

< *Special Issue* > \* \* \* \* \*

## History Textbooks and Historical Memory Construction\*

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### 1. Introduction

The controversy over history textbooks in Japan has received tremendous attention from domestic, Asian and broad international media since it has first surfaced in the international arena in 1982 (Pyle 1983.) However, while the history textbooks have been the target of numerous publications in Japanese, most of which are of normative nature, the English language academia has seen very few publications on the issue.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the comprehensive *Politics, Memory and Public Opinion* (Saaler 2005) being an exception, most of the research tends to focus on the controversial new history textbooks published by the revisionist Japan Society for Textbook Reform (*Atarashii Rekishi-kyokasho wo Tsukuru Kai*). (McCormack in Hein and Selden eds. 2000, Nelson 2002 and Rozman 2002).

It is beyond doubt that the issue of “history” has been continuously affecting Japan’s relations with its neighbors, since has first surfaced in early 1980 s (see Dir-

lik 1993 for China and Japan). However, it seems that the approach taken by the English language academia and the broad media alike inhibits three major problems and therefore leads to misleading conclusions about the nature of the history textbooks and the general historical memory construction in Japan in general.

First, unlike the one-sided understanding of the issue as being caused by Japan’s reluctance to deal with its past (for example see Jacques 2005 and Brooke 2005), the controversy should be analyzed as a multi-facet problem which is related to numerous domestic issues in Japan, including the various systemic reforms, debates regarding the relationship between the individual and the state (Saaler 2005, 11). The domestic issues in China and Korea, such as the usage of the Japanese textbooks in the mobilization of domestic nationalism and the difference in the role the State plays in education are also important factors in the dispute<sup>2</sup> (Kariya in *Asahi Shimbun* 15.4.2005, 13 and *Asahi Shimbun* 18.06. 2005, 17).

Furthermore, geo-political issues such as the territorial disputes between Japan and its former colonies, the rivalry over oil resources in the East China Sea, the US-Japan joint statement regarding peaceful resolution of Taiwan crisis which is per-

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ceived by China to be part of “anti-Chinese containment policy” (Lam 2005) and one of the major problems in the bi-lateral relations (Hu Jing Tao quoted in *Asahi Shimbun* 23.05.2005, 2), as well as Japan’s quest for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council should also not be forgotten.

Second, the dominant “critical” approach tends to confuse two different aspects of the debate—one being the politics and another, the construction of historical memory in Japan. No doubt that these aspects are interrelated and the approval of the controversial text books by the Ministry of Education is a political statement and is another proof to the strong relationship between the politics and education. However, it is important to bear in mind that an official approval of a certain textbook and its adaptation by a school are completely separated processes. The origin of this separation can be traced to the “progressive educational reform” conducted as part of the occupational reforms by the American authorities in mid to late 1940s (Nishimoto 1952, 23–24). While the former is a function of a special committee of the Ministry of Education, the latter has been conducted on a local level, by the schools in case of high school textbooks and by the regional Educational Committee (*kyoiku iinkai*) in case of junior high textbooks. Committee decisions are usually based on recommendations of sub-committees composed of local school teachers or decided by school voting (Nakamura 1997, 86–87), and therefore a direct intervention from the central government is systemically impossible.

Since its first approval in 2001, the

usage of the controversial “revisionist” textbooks has been limited to 0.0039 % of the junior high school students (*Mainichi Shimbun* 17.09.2001, 4) and in spite of various alarmist predictions, in 2005 the number has risen only to 0.4 %, considered as non-alarming even by the “progressive” *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper (*Asahi Shimbun* 07.10.2005, 3). Therefore, unlike James Brooke’s (2005) and numerous other sensationalist articles suggest, they can hardly be seen as representative of the historical narrative provided through school education<sup>3</sup>. Third, the epistemological problem that seems to be at the core of the discourse is the, at times explicit but the almost consistent presence of Germany as the yardstick for the normative evaluation of the range of issues related to the contemporary Japan’s dealing with its past. The example of Germany has been present in the academic discourse (for example Galtung 2005) and also in the political one (Chinese FM Lee comparing Japanese PM Koizumi visit to Yasukuni shrine to “commemorating Hitler” in *Asahi* 16.11.2005). The critical engagement with Japan’s dealing with its past is usually measured by the yardstick of Germany, forgetting not only the different political realities of the two regions but also that Japan’s colonial policies were modeled on Western colonialism (Umemori 2006). Therefore, for absence of an objective yardstick for assessing “dealing with colonial past” contemporary Japan could be easily compared with British, French, Dutch, Belgian and other ex-colonial powers. This kind of comparative analysis would probably result in a substantially different normative evalua-

tion, than the comparison with Germany.

In order to avoid the above-mentioned traps, here I chose in favor of a comparative analysis from within the historical narrative in the most widely read Japanese textbooks. As the numerous writings in political psychology point out, identification with a certain community and, as such, the identification with the State, presupposes a certain kind of emotional tie (Bloom 1990, 28). This “emotional tie” is constructed through value-laden terms and normative interpretations. In the context of historical narrative, purely factual description of certain historical events (what is usually known as *history*) can provide a sense of “common experience.” However, it will lack the unifying character of historical memory, as it will not provide the tools necessary for communal orientation (Hopf 2002, 25, Barnett 2002, 6 and Bloom 1990, 47).

As historical narrative in the present context focuses on interactions with other nations, the interpretation would be expected to consist of evaluative depictions that portray the historical “self” vis-à-vis the other.

The following part will examine the historical narrative and its relevance to national identity construction through comparing the textbooks’ depictions of modern Japan’s interactions with China and Korea on one side and Russia/USSR on the other. Most of the commentators on Russo-Japanese affairs agree that Japan is, or perceived as the victim in the Japanese general understanding of the bilateral relations (Rozman 1992, Kimura 1999, Hasegawa 2000 b, Glaubitz 1995). Hence we could expect two scenarios. First is

that the two narratives would compliment and balance each other, Japan being portrayed as the perpetrator towards China and Korea and as the victim, or responding to aggression, vis-à-vis Russia. Second would be an extensive narrative on Russia that would construct a positive emotional tie with the state, that will supercede in its intensity the one on Japan’s misdeeds vis-à-vis China and Korea as the “state’s involvement in a common endeavor in relation to an external threat” is a crucial characteristic of national identity narratives (Bloom 1990, 75).

No doubt that evaluation of “emotional” is a risky affair and any attempt to develop an objective criteria is bound to result in subjective and normative prescriptions. However, in the present context it seems possible so provide a set of issues that are a matter of concern to both camps in Japan’s textbooks debate. These are the actual reference to certain events and the quantative amount of space devoted to the description, and the normative language used in it.

Based on this understanding of the role of historical narrative in national identity construction and the tools used to achieve the goal, the following part will examine the most widely used Japanese history textbooks over two periods in the aftermath of the internationalization of the history textbooks problem in 1982.

For the purpose of this paper, historical discourse on China and Korea broadly defined <sup>4</sup> would be examined starting from the year 1905 in which Japan gained de facto control over Korean Peninsula. The inquiry into the narrative on Russia would also skip the pre-20 th century interactions,

and will start with the Russo-Japanese war. The events that are perceived to have shaped the contemporary Japanese perceptions of Soviet Union and Russia (Hasegawa 1998 a, 37 also Burton quoted in Kimura 1999, 226, Shimizu 2002, 36-40, Togawa 1990) will be the main object of analysis. Besides the general threat from the Soviet Union during the Cold War, these are mainly the events that accompanied the Soviet entry into the Pacific War, such as the “Soviet territorial expansionism” (i.e. the Northern Territories issue) and the “Siberian interment” which signifies the interment and forced labor of around 600,000 Japanese soldiers by the Soviet Union. In addition, the narrative on Japan’s intervention in Siberia during the Russian civil war will also be examined.

## 2. Historical Narrative in History Textbooks

As the overall number of history textbooks available is rather high (according to Ministry of Education website 8 junior high school and 18 high school textbooks were approved in 2005 and 2002-2003 respectively), this article will focus only on the most widely used textbooks that combined account for more than 50 % of the schools in Japan.

The 1980 s statistical data is fragmented and incomplete, possibly due to the fact that the examination process occurs in different years for high school and for junior high school textbooks. Hence the books that are examined here are the top three junior high school Japanese history textbooks for the year 1984 and the top four high school textbooks for the years

1989-1990 <sup>5</sup>. No doubt that over this five years there were numerous international events that could have influenced the construction of the narrative such as the beginning of Gorbachev’s *perestroika* in the Soviet Union and the democratization process in the Republic of Korea that started in 1987. However, the main international impact on the books was the harsh international critique of Japan after the 1982 textbooks controversy and resulted in the inclusion of “neighboring countries clause” (meaning the Asian nations occupied or colonized by Japan) in the official guidance for textbook evaluation for the first time. In the context of the narrative on Russia, all of the books were adopted after the governmental decree establishing an official Northern Territories Day in January 1981 to “deepen the Japanese people’s knowledge and understanding of the issue” (<http://www.hoppou.go.jp/gakusyu/27/index.html>) which has been the most visible governmental attempt to deepen the narrative on Russia.

The narrative in the 1980 s will be compared to the similar discourse in the most recent history books in order to observe the changes that have occurred in the textbooks historical memory discourse over the two decades and to analyze the depth (or lack of it) of the national identity construction vis-à-vis the two “others” in the textbooks.

### 2.1. The Narrative on Russia/USSR

In general, the space devoted in junior high school textbooks to the Russo-Japanese War is quite impressive as all of them devote around two pages to descriptions of the causes of the war, the war

itself and the Peace settlement. At the same time the description is purely factual with very little normative interventions that could contribute to the “emotional tie” construction. For example, *Atarashii Shakai Rekishi* (Ukai *et al.* 1984) devotes two pages to Russo-Japanese war and the narrative has a brief reference to Japan becoming an imperial power as the result of defeating the “mighty Russian army (1984, 235) and also to the victory of a” small, Asian country Japan “that has given hope and confidence to Asian people (1984, 236).

*Chugakko shakai-rekishiteki bunya* (Kodama *et al.* 1983) also devotes two pages to Russo-Japanese war which is described as the first war “among imperial powers”, where Russia portrayed as “one of world great powers” (1983, 214) and is the only textbook that goes further in its depiction of the war. However, the narrative that follows is internationalist and generally anti-war, drawing the clear line between the “state” and the “people.” It devotes a whole page to the suffering of the “people”, both in Japan and in Russia, which in turn led to both states’ inability to sustain the war effort (1983, 215). The high school textbooks devote much less space to the Russo-Japanese war and the narrative is usually limited to two paragraphs and in a similar fashion to the junior high school books, the description is mostly factual. For example, *Shinshosetsu nihon shi* (Inoue *et al.* 1988) devotes two paragraphs to the war and the only emotional description is one that states that, “Port Arthur was taken after loosing many victims” (1988, 274). All the other books by Yamakawa Shuppan, are also

edited by Inoue, and not surprisingly, have a similar purely factual and dry description of the war.

*Koko nihonshi* (Ishiyama *et al.* 1990) stands out as in a fashion similar to Kodama *et al.* junior high school textbook as it devotes a whole sub-chapter to the suffering of the Japanese population during the war under the title of “Russo-Japanese War and the People.” (1990, 256–258) However, here also the focus is not on Russia as the cause of the suffering, but on the Japanese government that mobilized the people and engaged in heavy taxation, and it is presented as the entity that bears responsibility for the suffering of the people.

The narrative on the Japanese involvement in the Entente attempts to crush the Bolshevik revolution, which is known in Japan as the “Siberian military expedition” is minimalistic in all the texts and does not go exceed one paragraph in all the textbooks, in spite of its potential to contribute to the identity construction. While it is mentioned that the expedition that has met “a strong resistance of Russian people” (Ukai *et al.* 1984, 25) or that it failed because of “guerilla warfare and the winter cold” (Kodama *et al.* 1983, 233) there are no value-laden descriptions. In high school texts, the “Siberian Expedition” is described in two lines, with the only value laden statement usually being directed at Japan, stating that the prolonged presence of Japanese forces, was criticized by the international society as “expansionism” (for example Inoue *et al.* 1988, 297).

Here again *Koko nihonshi* (Ishiyama *et al.* 1990) stands out as it provides a whole



paragraph devoted to Siberian expedition, stating that it resulted in failure after heavy losses and great expenses-like with the discourse on Russo-Japanese war, the focus is on the policies of the Japanese government as the cause for the suffering (1990, 276).

The most important point in the discourse on Russia/USSR is, that the narratives regarding the Soviet participation in the Pacific War, the Northern Territories and the Cold War, which are regarded to be the most important causes of Japanese negative feelings, is very limited in quantity and contains very few evaluative commentaries.

In general the description on the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, the occupation of Northern Territories and the so-called "Siberian internment" is limited to one or two lines stating that, USSR has declared war in spite of the validity of the neutrality pact and invaded Manchuria (Ukai *et al.* 1984, 289 and Kodama *et al.* 1983, 267). Furthermore, *Atarashii Shakai Rekishi* Soviet Union seems to provide a certain sense of legitimacy to the invasion stating that it was conducted according to Yalta agreement (Ukai *et al.* 1984, 289).

The reference to Northern Territories appears only in two junior high school texts and provides a very brief description of the issue. *Chugakko shakai-rekishiteki bunya* states that the islands are Japanese inherent territory but at the same time presents also the Soviet position without making any normative comments regarding the two positions (Kodama *et al.* 1983, 283). *Nihon no ayumi to sekai (rekishi)* (Aoki *et al.* 1983, 298) is the only text that engages in evaluative description

of the issue stating that the four islands are Japan's inherent territory and are occupied by the Soviet Union. However, the text is very brief and is provided as a footnote in "Japan's Foreign Relations" section.

The narrative in the high school textbooks does not differ much. While the narrative contains some evaluative descriptions, the text is very brief and usually is provided in the form of a footnote. For example, *Shinshosetsu nihon shi* (Inoue *et al.* 1988) devotes only two lines to the Soviet participation in the Pacific War stating that USSR has ignored the neutrality pact, declared war and invaded Manchuria and Korea. A footnote states that following the Soviet invasion to Manchuria, the Kwantung army was annihilated and as the result, many Japanese "pioneers" have met a horrible end, many suffered during their return to Japan and also many children were left behind (1988, 333-334).

The issue of Northern Territories is usually mentioned briefly in the context of the Soviet-Japanese Declaration of 1956 as paving the way for Japan's membership in the UN. The footnote text is limited to purely factual explanation that presents the positions of both governments (for example Inoue *et al.* 1988, 348, Ishiyama *et al.* 1990, 335).

The beginning of the Cold War that has placed Japan firmly in the Western camp and has been the source of the Soviet military threat perception described by Burton and affirmed by Kimura, is described in purely factual fashion both in junior high school and high school texts, mainly as a European event without any references to Japan (for example Kodama

*et al.* 1983, 278-279 Aoki *et al.* 1983, 298 Inoue 1988, 343). Furthermore, the US-Japan security alliance that has become the corner stone of Japanese post-war foreign policy is mentioned in one to two lines and also bears no reference to the Soviet threat (for example, Kodama *et al.* 1983, 282 Inoue 1988, 346 Ishiyama *et al.* 1990, 334).

Otherwise, *Chugakko shakai-rekishiteki bunya* is the only junior high school text that devotes further space to bilateral relations. One paragraph on Japan-USSR relations states that both countries are interested in cooperation on material grounds and stresses that it is important for Japan to deepen its friendship with USSR as a “peaceful nation” but because of disagreement on Northern Territories no peace treaty between the two nations has been concluded (Kodama *et al.* 1983, 291). Again, the text is rather factual and distant.

Compared to the textbooks in 2002, not much has changed in the discourse on Russia/USSR, in spite of the numerous domestic, international and systemic changes. Changes have also occurred in the ranking of the popular textbooks that have brought different writers, editors and publishers as the builders of the new generation’s historical knowledge and national identity.<sup>6</sup>

Notwithstanding the discourse on Russia/USSR does not reflect all those changes. The space devoted by junior high school books to the Russo-Japanese War has decreased from the average of two pages to a couple of paragraphs (Atsuta *et al.* 2002, 132-133 and Kuroda *et al.* 2002, 168-169) with only one book devot-

ing a page and a half to the war (Sasayama 2002, 159-160). This could be perceived as the reflection of the decline of the importance of Russia, but, at the same time, the high school textbooks engage in an extensive description of the war. They devote around two pages to the Russo-Japanese War, the narrative being mostly factual, with occasional descriptions of the victory as the “newly emerging Asian country Japan has defeated the great Caucasian power Russia” (Ishii 2004, 208-210 and Ishii 2003, 272-273) or as destroying the myth of “invisibility of the white man” (Torikai *et al.* 2003, 65).

In general, the description of Siberian expedition, the Soviet entry into the Pacific War and the related issues as well as to the beginning of the Cold War has not changed and still are brief, factual and are providing very few evaluative descriptions. The reference to the end of the Cold War is also purely factual. Only one of the texts has a reference to the reason of US-Japan alliance and the establishment of SDF to be “the threat from USSR and China” (Kuroda *et al.* 2002, 217) and most contain a footnote reference to the Northern Territories in the context of 1956 declaration (Kuroda *et al.* 2002, 217 Atsuta *et al.* 2002, 189, Ishii 2004, 81, Ishii 2003, 366). The description of the Soviet entry into the Pacific War in high school texts is similar to the junior high text books in its brief and purely factual description with occasional reference to the suffering of the Japanese colonizers in Manchuria, the returnees and the “left behind children” (Ishii 2003, 345).

However, the reference to the “Siberian internment” has made an appearance in

the narrative (Sasayama *et al.* 2002, Ootsu *et al.* 2004, Komura *et al.* 2003). The reference is made in a form of a footnote or a two-three lines body text, but states that 600 thousand of Japanese troops stationed in China, were taken prisoners and sent to Siberia, where they were forced to engage in harsh labor as the result of which many died. Some books provide concrete figures of the dead to be around 60,000 (Sasayama 2002, Ootsu 2004, 354, Komura 2003, 177, Torikai 2003, 123, Miyahara *et al.* 2003, 336).

The comparison of the widely used texts with the revisionist *Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho* (Nishio *et al.* 2001), which has the explicit intention of providing the “patriotic” view of history, is a good example of how the narrative could be constructed.

The text devotes four pages to the Russo-Japanese war (Nishio *et al.* 2001, 220-223) and is rich with expressions like “small island nation Japan” for which concluding an alliance with a “major power” (Britain) was the “only way of surviving.” On the other hand, “interventionist” and “ambitious” Russia, whose state budget and military power, have exceeded that of Japan by “ten times”, was defeated in Tsushima due to “high morale of the troops” and “skillful strategy.” The war is portrayed as a war of self-defense for “survival of Japan.” No need to say that the victory is described as a victory of a “colored nation” against a “white nation” that has given hope of independence to the “oppressed nations of the world.”

The Siberian intervention (2001, 246-247) is described not only as an attempt to expand Japan’s influence to Siberia but

also as an attempt to “rescue the Czechoslovak corps”, and the prolonged presence in Siberia is portrayed as a battle against communism.

In a column that is asking the students to think about modernity and war (2001, 288-289), it is explained that the atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers against civilian population are no different from other acts of violence during war and as one of examples, the “killing, looting and rape” of Japanese civilians by the Soviet soldiers after the invasion of Manchuria, as well as the “60,000 Japanese that included POWs” who were taken to Siberia and subject to “harsh labor” are brought up <sup>7</sup>.

Soviet Union is mentioned on numerous occasions dominated by references to “mass murders under Stalin” (2001, 289), “mass executions”, “cruel forced labor” and “enormous number of victims” (2001, 260-261).

It is mentioned that communist China and USSR have concluded an alliance against Japan as the potential enemy (2001, 297) in 1949 and “the Soviet threat” is brought as one of the factors behind the first post-occupation PM Yoshida Shigeru’s policies (2001, 298).

In this sense, the revisionist narrative provides a perfect example of how the historical narrative on Japan’s interactions with Russia could have been constructed in order to deepen the positive emotional tie of the students with “Japan”.

## 2.2. China and Korea

The texts from 1980s contain limited reference related to Japan’s colonial rule and imperial interactions with China and



Korea. For example, all the high school textbooks published by Yamakawa shuppan and edited by Inoue provide minimalistic reference to the numerous incidents. For example, the reference to Chinese mass protests against Japan being granted the German colonial rights as the post-WWI settlement (5.4 movement) is made in a footnote which portrays the anger not as anti-Japanese but as demanding the return of the rights to China, and is followed by two lines description of the independence demonstrations in Korea in 1919 (3.1 movement) stated in very neutral wording, without any reference to its brutal suppression by the colonial government (Inoue 1988, 300-301). The Korean struggle for independence is described also in a footnote as a “guerrilla struggle” (1988, 289) and the invasion of China is described as an “advancement to China.” (1988, 300) At the same time, there is a three lines reference to killing of Korean and Chinese residents after the earthquake in 1923 and brief reference to government involvement in it (1988, 306).

The notorious Nanking massacre is also mentioned in a footnote, stating that at the time of occupation of Nanking, “Japanese army has killed many Chinese, including non-combatants” and this “has become a big problem during the Tokyo trials” (1988, 324).

Only one out of the four top high school books devotes more space and provides an extensive evaluative narrative. *Koko nihonshi* (Ishiyama 1990) devotes a whole sub-chapter to the annexation of Korea, (1990, 265-267) stating that the government has managed to suppress anti-annexation demonstration both in Japan

and Korea through forceful measures. One paragraph cites the statement by Chinese representative to Washington Conference that criticizes the giving of German rights in China to Japan as inflicting great suffering on the Chinese people. (1990, 279) It also mentions the “at least 6,000 Koreans and Chinese killed” in the post-earthquake riots in 1923 (1990, 296).

One paragraph is devoted to “Nanking massacre” during which “for about one month after the occupation, Japanese soldiers have killed at least over 100,000 Chinese including women and children” (1990, 307).

Compared to the high school texts, the junior high texts devote more space and engage in much stronger emotional construction. Only the *Nihon no ayumi to sekai (rekishi)* (Aoki *et al.* 1983) is similar to Yamakawa shuppan books in its minimalistic and mainly factual reference to the incidents in question.

The other books, while still contain no reference to Unit 731 experiments, forced labor or comfort women <sup>8</sup>, engage in more in-depth emotional evaluations, this done in addition to the descriptions present in the high school texts.

*Atarashii Shakai Rekishi* (Ukai *et al.* 1984) mentions briefly the “fierce resistance” in Korea to Japanese colonization and its repression by the army (1984, 237). One paragraph describes the loss of land by Koreans, the “Japanization” policies and the strengthening of discriminative perceptions of Koreans in Japan. (1984, 237) Over one page is devoted to “Korean people suffering under Japanese colonial rule” and the 3.1 movement that was suppressed by Japanese army and

police (1984, 259-260).

Again, the Nanking massacre is mentioned briefly as a footnote, in the context of Japanese aggression against China in 1937 during which “over few weeks, Japanese army has murdered numerous Chinese. The number of civilian casualties including around 70,000-80,000 women and children is stated to be over 200,000. It also mentions the Chinese estimates of 300,000. However, the innocence of the general Japanese population is emphasized, as the text states that, “while this incident was widely condemned internationally, Japanese people did not know about it” (1984, 278).

Along similar lines *Chugakko shakai-rekishiteki bunya* (Kodama *et al.* 1983) has a whole chapter titled “Japanese aggression against the continent and the changes in Asia” (1983, 216). Whole page devoted to annexation of Korea, loss of land and forceful introduction of Japanese language at schools (1983, 217). Strong Chinese opposition to the 21 demands of Japan is mentioned briefly (1983, 231) but a whole paragraph describes in a very strong language the pro-independence 3.1 movement in Korea and its suppression by the army (1983, 238). As the same time, in a chapter titled “Japan’s Aggression against China” the reference to Nanking is made in a more ambiguous language stating that the massacre was the result of numerous incidents of Chinese in civilian cloths shooting at Japanese soldiers (1983, 258).

Unlike with the discourse on Russia, the textbooks of 2002 engage in a much more extensive and value laden depiction of Japan’s imperial past. While the narrative

on Nanking massacre is still brief and emphasizes the innocence of the general Japanese population, all the textbooks include references to “aggression against China”, forced labor of Chinese and Koreans during the war, that worked under “cruel conditions”, were “low paid” and lived in harsh conditions (for example, Tanabe 2002, 175).

*Atarashii shakai: Rekishi* (Tanabe *et al.* 2002) that has been used in over half of the junior high schools in 2002, is still rather brief as only one paragraph is devoted to the annexation of Korea and the following colonial rule. However, value laden language such as the Japanese “rule by force,” “loss of land” on behalf of the Koreans, “social and economic discrimination” against the Koreans (2002, 144) and “liberation movement” that was suppressed by “brutal force” (2002, 157) is used.

*Chugaku shakai-rekishiteki bunya* by Osaka Shoseki (Atsuta *et al.* 2002, 134) and *Chugakusei no rekishi-nihon no ayumi to sekai no ugoki* by Teikoku Shoin (Kuroda *et al.* 2002, 170-171) devote one page to the annexation of Korea (2002, 134) with strong words like “the Korean State was deprived of the right for diplomacy”, “fierce resistance” on behalf of Korean people, “forcing Japanese language and history” on Koreans and “negating the customs and culture” of the Korean people, and “superiority feelings” of the Japanese toward Koreans. *Chugaku shakai-rekishi: mirai wo mitsumete* (Sasayama *et al.* 2002) by Kyoiku shuppan goes further. It devotes a page an a half (2002, 162-163) to the annexation of Korea and engages in detailed descriptions of the discrimination of Koreans on institutional ad individual

levels, forced labor of Chinese and Koreans and the Japanese occupation of China. In addition to the language used above, there is an “attempt by the Japanese to take away Korean national identity and pride” and reference to the discrimination of Koreans those that moved to Japan proper. Also Japan is described as inflicting “pain that is impossible to explain” on the Korean people over the 36 years of colonial rule. The 3.1 demonstrations are described as a “peaceful movement”, which was “suppressed by force” and “resulted in many victims” (2002, 177). It also mentions the forced labor of Koreans and Chinese in the context of contemporary compensation claims and the need for Japan to address these claims is emphasized (2002, 221) *Chugaku shakai-rekishiteki bunya* also mentions the Korean and Chinese victims of the atomic bombing (Atsuta *et al.* 2002, 176).

China is described as being “forced” into accepting most of the 21 demands (Kuroda *et al.* 2002, 186) and, while the reference to Nanking is still brief it is mentioned that it has been seen by the nations of the world as “Japanese barbarism.” At the same time, like the other textbooks, the emphasis on the general population not knowing about it is also made (2002, 202).

The students are also encouraged to understand the position of the “other” as one of the suggested discussion topics- “if you were Korean or Taiwanese at the time of colony, what would you think about Japanese colonial rule and aggression?” (2002, 207).

Furthermore, all the texts mention the killings of Korean residents in the after-

math of the 1923 earthquake and emphasize the government involvement (for example Tanabe 2002, 162 Atsuta *et al.* 2002, 154 Sasayama *et al.* 2002, 185).

The narrative in high school textbooks differs greatly between the books published by Yamakawa shuppan that account for over one third of History A and just below two thirds for History B books and the other two publishers. Yamakawa books in general are very thin in narrative that can be seen as constructing historical consciousness. For example, in *Koko Nihonshi B* the description of the road to the annexation does not involve any value laden terms, and its only noted that, as the “expansion of Japanese landowners, has led to the demise of the peasantry” (Ishii 2004, 210) and the brief reference to Nanking massacre states only that “the Japanese army has killed many Chinese, including non-combatants” (2004, 260). While *Shosetsu Nihonshi B*, which is a more detailed version of the same book, engages in the description of the “peaceful” 3.1 movement in Korea that was suppressed in a “severe way”, it also states that there were certain improvements in the colonial rule made (Ishii 2003, 305) and the evaluation of the Japanese colonial response is rather ambiguous. At the same time, the reference to Nanking is more detailed and has more value laden terms in it. Compulsory drafting of soldiers from Taiwan and Korea as well as the issue of comfort women are also briefly mentioned in a footnote (2003, 342 also Torikai 2003, 122).

*Shin Nihonshi* (Ootsu 2004) is similar to the other Yamakawa books in its ambiguous construction. While it devotes a

whole page to Korea under the colonial rule, it states that the harsh food conditions resulted from extensive export of rice that was conducted both by Japanese and Korean landowners. Also, while admitting that most of the high level managers and owners of newly built industrial facilities were Japanese, reference is made to Koreans that worked as middle level managers and contributed to the post-independence industrialization of Korea.

In the context of education policies, one sentence mentions the gap between the mainland and Korea and refers to the education being conducted in Japanese, but the rest refers to the benefits the introduction of Japanese education system has brought to the Korean people (2004, 320).

The books by Jikkyo shuppan and Tokyo shoseki engage in a much more in depth construction through the amount of space devoted and the extensive evaluation. For example, *Nihon Shi A* by Jikkyo Shuppan (Miyahara *et al.* 2003) devotes a whole chapter to “Colonization of Korea” (2003, 96-97) with reference to opposition to “Japan’s aggression” and its “brutal suppression” that includes some detailed descriptions of the atrocities committed by the army. Two pages are devoted to “National Independence Movements in Korea and Asia, and Japan” (2003, 108-109). The detailed description of Nanking massacre is made in an emphasized paragraph and provides the Chinese estimates for the victims as the actual ones. However, here again, the innocence of the general population is underlined, through an emphasis on the lack of knowledge about the incident among the “Japanese people” at that time (2003, 121).

Two pages devoted to “Contemporary Japan and Korea (ROK)” in which detailed description of differences in the perceptions of colonial rule between ROK and Japanese governments and the historical road to reconciliation (2003, 158-159). The book also devotes a whole chapter to demands for war reparations in the Asian countries and the “comfort women” issue (2003, 176). The narrative in other books edited by Miyahara (2003 a), as well as Okuta and Ooyama (2003) and Tanaka (2003) is similar, while the two latter ones also mention the usage of poison gas on the Chinese front and production and sales of opium to the Chinese population by unit 731 (Okuta and Oyama *et al.* 2003, 328, Tanaka 2003, 147).

*Nihon Shi A* by Tokyo Shoseki (Tanaka *et al.* 2003) goes further than the rest of the textbooks by letting the Korean “other” communicate with the students through its text and by bringing up contemporary issues, provides a clear link between the past and the present. One page, written by a Korean resident of Japan, is devoted to detailed description of the Japanese and Korean pan-Asian movements, describes Japan’s “betrayal” of pan-Asianism and “aggression” towards Korea (2003, 103). Furthermore, a whole page engages in comparison between Germany and Japan in their “dealing with the past” in which a rhetorical question “Have the Japanese made an effort to clarify their own responsibility for the war of aggression” is posed (2003, 177).

The “revisionism” or “whitewashing” of Japan’s imperial history in *Atarashii Reki-shi Kyokasho* (New History Textbooks) has been discussed in numerous academic

and journalistic fora, which renders the repetition of the argument superfluous.

It must be noted though, that the narrative does not engage in revolutionary re-writing of history that negates completely the dominant discourse. While omitting several important issues such as the Nanking massacre and the comfort women, the descriptions of “negative” Japanese colonial policies are present, but the argument is limited in space and written in ambiguous language that avoids the clear cut dichotomies that could construct a negative emotional tie with the state. For example, the 3.1 demonstrations in Korea are described as “demanding independence” and as being “suppressed through force” by the “Korea Government General” (*chosŏn sotokufu*) without mentioning of Japan and stating that, as the result, the “way the rule (of Korea) has been exercised so far, was changed” (Nishio *et al.* 2001, 249). The killings of civilians conducted by Japanese army are put in the context of war in general and presented as a cruel but universal reality of war. Furthermore, while the Japanese misdeeds are mentioned in two lines in general terms, the massacres of the Nazi Germany are described in much more detail and followed but a description of cases when Japanese officials have assisted Jews escaping Holocaust (2001, 288).

### 3. Conclusion

No doubt that it can be argued that the space devoted to the imperial misdeeds in the textbooks should be expanded and the evaluative descriptions should be dee-

pened, in comparison to the 1980s, the texts of 2002 include more descriptions, more details and more value laden evaluations. However, as this article has shown, there has been a qualitative and quantitative improvement in the narrative on the colonial misdeeds of Japan. Furthermore, the main textbooks can be hardly labeled as “nationalistic” because they make very little usage of the Russian Other, to construct a positive identification with the Japanese nation-state.

No doubt that generally speaking education plays an important role in shaping national identity (Saaler 2005, 17) and its role in pre-1945 Japan as one of the main locale for identity creation is beyond doubt (for example, Yoshino 1999, 13–14). It can also be said that the “school” today is one of the most important institutions of national identity creation and reproduction, especially because it produces a homogenous linguistic community (Ozkirmili 2005, 174). Partly due to this role assigned to the school, the contents of the textbooks do reflect certain trends in the society<sup>10</sup> and therefore deserve close public and academic scrutiny.

However, the depth of identification with the nation in the context of historical narrative of “us” vis-à-vis “them”, which is the main interest of this article that can be achieved through the present texts’ depiction of interaction with the “other” is questionable. As has been demonstrated above, the concrete actors that represent “Japan” are usually the army, police and the government, and the Japanese “people” appear mostly as the victims with the rare example of post 1923 earthquake anti-Korean/Chinese riots where the “people”



are portrayed as the actors. We can concur with Kamei Shoichi, who, writing in 1950s, has criticized the teaching of “Showa history” for the “absence of the human” from the texts (quoted in Fujioka 1991, 118-119) and, as they generally fail to provide collective or individual actors that the students could identify with, their contribution to students’ identification with the nation is rather limited.

Furthermore, besides the obvious question on how closely do the teachers follow the textbooks the amount of time dedicated to history education should also be kept in mind. The number of history classes in junior high school education, has declined from 140 of history classes (both of Japan and world history) over two years (Kyokasho repoto 1986, 103) to 105 in 1998 (Ministry of Education 2003). In high schools, as the result of high school education reform of 1989, Japanese history has become a choice subject, while the students have to choose one subject among History of Japan A (2 units), History of Japan B (4 units), Geography A (2 units) and Geography B (Ito 2002, 438). Therefore, it is possible to graduate from high school without taking any classes in history and, judging by the experience of some schools this option is not purely theoretical, the lack of interest on behalf of the students resulting in suspension of history classes (Sase 1995, 28). The narrative in the textbooks does reflect certain tendencies in the society, but other locales, such as popular magazines and newspapers, TV, literature and cinema should be examined in order to get the full picture of historical narrative construction.

## Notes

- 1 The number of publications that are dealing with bilateral historical narratives is countless. For the general “conservative/revisionist” perspective see for example Morimoto 1981 and Fujioka 2000 (in Japanese), and for the “progressive” analysis Ienaga 1981, Fujita *et al.* 2002 and Takahashi 2002 (in Japanese) and Ienaga 1993, McCormack 2000 (in English).
- 2 For example, in Korea, besides the very strong emphasis on historical education, all the history textbooks from the third year of primary school through to the first year of high-school are produced by various state organs (Kitazawa *et al.* 2001, 40-42).
- 3 Rozman’s work mentioned above is dealing with the broad Japan-Korea relations, and in this sense, the revisionist textbooks are definitely an issue in the bilateral relations and need to be examined. However, the other works mentioned, while claiming to inquire into historical memory construction in Japan, devote most of their attention to the revisionist books, which as shown above occupy a marginal place in the history education.
- 4 By “broadly defined” I mean that there will be no distinction between the state, the nation and the individual made, as long as they represent the nation.
- 5 *Atarashii Shakai-Rekishi* (Ukai 1984) by Tokyo Shoseki publishing house (34.9%), *Chugakko shakai-rekishiteki bunya* (Kodama 1983) by Nihon Shoseki (20%) and *Nihon no ayumi to Sekai-rekishi* by Chukyo Shuppan (14.2%) for junior high schools (Kyokasho repoto 1984, 82). For high school textbooks, *Shinshosetsu nihonshi* (24.6% in 1989 and 26.9% in 1990), *Shosetsu nihonshi kaiteiban* (11.9% and 10.1%) *Yosetsu nihonshi saikaiteiban* (7.6% and 6.7%), all published by Yamakawa Shuppan and *Koko nihonshi sankaitaiban* (9.3% and 8.6%) by Jikkyo Shuppan (data obtained from the library of National Institute of Education Research).
- 6 The most popular Japanese history textbooks for junior highschool are *Atarashii*

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*shakai: Rekishi* (Tanabe *et al.* 2002) by Tokyo shoseki (51.3 in 2002 and 41.1 % in 1997), *Chugaku shakai-rekishiteki bunya* (Atsuta *et al.* 2002) by Osaka shoseki (14 % in 2002 and 19.3 % in 1997), *Chugaku shakai-rekishi:mirai wo mitsumete* (Sasayama *et al.* 2002) by Kyoiku shuppan (13 % in 2002 and 17.8 % in 1997) and *Chugakusei no rekishi-nihon no ayumi to sekai no ugoki* (Kuroda *et al.* 2002) by Teikoku shoin (10.9 % in 2002 and 1.9 % in 1997).

For high school history textbooks the top three are Yamakawa shuppan (38.8 % for *Nihon shi A* and 77 % for *Nihon shi B* for 4 books) Jikkyo shuppan (17.9 % and 77 %) and Tokyo shoseki (17.8 and 23 % for two books) (data by Shuppan Roren in *Kyokasho repoto 2002*, 77-83).

7 Surprisingly, only two lines are devoted to the Northern Territories issue and the narrative is similar to other textbooks.

8 While the misdeeds of unit 731 and the forced labor were known and described by the progressive camp for a few decades, the issue of comfort women has surfaced for the first time in the early 1990s and therefore the lack of reference in the textbooks that were written a decade earlier is rather understandable.

9 In this context, one line reference is made to the issue of reparations for Japanese soldiers that have been detained and engaged in forced labor in the Soviet Union.

10 For example, a special feature on textbooks in *Asahi Shimbun* on 18. 06. 2005, describes the decision to omit the mentioning of “comfort women” from the new junior high school textbooks by a certain publishing house, as being a result of decline in the market share.

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