

A CALL FOR OUTRAGE? A VICTORY FOR FREEDOM? THE ANNEXATION OF KOREA AND JAPANESE PARTICIPATION IN WORLD WAR I AS PORTRAYED IN THE *ATARASHII REKISHI KY KASHO* AND COMPETING JAPANESE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL HISTORY TEXTBOOKS

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We the undersigned support the efforts of Japanese historians, educators, and citizens to ensure that textbooks are consistent with values of peace, justice, and truth. We join them in protesting the recent decision of the Japanese Ministry of Education and Science to approve a new textbook that tramples on these values.¹

-International Scholars Appeal Concerning the New Japanese History Textbook

The above appeal, replete with fifteen pages of signatures, including those of a majority of prominent Asia specialists in the United States and many supporters of the lawsuits of Ienaga Sabur against textbook censorship in Japan, protests the approval of the nationalistic *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* for use in Japanese junior high schools starting in 2002. Yet, I argue, democracy, the protection of civil liberties, and the legacy of Ienaga Sabur thrive. The story of the approval of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* and its subsequent reception illustrates the health of these values, as well as those of peace, justice, and truth, in contemporary Japan. (The above cited appeal, and other actions of the group that sponsored it, contribute to their strength.)

In 2002, the Japanese Ministry of Education (*Monbush*)² approved the use of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* (*New History Textbook*) for use in Japanese public junior high schools. The approval of this textbook, authored by a right wing group intent on “reforming” Japanese education in order to promote patriotism and avoid a “masochistic view of history,” created an outcry both in Japan and abroad. Within months of the public release of the text, Japanese historians in Japan produced pamphlets and books outlining “factual errors” in the text and lengthy criticisms of the controversial historical interpretations it contained.³ In South Korea, the government temporarily recalled its ambassador from Tokyo and protesters attempted to force their way into the Japanese Embassy in Seoul to “demand that the textbooks be recalled.”⁴ English language scholars joined in the criticism of the text, including **its approval**, including publishing a lengthy article in *Critical Asian Studies* critiquing the content of the *Atarashii R ekishi Ky kasho*, circulating a petition signed

¹ Ienaga Sabur, Foreword, in *Rekishi no h tei: Ienaga ky kasho saiban to rekishigaku*, p. 3, as translated and cited by Richard H. Minear in Ienaga Sabur, *Japan's Past, Japan's Future: One Historian's Odyssey*, translated by Richard H. Minear, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2001), p. 187. “International Scholars’ Appeal Concerning the New Japanese History Textbook (Inaugurated on July 10, 2001),” <http://www.jca.apc.org/JWRC/center/english/appeal1.htm> (website visited on June 11, 2004, 8:25AM Central Time)

² The official complete translation of the ministry title into English is “The Ministry of Education, Sports, Science and Technology,” or *Monbukagakush* in Japanese. This article will refer to this ministry by the more familiar appellations *Monbush* or Ministry of Education.

³ For factual errors, see: “Machigae dareke no *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*”, 2001, in *Rekishigaku kenky kai*, editors, *Reksihika ga yomu “tsukuru kai” ky kasho*, Aoki shoten, 2001.

⁴ “Japan’s Refusal to Revise Textbooks Angers Its Neighbors,” *New York Times*, 10 July 2001, p. A3.

by many prominent American specialists in Asian studies, and organizing panels at scholarly conferences critiquing the text from cover to cover.⁵ Given the volume of criticism, ranging from Nelson's careful analysis to more intemperate and self-righteous chest pounding, many readers may question the need for further ruminations on the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*, and whether the process of criticizing the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* has crossed the bounds of useful scholarly inquiry into an academic game of piling on.

However, the debate in English over the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* has engendered more misunderstanding about than enlightenment regarding Japanese education. Within the English language media (as well as, from my personal observations from within the hallways of academic institutions), commentators often discussed the textbook with little regard for the broader context in which the Ministry of Education approved the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*. Further, in many cases they have not read the text. This article intends to shift the focus of the debate from continued declarations of disagreement with the content of the textbook to a broader consideration of the place of the text within Japanese education and the place of these debates within the broader scope of Japanese history. Given the timeliness of the issue, an on-line journal provides an apt forum for this discussion.

Despite the volume of writing about this textbook, numerous useful questions remain to be asked (and answered) regarding it, related to politics, international relations, and education. This essay primarily analyzes the educational impact of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*'s interpretations of Japanese history. Only a handful of public junior high schools in Japan (less than twenty as of this writing) use the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*. (While it goes beyond the scope of this article, a little research might show that it is the LEAST adopted approved textbook in the history of postwar Japan in any subject, but that is more a question for trivial pursuit than an academic journal.) Nonetheless, Japan has a textbook approval process, making the approval of the text, regardless of its use, a subject of debate. Described in broad terms, the textbook authorization system works as follows. The Ministry of Education releases a course of study. Private publishers then write textbooks that cover the topics mandated in the course of study and submit them to the textbook authorization committee, which operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. Technically, the textbook authorization committee is supposed to evaluate all drafts to verify accuracy and coverage of all mandated material. The authorization committee then returns the drafts of the textbooks to the publishers, with both suggested and required revisions. The textbook companies next submit revised versions of the text for final approval. Public schools may only adopt textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education. In reality, particularly in the case of social studies texts, the

⁵ "International Scholars' Appeal Concerning the New Japanese History Textbook (Inaugurated on July 10, 2001)," <http://www.jca.apc.org/JWRC/center/english/appeal1.htm>; 15 page list of signatories as of June 1, 2002, http://www.bcasnet.org/campaigns/campaign1_a2.htm; Introduction to the appeal by Yoshiko Nozaki, Richard Minear, and Mark Selden, <http://www.bcasnet.org/campaigns/campaign1.htm>; Center for Research and Documentation of Japan's War Responsibility, "Fact Sheet" accompanying appeal, <http://www.jca.apc.org/JWRC/center/english/appeal2.htm>; All web sites cited on June 11, 2004 between 8:00AM and 8:30 AM central time.

John K. Nelson. "Tempest in a Textbook: A Report on the New Middle-School History Textbook in Japan," *Critical Asian Studies* 34:1 (2002), 129-148. Link to abstract and full text in Ebscohost: <http://search.epnet.com/direct.asp?an=6663599&db=aph>

textbook authorization committee has defined “inaccuracy” extremely broadly, using its power to censor material with which the committee members disagreed.⁶

While I, like the majority of mainstream scholars of Japan in both Japan and the United States, argue that the Monbusho used the approval process inappropriately as a tool for censorship, especially against Ienaga Saburō, in the 1960s and 1970s (and to a more limited extent in the 1980s), I hold a minority viewpoint that it has been used inappropriately to censor right-wing textbook authors throughout the 1990s.⁷

Whether we agree with it or not, the Japanese government, like many nations, approves textbooks for adoption by public schools, giving the appearance of sanctioning certain historical interpretations, thereby exposing themselves to domestic and foreign criticism.⁸ Without approval from the *Monbusho*, the textbooks cannot be used in class. In that regard, the approval of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* illustrates the outer limits of what the Ministry considers “acceptable” history.

A broader study of Japanese secondary education indicates that the textbook approval process has had numerous patterns. One important pattern relates to the relative amount of diversity or uniformity amongst the different social studies textbooks. During certain periods, the textbooks read almost like copies of one another. At other points, different books have presented widely varying pictures of history. With this pattern in mind, this article answers three questions. 1. What are the dominant interpretations presented in the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* regarding two key events in the spread of Japanese colonialism: the Russo-Japanese War and the subsequent annexation of Korea; and Japanese participation in World War I? 2. How do the more controversial interpretations within it compare to the interpretations of history presented in the other approved texts? 3. Is the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* a symbol of a hallmark movement to conservatism in Japanese texts, or do the more widely used texts indicate that, from the point of view **solely** of the education of Japanese junior high school children, the uproar over the approval of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* may be much ado about nothing?

This article examines the portrayal in all currently approved Japanese junior high school history textbooks of the two events outlined in question one above, which the *Monbusho* mandates must be covered. Although complaints about the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* encompass numerous other topics, most notably treatment of the Nanjing Massacre and the comfort women, the events under consideration here provide a useful lens for analyzing the impact of *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*. Both events played a significant role in the expansion of Japanese colonialism in East Asia, and the interpretations of these events, especially of the motivations behind Japanese actions during these times, have been central to the international criticisms of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*. In terms of assessing the **educational impact** of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*,

⁶ For a description of the textbook approval system itself, see Byron K. Marshall, *Learning to be Modern: Japanese Political Discourse on Education*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 184-186

⁷ Numerous works in English analyze the Ienaga lawsuits. See, for example, Ienaga, *Japan's Past, Japan's Future*, pp. 151-187; Marshall, *Learning to Be Modern*, pp. 185-188, 212-23.

⁸ For an insightful analysis of the meaning of the textbook authorization system within an international and historic context, see Laura Hein and Mark Selden, “The Lessons of War, Global Power, and Social Change,” in Laura Hein and Mark Selden, (eds.), *Censoring History: Citizenship and Memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States* (Armonk and London: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), pp. 3-50.

consideration of these events (as opposed to the more widely debated Nanjing Massacre and comfort women issue) is vital for three reasons.

First, treatment of the Nanjing Massacre and comfort women issues have already generated considerable attention in the English language scholarly world, and careful analysis of different issues contributes more to the English language debate at this point.⁹ Second, because of the great deal of media attention generated by both of these issues in the Japanese popular media, a Japanese citizen should have some awareness of these events and the standard historical interpretations of their meanings (even if they stubbornly refuse to accept the overwhelming evidence regarding them) regardless of the contents of junior high school textbooks. (These events also are covered in some detail in most high school texts.) Third, various groups have argued against the appropriateness of exposing junior high school aged students to sexual or graphically violent material related to comfort women or the Nanjing Massacre. (I contend that the argument is little more than a red herring.) The question of age appropriateness is irrelevant to the issues considered in this paper. Hence, this discussion can focus on education and historical interpretation, as opposed to the complicated discussion of age appropriateness for inclusion of sexuality and graphic violence in the classroom. Finally, a broader reading of the texts indicates that the conclusions in this paper generally hold true for other controversial topics addressed in the textbooks.

Reading the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* with an eye towards its use (and usefulness) in a junior high school classroom, yields three key findings:

1. While the book contains factual inaccuracies, the problems with the book do not lie primarily in outright errors. (And, to the extent that the errors exist, they have already been adequately aired in other forums.¹⁰) Rather, the book makes statements that are technically accurate, but misleading.
2. In comparison to other junior high school texts, the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* requires greater background knowledge of Japanese history in order to read and comprehend it. Written in a defensive tone, the book appears targeted more as a defense of the views of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho o tsukurukai*, the group that authored the text, to the general public, than aimed at educating junior high school students.¹¹
3. The *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* presents an interpretation markedly different than the interpretations in all of the more widely used texts.

The opening lines of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*'s presentation of the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War illustrate this pattern of presenting technically accurate, but misleading, information. The textbook emphasizes that Japan's victory over "white, Imperialist Russia" inspired other nations to seek independence.¹² The authors stress this aspect of the Russo-Japanese War at two different points in the textbook, first including a graphic textbox entitled "The Russo-Japanese

⁹ Nelson, "Tempest in a Textbook."

¹⁰ For factual errors, see: "Machigae dareke no *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*", Appendix, pp. 4-31.

¹¹ In fact, the authors presented a full defense of their original text. Nishio Kanji, et.al. *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho "tsukurukai" no shuch* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten), 2001.

¹² *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* (Tokyo: Fus sha, 2001),223.

War and Awakening Independence” that would catch the eye even of a student skimming the book. This section features leaders of Chinese, Indian, Iranian, and Egyptian anti-imperialist/independence movements extolling the influence of Japan as an inspiration for their battles.¹³ The authors repeat this point in a different context fifteen pages later, commenting that “For the Asian countries that received courage through Japan’s victory, nationalism was kindled.”¹⁴ As historical statements, the above excerpts are, technically, accurate. The Japanese victory did serve as an inspiration to other “non-Western” nations at the time. However, the presentation gives the reader little idea, without making a number of inferences that most junior high school students are incapable of making, that the war was an important step in Japan’s road to imperialism and domination of much of Asia.

Other texts draw a more balanced picture of the war. For example, *Shin ch gakk rekishi*, perhaps the lowest level textbook approved in terms of both language and conceptual sophistication, explains that “Through the Russo-Japanese War, Japan secured its rule over Korea and also stole territory from Russia and China. On the other hand, people in North Africa and Asia, aside from Japan’s neighbors, took great notice of the first incident of a non-Caucasian nation defeating a Caucasian nation, and were given courage.”¹⁵ In the following passage, *Atarashii Shakai Rekishi* illuminates positive and negative outcomes of the War by explaining the impact of the Russo-Japanese War on Japanese national consciousness.

The victory of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War stimulated India, China, and other Asian nations and increased their activity for modernization and ethnic independence that they had learned from Japan. On the other hand, a consciousness of Japan as one of the great powers was born amongst the [Japanese] people, and the attitude of superiority to the rest of Asia was strengthened.¹⁶

While working within the same constraints of space and audience considerations, the other texts portray a more balanced picture of the influence of the Russo-Japanese War internationally than the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* does.

The *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*’s rendering of the annexation and domination of Korea is an even more disturbing example of often technically accurate, but highly deceptive, history. More importantly, the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* and all other approved texts differ even more starkly in their interpretations of this historical episode. While the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* concedes that there were negative aspects to the annexation for Koreans, the overall interpretation argues that Japan almost was forced into annexing Korea due to the international situation and emphasizes the benefits of modernization Korea received.

The authors draw on images of European power politics, explaining that “For Japan, a new need came about [after the Russo-Japanese War], as a great power, to continue the policy of balancing the powers of all the other great powers.”¹⁷ In other words, they contend that Japan

¹³ Ibid., 223. (bottom).

¹⁴ Ibid., 238.

¹⁵ *Shin ch gakk rekishi: nihon no rekishi to sekai* (Tokyo: Shosui, 2001), 151.

¹⁶ *Atarashii Shakai Rekishi* (Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki, 2001), 143.

¹⁷ *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*, 238.

simply was playing the colonial game required of all great powers at the time. They then claim, more explicitly, that “The Japanese government thought that the annexation of Korea was necessary for the defense of Japan’s safety and [defense of] its rights and interests in Manchuria.”¹⁸ This pattern of deceptive but technically defensible wording continues in their treatment of the Korean people’s reaction to annexation. “Within Korea, there was a portion of the population that raised its voices in acceptance of annexation. However, there was severe resistance against losing ethnic independence, and after that, activity in favor of restoring independence became deeply rooted.”¹⁹ The authors never concretely explain why such severe resistance existed. Instead, they describe Japanese activities in Korea as follows: “After the annexation of Korea, Japan carried out a land survey in order to prepare the Korean peninsula, which Japan had colonized, for the development of irrigation facilities and railroads. However, because through the land survey not a small number of farmers were chased away from the land they had cultivated until then, and the policy of Japanese language education and cultural assimilation was advanced, feelings of antipathy towards Japan by the people of Korea were strengthened.”²⁰

This section illustrates a number of representative patterns of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*. First, with the exception of the argument that Japan developed “a new need,” as a great power, to take over Korea, everything excerpted above is, at least in a strict technical sense, accurate. Second, while the statement about “a new need” to take over Korea is a debatable historical interpretation that many historians disagree with, it is a reasonably arguable proposition. Third, the overall picture created in the text emphasizes the needs of Japan to take over Korea and the benefits of the annexation for Korea, while minimizing the negative consequences of the annexation for the Korean people. The book’s purported audience, junior high school students, should not be expected to have much, if any, background knowledge about the topic. It is hard to imagine that most junior high school students would walk away from reading that chapter with any idea why Korean people were so upset about the annexation.

The other books, using descriptions easy for junior high school students to comprehend, illustrate concretely why Korean people were upset with the occupation, beyond referring to desires for “ethnic independence” or stating that “not a small number of farmers” were chased away from their land, without explanation of the fate of these farmers. For example, in relation to the land survey, various texts describe a process in which “land was stolen from Koreans” who “had to struggle to survive . . . and emigrated to Japan and northeastern China . . . where they received much discrimination,” “many farmers lost their land and became tenant farmers,” or that through the survey many Korean farmers “lost their land” and “became tenant farmers” or “migrated to Japan or Manchuria” where they faced “various economic and social discrimination.”²¹ In descriptions of the assimilation policy, even the relatively conservative (at least for the period under consideration) *Ch gaku shakai: rekishiteki bun’ya*, the text that is the most similar to the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* in interpretation, explains that through the policy of teaching Japanese history and

¹⁸ Ibid., 240.

¹⁹ Ibid., 240.

²⁰ Ibid., 240.

²¹ *Ch gaku rekishi mirai o mitsumete* (Tokyo: Ky iku Shuppansha, 2001), 162; *Shakaika ch gakusei no rekishi: Nihon no ayumi to sekai no ugoki* (Tokyo: Teikoku Shoin, 2001), 171; *Atarashii shakai rekishi*, 144-145.

language, the government intended to “unsettle the Korean people’s habits and culture.”²² Predictably, the other texts provide more explicit phrasing, explaining that Japan tried to “erase Korean language and culture” or “rob Koreans of their ethnic consciousness and pride.”²³

Textbook coverage of Japanese participation in World War I illustrates similar patterns to the presentation of the Russo-Japanese War and annexation of Korea.

Factual errors within the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* are not central to the problem. Rather, the book presents an interpretation of the motivations for Japanese participation in the war that differs from most contemporary mainstream interpretations. Unlike the previous issues, however, the more widely used texts vary more widely amongst each other in their treatments of Japanese participation in World War I.

The principle issues of disagreement amongst the texts are the motivation for entering World War I and the presentation of the Twenty-One Demands Japan made on China. (The Twenty-One Demands were a set of proposals that the Japanese government forcefully submitted to the Chinese government in 1915. A number of them would have impinged significantly on Chinese sovereignty.) In terms of the basic narrative, most historians can agree that the Japan’s official reason for entering World War I was based on the provisions of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, that Japan gained numerous former German holdings in Asia and the South Pacific north of the Equator as a result of World War I, and that Japan issued the Twenty-One Demands to China during World War I. All of the texts, in some form, present this narrative. However, the explanations for Japan’s actions range from a picture of Japan fulfilling its treaty obligations to England (the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*) to interpretations declaring that Japan entered World War I **in order to** gain possession of German bases and colonies in Asia.

The *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* explains, “Japan, which was being attached to the Triple Entente, participated in the war based on the provisions of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and declared war on Germany. [Japan] occupied the German colony of Qingdao on the Shandong Peninsula and German colonies in the Pacific Ocean north of the equator.”²⁴ Technically, the above statement is correct. However, it does not raise the possibility that Japan entered World War I with the goal of gaining increased colonial holdings. While The *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* concedes that the fifth group of demands within the Twenty-One Demands would have significantly impinged on the sovereignty of China, it introduces this topic in a separate section from World War I and does not clearly indicate the relationship between the timing of the Twenty-One Demands and the international political situation of World War I. A different text, *Atarashii Shakai Rekishi*, uses a similar strategy in interpreting Japan’s entrance into the War, stating that “Japan participated in the War on the side of the Allied Powers based on the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.”²⁵ However, this text, the closest to the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* in its presentation of World War I, states clearly that Japan took advantage of the “opportunity” in which the “West’s” attention was elsewhere to force the recognition of the Twenty-One Demands.²⁶

²² *Ch gaku shakai: Rekishiteki bun’ya* (Osaka: Osaka Shoseki, 2001), 134.

²³ *Shakaika ch gakusei no rekishi*, 171; *Ch gaku rekishi mirai o mitsumete*, 162.

²⁴ *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*, 244.

²⁵ *Atarashii Shakai Rekishi*, 152.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 156.

Other texts offer a far different picture of the war. One work explains:

Using the reason of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Japan declared war against Germany. This [declaration] was because of the thinking that while the Western countries were fighting in Europe, Japan could occupy the German base of Qingdao on China's Shandong Peninsula and their South Pacific islands. Furthermore, Japan thought it would increase its power in China while the various Western countries could not think about China.²⁷

Other texts also clarify the connection between the Twenty-One Demands and World War I. For example, *Shin Ch gakk Rekishi* argues that “taking advantage of the various European countries lack of time to think about Asia during the major war, Japan gave the Twenty-One Demands to the government of Yuan Shikai [the official president of China at the time] with the aim of expanding Japan's sphere of influence in China.”²⁸

The coverage of World War I in the texts reinforces the pattern illustrated in the presentation of the Russo-Japanese War and subsequent annexation of Korea. The *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* presents material that is technically accurate, but misleading, especially for a junior high school audience. However, the picture is slightly more complicated in the coverage of World War I. For this topic, the differences between the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* and the other texts are not as wide.

Concluding Points

The analysis of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* in comparison with more widely adopted texts, leads to six conclusions and issues to be raised for further debate.

1. For the period under consideration, the principle problem with the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* is not one, for the most part, of outright inaccuracies. Rather, it is a problem of an extremely unbalanced and deceptive presentation.
2. The *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* is far different than the more widely used junior high school texts.
3. The more widely used junior high school texts do contain some large lacunae, especially concerning Japanese colonialism. However, considering that the students will study the material again in high school, the general presentation is relatively balanced, and, I would argue, gives students a broad understanding of Japanese history during this period, the coverage of the annexation of Korea and World War I in approved junior high school texts should not be an issue that should provoke public outrage over the teaching of history in Japanese junior high schools.
4. Basing widespread criticism of Japanese education on the contents of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* is unfounded and intellectually dishonest.

²⁷ *Shakaika ch gakusei no rekishi*, 186-87.

²⁸ *Shin ch gakk rekishi: nihon no rekishi to sekai*, 166.

5. While the educational impact of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* on junior high school students is insignificant, the perception of government sanctioning of the version of history presented in the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* is a cause of concern.

6. As an open challenge raised by the issues outlined in this article, we need a discussion of the inconsistencies in the arguments of people attacking the approval of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*. Specifically, if people argued that “government censorship” was the problem in the Ienaga Sabur case, it is inconsistent in some respects to complain when the government does not censor right-wing textbook authors, no matter how repugnant we may find their views. It is important to remember that the majority of problems with the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho* are those of interpretation and balance, not factual “accuracy.” (The textbook authorization committee forced the correction of numerous errors and omissions that existed in the original draft of the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*.²⁹) The Monbush approved textbooks with markedly different interpretations than the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*, and it is those textbooks that are being assigned to junior high school students. There is a large difference between protesting a government’s decision to disapprove an interpretation we agree with--as happened in the Ienaga case--and protesting because the government allows the use of a book we disagree with--as is the case for the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*. Any specialist of contemporary East Asia should reflect carefully before, in essence, demanding that a government officially declare an **interpretation** of history not sufficiently progressive.

In the end, we have viewed a relatively healthy situation in Japan, in which a textbook with interpretations many find repugnant was approved, but the Japanese media and scholarly communities rapidly and effectively responded by making cogent arguments pointing out the problems with the *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho*’s interpretations, and schools, with very few exceptions, chose texts with a more balanced presentation of history.

²⁹ “*Rekishi ky kasho kentei iken oyobi sh seibun ichiran (Fus shabun)*, Document 1 in the appendix of Nishio et.al., *Atarashii Rekishi Ky kasho “tsukurukai” no shuch* .