

Use and Abuse of Images in Japanese History Textbooks and the History Textbook Controversy of 2000-2001

For Chino Kaori (1953-2001), in memoriam

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Introduction

When the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture Sports, Science and Technology approved a Japanese history textbook published by Fusōsha as one of several books authorized for use in junior high schools, it provoked domestic as well as international controversy. Edited by the so-called Society for History Textbook Reform (Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho o Tsukuru Kai 新しい歴史教科書を作る会), the textbook was regarded by left-wing historians as nationalistic, and its authorization was criticized by Korean and Chinese authorities as damaging to diplomatic ties. The authors aimed at rehabilitation of Japanese national dignity, but in the neighboring countries their effort was seen as an ominous maneuver to justify Japan's war crimes. The present essay first offers a critical overview of the issue. After a short survey of the domestic and inter-Asian reactions, I attempt, second, to analyze the textbook editors' use of illustrations, that is, the visual as well as the textual rhetoric of the book. The Fusōsha textbook managed to clear the official examination by the Ministry while conveying a set of camouflaged ideological messages in its text and illustrations.

However, the Fusōsha edition is not the only questionable history textbook. Here I will elucidate, in the third place, a lack of sensitivity in textbooks for high school students, as well as junior high school students—an insensitivity that remains intact despite the recent political controversy. The treatment of photographs of the Chōsen Government-General building in Seoul, for example, merits analysis as a typical case. Whether intentional or not, the Fusōsha book is not the only case of authors and publishers failing to grasp that inserting this illustration inevitably suggests Japanese aggressiveness to Korean readers. Fourthly, the “political unconsciousness”—lack of awareness, or a kind of naiveté—of Japanese textbook editors, including left-wing scholars, must be revealed. As representative modern Japanese paintings of the Shōwa era, most of the textbooks have reproduced, without any consciousness of guilt and regardless of the editors' political tendencies, images such as the Forbidden City in Beijing under Japan's occupation or a lady in Chinese dress. These subject matters clearly indicate the prewar painters' “orientalist” engagement in colonial polity. Yet no editor of recent junior high or high school Japanese history textbooks seems to have had any inkling that hidden (colonial and gender) biases are imbedded in these illustrations.

The use of word and image in Japanese history textbooks betrays an insensitivity or unconscious insensitivity that occasionally marks Japanese historiography and history education. This essay shows that the cultivation of visual literacy is badly needed.

Origin of the Issue

The Society for History Textbook Reform, often called simply the Tsukuru Kai, was founded on 2 December 1996. Nishio Kanji 西尾幹二, a Germanist who specializes in Nietzsche studies, became its first president. The main body of the Society is composed of former members of the Research Group for the Liberal View of History (Jiyūshugi Shikan Kenkyūkai 自由主義史観研究会), which was founded in September 1995 and presided over by Fujioka Nobukatsu 藤岡信勝, a onetime member of the Japanese Communist Party who is currently a professor in the Department of Education of the University of Tokyo. In its prospectus, published on 30 January 1997, the Tsukuru Kai asserted:

Postwar history education in Japan consisted in forgetting the cultural heritage and tradition of the Japanese, and contributed to the loss of dignity of the Japanese nation. Especially in modern and contemporary history, the Japanese are treated as if they were shameful war criminals destined to apologize forever for their crimes, one generation after another. After the Cold War this masochistic tendency of self-criticism has grown so strong that the descriptive passages of current history textbooks take the propaganda of Japan's former enemies as historical facts. No other country in the world does such an irrelevant education.

The Society declared that its purpose is “aiming at offering a reliable history textbook for the coming generation of the Japanese nation,” for it is “indispensable to recover the judicious history of one's own country, as every nation and race is entitled to possess one without exception.” (“Declaration,” 2 December 1996). In keeping with its plan, in December 1999 the Society requested that the Ministry of Education conduct an official examination of its junior high school textbook version of the Japanese past. The Ministry's examination committee scrutinized the Tsukuru Kai's submission and stated 137 “opinions” (or objections, or problematic points) that needed to be addressed before approval could be granted. By responding to those “opinions,” **the Society finally obtained state permission on 3 April 2001, for its *Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho* to be adopted at the junior high school level from the beginning of the academic year 2002.**

Even before the examination committee handed down its final decision, Nishio Kanji, the main ideologue of the Society as well as its president, published his *History of the Japanese Nation* (*Kokumin no rekishi* 国民の歴史) on 10 October 1999. Supported by a huge financial outlay and backed by extensive publicity by the conservative Sankei Shinbun 産経新聞 newspaper, the book was the fifth-best seller of the year 1999. By January 2002, it had sold more than 720,000 copies. While supporters of the Society applauded this unprecedented success, mainstream historians—**mostly on the political left—saw the sensational popularity** of the book as rooted in demagoguery, and regarded it as a scholarly shame. Nagahara Keiji 永原慶二, of the Liaison Team for the Truth and Freedom of Historical Textbooks, for example, accused Nishio of an “**unforgivable challenge to the achievements of post-war scholarship**” (Nagahara 2000, p. 19). In defense of history as a scientific discipline, mainstream historians argued that the book did not qualify for serious scholarly consideration. Obinata Sumio 大日方純夫 called it “**a blasphemy to the development of Japanese social science,**” **despising it** as an abusive patch-work concocted in the purpose of the baseless embellishing of Japanese

history which, while overlooking people's struggles against the rulers and power in domestic scene, also denies and negates Japan's acts of aggression against the Asian peoples.

Chinese Reactions

The final authorization of the Tsukuru Kai textbook by the Ministry triggered not only domestic left-wing indignation at home but also stern criticisms and resentments from Japan's neighbors. Let us briefly examine international reactions.

The Korean and Chinese Ministries of Foreign Affairs warned the Japanese against the Fusōsha edition and protested its approval by the Japanese government as damaging to relations with neighboring countries. Indeed the authorization may be regarded as contradictory to the spirit of Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi's declarations of apology, in 1995, to nations that Japan had invaded. According to the Korean and Chinese claims, the Japanese government, through its authorization of use of the Fusōsha edition, aids and abets the denials of Japan's war crimes and thereby denies Japan's responsibility for the repression and sufferings it inflicted upon Chinese and Korean peoples prior to 1945.

Schematically speaking, Chinese reactions are easier to analyze than the Korean ones. Both the public agencies and private voices call for "the right historical understanding," and blame the authors of the Fusōsha edition for "distortion" to historical facts, while at the same time implicitly hinting that the judiciousness in question is not entirely independent of the political hegemony. Let us point out four problems.

- (1) On the Nanjing Massacre: In a volume compiled by Chinese scholars who studied in Japan and are now teaching in Japanese universities, there is a paper pointing out a change in Chinese government decision-making about the treatment of the "Nanjing Massacre." Until 1983, the Chinese government tried to avoid discussing the issue, preferring to focus instead on economic cooperation with Japan, but it changed its mind during the "first textbook controversy," and called attention to the events in Nanjing in 1937 to insist upon Japan's criminality during the war. China officially put the number of victims at more than 300,000, although this figure was originally based on baseless propaganda disseminated by none other than the Japanese army itself. As Japanese revisionists have tried to refute this number, the issue has become intensely political and has come to a deadlock, making any neutral and emotion-free evaluation impossible.
- (2) The question of labeling Japanese military action—was it "invasion" (*shinryaku* 侵略) or "military advancement" (*shinkō* 進攻)?—arose as one of the key issues of the 1982 controversy. Evidently recognition of the legality or illegality of Japanese military actions was at stake. There was a serious cognition gap that lay behind the controversy. Apparently the Japanese authorities preferred avoiding, if possible, the term "invasion" because of its inevitably Marxist connotation. Accepting the term "invasion" implied accepting the views of dominant mainstream left-wing Marxist Japanese historians. For the Chinese authorities, believing in Marx-Leninism as the state creed, it was out of the question to question the theoretical framework. For the Chinese, refusal to use the term "invasion" is simply a violation of historical fact

and truth, whereas in Japan the issue revolves around the ideological orientations that condition differences in historical interpretation. The issue of terminology—“invasion” versus “advancement”—spilled into the arena of politics and diplomacy, making any rational elucidation difficult or even impossible.

- (3) Another cognition gap remained with regard to the difference between “state-edited textbooks” (*kokutei kyōkasho* 国定教科書) and “textbooks under state authorization” (*kentei kyōkasho* 検定教科書). The Japanese government asked for the neighboring countries’ understanding of the fact that it did not have the right to impose any ideological control in the course of implementation of the process of textbook authorization. This explanation was regarded by both Korean and Chinese authorities as proof of Japanese government’s rejection of assuming its political responsibility, and it was taken as unpardonable. By the same token, the authorization of the Fusōsha edition was regarded as constituting another proof of the Japanese government’s rejection of responsibility for its criminality during the expansionist period.
- (4) Finally, on the treatment of several key historical issues, fundamental disagreements still remain. Lack of description of Unit 731, the imperial army’s wartime secret biological weapons research group, in Japanese junior high school textbooks, for example, cannot avoid Chinese accusations that Japanese are intentionally concealing and suppressing historical truth. The lack of space within the framework of the junior high school textbook is not an acceptable excuse, in Chinese eyes. Chinese retain suspicions that the Japanese government is trying to hide Japan’s wartime criminality. But for Japan to accept unconditionally every requested change in the treatment of deeds and facts in accordance with foreign pressure would inevitably raise doubts about this nation’s political sovereignty, and right-wing nationalistic reaction and counter-attack resulted in the promotion of the Tsukuru Kai textbook.

To be theoretical about matters of historiography, there is no absolutely rational criterion of judgment as for inclusion of certain historical facts and exclusion of others. The choice can never be neutral, but inevitably reflects the ideology or set of biases on which the narrative is based. Under the law of Japan, the government, as a state agency, is not permitted to give any explicitly ideological imperative as for the choice of historical facts to be included in or excluded from the textbook. And yet once a textbook is authorized, the choices its authors have made inevitably invite ethical criticism from neighboring countries, and the critics are apt to equate approval of a textbook with Japan’s taking the ideological position presented in that book. It seems that the Chinese official reaction to Japanese authorization of the Fusōsha’s edition was issued in strict calculation of the mechanism of foreign diplomacy, and this appears to have been guided by state ideology.

The clear-cut and formal accusation of the Chinese government against Japanese authorization of the Fusōsha edition reveals one crucial issue separating mainland China’s position from Korea’s. Fujioka and his acolytes maintain that the so-called self-humiliating, self-accusing, masochistic view of Japanese history was put forward by left-wing intellectuals and

activists in Japan, and that these people in the 1970s believed in the legitimacy of the (North) Korean People's Democratic Republic and campaigned against the military dictatorship of South Korea. Curiously enough, these Japanese Marxists expected moral support from South Korea, where Marxism and communism were forbidden. The true objective of these Japanese Marxists consisted in taking advantage of Korean anti-Japanese sentiment and hostility, for their own political purposes. Though politically motivated, this analysis partly accounts for the difficulty of the dialogue between South Korean (mainly non-Marxist nationalist) historians and Japanese mainstream Marxist historians.

Korean Reactions

For a long period of time after the Second World War, most Japanese history textbooks (including left-wing works) paid little attention (from a Korean point of view) to Korea under Japanese occupation. It seems as if it were imperative for the post-war Japanese education to turn away from the abominable past days of external invasion. And it is only recently that the Japanese history textbooks have begun to give more detailed descriptions of Japan's annexation of Korea and its consequences. In this process, some contemporary Japanese such as Yanagi Muneyoshi 柳宗悦 (1889-1961), who publicly protested against crude colonial rule and invasion, came into focus for textbook editors.

By way of criticizing prewar Japanese imperialism and its military invasion of the continent, authors and/or editors inserted descriptions of Japanese resistance against the government's colonial rule in the textbooks. However, these descriptions were not welcome by Korean scholars. They found there only excuses and an attempt at self-exculpation, a neutralizing subterfuge on the part of Japanese scholars for the purpose of acquitting Japan's colonial crimes and exonerating Japan's responsibility. For some Korean historians the presence of these pro-Korean Japanese remains either unacceptable as historical fact or meaningless on grounds that it did not contribute to the Korean independence. The position of pro-Korean Japanese is no more favorably judged than that of the pro-Japan Koreans, who remain, even nowadays, discriminated against as infamous traitors of Korean nation. It may be worth remembering that many Korean nationalist scholars see it as imperative to categorically reject any attempt at rationalizing Japan's rule of the Korean peninsula; the mention of Yanagi Muneyoshi in a Japanese textbook can be judged as just one more maneuver of this sort.

Until recently, the dominant Korean view of the period under Japanese occupation was characterized by the theme "aggression and resistance." It has been said that a strong sense of identity crisis among Koreans stems from the systematic elimination of Korean culture attempted by the colonial government-general. For a long period of time, "anti-Japan" was the chief expression of Korean racial dignity and integrity. However, if "anti-Japaneseness" were the only possible core of Korean identity, this would logically mean that no Korean identity can be established without the presence of Japan. This of course is hardly acceptable to Korean nationalists. Even Korean emotional hostility to Japan and its frequent anti-Japan campaigns, manipulated and encouraged through education and media, may provide one more reinforcing proof of an old and infamous Japanese prejudice against the Korean people, according to which the Korean people are altruistic in character and as lacking in autonomous momentum. The "aggression and resistance" hypothesis is no longer tenable.

Assertions of the negative effects of Japan's rule on the Korean people have become a cause of national resentment. However, effacing Japan's presence from Korean history does not contribute to elucidate the truth in history any more than insisting (in denial of the record) that resistance to Japanese occupation was the only Korean story. In recent years, "aggression and resistance" gave way to a new "development and plunder" hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, Korean modernization in industry and commerce was achieved hand in hand with Japan's colonial policy and its usurpation of Korean resources. It is partly by following this hypothesis that the authors of the *Fusōsha* textbook seem to justify Japan's annexation and rule of Korean peninsula. So long as it contributed to Korea's modernization, the Tsukuru Kai writers imply, the Korean people should have taken Japanese annexation as beneficial. Of course it is one thing to statistically analyze the process of industrialization and explain the development of commercial activities during the Japanese occupation, and it is quite another to justify or ethically condemn the agencies involved in the process. But frequently these two aspects are confounded. This dilemma may partly explain the deep-rooted core and background of Korean emotional reactions to the *Fusōsha* book (cf. Inaga 2002).

Domestic Reactions

The authorization of the *Fusōsha* edition gave rise to two opposite domestic reactions. Left-wing, pro-Marxist, mainstream historians resented that all the efforts they have made in the last fifty years or so were jeopardized by the right-wing politicians and ideologues. Mainstream writers were concerned that the right-wing counter-attack maneuver around the issue would supply a pretext for bureaucratic sabotage against the truth in history. Some right-wing ideologues, for their part, criticized the compromises that the Ministry of Education made by way of giving its "opinions" on the first draft submitted by the Tsukuru Kai writers. They also condemned the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its humiliating submission to foreign (i.e., Korean and Chinese) reproaches and pressures, which they alleged to be violation of Japan's domestic politics, violation against which the Ministry should have protested.

Between the left and right extremes, some critics such as Mamiya Yōsuke 間宮洋介 pointed out the danger inherent in the official authorization (Mamiya 2001). Firstly there is the question of neutrality in the control. Because of its formal neutrality, the Ministry is not entitled to refuse any proposed textbook for obvious ideological reasons; it is obligated to rely upon the verification of the accuracy of factual data. But the elimination of factual errors only does not necessarily lead to a balanced and equitable description. The neutrality in the procedure of the examination does not always guarantee the neutrality of its product. The choice and elimination of historical facts to be treated or not in the manual depends, to a certain degree, on the editor's initiative. Hence the arbitrary nature of the "instructions" and "opinions" given for regulations in accordance with the general "guidelines" (*shidō yōryō* 指導要領). A certain margin is left for the editors as for the choice, organization, and interpretations of the facts and deeds they treat in a textbook. The editors might be old Marxist, nationalist or neo-nationalist, modernist, or something else; their positionality almost automatically determines the points at issue in what inevitably becomes an ideological controversy.

Secondly, whatever their ideological position, all the editors seek official authorization. And all sides believe in the legitimacy of their own ideologies and accuse their opponents of historical fallacy. Hence, incompatible worldviews enter in conflict in their quest for the aura of irreproachable authority that the “authentication” of official recognition confers. Obviously, the approved history textbook is an instrument of mass-education for the purpose of the reproduction of a national consciousness. So far as it serves the regime that authorizes it, it functions as an ideological apparatus par excellence. Mamiya calls our attention to the typical fact of ideological controversy that the conflict in search of hegemony is fought in the name (and guise) of the truth in history.

Thirdly, Mashiko Hidenori ましこひでのり points out that both the neo-nationalists and old-Marxists share a sort of morbid persecution delusion (Mashiko 2001a, Mashiko 2001b). According to his analysis, Marxists are escaping their own responsibility for not having been able to successfully indoctrinate the whole nation in the last half century. By claiming to be the victims of a right-wing/bureaucratic conspiracy, they try to cover up their own failures. The authors of the *Fusōsha* book also complain that they are victims of unjustified attacks, in their case by the domestic Marxist historians as well as from the hostile neighboring regimes. In their behavior one may detect a pervasive psychological retaliation against the incriminating of their own mother/father-land. Curiously enough, both of them, right and left, claim to be the victims of state censorship. And this despite the fact that both of them are intending to establish their own state-granted hegemony so as to ensure prevalence of their camp’s political ideology over the coming generations of the whole Japanese nation.

Strangely, Mashiko continues, both sides of the controversy seem to believe in the absolute efficiency of their tool of indoctrination, and forget the plain fact that the apparatus of indoctrination may face mental and intellectual resistance. Indeed the adults seem to forget that the boys and girls of the junior high school are no longer so young as to be more or less automatically obedient to their teachers’ instructions. Criticizing both the traditional left wing and the new right wing, Mashiko goes so far as to declare that ironically the *Fusōsha* textbook may be a most useful tool for a Marxist teacher, if he/she is clever and tactful enough to employ it as a defective product to be critically investigated in the classroom; he points out that this was the tactic followed by “bad teachers” (*fanmian jiaoshi* 反面教師) during the Maoist Cultural Revolution (*wenhua dageming/bunka daikakumei* 文化大革命) in China (Mashiko 2001a, Mashiko 2001b).

The greatest irony, according to Mashiko, is that the so-called neo-liberal ideologues are living proofs of the historical failure of the post-war democratic education in Japan, as all of them are the (by-)products of this democratic education. The neo-nationalists bear witness by their own existence to the fact that the postwar ideological brainwashing and indoctrination could have yielded results exactly counter to its own intentions. The rebirth of the neo-nationalism they represent is precisely the opposite of what had been expected from the American style democratic and liberal education. Nothing shows the tragicomical quality of this counterproductivity more clearly than the fact that Fujioka was once a renegade activist in the League of Democratic Youth (Minshu Seinen Dōmei 民主青年同盟), a cell organization of the Communist Party for the formation of new party leaders. Is this, we might wonder, the failure of the Japanese Communist Party or that of the GHQ of the American occupation army?

Art History in Question

My main purpose here is neither to give a comprehensive critical overview of the controversies nor to elaborate my personal opinions on the issue. I would rather like to concentrate on one aspect of the problem that has remained almost out of discussion until recently, namely the (ab-)use of visual materials in these authorized history textbooks. The matter did finally get taken up in a symposium held on 15 December 2001 as a special meeting of the Eastern Branch of the Association of Art History in Japan. Among the participants was Professor Tanaka Hidemichi 田中英道. An art historian whose major specialization up to then had been Western Renaissance art, he had been selected as the second president of the Tsukuru Kai, effective 1 October 2001, and it is probably fair to assume that he was the principal author of the passages in the *Fusōsha* textbook that treat art history. A critical overview of the symposium is already available (Chiba 2001, pp. 12-15), and so here let me limit myself to commentary on a paper distributed at the symposium by one of the organizers.

Shortly before her untimely death only two weeks after the symposium, Chino Kaori 千野香織 published an article of critical interest in which she discussed these textbooks (Chino 2001). After pointing out that the *Fusōsha* volume is the only textbook for junior high school students that gives an overview of Japanese art history, she observed, "Though benign at first sight, the illustrations, if compared with those of other [textbooks], turn out to be seriously problematical" (p. 41). "These illustrations convey the impression that a coherent Japanese beauty was created from the Jōmon neolithic era onward," Chino remarked, and she faulted the textbook for not showing "the beauty of [the minority] Ainu people" or that of Okinawa. Taking into account that minority peoples would have to make use of the textbook, Chino judged these lacunae to be deliberate acts of concealment of minority groups, and she contested the nationalistic and deceptively inclusive title, "The form of Japanese beauty." While blaming herself for having contributed to the lack of political sensitivity within the discipline of Japanese art history in general, Chino manifested her "strong anger against the abuse made by the *Fusōsha* textbook toward Japanese art history."

One may empathize with Chino's political engagement as a feminist art historian and willingly share her anger. At the same time one must acknowledge that her stance, also, was grounded on ideology. She disagreed with the idea of national history, which the Tsukuru Kai glorifies and aims to establish as an apparatus of indoctrination. It is an open question whether an authorized textbook should, in addition to teaching something about the past, contribute to a sense of national dignity or nationalism or conversely call that sense into question. Here is a frontal collision of opposite interests. Chino's argument is not well enough developed to logically dissuade the neo-nationalists from their egocentric ambition of re-establishing "beautiful and coherent Japan" as a nation. Her self-righteousness as an "authorized" guardian of judicious (professional or at least thoroughly scholarly) "Japanese art history" can be seen as no less problematical than the *Fusōsha* book's nationalistic view. Indeed, how can one be angry about the abuse of the concept of the "Japanese art history" the legitimacy of which one has already refuted?

My own view, which I want to show in the following part of this essay, differs from both Tanaka's nationalistic view and Chino's criticism of it. Instead of reducing the issue into an

ideological confrontation (which has no issue, as is typically observable in this symposium), I want to point out some of the limitations and flaws that can be found in virtually all the history textbooks now approved for use in Japanese high schools, regardless of their ideological tendencies (be they neo-nationalist or so-called mainstream “left-wing”). Examination of some crucial cases may allow us to problematize visual literacy in educational materials.

Reading the Fusōsha Book with Chinese Students

In the academic year 2001 in Beijing, I had the privilege of teaching Chinese students who were majoring in Japanese studies. The students took interest in the history textbook issue, which was being rather closely covered by the Chinese media. The students generally took at face value the accusations made by Chinese officials, and they were not in a position to judge the merits of the controversial *Fusōsha Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho* itself, because it was not available then in China. At the Center for Japanese Studies in Beijing Foreign Studies University, I was able to circulate a copy of the book, so as to open discussions with students. The following is partly based on this experience, and I would like to express my thanks to my Chinese students, who gave me a unique chance to think of the issue in an intercultural exchange.

For my students, the *Fusōsha* book was, at first sight, rather **disappointing**. They could not instantly and easily find glaringly wrong or irrelevant descriptions. They were more perplexed than surprised by the difficulty they encountered when they tried to identify the notorious prejudices of the book they had frequently heard of. Clearly they had expected to discover something much more horrible in the Tsukuru Kai’s version of the past. But their expectation of finding hideous distortions and historical fallacies, as well as an overbearing chauvinistic tone, soon faded away. They grew curious to know what was wrong with the textbook. Compared with the usual Chinese standard, according to which patriotism is strongly valorized, the nationalistic narrative of the *Fusōsha* text was not particularly astonishing. Rather it was similar to that familiar to them in their own Chinese textbooks.

They had been informed that the *Fusōsha* edition denied the historical fact of Japan’s military invasion of China in the 1930s, but they could not at first identify passages that would prove this accusation. They found treatments of such important historical incidents as the ones that occurred on 18 September (and not 11 September) 1931, and they were rather confused when they could not immediately recognize what had been said about the *Fusōsha* book in Chinese newspapers and weeklies. Of course, they were not familiar with the fact that in Tsukuru Kai usage these events were referred to as the *Manshū jihen* 満州事変 (Manchurian incident), and they took note of the semantic implications of that deliberately bland phrase. But the description itself of the incident did not differ much from what they had learnt at their high schools in China. This crucial example clearly shows that very close examination of the details of description is indispensable for anyone who wishes to detect the “wrongdoings” of the *Fusōsha* book. And more importantly, it demonstrates that unless they are equipped with a set of historiographical detective devices to help them discern subtle ideological signs of disagreement, even highly intelligent students find it difficult to understand the controversy. Without previous guidance, the ordinary and “secular” readers easily miss the points at issue. This also implies that any accusations that might be leveled

at an author or editor inevitably reveal the accuser's own ideological standpoint, at the same time and no less clearly than they identify faults of the author or editor.

For example, one may assert that the usage of "Manchuria incident" is irrelevant as historical terminology and should be replaced by 9.18 (the date does appear in the text), or one may charge that the avoidance of the term "invasion" shows the authors' denial of the basic historical significance of 9.18. However, such assertions themselves are doctrinaire, presupposing clear ideological position-taking for political and diplomatic purposes. Indeed a closer inspection does reveal that the Tsukuru Kai authors carefully avoid the term "invasion" when it comes to any Japanese military maneuver, while they use that very term for the military action by the Soviet Union. It was only by recognizing these details that the students began to understand what is at stake in the Fusōsha edition and what kind of political questions are hidden in the background of the textbook issue.

One student remarked that the fact of authorization of the Fusōsha text by the Japanese government was crucial to Chinese government for political and diplomatic reasons, and that the content of the textbook itself merely provides a suitable pretext for resuming a predetermined ideological controversy. If so, the textbook is not so much the origin of the dispute as a tool for keeping contention alive. It is like a ball thrown in the arena so that the political football game can begin. And in order to play the game, you have to know the rules in advance. The next step taken by my students was to understand the nature of official examination of the textbook as well as the procedures of the authorization, and to detect and decode hidden or camouflaged ideological messages that had survived the official examinations.

Equipped with the necessary critical tools, students made keen analytical points about the textual descriptions (which I omit here, as their findings were more or less similar with what has already been pointed out by many). But I believe it is worth noting that they paid little attention to the choice of illustrations, or the strategies by which those are selected and organized. Let me concentrate on this visual documentation of textbooks in the section that follows. So as to clearly see the points at issue, it is indispensable to make comparison of the Fusōsha edition with other textbooks—as Chino Kaori frankly confessed. I seek to avoid relying upon any certain preconceived ideological viewpoint. To the extent I can achieve this, it will make transparent the limits of my analysis, and these limits will reveal, in turn, the nature of the state control and authorization of history textbooks.

Depictions of the Chōsen Government-General Building

One of the most striking examples because it appears in a diversity of treatments in many junior high school textbooks is the Chōsen Government-General (Chōsen Sōtokufu) building. Constructed in front of the Gyeongbokgung¹ royal palace in 1922, after Japan's defeat it was eventually converted for use as the National Museum of Korea. It stood for half a century after the end of Japan's colonial rule, until it was demolished by the order of President Kim Young Sam on 15 August 1995. The dismantling provoked controversy: should the infamous memory of the Japanese rule be preserved or destroyed? Among Japanese junior high school textbooks, the Teikoku Shoin edition gives a bird's-eye view picture of the site, "objectively" commenting that the new reinforced concrete building is located in front of the

wooden royal palace. While using the same 1935 photo, the Tokyo Shoseki edition introduces it with a dialogue: “It seems that the building blocks the front of the palace,” says a boy. “Is this building still there?” asks a girl. If the Teikoku Shoin text hints that the attitude of the Japanese rulers toward the Korean cultural heritage was oppressive/aggressive and that the siting of the Government-General building was an intentional violation to Korean national dignity, Tokyo Shoseki calls attention to the recent (memorable or not memorable) destiny of this building that symbolized colonial rule.

The Tsukuru Kai textbook shows a photograph in which the Government-General building completely blocks view of the royal palace behind it. By the choice of the angle from which the photograph is taken, the fact of hiding the royal palace itself is tactfully erased. This observation might permit us to conclude that in comparison with other textbooks, the choice of the picture by the Fusōsha edition shamelessly contributes to justify Japan’s rule of the peninsula. Still this judgment may be too tendentious to be fair, because three other textbooks show different photos of the building in which the palace is not visible, and another three textbooks simply do not include a photograph of the building. However, these facts hardly mean that the latter six textbooks are no less dangerous or harmful than the Fusōsha book. Neither Japanese historians nor scholars in neighboring countries have questioned these other textbooks, which had—I would dare to say—previously been exonerated from any political dispute. As far as the photo of the Government-General building is concerned, the presumable and plausible hidden ideological intention of the Tsukuru Kai’s version seems to be calculated in such a way that it is perfectly neutralized and camouflaged when compared with other “irreproachable” “normal” textbooks.

Saying this does not mean at all that the observer is trying to defend the Fusōsha edition on grounds of its neutrality. The analysis simply shows that a mechanical iconographic comparison indicates that it is not consistent, and not justified, to direct criticism exclusively against the Fusōsha book and to overlook other textbooks. It seems as if the preconceived judgment about the Tsukuru Kai authors may have resulted in their work being singled out as uniquely questionable. To put it another way, Korean citizens might justifiably feel no less strong resentment against other Japanese textbooks than the Fusōsha edition, if they took note of those books’ equally “arrogant” and insensitive handling of these illustrations. The careless or even dismissive treatment, in Japan’s authorized history textbooks, of the most infamous monument of Japan’s criminal occupation of the peninsula might well be cited by Korean nationalists as a sign of Japanese insensitivity to their crimes.

This is no exaggeration. Description of the Korean national hero, An Jung-geun, as the “assassin” of Itō Hirobumi, Japan’s first resident-general in Korea during the period of the protectorate that preceded annexation, is enough to provoke strong nationalistic indignation among the Korean people. Many Japanese textbooks have already taken “appropriate” measures to avoid such accusations (“to the shame of Japanese dignity,” as was lamented by the Fusōsha authors). The textbook published by Nihon Shoseki makes a rather clever juxtaposition, placing Itō’s portrait on Japan’s 1000 yen bill next to An’s portrait on a Korean postal stamp. Teikoku Shoin inserts a text box, separate from the main narrative, with a Japanese translation of the description of An that appears in a Korean national history textbook. The Nippon Bunkyo Shuppan edition has a picture of An with the caption “An, the

hero of national salvation” bracketed in quotation marks. This quotation makes an ironical implication, because no Japanese figures in the textbook as “hero of national salvation”; the title is thus reserved for those peoples who had suffered under Japanese rule.

In the face of these typical examples of “shame and humiliation” (as the Tsukuru Kai authors have scornfully labeled them), the Fusōsha’s *Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho* takes revenge, in a way, by entirely omitting mention of An. The Ministry of Education guideline recommends, but does not require, that certain individuals who contributed to the nation be named. It must be noted that no strict official guideline is given as to which historical persons’ names are indispensable and must be mentioned in the junior high school textbook. Obviously, to draw such a list might jeopardize the stance of formal neutrality of the Ministry; it could be interpreted as an indicator of state control. And yet the selection or elimination of particular name(s) may inevitably inflict damage, and indeed might have already offended the sensibilities of neighboring peoples.

Colonial Masterpieces in Question

Theoretically speaking, therefore, there is no liquidating of the past history, and each historical textbook, regardless of its ideological position is susceptible of criticism in the future, according to political circumstances. In this respect, I am of the opinion that as far as the treatment of visual materials is concerned, no clear and reasonable demarcation could be drawn between the neo-nationalist’s “bad” textbook and other so-called mainstream “normal” editions.

Once again let me say that it is not my intention to defend the Tsukuru Kai’s textbook against criticisms, whatever the ideological background of these criticisms might be. So long as a textbook makes selections of certain facts to be treated (inevitably at the expense of omitting other facts), it is a simple illusion to believe that the book could be perfect. When specific entries or omissions in authorized textbooks become political issues, diplomatic disputes may occur again. Juxtapositions of contradictory interpretations of particular historical facts—by which several Japanese textbooks save face for the time being—may also become unacceptable at some time in the future. For the interested parties in certain political circumstances, an absolute interpretation is desired. For this reason, none of the authorized textbooks, whatever its good will and scholarly sincerity, can be sure of escape from unexpected criticism. Indeed nothing is more dangerous than the naive belief in irreproachable and absolutely accurate descriptions. In my opinion, this is particularly the case of Japanese high school (more than junior high school) history textbooks. The high school textbooks give an impression of neutrality by the sheer density of historical data and abundant quantity of materials (more than 6,000 individual names) that they contain.

When I was high school student more than twenty-five years ago, two oil paintings appeared in my textbook as exemplary specimens of the art of the Shōwa era. It happened that on the page opposing these two illustrations was the illustrated description of Japan’s invasion into the Northeastern part of China, then known as Manchuria. One of the paintings is the depiction of Beijing’s *Forbidden City* (*Shikinjō* 紫禁城, 1942; Fig. 1) by Umehara Ryūzaburō 梅原龍三郎 (1888-1986), the other is a *Portrait of a Lady in a Chinese Dress* (*Kinjō* 金蓉, 1934; Fig. 2) by Yasui Sōtarō 安井曾太郎 (1888-1955). Both painters were

Fig. 1. Umehara Ryūzaburō, *Shikinjō*, 1940. Oil and Japanese pigment on paper, 115.0 cm x 89.0 cm. Eiseibun-ko Museum, Tokyo.

decorated with the Order of Cultural Merit (*bunka kunshō* 文化勲章) in their final years. When I looked at these paintings, I could not see any connection between them and Japanese military expansion and/or invasion on the continent. It was not until much later when I made a systematic study of the Western Orientalist painting of the nineteenth century that I discerned a hidden and I might even say forbidden link that closely connected the illustrations and the map of Japan's new territory in Northeastern China.

I made a similar experiment with my Chinese students in Beijing. When I showed them for the first time the open pages in question, no one offered any comment. But a one-hour explanation of the outline of the Orientalist painting in Europe was enough to awaken their critical consciousness. What had initially appeared to their eye as an innocent landscape painting and a famous portrait of a lady transformed into ideological apparatuses, unquestionably emanating the message of Japan's occupation of China and signaling as well the painters' involvement in the colonialist polity. It is enough to



Fig. 2. Yasui Sōtarō, *Kin'yō*, 1934. Oil on canvas, 96.5 cm x 74.5 cm. National Museum of Art, Tokyo.

know the historical circumstances in which Umehara executed the scene of the Forbidden City so as to be convinced of the colonial implications. Beijing was then under Japanese military occupation, and Umehara enjoyed a privileged stay as an official painter invited by the Japanese authority for a propaganda mission. His painting shows the view of the Forbidden City from the top of the Beijing Hotel, the best setting conceivable.

Yasui also visited China by invitation, and shortly before he had executed a series of sketches and oil paintings of the Lama Buddhist temples in Chengde (*Shōtoku Rama byō* 承德拉嘛廟, 1938; Fig. 3), where the Qing Dynasty's summer villa and a vast garden were located. The first attempt to preserve and protect the architectural heritage of Chengde was



Fig. 3. Yasui Sōtarō, *Shōtoku Rama byō*, 1938. Oil on canvas, 60.0 cm x 77.5 cm. Aichi Prefectural Museum of Art, Aichi Art Center, Nagoya.

made by Sekino Tadashi 関野貞 (1867-1935) as part of the archaeological mission to the Manchuria. Yasui was among the Japanese official painters who had the opportunity to make the excursion to Chengde at the expense of the Manchukuo puppet monarchy. It would be going too far to see his portrait of a lady in Chinese dress as evidence of the painter's own will to dominate effeminate China. Still, the choice of this timely fashion cannot be explained except by contextualizing it within the precise historical and cultural circumstances of Japanese expansion into China. It must also be pointed out that the exotic female fashion is one of the most distinctive features of the colonial paintings in general, and it was not by chance that Yasui chose a lady in Chinese dress as his model.

Astonishingly enough, both of these paintings remain two of the most frequently reproduced and mentioned pieces of work in Japanese history textbooks for high school students today. When I pointed this fact out, my Chinese students became excited, thinking they could finally detect unquestionable proof of Japanese political will to invade China, as well as its survival in today's history textbooks. For my part, it was the optimal moment to explain them the so-called "political unconscious" as was proposed by the American Marxist theorist Frederic Jameson.

Both Umehara and Yasui remained unconscious of their own commitment to the colonialist ideology, and they consciously avoided explicitly colonial settings. They would almost surely be surprised if they knew they are now sometimes criticized as imperialists, anti-feminists, and colonialists because of their choice of the subject matter in these two paintings. The same may be true of authors and editors of Japanese history textbooks. These historians certainly have chosen the two paintings without suspecting the political incorrectness of their choices. But the fact that both the painters and the historians were unconscious of their own political stance, or more precisely politically unconscious of their behavior, must be all the more problematical as the consequences of their unreflectiveness go on affecting pupils who use the history textbooks now. Eliminating these paintings is not what I want to propose. The elimination would only result in concealment of what should be revealed. Condemning the painters of their unnoticed colonial spirit or the historians of their insensibility is not the issue, either. Instead, it would be more heuristic to awaken the critical consciousness of the high school and university students and to cultivate their visual literacy for their own purposes. Rather than blaming the people of shortsightedness in their past, it is more important to check and notice our own political unconsciousness.

Image and Interpretation

By way of conclusion, let us have a look at another painting. *Autumn (Aki 秋)*, Fig. 4) by Kojima Torajirō 児島虎次郎 (1881-1929) was executed in 1920 and was exhibited in the Parisian Salon des Indépendants. The subject, a lady in *chima* and *chogori*, is obviously colonial, and the setting is the Korean peninsula under Japanese rule. Just as the European painters made the exotic paintings of Oriental women, Kojima, as a Japanese, chose a Korean lady in her traditional dress, duplicating and transferring the colonial hierarchical relationship in East Asia. My intention, however, is not to reproach the painter for overt identification with the European colonizer. The subject matter reminds me of a short novel by Kajiyama Hiroyuki 梶山季之 (1930-1975), *Richō zan'ei* 李朝殘影 (Kajiyama 1963/1978; in English translation, Kajiyama 1995).

The story goes as follows: The protagonist of the story, a young Japanese painter in Seoul in 1940, is fascinated by a *kisaeng* dancer and wishes to do an oil painting of her. After a long refusal, she agrees to model for him. During the session the artist vaguely comes to know that her sadness comes from the tragic death of her family. The painting, when it is completed, is chosen for the gold prize in the government-sponsored official Korean annual exhibition. Despite this recognition, the painter is summoned by a sergeant of the military police, who asks him to change the title of his work. Any title evoking the Korean lost dynasty is unacceptable, as it may imply and encourage disobedience to Japanese rule. On condition that



Fig. 4. Kojima Torajirō, *Aki*, 1920. 200.0 cm x 136.0 cm. Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

the artist concede to the modification, he will be honored by the prize. Having noticed, however, the invincible sense of national dignity of his model, the painter promptly refuses the proposal. This is the beginning of the tragedy. His political thinking has been suspected as communist and his sympathy to the Korean nationalist has been already questioned by the military police, which had seized, in the painter's room, a secret military report on the repression of the March 1 incident (1919) by the Japanese army.² The report belonged to the painter's father, who is revealed to have been the commander of the massacre in which the model's family was murdered. With this surprising revelation given by the sergeant, the painter once again refuses to accept the new title and proposes to withdraw the piece from the exhibition. In a spasm of anger, the military police sergeant beats the unpatriotic suspect up. Falling unconscious, the painter vaguely recognizes with pain what he

has dared. With this the story ends, silently hinting at the tragic destiny that awaits the painter, his model and the surrounding people.

In the light of Kajiyama's novel, Kojima's colonial painting is suddenly transformed. It may also serve as a device to transmit a strong message against the Japanese rule. The question comes to my mind: Was similar censorship actually introduced by the military police as for the choice of subject matter and titles of works in the official Korean exhibition? Or was it simply Kajiyama's fictional invention? The question remains open, as the historical documents that survive from the government-sponsored exhibitions do not allow us to scrutinize the truth. And yet, the reality of the prevailing sense of terror is vividly transmitted from the original prose of the novelist, who spent his childhood in the colonial capital. It seems that this piece of fiction gives us much to think about, with regard to the aggressive nature of colonial rule—more even, perhaps, than the sterile ideological dispute over the historical textbook issue. The true arena of historical controversy does not lie in the textbooks themselves but in the educational environment in which they may be (ab-)used for different purposes.

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NOTES

¹ Romanization of Korean here follows the system adopted officially in the Republic of Korea in 2000. In the still widely-used McCune-Reischauer romanization, Gyeongbokgung would be Kyōngbokkung.

² This incident, by the way, was called the “Banzai [Mansei] Incident” in Japan, whereas it has been officially characterized in Korea as the “March 1 Independence Movement.”

The substance of the essay printed here remains as it was first written and delivered at the Banff Symposium in October 2002. My thanks go to James Baxter for editorial assistance with the present version. In this essay, I insisted on the apparent “neutrality” of the textbook authorization procedure in Japan, but this does not mean that I agree that the procedure is in fact wholly neutral. On the contrary, the main problem resides in the pretension of an ideology-free stance in the authorizing process. One should not, however, reduce this problem to a schematic ideological conflict between right-wing power holders and anti-regime left-wing activists and Marxist historians. For relevant criticism of the hidden ideology contained in the “Official Guidelines” for Japanese textbook authorization, refer to Chung Jae Jeong (Jeong Jae Jeong) 鄭在貞, (*Zōboban*) *Kankoku to Nihon, rekishi kyōiku no shisō* (増補版) 韓国と日本、歴史教育の思想 [Korea and Japan: Thought about Historical Education] (Suzusawa Publishers, 2005; revised and expanded edition of a work originally published 1998).

Notes on the illustrations: Figures 1, 2, and 3 are reproduced from the exhibition catalogue *Realistic Representation IV: Master Paintings in Japan in the 1930s* (Tokyo and Kyoto National Museums of Modern Art, 1994). Figure 4 is reproduced from *Exposition pour le 70^e anniversaire de la mort: Torajirō Kojima* (Kurashiki: Musée des Beaux-Arts, Ohara, 1999).