
JAPAN'S HISTORY TEXTBOOKS DEBATE

National Identity in Narratives of Victimhood and Victimization

===== Alexander Bukh
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Abstract

This article examines the narratives of wartime victimhood and victimization in Japan's junior high school history textbooks in the early 1980s and in contemporary times from the perspective of national identity. Unlike most existing scholarship, this article argues that the narrative regarding the wartime suffering of the Japanese people can be seen as inducing a critical perspective on imperial wars and their disastrous impact on ordinary people. It also argues that contemporary narratives contest the notion of a monolithic Japanese identity and challenge Japan's monopoly over writing its own national history.

Keywords: Japan, textbooks, national identity, historical memory, victimhood

Introduction

In Japan, history textbooks and school education in general have been important locales for the struggle between competing historical narratives in constructing and contesting national identity.¹ While Japan's textbook

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1. Yoshiko Nozaki, "Japanese Politics and the History Textbook Controversy," in Edward Vickers and Alisa Jones, eds., *History Education and National Identity in East Asia* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 275–306, 299.

Asian Survey, Vol. 47, Issue 5, pp. 683–704, ISSN 0004-4687, electronic ISSN 1533-838X. © 2007 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Rights and Permissions website, at <http://www.ucpressjournals.com/reprintInfo.asp>. DOI: AS.2007.47.5.683.

controversy gained international attention only in the past two decades, the domestic debate regarding the proper contents of history textbooks and the aims of history education originated in the prewar years.² This article hopes to contribute to the ongoing debate regarding the nature of the textbooks' narrative on the suffering of the Japanese people (victimhood) and the atrocities inflicted on the peoples of Asia (victimization) during the years of Japan's colonialism and imperialism.

After Japan's defeat in the Asia Pacific War,³ unfinished reforms implemented by American Occupation authorities created a situation by which, on the one hand, postwar academia in Japan became dominated by "progressive" and left-leaning historians, while on the other, the conservative establishment—including the Ministry of Education (MoE)—was left intact. The coexistence of these two conflicting sources of influence and authority with differing ideologies—the progressive academic establishment, and the conservative bureaucratic and political establishments—contributed to the revived struggle over historical education in the mid-1950s.⁴ Junior high school history textbooks have, in fact, remained the focal point for this struggle because they constitute an integral part of compulsory education for young citizens in Japan.

The position espoused by progressives in academe can best be summarized in the words of academic Ienaga Saburō. Ienaga, the figurehead for the progressive textbooks cause, has argued that the main problem of the textbooks is that they do not contain enough "remorse for the past."⁵ By this, he refers largely to the "aggression [and] infliction of damage" by Japan in Asia, the role and responsibilities of the Shōwa emperor, Hirohito, and the "war responsibility" of the Japanese people in general.⁶ On the other hand, the conservative establishment has continuously criticized existing textbooks as presenting students with an ideologically biased "red," meaning communist, view of Japanese history.⁷ In recent years, the "red" has come to be replaced with "American" or "Soviet," but the general argument criticizing the non-existence of the "Japanese

2. For a concise overview of the debate, see Mirai Niki, "Rekishī Kyōkasho Mondai" [The history textbooks problem], in *Rikkyō daigaku kyōikugakka kenkyū nenpo* [Yearbook of the education faculty, Rikkyō University] 48 (2005), pp. 113–43.

3. In general, the term "Asia Pacific War" refers to the conflict that starts with Japan's military expansion in China (usually 1937, but sometimes traced back to the Manchurian Incident of 1931) and that, following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, became an integral part of World War Two. The war ended with Japan surrendering to the Allies in August 1945.

4. James J. Orr, *The Victim as Hero* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), pp. 72–73.

5. Saburō Ienaga, "The Glorification of War in Japanese Education," in *International Security* 18:3 (1993/94), pp. 113–33.

6. For example, see Fuwa Tetsuō, *Koko Ni "Rekishī Kyōkasho" Mondai No Kakushin Ga Aru* [Here is the core of the "history textbooks" problem] (Tokyo: Shinnihon Shuppansha, 2001).

7. For example, see Democratic Party of Japan, *Ureubeki Kyōkasho* [Deplorable textbooks] (Tokyo: Nihon Minshutō, 1955) 1, pp. 24–27.

view of history” in textbooks has remained intact.⁸ In essence, conservatives seek to provide students with a positive and “nationalistic” view of Japan’s past in which the nation and state are characterized as being a monolithic, natural entity free from an “imported,” outside critique.⁹

For three decades, the history textbook debate remained largely isolated in the domestic political sphere. However, this debate came to play a larger and more important role in regional politics after 1982, when the Chinese press picked up domestic media reports critical of the MoE’s interference in drafting history textbooks. The most recent phase of the regionalized and internationalized textbook controversy started in 2001 when a textbook produced by a conservative group called *Atarashii Kyōkasho o Tsukuru Kai* (Japan’s Society for Textbook Reform, known as *Tsukuru Kai*) was granted official approval for school usage by the MoE.¹⁰

Engaging Japan’s History Textbooks

There is a vast amount of scholarly and journalistic work in Japan devoted to the history of the textbook issue, which predates the emergence of the *Tsukuru Kai*. Most Japanese writings on the topic constitute an integral part of the domestic struggle over the historical narrative found in the textbooks and tend to champion the cause of either one of the two camps.¹¹ Since the early 1980s, the controversy has also attracted the attention of foreign, including American, scholars. Most of the scholarship that has emerged from foreign academics takes a rather critical view of the narration found in Japanese textbooks of the country’s national past. The emergence of the *Tsukuru Kai* in the second half of the 1990s resulted in a number of academic works being written that engaged in a critical evaluation of the group’s ideology and its textbooks.¹² This scholarship has, in general, argued that the *Tsukuru Kai* has attempted to

8. Kanji Nishio, ed., *Atarashii Kyōkasho o ‘Tsukuru Kai’ no Shucho* [The argument of the *Tsukuru kai*] (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 2001).

9. For example, see Fujioka Nobukatsu, “*Jigyaku Rekishikan*” no *Byōri* [The pathology of a “masochistic view of history”] (Tokyo: Bungei shunshu, 2000).

10. Kanji Nishio et al., *Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho* [New history textbook] (Tokyo: Fusōsha, 2001). In January 2001, the MoE became the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT).

11. For a sample of the progressive perspective, see Ienaga Saburō, ed., *Kyokasho kara Kesenai Sensō no Shinjitsu* [Truth about the war that cannot be deleted from the textbooks] (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1996.) For a conservative critique, see Nakagawa Shōichi, ed., *Rekishi Kyokasho E No Gimon* [Questioning the history textbooks] (Tokyo: Tenten sha, 1997).

12. For example, see Gavan McCormack, “The Japanese Movement to ‘Correct’ History,” in Laura Hein and Mark Selden, eds., *Censoring History* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 2000), pp. 53–73; and John K. Nelson, “Tempest in a Textbook: A Report on the New Middle-School History Textbook in Japan,” in *Critical Asian Studies* 34:1 (2002), pp. 129–48.

rewrite and “whitewash” Japanese history through its activities and production of textbooks.¹³

Yet, it is important to note that the use of revisionist textbooks produced or supported by the Tsukuru Kai—which were first approved in 2001—was limited to only 0.0039% of the country’s junior high school population.¹⁴ In spite of previous concerns, this number rose to only 0.4% in 2005.¹⁵ Thus, while the problem of historical revisionism in Japan is important because it enjoys strong support from parts of the conservative political establishment, the excessive attention paid to the Tsukuru Kai and its textbooks is not numerically representative of the actual number being used in Japanese schools.

A number of academics have analyzed the dominant narrative found in Japanese textbooks. For example, Dierkes argues that very little has changed in terms of the textbooks’ portrayal of the Japanese nation over the past five decades.¹⁶ By studying the structure of the narrative, he contends that the nation has been continuously narrated in a chronological sequence of mostly political events and depicted as a natural form of organization for Japanese society—united, homogenous, and eternal. Dierkes notes that while depictions of the Asia Pacific War underwent minor changes in the 1980s and 1990s, the narrative generally remains unchanged—uncritical, unreflectively empirical, monolithic.¹⁷ Barnard provides the most forceful critique of Japan’s history textbooks by employing linguistic tools to analyze the prevailing depictions of the 1937 Nanjing Massacre, Japanese attacks against the Western allies, and Japan’s surrender in August 1945. In his assessment, junior high school texts are strongly tainted by the ideologies of “irresponsibility” and “face-protection.”¹⁸ Put simply, Barnard argues that the language of the narrative absolves the Japanese people from responsibility for the war and provides face-saving justifications for the wartime leaders.

In this context, Orr’s work—which examines the elementary and junior high textbooks’ narrative from the period between the end of the Asia Pacific War to the late 1970s—stands out in its overall and balanced approach.¹⁹ Orr links the dominance of the Japanese wartime victimhood narrative to the belief shared by American Occupation authorities and Japanese intellectuals that

13. For example, Martin Jacques, “Japan’s Failure to Own up to Its Past Threatens Its Future,” *The Guardian*, April 23, 2005, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk>>, accessed April 24, 2005.

14. *Mainichi Shinbun* [Mainichi News], Tokyo, September 17, 2001, p. 4.

15. *Asahi Shinbun* [Asahi News], October 17, 2005, p. 3.

16. Julian Dierkes, “The Stability of Postwar Japanese History Education amid Global Changes,” in Edward Vickers and Alisa Jones, eds., *History Education and National Identity in East Asia* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 255–74.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

18. Christopher Barnard, *Language, Ideology, and Japanese History Textbooks* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003), pp. 158–64.

19. James J. Orr, *The Victim*.

this kind of historical writing would serve as the basis for creating a post-war, peace-loving society. Orr notes the problem of neglecting Japanese responsibility for the victimization of other Asian peoples that emerges from juxtaposing the Japanese people (“the victims”) with the military (“the perpetrators”) in early textbooks. However, Orr argues that this tendency was ameliorated in the texts written in the late 1970s, which placed greater focus on the complicity of the Japanese people in the victimization of other Asians.²⁰ Orr’s work provides a concise analysis of the domestic and international dynamics that may have catalyzed this changed narrative, but unfortunately his temporal framework does not extend beyond the 1970s.

Analytical Framework and Scope of Analysis

This article takes the approach common to most works on the subject in that history taught at schools is conceptualized as providing students not only with dry facts regarding past events but also with what has been defined in the study of national identity formation as a “historical narrative.”²¹ In contrast to “history,” which contains only facts and dates, a “historical narrative” provides broad interpretations of the national past and links it to the present. As such, it constitutes a cognitive lens that helps members of a national community make sense of the nation’s place in the world and serves as an important tool in the construction, re-construction, and contestation of national identity. Hence, the narratives on Japan’s own victimhood and its victimization of other nations are not only depictions of the past but also play an important role in the construction of contemporary Japanese national identity.²² The analysis below seeks to examine the broader construction of the “nation” that emerges from these narratives and the changes that occurred in this construct over the past two decades.

In terms of Japanese victimhood, this article seeks to broaden the scope of analysis beyond Japanese hardships during the Asia Pacific War to include the narrative on Japan’s victimhood vis-à-vis Russia/the Soviet Union, which has generally been ignored by existing scholarship. These include events related to Soviet participation in World War Two—namely the seizure of the four islands

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 72–105.

21. For example, Michael Barnett, “The Israeli Identity and Peace Process,” in Michael Barnett and Shibley Telhami, eds., *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002) p. 6; and Kondō Takahiro, “Yoroppa no Kokusai Rekishi Kyōkasho Kenkyū to Katari” [European international studies of history textbooks and the narrative], in Watanabe Masako, ed., *Jojutsu Stairu to Rekishi Kyōiku* [Narrative style and history education] (Tokyo: Sangensha, 2003), pp. 16–17.

22. See Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2000) for an excellent analysis of the role of victimhood in the construction of postwar Japan’s identity.

off the northeast coast of Hokkaido that came collectively to be known as the “Northern Territories”—and the internment and forced labor of Japanese prisoners of war (POWs) in the Soviet Union after the Soviets advanced into Manchuria.²³ This article also expands the scope of analysis to include the narrative on the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05.) The main reason for this expansion is that this war, and not the first Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, has been widely perceived in Japan as being the starting point of the imperial ambitions that led to the disastrous adventures associated with Japanese colonialism and militarism. These, in turn, are seen to have led to the disastrous events of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the ensuing Japanese defeat in World War Two.²⁴ The textbooks also note the importance of the Russo-Japanese War by stating that Japan’s position as an imperial state, au pair with the European powers, was “solidified” as the result of Japan’s victory in the war and the subsequent Portsmouth Peace Treaty.²⁵ As such, the Russo-Japanese War constitutes an integral part of the narrative on Japan’s imperialism and colonialism.

In terms of Japanese victimization of other nations, this article examines the depictions of the most controversial parts of Japan’s involvement in Asia, including its colonial policies in Korea and the Korean struggle for independence and the events related to Japan’s war in China such as the Nanjing Massacre. In particular, this part also examines the mob-inflicted killings of Koreans and Chinese in Japan after the 1923 earthquake, the use of “comfort women,” and forced labor practices on Japan’s mainland. The examination below combines both quantitative and qualitative criteria in evaluating the dominant historical narratives. In terms of quantity, it includes the actual number of references to the events, the amount of space devoted to them, their location on the page (e.g., the body of the text, a highlighted text, or merely a footnote). At

23. The suffering of the Japanese “pioneers” in Manchuria after the Soviet invasion was identified by some Japanese historians as one of the most “disastrous moments” of the Asia Pacific War along with Hiroshima/Nagasaki, the Tokyo bombing raids, and the battle for Okinawa. See Eguchi Keiichi, “Kyōkasho Mondai to Okinawasen” [The textbooks problem and the battle for Okinawa], in Fujiwara Akira, ed., *Okinawasen to Tennōsei* [The battle for Okinawa and the imperial system] (Tokyo: Rippu shobō, 1987), pp. 223–54. Furthermore, the Soviet detention of around 600,000 Japanese prisoners of war and their prolonged detainment in labor camps, where an estimated 60,000 perished (comparable, for example, with the 70,000 victims of the Nagasaki atomic bombing) have an obvious potential for deepening Japanese victimhood and relativizing the atrocities committed by Japan. The revisionist textbook fully utilizes this potential by depicting both incidents along with Japanese atrocities in a sub-chapter titled “Tragedy of War.” See Nishio et al., *Atarashii Rekishi*, p. 208. The government attempt to utilize these incidents to deepen the construction of Japanese victimhood can be witnessed at Heiwa Kinen Tenji Shiryōkan [Resource Center of Praying for Peace] Museum, affiliated with the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

24. For example, see Shiba Ryōtarō, *Higashi to Nishi* [East and West] (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1995), pp. 9–10.

25. For example, see Ukai Nobushige et al., *Atarashii Shakai-Rekishi* [New social studies-history] (Tōkyō: Tōkyō Shoseki, 1984), p. 236.

the same time, it also examines the nature of the depictions of these events. As noted earlier, a “historical narrative” is expected to provide an interpretative lens for evaluating the national past, present, and future. While purely factual descriptions of certain historical events can provide a sense of “common experience,” they usually fail to create a cognitive framework that can be applied by individuals to evaluate the past and therefore the present in terms of “self” and “community.”²⁶ For this reason, the qualitative criteria applied in this analysis involve examination of the interpretative (e.g., normative) language or the lack of it, which constitutes a particular view of national identity and the past.

In order to trace changes in the discourse, the historical narrative associated with each particular topic is examined and compared in the most popular textbooks used in the mid-1980s (immediately after the introduction of the “neighboring countries clause”) with those found in the most recent textbooks. As a result of widespread domestic and international criticism and official protests from both China and Korea, what has been called the “neighboring countries clause” was introduced into the official guidelines for the examination of textbooks (*kyōkasho kentei kijun*.) The clause directs the writers of textbooks to show particular sensitivity to the feelings of “neighboring countries”—basically meaning the Asian victims of Japanese aggression and colonization—when drafting the texts.

Since the mid-1980s, the narrative on Japan’s colonial past has grown thicker, in both a qualitative and quantitative sense, reaching its peak in 1997 when all of the textbooks approved by the MoE included references to “comfort women” and broad coverage of the Nanjing Massacre.²⁷ However, the emergence of the Tsukuru Kai in the second half of the 1990s and the extensive activities of its members to “correct” the so-called “masochistic” view of history found resonance in certain sections of Japanese society and led to what can be characterized as a “regression” in the narrative. For example, references to “comfort women” started to disappear and the narrative on other such incidents grew thinner in textbooks that came out in 2001, the year the conservative revisionist book published by Tsukuru Kai passed the official screening. This change in the narrative has been pointed out by a number of scholars.²⁸ However, existing scholarship tends to ignore the broader changes that occurred in the narrative over the past two decades regarding national identity construction. This article seeks to address this question by examining the changes in the depiction of Japanese victimhood and the atrocities inflicted by Japan.

26. William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity, and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 47.

27. Tim Beal, Yoshiko Nozaki, and Jian Yang, “Ghosts of the Past: The Japanese History Textbooks Controversy,” *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 3:2 (2001), pp. 177–88, 179.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

Because the narrative varies from one textbook to another, this article focuses only on the most widely used textbooks that together account for more than 60% of those used in all Japanese junior high schools during the period under examination. It must also be noted that the most widely used textbooks in 2002 retained their market share after the 2005 MoE certification exercise without any substantial revisions. As such, the analysis provided below maintains its validity for textbooks to be used from 2006 until 2011.²⁹

Narratives of Victimhood and Victimization

A number of observations emerging from the narratives of victimhood and victimization are made in this article regarding the nature of Japan's national identity. In spite of being generally "empirical" as opposed to "interpretive," the primary emphasis in these narratives during the 1980s was on Japan's victimhood as a nation.³⁰ This characteristic of the narrative was widely criticized for absolving the Japanese people of their responsibility in the Asia Pacific War. However, the narrative found in these textbooks can only be understood in the context of the conception of "the nation" as an entity separate from "the state." This notion emerged as a part of the postwar "healthy nationalism" that came to be widely shared by a generation of postwar progressive historians. According to this conception, the nation came to be perceived in generally positive terms as a source of opposition against the state's interests, whereas the state came to represent the negative past of imperialism, authoritarianism, and barbarism.³¹

29. Below is the list of the textbooks examined. Data were obtained from *Kyōkasho Repoto* [Textbooks Report] 1984 (27), p. 82; 2002 (46), pp. 77–83; and 2006 (50), pp. 69–73. Additional statistical data were provided by the staff at the library of the National Institute of Education Research in Tokyo. In parentheses are the market shares of the respective books. In the body of the text, the references are made to the publishing house; subsequent footnotes will refer to the main author of the textbooks. Ukai Nobushige et al., *Atarashii Shakai-Rekishi* (34.9%); Kodama Yukikazu et al., *Chūgaku Shakai-Rekishiteki Bunya* [Junior high school social studies-history] (Tōkyō: Nihon Shoseki, 1984) (20%); Aoki Kazuo et al., *Nihon No Ayumi to Sekai-Rekishi* [Japan's path and the world-history] (Tōkyō: Chūkyo Shuppan, 1984) (14.2%); Tanabe Hiroshi et al., *Atarashii shakai-Rekishi* [New social studies-history] (Tōkyō: Tōkyō Shoseki) (51.2% in 2006, 51.3% in 2002); Atsuta Isao et al., *Chūgaku Shakai-Rekishiteki Bunya* [Junior high school social studies-history] (Ōsaka: Ōsaka Shoseki, 2002) (15.4% in 2006, 14% in 2002); Sasayama Haruo et al., *Chūgaku Shakai-Rekishi: Mirai o Mitsumete* [Junior high school-history: Looking toward the future] (Tōkyō: Kyōiku Shuppan, 2002) (11.8% in 2006, 13% in 2002); Kuroda Hideo et al., *Chūgakusei No Rekishi-Nihon No Ayumi to Sekai No Ugoki* [History for junior high school-Japan's path and the world changes] (Tokyo: Teikoku Shoin, 2002) (14.2% in 2006, 10.9% in 2002).

30. Dierkes, "The Stability of Postwar Japanese History Education," p. 259.

31. See C. A. Gayle, "Progressive Representation of the Nation: Early Post-war Japan and Beyond," in *Social Science Japan* 4:1 (2001), pp. 1–19.

In short, as this article argues, the narrative of Japanese victimhood creates a distinction between the state and the nation and emphasizes the heavy cost of the state's misadventures and policies for the people of Japan. As such, the victimhood of the Japanese people serves not only as a "foundational myth" of postwar Japan's pacifist identity but also creates a highly critical view of the state and its militaristic policies.³² Furthermore, in the context of narrating Japanese victimhood, there are a number of attempts to transcend national borders by including in the texts instances of suffering of other peoples of Asia. Yet, in spite of more extensive depictions of "atrocities" inflicted on other Asian peoples, Japanese victimhood is still a central feature in the contemporary narrative in the most recent textbooks. However, the narrative has undergone two important changes. First, the monolithic view of Japanese victimhood has been contested through detailed depictions of the battle for Okinawa. Secondly, inclusion of the narratives of the victims of Japanese atrocities in the textbooks has challenged the exclusive right of Japanese historians and the state over writing national history.

1980s Narratives of Victimhood

The Russo-Japanese War

The narrative of the 1980s is particularly vivid in conveying the disastrous "side effects" of imperial wars on the Japanese people if the scope of analysis is expanded to include depictions of Japan's wars with Russia (later the Soviet Union). Because the Russo-Japanese War is so central to the narrative on Japan's imperialism, almost all of the textbooks devote extensive space to describing the causes of the war, the war itself, and the subsequent peace settlement. While the narrative describes the victory of a "small, Asian country, Japan" as giving "hope and confidence to Asian people," it also emphasizes the hardships of the people during the war stemming from heavy taxation, difficult working conditions, and the lack of provisions.³³ Responsibility for these miseries is placed squarely on the shoulders of the state and elites. For example, a war-related caricature that appears in two of the textbooks depicts a Japanese peasant crumbling under the burden of heavy taxation while, in the background, members of the upper class and state officials enjoy the profits made during the war.³⁴ The textbook published by Nihon Shoseki stands out in this sense, devoting half a chapter to the suffering of the Japanese people during the war. It notes both the Japanese population's overall support for the war but also its suffering as a result of heavy taxation, hunger, and conscription. Interestingly,

32. Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory*, p. 205.

33. For example, Ukai, *Atarashii*, p. 236.

34. Aoki, *Nihon*, p. 224; and Ukai, *Atarashii*, p. 236.

the narrative also makes a brief attempt to transcend national borders by noting in the same sub-chapter the hardships experienced by the Russian people.³⁵

Asia Pacific War

There is no doubt that the “suffering of the (Japanese) people” (*kokumin*) is the main theme in this narrative and occupies an average of two pages. Another page is devoted to factual depictions of the main battles. The narrative generally describes the harsh economic conditions, the mobilization of women and children to work in factories, and the victims of American bombings.³⁶ All of the texts offer an additional reading titled “People and War” or “Children and War” that present letters or parts of diaries written by children during the war, in order to encourage contemporary students to think about the disastrous effects the war had on the lives of Japanese people.³⁷ However, the narrative is not about abstract suffering. The state’s role in the suffering of the Japanese people is demonstrated in discussion of the lack of food provisions that resulted from the “diversion of many products to the war” and the forced conscription of many youngsters and adults for labor in factories and mines.³⁸ In discussing the American bombing of Japan’s mainland, the texts also mention the fact that the government hid the truth about the Japanese army’s extensive losses while continuing to disseminate propaganda predicting definite and quick victory. The textbooks also note the initial refusal of the government to accept the Potsdam Treaty and subsequently describe the American atomic bombing of Japan as being largely a response to this refusal.³⁹ The section on people’s wartime hardships also includes depictions of the forced labor of over 600,000 Koreans and 40,000 Chinese in Japan proper. The normative language used in these depictions is rather strong and notes the “strict control” and harsh living conditions of the conscripted workers including hunger, disease, and exposure to the cold.⁴⁰ It can be argued that to a certain extent it is precisely the use of the often-criticized passive voice that enabled this brief shift from the narration of the national suffering to the suffering of the victims of Japanese imperialism.⁴¹ Namely, through the usage of passive voice, the narrative is able to focus on the “people” in general, and absolves itself from the need to provide detailed explanation regarding exactly who and what caused this suffering.

Interestingly, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—symbols of Japanese victimhood—is described mainly in a factual way in a few lines or a

35. Kodama, *Chūgaku*, p. 215.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 264–66; Aoki, *Nihon*, p. 271; and Ukai, *Atarashii*, pp. 284–85.

37. For example, Aoki, *Nihon*, pp. 274–75; and Kodama, *Chūgaku*, pp. 268–69.

38. Kodama, *ibid.*, p. 264; and Ukai, *Atarashii*, p. 284.

39. Kodama, *Chūgaku*, p. 265; and Ukai, *Atarashii*, p. 289.

40. Kodama, *Chūgaku*, p. 265; Aoki, *Nihon*, p. 271; and Ukai, *Atarashii*, pp. 284–85.

41. Barnard, *Language*, p. 38.

footnote, primarily emphasizing the huge number of casualties.⁴² In general, the only normative statement presented is the implicit denial of any military importance of the atomic bombing with the view that the bombs were dropped because of the American strategic desire to establish militarily superiority over the Soviet Union in the postwar world order.⁴³ The American Occupation of Japan, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (Tokyo Trial), and the pre-war oil embargo—all of which are used by the Tsukuru Kai book to deepen the broader notion of Japan's victimhood as nation/state—are denied this function in the narrative.⁴⁴ The narrative does not engage in a construction of Japan's victimhood as a nation/state but rather focuses on "the people." Hence, the narrative on the U.S.-led Occupation of Japan and the reforms in general is presented in a positive light. While briefly mentioning the negative consequences of the "reverse course," the texts mainly focus on democratic reforms that "abolished the laws that have taken away the freedom of the people."⁴⁵ The reference to the Tokyo Tribunal is very brief and, at times, appears only in a footnote stating simply that those responsible for starting the war were put on trial and punished.⁴⁶

The Soviet Role in the Asia Pacific War

Interestingly, the events related to Soviet participation in the Asia Pacific War, namely, the occupation of the "Northern Territories," the expulsion of Japanese residents, and the prolonged imprisonment and exploitation of Japanese war prisoners, are barely mentioned in the narrative. As already noted, these events are used extensively in revisionist textbooks in order to deepen the construction of Japanese victimhood as a nation/state as well as to relativize the Japanese atrocities against other Asians. Furthermore, the MoE has been rather keen on getting references into the textbooks about the territorial dispute and Japan's "inherent" claim to the islands.⁴⁷ However, in all of the examined texts, the depiction of these events is limited to one or two lines stating only the basic facts regarding the Soviet military actions.

42. Aoki, *Nihon*, p. 267; Kodama, *Chūgaku*, p. 267; and Ukai, *Atarashii*, pp. 289–90.

43. Aoki, *Nihon*, p. 273; and Ukai, *Atarashii*, p. 297.

44. While mentioning the positive nature of the reforms, the section on the Occupation emphasizes the strict censorship imposed by the General Headquarters (GHQ) and the enforcement of the Constitution on the Japanese government. Furthermore, it devotes two pages to the Tokyo Military Tribunal, with most of the text arguing the illegality of the trial and the various problems around it. See Nishio, ed., *Atarashii Kyōkasho*, pp. 290–95.

45. For example, Aoki, *Nihon*, p. 262. "Reverse course" refers to the 1947 shift in American Occupation policies from democratization of Japan's society, politics, and economy to more conservative policies aimed at stabilizing Japan as a key ally in the emerging Cold War rivalry.

46. Aoki, *Nihon*, p. 279; and Kodama, *Chūgaku*, p. 274.

47. Ienaga Saburō, *"Himitsu" Kentei no Kiroku* [Records of "secret" screening] (Tokyo: Meicho Kankosha, 1993), pp. 63–66.

For example, reference to the ongoing Northern Territories dispute appears in only two textbooks (and then, only in footnotes) and provides a very brief description of the issue. The *Nihon Shoseki* text states that the islands are inherent Japanese territory but also presents the Soviet position without making any evaluative comments.⁴⁸ The popular text published by Tōkyō Shoseki ignores the territorial dispute and states only that the Soviet Union “ignored” the neutrality pact and “invaded” Manchuria without any reason. The footnote reference to the disputed territories appears only later in the text and in relation to Soviet-Japanese negotiations of 1955–56.⁴⁹ Out of all the textbooks, only the one published by Chūkyō Shuppan engages in an evaluative description of the issue by stating briefly, in a footnote, that the four islands are Japan’s inherent territory and are occupied by the Soviet Union.⁵⁰

In spite of their potential to deepen and broaden the construction of Japanese victimhood, several stories of hardship are ignored in the narrative: Japanese colonialists during and after the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, the Japanese POWs detained by the Soviet Army, and the residents of the Northern Territories expelled by the Soviet authorities. This limited engagement with the suffering inflicted by the Soviet Union is easily explainable in the context of the central function of the narrative, namely, to convey the suffering of the people that resulted from imperial wars pursued by the Japanese state. In Japan, these Soviet acts are perceived as being unlawful and unjust policies of Stalin’s expansionism and opportunism. Hence, they are not viewed as a direct consequence of Japan’s imperialism and therefore are excluded from the narrative.

1980s Narratives of Victimization

Korea and China

There is no doubt that the narrative on the victimization of Koreans and Chinese is more limited in both quantitative and qualitative terms than the narrative on the victimhood of the Japanese people. The former also lacks any references to incidents like the notorious biological warfare Unit 731 human experiments on POWs and civilians from the occupied areas, or the use of “comfort women.” References to the Nanjing Massacre, while appearing in all of the textbooks, are brief and ambiguous. Although the texts note the large numbers of victims, all of them emphasize the innocence of the Japanese people by noting their ignorance about the “atrocities” committed by their army. For example, in the *Nihon Shoseki* textbook, the incident is described in ambiguous terms, noting that the “killings of numerous civilians including women and children” occurred in the “chaos of occupation.”⁵¹ In Chūkyō Shuppan’s

48. Kodama, *Chūgaku*, p. 283.

49. Ukai, *Atarashii*, pp. 289, 308.

50. Aoki, *Nihon*, p. 298.

51. Kodama, *Chūgaku*, p. 258.

text, Nanjing is depicted in one brief line that states that many Chinese were killed during the occupation of Nanjing.⁵²

However, in spite of the exclusion or ambiguity surrounding the most controversial incidents, the narrative does provide depictions of the pain inflicted on other Asian peoples. It does not necessarily absolve the Japanese people from total responsibility, as is often assumed.⁵³ All of the textbooks note the “fierce resistance” of the Koreans to Japanese colonization and their violent suppression by the army. All textbooks note the Koreans’ loss of land and the prohibition on use of the Korean language and the teaching of Korean history in schools, as part of the Japanese assimilation policy. All of the texts devote about a paragraph to the March 1919 Korean independence movement that was brutally suppressed by Japanese forces, noting the “continuous resistance” of the Korean people.⁵⁴

On a number of occasions, “Japan” is singled out as being the perpetrator of these excesses; unlike in the narrative on Japanese victimhood, there is no distinction made between the people and the state as actors. For example, the textbooks state that the “flow of capital from Japan” led to the loss of land by Korean farmers and that the policy of assimilation implemented by the “Governor General that was placed by Japan” resulted in “strong dissatisfaction” among the local population. They also note the widespread discrimination against Koreans by the “Japanese people.”⁵⁵

Regarding Japan’s relations with China, the textbooks mention the “21 Demands” imposed by Japan after the outbreak of World War One that the Chinese resisted. The books also make use of the Chinese anti-Japanese demonstrations of May 1919, explaining that they were a response to Japan’s insistence on getting German concessions regarding China at the Versailles Peace Conference that had taken place a few months earlier. Further along in the text, the narrative also mentions the “strong” resistance of the Chinese army to the Japanese invasion from 1937 onward.⁵⁶ All of the texts also cite the killing by Japanese mobs of several thousand Korean residents after the Great Kantō earthquake in 1923 and trace the incident to the widespread discrimination against Koreans among the Japanese population.⁵⁷

To summarize, the Japanese people’s suffering is much more central in the textbooks than are depictions of the pain inflicted by Japan on other nations. The brief and vague depictions of the Nanjing Massacre and the lack of discussion of individual perpetrators do not create a strong image of victimization

52. Aoki, *Nihon*, p. 264.

53. For example, Barnard, *Language*, p. 153.

54. Ukai, *Atarashi*, pp. 259–60; Aoki, *Nihon*, pp. 226–27; and Kodama, *Chūgaku*, p. 217.

55. Aoki, *Nihon*, p. 226; and Ukai, *Atarashii*, p. 237.

56. Kodama, *Chūgaku*, pp. 231, 239; Aoki, *Nihon*, pp. 247, 265; Ukai, *Atarashii*, p. 279.

57. Kodama, *Chūgaku*, p. 245; and Ukai, *Atarashii*, p. 265.

of Asia. However, the victimhood of the Japanese people and the separation between the people and the state create negative cognition regarding the imperial wars pursued by Japan. Furthermore, it has been shown that the 1980s narrative does not focus solely on Japanese victimhood. Instead, important historical moments that portray Japan and also the Japanese people as “oppressors” and “colonizers” are also present. Thus, it would be an exaggeration to claim that the 1980s narrative unequivocally absolves the Japanese people from responsibility for the victimization of other Asian peoples.

Post-2002 Narratives of Victimhood

Over the past two decades, a number of important domestic and international changes have affected the textbook debate. The emergence of the Tsukuru Kai and the numerous texts produced by it, such as the comic books of Kobayashi Yoshinori, openly glorify Japan’s militarist past. This has resulted in vigorous societal debates over Japan’s modern history. Changes have also occurred in the rankings of popular textbooks and among their authors. The textbook market has also become less fragmented, with the textbooks published by Tōkyō Shoseki accounting for over 50% of the market share. The textbooks themselves have also changed, becoming less voluminous but containing more colorful graphic images. This section examines the changes that have occurred in the narratives found in the most widely used textbooks in 2002. In particular, two significant changes have occurred—a challenge to Japan’s monolithic identity and the inclusion of more victims’ voices in the narrative.⁵⁸

Victimhood vis-à-vis Russia

There is no doubt that the construction of Japan’s victimhood as a nation continues to be the dominant theme in the post-2002 narrative. However, the narrative did undergo a number of significant changes. Only one of the texts still devotes almost two pages to the Russo-Japanese War. In the others, there has been a significant reduction in space given to this event.⁵⁹ The texts still provide brief references to the hardships of people in both countries that resulted in their inability to sustain the war effort.⁶⁰ This reduction in space is probably the result of the overall shortening of textbooks on the one hand, and an increase in the space devoted to other issues such as victimization of Asia on the other. But, the texts continue to emphasize the importance of the war as the starting point for Japanese imperialism and the emergence of “great-power consciousness.”⁶¹

58. For example, Nozaki, “Japanese Politics,” pp. 294–96.

59. Sasayama, *Chūgaku*, pp. 159–60.

60. Tanabe, *Atarashii*, pp. 142–43; Atsuta, *Chūgaku*, pp. 132–33; and Kuroda, *Chūgakusei*, pp. 168–69.

61. Tanabe, *Atarashii*, p. 143; and Kuroda, *Chūgakusei*, p. 170.

The textbooks' treatment of the Soviet entry into the Asia Pacific War and related issues has not changed dramatically; the overview is still brief and purely factual, providing very few evaluative descriptions. Reference to the Northern Territories is still made in the form of a footnote and usually appears in the context of the 1956 Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration that led to restoration of bilateral relations, providing a brief outline of both governments' official positions.⁶² Reference to the Siberian internment of Japanese POWs appears in two textbooks, usually in the form of a footnote or a couple of lines in the text. Without questioning the legality or morality of the Siberian internment, references to this topic usually give a total of Japanese soldiers who were taken prisoner and forced to engage in harsh labor. Many died. However, in the same paragraph, the texts note that the Soviets invaded Manchuria in accordance with the Yalta Agreement, adding that the mass suicide of Japanese settlers in Manchuria was a direct result of the hastened retreat of the Japanese army.⁶³ As such, blame for the miseries of the Japanese colonialists and POWs is attributed to both the Soviet Union and also to the Japanese army.

Victimhood in the Asia Pacific War

The victimhood of the Japanese nation in relation to World War Two is still extensively narrated in most of the texts. This narrative occupies about three pages and depicts—in both text and pictures—the food shortages, harsh living conditions, air raids, and atomic bombings.⁶⁴ References to Koreans and Chinese in this context have undergone some subtle changes: all of the textbooks continue to note the forced labor of Koreans and Chinese, who are characterized as having worked under “cruel conditions” and endured “a lot of hardships.” In some post-2002 textbooks, references to the plight of Koreans and Chinese appear directly after the “suffering of the [Japanese] people,” thus creating a certain sense of commonality and solidarity between the Japanese people and the Chinese and Koreans.⁶⁵ The texts also note the drafting of Koreans and Chinese into the Imperial Army, attempts to forcibly spread the Shinto religion to Korea, the policy of name changing imposed on Koreans,⁶⁶ and the Korean and Chinese victims of the atomic bombing.⁶⁷

62. Kuroda, *Chūgakusei*, p. 217; and Atsuta, *Chūgaku*, p. 189.

63. Atsuta, *ibid.*, p. 175; and Sasayama, *Chūgaku*, p. 175.

64. For example, Atsuta, *Chūgaku*, pp. 171–75; and Tanabe, *Atarashii*, pp. 176–81.

65. For example, Tanabe, *ibid.*, p. 170.

66. From 1939 onward, the Japanese colonial policy in Korea shifted toward colonial assimilation of the Korean population. As part of this policy, the colonial administration forced the Koreans to adopt Japanese names.

67. Kuroda, *Chūgakusei*, pp. 208–10; Atsuta, *Chūgaku*, pp. 165, 176; and Tanabe, *Atarashii*, p. 171.

The Battle for Okinawa

The most substantive change that has occurred involves depictions of one of the bloodiest battles of the war in the Pacific—the battle for Okinawa. This battle, which had been only briefly noted in earlier texts, has come to be narrated under a separate sub-chapter in contemporary ones. This change in the narrative should not be viewed as a simple expansion of the concept of Japanese victimhood, because it focuses on the Okinawans (and not the “Japanese people”) as the victims of the Japanese army.⁶⁸ The depiction of this battle in history textbooks, in fact, became a central part of the 1982 domestic controversy over MoE censorship and since then has developed into one of the major issues in the struggle over (re)defining historical narrative. In essence, the battle has been one aspect of the general progressive drive to deepen the remorse for the past, along with the Nanjing Massacre and “comfort women.”⁶⁹

However, the battle has also affected the characterization of the Japanese national identity by challenging its previous construction as being largely monolithic. Progressive scholars emphasize that the Imperial Army’s atrocities emanated from the perception that Okinawa and its people did not constitute a part of Japan proper.⁷⁰ On the other side, conservatives have continuously attempted to portray the mass suicides of Okinawans during this battle as being a symbol of Japanese patriotism.⁷¹ As one of the textbook authors notes, the main motivation behind the MoE’s opposition to detailed depictions of crimes committed by the Japanese army was that “it is impossible that Japanese would commit such crimes against fellow Japanese.”⁷² While the dominant Tōkyō Shoseki devotes only one photograph and brief explanation to the battle, other texts narrate extensively the Okinawans’ (*okinawa kenmin*) victimhood and devote an almost equal amount of space to it as to the broader suffering of “the people.”⁷³ The texts do note the indiscriminate bombing policy of the Americans, but the main perpetrator of crimes against the Okinawans in the narrative is deemed to

68. Okinawa was one of the first territories annexed by Japan in the second half of the 19th century. It was also the only part of Japan proper where land fighting between the Japanese Army and the advancing American troops occurred. There is enough historical evidence to suggest that during this battle the Japanese Army engaged in a number of atrocities against the local population.

69. For example, see Hisao Ishiyama, “*Ajia To No Shinrai Kankei O Sokonau Chugakkō Rekishi Kyōkasho no Kaihen*” [The changes in junior high school history textbooks that damage the relationship of mutual trust with Asia], in *Kyōkasho repoto* [Textbooks Reporting] (Tokyo) 49 (2005), pp. 21–22.

70. Fujiwara Akira, *Okinawasen to Temōsei*, pp. 2–46, 17–19.

71. Sono Ayako, “Okinawasen Shūdanjiketsu o Meguru Rekishi Kyōkasho no Kyomō” [The delusion of history textbooks regarding the group suicides during the battle for Okinawa], in *Seiron* [Just Argument] (Tokyo) 375 (2003), pp. 112–17, see p. 117.

72. Eguchi, “Kyōkasho Mondai,” p. 227.

73. Tanabe, *Atarashii*, p. 177; Sasayama, *Chūgaku*, pp. 206–07; Kuroda, *Chugakusei*, p. 209; and Atsuta, *Chūgaku*, p. 172.

be the Japanese army. The texts provide detailed depictions of the mobilization of junior high school students and female students for the defense of the mainland and note the “horrible result” that many Okinawans became victims of this battle. The textbooks also mention the widespread executions of suspected spies conducted by the Japanese army and forced collective suicides. Elsewhere, the narrative contends that the Japanese army “stole food from the people,” “chased the people from the shelters,” and turned them into “cannon fodder.”⁷⁴

If we perceive the depiction of Japan’s victimhood as being an important part of the construction of Japanese nationhood through common experience, the depictions of Okinawan victimhood can be viewed as being a contestation of the monolithic nature of this construction. By singling out Okinawans as victims of the Japanese military, the narrative breaks with the conception of nationhood that emphasizes victimhood as a truly common and unifying experience. As such, the narrative problematizes what has been pointed out as being one of the major lapses in the narrative found in Japan’s history textbooks, namely, the notion of a united and homogenous “Japanese nation.”⁷⁵

Post-2002 Narratives of Victimization

Korea and China

The most controversial instances of atrocities inflicted by Japan—such as the “comfort women” and Unit 731 biological experiments—are notably missing from the contemporary texts. The depiction of the Nanjing Massacre, one of the main points of contestation, is still brief, and half of the texts still emphasize the innocence of the general Japanese population.⁷⁶ At the same time, the depiction of the massacre has undergone some subtle changes: it is currently presented in the text and not in a footnote, as was the case earlier. Furthermore, the depiction states that the conquest of Nanjing involved killings “not only of soldiers but of many Chinese women and children,” prompting other nations to criticize the event as “the Japanese army’s barbarism.” Furthermore, the majority of the textbooks have come to include a photograph that depicts rallies in Japan celebrating the fall of Nanjing.⁷⁷ This can be seen as an attempt, however vague, to encourage Japanese students to think about the general population’s complicity in the massacre and the war in general.

Otherwise, the narrative dealing with Japan’s victimization of the other Asian peoples has become more extensive in terms of space and qualitatively different in terms of normative interpretations of the relevant incidents. For example,

74. For example, Atsuta, *ibid.*; and Kuroda, *Chūgakusei*, pp. 208–09.

75. Dierkes, “The Stability of Postwar Japanese History Education,” p. 260.

76. For example, Kuroda, *Chūgakusei*, p. 202; and Tanabe, *Atarashii*, p. 170.

77. Tanabe, *ibid.*, p. 171; Atsuta, *Chūgaku*, p. 165; and Sasayama, *Chūgaku*, p. 195.

one of the most extensively used textbooks devotes one page to the annexation of Korea and subsequent colonial rule. The narrative includes normative language describing the occupation of Korea in unflattering terms. The narrative states that the Japanese “ruled by force” and practiced “social and economic discrimination” against the Koreans. This part of the narrative is also enhanced by photographs of the colonial Government-General of Japan building, towering over the Kyongbok Royal Palace; Korean children forced to study in Japanese; and Korean conscripts in the Imperial Army. The text also devotes one paragraph to the “[Korean] independence movement” characterized as having been suppressed by “brutal force.” It presents the views of the art critic and champion of Korean architecture Yanagi Muneyoshi, who was highly critical of both Japan’s colonial rule and the disdainful views of Koreans and Korean culture widespread among the Japanese.⁷⁸

Other texts engage in more extensive depictions and devote about two pages to photographs and maps of colonial rule and Korean resistance. The narrative is rich in expressions such as “the Korean State was deprived of the right to diplomacy,” “fierce resistance” of the Korean people, “forcing Japanese language and history” on Koreans, “negating the customs and culture” of the Korean people, and “superiority feelings” of the Japanese toward Koreans.⁷⁹ A textbook published by Teikoku Shoin has a whole chapter titled “Colonies and the People Ruled (by Japan)” with detailed depictions of the anti-Japanese movement in Manchuria that originated in “forceful” expropriation of Chinese land by Japanese settlers and the policy of “Japanization” in Korea. A textbook published by Ōsaka Shoseki has a page on “Asia in 1945” that provides detailed depictions of the miseries Japan’s war brought on Asian peoples, including Koreans and Chinese.⁸⁰

Kyōiku Shuppan’s textbook provides the most detailed portrayal of colonial rule. It devotes a page and a half to the annexation of Korea and gives detailed descriptions of discrimination against Koreans, forced labor for Chinese and Koreans, and the Japanese occupation of China. In addition to the normative language used in other books, there are also statements like “attempt by the Japanese to take away Korean national identity and pride” and infliction of “pain that is impossible to explain” on the Korean people over the 36 years of colonial rule. The text also mentions the forced labor of Koreans and Chinese in the context of contemporary compensation claims and emphasizes the need for Japan to address these claims.⁸¹

78. Tanabe, *ibid.*, pp. 144–45, 157.

79. Atsuta, *Chūgaku*, p. 134; Sasayama, *Chūgaku*, p. 162; and Kuroda, *Chūgakusei*, pp. 170–71.

80. Kuroda, *ibid.*, pp. 206–07; and Atsuta, *Chūgaku*, p. 182.

81. Sasayama, *Chūgaku*, pp. 162–63, pp. 177, 221.

Voices of the Victims

The most important change that occurred in the narrative across contemporary textbooks is the challenge to Japan's hegemony on narrating its own national history. Unlike the earlier textbooks or the Tsukuru Kai text, the progressive narrative provides students with an opportunity to view Japan's history through the eyes of its former victims. This is achieved by including text and graphic images that convey the victims' views of Japanese colonization and aggression, as well as through questions for the students.

For example, some textbooks show a photograph of a mural of Yu Kang-sun, a 16-year-old activist in the Korean independence movement, accompanied by text which states that she was "severely tortured" and "had her life taken" by the Japanese army.⁸² Elsewhere, there is a photograph of and text about An Jung-geun, the "hero of the Korean independence struggle," who was portrayed as a murderer in Japan for his 1909 assassination of Ito Hirobumi, then governor-general of Korea.⁸³

The textbook also introduces former Korean President Kim Dae-jung's speech given during his visit to Japan in 1998 in which he emphasized the need for Japanese to face their history of colonialism.⁸⁴ Elsewhere, the narrative presents depictions of Japanese colonialism from ex-colonies' school textbooks.⁸⁵ Kyō-iku Shuppan's textbook devotes one page to "Japan as part of Asia" in which it discusses contemporary problems related to the compensation of Korean conscripts into the Imperial Army, those compelled to do forced labor, and broader issues related to war responsibility. The Ōsaka Shoseki textbook has three pages of photographs related to the broader Asian memory of Japanese aggression. These include the graveyard of a "few thousand victims" of Japan's forced labor during construction of the Thai-Burmese railway, Singapore's memorial to the victims of Japan's occupation, and a photograph of independence celebrations in Korea after Japan's surrender.⁸⁶ The textbooks also ask students to go beyond the borders of their own country and attempt to understand the position of Japan's victims. This involves asking them to imagine their response to Japanese colonization if they were Korean or Taiwanese; to imagine the feelings of Chinese people toward the creation of Manchukuo, the puppet state in northeast China; and the feelings of the Burmese people toward the arrival of the Japanese army on their soil.⁸⁷

82. Tanabe, *Atarashii*, p. 157; Sasayama, *Chūgaku*, p. 182; and Kuroda, *Chūgakusei*, p. 189.

83. Kuroda, *ibid.*, p. 171.

84. Tanabe, *Atarashii*, p. 199.

85. Kuroda, *Chūgakusei*, p. 207.

86. Sasayama, *Chūgaku*, p. 221; and Atsuta, *Chūgaku*, p. 176.

87. Kuroda, *Chūgakusei*, pp. 204, 207; Tanabe, *Atarashii*, p. 168.

Conclusion

This article has examined the historical narratives on victimhood and victimization in Japanese textbooks from the perspective of Japan's national identity. In particular, we have compared and contrasted textbooks used in the early 1980s to those introduced after 2002. There is no doubt that depictions of Japan's national victimhood continue to play a central role in the currently dominant narrative, particularly in relation to the Asia Pacific War. As is often argued, a number of important instances of Japan's "atrocities" against other Asians are either absent from the narrative—such as the Unit 731 experiments—or referred to very briefly—such as the Nanjing Massacre. Furthermore, the narrative does not provide any material related to individual responsibility for these atrocities committed by Japan; hints about collective responsibility are vague and few.

However, this article has argued that focus on the victimhood of the Japanese "nation" creates a critical perspective on the wars waged by the "state" and the horrors it brought to "the people." I have also argued that there have been a number of instances when the narrative has transcended national borders by including other Asian peoples in the depictions of victimhood. Furthermore, the article has attempted to show that the separation between "the people" and "the state" does not necessarily absolve Japan's population from responsibility for the suffering of other Asians. This expands the validity of Orr's argument that the focus on victimization has brought greater awareness about Japan's responsibility for its past actions.⁸⁸

There is no doubt that the Japanese textbooks continue to be dominated by factual historiography in terms of writing style. Dierkes is correct to locate the origins of this narrative in post-World War Two reforms, but he tends to overplay the role of the MoE bureaucracy in shaping these textbooks.⁸⁹ As previously mentioned, the origins of the history textbook debate go back to the prewar years and, for many of the textbooks' writers, the factual style represented opposition to the emotional and ideological narrative imposed by the pre-1945 Japanese state. As pointed out by one of the writers and activists, the factual narrative (as well as the extensive usage of passive voice) is seen as being scientific and rational by the writers, many of whom still carry memories of wartime education.⁹⁰ Possibly, a generational change in Japanese academia will prompt changes in the way history is narrated in future textbooks.

88. Orr, *The Victim*, p. 105.

89. Julian Dierkes, "Nihon no chūgakkoyō rekishi kyōkasho de egakareru kokkazō to keiken-shugiteki rekishijōjutsu" [The portrayal of the state and empiricist narrative style in Japanese junior high school history textbooks], in Watanabe, *Jojutsu*, pp. 161–81, see 174–76.

90. Interview with Ishiyama Hisao, one of the progressive activists and a member of one of the textbook's writing team, Tokyo, November 14, 2006.

This article has also illuminated a number of important changes in contemporary texts as compared to those of the early 1980s. The expansion of the images of the battle for Okinawa has challenged the monolithic conception of the Japanese nation as the victim of the state by highlighting the existence of Okinawan victimhood. Furthermore, the inclusion of the voices of the victims of Japan's imperialism through graphic images, citations, and questions posed to the students constitutes a challenge to Japan's monologue-like narration of its history. While the space occupied by these voices in the textbooks is relatively limited, their inclusion nonetheless contains a possibility for a genuine dialogue in narrating the darkest moments of Japan's past.

There is little doubt that these changes occurred in response to the domestic, regional, and international critiques of Japan's textbooks.⁹¹ Thus, the findings of this article further underscore the importance of international and domestic "textbook watching" and academic activism. However, this article has also attempted to put the critique of Japan's history education into wider perspective. A recently conducted poll on "peace consciousness" (*heiwa ishiki*) among Japanese junior high school students largely confirms the arguments presented in this article. This poll showed that the majority of the students (68.6%) have an interest in questions of war and peace, and over 70% are willing to do something to bring peace to society. When asked about the most important topic of study for creating a more peaceful society, Hiroshima/Nagasaki and the suffering associated with wartime air raids ranked highest with 30.5% and 28.3%, respectively. At the same time, the "war of aggression against Asia" drew 14.5% and the "Okinawa war experience" received 21.2% of the votes.⁹² These findings demonstrate that, while the narrative of national victimhood continues to occupy a central place in students' minds, narratives of victimization are also salient in their conscience.

At this point, it is too early to predict the impact of the recently passed amendment to the Fundamental Law of Education that aims at enhancing patriotism and the broader educational reform (currently under debate by the government) on the contents of the 2009 set of textbooks. It is hard to imagine that the contents of the textbooks will undergo major changes in either the progressive or conservative direction, considering the comparative strength of the competing forces on each side of the debate and their respective arguments. That said, we should remember that a major expression of anti-Japanese feelings triggered by either real or perceived Japanese provocation could result in a

91. For a detailed discussion of the domestic impact, see George Hicks, *Japan's War Memories* (Singapore: Ashgate, 1997), pp. 42–120.

92. Murakami Toshifumi, "Heiwa Keisei Hōhō No Kyōiku Ni tsuite no Kōsatsu [A study on education about the method to be a peace builder], in *Hiroshima Peace Science* 28 (2006), pp. 27–44, see pp. 34–39.

sharp upsurge of nationalist feelings in Japan. This, in turn, could lead to a rise in the use of Tsukuru Kai textbooks and also changes in the contents of other textbooks. As already mentioned, Japanese textbooks are not only a part of the domestic struggle over national identity, but they are also an integral part of regional politics among states in East Asia. Hence, the content of textbooks and both domestic politics and regional relations constitute a mutually interactive dynamic for Japan.

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