed domestic geographies are *Account of the Country of Japan* and *Imperial Geography*.

¹² Craig, *Civilization and Enlightenment*, 46; 97; 174.

Meiji education: “Use of American text books in my school was the cause of the adoption all over the country of American books for the following ten years or more. Naturally when students from my school, in turn, became teachers in various parts of the land, they used the texts they themselves had studied.”¹³ Fukuzawa’s claim has some basis, as his introduction of Cornell’s work led to her textbook being used in the creation of other textbooks, such as *First Steps in Geography*, published by the Ministry of Education in 1873.¹⁴

Fukuzawa used American geography textbooks to compose *All the Countries of the World*. American schools in the 19th and early 20th century approached geographic learning through the memorization of locations and significant facts. As mentioned, the book’s main sources are works by Sarah S. Cornell and Samuel A. Mitchell. Cornell, a teacher and school principal, became a writer later in life and joined the American Geographical and Statistical Society. Similarly, Mitchell began his career as a teacher and later became a textbook writer. Their geographic works were highly popular in the United States, aimed at primary, middle, and high schoolers.¹⁵

Compositional Differences Between Fukuzawa’s Text and His Sources

Although Fukuzawa derived his work from American textbooks, he made several notable changes. First, *All the Countries of the World* was tailored for a broad, non-elite Japanese audience, matching their literary expectations. In his introduction, he writes that “This work, *All the Countries of the World*, is intended solely to acquaint children and women with conditions in the wider world, to start them on the road to knowledge, and, by so doing, to lay the foundation for the future good fortune of Japan.”¹⁶ The singling out of children and women should not be taken as being Fukuzawa’s sole audience; the figuration of women and children as an audience was widely used throughout the late Edo and early Meiji to refer to the general public with only basic primary education, including male adults.¹⁷ To reach this audience, Fukuzawa completely altered his textbook’s visual layout and narrational structure to make it familiar to a domestic readership. American textbooks of the 19th century appear familiar to a 21st-century audience, with the entirety of the page occupied by a singular textual narrative that is at times interrupted by illustrations. Questions for the students come in the form of a catechism, a question-and-answer heuristic placed at the end of sections. In contrast, Fukuzawa’s composition weaves two simultaneous narratives – pictorial and textual – except for the concluding volume. Following the introduction in the first volume, every page is divided into two sections, separated by a thin line.

A pictorial section rests at the top of the page, occupying one fourth of the space. The remaining three fourths of the page consist of a textual section. The pictorial section houses

¹³ Fukuzawa, *The Autobiography of Fukuzawa Yukichi*, 212-213.

¹⁴ Saitō Motoko, “Shihan Gakkō Hensan ‘Chiri Shoho’ to sono Teihon (*Chiri-Shoho* and its original text),” *Chirigaku Hyōron* 78:6 (2005): 413-425.

¹⁵ Craig, *Civilization and Enlightenment*, 41-42. David A. Lanegran, “geographic education in the United States: Past, present and future,” *The SNU Journal of Education Research* 1 (1991): 44.

¹⁶ Fukuzawa Yukichi *Sekai Kunizukushi Ichi* (*All the Countries of the World, Volume*) (Tokyo: Keiō Gijuku Zōhan, 1869), 1. Translation taken from Craig, Albert M., “Warupuranku on the death of a schoolmaster,” *Kindai Nihon Kenkyū* 13 (1996): 2.

¹⁷ Araki, James T, “Otogi-zōshi and Nara-ehon: A field of study in flux,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 36 (1981): 1-20. As Araki shows with the common coupling of women and children as a readership in the Edo literary forms of *Otogi-zōshi* and *Nara-ehon*, the actual readership was more extensive than only women and children.

illustrations that Fukuzawa hand-copied from a variety of American books.¹⁸ The pictorial section's text focuses on political geography, while the textual section below explains the geographic positions of the countries relative to one another and their climate, with brief notes on their past and present accomplishments. The textual section's narrative is dry, moving rapidly from one country to the next, with its main didactic exercise being to teach students of the names and general locations of these areas. Each volume comes with a map to allow students to reference these places. Also, in adapting Cornell and Mitchell's texts, Fukuzawa chose to forego the catechism, doing away with questions and answers, allowing the text to flow more freely.



Image 1. Images of the heads of state of Austria, France, Russia and Great Britain. Image from *Mitchell's New School Geography* (Mitchell 1850: 39).

Fukuzawa copied these images in his text, though his drawings are notably less crisp and feature some changes (Sekai Kunizukushi San, p. 4). In Image 1 note the difference between the texts' composition. The left page shows Mitchell's catechism, providing questions and answers, whereas Fukuzawa's text is divided into pictorial and textual sections. Image on the left courtesy of the Library of Congress. Image on the right courtesy of the Fukuzawa Memorial Center for Modern Japanese Studies, Keio University.

Fukuzawa's role as localizer cannot be understated, as he transformed his source material to meet Japanese literary expectations. In changing the page layout, Fukuzawa adopted a layout familiar to the Japanese general readership. In keeping with late Edo literary customs, the syllabic style, calligraphic font, and consistent usage of woodblock print imagery, made the text palatable

¹⁸ A list of all images and the sources from which they are copied from is found in Minamoto, 7-9.

to a non-elite Japanese readership, masking its foreign content and origins. In his 1897 recollection, Fukuzawa revealed that this was indeed his strategy, mimicking the 5-7 syllabic tone of Utagawa Hiroshige's *The Fifty-Three Stations of the Tōkaidō*, a popular series of ukiyo-e woodblock prints dating to 1833.¹⁹ In emulating the tone, he planned for readers to be able to understand the context easily, giving the main text a rhythmic quality common in the late Edo period. He also consciously used calligraphy rather than a Western-style typeset to be more visually familiar to readers and to flow naturally during recitation.²⁰ When contrasted with his American sources, which structure paragraphs neatly and orderly as blocks, Fukuzawa's text appears more artisanal due to the flowing handwriting and the multiple sets of text. This approach, minus the syllabic tone, is present in Fukuzawa's other works in the mid to late 1860s. *All the Countries of the World* is one of the last works that played to these older literary standards, as his works after 1870 relied less on images.²¹

Second, while Cornell and Mitchell dedicated large parts of their textbooks to the United States, Fukuzawa made the American section significantly shorter, changing the focus of the work. Cornell and Mitchell's texts were meant for domestic geography, but Fukuzawa made it about the world, choosing to also virtually omit references to Japan found in his sources. In the first volume on Asia, he begins with Japan as the springboard from which his investigation begins, though almost no attention is placed on Japan; in fact, the only point in beginning with Japan is to acknowledge it as the common geographic space shared by both the writer and reader. In his 1897 recollection, Fukuzawa wrote that the purpose of *All the Countries of the World* was to educate people on "the importance of various things in the world, such as the cardinal directions of the world, the names of places, and the distances between places."²² Domestic geography was a separate genre that Fukuzawa saw little need to overlap with.

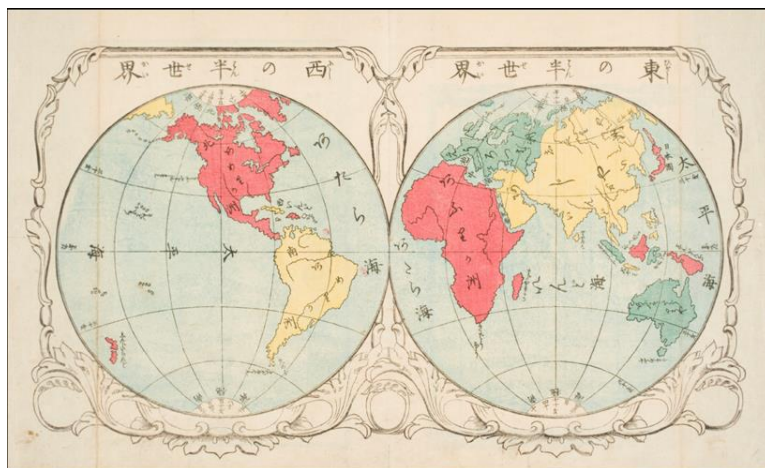


Image 2. A map of the world at the beginning of *All the Countries of the World* (Fukuzawa 1869a:12). Image courtesy of the Fukuzawa Memorial Center for Modern Japanese Studies, Keio University.

¹⁹ Fukuzawa *Zenshū Shogen*, 73.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

²¹ For further reading on the shift from Tokugawa to Meiji writing, see Maeda Ai, "Modern literature and the world of printing." Translated by Richard Okada. In *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity*. Edited by James Fujii. (USA: Duke University Press, 2004).

²² Fukuzawa Yukichi *Fukuzawa Zenshū Shogen* (Foreword to the Collected Works of Fukuzawa) (Tokyo: Jiji Shinpōsha, 1897), 73.

Third, Fukuzawa inverted the order of his content in contrast to his sources. The first five volumes of *All the Countries of the World* cover different continents: The first volume focuses on Asia, the second on Africa, the third on Europe, the fourth on North America, and the fifth on South America and Oceania. The final, sixth volume consists of the appendix that explains basic geographic theory and summarizes the lessons imparted in the other volumes. This structure was an inversion of Cornell and Mitchell, who began with general concepts of astronomy and the racial division of humanity, then proceeding with North America, Europe, and the rest of the world. In adapting these texts, Fukuzawa changed the starting point to Asia, where he began by describing Japan's neighbors. This reorganization helped to make his project more familiar to a domestic audience by positioning Japan as the text's point of origin, even if it received negligible coverage. By ending with theory, Fukuzawa's ordering gives some finality to his work, summarizing his approach to geography, in contrast to American textbooks that end rather abruptly after their last continent.

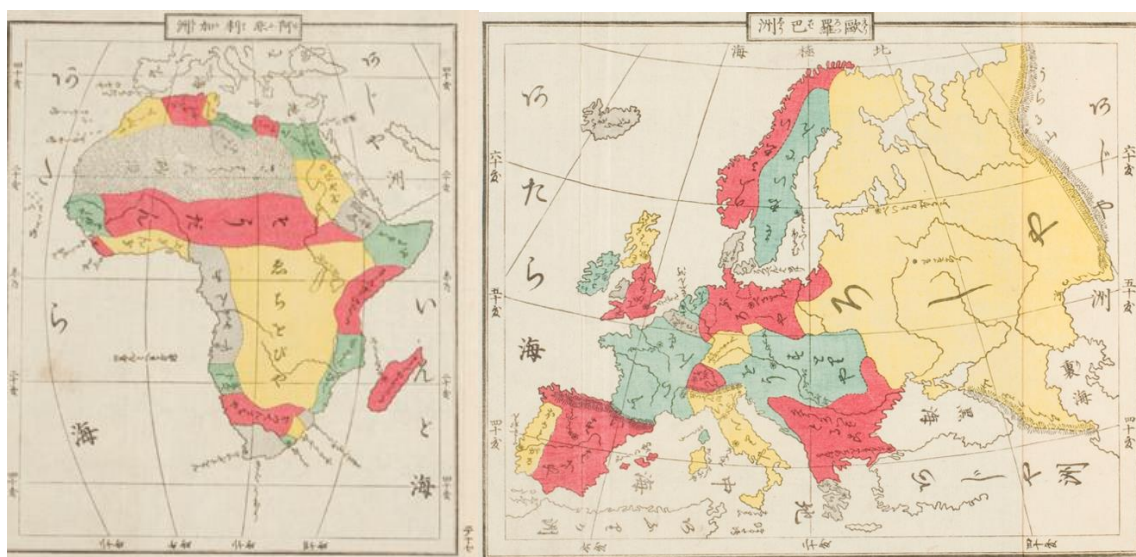


Image 3. Maps of Africa (Fukuzawa 1869b: 9) and Europe (Fukuzawa 1869c: 36). These maps were copies of maps found in Mitchell's text. Image courtesy of the Fukuzawa Memorial Center for Modern Japanese Studies, Keio University.

The fourth rupture with his sources can be found in how Fukuzawa framed race, which he translated as *jinshu*.²³ His sources presented a theory of five human races identified by skin color, which was the European and American convention in the 19th century. These five races were categorized as white (Europeans, *Yoroppa no jinshu*), yellow (Asians, *Ajia no jinshu*), red (People living in the mountainous parts of the Americas, *Amerika no sankanbu ni sumu jinshu*), black (Africans, *Afurika no jinshu*) and brown (Oceanic, *Taiyōshū no shimajima ni sumu hito*). This mapping of five continents with five races was a staple of racial science found in geography, paleontology, and biology in the West, and would continue to be used throughout the 19th and early

²³ For further reading on the evolution of the word *jinshu*, see Kawai Yuko, "Japanese as both a 'race' and a 'non-race': The politics of *jinshu* and *minzoku* and the depoliticization of Japaneseness," *In Race and Racism in Modern East Asia: Interactions, Nationalism, Gender and Lineage*. Edited by Rotem Kowner and Walter Demel. (Netherlands: Brill, 2015).

20th centuries.²⁴ While Fukuzawa adhered to this Western explanation of five races originating in different continents, he ultimately disagreed with the biological determinism present in the theory that destined non-Caucasian peoples, including the Japanese, as biologically fixed to be inferior. Instead, he looked at differences between races as a matter of civilizational stages, finding Mitchell's textbook useful as it stressed a theory of stages of civilization rather than biological determinism, unlike other Western geography textbooks. Accordingly, in the conclusion volume, where he presents his theoretical discussion, Fukuzawa echoes Mitchell, writing that disparities between the different races can be overcome through civilizational progress, listing four stages of human development, from the savage, the barbarous, the half-civilized, to the civilized and enlightened.²⁵ Fukuzawa maintained that such stages were historically flexible²⁶ – a line of reasoning that Fukuzawa would come back to when writing *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (*Bunmeiron no Gairyaku*, 1875). Fukuzawa's interpretation of Mitchell's stages theory offered a way out from the biological bind of racial determinism and confronted geopolitical realities, allowing Japan to escape its precarious position. In the map in Image 4, Fukuzawa's choice of imagery when writing about the various people of the world merits consideration. It is noteworthy that he selected images that visually conveyed the West's proximity to modern technology, such as these contrasting images in volume four.

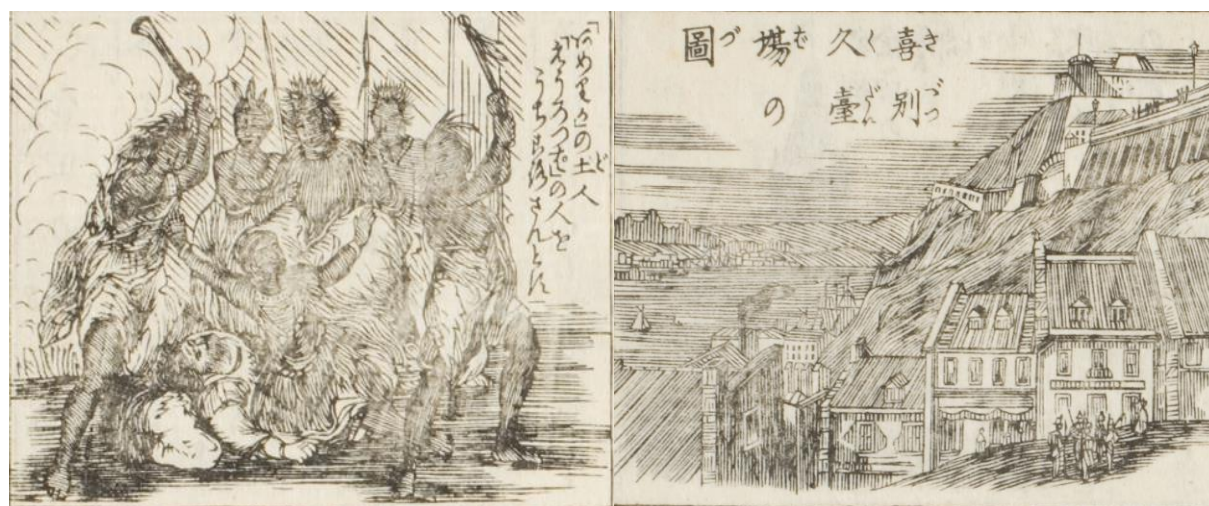


Image 4. Left: an image of the indigenous people of North America (Fukuzawa 1869d: 6.). Right: an image of Quebec City (Fukuzawa 1869d: 7). Images courtesy of the Fukuzawa Memorial Center for Modern Japanese Studies, Keio University.

²⁴ Fukuzawa, *Sekai Kunizukushi Ichi*, 13-14. This racial model was popularized by Johann Blumenbach, who was in turn influenced by other racial models from the likes of Immanuel Kant and Linnaeus. Jeremy W. Crampton, "Race, maps and the social construction of" in *The History of Cartography, Volume 6: Cartography in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Mark Monmonier, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 1232-1233.

²⁵ Craig, "Civilization and Enlightenment," 41-46. The idea of stages of civilization was translated from Mitchell, though Mitchell did not juxtapose race and civilization. Cornell also proposed a stage model, but she posited civilization and enlightenment as different categories, while Mitchell considered them one and the same.

²⁶ Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Sekai Kunizukushi Roku* (*All the Countries of the World, Volume 6*) (Tokyo: Keiō Gijuku Zōhan, 1869), 14-24.

Using *All the Countries of the World* for Classroom and Digital Access

The six original volumes of *All the Countries of the World* can be publicly accessed electronically via the Digital Collections of Keiō University Libraries where they are hosted alongside Fukuzawa's other first-edition works.²⁷ The site provides both a standard PDF download of the scanned books as well as an integrated viewer that allows for easy zooming and panning. I also suggest the Japanese Modern Textbook Digital Archive hosted by the National Institute for Educational Policy Research, which houses textbooks from the Meiji to postwar periods.²⁸ These archives are very useful to see not only the original Meiji textbooks but also how geography textbooks changed after Fukuzawa's time.

All the Countries of the World (not translated into English) can be a very effective resource in classrooms. For example, in a Japanese history course, where Fukuzawa's other translated texts are often assigned, it would be a valuable alternative primary source in the original Japanese language but highly accessible even to non-Japanese speaking students due to its rich visual content. I believe that the visuals of the text will prove valuable for content courses on modern Japan. It should spur discussion about the layout and typeset of the textbook, how an influential public intellectual understood and visualized different races, and how translation mattered in the early Meiji period. As mentioned above, *All the Countries of the World* was one of the most adopted geography textbooks in Meiji Japan; as such, it should prove useful in contextualizing the Meiji compulsory education system and what Meiji pupils learned in school, drawing comparisons to the visual experiences of students in our age of social media and digital learning.

All the Countries of the World can additionally prove useful as part of a primary document analysis exercise, even without assuming any knowledge of the Japanese language. Moreover, for students capable of reading Japanese, *All the Countries of the World* is an excellent way to learn to read pre-1945 texts written with *kyūjitai kanji*. Such texts can often feel daunting, as these *kanji* are not taught in typical language classes. I recommend reading the original alongside Saitō Hidehiko's translation into modern Japanese, which presents the text in a more legible fashion, making it easier to read Fukuzawa's calligraphy. This also provides students an opportunity to think about the nature of creating modern translations of texts with problematic content, and so I encourage it to be read alongside Elena Baibikov's article contextualizing and critiquing the translation.²⁹ By beginning with the pictorial sections, which have more legible *kanji* and *furigana*, advanced students can build confidence in their ability to use their knowledge of modern Japanese to read older texts.

²⁷ The Keiō University Libraries website is at <https://dcollections.lib.keio.ac.jp/en/fukuzawa>. Beyond Fukuzawa, the archive features Western medieval texts, classical Japanese and Chinese texts, and modern Japanese collections, including science and medical books, theatre picture-postcards, and Ukiyo-e (<https://dcollections.lib.keio.ac.jp/en>). It provides scholars outside of Japan with the opportunity to engage with early Meiji texts and familiarize themselves with both the composition and structure of these texts as well as the contemporaneous language used within them.

²⁸ The Japanese Modern Textbook Digital Archive is at <https://www.nier.go.jp/library/textbooks/>

²⁹ Elena Baibikov, "Recycled images: 21st century edition of Fukuzawa Yukichi's geography textbook." *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 18:5 (2020): 1-15.

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