

## History Textbook Controversies Regarding China in Japan

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### Abstract

In spring 2005, demonstrations ‘against Japan’ were organized in several cities in the People’s Republic of China. In Japan, these demonstrations were called ‘anti-Japanese’ and people from all walks of life considered that one of the main reasons for this growing anti-Japanese sentiment in China was caused by the ‘patriotism education’<sup>1)</sup> that was supported by the Chinese government during the 1990s. Many Japanese equated ‘patriotism education’ with ‘anti-Japanese education’. Some even stressed that the result of patriotism education planted the seed of ‘anti-Japanese’ thought into Chinese youths.<sup>2)</sup> This view did not begin in 2005, but can be traced back to before World War II. Similar problems had occurred during the 1920’s and 1970’s, when Japanese people started to pay more and more attention to information relating to Japan that was printed in Chinese textbooks. Each time this was noted, some critical views began to appear. Why did the Japanese media pay close attention to information relating to Japan published in foreign countries? Did this have something to do with Japan’s perception of foreign countries? Moreover, what information in Chinese textbooks concerned Japanese society and received its criticism? Was this the cardinal reason that the historical viewpoints between China and Japan began to be perceived differently? The author considered the phenomenon that China and Japan mutually questioned the descriptions in each other’s textbooks,

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1) ‘(Editorial) Japan and China conference - Danger of “patriotism no crime”,’ *The Asahi Shimbun* 18<sup>th</sup>.April.2005. ‘(A study - textbooks of China and Korea) China (1) Teach Japan Nanking Massacre’, *The Sankei Shimbun*, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2005. Sumio Yamagiwa, ‘An urgent theme: The Chinese leaders shook with anti-Japanese riot - Caught in their own trap by patriotism education’, *The Reformer (Kaikakusha)*, July.2005, pp.20–23.

2) ‘The anti-Japanese demonstration is “the result of Patriotism and anti-Japanese education” criticized the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology’, *The Asahi Shimbun*, 18<sup>th</sup>. April.2005. ‘Abe of Liberal Democratic Party of Japan declared about anti-Japanese problem “China should also put some effort”’, *The Nikkei*, 23<sup>th</sup>.June.2005. Jin Matsubara ‘This is the anti-Japanese education manual—the way to make sure students REMEMBER the grudge for Japan? (Special Feature: Goodbye, China’s anti-Japanese)’, *Voice*, July.2005, pp.94–101.

this truth itself indicated that their conceptions of history and the content revealed in the textbooks of these two countries were fundamentally different. Therefore, in this paper we discuss the history textbooks in China and Japan.

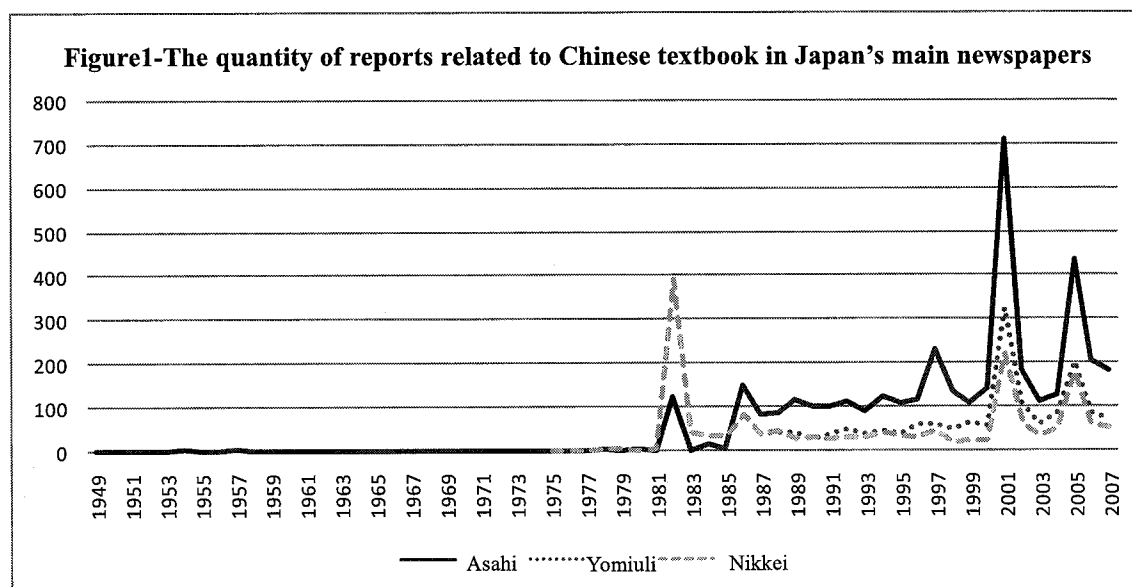
### I. Problems concerning Chinese textbooks in Japanese society

During the initial period after World War II, although there were some articles in the Japanese media that introduced the education situation in foreign countries, but before 1960, they were basically focused on those parts regarding Japan and criticism was not a major part of the review.<sup>3)</sup> After the 1970s, along with the development of Japan's economy and the normalization of China-Japan relations, Japan's media and academic circles started to investigate the image of Japan in both Japanese and Chinese textbooks. Their primary intention was to understand the mutual perception of both countries and to analyze how it affected the relationship between the two countries. For example, after China and Japan restored diplomatic relations, some magazines such as 'Monthly Journal of Chinese Affairs' and 'Asahi Asia Reading' published some special editions reviewing the content regarding China in Japanese textbooks.<sup>4)</sup> However, at the same time, some criticism about the descriptions relating to Japan in Chinese textbooks also appeared. For example, the July 8th 1970 edition of Asahi Shimbun published an article on the topic 'the revised textbooks criticized the Sato Cabinet, China, and Japan militarism'. In this article the caution about the content regarding Japan in Chinese textbooks was proposed.

Figure 1 shows the summary of the retrieval results concerning articles in Japan's main newspapers related to Chinese textbooks after the war. Due to the retrieval system may use a different year; the retrieval result of newspapers and years were actually as follows: 'The Asahi Shimbun' (1949–2007), 'The Yomiuri Shimbun' (1986–2007) and 'The Nikkei' (1975–2007).

3) Akio Saito 'China— The national language textbook of elementary school', *A new classroom*, April.1952, pp21–24. 'The national language textbook of high school', *Institute of Chinese Affairs*, September.1953, pp.24–50. 'Communist China (Volume one)—Textbooks of world', *The Asahi Shimbun* 6<sup>th</sup>. February.1957 evening paper. 'Communist China (Volume two)—Textbooks of world', *The Asahi Shimbun* 7<sup>th</sup>. February.1957 evening paper, etc.

4) Akio Saito 'Pekingology and national education—For special feature (Chinese image in the textbook—Joint Communiqué of the Government of Japan and the Government of the people's Republic of China and the actual situation of the description in textbook (Special feature))', *Monthly Journal of Chinese Affairs*, April.1973, pp.43–46. Shinji Kojima 'Joint Communiqué of the Government of Japan and the Government of the people's Republic of China and the problem of history education—reading the criticism about militaristic education from Asia (Chinese image in the textbook—from the report of The Japan Association for Modern China Studies—report History researcher and history education—the actual situation of "the consideration to education" in social studies textbook of elementary and high school)', *Asahi Asia Review*, June.1973, pp.72–78, etc.



Source: Figure 1 was made by author according to the retrieval results of the retrieval systems of *The Asahi Shimbun*, *The Yomiuri Shimbun* and *The Nikkei*.

From the data in Figure 1, the results show that the quantity of reports regarding Chinese textbooks as published by Japan's three full-sized newspapers increased after the 1980s, and the quantity of reports increased at basically the same time periods, mainly in 1982, 1986, 1998, 2001 and 2005. Although the quantity appeared to decrease after 2005, it still maintained at a high level. By analyzing these five periods of time when the quantity increased, it was noted that four of the times completely matched those times when the problem of Japanese history textbooks appeared in China. The other time period, 1998, matched the visit of Ex-General Secretary Jiang Zemin to Japan and his many comments about Japan's history perception problems. For example, after the textbook problem in Japan that took place in 2001, *The Yomiuri Shimbun* published a report on May 18th on China's recommendations for revising the text. The title was 'the 8 requests of modification about "history textbooks", how about the description in China's national unified textbooks?'. This report also criticized the content in Chinese textbooks.<sup>5)</sup> A report also carried criticism about Chinese textbooks gradually increased after 2001. This indicated that when Japan's history textbooks or their view of history was criticized, Japan's media tended to counter-attack by

5) Hiroyuki Sugiyama 'There was a textbook for the bashing of "Obscene Japan" from China', *Shokun*, January.2004, pp.213-221. 'Modern Japan China relation history—the history textbook for the hatred of Japan and to justify the Chinese Communist Party (Special feature: Thorough criticism—Chinese history textbook)', *Choices for Tomorrow*, January.2005, pp.10-14. 'The 300 mistakes in Chinese textbook, made by instructor of Mie University, used one year, revised this year', *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, 9<sup>th</sup>.May.2006. 'Teach in School "The past with Japan", to understand Chinese and Korea textbook from basic—A spread special feature', *The Yomiuri Shimbun* 26<sup>th</sup>.May.2005, etc.

criticizing opposite party's textbooks and the content of their education. Until 2004, these critical views on Chinese textbooks only appeared in civic settings like the media but, during 2005, the Japanese government was so influenced by public opinion that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials also started to seek the root of 'anti-Japanese' from the history education in China, and asked the Chinese government to improve their history education.<sup>6)</sup> With the development of this situation and Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs lodging a protest with the Chinese government, many Japanese scholars started to raise alarm about this inflammatory kind of public opinion.<sup>7)</sup>

As described in the preceding text, the criticism about Chinese textbooks that existed in Japanese society began from domestic public opinion, and ultimately resulted in asking the Chinese government, through diplomacy way, to revise their textbooks. This phenomenon had been building before World War II. For instance, before World War II, the team studies project carried out a detailed investigation called 'the research of the textbook problem between Japan and China before World War II', (Japan-China Friendship Center, Japan and China Historical Studies Center, "Research Fund for the Project about Modern History of Japan and China"). Yukio Sunayama, one of the team studies project members, carried out a thorough analysis of the critique of Japanese society regarding Chinese textbooks before World War II. His main research results were published in the 2005 April issue of 'Monthly Journal of Chinese Affairs'.<sup>8)</sup>

In his paper, he pointed out the similarity of Japanese media attacks on Chinese textbooks before WWII and after 2005. He particularly noted that the so-called 'anti-Japanese textbooks' was only one of the slogans of 'anti-Japanese demonstrations'; there was no evidence that 'anti-Japanese textbooks' caused 'anti-Japanese demonstrations'. However, over a period of time, 'anti-Japanese textbooks' and 'anti-Japanese education' were regarded as inseparable essentials of 'anti-Japanese demonstrations', or were viewed as the original stimulus for these demonstrations. Considering from this angle, it's very similar to the situation of Japan

6) 'Mr. Tang, the criticism of Japan history education, the counter argument of Machimura Foreign Minister of Japan, the arguments are parallel lines', *The Sankei Shimbun*, 19<sup>th</sup>.April.2005. 'The investigation and opinion of Chinese textbook, Machimura Foreign Minister of Japan', *The Asahi Shimbun*, 25<sup>th</sup>.April.2005.

7) Yori-hisa Namiki 'Team studies project of "The research about the textbook problem between Japan and China before WWII": Friendly clubhouse of Japan and China, Japan and China historical studies center "Help the research about Modern history of Japan and China" <Special feature>the research of textbook problem before WWII (1)', *Monthly Journal of Chinese Affairs*, March.2005, pp.1-3. Hiroaki Osato 'Time flies, the textbook problem in Yokohama Overseas Chinese school before WWII (Special feature: the research of textbook problem before WWII(2))', *Monthly Journal of Chinese Affairs*, April.2005. pp.45-47. Shigeto Sonoda 'To get out of the "nationalism game" —the view of anti-Japanese demonstration in China', *Sekai*, July.2005, pp.78-85. etc.

8) Yukio Sunayama "'Anti-Japanese textbook of China" the genealogy of the criticism (Special feature = the research of textbook problem pre-war (2))', *Monthly Journal of Chinese Affairs*, April.2005, pp.1-19.

criticizing Chinese textbooks and the development of the affair in Japan after 2005.

Moreover in his paper, Sunayama also pointed out that the cause of 'anti-Japanese textbooks' demonstrations was based on Japan's behaviour; this phenomenon could be seen in all three high-tide periods when Japan criticized Chinese textbooks. So, the descriptions about Japanese behaviour in 'anti-Japanese' textbooks were just a reflection of Japan's behaviour at that time. Therefore, some men of insight in the Japanese government and non-government organizations proposed that criticizing the information in Chinese textbooks that were true was not correct.

At the end of his paper, Sunayama also analyzed the causality between the deepening of Japan's aggressive acts and the heating up of criticism against 'anti-Japanese textbooks'. First, the tide of criticizing 'anti-Japanese textbooks' was rising in Japanese society, then various 'anti-Japanese textbooks'<sup>9)</sup> were translated and published in Japan. Then, using the intensification of 'anti-Japanese demonstrations' as a pretext, Japan started military aggression in the northern region of China. The subsequent protest activities in China towards this Japanese aggression were again regarded as a new 'anti-Japanese' activity. In order to ban the 'anti-Japanese demonstrations', Japan asked China to forbid the use of 'anti-Japanese textbooks'; thus forming the circulation structure of aggravated aggressive acts.

In summary, the criticism of Chinese textbooks, both before WWII and after WWII, had similar aspects, as follows. (1) After criticizing 'anti-Japanese or 'repel-Japanese' textbooks in China, the translation and publishing of Chinese textbooks was carried out. (2) Although the 'anti-Japanese' or 'repel-Japanese' activities were basically brought on by the Japanese government's official statements and behaviours, some of the Japanese media not only did not mention this truth in their reports, but also considered 'anti-Japanese' or 'repel-Japanese' textbooks as the prime culprit responsible for creating 'anti-Japanese' sentiment. (3) Basically, all the climaxes of the criticism problems with Chinese textbooks tallied with the periods when problems appeared in China-Japan relations. (4) The society and environment that criticized Chinese education content was formed by media reports, then through diplomacy way, added the pressure on China to revise the content of textbooks. (5) At the same time, some Japanese scholars also felt uncertainty about Japan's public criticism and proposed that a calm analysis of Chinese society and education was needed; this sounded the alarm of extreme public opinion.

However, the criticism regarding 'anti-Japanese' education in China originating

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9) *Anti-Japanese textbook of China*, Tokyo: East-Asiatic Commercial Intelligence Institute, 1929. *The anti-Japanese description in textbook of Republic of China*, Mother country Publish(Sokokusha), 1929. Hiroshi Ikeda, *The political situation of modern China—the harshness and serious of the real facts of anti-Japanese education*, Restoration time signal Publish(Kaiten Jihosha), 1931. Translated by Jiro Okai, *Chinese elementary school textbook in Japanese*, South light Publish(Nankousha), 1932.etc.

from Japanese public opinion continued to rise unceasingly. Basically it had become a final conclusion on the perception of China. The author considers that this situation might possibly worsen the mutual perception of both countries such as was held before World War II. Stopping this vicious circle of negative perception is very important for both China and Japan.

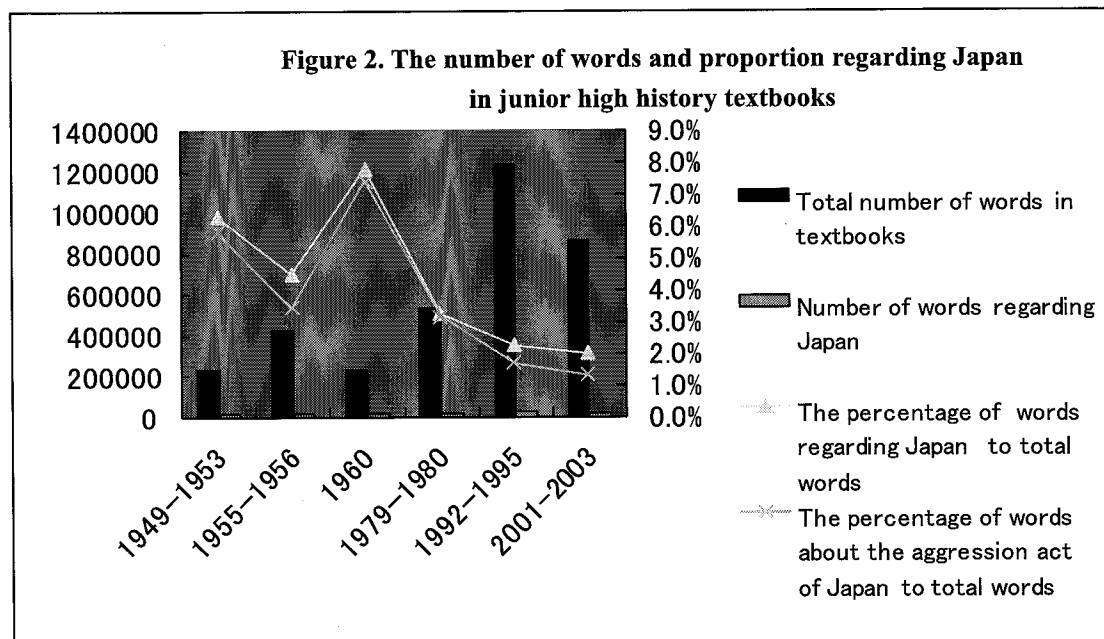
## II. The criticism and misunderstanding of Japanese society regarding Chinese textbooks

After the demonstration against Japan in 2005, the Japanese public reached a new climax of criticizing Chinese history textbooks. The criticisms focused on the large quantity of narration about the Second Sino–Japanese War and on the brutal phrases and material used to describe it. In addition, some narrations did not tally with the truth of history.<sup>10)</sup> Moreover, due to the strengthening of patriotism education, Chinese people’s anti-Japanese sentiment was stronger.<sup>11)</sup> Some media even pointed out that the Chinese government was leading this kind of ‘anti-Japanese’ education.<sup>12)</sup> Many of these criticisms, however, were based on analyzing only part of Chinese textbooks, those parts regarding Japan; there was no overall and comprehensive analysis of Chinese history textbooks. For example, many times Japanese media pointed out that there was far too much content about the Second Sino–Japanese War.<sup>13)</sup> This was mainly because the Chinese highly valued history education. To illustrate this point, there was only one volume of history textbooks used in Japan’s junior high schools, but there were six volumes used in China’s junior high schools, one volume for every half year. Thus, in regard to modern Chinese history, it was understandable that there was comparatively more content about the Second Sino–Japanese War. Therefore, to accurately discuss Chinese textbooks, the discussion should be carried out under the full understanding of the difference between the history courses offered in the two countries.

Figure 2 notes the results of the description data about Japan in Chinese textbooks published after 1949, after the founding of the PRC. From Figure 2, it is clear that, in Chinese junior high school history textbooks, the proportion of content regarding Japan and the proportion covering the conflict between China and Japan in modern

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- 10) ‘(A study—textbooks of Chinese and Korea) Chinese(3) The perception of the truth in history, never admit the mistake’, *The Sankei Shimbun*, 16<sup>th</sup>.June.2005. ‘The anti-Japanese demonstration in China—the method to secure the legitimacy of government’, *The Sankei Shimbun*, 14<sup>th</sup>.May.2005.
- 11) ‘Proposition“ Anti-Japanese education of China—The Prime Minister expressed deep concern”’, *The Sankei Shimbun*, 21<sup>st</sup>.April.2005. ‘Textbook of China and Korea, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs investigating—the description related Japan’, *The Asahi Shimbun*, 27<sup>th</sup>.April.2005. ‘The Government that failed to protest in prevent: “The remote cause of this demonstration”— the strengthening of anti-Japanese education at the time of Jiang, former president of the People’s Republic of China’, *The Sankei Shimbun*, 20<sup>th</sup>.June.2005.
- 12) ‘Open up all the nonsense parts in Chinese and Korea “history textbook”—they have no right to criticize “Japanese textbook”, due to the the government that stirred up people to attack embassy and led the “anti-Japanese education”’, *Weekly Bunshun*, 21<sup>st</sup>.April.2005, pp.34–37.
- 13) ‘(How to teach WAR, China, Korea, Japan: first volume) China: “Second Sino–Japanese War”, the starting point of country’, *The Asahi Shimbun*, 16<sup>th</sup>.June.2005.

history were both declining after the 1960's. The proportions did not increase due to the strengthening of patriotism education. Therefore, the Chinese government did not intend to promote the "anti-Japanese" sentiment of Chinese people.



Source: Made by author according to the data offered by China People's Education Press.

Note: Due to the total number data of 1963-1965 version and 1987-1989 version were uncompleted and were not counted in Figure 2.

### III. Conclusion

The criticisms of Japanese society towards Chinese textbooks did not start after World War II era; it is a history problem that has lasted for more than 80 years. In addition, the manifestation and development of this problem did not change very much from before World War II to after World War II. Japan has paid attention to the textbooks of other countries as well as to China's, so the behaviour of translating and publishing foreign textbooks was always in vogue<sup>14)</sup>. This truth indicates that Japanese media and people strongly cared about the perception of Japan in other countries, and cared about education content related to Japan as well. So whenever criticism about

14) Writer Gysop Shin, translators Kazuhiko Kimishima, *History of Korea— State Korea Senior High School history textbook (The world textbook series)*, Akashi Shoten, 2000. Supervised by Chuo University The Institute of Policy and Cultural Studies, translated by Chiyo Kakizaki, *Thai senior high school social studies textbook (The world textbook series)*, Akashi Shoten, 2002. Kaoru Murata, James M. Vardaman Jr, *What American Elementary School Students Learn in history textbooks*, Tokyo: Japan Book, 2005. etc.

Japan appeared in other countries, it was very easy for Japanese people to consider that the opinion was influenced by education. At the same time, this reaction of Japan also reflected the education system of Japan before World War II, because the introspection about education before World War II lasted for a very long time in Japanese society. Therefore, their awareness of the sedition resulting from education was very strong. So we have to agree to some extent that those questions Japan put forward regarding the education texts in other countries made some sense. However, if their method of expression was too drastic, it could cause a resistance emotion in other countries, and provoke counteraction. The author considers that both China and Japan should mutually understand the historical structure of the other. The solution for harmonious China-Japan relations then is to avoid the vicious circle of counterattack whenever a problem appeared.