

Educational Reform and the Changing Representation of Japan in Taiwan's Textbooks: Reflections on the Trends since the 1990s

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Introduction

Education in Taiwan has undergone a series of fundamental reforms since the 1990s. From kindergarten to higher education, things have changed radically during the past twenty years or so. The reform has covered a wide range of areas such as the making of new laws, the adjustments of administrative organizations, increasing expenditures in education, new curriculum standards and teaching practices, new measures for entrance examinations, changes in teacher's qualifications, payments and welfare benefits, etc. It would not be exaggerating to say that no stone has been left unturned in Taiwan's educational system in the past two decades.

Meanwhile, the representation of Japan in Taiwan's school textbooks has undergone significant changes as well. As a matter of fact, "how Japan should be represented in school textbooks" has been one of the thorniest issues insofar as history education is concerned. Not only did the issue cause a series of bitter debates in Taiwanese society, but it also became a site of contestation during the course of curricular reform. How and why this should happen can only be understood in the context of educational reform as a whole. In other words, in order to understand the changing representation of Japan in Taiwan's textbooks, we need to get a better grip on the major forces that have been shaping educational reform since the 1990s.

Yoked with such a double task, this paper is divided into two parts. The first half shall provide an overview of some general trends and currents of educational reform in contemporary Taiwan. The goal here is rather modest. I shall try to identify a few characteristics and forces that have been shaping the contents and the course of educational reform. To be sure, I argue that educational reform in Taiwan has been shaped by contradictory forces of democratization, nationalization, marketization, and globalization. As a result, educational reform in Taiwan has been full of conflicts, paradoxes and controversies. In the second half of the paper, I shall proceed to discuss the changing representations of Japan in Taiwan's new curriculum. It is found that nationalization, one of the major forces shaping educational reform, has made Japan one of the focal points of controversy during the course of curricular reform. The split and mutually contradicting historical memories between different ethnic groups, behind which different nationalist ideologies were presumed, collided on the issue of "how Japan should be represented in the textbooks." In the concluding section, the relations between history, education and

nationalism in terms of “the representation of the Other,” particularly in the context of East Asia, will be further explored.

Historical Background and Major Forces behind the Reform: A Brief Sketch

Educational reform in Taiwan took place at a historical juncture where democratization, nationalization, marketization, and the recent wave of globalization met each other.¹ As a matter of fact, educational reform was directly connected with the lifting of Martial Law in 1987, a watershed in Taiwan’s political history since 1949. Before 1987, education, as with other social and cultural spheres, was under tight control by the KMT (Kuomintang) state, as the KMT had exercised authoritarian rule over the island for more than four decades. After the lift of Martial Law, which made free associations possible, there emerged a number of social movement organizations or groups that took educational reform as their primary goal.² On 31 January 1988, thirty-two non-governmental organizations made collective efforts to launch a general attack on education by holding “The First Non-Governmental Conference on Education,” which can be said the prologue to the reform in the decade to come. In the next year, three consecutive conferences were held in February, June and September. The issues being discussed included curriculums in elementary schools, the quality of education, evaluation of teaching quality, multiple channels for teacher’s trainings and qualifications, etc. Although the government responded with a few measures and legal procedures (such as the drafting of University Law and Teacher’s Law), it was widely held that these efforts were far from satisfactory, and that a much more thorough reform should be made. On 10 April 1994, the pressure by non-governmental sectors for educational reform reached its peak in the nationally mobilized “410 Great March for Educational Reform,” in which four major appeals were brought up: (1) to reduce the scale of schools and classes; (2) to increase the number of high schools and colleges; (3) to modernize educational systems; and (4) to make the Basic Law of Education.

During the same period of time, the ruling KMT was undergoing some fundamental changes as well. Since Lee Teng-hui succeeded Chiang Ching-kuo in 1988 to become the first native Taiwanese to be the President of the Republic of China (ROC), nationalist politics in Taiwan has escalated to form a historical turn. Although Chinese nationalism and reunification (with mainland China) remained the official ideology of the KMT state, Taiwanese nationalism was gradually on the rise to gain the ground. The rising Taiwanese consciousness made the old curriculum, which was previously constructed under the framework of Chinese nationalism, appear quite awkward and outdated. In addition, the

1 I use “the recent wave of globalization” instead of referring to globalization as a whole, because to many theorists, globalization is a long historical process that cannot be equated with the recent global transformations that we have witnessed since World War Two. For some theorists, however, the end of the Cold War in 1991 marked a milestone of globalization. It is in this sense that I talk about the recent wave of globalization.

2 These organizations and groups included, for instance, the Association for the Promotion of Teacher’s Human Rights (established in 1988), the Humanistic Education Foundation (1988), the Association for the Promotion of University Education (1989), and the Taiwan Association of University Professors (1990).

authoritarian legacy in the educational system was rather incompatible with the newly established democracy. Reform was considered necessary and urgent.

Under the pressure from both inside and outside, the Prime Minister approved establishment of the Ad Hoc Council on Educational Reform in September 1994 to conduct an overall review of Taiwan's educational system. During its operation from 1994 to 1996, the Ad Hoc Council on Educational Reform released five reports, which later became the major blueprint according to which educational reform was to be drawn. As the former Minister of Education Kuo Wei-fan puts it, educational reform in Taiwan has been under "a double transition from uniformity to diversity, from authoritarian centralization to deregulation and pluralism."³ To be more specific, the measures and actions taken by the Ministry of Education (MOE) have followed six principal directions: (1) the improvement of the entrance examination system to reduce the students' working load; (2) democratization and deregulation in favor of institutional autonomy and decentralization; (3) reallocation of resources to assure equality of educational opportunity; (4) elaboration of a life-long learning system; (5) overall revision of school curricula and textbooks; and (6) restructuring of teacher training progress and teacher organizations.⁴

As can be seen, the six principal directions mentioned above were wide-ranging in scope and far-reaching in depth. It is almost impossible to cover all issues thus involved in one single study. In this paper, I shall deal mainly with the fifth, namely, the overall revision of school curricula and textbooks, with the primary focus on the highly controversial Grade 1–9 Curriculum. Other directions of reform will serve as a background for our understanding of how curricular reform has been shaped within these contexts.

Grade 1–9 Curriculum: Ideas, Policies, and Problems

The "Grade 1–9 Curriculum" is the official translation of "*jiunianyiiguan kecheng*" (九年一貫課程), which literally means "nine-year integrated curriculum." Basically, it can be viewed as an overall reform in curriculum in compulsory education. As with many other countries in the world, compulsory education in Taiwan covers nine years, which can be further divided into two stages: six years in the elementary school, and three years in the junior high school. In the past, the contents and the standards of the curriculum in the elementary school and the junior high school were determined by two different committees. The result was inconsistencies, repetitions and ruptures between the curriculums in the two stages. In addition, the curriculums were considered consisting of too many narrowly specialized subjects, which increase the difficulties for both teaching and learning. In 1996, the Ad Hoc Council on Educational Reform published a summary report, which brought up a few concrete suggestions concerning curricular reform. These suggestions include: (1) An overall re-construction of curriculum centered on daily life experience ought to be done. (2) The government should soon draw new "curricular guidelines" to replace old "curricular standards." (3) The application of curriculum should accommodate developments in technologies such as the Internet. (4) The contents of curriculum should be integrated as much as possible to reduce teaching subjects in the

3 Kuo 1996, p. 12.

4 *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

school; for instance, history, geography and civic education should be integrated into one single subject of "Social Studies." (5) Skills in daily life should be integrated into the curriculum. (6) Evaluations should be diversified; each school should examine and establish its own evaluation system. (7) Students in elementary schools should learn to read and write the English alphabet; therefore, English should be introduced to the curriculum in elementary schools.

On September 30, 1998, the MOE released the "Guidelines of Grade 1-9 Curriculum for the National Education Stage." According to the official account, the Grade 1-9 Curriculum is based on four "currents of thoughts": postmodernism, humanism, sociology of knowledge, and constructivism. The rationales behind the design of the curriculum includes "humanist concerns," "integrative abilities," "democratic capabilities," "native and international consciousness," and "lifetime learning." The core components of each rationale are as follows: (A) "Humanitarian attitudes" include self-understanding and respect for others and different cultures, etc. (B) "Integration ability" includes harmonizing sense with sensibility, a balance between theory and practice, and integrating human sciences with technology. (C) "Democratic literacy" includes self-expression, independent thinking, social communication, tolerance for different opinions, team work, social service, and a respect for the law. (D) "Native awareness and a global perspective" includes a love for one's homeland, patriotism, a global perspective (both culturally and ecologically). And (E) "Capacity for lifelong learning" includes active exploration, problem solving, and the utilization of information and languages.

The Grade 1-9 Curriculum prescribes seven "learning areas" to replace previously existing subjects. The seven learning areas include Language, Health and Physical Education, Social Studies, Arts and Humanities, Mathematics, Science and Technology, and Integrative Activities. Each learning area, which integrates former "subjects" to varying degrees, is to be taught throughout grades 1 to 9, divided into three or four "stages." For instance, Social Studies integrates three former subjects (namely, History, Geography, and Civic Education) into one learning area, and it is divided into four stages: grades 1-2 forms the first stage, grades 3-4 the second, grades 5-6 the third, and grades 7-9 (junior high schools) the fourth.

What is considered so "new" and "revolutionary" about this new curriculum lies in two facts. First, the structure of the curriculum has been completely changed. Consequentially, the pedagogical practice by teachers has to be changed in response to the transformation of the curriculum. In addition, the contents of the curriculum have also changed significantly due to the promulgation of the new Guidelines. Second, the new curriculum opens up the market of textbooks at the same time. The government no longer provides the single authoritative textbooks for the schools; instead, textbooks and teaching materials prepared by private providers are not only allowed but also encouraged. The impact is profound and widespread. We will examine it in a later section.

During the making process of the Guidelines of the Grade 1-9 Curriculum, there were fervent debates and strong reactions from the public, particularly from those teachers who would be affected by the new curriculum. This is quite understandable and expectable because teachers have to make considerable efforts to adjust to the change. For instance, in the past, a history teacher should only teach history in the school and nothing

else, but under the new curriculum, s/he would be expected to teach Social Studies that covers not only history but also geography and civic education. The same holds true for teachers of geography and civic education as well. While the new curriculum brought a lot of pressures to school teachers, there were other controversies concerning issues such as the appropriateness of the Guidelines, the timing of implementation, and so on.

As I have pointed out, educational reform in Taiwan has been shaped by different, sometimes mutually conflicting, forces. As a result, it is full of paradoxes, contradictions and compromises. The Grade 1-9 Curriculum is no exception. Here I shall elaborate some of these by focusing on two types of tensions: the one is the tensions between globalization and nationalization; the other concerns the tensions between marketization, nationalization and democratization.

(1) *Tensions between globalization and nationalization*

Globalization and nationalization need not to be in conflict; in some cases, they may go hand in hand with each other. As I have pointed out elsewhere, globalization in Taiwan has given rise to stronger incentives to Taiwanese nationalism, while globalization itself has been incorporated as a strategy for nation-building.⁵ As is widely known, Taiwan has been under the rule of Japanese colonialism for over half a century before the end of World War Two. During the *kōminka* (皇民化) movement, Taiwanese learned to “become Japanese” as their ruler imposed the policy of Japanization on the island.⁶ After the war, when the KMT state took over the island, their first task was to clean up Japanese colonial legacies on the island. Chinese culture was therefore “imposed” on Taiwanese people and a Chinese identity transplanted in Taiwanese society.⁷ In other words, Chinese nationalism was the dominant ideology before the 1990s. During the process of democratization and nationalization, the rising Taiwanese nationalism intended to once again tackle the already existing ideology—namely, Chinese nationalism, and in order to counter the hegemony of Chinese nationalism, globalization was borrowed as a strategy to dilute the color of Chinese culture on the island. It has been emphasized that Taiwan is characterized by multiculturalism, where many different cultures from outside the island have been absorbed and integrated into the newly emerged Taiwanese culture. Taiwanese culture is also depicted as an open system of “oceanic culture” as opposed to the closeness of continental culture of mainland China. In other words, a Taiwanese identity is constructed upon the fact that Taiwan is “more global” than its Chinese counterpart. Not only does the government emphasize the cultivation of “global views” in curriculum, but it is also reflected in the writings of school textbooks. It is in this context that Japan has got involved in the politics of textbook-writing, which I shall discuss in a later section.

5 Wang 2000.

6 Ching 2001. The issue is so complicated that more discussions will be advanced in a later section.

7 Some may disagree with the statement that Chinese culture was “imposed” on Taiwanese people because, if culture is understood as a way of life, then Chinese culture had existed in Taiwan long before the KMT took over the island. However, the imposition of Chinese culture here refers to the construction of national culture as a collective representation, and such a process only take place after the KMT took its refuge in Taiwan. For more discussions, see Wang 2004.

However, globalization is not always in accord with nationalization. There exist some fundamental tensions. In terms of curriculum, the most manifest example can be found in the language courses. On the one hand, in order to give students this so-called "global view" and equip them with the ability of "internationalization," English is now introduced into the curriculum in the elementary schools as a required course that every student has to take. On the other hand, in order to cultivate an identity that can be distinguished from the previously dominating Chinese identity, it is also required that students have to take courses in "native languages," which include Holo, Haka, and aboriginal languages. As a result, students in elementary schools have to learn at least three languages: Chinese (Mandarin), English, and one kind of native language of their own choice. This policy has caused great reactions from both students and parents. It was considered that this has increased students' learning loads, and learning three languages at a time will lead to the result that most students cannot master any of the languages to a satisfactory extent.

(2) *Tensions between marketization, nationalization and democratization*

The tensions between marketization and nationalization, as well as the tension between globalization and democratization, are no less profound than that between globalization and nationalization. However, these tensions are much subtler and less manifested to be perceived, so much so that their impact and implications may take many years to have effect. Let me elaborate on this at further length by starting from the examination of relationships between state, education and market.

The contemporary mass education system, institutionalized as compulsory national education, is in fact an invention of the modern nation-state. The aim of national education is thus to prepare the nation with generations of constituents that have some basic capacities in reading, writing, calculating, etc. These constituents are thus called "citizens" or "nationals" of a certain nation-state. Modern education systems have helped to reproduce "modular man" that fit the needs for industrial capitalism and the functioning of nation-states. In addition, civic education provided in national education systems also helps to produce the quality of civility, which, in turn, is essential for the formation of civil society.⁸

The Grade 1-9 Curriculum has had profound impact upon national (compulsory) education in many respects. To begin with, it opens up the market of textbooks in national education. This is in accordance with the overall trends in educational reform, as "privatization of national education" was one of the policy suggestions made by the Ad Hoc Council in its final report. In the past, textbooks in national education were uniformly written and published exclusively by the National Institute for Compilation and Translation (NICT), an official institution for textbook publication and reviews. Under the new project of the Grade 1-9 Curriculum, the NICT no longer publishes textbooks. Instead, textbooks are now written and published by private publishers, while the NICT only assumes the responsibility for reviewing textbooks published by non-governmental sectors.⁹ So long as there are more than one publisher to publish textbooks, there will be more

8 On the concept of "modular man" and its relations to nationalism, see Gellner (1996). On civility and civil society, see Shils (1992).

9 This is called "single guidelines, multiple editions" (*yigang duoben* 一綱多本)

than one edition of textbooks to choose from. In other words, students under the national education system will not read the same textbooks for the first time in Taiwanese history.

Furthermore, with the opening up of the textbook market, it follows that the contents of the textbooks are no longer single-handedly determined by the state or its agent. What the state does is merely to draw up the guidelines, according to which private publishers have to follow when preparing textbooks, and to review and license the textbooks written under the guidelines. Although this may have been the case in many other countries for a long time, in Taiwan this is nonetheless a new experience.

The marketization of textbooks has led to what Ben Agger has characterized as “the demise of textuality” and “the decline of discourse.”¹⁰ Since texts have now become a commodity to be sold in the market, editors and writers tried their best to please the buyers—namely, the consumers of the texts—to increase their market share. Texts are no longer produced to form discourse or to convey knowledge, but to be sold to please the readers. This leads to another set of problems concerning consumerism and the “Disney-ization” of education.

Consumer culture has been characterized by “the emphasis on hedonism, the pursuit of pleasures here and now, the cultivation of expressive lifestyles, the development of narcissistic and egoistic personality types.”¹¹ Although the new guidelines for the Grade 1–9 Curriculum do not highlight any of these, the consequence of the marketization of the textbooks has led to the overwhelming appearance of consumer culture in their contents. Slogans in commercial advertisements, names of TV shows and film titles, slang in youth culture, logos of commodities—all of these have been written into the textbooks and are now taught as a kind of “knowledge” in the schools. Besides, since the new curricular guidelines put much emphasis on “daily life experience,” consumer culture that is pervasive in daily life is now also introduced into textbooks and teaching practice. Teachers and schools are swarming to design teaching and learning activities that resemble carnivals or festivals. Under the slogan of “learning with happiness,” there is a tendency of what I call “the Disney-ization” of education in Taiwan. Schools and classrooms are turned into something that is not unlike theme parks, in which teachers and schoolmasters make big efforts in order to please their customers—namely, the students.

The above-mentioned trends have led to some serious and profound problems that may deteriorate the foundation of society. We can clearly see that there is a big mismatch between the ideals and the practice of educational reform in Taiwan, and this has caused a number of serious problems that make people lose their confidence in Taiwan's education. Indeed, although educational reform is a response to the changing political, economic and cultural environments of Taiwanese society, it has also created a number of thorny problems and unsettled issues, the representation of Japan in school textbooks being one of them.

Japan as Represented in the New Curriculum

After reviewing the major forces that have shaped Taiwan's educational reform, and

10 Agger 1990.

11 Featherstone 1991, p. 113.

after examining the tensions and paradoxes these forces have led, I now move on to discuss how the representation of Japan has been changed in the textbooks under the impact of educational reform.

As is now widely known, the old textbooks written and published by the KMT state in Taiwan were characterized by its explicit orientation towards Chinese nationalism. Japan in such an ideological perspective was portrayed as the biggest enemy of the Chinese people and a defining “Other” of the Chinese nation. Anti-Japanese spirits could be easily found in the textbooks. However, curricular reform under the impact of nationalization and democratization has changed such practice to a great extent.

Among the many features of the newly developed curriculum, one of the most remarkable changes is the writing of Taiwanese history in the textbook. The focus has been shifted, while the weight of Taiwan’s history has been increased to a great extent. In the old curriculum standard, history was written from the perspective of Chinese nationalism. “National history” implied the history of China. In such a historiography, Taiwan as a periphery played merely a marginal role. The main body of history taught in national education was devoted to the grand narrative of the “five thousand years of Chinese history,” while the major line of narrative of modern history followed the Republic of China instead of Taiwan itself. In the previous curriculum, the contents related to Taiwan accounted for no more than 3% in the textbooks used in the elementary school.¹² The result was a general lack of knowledge among students about Taiwan’s history, particularly with regard to the colonial past. This has caused great grievances, not only among those supporters of Taiwanese nationalism, but also among many intellectuals and cultural elites who were not associated with Taiwanese nationalism.¹³ During the reform in the 1990s, in an attempt to counter the bias of history-writing in the existing textbooks, a new subject called “Getting to Know Taiwan” (*Renshi Taiwan* 認識台灣) was introduced as a new curriculum to be taught in junior high schools.

The importance of *Renshi Taiwan* in Taiwan’s curricular reform cannot be overstated. Its significance can be understood from at least two aspects. To begin with, *Renshi Taiwan* is the first state-sanctioned textbook that is written from a Taiwan-centered, rather than China-centered, point of view. Some commentators saw it as a “paradigm shift” from a China-centered paradigm to a Taiwan-centered one.¹⁴ Although it is asserted that the indigenization (*bentuhua* 本土化) or Taiwanization of Taiwanese politics started in the late 1980s, and although the KMT government under the leadership of Lee Teng-hui had been shifting from Chinese nationalism towards Taiwanese nationalism, textbooks used in schools for national education were still written from the Chinese nationalist point of view. Up until mid-1990s, it was still taught in the school that Taiwan is not a country

12 Wang 2001, p. 157.

13 For instance, Long Ying-tai, a bestseller writer and a university professor who can be categorized as a so-called “mainlander,” criticized that the curriculum in national education taught too little about Taiwanese history. When she went abroad, she found herself so embarrassed for knowing very little about Taiwan’s past. She attributed her lack of knowledge about Taiwanese history to the biased textbooks used in the school. See Long 1987, p. 94.

14 Wang 2005.

but a province of (the Republic of) China, and that unification with Mainland China was the ultimate goal. In contrast, *Renshi Taiwan* explicitly abandoned the previous China-centered paradigm and adopted a Taiwan-centered view. It can be said that *Renshi Taiwan* was the first state-authored textbook that decisively adopted a Taiwan-centered view to be taught in compulsory national education.

The second significance of *Renshi Taiwan* lies in the bitter debates it provoked. For the first time, the question as to “how (official) history should be written” became an open issue and was turned into a major battleground of nationalism. In the past, the differences of historical memories between different ethnic groups (the so-called “mainlanders” [*wai sheng ren* 外省人] vs. the “Taiwanese” [*ben sheng ren* 本省人] in particular) manifested themselves in various “private texts” such as historiographies, biographies, memoirs, oral histories, novels, and the like. Most of these texts appeared in separate arenas, as it were, so that even though there were apparent conflicts and contradictions between the historical memories in these texts, the level of tensions was not that high, because these texts appeared in different places, and because most of the time the authors hardly spoke to each other. The case of *Renshi Taiwan*, however, was quite different. Not only was it the official textbook in which a “standard” story (about the nation) was to be told, but it also represented the national ideology to be taught to all students around the “nation.” Put more specifically, in the past, the crossfire between these mutually contradicting historical memories was sparked only occasionally and sporadically; in the case of *Renshi Taiwan*, however, there emerged a well-defined battleground in which the two camps collided head on. Fire from both sides was opened to the full. In other words, even though nationalist politics had escalated since the late 1980s, it was not until the appearance of *Renshi Taiwan* in 1997 that the battle of historical memories between different ethnic groups was “officially” declared and fought.¹⁵ The battle was initiated by Li Qing-hua (李慶華), then a legislator of New Party, who held a public hearing to launch the attack on the curriculum in June 1997. The hearing was followed by a series of protests and campaigns against the publication of the textbook and the teaching of the curriculum. In addition to protests, both pros and cons wrote articles and held debates in the mass media. For the first time in Taiwan's history, the writing of history was publicly contested at such a high level with extraordinary emotional charge.

According to Wang Fu-chang's extensive study, during the debate over *Renshi Taiwan*, the top five most contended issues were: (1) the historical relations between Taiwan and China (49.6%); (2) the historical relations between Taiwan and Japan (37.8%); (3) the selection and forgetting of certain historical events (24.0%); (4) the description of the status quo as to whether Taiwan is a country or not (20.8%); and (5) the respects to the historical memories of different ethnic groups (19.4%).¹⁶ As we can see, the “historical relations between Taiwan and Japan” was the second most contended issue during the

15 To be sure, the MOE started planning for the curriculum in 1993, while the outline of *Renshi Taiwan* was drawn in 1994. But the debate over the curriculum did not emerge until 1997 when the textbooks were published.

16 See Wang 2001, pp.151–2. The numbers shown in the parentheses indicate the percentages of these issues being discussed in the reports and comments in the mass media.

debate, next only to the “historical relations between Taiwan and China.” In order to understand why it is so, we need to examine what was at stake in the debate.

As pointed out above, the whole dispute over *Renshi Taiwan* was first ignited by Legislator Li Qing-hua, who once taught in the History Department at National Cheng-chi University. In a document questioning the appropriateness of the contents in *Renshi Taiwan*, Li brought up a laundry list of questions to tackle what he found problematic in the textbooks. In the opening statement, Li mentioned that the new textbook was praised by *Sankei Shimbun* (産経新聞) in Japan, implying that these textbooks were biased towards Japan. Among Li’s laundry list, those problems directly related to Japan included: Why were all the expressions of “Japan-occupied period” changed to “Japan-governed period?” Why was there no mentioning of various discriminating measures that Japanese colonizers imposed upon Taiwanese compatriots (*Taiwan tongbao* 台灣同胞)? Why was there no mentioning of comfort women, Japan-drafted Taiwanese soldiers, and all sorts of pains that Taiwanese compatriots had undergone during the colonial time?

Li’s criticisms were echoed by a large number of scholars, intellectuals and politicians. These criticisms were charged with strong emotions. Some critics characterized these textbooks as “edited for the Japanese,” accusing the editors of “moving away from Beijing but moving towards Tokyo” (*yuanli Beijing, zouxiang Dongjing* 遠離北京、走向東京).¹⁷ As one can see, what was at issue here was the evaluation of Japanese colonialism in Taiwan. In the previous paradigm of Chinese nationalism, Japan is depicted as one of the most vicious enemies—if not the single most—of China. Anything related to Japan, particularly those mentioned in the context of modern history of China, tends to be portrayed in a negative way. Japanese colonialism in Taiwan is no exception. Not only are the revolts against Japanese by Taiwanese people highlighted as the evidence of the loyalty of the Taiwanese people to the Chinese homeland, but the colonial government is uni-dimensionally characterized as an oppressing apparatus that had done all harm but no good to Taiwan. In the eyes of Taiwanese nationalists, however, the picture is quite different. For one thing, the revolts and resistance against the Japanese colonizers do not necessarily entail the loyalty to, nor identification with, the Chinese homeland. Rather, some argue that, through the resistance against Japan, the Taiwanese consciousness gradually emerged, thus planting the seeds for Taiwanese nationalism for later days. On the other hand, the evaluation of Japanese colonialism in Taiwan also differs significantly from that by Chinese nationalism. Generally speaking, Japanese colonialism is evaluated in more positive terms by Taiwanese nationalists than by Chinese nationalists. The reasons are quite tricky but not very difficult to understand. There are two major reasons. On the one hand, during the *kōminka* period in the last years of Japanese rule, a good number of Taiwanese shifted their identities towards Japan, considering themselves to be Japanese.¹⁸ On the other hand, although many Taiwanese did not like Japanese and welcomed the takeover by the KMT regime, celebrating it as a “return to the motherland,” they soon found the latter was no better than the former ruler. Comparing the two rulers, many Tai-

17 *Taiwanshi yanjiu hui* (台灣史研究会) 1997, p. 147; p. 157.

18 The process of “becoming Japanese,” however, was full of struggles, ironies, and twists. For a further analysis, see Ching 2001.

wanese thought that the colonial government of Japan was better than the KMT. Since they hated the KMT so much, they even became nostalgic about the “good old days” in the colonial time.¹⁹

The re-writing of Taiwanese history involves changes in both quality and quantity. It follows that the colonial period under Japanese rule, which was only dealt with in a cursory manner in previous state-authored textbooks, is now described and discussed in much fuller detail. Since some of supporters of Taiwanese nationalism are more sympathetic to Japanese rulers than to the KMT regime, they tried to credit Japanese with the success of turning Taiwan from a “pre-modern” to a “modern” society. Although there have been conflicts and debates concerning how history of the colonial period should be written, Japanese is now presented in a more positive, if not merely balanced, way than before. The following contents from *Renishi Taiwan* provide a vivid example.



Fig. 1. Excerpt pages from *Renishi Taiwan—History Volume*. The contents of these two pages describe how Taiwanese society became modernized during the Japanese colonial period. The three bold-faced headings read (from left to right): “the fostering of the idea of punctuality,” “the establishment of the idea of law-abiding,” and “the establishment of the idea of modern sanitation.”

19 As a matter of fact, many Taiwanese never “liked” the Japanese government until they found that the succeeding KMT government was much worse than the former. “Nostalgia about the Japanese time” thus became a tool for Taiwanese nationalists to mobilize people against the KMT. On the relations between Taiwanese nationalism and Japanese colonialism, see Wu 2003.

In the second section of Chapter Eight in *Renshi Taiwan—History Volume*,²⁰ the topic was about social change in the colonial time. The section consists of five segments under different headings, each of which implied positive evaluations of the colonial rule. The first segment dealt with “the rapid growth of population,” which was attributed to the success of public health system implemented by the colonial government. The second segment discussed how Taiwanese were liberated from those traditional practices such as hair-braiding and foot-binding to become modern men and women. The heading of the third segment was “the fostering of the habit of punctuality,” which discussed how Taiwanese people were taught the concept of punctuality by the colonial government. The fourth and the fifth segments dealt with the establishment of law-abiding and modern sanitary concepts, both of which, again, were attributed to the variety of measures by the colonial government through which Taiwanese society became modernized.²¹

The rewriting of history manifests itself not only in the book’s perspective, weight and focus, but also in the replacement of old terms by new ones. Among them, two terms are the most notable and controversial. The old term “*riju*” (日據), which literally means “Japanese occupation” or “Japan-occupied,” is replaced by a new term “*rizhi*” (日治), which means “Japanese rule” or “Japan-governed.” The term *riju* has a strong anti-colonial connotation, implying that Taiwan was unduly occupied by Japan. In contrast, *rizhu* appears to be more neutral, which is used to reflected the fact that Taiwan was ruled by Japan, without making moral judgment about the legitimacy of the ruler. In the orthodox discourse of Taiwanese nationalism, Taiwan has been ruled by outside rulers since the very beginning: first the Qing dynasty, then Japan, and after World War Two the exiled KMT from China. All these rulers were from outside the island of Taiwan, and the ultimate goal of Taiwanese nationalism is to build a nation of their own by overturning the regime of these rulers. Japan in this perspective appears just another ruler from the outside. As pointed out before, many advocates of Taiwanese nationalism view Japan as a much better ruler than its successor, the KMT regime, which also imposed on Taiwanese people oppressions of a colonial kind. As a consequence, they tend to use more “neutral” terms to refer to the Japanese colonial period. The term *rizhi*, therefore, is preferred by them to *riju*.

In the first draft of *Renshi Taiwan*, all the reference to the colonial period uses *rizhi* to replace *riju* previously used in school textbooks. The opponents thus accused the editors of using *rizhi* instead of *riju* to conceal the fact that Taiwan was unduly occupied and unjustly colonized by Japan. In response, one of the editors explained that “*rizhi*” was shorthand for “*ribenzhimintongzhi*” (日本殖民統治), thus the term itself already had the connotation of “being colonized (by Japan).” However, such an explanation incurred even harsher criticisms. In the view of critics, the editors had in effect concealed the crucial term “*zhimin*” (colonize) by shortening “*ribenzhimintongzhi*” into “*rizhi*,” thus it became

20 The textbooks of *Renshi Taiwan* consisted of three volumes, each of which focused solely on history, geography, and society respectively. Among them, the ones that caused most controversies were the History Volume and the Society Volume, whereas the Geography Volume was considered much less problematic.

21 Guoli bianyiguan 1997. pp. 77–80. Excerpt pages of these contents are shown in Figure 1.

all too evident that the editors had explicit attempt to cover up the oppressive sides of Japanese colonialism in Taiwan.

Another more controversial term is *zhanhou* (戰後), which is used to replace the term *guangfu* (光復) used in the previous China-centered textbooks. *Guangfu* is a term with strong, explicit connotation of Chinese nationalism, which literally means “glorious recovery (of Taiwan).” In contrast, *zhanhou*, a term somehow related to the Japanese term *shūsen* (終戰), is used “neutrally” to mean “after the war.” It does not make any value judgment about the regime-shift in Taiwan, nor does it imply any reference to the winners and the losers of the war. The politics of using these terms reflect the awkward situation of Taiwanese being caught between China and Japan. Since Taiwanese were colonized and educated to become Japanese during the war—some of them were even drafted to fight the war for Japan—they were seemingly the “losers” of the war. However, if they identified themselves with China, then they should be the “winners” of the war. To depict Taiwanese as either losers or winners would displease the other side anyway, so it was thought that it was better to use the neutral term “*zhanhou*.” Since many anti-KMT Taiwanese nationalists see the KMT as no better than the preceding Japanese colonizer, they are rather reluctant to use the term “*guangfu*,” as the term clearly endorses the legitimacy of KMT’s rule on Taiwan by celebrating the victory of China over Japan. On the other hand, the use of the term *zhanhou* also upset people in the opposite camp, for it implied an attitude refusing to recognize the legitimacy of the KMT’s takeover of the island. Moreover, since *zhanhou* is associated with the Japanese term *shūsen*, it somehow endorses Japan’s attitude towards the war. To those supporters of Chinese nationalism who view the war from a China-centered perspective, such an attitude, along with its implication, was simply unbearable—and it became even more unbearable when this “pro-Japan” attitude appeared in the state-authored textbooks to be used in compulsory national education.

Despite its extraordinary intensity, the dispute over *Renshi Taiwan* lasted for about three months and gradually faded away. One of the reasons was that, in response to these criticisms, the MOE and the editors made several concessions and revised 160 places in the textbooks. Although the critics were never satisfied with the extent of revision, they had succeeded in pushing the editors to step back a little bit. On the other hand, it is also argued that the dispute has raised the awareness of Taiwanese to the “inherently pluralistic and fluid character” of identities, thus making Taiwanese more tolerant of the differences in national historiography.²²

If the debate over *Renshi Taiwan* marked a watershed in the development of education in Taiwan, then it follows that textbooks and curriculum in national education have undergone a major paradigm shift, moving from the old China-centered paradigm to a more explicit Taiwan-centered one. In other words, there has been a “paradigm shift,” as it were, in historiography in the textbooks, and its effects continued to model the new Grade 1–9 Curriculum.²³ In the new curriculum, the subject of *Renshi Taiwan* was abolished, but

22 Corcuff 2005, p. 134.

23 Some commentators contended that *Renshi Taiwan* was a manifestation of brutal interference of political power in scholarly writing of history, thus it had nothing to do with “paradigm shifts,” that involved issues in a much higher intellectual level (Wang Xiao-bo 1997). However, if we

in overall curriculum Taiwan is given a higher priority than China. According to the new “concentric-circle theory” behind the curriculum, knowledge should be learned in a way like a developing concentric circles—students first learn about themselves, their family, the community they live in, and then move forwards to Taiwan, China and finally the entire world. The “concentric-circle theory” was first brought up by historian Tu Chengsheng, who later became the Minister of Education, to defend the curriculum of *Renshi Taiwan*, and now it has become the basic framework to structure the new Grade 1–9 Curriculum. Under such a framework, Taiwan was given a prior position in the learning process, and its weight is more than that of China. As a result, Taiwanese history and society is written and taught to an extent much further than that in the previous curriculum.

The effects of the “paradigm shift” in the new curriculum can be clearly observed in the textbooks written by authors in private publishers. Take the subject (which is now called “learning area”) of Social Studies in the junior high school as example. There are four different versions of textbooks published by private providers. All four versions have explicit orientations towards the Taiwan-centered view. What is more, most of the contents in *Renshi Taiwan* have been retained in these textbooks to varying degrees, and the term *rizhi* and *zhanhou* are now adopted, used interchangeably with *ribenzhimintongzhi* (日本殖民統治) and *guangfu*, in all four versions. The convergence of the perspectives adopted in these different versions of textbook can be explained, in part, by the fact that all these textbooks have to be written under the guidelines prescribed by the government, while these guidelines are themselves Taiwan-centered. However, these guidelines do not automatically lead to the production of textbooks written in such fashions. As a matter of fact, in the beginning, there were five, rather than four, companies that published Social Studies textbooks. One of them distinguished itself from the other four by adopting an explicit China-centered viewpoint. The irony was that this publisher went bankrupt just before the beginning of the new semester due to its miscalculated investments in the PRC, thus its newly published textbooks did not even get a chance to reach the market.

Conclusion: Some Reflections on Education, Nation and History in East Asia

In the above, I have examined the major trends and forces that have been shaping educational reform in Taiwan. These trends run against each other from time to time, so much so that educational reform in Taiwan has been characterized by overt contradictions and dissonances. Against this backdrop, the changing representations of Japan in the textbooks are also examined. While the writing of history has always been a major battleground in the politics of nationalism, we find the main controversies in Taiwan’s textbook debate centering around the issues related to Japan. In other words, Japan has become one of the focal points around which the battle between two nationalisms is fought.

Viewed in a comparative perspective, education in the Asia Pacific region has un-

follow Thomas Kuhn’s (1962) original formulations, which characterize paradigm shifts as the changes of world view, we may well say that *Renshi Taiwan* embodies a kind of paradigm shift in historiography, no matter it is a result of political interference or not. As will be discussed in a later section, historiography in the textbooks for national education can hardly do without political factors; in fact, it contains explicit or implicit political goals in itself.

dergone significant restructuring to respond to the trend of globalization since the 1990s; Taiwan in this context is no exception.²⁴ What makes Taiwan's experience distinctive, however, is that educational reform has been taking place in the course of nationalization. To be sure, mass education in modern society has always been intertwined with nationalism and the building of the nation-state, but Taiwan's historical past and its current ambiguous political status have made the relations between education and nation-building a thorny issue that cannot be easily settled.

As stated above, one of the key forces that shapes the process of educational reform is nationalization, which, in turn, inevitably involves the writing of history. Nowadays, the relations between writing of history and nation-building or nationalism appear more than apparent to us. Through compulsory national education, history has played a key role in shaping collective memory of a common past to form a shared national identity; thus, the writing of history has been an important site of contestation in nationalist politics. Numerous studies have pointed out the central role that history has played in forging national identities, so many so that academic historians feel the need to "rescue history from the nation."²⁵ Indeed, no other scholars have made it blunter than Ernest Renan did: "Getting its history wrong is part of being a nation."²⁶ The problem in Taiwan's case is that different "ethnic groups" have mutually conflicting historical memories, and it is at this conjuncture that Japan becomes the focal point of controversies. People on both sides simply cannot reach a consensus regarding "how the Other should be represented in school textbooks." The dispute over *Renshi Taiwan* is a manifestation of the sense of identity crisis in recent Taiwan: the split of national identities is also reflected in the split of historiography.

Indeed, Taiwan and Japan have been intertwined with each other's nationalist politics. Just as Japan became one of the foci of controversy in Taiwan's nationalist politics, so is Taiwan involved in the nationalist politics in Japan.²⁷ If we expand the scope to a wider range, we will find this phenomenon existing not only between Japan and Taiwan, but also among other East Asian nations such as China, the two Koreas, Singapore, to name but a few. The intertwined historical relations between people living in these areas, particularly conflicting memories about recent wars, have been so complicated that the writing of history in one nation inevitably involves the representation of the Other, which, in turn, has not been done in a very positive way.

Such a phenomenon is not peculiar to East Asia. Rather, we can find similar cases

24 For a discussion of globalization and educational reform in the Asia Pacific region in a comparative perspective, see Mok and Welch 2003.

25 Duara 1995. For general discussions on history, education and nationalism, see Hobsbawm 1990; Gellner 1983, for the discussions specifically focused on East Asia, see Vickers and Jones 2005.

26 Quoted in Hobsbawm 1990, p. 12.

27 Examples of the latter kind can be found in the events such as the debates surrounding Kobayashi Yoshinori's *Taiwan ron*, in which Taiwan was used as a tool by the right-wingers in Japan to reinforce their nationalist ideology. The publication of *Taiwanron* has caused wide discussions in the intellectual circles in both Japan and Taiwan. For further discussions by scholars from both sides, see Chen and Li 2005.

all over the world. What makes East Asia somewhat peculiar is that there has been a lack of efforts, or even consciousness, to solve the tensions. As Vickers has sharply pointed out, after the end of World War Two, nations in Western Europe have made tremendous efforts to reconcile their conflicting memories about the war, for the reasons of maintaining regional stability (and later for regional integration). Such kinds of efforts, however, have been curiously absent in the East Asian region.²⁸ Instead, nations in this region such as China, Japan and Korea, have somehow kept insulated from each other, tending to “rebuild or reinforce internal social cohesion during the postwar period through old-fashioned appeals to naked ethno-nationalist sentiment, without having to confront any seriously adverse consequences in terms of their relations with their neighbors.”²⁹ Examples of this kind can be found in the publication of the *New History Textbook* in Japan, which caused controversies and serious concerns not only within the boundary of Japan, but also in neighboring countries such as China and South Korea.³⁰ Although there have been efforts of international collaboration by academic historians from China, Japan and Korea to write school textbooks on modern history of East Asia, Taiwan is nonetheless left out in these internationally collective efforts. There might be some nationalist reasons behind this, as Taiwan is still claimed by the PRC to be its province, thus being considered unqualified to participate in these collaborative efforts across the nations. The writing and rewriting of national history is, after all, a matter of nationalist politics. The above-mentioned collaborative efforts notwithstanding, it can be expected that the politics of writing history will remain a recurring theme in this region in the years to come.

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28 Vickers 2005, p. 5–12.

29 Ibid., p. 9.

30 In comparison, the reactions in Taiwan to this incident appeared to be rather mild, which, again, testified a paradigm shift in view Taiwan-Japan relations.

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****Note on romanization:** All Chinese names and characters are romanized in *pinyin*, unless there is a common usage that has gained wide popularity (e.g., Taipei, Lee Teng-hui). Japanese terms are romanized in the Hepburn style.