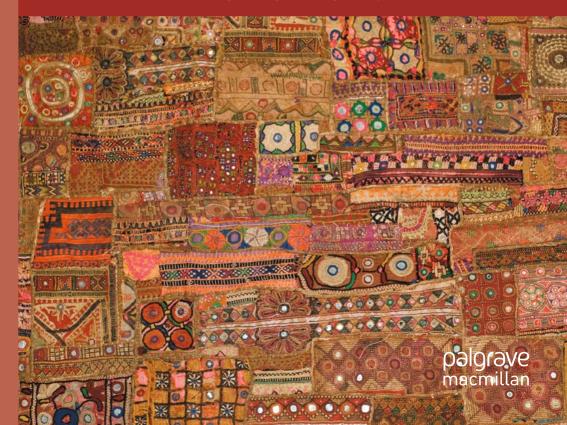# Negotiating Ethnic Diversity and National Identity in History Education

## International and Comparative Perspectives

*Edited by*
Helen Mu Hung Ting · Luigi Cajani

# Negotiating Ethnic Diversity and National Identity in History Education

Helen Mu Hung Ting • Luigi Cajani
Editors

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## International and Comparative Perspectives

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# Contents

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# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| BaH | Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| BBC | British Broadcasting Corporation |
| BME | Black and minority ethnic |
| CCC | Common core curriculum |
| CCP | Chinese Communist Party |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus disease |
| DfE | Department for Education |
| DfEE | Department for Education and Employment |
| DfES | Department for Education and Science |
| EuroClio | European Association of History Educators |
| GCSE | General Certificate of Secondary Education |
| HMSO | Her Majesty's Stationery Office |
| IC | International community |
| LCC | Literature and culture committees |
| MOE | Ministry of Education |
| MOEA | Ministry of Ethnic Affairs |
| NCEA | National Certificate of Educational Achievement |
| NE | National Education |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| NUS | National University of Singapore |
| NZC | New Zealand Curriculum |
| NZHTA | New Zealand History Teachers' Association |

| | |
|---|---|
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe |
| PAP | People's Action Party |
| PEP | People's Education Press |
| PRC | People's Republic of China |
| QCA | Qualifications and Curriculum Authority |
| RS | Republika Srpska/Serb Republic |
| SHP | Schools History Project |
| TRC | Truth and Reconciliation Commission |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund |
| USA | United States of America |

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# 1

# Introduction: Negotiating Ethnic Diversity with National Identity in History Education

**Helen Mu Hung Ting**

## Introduction

This volume is interested in the problems and challenges of negotiating the spaces given to the stories and perspectives of ethnically non-dominant groups in the history education of multiethnic countries—how official or dominant narratives in history textbooks articulate the nation's past in relation to its "diverse self". A narrative in history textbooks which recounts the story of the origins of the nation through its inclusion/ exclusion of voices and the historical roles played by ethnic minorities "defines a boundary between members who share the common past and those who do not" (Seixas 2004, p. 6).

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The process of selection and omission of specific contents and viewpoints "is an intensely political and ideological process" (Foster and Crawford 2006b, p. 7). This is admittedly part and parcel of narrative construction, one which cannot be avoided (Cronon 1992). It nonetheless involves value judgments and reveals how the narrator understands past events and actions and ultimately the "moral of the story" to be affirmed in the present (p. 1367). How the ethnic configuration of the nation is enacted in curricular and/or textbook narratives constitutes the main focus of this collection.

By ethnicity, we refer loosely to cultural or religious identities that are socially salient or politically significant.[1] State efforts at defining national identity institutionalise a social frame which may make certain identities more or less imperative, depending on whether or not the policy framework renders identity categories as "mandatory elements of people's existence in the state" (Verdery 1996, p. 39),[2] which we call the figured world of national identity, to be elaborated in this chapter. More often than not, the state is not ethnically neutral, and policy decisions on history education may reveal much about interethnic power relations. There are also cases where marginalised groups fight back and demand that their identities and historical roles be recognised in the story of the nation. The foci of our analyses are the orientations and narratives in history curricula and textbooks, with particular regard to majority-minority ethnic relations and how these have evolved over time.

This volume has assembled ten case studies consisting of five "Western" and five Asian nation-states with different dynamics of interethnic relations and politics of multiculturalism—ranging from difficult, post-conflict countries to those states which have, to a greater or lesser extent, taken into account ethnic diversity in policy formulation. Since the former are well-researched in peacebuilding and reconciliation studies, our emphasis is on societies which have not experienced large-scale violent conflicts in recent decades but have low intensity conflicts or latent ethnic tension. Two post-conflict countries are nonetheless included:

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[1] After Barth (1969), we understand ethnicity as the social organisation of cultural difference through the use of cultural practices, ethnic markers and boundaries—not all cultural practices and forms have equal social or political significance for an ethnic group (and) over time.

[2] For an application of this theoretical framework in Malaysia, see Ting (2014b).

Myanmar (Asia), which has relapsed into military rule, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina (BaH, Europe). They serve not just as reminders against a facile East-West generalisation and distinction, but also as illustrations of the intractable challenges in building bridges across ethnic divides to construct a cohesive national identity based on a shared historical perspective in the aftermath of military conflict and ethnic violence.

## Divergent Patterns in the Politics of Multiculturalism

Western debates on multiculturalism originated in the context of what Kymlicka (2010) calls the postwar human rights revolution, one which challenges illiberal ideologies including racialist exclusions and ethnic hierarchies. Political theorists have begun to recognise that liberal democratic states are *not* ethnoculturally neutral despite having previously claimed to be such. Consequently, there is an acknowledgement that "majority efforts at nation-building create injustices for minorities", with particular regard to the "proper role of language, nationality, and ethnic identities within liberal-democratic societies and institutions" (Kymlicka 2001, p. 27). This has led to a reconsideration of the appropriate ways of fostering social cohesion and national identity.

In the face of globalisation and migration, which render societies more and more diverse, varying sets of multiculturalism policies have been proposed in different Western democracies to redefine the relationship between ethnocultural minorities and the state. These new institutional arrangements are relatively more accommodating of the cultural rights of minorities such as indigenous peoples and sub-state national as well as immigrant groups (Kymlicka 2010). Yet these policies are not without their detractors and challenges—one being balancing tensions between accommodating diverse minority cultural rights and forging a shared national identity and solidarity: an issue that used to be regarded as a specifically postcolonial challenge for newly independent countries. In effect, this volume's chapters on European settler societies discuss how their history education is coming to terms with the "colonial" past. These

tensions have, to a certain extent, contributed to the so-called history wars to be discussed shortly.

In many Asian countries, cultural and linguistic diversity was the lived reality before the onset of Western colonialism, which introduced the ideologies of racialist hierarchies and the assimilationist ideals of nation-states to Asian political elites. These legacies left their mark on postcolonial nation-building projects in Asia and elsewhere, including the construction of the ethno-genesis story of an ethnic majority as national history. Asian states subsequently carved out their own trajectories of economic and political development, which in turn shaped their evolving nation-building projects. Here, multiculturalism entails pragmatic strategies or policies to manage issues arising from cultural and religious diversity, with or without reference to the norms of human rights.

Such colonial interactions and postcolonial divergences in historical and political trajectories have led to different practices in handling minority rights and ethnic diversity in different countries. Yet they are all marked by a similar tendency—using history education for political and ideological agendas, albeit in different manners. Politically then, how have the divergent paths of "multiculturalism" between multicultural Asian and Western countries affected the handling of ethnic diversity in history education? Nation building should be understood as an attempt at bridging social or ethnic cleavages within the nation-state to foster a more inclusive and cohesive national identity, but in practice, this is not as straightforward. Our diachronic analyses pay attention to the evolving dynamics of how and why states attempt to bridge (or neglect) such cleavages in successive versions of history textbooks or curricula.

A comparative study of England, Germany and Greece, which analyses the contents and discourses in their geography, history and citizenship studies curricula, reveals that while the theme of cultural diversity was variously treated in these three subjects, their respective history curricula were found to be ethnocentric (Faas 2011). Nordgren and Johansson (2014, p. 2) remark that "[f]or history teaching, fostering intercultural understanding seems to be a far more ambiguous and vague project than was once the project of fostering nationalism".

Education practitioners from the Schools History Project in England, for instance, are wary of reducing history teaching to merely citizenship

education, which would turn learning into a superficial and reductionist process, at the expense of fostering more rigorous historical thinking and understanding (Bracey et al. 2011; Lee and Shemilt 2007). In addition, the integration of citizenship training into history learning is also feared to favour a "presentist" history agenda, where only topics deemed relevant to civic education are privileged (Harris 2011; Lee and Shemilt 2007).

# From the Interstate to Domestic Politics of History Textbook Revision

## Interstate Cultural Diplomacy

There are two common features of a great number of history textbooks used all over the world. Firstly, "they are often overtly nationalistic",[3] and secondly, "they commonly adopt an official, single 'best story' narrative style" (Foster 2012, p. 49). In effect, history education has been used by states to inculcate patriotism and national identity since the nineteenth century (see Chap. 2). Seixas (2007) calls this the "collective memory approach" to history education for it "recognizes that school history curricula must transmit collective memory" (p. 20). Its defining feature is that only one single account is presented as the true, best version of historical interpretation. In reality, this is not only done by the state, but also by minorities or even progressive groups who construct alternative narratives to challenge state hegemony, and "has the advantage of providing a compelling moral framework" (ibid.). This longstanding practice, however, has been criticised for having contributed to the maintenance of inter- and intrastate antipathy and conflict.

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[3] The use of the word "nationalistic" or "nationalism" usually carries an exclusive connotation of a quest for or assertion of boundaries of the putative "nation," either internationally or domestically, although identity necessarily requires differentiation from the "Other." In the case of domestic ethnic politics, "nationalist" or "nationalism" refers to a monoethnic vision of the putative nation. National identity, on the other hand, refers to the identity of the nation-state encompassing the whole citizenry. See the subsequent section for a further discussion on our understanding of national identity.

Debates on the need to revise history teaching to promote peace and curb excessive nationalism began in the Scandinavian countries towards the end of the nineteenth century (Elmersjö and Lindmark 2010). By the turn of the twentieth century, an international peace movement was growing, with female schoolteachers at its forefront. The First World War added further impetus to the spread of a sense of urgency and efforts at "cultural diplomacy" in Europe to revise history textbooks containing factual distortions which fuelled interstate hostility and prejudice (Albert 2016; Elmersjö 2014; Pingel 2010). Nonetheless, advocates for international understanding and peaceful coexistence among the nations did not reject the need to teach national history to foster national cohesion. They framed their discourse in terms of "patriotic pacifism" and "sensible patriotism", which criticised the glorification of militarism but supported a strong sense of patriotism (Elmersjö 2014). Pingel (2010, p. 12) diplomatically describes this approach as one where "We See the World through our Nations". It was not until the last couple of decades of the twentieth century that the entrenched practice of using history education to instil cohesion at the national level was subject to more critical scrutiny (Symcox 2002; Foster and Crawford 2006a; Seixas 2007; Carretero 2011; Ahonen 2017).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Council of Europe were among the prominent interstate institutions formed after the Second World War to support bilateral or multilateral textbook revision efforts to foster interstate peacebuilding (see Chap. 2). Nonetheless, they advanced contrasting ideas for such revisions (Elmersjö 2014). From the outset, UNESCO promoted the idea of the interdependence of humankind through education (Pingel 2010), encouraging a non-Eurocentric presentation of Asia in Western textbooks and vice versa. Paralleling UNESCO's advocacy for international understanding through history education, the Council of Europe promoted a regional vision of history to foster a European identity and to prevent interstate hostility. Nonetheless, their idea of teaching European history to reinforce a European identity is arguably based on the same logic of the nation-states in teaching national history for nation building (see also Fuchs 2010). These different conceptions of history education

bear some resemblance to the unresolved debates over its role in relation to national identity, to be discussed in a subsequent section.

## The 'Cultural Turn' in the Politics of History Education

The spectacular fall of the Eastern European communist regimes in the 1990s gave birth to many new nation-states with reconfigured ethnic compositions and "new minorities". One of the challenges confronted by these new multinational states, often in post-conflict situations, was negotiating national narratives in history textbooks which accommodated conflicting historical interpretations by various ethnic groups (Dimou 2009; cf. also Chaps. 4 and 5). This was especially challenging after violent conflicts hardened the positions of conflicting groups, who were both wartime aggressors and victims (e.g. BaH; see Chap. 4).

Another challenge to traditional patriotic history education arose from critical historiographical development, which marked a shift in the theory and practice of historical scholarship away from the "whiggish" master narrative (Grever and Stuurman 2007; Ahonen 2017). The dominance of traditional historiography—which privileged the achievements of great leaders as well as political and diplomatic history—was gradually eroded during the second half of the twentieth century. The notion that historical events could be interpreted in more than one way due to different interpretive vantage points gained wider currency, and social histories and historical studies of subaltern social or racial groups such as women, slaves, the working class and ethnic minorities flourished (Symcox 2002). Power relations and positionality, which introduced biases into the construction of historical narratives, were also highlighted by postmodernists (e.g. Epstein and Peck 2018). Questioned about the social relevance and declining popularity of traditional history teaching, history teachers and researchers in some countries went through a period of self-reflection and realignment (Rüsen 1987; Phillips 1998; Lévesque 2011).

These developments, in tandem with the politics of multiculturalism, have contributed to a rise in domestic controversies over history textbook revision in various countries (see, e.g., Taylor and Guyver 2012; Cajani et al. 2019; Cajani 2008). The attention paid to mutually hostile

portrayals of neighbouring countries was extended to domestic "culture wars" or "history wars" between the proponents of "new history" and their detractors, between the threatened "great tradition" and more inclusive approaches to marginalised groups within the nation.

Indeed, controversies over textbook historical narratives are not the preserve of post-conflict multiethnic nation-states. The limits and merits of history education's contribution to reconciliation and peacebuilding in the aftermath of violent conflicts remain a subject of current research (Cole 2007; Psaltis et al. 2017; Pingel 2010; Dimou 2009; Bentrovato et al. 2016). On the other hand, it may be equally useful and relevant to explore the conditions and processes of how history education can bridge ethnic or sectarian divides (Barton and McCully 2005; McCully 2010, 2019; Zanazanian 2017) or be rendered more inclusive and respectful of diversity in peacetime, in the hope of developing a culture of peace to *prevent* or *pre-empt* serious conflicts (Hopken 2008; Korostelina 2013). In fact, divisive educational structures and contents could catalyse violent conflicts in some instances (Chapman 2007; Hoepken 1999). Noting the emergence of the challenge of this "cultural turn", Pingel (2010, p. 16) remarks that:

> more and more states who had the perception of themselves as being mono-ethnic and shaped by a singular, dominant culture can no longer retain this self-image because the awareness of already existing cultural or ethnic diversity has grown or because they are in fact the target of increasing cross-boundary migration flows.

## The History Textbook as a Site of Negotiation of National Identity

Formal and informal education have always played important roles in the social reproduction of communities or societies and have also been regarded as pathways to social mobility and emancipation. In modern nation-states, the education system is always used, in one way or another, as a tool for nation building and political socialisation (Lall and Vickers 2009; Carretero 2011). Liberal scholars who otherwise frown upon

"uncritical patriotism" acknowledge that public schools should aim at preparing the younger generation to participate constructively, critically and responsibly as citizens in a democratic society (Kymlicka 2001; Barton and Levstik 2004; Lee and Shemilt 2007).

The role of the state in transmitting "official knowledge" through the education system differs, depending on varying degrees of government intervention (Foster 2012; Foster and Crawford 2006a) and the domestic culture of democracy and conservatism. In effect, the system of administering education policy varies widely. Education policies in many Western countries are decentralised, hence complicating any analyses of history textbooks or curricula in understanding the reproduction of national identity. In the extreme case of New Zealand, there has not even been a prescribed list of historical subjects to be learnt in the history curriculum since 2007, although the government has decided to make the learning of its history compulsory from 2023 (see Chap. 9).

The production of history textbooks is quite variable too, ranging from the mandatory use of a single version of officially sanctioned textbooks,[4] the responsible ministry providing a choice between several vetted textbooks or leaving market forces to produce textbooks based on a prescribed curriculum. Depending on how different societal forces intervene, it may not just be the government or education minister which decides what goes into the textbooks. Various actors such as ministry officials, academic bodies, publishing companies or agencies, textbook writers and history associations may also be influential in determining the final output. In the United States, market forces have played an important role in maintaining the traditional narrative of national history (Foster 1999). In England, despite the stipulations of a national curriculum, teachers maintain considerable autonomy in teaching. The strong tradition of practitioner-oriented research, exchange and textbook production through teachers' networks such as the Schools History Project and Historical Association have played a part in changing the ways in which history lessons are delivered (see Chap. 6; also Chapman 2017). Each country analysis in this volume clarifies the domestic administrative

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[4] This is the case in many Asian countries. See, for example, Vickers and Jones (2005); or in Greece, cf. Cajani et al. (2019).

system of education and textbook production process. Evidently, text-book content does not automatically translate into what the students imbibe in classrooms, but that is outside the scope of research of this volume.

In reality, apart from political dynamics, objective conditions of schooling systems and standards of instruction affect policy decisions. Chapter 5 on Myanmar documents the challenges in accommodating ethnic diversity in history education during its brief window of limited democratic transition and openness. Its adoption of a new history curriculum was part of a range of more ethnically inclusive education policies introduced during this transition, where the teaching of ethnic history was allocated some decentralised space. Yet academic research of ethnic history in some communities has barely begun. In BaH, attempts by the international community to introduce a disciplinary and competency-based approach to history education such as handling sources, exploring the multi-perspectivity of historical interpretation and critical historical thinking were not successful due to deficiencies in conditions and resources in popularising novel teaching methodologies.

## National Identity as a Figured World

Identity may be understood as one's self-orientation in time and social space. In an intersubjective way, identity "defines a person's position in his or her social world" and "carries within itself expectations from the person and from different classes of others in the person's surroundings, and thus orients his or her action" (Greenfeld 1993, p. 13). Historical consciousness[5] or memory, depending on the social sphere in which one's identity is oriented or acted upon, is the temporal dimension of identity. Through socialisation and interactions with significant social circles—that is, a way for us to access a community's collective historical

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[5] The concept of historical consciousness was initially developed by the German history education theorist Jörn Rüsen and has since been defined and explored variously by scholars and educationists in different countries, notably Peter Seixas. The literature is too wide-ranging to be discussed here, but we use it here in a broad, anthropological sense to denote all ways in which people from different sociocultural, temporal and individual contexts relate to the past, as favoured by Korber (2016). See also Rüsen (1987).

memory—we all acquire some form of historical consciousness. Whether it is factually erroneous or sophisticatedly informed, this consciousness orients us in the social world based on an understanding of the past, shapes our outlook on the future and is reproduced in our activities.

History education in school can be understood as a state effort to transmit an understanding of the story of the nation to the younger generation in order to shape and perpetuate an official version of the "national social imaginary" (Taylor 2002). Carefully crafted history textbooks often carry authoritative messages on the desired forms of patriotic sentiments and representations of the nation, serving as "the keepers of ideas, values and knowledge", and "[n]o matter how neutral history textbooks may appear, they prove ideologically important because often they seek to imbue in the young a shared set of values, a national ethos, and an incontrovertible sense of political orthodoxy" (Foster and Crawford 2006a, p. 1).

Hence, history textbooks and curricula remain privileged sites for analysing the articulation of official nationalism or national identity and their evolution in a country. The phenomenon of national identity is of course broader and more dynamic than textbook representation and is understood here as a relational identity, the "site where very different views of the nation contest and negotiate with each other" (Duara 1995, p. 152). Historical representations in textbooks are expressions of dominant national narratives, a mainstream representation of societal identity. Just as how successive editions of history textbooks and curricula may vary from one another, this process of negotiation and reproduction of historical representation continues in society, never to be permanently settled (Ting 2008; Zimmer 2003). This will be shown in our diachronic analyses of successive versions of history textbooks.

One way of understanding the phenomenon of national identity is to use the concept of the "figured world"—a socio-historically produced, culturally constructed system of apprehension which mediates one's engagement in social activities or interactions with others: "frames of meaning in which interpretations of human actions are negotiated" (Holland et al. 2001, p. 271). The mental representation of a figured world usually consists of generic figures, acts, stereotypical schemas or taken-for-granted sequences of events, which Wertsch (2004) calls

"schematic narrative templates".[6] The figured world, which provides the context for human activities as something meaningfully oriented, includes but is not merely about historical narratives.

The figured world of nationhood or national identity would consist of a narrative of the historical origins of the nation, and its most important heroes and villains who played key roles in historical events which have shaped the current form of the nation-state (Ting 2008). The national flag as well as other important national symbols and monuments may also be part of this figured world, but historical narratives are always staples in their construction because stories of the nation are related to temporality. In effect, an analysis of history textbooks would reveal the figured world of nationhood which is officially articulated and understood by authorised textbook writers.

Our comprehension of the meanings of activities/figured worlds is mediated and reproduced, not just via narratives but also intersubjectively through our actions (either on our own or through interactions with others) (Holland et al. 2001). A figured world for a specific genre of activities is transmitted socially, which means that not everyone encounters or has knowledge about it. An indigenous person living in a remote jungle may not have any notions of or cares about what citizenship is all about, until they need an identity card to access public healthcare systems or a passport to travel overseas. Even if someone is exposed to it through interactions, they may or may not be engaged with or committed to the webs of meaning as signified by the figured world,[7] until they act or get involved in its related activities, either on their own volition or in response to others' actions.[8] For instance, a particular historical event (and its

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[6] Based on similar ideas, the extensive research of Jocelyn Létourneau on francophone *Québécois* students' historical consciousness has identified a converging pattern of the basic plot of their narrative template of the history of Quebec. See for instance Létourneau and Moisan (2004) and Lévesque et al. (2013).

[7] See Holland et al. (2001) for further elaboration. Virta (2017) notes that some young people can remain "historically apathetic" or ignorant even if they are exposed to a multitude of historical images and information daily.

[8] Lévesque and Létourneau (2019) report that the strength of identification of francophone students with their provincial linguistic communities is associated closely with the extent of their complete adoption of the typical French nationalist historical narrative following *la survivance* (the survival) template. This corresponds well with how a person becomes closely engaged and identifies with a particular figured world (Holland et al. 2001).

interpretation in the figured world) may not mean much to me until it is used to justify government policies which affect specific aspects of my life. One may also resist the relationship or signification offered to them in the specific figured world of the activities that they are engaged in, as discussed in the case of romance or gender relations in Holland et al. (2001). Yet in the case of the teaching of official historical narratives in classrooms, students may have less room or resources and lack the agency to reject them. A rejection of a hegemonic figured world of nationhood may explain political disengagement or apathy.[9]

But not all history lessons are "usable history" relevant to the construction of national or political identity, and in the case of francophone *Québécois*, the basic plot consists of four main clusters of periodisation (Létourneau and Moisan 2004). The same historical events may evoke different significations or interpretations due to the existence of rival narratives in different communities' social memories. Barton and McCully (2005, p. 108) found that teaching a balanced mix of rival historical perspectives on Irish nationalism without challenging students' preconceived historical understandings ended up supplying "raw material for the partisan narratives" (read "figured worlds") of the students, which sharpened their respective historical identifications and perpetuated community divisions—in other words, merely feeding into their pre-existing figured world of nationalism.

## The Power of Historical Narratives and Disenchantment

Commenting on patriotism as a curious cultural psychological phenomenon, Valsiner (2011) notes that:

> It is a very special kind of loyalty—to the non-existing object. Fatherland— or motherland—are such non-existing objects. Such objects are crucial in human *psyche* and society … they *sub*sist rather than *ex*ist.… The father is

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[9] The findings of Létourneau and Gani (2017) indicate this dissociation with or rejection of the official historical narrative on the Quebec nation.

a real person—the fatherland—a fiction. Yet—like many fictions—its ephemeral nature is its strength. (pp. ix–x)

In other words, the object of patriotism, that is, the nation, exists in the form of a mental representation, one that is held as "real", anchored in a figured world of nationhood. An integral component is its genesis story—its representation of the past.

Carretero (2011) suggests that citizens' constructions of national identity are informed by three sources of representations of the past which coexist in their daily lives:school history, academic history or historiography and lastly "everyday history" or what others call social or collective memory.[10] Within the framework of the figured world, the concept of "everyday history" may be more appropriate, because it denotes the fragmented and more malleable nature of this use of historical discourse, which may be derived from the more comprehensive social or collective memory. This is akin to the idea of a larger master narrative circulating within a society or community, which may consist of a number of sub-plots of "everyday history" or other "everyday discourses" which people may combine or modify in the construction of self-identity.

Even though history learning in schools is arguably modern society's most entrenched and organised system of transmitting historical understanding,[11] people's historical perceptions or sensibilities—their everyday histories—may also be influenced by other sources such as social media, national rites, heritage exhibitions or friends and family circles. In addition, the appropriation of historical representations in textbooks may also be influenced by students' social positions and lived experiences.[12] A divided society is likely to have opposing figured worlds with rival narratives circulating within each community.

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[10] Ahonen (2017) proposes a slight variation of the three fields of history making: academic historiography, social memory and public history. History education is regarded as a subset of public history.

[11] Studies in Argentina and Spain found a "clear coincidence between formal schooling and informal uses and representations of history among citizens" (Carretero 2017, p. 518).

[12] Studies on a community's collective memory that illustrate this phenomenon include Létourneau and Moisan (2004) among Quebec's youths of French-Canadian descent, and Barton and McCully (2005) on Northern Irish youth.

Given the availability of multiple sources of historical representation, even if schools do not teach history, citizens would spontaneously improvise versions of their "everyday history", mediated by collective memory and informed by what Michael Billig calls the "banal nationalism" which permeates public media. When people act in public life, their actions are based consciously or unconsciously on their perceptions of social reality, as comprehended through the lenses of their improvised figured worlds of nationhood as citizens. Historical arguments may be advanced in public discourses to defend or dispute policies or legislation, and may thus influence the underlying perspectives of citizens who support or reject them. Referring to a Scottish ancestral story, Rüsen (2004) illustrates how the articulation of a narrative is an expression of historical consciousness, which can guide one's moral orientation and shape human agency.

On the other hand, the three sources of historical representation may not be as distinct as Carretero (2011) believes. History textbooks are often written by academics commissioned by education ministries, within the constraints of their guidelines (Foster 2012). Berger (2007b) recounts how historiographic nationalism played an instrumental role in legitimising interstate and civil wars as well as instances of ethnic cleansing in Europe. Our chapter on Thailand illustrates how the royal construction of the Thai national narrative was influenced by renowned foreign academics and a Thai prince's English education. Nationalist-oriented historians in Malaysia were instrumental in introducing ethnonationalist constructions of textbook historical narratives. Hence even historians may not be completely free from their historical, social and political positionalities, which affect how they interpret historical facts and craft narratives (Berger 2007a; Ting 2014a). In effect, historians may intervene in the public sphere and speak on television or radio to exert an influence on "everyday history", as understood by the common people. These interactions of various sources of historical representation illustrate the need to recognise the intervention of knowledge as power, and how power legitimises select forms of knowledge.

Despite their messy interactions in social reality, history as an academic discipline obviously cannot be equated with collective memory or "everyday history". In effect, the prevalence of social media and the Internet are formidable competitors of textbooks in influencing narratives of

everyday history. What is at stake is not so much the transposition of the "right version" of history into the minds of students but helping them progressively acquire sound historical thinking and evidence-based rigour to validate historical accounts (Virta 2017; Lee 2004) or assess their "narrative plausibility" (Seixas 2017) and discern between proliferating sources of misinformation. Through this, younger generations may, over time, be able to demystify parts of popular memory that do not withstand the rigour of historiographical validation and thus develop an alternative "internally persuasive discourse" (Barton and McCully 2010) and meaningful historical narrative (Lévesque 2016) for themselves. To handle the onslaught of multiple, contradictory narratives, Parkes (2017) proposes self-introspection, to cast a "historiographic gaze" on one's own historical perspective to develop what he calls a "critical pluralist" disposition. This is well and good as an idea. But in practice, whether or not this approach, if coupled with a deconstructionist epistemological position (Elmersjö et al. 2017), is educationally helpful to students confused by conflicting narratives is moot. The risk is that this may result in "disenchantment", not only with the officially prescribed patriotic narrative but also with "historical truth" altogether, thus causing political disengagement (Lee and Shemilt 2007).

## Unresolved Debates: The Relationship Between History Education and National Identity

There is a divergence of views among academics and educationists on whether or not history education *should* be assigned the mission of fostering national identity and citizenship, and whether it can even accomplish such a task well. These debates arose from the changing context of history education, as discussed earlier. Berger (2007b) is a rigorous opponent, arguing that no neat distinction can be made between benign, liberal nationalism and a malign, authoritarian version, as far as the legitimisation of violence and exclusion by historiographic nationalism is concerned. Carretero (2011) views the use of school history in promoting patriotism and national identity as incompatible with teaching history

based on critical rationality, because the former always entails portraying national history and heroes in a positive light and in uncritical ways.

In a similar vein, rather than inculcating an officially prescribed collective historical consciousness or identity, Lee (2012) proposes that history education moulds a "historically literate" identity with "cognitive ethics" and "rational passions" instead (p. xii–xiii). But this requires that history education debunks mythic pasts and teaches inconvenient or negative historical events as they are. Helping students to understand peoples' actions and thoughts in their historical contexts reveals the historical contingency of identities and even democracy—which may result in the development of an "anything goes" moral relativism instead of empowering them as citizens (Lee and Shemilt 2007). Hence, Lee (2012) argues that expecting history education to help construct a specific identity or foster social cohesion is misplaced, thus ignoring the nature of history as a discipline and what (to him at least) counts as proper history education. History could serve as a "complement" to citizenship education by nurturing the critical capacity of citizens to rationally assess the historical discourses which they encounter, based on the disciplinary rigour of historiography (Lee and Shemilt 2007).

Kymlicka (2001), on the other hand, believes that a sense of a shared national identity based on a feeling of belonging to the same nation is an important ingredient which encourages solidarity and trust among citizens. He sees the teaching of history as fundamental to the construction of national identity and believes that it is legitimate for schools to promote emotional identification with a national history which is taught truthfully and inclusively. This sense of identification entails students taking pride in their nation's historical accomplishments and shame in its injustices.

Chapter 9 discusses the latest debates on the history curriculum in New Zealand, shedding an interesting light on the necessity of complementing disciplinary skills (i.e. critical historical thinking) with prescriptions of important national historical events to be studied. The recent decision by the government to introduce a new curriculum to this effect demonstrates that history education also needs to equip young citizens to understand the historical impact of colonialism on the Māori people, so

that they are able to appreciate or participate in related policy debates or current affairs in an informed way.[13]

Sharing Kymlicka's position, Barton and Levstik (2004) also affirm that history education, guided by the principles of humanistic education, plays an important role in creating a sense of national identity and contributes to a pluralistic participatory democracy, listing three key elements of teaching history:

1. promoting reasoned judgment through the development of historical thinking skills;
2. inculcating "an expanded view of humanity" which helps students to "recognise, understand and even embrace the range of human diversity", an ability critical to participatory democracy (p. 37); and
3. encouraging students to deliberate on the common good, which they regard not as a predetermined ideal, but to be decided upon based on participatory discussions and deliberation.

It is in this third element that Barton and Levstik (2004) differ from Lee and Shemilt (2007). Acknowledging that it is a controversial element, they nonetheless point out that "[a]ll of us repeatedly make judgments about history" and on whether or not a specific historical event "contributed to or detracted from the common good" (Barton and Levstik 2004, p. 39). Like Kymlicka, they also encourage an association and identification with the nation's past to create a sense of belonging, allegiance, justification for contemporary social arrangements and political actions.

Could or should the scope of history education avoid its inevitable function of informing (or not) the historical consciousness of generations of young people? Perhaps the debates have focused too much on the *concept* of history and not enough on its *educational component*, which we all agree cannot be reduced solely to a cognitive dimension. It may be a matter of balancing the cognitive and affective components of learning or involving different conceptions of its goals and approaches.

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[13] See also Chap. 7 for the case of Canada, which suggests how the teaching of critical historical thinking skills can help in navigating the domestic politics of multiculturalism.

The conversations on the dual demands of history education continue, but what is undeniable is that the "intuitive" use of historical representation and the improvisation of a simplified, streamlined historical narrative—subsumed under what some refer to as historical consciousness or in our case, a dimension of the figured world of national identity—are part and parcel of being human. Whether informed by academic historiography, a (non-)nationalistic history education or informal collective memory, all of us hold individual versions of our own representations of the past, probably through the improvisation of all three abovementioned sources. This representation forms an integral part of our figured world of nationhood and shapes our national identity as citizens.

Given the entanglement of history, memory and identity in real life, disengagement sidesteps the practical and political implications of history education. Although history education is only one factor among others, it does play a part in informing our historical consciousness and shaping collective historical memories of cohorts of young people over time. History may be served better by exploring how history education could contribute to a more informed, inclusive and critical construction of the personal and collective historical narrative of the nation.[14]

Acknowledging unresolved disagreements over the role of history education in (in)forming national identity amongst scholars, our position is that history textbooks should be inclusive and promote a historical understanding that reflects the diverse components of the nation. Taking this as an ideal, how then do different nations fare against this benchmark? How do they negotiate tensions between acknowledging ethnic diversity and promoting national identity in practice? Do they even try? Do the trajectories of negotiation diverge between our selected Western democracies and ethnically diverse Asian nation-states? And if so, what are the driving forces behind these differences and similarities?

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[14] Cf. Létourneau (2017).

## A Comparative Perspective

In this volume, we interrogate the experiences of countries from the "Orient" and the "Occident" in their national conversations on the places of ethnic minorities in history textbooks and curricula. We ask how ethnic diversity and national identity are negotiated in history education. The collection is divided into three parts, with the first taking stock of the more familiar experiences of international peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict countries. The second examines a number of European settler countries and a nation within a former empire, while the third focuses on multiethnic Asian countries.

Part I consists of four chapters which touch more on the international dimensions of textbook revision. The first two chapters provide broad, regional perspectives of the challenges and contrasting experiences of postwar reconciliation in Europe and East Asia, respectively, from the vantage point of history education. They effectively show how the old concerns of nationalist historical perspectives as obstacles to interstate reconciliation remain relevant, while Chap. 2 specifically documents the painstaking, international endeavours of historians to lay the groundwork for peace education by preparing teaching materials based on dispassionate historical accounts rid of belligerent nationalist connotations. It is instructive to read that beyond politics, the construction of a common narrative among European historians proved challenging due to differing historical frameworks and interpretive models. The next two chapters analyse the post-conflict reconstruction experiences of Myanmar (2011–2020) and BaH, with the assistance of international agencies in their efforts to revise history curricula. As a whole, this part provides a state-of-the-art perspective of conventional international peacebuilding initiatives through history education in terms of their successes, challenges and lessons learnt.

Part II consists of countries whose white-majority populations are associated with a colonising past, in contrast with Part III's analysis of postcolonial countries in Asia (except for Thailand). Hence, the two parts have distinct issues regarding their respective states in terms of history education, given the peculiar dynamics of their respective politics of

multiculturalism. Part II's countries have undergone sustained debates on multiculturalism or multicultural education and are perceived to have—to a greater or lesser extent—moved away from teaching traditional patriotic history. The ethnically diverse Asian countries in Part III are marked to varying degrees by the dominance of ethnonationalism, which has impacted their history textbook writing. The developments in Singapore and Malaysia, which once shared a common past, constitute an interesting contrast in terms of their trajectories, providing much food for thought.

## The Politics of Curricular Inclusion/Exclusion: The Price of National Cohesion

The significance of the inclusion/exclusion of ethnic minorities' stories, as demonstrated in our country analyses, cannot be overemphasised. The highland peoples of Thailand, we are told, have "no history"—for no mention of them is made in Thai history due to their willingness to assimilate as Thais to improve their livelihoods. Yet the majority of them have no paper documentation as citizens (a status denied to them because highland dwellers are officially regarded as non-Thai), and with "no history" to speak of, they cannot claim "Thai-ness". Thai national history also positions the history of the Malay-Muslims in Southern Thailand as the "wrong history", for the latter resists and challenges the former, yet the latter community want their history to be remembered as a resource for resistance. In Malaysian history textbook narratives, the historical roles played by ethnic Chinese and Indian Malaysians (who currently make up almost a third of citizens) suffered progressive obliteration over the decades following the gradual entrenchment of Malay ethnonationalism, which attempted to justify unequal citizenship statuses based on arguments of indigeneity. The portrayal of non-Han minorities in Chinese history textbooks, on the other hand, fluctuated from the first instance as hostile "non-Chinese 'Others'", who then became Chinese minority nationalities with equal status with Han Chinese but subsequently returned to reduced visibility in the face of the reinforcement of

Chinese ethnonationalism. Singapore's story tells of how the previously dismissed Malay historical existence predating the state's "birth of the nation" story is finally being integrated into the latest version of its history curriculum, henceforth pushing the historical antecedents of Singaporean nation five centuries back. Lastly, the short-lived return to partial democracy in post-conflict Myanmar in 2011 ushered in almost a decade of experimentation in curricular decentralisation, integrating the ethnic histories of various local communities into regional or provincial curricula. What was most interesting was how the curricular decision unleashed the edifying processes of local negotiations, which provided spaces for local community leaders to achieve a mutual understanding on conflictual community histories, and learn to compromise on the contents to be taught.[15]

In England, conservative socio-political forces remain dominant although the attempts of "new history" proponents carved out some space for the teaching of a more inclusive version of history. The Australian chapter concludes that despite the inclusion of stories of early non-European migrants and its First Nations peoples as structural parts of the curriculum, they remain minor partners to the stories of the mainstream "white" community. A stocktaking of the Canadian situation indicates that while the *Québécois* narrative of *la survivance* appears to be sustained, a lot remains to be done about the inclusion of indigenous peoples' historical memories and the acknowledgement of the historical mistreatment of non-white ethnocultural communities. New Zealand, which adopted biculturalism decades ago, has only just begun to recognise the importance of mandating the teaching of its difficult history of colonialism for reconciliation and national cohesion.

Finally, in BaH, the most divided country among the ten surveyed, different approaches were unsuccessfully attempted to get its three constituent peoples to formulate curricula which fostered national allegiance rather than separatist exclusive nationalisms. Despite the supervisory oversight of the international community, the nationally oriented

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[15] Note the similar way in which deliberative communication was attempted by Ahonen (2017) to bridge identity narratives in the classrooms of BaH.

curriculum was often subverted and replaced by local administrative units in their respective territories.

"Stories matter, and how we tell them matters even more" (Smits 2008, p. 107). Accommodating ethnic diversity is not just a matter of content inclusion (Virta 2017)—even though that would constitute a step forward away from invisibility—but equally important is whether it is merely added as "fringe content" (Sharp 2017) in a tokenistic gesture to pacify rather than meaningfully include non-dominant groups' perspectives. No less significant are the natures of majority-minority relations and their legitimisation as depicted in history textbooks (Korostelina 2013), which are closely examined in our textbook content analyses.

The figured world of national identity positions different social groups within the nation and defines the relationship among ethnic groups. Non-dominant counter-hegemonic accounts are often not independent of official narratives, because they are reactive and produced within the same grand narrative of the figured world. For instance, the significant addition of non-Burman peoples' stories into Myanmar's curriculum, while very meaningful, hardly changed the old "Bamar-centric" narrative with its great kings and kingdoms.

The inclusion/exclusion of ethnic minorities' stories in national history reflects how policymakers envision national cohesion, defining the conditions of existence of the former within the nation in a performative way (Smits 2008; Cronon 1992), even though the imposed figured world of nationhood is not always passively acquiesced with (Peck 2018). Conflicts over historical narratives of the nation are often not resolvable by referring to evidence, due to political or ideological considerations (Seixas 2007), but what is at stake is the moral compass of the nation. "The end of these human stories creates their unity, the telos against which we judge the efficacy, wisdom, and morality of human actions" (Cronon 1992, p. 1375).

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# Part I

## The Politics of Reconciliation and History Education in Post-conflict Contexts

# 2

## Peace Through History Education: The Activities of UNESCO, the Georg-Eckert-Institut and the Council of Europe

**Luigi Cajani**

## Introduction: From the Nineteenth Century to the End of the Second World War

History was introduced as a fundamental part of school education during the nineteenth century in Europe and then worldwide, with the main intent of constructing a homogeneous national identity. It was a political instrument, the aim of which was to create a good patriot, and a good patriot also had to be a good soldier. In Prussia, after the war against Austria in 1866, the *Provinzial-Correspondenz*, a newspaper very close to Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, glorified the decisive contribution to the victory made by the Prussian elementary school system which had succeeded in teaching future soldiers "loyalty to the Sovereign,

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obedience, self-sacrifice and love of their fatherland" (Provinzial-Correspondenz 1867).

A few years later in the 1880s, when France was still shocked by the defeat inflicted by Prussia in the 1870–1871 war and nurtured a strong revanchism, the French historian Ernest Lavisse, one of the most important authors of history textbooks, wrote the following:

> Moral and patriotic teaching: this must be the outcome of history teaching in primary education. … Our very flesh and blood are at stake. In other words, if pupils are not imbued with the living memory of our national glories; if they do not know that our ancestors fought for noble reasons upon one thousand battlefields; if they do not learn how much blood was spilt and how much effort was made in order to accomplish the unity of our fatherland and to draw thereafter, out of the chaos of our aged institutions, the laws that made us free men; if pupils do not become citizens conscious of their duties and soldiers who love their guns, teachers will have wasted their time. (Lavisse 1885, pp. 209–210)

The nationalistic and warmongering character of history education began to be disputed around the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth centuries by pacifist and socialist circles (Schröder 1961, pp. 45–48; Schüddekopf 1967, pp. 15–16; Cooper 1991, pp. 78–80). For example, in the Netherlands, the association Vrede door Recht scrutinised some of the country's history textbooks in order to remove prejudices and negative images of "the others" (Schakenraad 1984). In France, a strong pacifist movement took hold among teachers (Ozouf 1984; Chanet 2001), and the socialist activist Gustave Hervé wrote a history textbook with a telling subtitle: "*L'enseignement pacifique par l'histoire* (pacifist teaching through history)" (Hervé 1903; Loubes 2007).

After the First World War, these initiatives gained a new impulse in the more general context of the commitment to peace, both at governmental and non-governmental levels (Kolasa 1962; Fuchs 2007). At the governmental level, there was the International Committee on Intellectual

Cooperation (Renoliet 1999), set up in 1922 by the League of Nations, as well as the initiative of a group of Latin American states which in 1933 signed an agreement to periodically review their history textbooks collaboratively. At a non-governmental level, one finds the associations of French and German teachers who founded in 1926 the Fédération internationale des associations d'instituteurs "for educational collaboration and to prepare for peace through the cooperation of the peoples in freedom" (Schüddekopf 1967, p. 23; Siegel 2004, pp. 135–137; Mole 2015).

These activities were based on bilateral or multilateral revisions of history textbooks. Later, a more comprehensive vision emerged, with the idea of going beyond national dimensions and towards a more global view. In 1937, the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation issued a "Declaration on History Instruction", "to make felt through the teaching of universal history sentiments that will promote the interdependence of nations" (Hofstetter and Riondet 2018, p. 218).

The concrete results of all these initiatives were very limited, because during the interwar period the international political situation was certainly not in favour of moral disarmament and most states were not willing to accept interference in a field as important and sensitive as history teaching (Schröder 1961, pp. 69–71; Renoliet 1999, pp. 304–305).

The international political context and cultural climate changed after the Second World War, and the initiatives to radically modify history teaching into a tool designed to foster peace and cooperation among peoples were taken up again with more decisiveness, in particular by two intergovernmental organisations—the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Council of Europe—and by a research institute, the Institut für internationale Schulbuchverbesserung, founded in 1951 in Braunschweig by the German historian Georg Eckert, which was renamed in his honour in 1975 after his death, thus becoming the Georg-Eckert-Institut für internationale Schulbuchforschung (Dowe et al. 2017).

# UNESCO

The constitution of UNESCO, signed in 1945 and entering into force the following year, opens with the following words: "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed". Following this irenic vision, UNESCO launched a large action plan for history education, in continuity with the interwar initiatives. The idea of teaching the history of the whole of humanity was developed into a project of a new general world history, one which would highlight cultural and scientific aspects above all, alongside "the interdependence of peoples and cultures and their contribution … to the common heritage" (*Records of the General Conference* 1949, p. 26). When presenting the plan for this project, French historian Lucien Febvre underlined the limitations of the initiatives for the revision of national history textbooks undertaken up to then, and asserted the relationship between the history of the whole of humanity and peace education:

> When one deals with the question of textbooks, and above all history books, we are told: "It is necessary to revise them". Is this enough? I answer that it is not. The fact is that these textbooks, nationalist by definition, designed to glorify the individual spirit of a people, cannot but place it in opposition to neighbouring peoples. Neither UNESCO nor anyone can remedy this. National history based on politics, as it is taught more or less everywhere, will never tend to reconcile peoples. All one can ask of it is not to set off one against the other. If one wants to do more than this it is necessary to do something new. It is necessary to create the opportunity for a new kind of teaching: an apolitical approach to world history, which is, by definition, pacifist. (Febvre 1954, p. 956)

This huge historiographical work was the product of a committee of historians from all over the world headed by Paulo E. de Berrêdo Carneiro, published in the 1960s in English, French and other languages, from Spanish to Japanese (*History of Mankind* 1963–1969; Allardyce 1990; Duedahl 2011). This was an important scientific achievement, but it was not transformed into educational material and therefore did not influence teaching in schools. In 1978, UNESCO decided to update this

work in tune with new historical research. The publication of this new *History of Humanity*, written by an international committee headed by Georges-Henri Dumont, started in 1994 and was published in many languages, including French, Russian and Italian (*History of Humanity* 1994–2008.

Parallel to this major historiographical project, UNESCO also continued the traditional activities of bilateral textbook revision through a first programme in 1949 (*A Handbook* 1949), followed by a great number of initiatives carried out either directly by its national commissions or in collaboration with partners, in particular the Council of Europe (Cattaruzza and Zala 2007) and the Georg-Eckert-Institut (Hüfner 2000). The collaborations between historians from different countries aimed to bring about the revision of history textbooks, as in the case of the French-Italian UNESCO committee (Ghisalberti 1954; Rainero 2007), but could also go further by writing common history books for a wider public, as in the case of Italy and Austria (Wandruszka and Furlani 1973; Wandruszka 1974; Sattler 1974).

## Georg-Eckert-Institut

Textbook revision has been a core activity of the Georg-Eckert-Institut, which has organised many bilateral commissions between German historians and those from other European and non-European countries, such as Indonesia (Schüddekopf 1957–1958), Japan (Jeismann and Hillers 1982) and Israel (Deutsch-Israelische Schulbuchkommission 2016). Clearly, these initiatives were dependent on the international political climate: with North Atlantic Treaty Organization states like the United States of America (USA) (*Elemente eines atlantischen Geschichtsbildes* 1965), the United Kingdom (Die 2: deutsch-englische Geschichtslehrertagung 1951), France (Riemenschneider 2000) and Italy (*1000 Jahre deutsch-italienischer Beziehungen* 1960), these commissions were already active in the 1950s, whilst with states beyond the Iron Curtain they were conditioned by the vicissitudes of the Cold War. Dialogue with Czechoslovakia started in 1967, in the climate which preceded the Prague Spring, but soon stopped under the Husák government

and only resumed 20 years later (Čapek et al. 2000). A commission with Poland was created in 1972 after the normalisation of German-Polish relations, thanks to the treaty on the Oder-Neiße line signed in 1970 (Strobel 2015).

The task of these commissions was the publications of recommendations to inspire textbook authors. A further step of this cooperation was the writing of common history textbooks for use in schools. The first product was the Franco-German history textbook, a project launched in 2003 at the French-German Youth Parliament meeting on the fortieth anniversary of the Élysée Franco-German Friendship Treaty. Supported by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of both states and managed by the Georg-Eckert-Institut, this project has brought about the publication of three textbooks for high schools (Le Quintrec and Geiss 2006; Henri et al. 2008; Bendick et al. 2011; Defrance and Pfeil 2013) in both countries between 2006 and 2011. A similar project, once more with the support of the Georg-Eckert-Institut, was implemented between Germany and Poland (Gemeinsame deutsch-polnische Schulbuchkommission 2012). The outcome was a four-volume textbook series, published between 2016 and 2020 in German (Europa. Unsere Geschichte, Wiesbaden: Eduversum) and Polish (Europa. Nasza historia, Warzsawa: WsiP), respectively.

# Council of Europe

The Council of Europe was founded in May 1949 by Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, soon joined in August by Greece and Turkey, and then by the Federal Republic of Germany and Iceland the following year. It is managed by a Committee of Ministers and a Parliamentary Assembly made up of its member states, and its main objectives are first, the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and second, the creation of a common European identity whilst respecting the diversity of each country. Since the beginning, a fundamental role was reforming history education, because this was seen as an essential tool for shaping new mindsets. The previous nationalistic approach was indeed

considered one of the elements that brought about two catastrophic world wars. The establishment of a common European vision of history was therefore considered necessary to establish peace among the former enemies.

The British historian Edward Herbert Dance, one of the initiators of the history education project, clearly summarised the preoccupations about the current state of history education and the rationale for its improvement:

> It is often said that one of the most important functions of history teaching is the inculcation of patriotism; some countries even put the inculcation of patriotism as the very first function of the history lesson. Patriotism, at any rate, is the better side of nationalism, and it is good that it should figure in the history textbooks; it is proper that the children of every nation should learn to take pride in the achievements of the greatest men in their own history. But patriotic pride can easily slip into national arrogance. There is no justification for the all too frequent practice in history textbooks of dwelling on the national achievements while disregarding the achievements of foreign nations. (Bruley and Dance 1960, p. 24)

The bias, he continued, was especially strong when dealing with wars:

> The First World War is almost invariably presented in the textbooks from the national angle; each nation sees itself as the centre of the struggle with "allies" whose own needs and motives receive an altogether inadequate attention; while it is usually implied that the enemy nations have no needs but only motives, which are customarily represented as all bad. The book's own nation is often personified as a crusader for the right; the other side as a seeker of evil.… In the case of both wars it is customary for the textbooks to assign "responsibilities": for the Second War, Hitler is "responsible"; for the first, different nations in different national books … it is now time, in dealing with all wars, to cease speaking of "responsibilities" and to refer instead to "causes". (Ibid., p. 47)

The Council's programme was based on a multilateral dialogue among historians from all member states in order to revise history textbooks and to construct a new narrative—a common historical discourse for

Europeans to recognise their inherent unity and get rid of those nationalisms which disrupted this unity.

Its activities in the field of history education can be divided into three phases, with a major turning point being the fall of the Berlin Wall. During the first phase, the Council concentrated on the revision of textbooks and shaping a common framework for European history. For this purpose, six conferences were held between 1953 and 1958, during which participants produced sets of recommendations for curriculum developers and textbook authors. Typical examples of specific recommendations for different historical eras are as follows:

> The participants … would like to see more insistence in textbooks upon the importance of the heritage of Rome and the Greco-Roman world in the formation of Europe and its civilisation. The unifying role of the movement of the Crusades could also be more adequately treated…. It is recommended that in the treatment of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation more weight should be given to the essential religious origins and character of these movements…. Stress should be laid on the influence of Napoleon's administrative, judicial and economic reforms on other European countries…. Europe before 1914 showed two opposing trends, generally neglected by the history books. Although much is made of the dangers resulting from the armament race, very little attention is usually paid to Europe's common cultural background or to the ease with which goods, ideas and individuals could circulate and the extent to which they did so. (Ibid., pp. 72–76)

Among the participants, there was a general agreement on most issues. Heated controversies took place only with regard to the history of the Ottoman Empire in terms of its relationship to Europe, with the Greek and Turkish delegates as protagonists. This clearly mirrored tensions between the two states, but eventually a settlement was reached with the following recommendation:

> When treating the Eastern Question, it is desirable that the Ottoman Empire be studied in its own right and not merely as a factor in the policy of the powers; care should be taken to avoid implying that Turkey is a non-European country. (Ibid., p. 75)

The second phase, which lasted until the fall of the Berlin Wall, was predominantly oriented towards the consolidation of the previous results, with some attempts to broaden the horizon beyond Europe, for instance concerning the voyages of exploration and expansion. The third phase started with the conference in Bruges in 1991, which saw, for the first time, delegates from Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union—states previously beyond the Iron Curtain which later joined the Council of Europe. The scale of this enlargement and the differences in historical, political and educational experiences between old and new member states made a new strategy necessary: one with a focus on the introduction of teaching history inspired by the pan-European vision and the development of democratic values in the new member states.

It is important to highlight a recurring problem encountered during the various activities of the Council of Europe in the field of history education: the possible accusation of political bias, precisely because historians worked within a political context. This problem was immediately addressed and dispelled with during the first conference held in Calw in 1953. The first general recommendation, in fact, reads:

> Our purpose is not to use history as propaganda for a European Union, but to try to eliminate the traditional mistakes and prejudices and to establish the facts. (Ibid., p. 71)

In this context, another concern was raised: the adoption of one common history textbook for all member states. Already in Calw, the idea of a single textbook was unanimously rejected because, according to Dance, it was "contrary to academic common sense and raised insoluble problems" (Council of Europe—Conseil de l'Europe 1953, p. 26). Instead, the French delegate Marc Bonnet suggested a coordination of the curricula and the production of teaching materials on specific European themes (ibid., Appendix 7, pp. 39–40). At the Elsinore symposium in 1965, this idea was dismissed once more, because "there can be no question of a uniform teaching of history in the different countries" (Council of Europe—Conseil de l'Europe 1995, p. 34). A common European history textbook written by a group of European historians was presented

during the Bruges conference in 1991 (Low-Beer 1992, p. 56; Council of Europe—Conseil de l'Europe 1995, p. 53; Delouche 1992; Pingel 2013; Davies 1996, pp. 42–44; Tiemann 2000). This was part of larger project, coordinated by the businessman Frédéric Delouche and the historian Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, sponsored by the European Commission, which was promoting initiatives aiming to disseminate a vision of a historically grounded European identity to the general public as a tool to legitimise the politics of European integration (Calligaro 2013, pp. 57–68). In fact, this book, which was later translated into many European languages, was not an official textbook (unlike the Franco-German project), but rather a complementary publication addressed particularly to teachers and based on a private initiative. Nevertheless, the support from the European Commission gave it a political significance. Eventually, rather than endorsing this initiative, the conference participants agreed on the production of teaching materials highlighting relevant historical events in the interplay between the European and regional dimension. The three following themes were initially proposed: the Medieval City, the Industrial Revolution, and fascism and its different forms. This was in line with the proposals made in Calw: *no* to a common history textbook, *yes* to separate teaching materials. Two years later, at the conference in Leeuwarden on the subject of "The Teaching of History since 1815 with a special reference to changing borders", the delegates reaffirmed their refusal to use a common history textbook:

> Although teachers and students throughout Europe need appropriate textbooks and educational materials on European history, steps towards the development of European History textbooks could prove counterproductive—and would be educationally inappropriate—if they seek to present a uniform, common history. (Council of Europe—Conseil de l'Europe 1995, p. 60)

The risk of being accused of producing political propaganda was also felt by the participants of a 1994 symposium on "History, democratic values and tolerance in Europe: the experience of countries in democratic transition" in Sofia. In this case, they showed themselves confident

enough to dismiss any accusations of political bias thanks to their impartiality:

> Although there is a risk that the Council of Europe may be accused of social engineering, even though for the best of reasons, we must not be deterred from our effort to see that history teaching reflects the positive values in which liberal democratic societies believe. History can so easily be abused to sanction or even promote racial, religious or cultural prejudice, hatred and violence. We have to ensure that, in contrast, it is a vehicle for civilised behaviour and values. Indeed, we have to be able to devise recommendations in such an open and balanced way that we cannot be accused of favouring any political party or faction or any mere theoretical fad or fashion. That is our challenge. (Ibid., p. 64)

Many teaching materials and historical essays were produced during this third phase. Among the former there are *The Black Sea: A History of Interaction* (published 2004) and a trilingual set of supplementary teaching units for Cyprus (*A Look at our Past, Μια Ματιά στο Παρελθόν μας, Geçmişimize Bir Bakış*) published in 2011. Among the latter are books by Robert Stradling (*Teaching 20th Century European History* in 2001 and *Multiperspectivity in History Teaching* in 2003), Ruth Tudor (*Teaching 20th Century Women's History: A Classroom Approach* in 2000), Falk Pingel (*The European Home: Representations of 20th Century Europe in History Textbooks* in 2000) and Jean-Michel Lecomte (*Teaching About the Holocaust in the 21st Century* in 2001). In 2002, a project was launched with many experts from the member states which, after a series of five conferences, resulted in *Crossroads of European Histories: Multiple Outlooks on Five Key Moments in the History of Europe* (2006). The rationale of this last project was the identification of significant moments in European history which formed the background of the changes that occurred during the 1990s in Central and Eastern Europe. The starting and ending points were the revolutions of 1848 and the events of 1989, respectively, and in-between the Balkan Wars (1912–1913) and the aftermaths of the First and Second World War were highlighted. A similar project ran from 2010 to 2014 and brought about *Shared histories for a Europe without dividing lines*, which analyses the impacts of four main features across all

member states: the Industrial Revolution, the development of education, human rights as reflected in the history of art and finally the relations of Europe with the rest of the world.

## Other Actors

UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the Georg-Eckert-Institut have been the most important actors within these international initiatives in history education, because of the scale and the temporal continuity of their actions. However, they are not the only actors at governmental or non-governmental levels. Of the former, one can mention the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which was active in Bosnia and Herzegovina after the end of the post-Yugoslavian wars (Pingel 2008). Among the latter is the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe, based in Thessaloniki, which published a set of four workbooks on Balkan history in 2005 (Koulouri 2005), as well as the European Association of History Educators (EuroClio), which carried out regional projects in the Baltic and Balkan states (van der Leeuw-Roord 2008).

Whilst bilateral and multilateral projects in history education were and still are numerous, the project on world history which was conceived by UNESCO has been less successful, with the only (but notable) exception of the USA. The reason for this particular success is the great and long development of this field of academic research in the USA, which eventually had an impact on school education. Already in the 1950s, Leften S. Stavrianos advocated the teaching of world history and even wrote a textbook on this subject (Stavrianos et al. 1962). In a speech in 1968, at the annual conference of the American Historical Association, he pointed out two reasons for introducing this new vision of history. On the one hand, looking beyond the USA, it would help students better understand the world and end with the inadequacy of the focus on Western civilisation, which had until then shaped history teaching. On the other hand, world history could help Afro-Americans and other minorities, all underrepresented in the current approach to teaching national history, identify with this new narrative (Stavrianos 1969).

Nevertheless, it took until the mid-1990s for world history to enter the USA's school curricula, on the occasion of a general reform, and it has since strengthened its position (Dunn 2020). The preface of the *National Standards for History*, the foundational text of this reform, highlights not just the cognitive relevance of world history but also elements of the irenic vision of UNESCO:

> Today's students … need also a comprehensive understanding of the history of the world, and of the peoples of many cultures and civilizations who have developed ideas, institutions, and ways of life different from students' own.… Especially important, an understanding of the world's many cultures can contribute to fostering the kind of mutual of patience, respect, and civic courage required in our increasingly pluralistic society and our increasingly interdependent world. (National Center for History in the School 1996, p. 1)

## Conclusion

History textbook revisions have now had more than a century of experience behind them. Many problems and solutions have been seen so far. The work on history textbooks started with the aim of removing negative statements against other countries, which is relatively easy to achieve by unbiased historians working in a peaceful political context. After removing negative elements from textbooks comes a further step: the writing of a common narrative. This is a much more challenging task because it implies the construction of a complex historical framework where historians can differ not only because of their national backgrounds, but also because of their different interpretive models. This task has proven particularly difficult in post-conflict contexts, but there are many positive examples of what historians can achieve. One of these examples is the Italo-Slovenian commission, created in 1993 under the sponsorship of both governments to study common contemporary history—one particularly marked by mutual violence during the Second World War—that produced an influential report in 2000 (Pupo 2013). An important case outside Europe is the initiative developed by a group of Japanese,

South Korean and Chinese historians who responded to the many, often heated, public controversies on the teaching of their common armed conflicts by writing *The History That Is Open to the Future*, published in their respective languages in 2005 (see Chap. 3). Unlike the Franco-German or German-Polish history textbooks, this book was not intended to replace textbooks used in schools, but to be used as a supplementary teaching tool instead. Even though this independent, private initiative was not promoted by the historians' respective governments, it was eventually celebrated in the three countries with ceremonies attended by state officials. This success encouraged further collaborations between teachers' associations and academics in Japan and South Korea (Iwasaki and Ryūichi 2008; Yang and Ju-Back 2013).

Historians' dialogues are of course not always easy and do not always lead to agreements. However, the main problem is the relationship between historians and politicians, where the balance of power always tips, even if to different extents, to the politicians. Historians find a larger space for dialogue within international organisations with peace on their agenda and which are managed by numerous states, while the relationship between one or two states can prove difficult. In general, there is always an inherent tension between politicians and historians: the former want a product which fits their agenda, while the latter are keen on preserving their scientific independence and avoiding suspicion of political influence. In some cases, however, there is a convergence of goals and politicians encourage or even require collaboration with historians. But politics is subject to deep and sudden changes, and politicians can reverse their politics on history. Of many examples, one can mention the failed common history textbook for Slovakia and Hungary—two states divided not only by different visions of their common past but also by the existence of a large Hungarian minority in Slovakia. This project was launched by historians from the two countries, who met the approval of their respective governments until 2010, when the Slovakian minister of education, the nationalist politician Ján Slota, side-lined it (Lesná 2008; The Economist 2010).

The evaluation of the results of all these initiatives in history education must take into consideration the fact that international organisations do not have a direct effect on the educational politics of states. States indeed

have control of their own educational systems: first of all in curricula, which in the case of history can be more or less ideologically oriented, detailed and prescriptive in terms of content. Moreover, most states exercise more or less strict control over textbooks. Only in a minority of states are textbook totally free of control, such as in Italy, France, England, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Finland, for example (Wilkens 2011; Matthes and Schütze 2016). Therefore, the landscape of history education worldwide remains differentiated. A favourable political context is the key variable to ensuring a fruitful outcome for historians.

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# 3

# Cure or Disease? History Education and the Politics of Reconciliation in East Asia

**Edward Vickers**

## Introduction: The Inescapability of Politics

We often hear the term "reconciliation" invoked in discussions of history education, reflecting a widespread belief or hope that the teaching of history in schools can bring about cross-national or intercommunal harmony. As noted in the "Introduction" and Chap. 2, faith in the potential for history teaching to promote reconciliation has been especially evident in the work of institutions such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Council of Europe, infused with a spirit of liberal internationalism that has informed efforts to decouple history education from the promotion of narrow nationalism.

I would like to share this faith myself. I grew up a fervent European, not out of any love for low tariffs or a "single market", but out of a belief in the role of European unity in breaking down antagonistic, atavistic

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nationalistic tribalism. As a teenager, I proudly wore a watch sporting the flags of all European Economic Community member states (conveniently, there were exactly 12 at the time); my bedroom door sported a sticker declaring "My Country: Europe". However, I am unsure how much this pan-European enthusiasm had to do with my history lessons at school; it probably had more to do with my Roman Catholic upbringing and two happy years as a small boy in Germany.

Today, having spent most of my adult life living and working in Asia, including some years as a schoolteacher in Hong Kong, I am rather pessimistic about the potential for history education, in and of itself, to bring about reconciliation amongst antagonistic national, ethnic or religious communities. In reality, history education across most of Asia (and much of Europe as well) appears geared towards fuelling rather than abating international antagonism and nationalist chauvinism.[1] When and where this unfortunate situation improves, substantial curricular reforms tend to follow rather than precede significant shifts in the political climate. This is not to deny any potential role for history education in promoting reconciliation or tolerance; once curricular change becomes possible, it may play an important role in influencing popular consciousness. But unlocking the possibility of curricular change in the first place depends on politics.

In this chapter, I elaborate this argument by considering the history of history education in contemporary East Asia. I start by briefly comparing the East Asian and European contexts, both because this comparative perspective arises naturally out of my personal experience and because the European example is often held up—misleadingly, in my view—as some sort of normative model or benchmark for an East Asia portrayed as deficient in key cultural attributes conducive to reconciliation (Chung 2017). Eschewing sweeping cultural generalisations, I discuss how the Cold War, civil wars and the aftermath of colonialism in East and Southeast Asia have elevated the stakes in debates over history education across this region. Notwithstanding claims made for the role of culture and tradition

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[1] See Frost et al. (2019) for a comparative discussion of the treatment of Second World War-related heritage in Europe and Asia. Chirot (2011) delivers a similarly sceptical judgement in his chapter, "Europe's troubled World War II memories: Are they that different?".

in shaping these educational debates, it is ultimately politics that has been crucial to the "weaponisation" of history across East Asia. Since the start of the twenty-first century, the prospects for transnational collaboration in curricular development with the aim of promoting reconciliation have, if anything, receded—largely due to the geopolitical ramifications of China's growing regional influence. This underlines the futility of considering history education in isolation from its political context. While the teaching and learning of history has a significant role to play in reinforcing reconciliation once the process is already underway, in order to achieve the necessary transformation in history curricula, we first need to set about transforming the politics that shape them.

## Some Comparative Observations from Opposite Ends of Eurasia

The importance of context—political and geopolitical, socioeconomic and cultural—in explaining when, where and how changes to history curricula conducive to reconciliation have occurred should make us cautious about viewing the case of postwar Western Europe as some sort of normative exemplar for other regions, including East Asia. The role of collaboration over history textbook development in Franco-German and German-Polish reconciliation has often been celebrated by those who would like to see Japan, for example, engage in similar collaborations with Korea and China. But East Asian efforts in this direction fell flat in the early 2000s, for reasons elaborated below.

Rather than seeing the Western European experience as normative, we need to recognise it as exceptional. Relevant factors include the extent of postwar de-Nazification in West Germany, powerful incentives for collaboration provided by the drive for European economic integration (and the role of transnational institutions in transforming the *habitus* of political and bureaucratic elites) and, crucially, the thoroughgoing democratisation of a federal West German state. These conditions allowed for the emergence of powerful civil society actors and, by the 1970s, a remarkably open debate within West Germany on the legacy of Nazism (Judt

2007). Such developments *preceded* rather than followed the introduction of extensive and critical coverage of painful episodes in twentieth-century history into school curricula. Crucially, when curricular change did take place, it did so not primarily at the initiative of national-level politicians and bureaucrats, but at the instigation of the authorities in various federated German states, and through a far more consultative process than has been possible anywhere in contemporary East Asia. Moreover, as Ting notes in the "Introduction" to this volume, across Europe as a whole, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that "the entrenched practice of using history education to instil cohesion at the national level was subject to more critical scrutiny". In other words, in Europe, this shift intensified as the Cold War was winding down at the end of the twentieth century. But even there, attempts to promote a post-national or transnational "European" consciousness have proved halting and fragile, especially in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

The far more fraught politics of history education in East Asia owe much to the different trajectory of the Cold War in this region (Mitter and Major 2004). Despite much tension and suspicion between Europe's antagonistic blocs, the Cold War there was fundamentally an era of stability, with a consciousness of shared threats driving national elites towards collaboration and reconciliation. In East Asia, by contrast, the Cold War was never really "cold" at all but consisted of a series of intense and bloody internecine conflicts: from China and Korea to Vietnam and Malaysia. In the cases of China and Korea, these then froze into "cold civil wars" that have never been resolved. Moreover, in East Asia, Cold War divisions could not be framed as clear-cut ideological divides between authoritarian communism and liberal democracy. Military regimes in South Korea and Taiwan pursued highly authoritarian forms of state-driven corporatism, while across Southeast Asia (beyond Indochina), colonialism was succeeded by various forms of outright autocracy or "managed democracy". Nonetheless, all these regimes received strong backing from the United States of America (USA), whose aim of countering communism trumped ideological commitments to liberal democracy.

This context also helps to explain why the supposedly most notable East Asian exemplar of liberal democracy—Japan—never really became either liberal or democratic. Strong American pressure for reform and democratisation in the first two years of the Occupation quickly gave way to a "reverse course" from 1946 onwards thanks to Cold War fears, with conservative wartime statesmen and civil servants rehabilitated and drafted into collaboration with the USA's anti-communist project (Dower 1999). In the words of Nakasone Yasuhiro, the nationalist premier during the 1980s, Japan became the USA's "unsinkable aircraft carrier" (Parameswaran 2019), and this status allowed the conservative establishment to entrench a constitutional (and educational) settlement that in key respects was highly illiberal, with key power-brokers deeply antagonistic to any thoroughgoing and honest reflection on Japanese actions during the Asia-Pacific War.

Frozen civil wars, continued conflict or insurgency in Southeast Asia and the related willingness of the USA to prop up highly chauvinistic autocracies in the cause of anti-communism limited the potential for meaningful or far-reaching reconciliation amongst fellow members of the anti-communist camp. Rather than diluting or pooling sovereignty with each other, nationalists in Japan, South Korea and the Republic of China on Taiwan were in the business of asserting national sovereignty and independence in the most absolute and vehement terms. Despite moves towards the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, this situation also remained fundamentally true of Southeast Asia, where postcolonial regimes governing disparate populations were anxious to shore up their legitimacy and create a consciousness of unified national identity—in some cases more or less from scratch. The formation of viable, cohesive nation-states was seen as the overwhelming priority by elites in societies emerging from colonial rule or long periods of neocolonial foreign domination (as in the case of China). And amongst those aligned with the West, alliance with the USA was represented as an essential guarantee of security, without implying any deep cultural or ideological bond except in the form of shared anti-communism.

## Weaponising History in Postwar East Asia

In the absence of political conditions conducive to cross-national reconciliation, nationalists or communists in power across East Asia therefore sought to weaponise history education as a tool for constructing or shoring up totalising, chauvinistic and xenophobic visions of national identity. In Japan, the anti-communist imperative even led the Americans themselves to undermine their early commitment to curricular and textbook pluralism, censoring teaching materials for content deemed unduly sympathetic to communism (Dower 1999). This set a precedent enthusiastically followed from the 1950s by post-Occupation governments dominated by the intriguingly named Liberal Democratic Party, which instituted a draconian and opaque bureaucratic system of textbook accreditation (Nozaki 2005). This system was deployed to weed out any substantial or critical discussion of Japan's wartime record. Meanwhile, across the rest of East Asia, even the pretense of textbook pluralism or curricular openness was absent.

One exception was Hong Kong, but there too government controls were tightened from the 1950s in response to the fear of a spillover of continuing tensions between the Chinese Communists and Nationalists (Sweeting 1993). From the 1950s, Hong Kong's British colonial authorities implemented a Japanese-style system of centralised curriculum development and textbook vetting. This ensured that any critical discussion of historical issues likely to trigger local controversy or conflict—such as the Chinese Civil War or Britain's colonial record—was largely excluded from the curriculum (Vickers 2003). And arguably, in a society dominated by refugees from the Chinese Civil War and still seething with related tensions, *not* dwelling on that past was more conducive to reconciliation than scratching the sores of conflict. Nonetheless, across East Asia, the practice of maintaining centralised state control over curricular development and textbook approval by entrenching the perception of history education as essentially a matter of *national* interest (or even, as in post-2020 Hong Kong, "national security") has in itself become a significant institutional barrier to transnational collaboration in history curricular development.

Attempts to break down such institutional and political barriers are rendered more difficult by attempts to sacralise the principle of state control over national narratives in East Asia. The cloak of "tradition" is frequently deployed to portray established approaches to curricular development as being somehow "uniquely" Japanese/Chinese/Korean/Thai/Vietnamese. We cannot dismiss the role of culture and tradition in influencing assumptions concerning the proper subject matter of history, who should shape the narrative and for what purposes. In Northeast Asia, for example, the heritage of Confucian statecraft and scholarship has undoubtedly played a role in entrenching and perpetuating a belief in the relationship between history and moral instruction—and by extension political education—as well as the assumption that controlling the historical narrative is properly a function of the state (Jones 2005). However, a state-directed, state-centred and moralistic approach to history education is far from unique to modern Asia. If anything, "premodern" East Asia, in this respect as in so many others, set a precedent to be followed or duplicated by Europeans. In turn, the deployment of history education for nation building in modern Asia borrowed heavily from Western (or Soviet) precedents. For example, Herbartian thinking concerning the moralising purpose of history education and its use in inculcating national loyalty was a significant influence on educational policymakers in Meiji Japan. And so was the practice of "inventing" tradition, which in the Japanese context involved reframing Shinto as a state religion, encapsulating a Japanese spiritual "essence" distinct from "foreign" Buddhism (Gluck 1985).

The frequent interpenetration of secular and sacred narratives of the past and their incorporation into state-mandated curricula and textbooks is another aspect of the culture and politics of education that we need to bear in mind. Again, there is nothing uniquely "Asian" about this phenomenon, although it displays distinctive features in East Asia. In the so-called Confucian heritage societies of Northeast Asia, where—with the partial exception of Japan—organised religion has not served as a key marker of political identity (despite the undeniable cultural importance of religion and spirituality), history has arguably served a pseudo-religious purpose, elevating and sanctifying the state as a locus of loyalty and source of meaning. Conversely, across much of contemporary Southeast Asia,

we have seen a melding of history and religion—Buddhism in Thailand and Myanmar, Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia—in state-directed projects of nation building. As I noted earlier, with reference to my own Catholic upbringing, religion can promote a consciousness of transnational identities rooted in narratives of both the past and the future. But the phenomena of Christian and Islamic fundamentalism demonstrate that religiously inspired forms of transnationalism can also be highly chauvinistic and divisive.

## Warring Peace?[2]

In postwar Japan, Christian groups as well as leftists were prominent in a popular "peace" movement strongly opposed to the conservative establishment. Peace activists also pursued grassroots efforts at reconciliation with Japan's Asian neighbours and campaigned against the Education Ministry's censorship of school history textbooks (Ienaga 2000). However, the "peace" discourse in Japan has also been appropriated by the conservative establishment itself, despite right-wing dissatisfaction with the constraints of Japan's "Peace Constitution" (Vickers 2022). The conception of Japan as a quintessentially peace-loving nation, which the constitution has come to symbolise, has been harnessed to a profoundly narcissistic narrative of Japanese suffering and victimhood. This involves pseudo-religious commemoration of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with the "Peace Parks" at Hiroshima and Nagasaki sanctifying the memory of Japanese wartime suffering. History textbooks devote several pages to these appalling instances of Japanese victimhood but say practically nothing about the atrocities perpetrated by Japanese forces in wartime China or Southeast Asia. Instead, in both textbooks and the mainstream media, the focus on Japan's wartime suffering typically prefaces a triumphalist account of postwar reconstruction—rendered all the more glorious by the devastation that preceded it. As the historian Ran Zwigenberg (2015) has shown in his study of the role of

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[2] This phrase was suggested by Tim Winter and Mark Frost, my partners in the WARMAP project, in which I have been involved since 2014.

Hiroshima in global memory culture, a "forward-looking" approach to commemorating the war was aided and abetted by the USA, which saw this as conducive to stabilising both the conservative political establishment and the Japanese-American alliance.

Declarations of pacifism are typically accompanied by generic endorsements of harmony, brotherly love and universal reconciliation—but we cannot always take this rhetoric at face value. Across East Asia, the conviction that "we"—Koreans, Japanese, Chinese, Taiwanese, Vietnamese—have a special appreciation of the value of peace tends to be rooted in the belief that "our" experience of suffering is uniquely terrible. This feeds a pathology of competitive victimhood, characterised by an obsession with the incomparable quality of "our" suffering and a profound lack of interest in the suffering of others—even, or especially, when "we" were the perpetrators. The "Peace Parks" at Hiroshima and Nagasaki have served as templates for similar commemorative spaces elsewhere, such as the Nanjing Massacre Memorial in China. There, the massacre inflicted by Japan has been elevated to the status of "China's Holocaust", with officials seeking to assert an equivalence between China's victimhood at the hands of Japan and that of Europe's Jews at the hands of the Nazis. Indeed, perceptions across East Asia of the Nazi Holocaust as the ultimate, USA-endorsed benchmark of atrocity have fuelled a bizarre rivalry between China and Japan, as elaborated in the section below on "history wars". Meanwhile, Chinese school textbooks and museums are largely silent regarding the extent of the casualties caused by the Chinese Civil War, let alone Mao Zedong's mass campaigns: the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.

Elsewhere, the rhetoric of pacifism often serves as a thin veneer for a focus on national victimhood that lends itself to xenophobia. In Korea, the "comfort women" phenomenon was a genuine atrocity, but also exemplifies how the deleterious consequence for women of a patriarchal order which is still entrenched throughout the wider region has been framed as a nationalist issue. Most Koreans are unaware of Korean complicity in recruiting prostitutes for the Japanese military or of the extent to which women of other nationalities (including Japanese) were caught up in this system (see Frost and Vickers 2021). In Taiwan, democratisation since the 1990s has been accompanied by the widespread

commemoration of the "228" incident of 1947 and the subsequent "White Terror". However, this long-overdue acknowledgement of the suffering experienced by "native Taiwanese" at the hands of Chinese mainlanders (during the period of Kuomintang-imposed Martial Law on the island) has been accompanied by a downplaying of the impact on China of the Japanese invasion, in which many Taiwanese soldiers participated (Vickers 2013). In Taiwan's identity wars, the desire to accentuate differences with the Chinese mainland has led to the Japanese being celebrated almost as model colonialists—reflecting, but possibly also exacerbating, a profound lack of sympathy for the very real suffering of mainland Chinese at the hands of Japan.

## History in Postcolonial Nation Building

In Southeast Asia, colonial nostalgia, such as that found in contemporary Taiwan, is very thin on the ground—except perhaps in the case of the Philippines. Indeed, the Philippines—at least until the advent of the Duterte regime—could arguably be seen as a model of reconciliation, at least between Filipinos and their former colonial rulers. While postwar opinion surveys indicated that Filipinos were more vehemently anti-Japanese than most other Asians, discussions of Japan's invasion during the 1940s and the accompanying atrocities hardly feature in most history texts today (Maca and Morris 2013). Colonialism in general—Spanish, and especially American—has largely been celebrated for its manifold "contributions" to Filipino society and culture (Maca and Morris 2015). But a concomitant of this willingness on the part of Filipino elites to bury the hatchet with their foreign oppressors has been a massive failure to construct a historical narrative capable of underpinning a unified, cohesive sense of Filipino national identity. In other words, the keenness of elites to maintain collaborative relationships with the USA and Japan has been accompanied by a disdain for the fates of their less privileged compatriots. Along dimensions of class, as well as ethnicity and religion, the Philippines remains a profoundly fractured society—and history education, as well as popular culture, reflects this fragmentation. In reconciling

with foreigners, Filipinos have neglected to pursue effective reconciliation with each other.

At perhaps the other extreme is the case of Singapore (see Chap. 12 in this volume), where in recent decades, enormous official energy has been devoted to deploying history to forge a sense of common identity amongst the main ethnic groups. This has been pursued in part by portraying the Asia-Pacific War as one chapter in a shared struggle for dignity, prosperity and independence (Khamsi and Han 2013). The ruling People's Action Party (PAP) has sought to construct an idiosyncratic narrative of "Asian" identity, incorporating a vision of multiculturalism as "plural monoculturalism". As Amartya Sen (2006) has observed, this rigid compartmentalisation of ethnocultural categories is both highly illiberal and profoundly ahistorical. While the result is a distorted account calculated to legitimise the one-party rulership of the PAP, the regime can claim some success in creating a shared consciousness of "Singaporean-ness", overcoming the serious intercommunal tensions of the early postwar years. The Singaporean case is an archetypal example of how East and Southeast Asian elites have overwhelmingly prioritised the use of history education for strengthening—or creating—a cohesive sense of national identity, often against a backdrop of quite real external threats.

Like Singapore, Hong Kong owes its origins as a distinct political entity to the legacy of British colonial rule. There too, conceptions of identity as a totalising, primordially determined ethnocultural category have been a prominent feature of political discourse, popular culture and school curricula. However, the official vision of nationhood foisted upon postcolonial Hong Kong has been one of singular rather than plural monoculturalism, imposed by a Beijing-based regime operating the levers of the old colonial administration. While the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) portrays China as a "multicultural" state, its ethnocultural categories are viewed as monolithic, static and internally homogenous, and this view applies to the "Han" category that accounts for around 90 per cent of the national population (see also Chap. 10). Notions of Han bloodlines and "traditional Chinese culture" are invoked to portray Hongkongers as essentially indistinguishable from their mainland compatriots. For the communist authorities, colonialism and imperialism are understood purely as factors in China's "national humiliation", and Hong Kong's (or

Taiwan's) separate status is a legacy of that shameful history. By the same token, attempts by local Han residents to assert a distinct identity are viewed as profoundly illegitimate; such claims merely testify to the corrupting influence of foreign imperialism and the need to purge local consciousness with a thoroughgoing programme of "national education" (Vickers 2011; Morris and Vickers 2015). History has always been seen by Beijing and its local proxies as central to nation building in postcolonial Hong Kong, and today, the new "National Security Law" explicitly mandates the national government's local liaison office to oversee education policy to ensure the implementation of this agenda.[3]

## The Fragile Foundations of Transnational Curricular Dialogue

It is no accident that the period during which international tensions across East Asia were perhaps at their lowest ebb—the 1990s and early 2000s—witnessed the most substantial moves towards reconciliation in the field of history education. The global end of the Cold War played a role in supporting these conditions—not least by weakening the USA's interest in propping up authoritarian regimes. More significant, perhaps, were the dynamics of relations amongst the major powers within East Asia. From the 1990s to the early 2000s, Japan was still the region's largest economy by a considerable stretch, and China remained the largest recipient of Japanese bilateral development aid. Opinion polls in Japan during the 1990s showed that most Japanese retained a positive view of China, even though China's wartime victimhood was then already a major theme of the CCP's "Patriotic Education Campaign". While the Japanese could still see themselves as "elder brothers" to their backward,

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[3] One indication of how this authority will be wielded was supplied in May 2020, when Hong Kong's Education Bureau disallowed an examination question that challenged candidates to weigh up the proposition that "Japan did more good than harm to China in the period 1900 to 1945". Although candidates had already sat for the examination, the Hong Kong Examination Authority was instructed not to grade answers to this question. Parroting the language of the mainland's propaganda organs, the Education Bureau ruled that questions that risked yielding conclusions which would "seriously hurt the feelings and dignity of the Chinese people" were unacceptable (*The Economist* 2020).

impoverished Asian neighbours, many were inclined to be magnanimous. It was against this backdrop that a Japanese-Korean-Chinese committee was convened, with official support, to jointly draft a history textbook—*The History That Is Open to the Future*—which was published in 2005 (Park 2011). However, the use of the term "textbook" here is misleading, since East Asia's national textbook approval procedures never offered any prospect of this book being officially adopted as the core instructional text in any of these countries. At best, it could be used as a supplementary teaching and learning aid.

In fact, by the time this textbook appeared, the political climate was already shifting in ways that promised to make further collaboration difficult. 2005 witnessed significant anti-Japanese riots in Shanghai and other Chinese cities, sparked by Japanese approval of a right-wing, revisionist history textbook. That decision in turn reflected the rising influence within Japan of ultraconservative nationalists. Since the mid-1990s, the rightists had attracted growing support, largely because of increasing anxiety about Japan's economic stagnation and the alleged loss of national "confidence" and "identity" that this betokened. Meanwhile, China's rapid economic growth was rapidly undermining earlier Japanese complacency and fuelling, in its place, hostility towards the Chinese, now seen as harbouring bigoted and unreasonably anti-Japanese sentiments. This growing mutual hostility was only accentuated by the effects of the 2008 financial crisis, which intensified Japanese alarm at China's seemingly inexorable rise, while also contributing to an increasingly assertive, chauvinistic turn in Chinese attitudes towards the outside world. When considering the Japanese victimhood/threat complex, the role of North Korea, now entirely dependent on backing from China, also needs to be considered.

# China's Rise, National Insecurity and Intensifying 'History Wars'

This is the context for the intensified bout of textbook "weaponisation" which Northeast Asia has witnessed over the past decade. On the one hand, Chinese assertiveness and bluster, while reflecting pride in China's growing wealth and power, belies deep anxieties amongst CCP leaders concerning the sustainability of economic growth; severe socioeconomic, ethnic, religious and regional tensions; and the risk of internal conflict (Overholt 2018). The cautionary examples of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and assorted "colour revolutions" (including the "Arab Spring", which occurred just before Xi Jinping's assumption of the presidency) have reinforced a determination to tighten control. The past decade has thus seen further restrictions on already limited civil liberties and a recentralisation of power in Beijing—including power over the school curriculum. While the early 2000s witnessed the introduction of a measure of (highly circumscribed) history textbook pluralism, in 2017 the authorities reimposed the universal use of texts published by the People's Education Press. At the same time, through history and other school subjects, the state has sought to legitimise itself by invoking a neo-traditionalist and highly Han-centric vision of "Chinese culture" (Vickers 2021a). Far from promoting reconciliation with alienated ethnic groups such as Uyghurs and Tibetans, this is likely to intensify interethnic distrust and resentment. And the same will doubtless prove true in Hong Kong, where officials tout compulsory instruction in the state-approved version of Chinese history as the salve for youthful dissent. Aspiring to achieve "reconciliation from above" in the Singaporean mode, the CCP appears to believe that it can succeed by forcing its narrative down the throats of recalcitrant citizens—even to the extent of confining them in concentration camp-style "reeducation camps", as in Xinjiang (Roberts 2020).

Just as Japanese textbook revisionism helped fan the flames of Chinese nationalism in the early 2000s (and as long ago as the 1980s), so has China's weaponisation of the history curriculum helped legitimise similar moves in Japan. Japanese rightists, seeking to defend their own distortions of history, endlessly assert that in portraying their own country in a

positive light, they are only doing what "every country" does. Starting under Shinzo Abe's premiership, since 2012 there has been a significant tightening of official textbook censorship against a wider backdrop of official attacks on press freedom, including on the state broadcaster, NHK. For example, whereas in the mid-1990s all but one of the history textbooks approved for use in middle schools mentioned the "comfort women", now none of them do. Brief allusions to the "Nanjing Incident" provide no details, and textbooks carry a note claiming that historical evidence regarding this event is "under dispute". There is no acknowledgement of the widespread vivisection of captives by Japanese medics or the use of live human subjects for testing chemical and biological weapons, for example in Manchuria's notorious "Unit 731". By contrast, in addition to extensive coverage of the atomic bombings, textbooks invariably feature substantial discussion of the plight of Japanese civilians stranded on the Asian mainland after the 1945 surrender (Vickers 2022). And most textbooks include a boxed text praising Sugihara Chiune, a Japanese consular official in Lithuania in the early 1940s, who saved thousands of Jews by issuing them with exit visas (Vickers 2021b; UNESCO 2017, pp. 80–85). Indeed, China and Japan have, in recent years, competed for international recognition of their roles in saving European Jews from the gas chambers—Japan with a failed attempt to have Sugihara acknowledged with a UNESCO "Memory of the World" listing, China with a mooted bid to secure UNESCO "World Heritage" status for the former Jewish Refugee Zone in Shanghai.

Indeed, in the East Asian context, UNESCO—whose efforts in promoting international understanding and reconciliation are discussed in Chaps. 1 and 2—has increasingly become an arena in which rival regimes compete for recognition of their own self-serving national narratives (Vickers 2021b). Following Chinese success in attaining a "Memory of the World" listing for the Nanjing Massacre in 2015, Japan successfully pressured UNESCO into rejecting a transnational bid to list the "Voices of the Comfort Women" archive. Meanwhile, the Abe government deployed Japanese diplomats around the world to harass anyone, anywhere, seeking to publicise the "comfort women" issue. Although this has, if anything, damaged Japan's international reputation, it plays well to powerful elements in Abe's domestic base.

Japan is not the only East Asian regime to engage in crude attempts at rewriting other countries' historical narratives for them. In September 2019, I took part in a workshop in Shanghai convened to discuss the portrayal of China in foreign history textbooks. The event opened with a thoughtful address from a senior Chinese scholar, who admonished his colleagues to reflect on the poor state of China's relations with neighbouring countries and to learn from comparisons of history curricula—in effect, to "see ourselves as others see us". However, the presentations by his more junior colleagues, almost without exception, concluded that foreign textbooks were insufficiently "objective" in their coverage of Chinese history. The solution, they declared, was for Chinese scholars and their government to offer advice and support to these countries as they revised their school curricula. It subsequently appeared that these were not just idle words. One foreign participant informed me that some days after her return home, her university received a visit from an official of China's People's Education Press. The official explained that he had seen reports of problems with the portrayal of China in local textbooks and was there to offer assistance in putting things right. We can only wonder how many other countries can expect to receive similarly friendly offers of Chinese support for their history curriculum development.

## Conclusion

What does the East Asian experience teach us about the actual or potential role of history education in reconciliation amongst former enemies or antagonists (foreign or domestic)—in helping us, as UNESCO's (1996) Delors report puts it, to "learn to live together"? In a region dominated by "strong states" presiding over often fissiparous societies, where official oversight of curriculum development and textbooks is regarded as crucial to maintaining political stability or even national security, the scope for history education to promote reconciliation depends largely on the political climate. In practice, this is tantamount to saying that the presence of some significant political impetus towards reconciliation is the key precondition for history education to play a facilitating role.

This does not mean that the teaching or learning of history is unimportant—far from it. Despite the increasing variety and volume of media through which young people access information, history lessons at school remain, for most, the only opportunity to systematically acquire a framework for understanding the past and, along with it, some conception of the nature of history as a form of knowledge. But when East Asian education officials talk about the importance of "analytical skills" in history education, we generally find that their conception of such "skills" is overwhelmingly instrumental, and that the inculcation of patriotic "correctness" swamps any ambitions to promote critical autonomy in individual learners—and with it, the sort of awareness and tolerance of diverse interpretations of the past upon which reconciliation depends (UNESCO 2017, Chap. 3). This powerful, state-directed drive to promote national solidarity above all else is very hard to reconcile with the meaningful pursuit of reconciliation.

Short of political revolution, what would be required to change this situation? First, there would need to be a ratcheting down of the perception, or reality, of threats to national security across the region. This is a necessary precondition for persuading states to relax their iron grip over the apparatus of history curriculum development, thereby limiting the capacity of elites to use history to shore up their legitimacy through totalising and often xenophobic national narratives. At the same time, the loosening of state control over curricula is not a sufficient condition for promoting tolerance and understanding of different points of view. For that to happen, there needs to be some minimal openness to diverse interpretations of the past, not just among state officials but also among the populace at large. Otherwise, the democratisation of the curriculum can actually intensify *intolerance.* The collapse of state socialism across the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe after 1989 came with the collapse of any pretense of proletarian international brotherhood, unleashing a maelstrom of frequently violent tribalisms. Extreme nationalists in many countries followed the electoral route to power and, having done so, used their authority to embed chauvinistic visions of national identity in school history curricula. The point has often been made that while the CCP undeniably attempts to harness and manipulate popular nationalism for its own ends, it also plays a role in suppressing and containing it.

Democratisation in South Korea during the 1980s and 1990s, far from ushering in an era of peaceful coexistence with the country's neighbours, let rip a tsunami of long-suppressed anti-Japanese resentment that has yet to subside.

But the indefinite suppression of freedom of expression is hardly a viable or ethically acceptable formula for sustainable reconciliation. And if anti-Japanese resentment remains a live issue in democratic South Korea, part of the blame lies with Japan's own stunted democratisation and its role in suppressing open domestic debate on the issues that inflame Korean hostility. To the extent that history education in contemporary Japan has ever embraced an agenda of reconciliation with former colonies and wartime adversaries, this only happened (briefly and half-heartedly) during the 1990s, following a long struggle through the courts, in the media, on the streets and through the ballot box. Otherwise, decades of talk amongst Japanese peace activists and leftists—including many teachers and academics—have yielded no lasting transformation of history education or of public consciousness of the national past. In fact, the trend over the past decade has been a shift in precisely the opposite direction—towards intensified nationalism and intolerance, reinforced by state-mandated changes to history textbooks.

Contemporary global policy debate ascribes to education almost magical powers to solve a range of social problems—from poverty, inequality and climate change to civil and international conflict. Not accidentally, this belief is highly convenient for political and business elites keen to protect the *status quo* from any radical challenge—whether in the form of progressive taxation, redistributive welfare regimes, active curbs on environmentally destructive commerce or meaningful reform of state and corporate governance. Vested interests can afford to be profoundly relaxed with visions of "transformation" that focus on classroom discourse rather than constitutional arrangements, taxation regimes or corporate profiteering. However, the general languishing of attempts across East Asia (and elsewhere) to promote reconciliation through history education should remind us of the limits of education as an autonomous vehicle for social transformation. Ultimately, the potential for education to achieve desired change depends on factors beyond the school gates. Where teachers, curriculum developers and textbook authors already have substantial

autonomy over the shaping of the narratives conveyed to pupils in classrooms, efforts to use history to promote reconciliation can be meaningfully channelled through schools. But where this autonomy or agency is lacking—as it is across most of East Asia—the first priority must be to secure it. And this is ultimately a political struggle, not a purely educational one.

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# 4

# Unity in Diversity or Political Separation Driven by Cultural Difference? Textbook Revision in Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Falk Pingel**

## Introduction

For more than a century, pedagogues, historians, social scientists as well as concerned politicians have striven to combat the presentation of material in textbooks that may arouse negative feelings between peoples, present biased views and propagate adversarial images. History textbooks tend to legitimise the positions and actions of one's own national actors and serve to construct ideas of collective pride and hostility towards others. History textbooks are perceived to be powerful tools for shaping a national collective memory and promoting internal social cohesion (Carretero et al. 2011).

The horror of the First World War and hate speech disparaging the respective enemy countries formed the background against which teachers, researchers and enlightened politicians tried to foster rational, peace-oriented presentations of international relations and conflict resolution. The League of Nations, the first global political organisation, established

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special committees which developed procedures for textbook projects between its member states. The aim was to produce texts that could be accepted by experts from different countries which had antagonistic or problematic views of each other's relations in the past. It was hoped that more balanced presentations would lead to better mutual understanding and future peaceful relations (Pingel 2010).

Various players participated in consultations on international textbook revision: ministries of education, pedagogical as well as subject-oriented academic institutions, teacher associations and international organisations. Although all the participants may have agreed on a common aim, they often differed in their strategies, being used to acting in different contexts such as their educational, political or scientific environments, and imbibed specific traditions and attitudes towards negotiations and problem solving. Successes and failures depended considerably on the interplay of these various actors.

According to the model elaborated and practised by the league's committees in the 1920s and 1930s, textbook revision was firstly based on political agreements between the parties involved, stating that revision of educational material was wanted. At that time, such an understanding could not be taken for granted because international revisions implied interference in identity-sensitive educational issues of another state—which seemed almost inconceivable before the First World War. Secondly, it was built on scholarly work, namely the mutual analyses of each other's textbooks, according to agreed-upon content and methodological criteria. The implementation of recommendations worked out by academic and pedagogical experts again depended on political authorities, usually the ministries of education. Political and scholarly responsibilities were to be well defined and separated. However, this was often not guaranteed. Politicians may prescribe certain aims that are unjustified from academic points of view, or even interfere in the experts' work. Sometimes, representatives of educational authorities are members of joint commissions. Political pressure may influence experts' findings and recommendations. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BaH), political and scholarly conceptions intermingled in the work of commissions. Time was needed to secure the freedom of scholarly work and find a common

understanding on how this work was related to the political objectives of education ministries.

Regarding BaH, one should not forget that textbook revision was, and is, not always a matter of free consultation between independent, autonomous partners who jointly agree on findings and recommendations. After a war, the revision of teaching material and curricula can be imposed unilaterally by victorious powers or the international community as a peacebuilding measure. For example, occupying powers withdrew textbooks and curricula as well as commissioned the production of new teaching material in Germany and Japan after the Second World War. "Softer" but nevertheless externally initiated interventions currently take place in many conflict zones worldwide. International organisations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have implemented programmes to produce new textbooks and curricula in Iraq, Afghanistan and Timor-Leste, to mention but a few. In BaH, different modes of textbook revision were applied at different stages—forced intervention by the international community, political pressure from ministries and expert work in scholarly driven commissions.

Although these textbook consultations have been conducted between different stakeholders within BaH, and not between different states, features normally associated with international revision projects are included in this case since the international community played a crucial role and some of BaH players acted as if they were opponents, as if in an international context.

## Historical Layers

When the federal state of Yugoslavia broke down over the 1990s, BaH—like the other states emerging from former socialist Yugoslavia—could look back at a common education system that had made its imprint on successive cohorts of students for more than 50 years. Education was one of the main transmitters of the ideology of "Brotherhood and Unity", which stressed the commonalities of the Yugoslav people rather than their

different cultural and religious traditions. However, the wars of the 1990s dissolved these common politico-ideological structures and fragmented the formerly unified, centralised socialist education system. Not only in BaH, but also in Serbia and Croatia, it was no longer commonalities but differences which drove ethnic groups apart, which became the focus of novel educational material meant particularly for the teaching of history, geography and mother tongues aimed at legitimising the supposed ethnocultural singularity of their nations.

The fragmentation of BaH's education system was prescribed by the Dayton Peace Accords, which split BaH into two entities: the Republika Srpska (RS, Serb Republic) and the Federation of BaH, consisting of ten cantons with either a Bosniak[1] or a Croat majority population. The RS and each of the cantons have their own ministries of education, whereas the federation's minister of education only plays a coordinating role. Responsibility for decision making and the administration of education lies exclusively with the RS ministry and the cantonal ministries of education. This quasi-cultural autonomy, as stipulated in the Dayton Peace Accords, was the price for peace. Only under these conditions would the representatives of the so-called constituent peoples—the Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats—be willing to unite within a common state framework. Thus, the education system's political structure was cemented by the internationally controlled peace agreement and forms part of BaH's constitution. Responsibility for the use and abuse of this construction, however, lies totally with the local ministries.

In the years following the peace agreements, it turned out that the objectives of the ministries' political strategies were not to build a system that invested their multiethnic population with a common, overarching school education which harmonised differences, but to create monoethnic classes with separate curricula and textbooks, according to the wishes of their respective majority populations.

This development reflects not only a break with the socialist period, but is also in contrast to the much longer tradition of more or less tolerant living, side by side, between the different ethnocultural

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[1] The people of BaH are called Bosnians. The Muslim population—in contrast to the (mostly Christian Orthodox) Serbs and (mostly Catholic) Croats—are the Bosniaks.

communities during the periods of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as well as under Habsburg and Ottoman rule. However, a more thorough view of the past reveals that separatist tendencies and longing for cultural-religious autonomy already permeated the education systems in the region during pre-socialist periods, rather than stressing commonalities and mutual recognition, if not an appreciation of diversity. Bozic (2006) emphasises that the Austro-Hungarian Empire was unable:

> to prevent the fragmentation of the education system along ethno-confessional lines in BaH. Each ethnic group—Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs—struggled for and gained autonomy in educational affairs as a means to preserve and protect their respective identities. (p. 323)

Even more detrimental to the introduction of a modern, secularised education was that the Austro-Hungarians helped to transform the Ottoman system of restricted cultural and religious rights for *communities* into the recognition of special cultural provisions for *peoples and nations*. The Austro-Hungarians strengthened the cultural self-awareness of the Muslim population in the occupied/annexed territories of BaH, as a counterweight to the growing nationalism of Serbs and Croats—this was because Muslim self-awareness seemed to be less politically loaded and hostile to the Austrian rulers. In fact, as Bozic (2006, p. 323) states: "education became a mechanism for translating confessionalism into nationalism, with each group striving to establish its primacy in the two provinces". The Austro-Hungarian governor had decided to cease the use of Croat textbooks and develop new books which would better suit the Muslim population. The Habsburg rulers conceived a history of Bosnia as a distinct politico-cultural entity since the Middle Ages for schools (Perić 2018) and laid the foundation for a distinct Bosnian politico-cultural identity. This was easily transformed into modern, post-Yugoslav Bosnian nationalism, which claimed—in parallel with their Serbian and Croatian counterparts—historical dignity. With this support for the ethnicisation of the Muslim population, whose religious identity until then was not politically invested, the rulers worked against their most important innovation in education, namely the foundation of secular schools,

which were intended to neutralise divergent political ideologies hostile to the ruling powers.

The short-lived history of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, founded as a result of the First World War, was marked by Serbo-Croatian rivalry from the beginning. Not least for financial reasons, the central government did not invest much energy into establishing common secular, non-ethnic schools. Initial plans by the central Ministry of Education to produce one common textbook for each subject, for the whole country, never materialised. New textbooks favoured by the central government played down differences and portrayed the Yugoslav peoples as being "related" to each other and as "brothers" (Dimić and Alimpić 1996, p. 90). National rivalries, as they occurred particularly between the growing Croat and Serb nationalisms, were now reinterpreted—even if the different communities, peoples or nations competed with each other, they all fought for the same aim: freedom. However, these books, produced under the surveillance of the state educational authorities and meant for the whole country (but usually written in Cyrillic only), were contested by more ethnic-oriented teaching material. The religious communities continued to strongly influence school policies and run their own schools. Although the king's dictatorial regime, installed in 1929, strove to centralise administrative structures and harmonise cultural policies, time was too short and the persistent forces too strong. Remarkable changes to the education system could not be induced.

During the Second World War, state unity was abandoned and politico-historical education became more politicised than ever, if it even functioned at all. The experience of the concurrent civil war, against or in cooperation with the Axis powers, created new and revived old rifts between the Yugoslav peoples. After the war, although socialist Yugoslavia was structured as a federal republic, Josip Broz Tito introduced centralised governmental structures under the Communist Party's regime, including education. The overarching ideology of "Brotherhood and Unity", born of the partisan fighting during the war, was meant to bind the diverging forces of the provinces and republics, with their different cultural characteristics and political aspirations, together. This ideology formed the obligatory nucleus of modern Yugoslav history in schoolbooks. However, ideological conformity did not prevent the socialist

republics and autonomous provinces of Yugoslavia (particularly Serbia and Croatia) from developing their own textbooks, each stressing the importance of their own traditions and contributions to the benefit of Yugoslavia—and the longer the state existed, the more differences came to the fore. Time and again, constitutional changes had to be made to counter the centrifugal tendencies under Tito's regime. In the 1960s and 1970s, tendencies towards regionalisation and ethnicisation led to the new constitution of 1974, which weakened the central forces, strengthened the federal structure and gave way to ethnic quotas in political representation. Gradually, the Bosnian Muslims gained political recognition as one of the Yugoslav nationalities. More and more people defined themselves as members of their respective nationalities and no longer as "Yugoslavs". Nevertheless, Tito's reign may be seen as the only phase of a rigorous, consistent politico-historical education embracing all the Yugoslav nationalities. This education was based on the victorious socialist ideology as the official, obligatory common denominator of postwar Yugoslav statehood.

After its breakdown, the wars of independence in the 1990s resurrected the irreconcilable national, cultural and religious aspirations of the Second World War, which had never been totally erased from collective memory. After Tito's death, the republics and autonomous provinces claimed more rights and partly developed their own educational devices. The teleological worldview imprinted by historical materialism, which previously streamlined the historical textbook narrative, lost its persuasiveness. In particular, the description of the Second World War stirred controversies, being the most sensitive subject because of the interethnic tensions encapsulated within. According to the Titoist interpretation, partisan fighting was seen as a continuation of the fight for freedom of the Yugoslav peoples, which was successfully brought to its historical fulfilment (Koren 2012, Chap. 3). As Đureinović (2018) writes:

> all Yugoslav nations were said to have contributed equally to the antifascist struggle, while they all contributed to the collaboration as well, but without any group being blamed any more or less than any other for inter-Yugoslav atrocities. (p. 112)

But this interpretation was eroded more and more since the 1980s. According to Höpken (1996, p. 111), the balanced, neutralising presentation of the Yugoslav peoples hindered young learners from equipping themselves to deal with conflicting forms of "Othering".

## Reform as an International and Local Project: Oscillating Between Intervention, Cooperation and Hesitation

During the war of 1992–1995, the education systems in the so-called Serb Autonomous Regions and Croat Herzegovina had already adapted content patterns and even textbooks from Serbia and Croatia, respectively, which were tainted by exclusive nationalism and denied the historical as well as current legitimacy of BaH as a distinct political unit. Challenged by these separatist developments, Bosniak communities developed a narrative of Bosnian unity since the Middle Ages, which displayed a positive image of Islam and the Ottoman legacy, but also acknowledged the Serbs and Croats as South Slavic peoples. After the war, the governments of the RS, the federation and the cantons developed curricula and supported the conceptualisation of textbooks that strengthened and consolidated the different ethnocultural traits, political aspirations and historical traditions of each of their peoples or nations.[2]

Although the Dayton Peace Accords had (re-)established the independence of BaH as a state, the international community (IC)[3] has reserved the right to oversee and control the accords' implementation. To this aim, it has established the Office of the High Representative in BaH, invested

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[2] The federation government tried to develop curricula covering all cantons within the federation. However, the implementation was by the cantons; some of them developed their own curricula and did not take over those developed by the federation.

[3] The international community comprises the representatives of member states and international organisations safeguarding the peace process and supporting material and institutional restoration. Concerning education, the most important international players include the World Bank, OSCE, European Commission, Council of Europe, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), UNDP and UNESCO.

with the power to dismiss politicians who infringe on peace regulations or refuse to pass laws indispensable for the implementation of the accords.

When at the end of the 1990s, the IC became aware that school education in BaH was geared towards fostering rather than dissolving ethnic stereotypes, cultural exclusiveness and mutual derogation of each other's ethnic communities, it intervened in education legislation and, in particular, the development and approval of textbooks for history, geography, nature, society (social studies), mother tongue studies and religious instruction—the so-called national subjects. This chapter concentrates on history and geography, where the most identity-sensitive issues had to be tackled.[4]

As a first step of intervention, the IC, led by UNESCO, whose representatives were sometimes accompanied by soldiers, blacked out the so-called objectionable material in textbooks already being used in schools, and it became obvious to teachers, students and parents that the IC was censoring content formerly approved by local educational authorities. Since this caused protests in the media and from local educational stakeholders, the IC tried to apply a more consensual method of textbook revision in cooperation with the BaH ministers of education in order to bring the curricula and textbooks in line with the principles of multiethnic and multicultural education.

The process of textbook revision underwent different phases. A first agreement on textbook revision was concluded at a conference of the ministers of education for the school year 1999–2000. The ministries were required to check whether or not the manuscripts were in agreement with the accords before approving them for use in schools. Up to the school year 2001–2002, this screening process was the sole responsibility of the respective ministers of education.

However, the ministries turned out to be lenient towards textbook authors and publishing houses, and so this procedure did not produce satisfactory results. In response, the IC came to an agreement with the ministers of education to set up joint textbook commissions for the school year 2003–2004, consisting of experienced teachers, textbook authors and curriculum experts from the three constituent peoples as well

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[4] For a detailed description of the institutional process of textbook revision in BaH, see Pingel (2009).

as representatives of the IC, who served as advisors and mediators. After analyses of the submitted manuscripts, incriminating formulations were jointly discussed and manuscripts were purged of "inappropriate", derogatory and offensive language as well as obviously false representations of the "Other". This method made the texts less controversial and less open to criticism, but also more boring. It neutralised the language without changing the main narrative. It neither altered the differences in perspectives, nor was it geared towards common denominators of Bosnian society and historical commonalities. BaH still did not represent a common point of reference in most Serb and Croat books, because each side emphasised its own cultural, political and economic advantages and achievements. In addition, the process was still very much politicised. Commission members, as a rule, regarded themselves as representatives of their respective governments rather than as subject-oriented experts (teachers, historians, geographers, etc.).

The most critical and controversial issue was the lack of common acknowledgement of BaH as the overarching political framework, within which the entities and cantons operated. BaH was not regarded as the focal point of representation—rather, its respective political entities or cantons were. Often, the borders of BaH were not clearly marked. This applied mostly to Croat and Serb texts and maps in geography textbooks. Political relations and cultural bonds with neighbouring countries (Serbia and Croatia, respectively) were more extensively treated than common Bosnian features. Territories mainly populated by "Other" constituent peoples were sometimes depicted like foreign countries on maps, or appeared entirely in white, without depicting features like towns. Some atlases of the RS turned out to be particularly problematic because they disregarded BaH as a political entity completely and depicted the RS as part of the Federation of Yugoslavia. In addition, Croat and Serb books described Croatia and Serbia respectively (and not BaH) as the pupils' respective "fatherlands".

Such obvious violations of concrete regulations or the core spirit of the accords could, as a rule, be removed. But it was more difficult to reach an agreement about competing or even mutually exclusive regional interpretations of statehood and the role of the Serb Orthodox, Catholic and Bosnian churches in the Middle Ages. Bosniak books tended to see the

first contours of a Bosnian political entity already emerging during this epoch, whereas Croat and Serb books denied this appearance. Bosniak books underscored the importance and relative autonomy of the Bosnian Catholic church at that time, whereas Serb and Croat books either neglected or downplayed its role, or regarded it as heretic. Here, differences could, if at all, only be mitigated but not really harmonised. Disagreement prevailed on issues such as Ottoman rule, the evaluation of emerging nationalist movements in the nineteenth century and the Second World War. In particular, the actions of the armed Serbian and Croatian units, the Ustasha and Cetniks, remained controversial.

Formulations acceptable to all sides could also not be found for the descriptions of the most recent developments, be they the "breakdown" or "dissolution" of Yugoslavia and the "wars of independence" or "separation". Therefore, it was decided to more or less exclude these issues from the curriculum altogether, or treat them only in a very superficial, fact-oriented way and avoid any kind of interpretative language. History textbooks were to just list the most important "events" of this period without describing them in detail (e.g. the war of 1992–1995 should not be described as "civil war" or "aggression", but the "recent war") (Batarilo 2019). Since the wounds of the war were still fresh in the memories of the people, and remembering the war could trigger uncontrolled emotions, this period was not made a school topic for many years. Nevertheless, some Croat and Serb history textbooks included short paragraphs on the "recent" war, usually in the form of legitimising one's own actions of warfare, demonising military actions of the other side and questioning their legitimacy.

The theme of the conversion of Bosnians to Islam during the Ottoman period was also highly controversial. Croat and Serb commission members insisted on using the concept "Islamicisation", whereas the Bosniaks refused to adopt this concept, since it implied that the process unfolded mainly under duress. Yet the Serb and Croat positions wanted precisely to emphasise the aspect of force and to demonstrate the cruel and violent oppression of Christians under Ottoman rule. In contrast, Bosniaks interpreted the transition to Islam as a long and slow process of acculturation, thus leading to its successful acceptance, albeit without describing in detail the sociopolitical ramifications of this process. In general,

Bosniak books draw a more positive picture of the "tolerant" Ottoman Empire, whereas Croat and Serb books describe this rule as an "occupation" and "subjugation".[5] The international commission members particularly criticised the extension of the current conflict between the three constituent peoples to remote historical epochs. The feudal society of the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times was represented in the texts as being marked by the same ethnic differences that characterised the present conflict. Typical medieval societal layers, such as social strata (e.g. peasants, soldiers, clergymen, nobility and serfdom), played a minor role.

Such historical paradigms could not and cannot be changed through cosmetic, linguistic operations. Therefore in 2002, the OSCE, as the new leading organisation for education within the IC, proposed to set up a new joint textbook commission for the subjects of history and geography, assigned with a broader mandate than the previous ones. This commission was expected to initiate a major shift in approach: from "negative" screening of texts to introducing a constructive "positive" methodology. Textbook authors should be encouraged to write new textbooks that embraced the history and geography of the three constituent peoples through a comparative, multi-perspectival approach.

To this end, the commission developed "Guidelines for Writing and Evaluation of History Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Schools in BaH" for history and geography, containing general principles on how to conceptualise textbooks that confronted students with different perspectives of the same event or process (*Official Gazette of BaH* 2007). The guidelines were to form an integrated part of all future textbook approval procedures. After a long scholarly consultative process and one year of political negotiations, all ministers of education signed the guidelines in 2006. Besides stipulating the overarching principles—such as adopting a multi-perspectivity approach, choosing BaH as the main point of reference, placing it in a regional context and offering a range of different media (besides the author's text, pictures/illustrations, documents, etc.)—the guidelines catalogued concrete methodological advice, for example, developing a teachers' manual, incorporating diverse sources for

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[5] The same type of argument occurs in many textbooks used in Arabic-speaking countries (Doumato and Starett 2007). For a detailed textbook analysis of the issue, see Alibašić (2008).

each teaching unit, including questions, assignments and more. This would allow for interactive teaching to address different levels of knowledge, from reproduction to synthesis and evaluation—particularly for 1945–1992 world and European history, where the histories of neighbouring countries as well as those of socialist Yugoslavia and BaH should be taken into account, and the processes of interrelatedness and integration described.

To implement the guidelines, the Georg-Eckert-Institut for International Textbook Research[6] and the Council of Europe conducted teacher and textbook author training seminars in cooperation with the OSCE. Over the course of these seminars, participants had the opportunity to develop experimental chapters for new textbooks. To speed up the slow pace of the political institutions with regard to reform, the IC emphasised teacher training to develop bottom-up capacity. This approach was furthered by a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as EuroClio (the European Association of History Educators) and the Center for Democracy and Reconciliation in South East Europe. Some of the local commission members and seminar participants have since become ardent and persuasive advocates of textbook and curriculum reform, whereas ministerial top-down implementation was only hesitantly performed.

According to a first comparative textbook study analysing the presentation of the twentieth century in history textbooks developed after and before the publication of the guidelines, new books concur with the guidelines more often than older books (Karge 2008). In particular, the image of the First World War is less marked by heroic fighting and rivalry among the South Slavic ethnicities. Instead, the war is framed more within the international context of imperialism and seen as a modern war with incredible losses on all sides, for victors and losers alike. However, differences still remain. It goes almost without saying that Serbian books

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[6] As the deputy director of the Georg-Eckert-Institut and the director of education of the OSCE Mission in BaH then, I headed the new OSCE education department for the coordination of education reform in BaH.

justify Gavrilo Princip's actions[7] and regard him as a national hero, whereas Bosniak authors put more weight on the international context and question the justification for the assassination. When it comes to the Second World War, stereotyped images of foes and friends as well as mutual accusations of war crimes prevail. One's own group is portrayed as being victimised, while "Others" appear as aggressors. Nevertheless, it can be said that the new books are less nationalistic and more open to European and sometimes even global perspectives, with the exception of the presentation of the Second World War, the breakdown of Yugoslavia and its aftermath. As Karge (2008, p. 38) states: "all reviewed textbooks show a considerable shift towards World/European and away from national history". Following the recommendations of the guidelines, narratives no longer focus almost exclusively on political history, on political and military leaders, but also take into account daily lives of the people and the different social strata of a given society.

These trends are more obvious in books for Bosniak majority cantons than in the RS and Croat cantons. BaH clearly forms the main point of reference in Bosniak books only. Some of them emphasise integrative forces within Bosnian society and show respect for the cultural achievements of all three constituent peoples. The guidelines' methodological proposals have been implemented in all parts of the country in a more meaningful way. Written texts, which were by far the dominant mode of representation in former books, have become less monotonous through the integration of other media such as photographs, illustrations, tasks, and so on.

In sum, the books that appeared after the publication of the guidelines share more common structures than before, although significant differences still exist. This particularly applies to themes connected (or seemingly connected, in the eyes of their authors) to the lingering conflict. Whereas Bosniak books try to instil an awareness of a Bosnian national identity, which encompasses different ethnocultural and religious communities, Croat and Serb books remain ambivalent in this regard. A later

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[7] A Bosnian Serb student, Gavrilo Princip, assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914. The international tensions following the assassination led to the outbreak of the First World War.

and more comprehensive textbook analysis underscores the persistence of ethnocentric views and stereotyped images of "Other" communities, nations, cultures and religions in most books, particularly in those used in Croat and Serb majority areas. The ethnocentric presentation implies that universal values are referred to only in a cursory manner or not at all. Only a minority of books on the national subjects describe in at least some detail the emergence of values such as human rights, gender balance, social equality and so forth (Soldo et al. 2007).

Parallel to the work of the textbook commissions, the IC strove to harmonise—at least to a certain extent—the divergent curricula. The IC proposed that the ministers of education define a common core curriculum (CCC) to be shared by all syllabuses. Because the construction of the CCC covered all subjects, it involved the work of many experts and brought about media debate. In fact, the work of the CCC commissions and their public echo have strengthened the awareness of existing commonalities, as opposed to the usual emphasis on differences between the constituent peoples.

However, this movement was not free from feelings of Yugoslav nostalgia and moments of retardation. The majority of commission members were only willing to define commonalities within the existing curricula, without venturing into defining new areas which should be integrated into the CCC in the future. The CCC in the national subjects turned out to comprise mostly uncontested issues and excluded, for example, in history, almost the entire contemporary period because of the prevalence of different interpretations. Nevertheless, even experts were surprised to find that in the existing science curricula, up to 80 per cent and more of the content and methodology did not differ much. However, this shared heritage, stemming mostly from Yugoslav times, did not offer a platform for joint work on the revision and modernisation of the existing curricula. So far, the CCC has not set off new dynamics to deal with controversial and more recent developments, which are not yet covered.

Furthermore, the IC took up current trends in general curriculum development and adopted a competency-oriented approach instead, concentrating on contents as the CCC mostly did. This turn in educational strategy was adopted by the ministries of education and resulted in a new "Common Core Curriculum based on Student Learning Outcomes for

the History Subject", put into force in 2015 (Mostar 2015). The new CCC expressly requires that students develop critical thinking and discover different points of view on the same event or historical process through the use of different sources. Students should comprehend the complexity of historical causes and effects as well as understand the limitations of these concepts. This is a clear rejection of simplistic, monocausal explanations. The orientation towards competency, however, is difficult to implement because it requires new teaching methodologies, which cannot be simply prescribed but need practical teacher education courses. The few training seminars have reached only a minority of teachers so far. Although (mostly international) NGOs have helped to develop additional teaching material following this new approach, their impact remains weak because most teachers are not used to deviating from the approved official textbooks, and so they adopt the new approach rather slowly.

## A New Theme, but Old Images of Oneself and the "Other"?

In more recent years, the ministries of education have approved textbooks or developed additional teaching aids on their own concerning the war of 1992–1995 and its aftermath in detail—topics that have not been included in the history curricula so far because of their controversial and identity-sensitive content. In 2017, the first official move in this direction was made by the Sarajevo Canton, which set up a team of history teachers and academic experts to develop (in addition to the existing cantonal history curriculum) curricular material on the war, with a particular emphasis on "the siege of Sarajevo" and "genocide" (in reference to the massacre in Srebrenica) (Muminović et al. 2018). This move provoked a harsh reaction from the RS. Milorad Dodik, the RS president, announced in a press conference that pupils in the RS would never use teaching material dealing with the alleged "genocide" and the siege (Balkan Insight 2017). In response, the RS Ministry of Education felt obliged to also amend their history curriculum, with additional exemplary material meant for

teaching about the 1990s (Ministarstvo prosvjete i culture 2018). EuroClio heavily criticised the Sarajevo material because of its biased approach, which almost exclusively tells a story of the suffering of its own community, and the open aggression and brutal warfare of the other (read: Serb) side. Attempts at a multi-perspectival narrative were missing (Savitsky 2019).

Also, recent, detailed analyses of the new curricular material and textbooks have come to similar conclusions (Karge 2019; Forić Plasto 2019). According to these analyses, the Serb curricular material refers only superficially to crimes committed—presumably by all sides—without further information or explanation. New textbooks largely follow this approach and authors show empathy for "their own" victims only. The Bosniak texts speak of a "war of aggression" and put responsibility clearly on the Serb side, whereas Serb texts prefer the term "civil war" to indicate that the population of BaH was divided with respect to their national aspirations. They accuse the Bosniak leadership of waging a war to the detriment of the Serb people. Serb texts do not deny that "mass crimes" happened during the war, but just mention several places where they occurred—amongst them Srebrenica—but without any reasons or further explanations. Forić Plasto (2019, p. 244) calls this a "relativization" of the committed crimes. In sum, when it comes to dealing with the most sensitive issue among the national subjects, namely the wars of the 1990s, textbook authors fall back onto traditional self-legitimising narratives, exclusive victimisation and culpability of the "Other".

Although the decision to deal with the 1990s more extensively is in accordance with the guidelines of 2006, it was implemented by the ministries of education without mutual consultation on how to treat the issue in curricula and textbooks. Obviously, coordination was not wanted. The IC, which has lowered its engagement in the last decade, has not interfered so far.

## Conclusion

To date, none of the three streams of history education in BaH have found a model narrative for the description of a modern state that is not based on imagining a homogeneous nation based on an exclusive territory and a value system. According to the quoted textbook analyses, only a few Bosniak books may come close to representing a multiethnic society encompassing different religious and cultural traditions.

The Dayton Peace Accords offered a legal framework for the institutionalisation of separate educational systems, corresponding to the different politico-cultural traditions of the three constituent peoples. Because this constitutional construction can only be changed with the agreement of all the three peoples, it seems cemented for the foreseeable future. Far-reaching autonomy in education was the price for peace. However, it was only meant to enable a peaceful coexistence and the preservation of cultural specificities, but not to politicise and invest them with exclusive value systems claiming superiority over the values of the "Other" ethnicities.

The IC's understandable focus on material reconstruction in education during the first years after the war led to the stabilisation of cultural exclusivity and the production of ethnocentric curricula and textbooks. When the IC intervened, its initial top-down approach removed obvious derogatory expressions and open denial of BaH as a political reality from textbooks on national subjects, but could not change the heavy emphasis on the respective perspectives that continue to permeate the narratives. When the IC altered its approach and chose a more cooperative method in fostering active involvement of local political institutions and educational experts, individual support for reform increased as the experts worked longer together in joint commissions. Narratives, particularly methodological structures of teaching material, became more open, but changes were often short lived and rarely created sustainable innovations. Most of the IC's work was project-based and limited in time. In addition, the IC altered its methodological strategies and hence weakened its own position. It introduced concepts that were unknown to teachers and most textbook authors. Ministers of education often only formally and

half-heartedly agreed to the IC's concepts, but did not support them with sufficient in-service training, and so teachers often felt exposed to two different authorities with differing approaches—their respective ministries and the IC.

The concept of a content-oriented CCC was largely welcomed, but was not further developed until many years after its enforcement. The chance to continue the work in tripartite working groups and commissions dealing with sensitive topics that had been left out of the CCC was not taken up. Instead, the IC supported the internationally acknowledged competency-based curricular approach but did not dare to focus on sensitive issues. It took almost ten years after the enforcement of the CCC and the publication of the guidelines that a new, competency-oriented curriculum was put into force. During this period, innovations were mostly dependent on the work of local and international NGOs. Although they could produce innovative material and train teachers, their work had (similar to the official commissions and the rare teacher training activities of the IC and the ministries) almost no ripple effect. Their influence reached the participants of these activities but hardly went beyond them.

When the Sarajevo ministry of education and others recommended teaching the 1990s' events, it became obvious that neither a multicultural nor a comparative or multi-perspectival approach was applied in the new teaching material, with only some exceptions. Even if innovations found their way into teaching material and possibly also classrooms, when it came to the most sensitive topics (i.e. issues related to ethno-national identification), textbook narratives fell back into oppositional juxtaposition of "us" and "them", and a binary conception of self-legitimisation and accusations of the other.

The (at least partial) failure of internationally led reforms casts doubts on the IC's strategy of implementing a multicultural approach—forceful intervention could not be an option for a longer time period, which would have contradicted the IC's own objective of democratisation. A complete turnaround in education was impossible to achieve in the face of the dominant, exclusively ethnocultural educational authorities. Persistent local policies of open resistance, silent disapproval, technical obstruction and hesitation in implementing reforms have had a negative

impact on the whole school system. The reform agenda—largely driven from "outside" the country—has been defeated by local forces which have used the accords to build up an education system promoting ethnocentric orientations and monocultural values, instead of universal values and multicultural diversity. Education policies, which were squeezed between these contradictory options, made little progress. Ongoing dissent, often fuelled by the media, hardened divergent positions instead of dissolving them.

Could the IC not have created better learning conditions for students faster and more effectively if it accepted the educational autonomy of the RS and the cantons, and tried to raise the quality of education in general (i.e. in all subjects and schools)? The introduction of learner-friendly teaching methods, better equipment with educational media (including information technology) and continuous teacher training could have been supported by a wide range of local and international NGOs and perhaps eventually helped to get around to dealing with cultural opposition as the focal point of reform. Raising the quality of teaching involves the inculcation of general academic dispositions such as producing evidence, giving reasons, checking explanations and comparing interpretations among students. Investment in these competencies may help open the students' horizons of thinking and evaluation in general. Focusing on providing quality education may help bridge the political divides among these separate systems more effectively and help them come closer together in the long run. Even if political divisions cannot be overcome, they would not lead to anything worse than the *status quo*—but at least lift the dynamics of historical debates to a higher quality.

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# 5

# Curricular Decentralisation as an Antidote to "Burmanisation"? Including Ethnic Minorities' Histories in Myanmar's Government Schools (2011–2020)

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## Introduction

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar (the Union of Burma until 1989) has complex ethnolinguistic diversity: 135 "national races/ethnic nationalities"[1] have been officially recognised since the 1983 census, although the nomenclature itself is rooted in colonial censuses whose categories are often disputed today.[2] The latest estimates list 117 living languages (111 "indigenous" and 6 "non-indigenous") spoken throughout the country.[3]

Managing this diversity and the political representation of ethnic nationalities constitutes a central challenge in nation building, with critical implications for Myanmar's chaotic post-independence political history. Like many other countries in the region and across the world, the modern state of Burma/Myanmar, largely a colonial creation, was left to make sense of itself, its borders and its patchwork of peoples in 1948. A long series of conflicts, in which ethnic identities played a central role, started the same year; many are not yet settled (Smith 1991; Thant Myint-U 2019).

In the context of this protracted civil war, successive governments—most notably military juntas, self-appointed guardians of Myanmar's unity—have increasingly relied on a conception of national identity based on nationalist views developed during the struggle for independence by the ethnic majority (the Burmans, or Bamars, who today account for roughly 70 per cent of the population).[4] While such domination by an ethnic majority over a nation-state and its historical narrative was all but uncommon worldwide and in Southeast Asia throughout the twentieth century (Chutintaranond and Baker 2002), the rather

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[1] Two common translations of the corresponding Burmese term (/tain:jin:dha/), which conveys a strong sense of "indigenousness." Colonial censuses distinguished between "indigenous races" and "non-indigenous races" (sometimes called "alien races"), corresponding to migrant populations from India and China (Bennisson 1931).

[2] For more details, see for instance Ferguson (2015) or Salem-Gervais and Ja Seng (2022).

[3] See www.ethnologue.com.

[4] This figure is a rough estimate, since data on ethnicity in the 2014 census were not disclosed (because of their political sensitivity). The nomenclature used in this census is also widely disputed, and more fundamentally, the underlying idea that all citizens should fit into one ethnic category is problematic.

monolithic historical account developed in the post-independence decades contrasts with the supposedly federal grounds on which Burma was formed.

Regarding formal education, this process, which was often denounced as "Burmanisation" by political actors associated with various ethnic minority identities, entailed two main aspects: curtailing the teaching of ethnic minority languages—a process which has often been described too simplistically but remains manifest (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2008; Salem-Gervais and Raynaud 2019, 2020), and shifting the national history curriculum towards a narrative largely based on the ethnic majority's perspective (Salem-Gervais and Metro 2012).

In parallel, a number of ethnic armed organisations active in multiple regions of the country (including the Shan, Karen, Mon and Kachin States) set up their own education systems. The relationship between these groups and the federal government, as well as the links between their education systems and the Ministry of Education (MOE) were diverse and shifting (from some forms of cooperation to complete secessionism). In general, these education systems prioritised their respective ethnonationalist views, most evidently through language policies and history textbooks, with content that tended to be staunchly antagonistic to the state-sanctioned narrative (ibid.). Within this context, different sections of society, well beyond armed group territories, held very different views regarding both national and local histories, their symbols and what should be included in the content of school history textbooks.

Between 2011 and 2020, Myanmar embarked on an often slow and frustrating, but nonetheless indubitable and tangible process of democratisation and decentralisation, which included some aspects of formal education (Salem-Gervais and Raynaud 2020). In addition to developments regarding the language-in-education policy to use ethnic minority languages in schools, this shift also entailed some extent of curricular decentralisation to integrate the teaching of the respective histories, geographies

and cultures of the local inhabitants in each of Myanmar's 14 states and regions.[5]

While the new national curriculum, which was only partially introduced at the time of writing, did not seem to radically shift away from previous versions in terms of discourse on the nation and its history, this partial curricular decentralisation initiative seemed to constitute an opportunity for change. These local curricula, which were in the production process at the time of writing, indeed offered a chance to balance out the somewhat monolithic national narrative by including elements linked to different identities and perspectives on history, as well as a level of detail that would not be manageable in a single national curriculum.

Adding local curricula to the national history textbooks might have been an effective channel towards finding an equilibrium between the necessity of accommodating ethnic diversity on the one hand and maintaining a common overarching national narrative on the other—a concern of many post-conflict societies (see also Chap. 4). In practice, reconciling antagonistic perceptions of recent conflict would never have been easy. Partial curricular decentralisation seemed to be a constructive and well-calibrated approach, but it should not be seen as a panacea; the challenges faced in drafting these local curricula are discussed below.

## Teaching History Until 2011: A Brief Historical Background[6]

While hill-dwelling nonliterate groups passed down origin stories orally, the various Burman, Shan, Mon and Arakanese kingdoms recorded their glorious pasts and achievements in chronicles. These histories, however, did not appear to have been part of the syllabuses of the monastic schools that constituted most of the education system for centuries (Kaung 1963; Than Htut 1980). Geography and later history were formally taught for

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[5] These are administrative divisions of equal status, but states are typically inhabited by a higher proportion of ethnic minorities and bear their names (e.g. Shan State, Kachin State), as opposed to regions, which are often named after their capital cities (e.g. Mandalay Region, Yangon Region).

[6] For more detailed accounts, see Salem-Gervais and Metro (2012) and Salem-Gervais (2013).

the first time under the British in the second half of the nineteenth century, occasionally creating controversies because of their contradictions with Buddhist cosmology (Than Tun 1972).

Monastic education served as a tangible link between the people and the state, conveying the monarchy's legitimacy and contributing to the assimilation of ethnic minorities into lowland polities. While largely focused on creating "Burma" as a political entity, for the first time delimited by borders, the British used their school system to inculcate a sense of loyalty to the Crown (Than Htut 2003, Taylor 2009). A "Committee to Ascertain and Advise How the Imperial Idea May be Inculcated and Fostered in the Schools and Colleges of Burma" was created in 1916, and a 1927 geography textbook, for instance, described the difference between Burmese dynastic and British colonial rule in these terms:

> we may say that the great difference between Burmese and British rule is that now (a) we have a rule of law not of caprice—or the changeable mind of the king; (b) impartiality between the different races and tribes and perfect peace between them; (c) a rule planning the progress of the people— their welfare, in health, education, trade, etc. (d) a rule with stated legal revenue. A rule of freedom—slavery is not allowed. (Rowlands 1927)

Trying to make sense of the diversity they encountered through the concepts of their time, the British, notably through successive censuses, strived to approach "true racial classification" of the "indigenous races of Burma" (in contrast to "non-indigenous races"), pondering the relative importance of linguistic criteria (McCormick 2016; McAuliffe 2017) compared to other features, such as "physical appearance, body measurements, culture, customs, technology and the temperament" (Bennisson 1931). Here is a snippet from Smeaton (1887) to give a feel of such attempts, when he contrasted the "Karen" character with the "Burman":

> This reticence often makes the Karen appear stupid, awkward, and obstinate, which he really is not. He will take refuge in "I don't know" and a blank stare simply to avoid further questioning. A Burman is keen to show off his knowledge—sometimes more than his knowledge; a Karen will rather conceal what he knows, frequently to his own hurt.

While British historians portrayed Burma's fate since colonisation in optimistic terms, they often depicted what is today referred to as "ethnicity" as the most salient and relevant historical category, emphasising the existence of discrete (and conflicting) ethnic identities (Lieberman 1978). In this way, they rewrote the chronicles' descriptions of mostly benevolent monarchs propagating Buddhism while pacifying and expanding their territory (Pe Maung Tin and Luce 1923), emphasising poor leadership and ethnic disunity to legitimise colonial conquest. According to colonial history textbooks:

> *Madness of Bagyidaw.* The loss of the maritime provinces weighed heavily on the mind of the king, who brooded over his troubles and in time developed the insanity which seemed to be hereditary in the family of Alaungpaya …. (Cocks 1912)

> The English conquest came not to destroy but to fulfill. Racial character cannot develop so long as government is unstable …. Thrice they achieved a measure of unity [Kings Anawratha, Bayinnaung and Alaungpaya]. It was seldom a true unity, for whenever it was more than nominal it was maintained by means so terrible that they destroyed the end; and it seldom lasted for the bond was purely dynastic and broke thrice. The empire came to give her that unity, and the reform scheme to give her power to make it a true unity welling up from within, not an artificial unity imposed from without …. Unity is something more than a condition of progress in Burma; at this hour it is a condition of her racial integrity. (Harvey 1926)

Starting in the early twentieth century among monks and students, Burmese nationalist movements, among their objections to what they called the (colonial) "slave education system", resisted its disparaging interpretation of the classical past. Articles published in newspapers such as *Thuriya* (The Sun) from the late 1910s insisted that the youth be taught their glorious history through the chronicles, instead of humiliating accounts written by foreigners. This awakening of pride in Burmese history played a role in the creation of the National School Movement in 1920, a patriotic alternative to colonial education, allowing Burmese historians to present their own versions of the country's history. Textbooks by authors such as U Po Kya and U Ba Than, as well as short stories and

books on various "Myanmar Heroes" (Thein Maung 1933), tended to return to the chronicles as both sources and inspiration, producing narratives of Burmese history which often prioritised patriotism over historical accuracy (Than Htut 2005; Thaw Kaung 2010).

The emergence of a national consciousness throughout the colonial period, however, was not limited to the Burmans; other groups, such as the Mon or Karen, founded organisations to defend and mobilise their ethnic identities, writing histories according to their own ethnonationalist perspectives. Saw Aung Hla's *Karen History* (1932), for instance, established the origins of the Karen in Babylon, 2000 BCE (Cheesman 2002). In this political and intellectual context, despite the efforts of some politicians, the Burmese nationalist movements of the centre generally failed to develop an all-encompassing conception of national identity (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2008).

The education system set up in 1948 was more centralised and influenced by Burman nationalism than what was discussed in the years and months preceding independence, notably by General Aung San (assassinated July 1947), who suggested, perhaps without a comprehensive picture of the complexities and implications, that each ethnic group could have its own schools.[7] Nevertheless, the educational agenda of independent Burma also implied a shift away from the National School Movement's anticolonial Burmese patriotism and towards a more encompassing national narrative aimed at unifying a society divided by colonial policies, diverging aspirations and emerging civil war.

Some of the history textbooks used in the national schools were reprinted throughout the parliamentary era (1948–1962), but most of

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[7] General Aung San suggested in a letter to the Karen on 9 February 1947 that:

> Each ethnic group should have its own cultural rights. For example, Karen have the right to Karen schools, as Shan have the right to their own. This also applies to special holidays, national dress, traditional customs, and the use of native languages in books and government offices. (Naw 2001)

This idea was reiterated in May 1947, in a speech at Jubilee Hall, in the form of a Lenin quote: "A minority is discontented … because it does not possess its own schools. Give it its own schools and all grounds of discontent will disappear" (reproduced in Silverstein [1993]). In 1946, the Education Policy Enquiry Committee recommended that languages other than Burmese could be used in all primary schools.

those published after independence attempted, to a limited but perceptible extent, to produce a national historical narrative more conducive to interethnic unity (e.g. Ba Phe 1952; Thein Han 1958). Colonel Kyaw Zaw's preface to Bo Ba Shin's (1948) history textbook, while perhaps not representative of his fellow contemporary historians' general attitudes, explicitly addressed these new imperatives, stating that previous textbooks were primarily intended to stimulate Burman patriotism, and that it was thus not surprising that minorities who studied those subjects were wary of the ethnic majority.[8]

The accounts of the period following the seizure of power by General Ne Win and the Burma Socialist Programme Party in 1962 are arguably sometimes overly simplistic in their description of systematic state-orchestrated "Burmanisation" policies. Nevertheless, the arrival of military regimes, most notably after the taking over by the State Law and Order Restoration Council following the 1988 demonstrations, prompted major shifts regarding the discourse on the nation and its history.

The first aspect of these discursive evolutions was the return, in textbooks produced after 1988, of three great kings generally described as the founders of three successive Myanmar empires (Anawrahta, 1015–1078; Bayinnaung, 1516–1581; and Alaungphaya, 1714–1760) as the central references and symbols of the country's history, in place of General Aung San. The most direct reason for this shift was obvious: the emergence of Aung San Suu Kyi, his daughter, as the main figure of political opposition to the military. Textbooks thus prioritised the description of strong kings unifying divided polities into strong Buddhist empires, echoing the military's description of their own mandate, instead of Aung San, often remembered as a symbol of the compromises which led to the creation of the Union of Burma.

The second shift entailed boiling down history—perceived as being too complex and conflictual to be narrated in detail—into a harmonious common "Myanmar" essence, running through the three golden eras of the Myanmar empires. The unavoidable surface layer of "unity in diversity" in official discourse was achieved through the inclusion of characters belonging to the "national races" compatible with the largely

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[8] For more details, see Salem-Gervais and Metro (2012).

Burman-centric national narrative—as part of a process sometimes described as "Myanmafication" (Houtman 1999). The use of such narratives was extremely common in twentieth-century nation building, but this simplistic picture appeared particularly problematic in a country which gained independence on (supposedly) federal grounds, in which several groups (e.g. the Mon, Shan and Arakanese) could look back to various kingdoms and political entities perceived as their own golden eras. The classical approach of mapping empires of the past and delimiting them with borders was also used by the junta, projecting the idea of the modern nation-state back into the past to strengthen its present legitimacy. While not going as far as the junta's propagandic claim that Myanmar was the "cradle of humanity",[9] official history textbooks indeed melded ethnic complexity into a harmonious past, starting with the first golden era of Pagan, whose success and prominence was specifically attributed to the solidarity and harmony between all the "national races".[10]

Finally, in order to foster unity among the "national races", the military regime resorted to another classic strategy: designating national enemies. Echoing the harsh daily propaganda in official newspapers, textbook content regarding British colonisation became more virulent, notably in their focus on battles opposing the British by the different "national races" a very selective account of history, by any standard.

In addition to its rhetoric against "white faced" colonists, in the early 2000s, the military resorted to another classic process: designating a neighbour, Thailand in this case, as the national enemy. The specific set of textbooks for primary, middle and high schools dealing with Myanmar-Thai history were particularly harsh:

> Thailand is Myanmar's eastern neighbouring country. When the first Myanmar empire was founded around Pagan, Tai groups, whom Thais come from, only succeeded to set up city-states; there was no kingdom yet.

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[9] From 1997 onwards, the State Peace and Development Council, after the discovery of ancient primate fossils, started promoting the idea that Pondaung (in today's Magway Region) was the "cradle of humanity" (May May Aung 1999).

[10] For more details, see Salem-Gervais (2013).

Thais still have hate and [have] resentment regarding events of the past. They have an obsessive fear of a strong Myanmar, which would be a threat for them …. Whereas they systematically accuse Myanmars of being cruel invaders, in reality, they are the ones, all throughout history, who have attacked and invaded Myanmar whenever it was weak. They want to divide the national races and Myanmar territory.[11]

Parallel to this increasingly nationalist and Burman-centric perspective in government schools, beyond government-controlled territory, the education systems set up by ethnic armed groups (such as the Karen National Union and the Shan State Army) resorted to very similar processes. In fact, their textbooks were akin to photographic negatives of those produced by the MOE: different golden ages, different heroes and unifiers and, unsurprisingly, casting the Burmese and their great kings as national enemies. A 2007 textbook used by the Shan State Army, for instance, described how Alaungphaya, one of the great kings celebrated for unifying the "national races" in the government's textbooks, "tried to exterminate the Shan people", while reinterpreting some of the maps drawn by Burmese nationalist educators of the colonial period as evidence of a vast, ancient and coherent Shan kingdom.[12]

## Teaching Ethnic Histories in the 2011–2020 Context

Issues regarding history teaching (and the inclusion of ethnic minority languages and cultures) in formal education still had considerable educational and political implications but were set in a new context between 2011 and 2020, which witnessed unprecedented political changes. Myanmar embarked on a journey towards democracy as well as a slow but nonetheless tangible decentralisation process meant to lead towards federalism.

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[11] Translated from the 2011 high school Myanmar-Thai history textbook (original Burmese versions in Salem-Gervais 2013)

[12] For more details, see Hkur Seng (2007) and Salem-Gervais and Metro (2012).

Arguably, after decades of extreme centralisation, numerous conflicts and an overall political deadlock, the military junta that undertook the writing of the 2008 constitution from 1993 to 2007 tried to assuage ethnic demands for federalism as well as demands for a democratic system. Under this constitution, which underwrote a political system often described as "hybrid" because of the decisive political prerogatives that remained in the hands of the military (Egreteau 2016; Raynaud 2016), the state and regional parliaments and governments, largely nominal under the first legislature, progressively came to life. As local political ecosystems developed around these institutions in the second half of the 2010s—including, as described below, in education—they became increasingly critical actors in decentralised politics (Htun and Raynaud 2018).

There are in fact two related but distinct issues involving the introduction of ethnic minority languages, cultures and histories in formal education (Salem-Gervais and Raynaud 2019, 2020). The first was building or strengthening administrative and curricular bridges between the MOE and existing non-state education systems, often referred to as ethnic basic education providers which provided education to an estimated 300,000 students and included the education departments of the aforementioned armed groups. This process entailed negotiations and compromises, notably in terms of language-in-education policies and contents of history textbooks. Different groups presented very different situations and challenges. In the context of ongoing conflict and tension, as of 2020, a clear plan to formally recognise these institutions was yet to be drawn.

The second issue—and the main topic of this chapter—was the inclusion of ethnic identities, languages and histories in government schools, which were attended by a total of nine million students. This prospect entailed two different channels. The first was the evolution of the national history curriculum and a shift towards a more "inclusive" version of the national historical narrative in these textbooks. The second was the inclusion of ethnic minority histories in government schools, within the context of the decentralisation of a portion of the school curriculum.

Regarding the national curriculum, new textbooks were being released year-by-year since 2017. For the 2019–2020 school year, the new social studies textbooks, which included history, were taught for Grades 1, 2

and 3, for two periods per week (as opposed to three periods per week in higher primary school). The new Grade 6 history textbook was also published and taught for three periods per week as a standalone subject. At the time of writing, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted at least half of the 2020–2021 school year, during which the new textbooks for Grades 4, 7 and 10 were supposed to be introduced.

The history sections of the social studies textbooks in primary schools released in this period focused mainly on famous historical characters, including but not limited to Burmese kings, as well as general descriptions of the most prominent Burmese kingdoms. This latter theme was also addressed in more detail in the first grades of the middle school history curriculum, along with world history (Table 5.1).

This new curriculum was one of the outcomes of review processes of the education sector, notably the Comprehensive Education Sector Review, launched by President Thein Sein in 2012, as well as the subsequent National Education Strategic Plan issued in 2016. Organisations

**Table 5.1** Brief outline of Myanmar's new history curriculum (as of 2020)

| Level | Grade | Details |
|---|---|---|
| **Primary school** (as part of social studies, i.e. history and geography) | 1 | Myanmar's historical figures: King Anawrahta, King Bayinnaung, King Alaungphaya |
| | 2 | Myanmar's historical figures: King Kyansittha, Queen Shinsawpu, Mahabandula |
| | 3 | Myanmar's historical figures: King Mindon, General Aung San, U Thant |
| | 4 | Pagan Kingdom, Taungoo Kingdom |
| | 5 | *Not published yet* |
| **Middle school** | 6 | Myanmar's prehistory, ancient cities, pagan; development of human societies: hunting, agriculture, Babylon, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, China |
| | 7 | Myanmar history: pagan and Taungoo kingdoms; world history: history of Europe |
| | 8 | *Not published yet* |
| | 9 | *Not published yet* |
| **High school** | 10 | *Not published yet* |
| | 11 | *Not published yet* |
| | 12 | *Not published yet* |

such as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, Australian Aid, the Department for International Development (now the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) and the European Union were involved in this education reform process. More specifically, the Japan International Cooperation Agency as well as the Asian Development Bank supported the MOE (notably through local and international consultancies) in developing the new textbooks, which were then evaluated by the World Bank's consultants (Metro 2019a).

This new curriculum was illustrated in colour and made very significant steps in terms of shifting away from the much-criticised rote learning pedagogy under military regimes. The contents of the first textbooks published, however, were described as still largely "Bamar-centric" (Metro 2019b), through the continued emphasis on the great kings and their kingdoms (Salem-Gervais 2018). A noticeable novelty was the introduction of characters banned from public discourse under military regimes, such as General Aung San and United Nations Secretary-General U Thant, in the Grade 3 textbook, introduced in 2019–2020 (Table 5.1). It should also be noted that in a country with such diversity, where ethnicity has been deeply politicised and with such different views on history, including satisfactory ethnic minority histories into the national curriculum was a daunting prospect.

These discussions regarding the content of history textbooks also echoed much more prominent debates regarding historical symbols and heroes, some of which grew into major controversies in the last few years. Most notable was the naming of the bridge between Mawlamyine and Bilu Island in Mon State after General Aung San, and the erection of statues of him under the government led by his daughter in the capitals of several states (notably Kayah, Kachin and Chin States).

His figure, which started to reappear on banknotes in 2020 after a hiatus of 30 years, used to be perceived to at least some extent as a symbol of compromise between Myanmar's different ethnic groups. Post-1988 junta attempts to suppress this reference also bestowed upon him a "rebellious" dimension. However, if fostering a sense of belonging to the nation was the objective, the National League for Democracy government's efforts to use him as a national symbol arguably significantly backfired.

Many actors linked to ethnic minorities seemed to perceive this as a new effort of "Burmanisation" and numerous protests were staged.[13]

# Developing the Local Curricula

The second channel for introducing ethnic minority languages, cultures and histories in government schools was known as the "local curriculum". Following the 2008 constitutional framework, and more specifically the 2014–2015 Education Law, each of the states/regions had the right to produce the content of 15 per cent of the total curriculum of the schools under its jurisdiction. These local curricula, which were supposed to be developed up to high school, were largely designed to include ethnic minority languages, culture and histories in schooling, even if other classes linked to local activities and needs (e.g. protection of the environment, agriculture and farming, arts and handicrafts, traditional sports, music or basic computer skills) could be included where relevant.[14]

After frustrating beginnings in 2012–2013, the teaching of ethnic minority languages as subjects, as well as their oral use as "classroom languages", developed significantly in the last few years. As of 2019–2020, 64 languages were officially being taught as subjects in government schools.[15] Parallel to this ongoing process, five of the seven states (Chin, Kachin, Kayah, Mon and Kayin[16]) started developing their respective "Local Knowledge" textbooks since 2017, dealing with the history, geography, culture, symbols and various customs of their respective regions.

The drafting committees for these textbooks included multiple local actors: social affairs and ethnic affairs ministers of the regional governments, local university teachers, representatives of the MOE and the Ministry of Ethnic Affairs (MOEA) in the respective states as well as the

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[13] See, for instance, Salai Za Uk Ling. 2019, September 26. Statue-building spree tarnishes Aung San's legacy. *Frontier Myanmar*.

[14] For more details, see Salem-Gervais and Raynaud (2020).

[15] For more details, see Salem-Gervais and Raynaud (2019, 2020).

[16] "Kayin" is Burmese for "Karen" and is thus the official name of this state. The Shan and Rakhine States were not included in the first phase of this project because of limited resources, challenging ethnic diversity and ongoing conflicts.

Literature and Culture Committees (LCCs) of the different local ethnic groups. While armed groups and ethnic civil society organisations did not necessarily wish to take part in the project, in some instances, such as in Mon and Karen States, representatives of the education departments of local ethnic armed groups were indeed involved (Table 5.2). UNICEF also largely supported the production of these textbooks (as well as the ethnic languages curricula) through its representatives and local consultants.[17]

In the early stages of the project, in 2017, there were discussions regarding the language(s) that should be used to draft these "Local Knowledge" textbooks in the different states. However, unlike the numerous curricula for teaching ethnic minority languages, it soon became clear to national and most local stakeholders that "common" state-/region-based knowledge textbooks were preferable to ethnic-based curricula in a multitude of languages. Drafting these state-/region-based textbooks in Burmese thus avoided situations in which, for example, Pa-O children learned only Pa-O history through overly patriotic texts, which was not necessarily conducive to "peacebuilding". This process thus forced all stakeholders to collaborate and compromise regarding what was to be taught to the youth of their states/respective regions.

At the time of writing, the "Local Knowledge" textbooks for Grades 1 to 3 were finalised in these five states, approved by their respective regional governments. Despite hesitations regarding the framework, which prescribed the teaching of these "Local Knowledge" curricula from Grade 1 (which may have been slightly too early for the students to understand the content), some of these textbooks were originally set to be taught in pilot schools in 2020–2021, following teacher training sessions organised by the MOE and UNICEF, until the COVID-19-induced closure of schools.

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[17] The material gathered in this section is based on 140 semi-structured interviews with all these actors, as well as those from Sagaing and Yangon Regions and Naypyidaw Union Territory, between December 2018 and November 2019 (Salem-Gervais and Raynaud 2020).

**Table 5.2** The Mon State local curriculum implementation committee

| Actors | Official position | Committee position |
|---|---|---|
| Mon State government and parliament | Mon State minister of social affairs | President |
| | Minister of natural resources and environment (in charge of Mon ethnic affairs) | Vice-president |
| | Minister of Pa-O ethnic affairs | Vice-president |
| | Minister of Kayin ethnic affairs | Vice-president |
| | Minister of Bamar ethnic affairs | Member |
| | Deputy speaker of the Mon State parliament | Member |
| | Four representatives of the ethnic nationalities affairs committee of the Mon State parliament | Members |
| LCCs | Representative of the Mon LCC | Member |
| | Representative of the Kayin LCC | Member |
| | Representative of the Pa-O LCC | Member |
| Armed groups' education departments | Representative of the Mon National Education Committee | Member |
| | Representative of the Karen Education Department | Member |
| MOE and MOEA representatives in Mon State | Mon State education officer (MOE) | Member |
| | Rector of Mawlamyine University | Member |
| | Headmaster of Mawlamyine Education College | Member |
| | Representative of Mawlamyine Technology University | Member |
| | Mon State ethnic affairs officer (MOEA) | Member |
| | Representative of the Computer University | Member |
| | Representative of the Agriculture University | Member |
| | District/Township education officers | Members |
| | Deputy Mon State education officer | Secretary |

# Experiences and Challenges
# in the Different States

The local curriculum was largely perceived as a tool to balance out the overall programme by including a complexity of detail about ethnic identities that would have been impossible to manage in the national textbooks, through state/region-based perspectives. However, including these ethnic identities and histories into local curricula sometimes proved more complex than what outsiders expected.

In national debates, ethnic identity claims tended to be antagonistic to the majority Burman identity, denouncing "Burmanisation" in a classic centre-periphery model. However, drafting local curricula switched the geographical scope of the playing field to the states/regions. Other antagonisms, fault lines, disputes and conflicting ethnonationalist narratives also existed within these smaller geographic, administrative and political entities. In some cases, reconciliation was particularly challenging, since those groups were in close contact and possessed a long history of conflict and distrust.

Unsurprisingly, developing the regional history sections was often the most problematic part of drafting—these sections differed the most from one state to another in the final drafts. The national guidelines for these local curricula suggested the inclusion of role models (/sanbja.pou'gou/, sometimes translated as "ideal people" in official documents). This approach, which had much continuity with past practice (at least since the anticolonial period and the subsequent promotion of "Myanmar heroes" aimed at fostering nationalist pride), also resembled the one used to draft the new lower primary national curriculum, as described above.

The relevance of this approach to teaching history can certainly be discussed, since historical figures are often polarising symbols, which may have very different meanings for different groups. Indeed, no "ideal people" were found in Kayin State's draft textbooks. The actors involved related how preliminary meetings of the "Kayin State Local Curriculum Team", in aiming to decide which topics should be included in the textbooks, rapidly showed that choosing role models would be contentious, not only with the central government but also between different groups

of Kayin State. Some wanted to include politicians and soldiers, such as Saw Ba U Gyi (1905–1950), the founder of the Karen National Union, whose commemoration as a Karen martyr became the object of controversy.[18] Others insisted on the inclusion of General Bo Mya or Thamanya Sayadaw and Myaing Kyi Ngu Sayadaw.[19] Some of these historical figures were directly linked to conflicts and tensions, both within Karen armed groups (e.g. the Karen National Union and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army) and between them and the Myanmar army. After several somewhat agitated meetings, the decision was made to exclude any of these role models from the textbooks.[20]

In Kayah State, different groups had very different perspectives regarding local historical figures: from a first list of 50 local role models proposed by the different members of the local curriculum committee, only 5 made it to the final draft of the Grades 1 to 3 textbooks. The representatives of the various LCCs involved often regretted not having been able to include some of their historical leaders, but also related that the experience helped them to understand the sensitivity of these issues and the actual meaning of compromise in composing textbooks acceptable to all. Some hoped to include these historical figures down the road of developing the local curriculum, either in higher grades' "Local Knowledge" textbooks or lessons on their respective ethnic languages.[21]

Other interviewees reported smaller difficulties in finding compromises between ethnic groups. When it came to introducing ethnic minority languages and cultures in government schools, Mon State was often regarded as the least challenging case because of its comparatively simpler ethnic setting (mainly composed of Mon, Bamar, Karen, Pa-O as well as

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[18] See Nyein Nyein. 2019, September 19. Karen Martyrs' Day Case Shows Ethnic Rights in Retreat Under Present Myanmar Govt. *The Irrawaddy*; Wei Yan Aung. 2019, August 12. Marking the Death of a Karen Revolutionary Leader. *The Irrawaddy*.

[19] General Bo Mya (1927–2006) was the Karen National Union's chairman between 1976 and 2000; Thamanya Sayadaw (1910–2003) and Myaing Kyi Ngu Sayadaw (1947–2018) were two influential monks based in Kayin State.

[20] Interviews with members of the Kayin State Local Curriculum Development Team, including Karen LCC members, Kayin State ministers, MOE and MOEA representatives in Hpa An, July 2018 and August 2019.

[21] Interviews with representatives of the MOE, MOEA and eight LCCs in Loikaw, December 2018 and August 2019.

Muslim and Hindu populations originating from India, but whose languages and cultures were not taught in public schools since they were not recognised as "Ethnic Nationalities"). However, some aspects of ancient history, such as the mention of Suvarnabhumi, a mythical "Golden Land" which according to some accounts was linked to the historical city of Thaton, were likely to prompt debates between Mon and Pa-O representatives, with both claiming historical ownership. The local curriculum committee had to discuss the matter and find ways to present these topics as a compromise without hurting any sensibilities. The committee ended up not featuring role models altogether, and the history section focused on the flags and symbols of the ethnic groups, their festivals, ancient cities, famous pagodas, museums and historical buildings.[22]

In Kachin State—where representatives of different LCCs sometimes held diverging views on which (and how) languages should be used in schools—debates surrounding the "Local Knowledge" textbooks (Table 5.3) seemingly focused on similarities regarding material culture, rather than diverging perspectives concerning historical figures. Groups having similar "traditional" weapons, musical instrument or cooking recipes, for instance, had to find compromises to overcome arguments regarding who "got it first" or "invented it".[23]

The drafting of these history sections did not seem to have prompted major debates in Chin State despite its great linguistic diversity and the complexities involved in producing a list of languages (as opposed to "dialects") to be formally taught in schools (Salem-Gervais and Van Cung Lian 2020). A number of historical characters associated with specific groups, including military leaders, were featured in the draft textbooks, along with historical events.[24]

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[22] /munpjinedeitha thinjou:hnjun:baun/ [Mon State Curriculum Framework] Mon State MOE and Mon State government, March 2019. Interviews with members of the Mon State Local Curriculum Development Team in August 2019.

[23] Interviews with members of the Kachin State Local Curriculum Development Team in Myitkyina, June 2019.

[24] Interviews with members of the Chin State Local Curriculum Development Team, UNICEF, MOE and MOEA in Hakha, May 2019 and April 2020.

**Table 5.3** Kachin State's "Local Knowledge" textbook content up to Grade 3 (as of 2019–2020)

| Themes | Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cultural and traditional heritage | Ethnic groups of Kachin State; traditional foods of the ethnic groups; traditional objects and utensils of the ethnic groups; traditional musical instruments of the ethnic groups | Costumes of the ethnic groups; ingredients of traditional foods of the ethnic groups; utilisation of some instruments of the ethnic groups; traditional musical instruments of the ethnic groups (gongs) | Traditional festival of the ethnic groups; cooking techniques of the ethnic groups; tools used by the ethnic groups for agriculture; traditional musical instruments of the ethnic groups (drums) |
| Regional history | Captain Thura Bwe; La Hsaung Kyan (thrice winner of the *Thura* title); U Sai Htein Lin | Second Lieutenant Burma Gallantry Medal Thura Agudi; Sao Phaman Aung; Milar Shika Tai Khamti | Duwa Kayeinaw (member of parliament); Colonel Ati |
| The region and the environment | Rivers, streams, lakes and waterfalls around us; hills, mountains plains and valleys around us; wards, villages and towns around us; wild animals; natural reserves | Famous rivers, lakes and streams of Kachin State; Famous mountain ranges of Kachin State; about your township and district; wild animals of Kachin State; natural parks of Kachin State | Indawgyi Lake; Mount Khakaborazi; townships and districts of Kachin State; Hukaung Valley Wildlife Sanctuary; Hponganrazi Wildlife Sanctuary |
| Natural resources and economic activities | Fruits and plants produced regionally; flowers that can be grown in Kachin State; vegetables that can be grown in Kachin State; plants in Kachin State; various mining products in Kachin State | Agricultural activities and cultivated plants; plantation and gardening activities; forests; products from the forest; mining products (jade) | Grapefruits and oranges; household cooking activities; weaving mills; household activities; mining products (amber) |

## Conclusion

After five decades of military rule, largely characterised by centralisation and a shift towards a Burman-centric conception of the nation, the process of including ethnic minority languages, cultures and histories in formal education underwent extremely significant developments between 2011 and 2020, with an increased momentum starting in 2017. Although specific aspects of this matter (such as the recognition of non-state ethnic basic education providers or the development of more inclusive discourse in the national history curriculum) were still generating deep frustrations, this partial decentralisation of the curriculum seemed liable to induce significant political and educational benefits.

Following the *coup d'état* of 1 February 2021 and its deeply disrupting aftermath, Myanmar faces great uncertainties. The consequences of these events on education policies pertaining to ethnic minority identities in general and the local curricula in particular remain to be seen as the military strives to control the education sector while aspirations towards decentralisation and federalism seem to be all but fading away.

In any case, the process of producing these "Local Knowledge" curricula in general, and their history sections in particular, seemed liable to engender or enhance contradictory social dynamics. On one hand, this initiative forced the actors involved to discuss and compromise on the content of these textbooks, and in the process actively participate in the creation of state/regional political ecosystems, a crucial step towards addressing the fundamental issues faced since independence (see Chap. 3 for a broader discussion on political readiness to engage in reconciliation and curricular reform).

On the other hand, the overall approach, largely based on the recognition of discrete ethnic identities (notably through the promotion of historical figures supposedly corresponding to these categories), did not really allow for much-needed explorations of ethnic fluidity.[25] The process of recognition and attribution of political prerogatives along ethnic lines, largely inherited from colonisation and constituting the political matrix of the country since independence, may prove to be an enduring

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[25] For more details, see (Salem-Gervais and Metro (2012); Metro (2013); Salem-Gervais (2018); Thant Myint-U (2019).

issue, beyond the political deadlock caused by the *coup d'état*—as noted by observers of other societies, identity-based recognition indeed "reif[ies] categories that may misrepresent the lived experience of group members", which may in turn open the door to more recognition-seeking through claims linked to categories within categories (Markell 2003; Lane et al. 2018; Malloy 2014).

As noted in Chap. 4, peacebuilding and raising the quality of education likely go hand in hand. Discussing different views of historical characters and events very much aligned with the perspective of a Myanmar education system which was moving away from rote learning and teacher-centred pedagogy. In order to stimulate "critical thinking" and teach history which moved away from essentialised ethnic categories, researchers had indeed suggested a departure from the rote learning and role model approach. Metro (2013) suggested that teaching students how to handle primary history sources and documents would be particularly relevant in this regard. Although challenging to implement—especially in the context of the current political crisis—this prospect could still contribute, as far as history teaching is concerned, to a culture of discussion featuring divergent perspectives and away from monolithic narratives underpinning multiple, and sometimes hardly compatible, nation-building projects.

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# Part II

## Negotiating the History of Minorities in European Settler Countries and a Former Empire

# 6

# Portrayals of Ethnic Minorities, Migration and Empire in English History Textbooks, 1910–2020

## Stuart Foster

## Introduction

For more than a century, history textbooks have played a prominent role in the education of young people in England.[1] This chapter aims to explore significant trends and historical developments in history education and history textbook production in England during this period. In particular, it examines the ways in which and the extent to which the history of minority groups and portrayals of migration and empire have been presented in these textbooks. This analysis is based on the examination of a range of history textbooks used in classrooms over the past

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[1] Note that the focus is on textbooks published in England, not on textbooks produced in the devolved education systems of Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland (collectively comprising the United Kingdom [UK]). In terms of content, however, English textbooks and curriculum mandates typically refer to "British" history.

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century and is divided into three sections. The first section analyses text-books written during the era of the "great tradition" and focuses on texts produced before the 1970s. The second section examines textbooks written after the 1970s and primarily focuses on texts published following the introduction of the National Curriculum for history in 1991. The third section analyses textbooks published in the past 20 years. The chapter concludes by summarising some of the most important trends and developments in these textbooks' portrayals of ethnic minorities, migration and empire over the past century and considers the most likely direction for future textbook content and production in England.[2]

Significantly, although this chapter explicitly focuses on the educational experience in England, the issues that emerge are relevant to all nations with multiethnic and diverse populations. Furthermore, because disputes in England over how the national past should be presented to young people often mirror the complex and contentious arguments that have raged and continue to rage in numerous countries, this chapter offers intriguing and relevant insights for history educators, textbook publishers and policymakers in international settings (see, e.g., Foster and Crawford 2006; Clark 2008; Symcox and Wilschut 2009; Carretero et al. 2010; Taylor and Guyver 2011).

## British Identity, Ethnic Diversity and the 'Great Tradition', 1910–1970

From the outset, it is important to recognise that for most of the twentieth century, decisions about how and what history to teach in England occurred at the local level. Typically, history departments in individual schools decided on their own curriculum. Therefore, unlike many other nations in Europe and beyond, interference in the school history curriculum from the central government was largely absent.[3] In fact,

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[2] For a related study in the United States, see Foster (1999).

[3] Prior to the 1988 Education Reform Act, schools operated within the framework of the 1944 Education Act, which did not prescribe a curriculum. Its only mandate was that physical education and religious education should be taught.

from 1944 to 1988, the only national intervention into teaching occurred in the final years of compulsory education, in which students (principally aged 16 and 18) took common final examinations.[4]

An additional issue that warrants careful consideration is that England has always been (and remains) very unusual in matters of textbook production, selection and use. Unlike many other countries, state-regulated or "state-approved" textbooks have never existed in England. Rather, individual schools have always been free to purchase textbooks from the open, commercial market. This liberal approach to textbook provision has ensured that across the decades, a huge variety of textbooks always existed.

Significantly, despite their apparent freedom to develop individual history curricula and purchase textbooks from the open market, for most of the twentieth century, schools have followed a common approach. Indeed, history education in England prior to the 1970s typically reflected what is often characterised as the "great tradition" of history teaching, with its distinctively Anglocentric, nationalistic and conservative emphasis (Chancellor 1970; Sylvester 1994; Castle 1996; Dickinson 2000; Marsden 2001). The history curriculum was largely structured as a year-on-year chronological parade through Britain's imperial past, in which attention to constitutional, military and political events, the achievements of great men and the activities of ruling monarchs was almost guaranteed. In contrast, the increasingly diverse makeup of English society and the contributions of immigrants were typically ignored by most educators and textbook authors.

An analysis of a wide range of selected school history textbooks, published between 1910 and 1970, offers stark insights into how the nation's past was narrated to schoolchildren. In particular, textbooks commonly shared three key features during this "great tradition" period.

First, it is striking that many textbook authors in this period saw it as their duty to instil a sense of pride and respect for the deeds and sacrifices of one's forefathers. This was clearly the intention of the authors of the

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[4] These publicly examined courses changed identities during the years since 1944, but they included the School Certificate, Certificate of Secondary Education History, O Level History, General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) History, and A Level History.

popular *Periodic Histories*, published in 1926. In an introduction entitled "The Wonderful Past", readers were told that English history amounted to a "continuous thread" in which:

> The chain of gold is the main story; the pearls, diamonds, emeralds, and rubies with which the chain is studded are the heroes and heroines that make the story sparkle. (Chambers 1926, p. 8)

In narrating the past, many history textbooks of this era often appeared to blur the lines between history and fiction in order to tell romantic stories of heroism and noble victories. Patriotic songs, poems and references to historical novels were frequently used to enliven the texts and encourage nationalistic sentiment. The main characters of these textbooks were typically monarchs (e.g. Henry V, Elizabeth I) or military leaders (e.g. Drake, Wellington) who engaged in noble victories and sometimes arrived at heroic deaths (e.g. Nelson, Wolfe). For example, one textbook published by Macmillan in 1912 informed its readers that General Gordon, who was killed in Sudan in 1885, "has left a name which will stand high among the heroes of his country, and his memory is one of the priceless possessions of the British race" (Macmillan 1912, p. 120).

Close analysis routinely reveals that such textbooks offered a nationalistic, single narrative, which centred on celebrating selective aspects of Britain's past. Illustrative of this trend was the common tendency of textbook authors to use pronouns such as "we" and "our" when narrating the nation's history to young people. It is also notable that scant attention was paid to the perspectives of minority groups or of other nations. In fact, almost without exception, textbooks written in this era presented an unashamedly white, upper-middle class, Anglocentric narrative focused on the accomplishments of male protagonists, military leaders and ruling monarchs.

The second overarching feature of textbooks produced in the era of the "great tradition" was their widespread tendency to promote a sense of English accomplishment, superiority and unremitting progress. All textbooks, for example, took pride in detailing how England led the world in the development of parliamentary democracy. Textbooks keenly

celebrated landmark political and constitutional acts such as the signing of the Magna Carta, the beginning of parliament, the Peasants' Revolt, the introduction of *habeas corpus*, the Bill of Rights and the Great Reform Act of 1832. As one textbook reminded its readers: "No Englishman can look upon the Magna Carta without a feeling of reverence, for it recalls the struggle our forefathers waged to secure the freedoms we now enjoy" (Macmillan 1912, p. 93).

Most history textbooks also emphasised that progress over time was developmental, measured and positive. One textbook, for example, pointed out that whereas revolutionary change occurred in France during the eighteenth century through violence and bloodshed, Britain's three "distinctive revolutions" (i.e. "industrial, agrarian, religious and social") were "carried out for the most part without actual fighting" (Chambers 1926).

The era of the "great tradition" textbook narratives commonly presented a "Whig" interpretation of history. They portrayed Britain's past as an inevitable progression towards increasing enlightenment, liberty and democracy. Furthermore, textbook narratives often took pride in celebrating what they deemed to be British "exceptionalism" and superiority. In striking contrast, the achievements of other nations and the contributions of peoples from other ethnic groups were typically either ignored or presented at the margins.

The third feature of all textbooks published during this period was their unreserved celebration of the achievements of the British Empire. Central to all textbook narratives was a clear sense of Britain's "imperial mission" and its destiny (even duty) to improve the lives of "subjects" across the world. One textbook, for example, arrogantly declared that Britain's mission was to "[t]each alien races to walk the paths of civilization" (Fletcher and Kipling 1930, p. 245) while others keenly celebrated the contributions and positive impacts of British imperialism. For example, a textbook published in 1921 trumpeted the accomplishments of "the little island in the northern seas" whose history was "so crowded, so glorious, [and] so fruitful of noble service to mankind" (Davis 1921, p. 320). Davis's *The Story of England* continued emphasising the theme of British benevolence and exceptionalism by dramatically informing its readers that:

If England perished tomorrow, and if even London, the heart of the Empire, were blotted from the map, there would still be peoples left in three continents to boast: "Our forefathers came from England, and our lands were bought with English lives and labour. We are what England made us; and we do the work that England laid upon us. By her laws we are ruled, by her memory we are united, and in the thought of her great men we find our daily inspiration". (Ibid.)

What is strikingly apparent in analysing textbook content from this period is the widespread failure to acknowledge any of the negative impacts of British colonial rule. As products of their age, textbooks did not dwell on ingrained racist attitudes, the enslavement of conquered peoples or the oppression of British imperialism. Rather, they emphasised the unremitting good that British rule offered the world and, in particular, to those peoples who were allegedly unable to govern themselves. Thus, although one textbook recognised that "India was won by the sword", it was able to dismiss this grim truth because "Britain has given peace and prosperity to three hundred million of that vast dependency". Readers were proudly told that "Britain will hold India because it strives to give freedom and justice to the struggling masses of people of all races and of all religions, who, left to themselves, would perish by war and brigandage" (Macmillan 1912, p. 233). The message was clear: British rule was positive and benign, inexorably more just and progressive than any other local or "alien" alternative.

Looking at the broader landscape of history textbook production from 1910 to the 1970s, it would be imprudent to suggest that every key issue and theme remained constant across the decades. Undoubtedly, shifting world events and the evolution of historical practice precipitated variations over time. Textbooks written at the end of this period, for example, often paid more attention to major international events—a trend that was particularly noticeable in the period after both World Wars. Furthermore, over time, textbook portrayals increasingly focused on aspects of social and economic history. Nevertheless, despite these subtle shifts in emphasis, it is undeniable that many of the key characteristics of the "great tradition" remained firmly in place for most of this period. Indeed, as outlined above, almost without exception, textbooks written

in this period offered readers an Anglocentric, elitist, heroic and celebratory version of the nation's past. Typically, they eschewed the contributions other nations and people in Britain from diverse cultures and, in dramatic contrast, exaggerated the highly selective achievements of those narrowly defined as British. Furthermore, almost without exception, authors' opinions were stated as objective fact and historical accounts were typically presented as uncontested "truths".

## The Emergence of 'New History' and the Challenge to Tradition, the 1970s–1990s

During the 1970s and early 1980s, however, important changes took place in history education in England which significantly challenged many of the central tenets of the "great tradition". Many factors can potentially explain this shift. For example, at the beginning of this period, the history profession was particularly concerned that history as a school subject was in "danger" because it was perceived to be "excruciatingly, dangerously dull and … of little apparent relevance to pupils" (Price 1968). Reflecting sociocultural discourses prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s, advocates of more inclusive, critical histories of underrepresented social groups also became more prominent. At the same time, the cognitive revolution challenged existing theories of how children learned, and constructivist pedagogies emerged as alternatives to didactic teaching. Within this context, a number of researchers in the UK (e.g. Booth, Fines, Lee, Shemilt) demonstrated that students' abilities in history had previously been underestimated and argued that teachers had to move away from an emphasis on knowledge retention to focusing more on engaging students in the disciplinary practices of history.

During the 1980s, therefore, a fiercely ideological clash occurred between proponents of a traditional chronological and nationalistic approach to history teaching, on the one hand, and those on the other who argued for a "new" history which placed greater emphasis on the structure of the discipline, the interpretive nature of history and the

desire for more inclusive and diverse historical perspectives (Sylvester 1994; Crawford 1996; Foster 1998; Phillips 1998; Dickinson, 2000; Haydn 2004).[5] The most effective embodiment of this radically different approach to history education was the Schools History Project (SHP) which, from the early 1970s onwards, offered teachers and students an innovative, critical and publicly examined "new history" curriculum (Dickinson 2000; Haydn 2004; Phillips 1998; Shemilt 1980; Sylvester 1994; Wineburg 2001).[6]

A key feature of "new history" was that it placed greater emphasis on the histories of peoples with different perspectives. Thus, rather than adopting the perspective of the "great tradition" and its "top-down" view of the past, "new history" invited attention to social history, women's history, labour history and the histories of other nations and peoples. Typically, SHP educators encouraged students to think critically about history and appreciate that the past is not fixed and agreed upon, but subject to different interpretations and perspectives.

Disputes between advocates of "new" and "traditional" history became particularly acute at the end of the 1980s when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher controversially introduced a National Curriculum for schools. Significantly, the 1988 Education Reform Act laid the foundations for sweeping reforms and represented a seismic change in the educational landscape in England. For the first time in England's history, curriculum decisions were to be centrally controlled by the government. Not surprisingly, disagreement over what young people should learn in the history curriculum was significant, as protagonists wrestled for control of the cultural and educational agenda. *The Guardian* journalist, Martin Kettle (1990), famously warned that the ability of politicians to control how the past is "officially" narrated to young people was a "big prize" of enormous cultural significance and import.

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[5] Although battles over history surfaced most acutely in arguments over the National Curriculum for history in the late 1980s, the clash between competing traditions was apparent many years earlier, particularly during the introduction of the GCSE examination course for students aged 14–16 in 1986.

[6] The SHP was established in 1972. It continues to offer an alternative to existing history courses and remains a significant force in history education in England. See http://www.schoolshistoryproject.org.uk.

On one side of the ideological and cultural divide were those who considered history to be a collection of universally accepted "truths" to be learned by school students. Typically politically conservative, these advocates argued that school history should serve as a means to instil a sense of unity, pride, patriotism and veneration of the nation's heritage and achievements in the young.

In contrast, critics of a more progressive political persuasion considered any "official" historical narrative as subject to debate and contestation. For them, history was complex and open to diverse perspectives and interpretations. For this reason, these advocates believed that school history should focus on cultivating students' abilities to understand and critically evaluate historical evidence and historical narratives. Pedagogically, historical enquiry and critical analysis were favoured over a didactic approach which fundamentally aimed to disseminate a fixed "official" narrative.

In the ensuing dispute over what should be taught in history classrooms, Thatcher made her "traditionalist" position very clear. She declared she was "appalled" by suggestions that history education should "put the emphasis on interpretation and enquiry as against content and knowledge". She also demanded that more attention be paid to "British history" and "chronological study" (Thatcher 1993).

A simple overview is that when the first National Curriculum for history was eventually introduced in schools in 1991, it appeared to be a compromise between "new" and "traditional" ideas on how history should be taught (DfES 1991).[7] On one hand, the traditionalists were appeased by the curriculum's primary attention to a chronological study of British history. For example, during the three years devoted to the study of history for students aged 11–14 (known as Key Stage 3),[8] they were required to study five core units. Three of these units centred on a study of British history broken into chronological segments (i.e. 1066–1500; 1500–1750; 1750–1900). The other two core units focused on "the Roman Empire" and "the era of the Second World War". But

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[7] The Department for Education and Science.

[8] Students in England progress through six key stages between the ages of 3 and 18 (i.e. Foundation and Key Stages 1–5). Key Stage 3 typically spans the first three years of secondary school for students aged 11–14.

even these units devoted attention to the influence of events on the British people. Thus, to the delight of many traditionalists, the principal focus of the curriculum was on British history.

On the other hand, the National Curriculum did offer advocates of "new history" some comfort. For example, many welcomed the central requirement that students be taught to understand and evaluate historical evidence and consider differing interpretations and diverse perspectives. Enshrined in the National Curriculum was the principle that history education involved more than students' uncritical acceptance and learning of given stories or historical facts. Interestingly, Husbands et al. (2003, p. 13) suggested that the two traditions appeared to be held "in creative tension", whereas Haydn (2004, p. 90) considered the compromise to be "an uneasy mix of old and new."

Not surprisingly, during the 1980s and 1990s, history textbook production responded to the shifting landscape in history education and the requirements of the National Curriculum for history. Indeed, many of the "traditional" textbooks based on conventions established for generations were replaced by new texts, the majority of which bore the hallmarks of "new history". Typically, textbooks invited enquiry, pupil engagement and activities, where students were asked to assess and analyse historical sources in order to reach defensible conclusions.

Led by Colin Shephard, the director of the SHP, a series of Key Stage 3 textbooks were produced in the early 1990s which embodied the changing landscape in history education. For example, the very popular Key Stage 3 textbook, *Peace and War* (Shephard et al. 1993), was structured around 12 sections and a series of enquiry questions spanning 1750 to 1945. Section 5 focused on "Victorian Values" and invited students to consider provocative issues such as "Did the Victorians Care?" or "Were the British Racist?" Significantly, the six-page textbook enquiry which focused on British racism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries used a series of primary sources to explicitly convey the horror and brutality of the slave trade and to exemplify the shameful ways in which Britain exploited other humans for economic gain. Undoubtedly, the authors wanted students to consider many of the negative aspects of colonial rule and potentially acquire an empathy for, and a deeper understanding of, the treatment of ethnic groups in the dominant age of British imperialism.

The tendency for a number of textbooks to ask students to think about both Britain's relationship with the British Empire and the experiences of those immigrants who came to Britain over time was similarly illustrated in *Past into Present: 1700–Present*. In particular, one striking chapter entitled "Multicultural Britain: Who Are the British?" offered an intriguing insight into the impact of immigration on British society. At the beginning of the chapter, the textbook authors set out their aims:

> This unit will help you see that Britain is a multicultural society. It is made up of a variety of different religions, languages and backgrounds. The diversity has come about as a result of immigration over thousands of years. You will be looking at some of the causes of immigration and the reasons why two particular groups of immigrants decided to come to Britain. (Fisher and Williams 1991, p. 84)

Unquestionably, as these few examples illustrate, many textbook authors seized the opportunities provided by the introduction of the National Curriculum for history in 1991 to reconceptualise textbook structures and contents. Many textbooks acquired a critical, enquiry-focused edge and more respect and attention was afforded to the diversity of British society and its distinctive past.

Despite the emergence of these important changes in textbook content and production, it is important to note that the early 1990s were not a revolutionary period. Many textbook publishing companies, for example, elected to maintain many of the core elements of the "great tradition", with its focus on narrating a chronology of ostensible "key events" and "significant" individuals. Analyses of the content of textbooks used for the widely taught National Curriculum core study unit, "The Era of the Second World War", revealed the inherent conservatism of many textbooks during this period (Crawford and Foster 2007). For example, although approximately 500,000 Africans, more than 7000 Caribbean Islanders and 2.5 million Indians fought alongside Allied troops during the war (Furedi 1999; Sherwood and Spafford 1999), for the most part history textbooks completely ignored these contributions and experiences of peoples from the British Empire and the Commonwealth (Foster 2005). Accordingly, Sherwood and Spafford (1999, p. 11) argued that

"British school history is nearly always silent about the participation of black people in the Second World War.... The war, so resonant in the British consciousness, is not recognized as being a black British story as much as it is a white one".

In overview, therefore, it is evident that during the late 1970s, throughout the 1980s and the early 1990s, the "great tradition" in history education encountered serious challenges from advocates of what has loosely been termed "new history". In particular, the influence of the SHP with its emphasis on history as a form of knowledge (rather than as just a body of knowledge) and increased attention to social history heralded important changes in pedagogic practice in many schools throughout the country. Nevertheless, given the significant influence of Thatcherite conservatism, which dominated the sociopolitical landscape for 18 years from 1979 to 1997, it is perhaps not surprising that the political right largely prevailed.[9] Recognising the importance of controlling the past to promote selective national memories as well as to appease social and political agendas in the present, politicians understood that the stakes were high. What emerged was therefore a National Curriculum that chiefly celebrated the achievements of the dominant white majority and, as Booth (1993, p. 79) has argued, portrayed "the whiggish story of the political and economic improvement of the great British people". Building on what Visram (1994, p. 54) has referred to as "the twin pillars of patriotism and the transmission of a common cultural identity", National Curriculum mandates largely ignored the historically pluralistic nature of British society and many, although not all, textbook publishers followed suit.

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[9] After 1990, Margaret Thatcher was succeeded by John Major, who served as the Conservative prime minister until 1997.

## History Education, History Textbooks and Ethnic Diversity in the Twenty-First Century

Significantly, although there have been five different versions of the National Curriculum (DfES 1991; DfE 1995; DfEE 1999; QCA 2007; DfE 2013),[10] its central framework remains in place today. Nevertheless, three key changes occurred from 1991 to 2013. First, the content coverage for history has been reduced in successive versions. Second, since 1995, history has ceased to be a compulsory subject for all students after the age of 14, and currently only about a third of students choose to study history after this age. Third, in attempts to deregulate central government control of schools, the controversial Academies Act of 2010[11] determined that academies (which now account for three-quarters of all secondary schools in England) no longer have to follow the National Curriculum. In fact, for the majority of schools, the National Curriculum has become an advisory guide rather than a statutory requirement.

Nevertheless, the current (2013) version of the National Curriculum maintains two key features that were enshrined in previous documents. Firstly, the curriculum recognises that all students who study history should appreciate the disciplinary nature of the subject and "understand historical concepts such as continuity and change, cause and consequence, similarity, difference and significance…" (DfE 2013). Secondly, of the seven areas of study for 11–14-year-olds, six explicitly focus on British and local history, whereas only one is devoted to a "study of a significant society or issue in world history".

Although on the surface it might appear that considerable consistency has remained in the approaches to teaching Britain's past over the past two decades, it is important to recognise the significance of ongoing

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[10] DfE: Department for Education; DfEE: Department for Education and Employment; QCA: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

[11] The Academies Act, 2010, allowed schools to apply to become "academies." They are funded by central (not local) government and operated by not-for-profit academy trusts. Academies have more independence (e.g. over staff pay and conditions, length of the school term and school day and whether or not to follow the national curriculum). 77 per cent of secondary schools in England are now academies.

debates focused on issues of diversity, ethnicity and British identity. Arguments over how to narrate Britain's complex past also have to be considered in relation to the shifting demographics of British society. In 2018, for example, 27 per cent of state-funded primary and secondary school students in England came from BME (black and minority ethnic) backgrounds (DfE 2018), with the five largest groups originating from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Africa and the Caribbean. Most cities in England have large diverse, multiethnic populations. Indeed, 37 per cent of London residents were born outside the UK. As a result, legitimate questions have understandably been asked about how the nation's history should be portrayed.

At one extreme are those, typically on the political right, who have adopted a nationalist stance arguing that immigrants need to be assimilated to a fixed set of core British values. In this vein, they argue that in order to achieve cohesion and unity, schools should focus less on multiculturalism and pay more attention to celebrating Britain's history, traditions and rich cultural heritage. Other commentators, however, offer a more nuanced, complex and liberal approach. Central to their approaches is the belief that young people should learn to understand and respect the history, culture and diversity of all citizens, both within the UK and beyond. During Labour Party rule under Prime Minister Tony Blair (1997–2007), for example, these issues received serious attention. In fact, the government's review of "Diversity and Citizenship" in the school curriculum strongly suggested that "through the school curriculum pupils should" explore the origins and "representations of different racial, ethnic, cultural and religious groups in the UK and the world" (DfES 2007, p. 23).

More recently, a research report published by the Runnymede Trust and the European Research Council (McIntosh et al. 2019) has urged the current Conservative government to take actions to ensure that more students have access to an education which deepens their understanding of migration, empire and Britain's relationship with the world. It is also notable that in the 2019 Labour Party general election campaign, which culminated in their eventual defeat, a pledge was made to ensure that an "emancipation educational trust" would be formed "to ensure historical

injustice, colonialism and role of the British Empire is taught in the national curriculum" (BBC 2019).

It is, of course, unlikely that this initiative will be supported by the current Conservative government. Undoubtedly influenced by the work of E.D. Hirsch (1983, 1987, 2016), authoritative Conservatives in office have championed the importance of "content rich" learning and students' acquisition of core factual knowledge (see, e.g., Abrams 2012; Gibb 2017; Peal 2014). As a result, policy has been directed at the need for students to learn traditional subject content knowledge, rather than engage in enquiry-based learning and the understanding of diverse interpretations of Britain's past.

In many respects, the school history textbook industry has reflected this duality of approach. On one hand, many textbooks produced today embrace some of the core features of the "great tradition". On the other, other textbooks available on the open market offer radically different perspectives and interpretations of Britain's rich and diverse history. A brief focus on history textbooks produced today by two leading publishers for Key Stage 3 students (primarily aimed at 11–14-year-olds) provide some insights into the existence of this dual approach.

Arguably, the most conservative and traditional of Britain's major textbook publishing houses is Collins. The fourth and final book in its *Knowing History* series, covering the period from 410 CE to the present, centres on the twentieth century and follows a traditional format (Selth 2019). It is organised around six units, each of which has five chapters. Unit content includes the "First" and "Second World Wars", "the Rise of the Dictators" and "the Cold War". In a departure from textbooks written in previous eras, two units also focus on "Decolonisation" and "Civil Rights in America". However, what is striking about the books in this series is that no effort is made to educate students about the diverse and pluralistic nature of British society, either today or in the past. Indeed, even in the unit which focuses on decolonisation in the twentieth century, no reference is made to the current relationship between decolonised nations and Britain. Nor is there any acknowledgement that peoples from all over the empire and Commonwealth emigrated to Britain during the twentieth century. The experiences of these peoples and their contributions to British society are strikingly absent.

Another book currently offered by Collins is simply entitled *Key Stage 3 HISTORY*. Its cover is adorned with a large photograph of a statue of Queen Victoria and it purports to cover the period from 1750 to 1918. The 188-page book is organised around five units. The final unit, "The world's greatest empire", examines British rule and the impact of empire across two centuries and briefly acknowledges the diversity of modern Britain: "Today Britain is a multicultural country", its young readers are told, and "the country is home to people from many ethnic backgrounds, religions and colours". However, rather than to focus on the experiences of immigrants and their contributions to British society, students are invited to consider the "push" and "pull factors" which prompted people to leave their home countries. Thus, students are told that most immigrants arrived because of the economic opportunities that Britain offered and their desire to escape poverty and persecution at home. The textbook also emphasises that "[p]eople were also attracted to Britain because of its democracy, with equal rights for all its citizens" (Murphy et al. 2010, p. 166). Significantly, the book makes no mention of the racism and discrimination that many immigrants face today and in the past. Instead, Britain is seen as a land of opportunity and justice, with the more difficult and problematic aspects of multiethnic Britain largely hidden or unexplored.

In direct contrast to the narrow and conservative portrayals by Collins, Hodder Education currently offers an alternative to traditional textbooks. As the "official" publisher of the SHP, it is perhaps not surprising that Hodder publishes some of the most pioneering textbooks in the current textbook market. One of Hodder's most ambitious (and controversial) books for Key Stage 3 students is *Understanding History: Britain in the Wider World, Roman Times-Present* (Riley et al. 2019). The 256-page textbook covers all aspects of the National Curriculum for students at Key Stage 3. Written by a team of authors and led by Michael Riley, the former director of the SHP, it provides a distinctive and original approach to British history from 1000 CE to the present.

The textbook is structured around four overarching "Period Studies" (1000–1450; 1450–1750; 1750–1900; 1900–Present) and four "Thematic Studies". Of relevance is the final "Thematic Study", which provides a detailed 12-page exploration of "Migration to Britain Through

Time". The "Overview" to the ensuing "Thematic Study" makes it clear that migration has significantly impacted British society:

> By the time the Romans began to settle in Britain in the first century AD, the population had already been shaped by thousands of years of migration. People had been migrating to Britain ever since the end of the ice age, more than 10,000 years ago. Everyone living in Britain today has a migrant heritage. The only difference is how far back in time our migrant heritage stretches. (p. 188)

The final pages of the "Thematic Study" ask students to use evidence to explore the controversial issue of modern migration to Britain. Textbook activities are therefore focused on inviting students to consider the impact of migration on British society and the challenges (including widespread discrimination) that migrants face after arriving in Britain.

Another popular textbook produced by Hodder under the auspices of the SHP is simply entitled *SHP History: Year 9* (Banham and Luff 2018). The 234-page textbook primarily focuses on events of the twentieth century, structured around six broad enquiry questions. The book also organises content around historical concepts such as causation, significance, continuity and change as well as diversity and interpretation. Three of the six enquiry questions invite students to explore, in detail, the impact of twentieth-century conflicts, inventions and dictatorships on the lives of ordinary people. A fourth enquiry question asks students to consider "How have people campaigned for equal rights" in the twentieth century, by examining issues related to women's suffrage in England, Apartheid in South Africa and the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.

The two remaining units encourage students to think critically about Britain's colonial past and its approach to migration and diversity. For example, the organising enquiry question ("Why is the British Empire so controversial?") spans 40 pages and provides a vast array of primary and secondary evidence to help students address some of the key and challenging issues surrounding colonial rule. One section of the book, for instance, demonstrates how historians have repeatedly argued over the impact of British rule in India.

The final section of the textbook addresses head-on the impact of migration on modern British society. Organised under the overarching question ("How do we tell the story of migration to Britain?"), the textbook explores some of the complex issues which relate to this sometimes-controversial history. Students are introduced to pages of information which explain how migration to Britain occurred over thousands of years. "Migration stories" of individuals from a variety of backgrounds who came to Britain also feature in the book. Many of these compelling human stories highlight the challenges that migrants faced and their contributions to British society. The textbook also acknowledges that immigration has always been a contentious issue, one which students are encouraged to consider and debate. Overall, this innovative and thought-provoking textbook radically departs from the conventions of the "great tradition".

## Conclusion

In overview, most textbooks written before the 1970s typically communicated a very limited and narrow Anglocentric history. Textbook narratives were typically written to glorify a mythical, collective British heritage, devoid of the influence of other "alien" forces or the contributions of people from other lands. Most trumpeted British exceptionalism and superiority, presenting a "Whig" history of unrelenting progress and achievement, within which no consideration was given to the history of peoples who experienced colonial rule and/or their contributions to British history. During the 1970s and the decades that followed, many of the central principles of the "great tradition" were seriously challenged. The most serious threat to convention came from what was known as "new history", which emphasised understanding the disciplinary nature of history and recognised the importance of teaching the experiences of ethnic minorities and peoples from other nations across the world. These developments simultaneously led to changes in the structure and content of many textbooks.

Fierce ideological battles over school history were prominent in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They were particularly acute during the

establishment of the National Curriculum for history in 1991. The final framework was arguably a compromise between advocates of traditional approaches to the study of the past and "new history". In the three decades since the introduction of the National Curriculum, history teachers have been permitted a degree of flexibility on what schools can teach, particularly the subjects of ethnic diversity, migration and empire. This curriculum flexibility has allowed different approaches to textbook portrayals of the past. For example, some publishers (e.g. Hodder) have seized the opportunity to produce innovative and progressive textbooks which challenge convention. In particular, these textbooks present British history in more complex, inclusive and diverse ways. Nevertheless, although all textbook publishers adopt an evidence-based approach to history, some prominent publishers (e.g. Collins) have maintained a conservative approach to textbook production and continue to focus on more traditional content.

For many contemporary critics, the maintenance of traditional narratives is deeply problematic in an age where, as mentioned above, 27 per cent of state-funded school students have BME backgrounds (DfE 2018). Indeed, in a society which is becoming increasingly pluralistic and multi-ethnic, strong arguments for all young people to have an awareness of migration, diversity and the legacy of empire exist. But as the Runnymede Trust's recent report suggests, it still appears unlikely that significant changes to traditional practice will occur now or in the immediate future (McIntosh et al. 2019). Its authors note that issues such as "migration, belonging and empire" remain outside mainstream practice; that only four per cent of secondary school students are currently following the GCSE national examination course for 16-year-olds (which focuses on empire and "migration to Britain"); and that significant change will only come about when teachers receive appropriate training and professional support to teach students about Britain's diverse history. To date, however, this support has not been forthcoming.

It is important to appreciate that, as Richard Aldrich (2002, p. 3) has written, education "does not take place in a vacuum. It reflects, and at times challenges, the social, economic, political, and intellectual contexts of its age". With the publication of the latest iteration of the new history National Curriculum in 2013, it is clear that Conservative ministers

remain keen on reinforcing the teaching of traditional subject matter. In this context, and in view of the election success of the Conservative party in December 2019 and the perspectives of subsequent prime ministers, it seems unlikely that reforms which will challenge the *status quo* and eschew more traditional forms of history education. Of course, because of the flexibility built into school curriculum planning and teaching at Key Stage 3, many teachers and some publishers will continue to promote innovative and inclusive textbooks. In these conservative times, however, it is likely that attempts to provide alternative versions of the Britain's diverse and complex past will remain the exception, and not the rule.

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# 7

# History Education and Historical Thinking in Multicultural Contexts: A Canadian Perspective

**Naomi Ostwald Kawamura**

## Introduction

Public education, as an extension of the state, contributes to the shaping of national identity and fostering patriotism, and thus state-sponsored history education can play a central role in nation building and serve as a generative site to examine the debates surrounding national memory, narratives and identity (Seixas 2009b). In Canada, a stated commitment to the principles of multiculturalism complicates, if it does not preclude, the formulation and inculcation of a single, coherent, state-sanctioned national narrative. In its place are a series of narratives grounded in the unique experiences of different peoples and regions, highlighting a national *ideology* centred around practices of accommodation. The organisational structure of public education in Canada adds further complexity: education is the responsibility of its provinces and territories and there is no ministry of education at the federal level. Canada's

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constitutional commitments to multiculturalism, the absence of a single state-sanctioned historical narrative and the complexity of Canadian identity politics in conjunction with a highly decentralised approach to education have complicated the aims of history education in Canada.

This chapter will examine one approach to Canadian history education, *historical thinking*, through the lens of Canadian multiculturalism. First articulated by Peter Seixas, this approach has not been uniformly adopted nationwide, but its principles widely inform teacher education programmes, teacher professional development and curriculum (Clark and Sandwell 2020). The framework emphasises a disciplinary approach to history education, comprising six procedural concepts that call for students to establish historical significance, use primary source evidence, identify continuity and change, analyse cause and consequence, take historical perspectives and understand the ethical dimensions of history (Seixas and Morton 2012). Historical thinking also calls for nurturing students' progression in handling these concepts in more sophisticated ways.

This chapter maps a commitment to accommodating diversity onto a Canadian approach to history education. I begin by discussing the Canadian context and the current absence of a single, state-sanctioned national narrative as conventionally understood. In its place is a constitutionally inscribed multicultural ideology that describes Canada as comprised of numerous groups, each retaining their own identities and narratives. I then provide an overview of the educational context, including its structural attributes and the role of history as a subject in the curriculum. In the third section, I discuss the historical thinking approach in relation to Canadian multiculturalism and how this framework attends to the following related issues of identity and its treatment of Indigenous

Peoples[1], sub-state/minority nationalisms[2] and ethnocultural diversity. I examine the extent to which the historical thinking approach has the potential to meet the competing demands of multiculturalism in the classroom.

## The Canadian Context

Contemporary Canada, with an estimated population of 37.7 million, is an ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse nation (Statistics Canada 2019). As recognised by the constitution, there are three distinct groups of Indigenous Peoples: the First Nations, Inuit and Métis. The 2016 Canadian Census reported an estimated 1.6 million Indigenous Peoples, who had one of the highest population growth rates (Statistics Canada 2017). Canada's diversity has also been further increased by high rates of inward migration. According to this census, nearly one out of five Canadians are immigrants and six million have been admitted since 1990 (Government of Canada 2017). In addition to the official languages of French and English, more than 200 mother tongue languages are spoken nationwide (Statistics Canada 2017).

Canada exists as a "fragile union" between its Indigenous nations and the former colonies of Great Britain and France (Faden 2015, p. 54). Historically, each of these "nations" has expressed their own unique cultural and political identities and continues to do so, thus complicating the development of a pan-Canadian national identity and narrative. Clark et al. (2015) describe further challenges to articulating a simple story of Canadian nationhood, including the vast geographical area,

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[1] In Canada, the term "Aboriginal" refers to First Nations (Indian), Métis and Inuit peoples. The term gained popular usage after its inclusion in the Canadian Constitution in 1982 but is not widely used internationally. The term "Indigenous" encompasses both local and international contexts. For this chapter, I will be utilising the term "Indigenous" or "Indigenous Peoples" unless referencing or citing other research.

[2] There are more than 50 First Nations, each recognised as self-governing and self-determining. To place a nation-state frame on Indigenous Peoples is to not recognise the *sui generis* nature of Indigenous rights and to define Indigenous identity through a colonial system (Frideres 2008). For this reason, I will be treating Indigenous nations as unique from sub-state nations like Québec, and Indigenous people as distinct from other ethnocultural groups, immigrants or visible minorities.

distinct provincial and regional identities, strong cultural influences from the United States of America and divides between historians' research agendas and history teaching. Scholars now characterise Canada's grand narrative of nationhood as a shared commitment to principles and ideologies, rather than to a shared national narrative (Anderson 2017; Rigney 2018).

Grand narratives of nation-states, however, were commonplace during the nineteenth century, providing origin stories and timelines of their achievements and adversities in becoming nations (Ahonen 2017). In Canada, early attempts at inculcating stories of a grand narrative of nationhood fall into this timeframe, coinciding with the establishment of school systems and the authorisation of textbooks (Anderson 2017; Clark 2005). Yu (2011) characterises these earlier nationhood stories as narratives in which European immigrants become "'Canadian', and for all those who were non-white to remain a 'visible minority', forever arriving late, or a 'native' forever destined to disappear" (p. 305). Stanley (2002) draws attention to how this particular version of history, as told in history education, always "begins" with the earliest European colonies. Centring attention on European arrival and the formation of the nation not only neglects the presence, history and dispossession of Indigenous Peoples of North America but also emphasises the progress of European colonisation as the central narrative (ibid.). Clark (2007), examining Indigenous representation in English Canadian textbooks, finds that "Aboriginal people are 'othered'" and presented "in relation to the European settler story" (p. 111). See Clark (2005, 2007, 2009) for comprehensive examinations of Canadian textbooks over time.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Canadian history education began shifting towards a focus on social issues, particularly in response to issues of Indigenous rights, multiculturalism, feminism, Québec nationalism and other ethnocultural groups (Clark et al. 2015). Beginning in the early 1970s, Canada actively shifted towards a gradual process of reconciliation with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples (Kymlicka 2003), following a lengthy history of continuous assault, mistreatment and systematic oppression (Frideres 2008). In 1991, a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was established to address mounting tensions between the Canadian government and Indigenous Peoples, evidenced, for example,

by the armed 78-day standoff between the Canadian military and the Kanien'kéha:ka (Mohawk) at Oka, Québec in the prior year. In 1996, the commission released a 4000-page report that outlined 440 recommendations to improve relations between the Canadian government and Indigenous Peoples, including an official inquiry into the Indian Residential Schools.[3] First established in the 1880s, this school system was funded by the federal government and operated by Anglican, Presbyterian, United and Catholic churches. Its primary aims were to isolate Indigenous children from their communities and enforce policies of assimilation and conversion to Christianity (Truth and Reconciliation 2015), intended to "kill the Indian in the child" (Royal Commission 1996). The last school closed in the 1990s. There were also reports of rampant emotional, sexual and physical abuse (ibid.), and an estimated 4200 children died in these schools.[4] In 2005, the federal government announced the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which entailed a $1.9 billion compensation package for former students and the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) to document the stories of the survivors. The final TRC report, released in 2015, called for 94 actions to be taken by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians nationwide to redress the legacy of residential schools and support active reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. The report prompted further changes across Canada, including: the modification of institutional practices at libraries, museums and archives towards decolonisation; the establishment of a National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation; curricular changes to history education in some provinces; and the adoption of policies within governments, organisations and corporations to recognise key findings. In 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper made an official apology for the treatment of children in these schools.

Ethnocultural groups have also called on Canada to address state-sanctioned historical injustices as a means to grapple with issues of recognition and repair relations. Japanese Canadians, for example, demanded

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[3] They operated between the late 1870s and 1990s, where an estimated 150,000 Indigenous children were placed in 132 industrial boarding or "residential" schools.

[4] National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. See https://news.nctr.ca/articles/nctr-creating-memorial-register-honouring-residential-school-children.

"redress" for the dispossession, forcible removal, and incarceration of their community during the Second World War. Dr. Edward Banno, a Japanese Canadian activist and survivor of the Tashme Internment Camp, articulated his hope "that someday the people of this great Dominion will count the Nisei Japanese Canadians as a definite part of their national existence."[5] The community's efforts eventually led to a formal apology issued by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in 1988, monetary compensation for the remaining survivors and the establishment of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation. Many other public apologies to other ethnocultural groups have followed in subsequent years.

By the late twentieth century, the use of grand narratives lost favour, due in part to the rise of postmodernist theory and the omission of stories of Indigenous Peoples, women and ethnocultural groups (Ahonen 2017). However, the absence of such narratives does not preclude the existence of any narratives. Those that continue to exist have become more oriented towards identity shaping narratives (Seixas 2017). Demands for recognition, redress and reconciliation as well as the cultural, linguistic, ethnic and regional diversity of Canada have instead created conditions for the adoption of a national identity centred around multiculturalism, which has since flourished—a "modest remedy" to accommodate differences (Winter 2015, p. 650).

Kymlicka (2003) claims that the two distinctive features of Canada's approach to accommodation are the breadth of challenges surrounding issues of diversity that Canada has faced (immigration, Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination, and sub-state nations) and the inscription of multiculturalism into its constitution, cultural symbols and national narratives. These features illuminate a Canadian national identity built around the principles of multiculturalism. Several key federal policies also illustrate Canada's commitment to multiculturalism, including: the passage of the Official Languages Act in 1969, which

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[5] Personal written communication relayed to author by members of the late Edward Banno's family, 29 June 2020. Banno addressed parliament in 1936 to extend voting rights to Japanese Canadians. This was denied. Edward's son, Robert Banno, who was born in Tashme Interment Camp, would later establish the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre in 2000. In July 2020, Robert was awarded a Meritorious Service Decoration (Civil Division) by the governor general of Canada for his contributions to the country.

established both French and English as the official languages of Canada;[6] the introduction of a multiculturalism policy in 1971; and the enactment of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, which included minority language rights and recognised the country's multicultural heritage. Canada's multiculturalism policy was written into section 27 of its constitution, and in 1988, parliament passed the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, thus making Canada the first country to adopt a multicultural law.

While Canada has shifted away from promoting nation-building *narratives* towards promoting a national *ideology* of multiculturalism, history classrooms remain part of the nation-building project by providing students with concepts and frameworks needed to construct identities, be they individual, regional or national (Carretero et al. 2012). Lévesque and Létourneau (2019) suggest that history education which aims to foster exclusive national identities is no longer relevant for multinational and multicultural nations like Canada.

## Educational Context

The history classroom remains an important site for examining how young Canadians learn about the nation's past. As Seixas (2009b) articulates, classrooms are distinctive locations subject to official policies, where young people are compelled to attend lessons over a duration of time, serving as principal sites for transmitting historical narratives and perspectives to younger generations.

Education is compulsory for all Canadians aged 5 to 16 (or 18 in the provinces of Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick). According to a 2014 report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2014), Canada's annual spending per student in primary education and its total expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product are above its averages. Public schools are tuition-free.

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[6] The passage of the Official Languages Act raised concerns from ethnic minorities who believed that this policy minimised the contributions of other linguistic groups in Canada. In a 1964 parliamentary address, Ukrainian Canadian Senator Paul Yuzyk characterised Canada as "multicultural", the first public articulation of a "multicultural" Canada.

Canada's K-12 (kindergarten through Grade 12) educational system operates on a decentralised model, where the responsibility for public education lies with its ten provinces and three territories. Typically, through provincial ministries or departments of education, provincial governments oversee the authorisation of textbooks (in some provinces), the allocation of funding to schools and the teacher certification processes. There are English, French and Catholic school boards. Since 1969, the federal government has also provided funding for minority language education and second language instruction.[7] However, language policies in public schooling centre around the teaching and maintenance of French and English, with some support for other heritage languages which are not universally accessible (Slavkov 2017).

An additional challenge to Canada's educational system is found in the asymmetries that exist in supporting the needs of Indigenous students. While Canada consistently performs well on international studies of student achievement,[8] a significant achievement gap exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (Statistics Canada 2011). The TRC (2015) has called on the federal government to draft legislation, commit funding and provide the necessary support to improve the educational attainment levels of Indigenous students in one generation.

In the area of history education, most provinces and territories mandate learning either social studies (which often include geography, civics, political science and history) or history in their schools (Clark 2018; Lévesque and Clark 2018). In fact, only Ontario and Québec explicitly mandate history courses instead of social studies (Lévesque and Clark 2018). Clark et al. (2015) point to the late 1990s as a turning point in Canadian history education, when the field began to adopt an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning. The authors contend that history education was strongly influenced, among other factors, by Seixas' 1996 paper, "Conceptualizing the Growth of Historical Understanding", which introduced elements of a disciplinary approach to history education—later further conceptualised in his model of historical thinking.

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[7] See Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, cmec.ca/154/Official_Languages.html.

[8] Results from the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment reflect that 15-year-old Canadian students scored higher than average in reading, mathematics and science.

# Historical Thinking Approach

Drawing from international approaches to history education, the Canadian historical thinking approach focuses on six competencies that engage both teachers and students to think critically about history while exploring theoretical, epistemological and ontological issues concerning the nature of history and historical knowledge. Its central features are influenced by the works of cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner, British scholarship surrounding the Schools History Project, Sam Wineburg's (1991) contributions from the United States, and German contributions around a notion of historical consciousness.[9]

The six competencies serve as a framework for students to learn the conceptual tools, vocabulary and standards of the discipline to enhance their progression of historical understanding. Seixas (2017) articulates that the benchmark competencies "function, rather as problems, tensions, or difficulties that demand comprehension, negotiation and ultimately, an accommodation that is never a complete solution" (p. 5). The historical thinking framework challenges students to consider answers to the following questions:

1) How do we decide what is important to learn about the past?
2) How do we know what we know about the past?
3) How can we make sense of the complex flows of history?
4) Why do events happen, and what are their impacts?
5) How can we better understand the people of the past?
6) How can history help us to live in the present? (Seixas and Morton 2012)

The aim is for students to develop a deeper understanding of the use and nature of history. An additional area of emphasis is on the *progression* in students' historical thinking (Seixas 2011). Progression can be defined as the expansion of students' abilities to develop more powerful ideas of the nature of historical knowledge. Seixas (2011) suggests that a sophisticated understanding of historical thinking might be characterised as students' abilities to "be able to articulate what is known, what is not known,

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[9] See Seixas (2017) for a review of the roots of the Canadian model of historical thinking.

what additional evidence might shed more light, and possibly, what is simply unknowable" (p. 145). Students develop and apply their understanding with richer inquiry.

The Canadian project is also informed by German scholarship surrounding "historical consciousness", situated at the intersection of "public memory, citizenship, and history education" (Seixas 2006, p. 15). It involves the relationship between the past, present and future; the past that holds meaning in the present; and how the past is "expressed though narratives that embody a moral orientation" (Seixas 2017, p. 596). For learners in multicultural contexts, a historical thinking approach can be particularly beneficial, because students are able to examine why certain narratives hold particular meanings, be they at the individual, collective or national level.

The historical thinking approach allows students to wrestle with both the ethical implications of history and how our current understanding of history may help us take more informed positions on ethical issues. The *ethical dimension of history* specifically considers "the memorial obligations that we in the present owe to victims, heroes, or other forebears who made sacrifices from which we benefit" (ibid., p. 602). This concept enhances students' understanding that many familiar contemporary issues have roots in the past. In this sense, a historical thinking approach is an attempt to equip Canadian students with the ability to handle questions about the consequences of past actions and apply them to contemporary issues.

To some extent, the historical thinking approach allows Canadian history education to circumvent some of the complexities surrounding identity politics by focusing on the development of the critical thinking skills necessary to navigate a multicultural environment. I will examine historical thinking in the context of the following three areas concerning diversity: Indigenous Peoples, Québec/Francophone identity and ethnocultural diversity.

## Indigenous Peoples in Canada

The final report of the TRC highlights the role of education as "the key to reconciliation". Its recommendations in the areas pertaining to history education include the following:

 i. Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.
 ii. Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.
 iii. Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.
 iv. Identifying teacher training needs relating to the above. (Truth and Reconciliation 2015, p. 238)

Provincial and territorial responses to the recommendations have differed widely, due in part to the lack of consensus about what specific changes need to be implemented (Gibson and Case 2019).

An examination of Canadian history education in the context of Indigenous Peoples and histories reveals many of the limits of multiculturalism and raises a distinctly epistemological challenge for historical thinking. Indigenous scholar Michael Marker (2011) reasons that Western intellectual traditions and traditional forms of teaching history are incompatible with Indigenous ways of meaning making and knowledge construction. Cutrara (2018) also stresses the challenges of reconciling Western intellectual traditions with Indigenous epistemologies, because one has historically and actively dismissed the other. Marker (2011) calls on history teachers and scholars to make space in classrooms to include Indigenous perspectives; study First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples' relationships to time, land and the past; as well as challenge "embedded assumptions made about progress and modernity" (p. 111). McGregor (2017) calls for a historical thinking approach that adopts more "respectful engagement" with Indigenous knowledge and epistemologies through an intentional and collaborative coordination of efforts

between scholars knowledgeable about historical thinking and scholars of Indigenous education.

An added layer of complexity is the cultural and linguistic diversity among over 600 First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and more than 50 language or cultural groups. This diversity also represents the many distinct and varied approaches to Indigenous perspectives and knowledge (Archibald 2008). Multiculturalism can also act to occlude the distinct concerns of First Nations, Métis and Inuit by conflating Indigenous Peoples with other ethnocultural groups[10] while offering distractions from the issues of sovereignty, Canada's settler colonial history and present-day land claims (St. Denis 2011).

This raises specific challenges for a history education approach that can effectively contribute towards repairing relations between non-Aboriginal and Indigenous Peoples, which is specifically addressed in Gibson and Case (2019). They call attention to three potential areas for changing practice, including: centring Indigenous content, "histories, perspectives, epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies" in the classroom (p. 254); challenging the traditional model of teaching history with an open and unambiguous awareness of the judgements, interpretive choices, perspectives and assumptions surrounding historical accounts; and developing multidisciplinary courses that explore and meaningfully engage with both Indigenous and Western epistemologies. The authors also highlight the importance of pedagogy—namely the efficacy of how historical thinking is taught and an emphasis on enhancing teachers' knowledge of Indigenous history, culture and epistemologies—as well as deepening cultural competency and cultural responsiveness in classrooms. However, for history education to meet the needs of its Indigenous students, significant reforms will be required that also recognise the legacy of both residential school history and settler colonialism.

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[10] Indigenous scholar Verna St. Denis (2011) explains that multiculturalism obscures the "unique position of Aboriginal peoples as Indigenous to this land" when categorised together with racialised ethnic immigrants (p. 311).

## *Québec and the* Québécois *Nation*

In 2006, the House of Commons of Canada ([2006](#)) approved a parliamentary motion "recognizing that the *Québécois* form a nation within a united Canada". This motion officially recognises the unique culture, history and identity of the people of Québec, symbolically legitimising the province as a nation within a nation. Predictably, history education in Québec primarily centres on notions of *Québécois* identity, the province's struggle for nationhood and the preservation of a collective Francophone identity (Létourneau [2011](#)). Clark ([2018](#), p. 2) writes that national history taught in the province of Québec "is a history of the *Québécois* 'nation' first, set within the larger context of the Canadian confederation". Québec's culture is dominated by the concept of *"la survivance"*, or the "continuous and necessary survival of Francophone language and culture in the face of English Canadian or Anglo-American hegemony" (Lévesque and Létourneau [2019](#), p. 152).

In the case of Québec's history education, "the poles of a usable versus a critical past represent an irreducible tension" (Stearns et al. [2000](#), p. 8). The public desire for a coherent, collective identity creates a unique challenge to adopting a disciplinary approach to history. However, an area of historical thinking has gained some traction, specifically surrounding the concept of historical significance. A study of historical thinking among Francophone and Anglophone high school students by Lévesque ([2005](#)) has found that Francophone students placed historical significance on events and developments that served to support their Francophone identity. The historical thinking approach has great potential in this context, since it attempts to bridge disciplinary practices with cultural beliefs. Classroom teachers can actively engage with students' memories and identities (individual, cultural, familial, etc.) and their prior understandings of the past. This "collective memory" can be laid open to historical inquiry. The emphasis is then on active engagement and the development of the tools necessary to negotiate "production solutions" to problems that may not be reconcilable (Seixas [2017](#)).

Létourneau ([2011](#)) explores the debates surrounding *Québécois* history education, namely the challenges of balancing public calls to address

provincial and cultural identity while meeting the challenges of a changing, ethnoculturally diverse population. An independent review of Québec's high school history textbooks commissioned by the English Montreal School Board (2018) revealed that the textbooks and programme were "ultimately a 'history of Québec" (p. 7) intended to tell a "nationalist narrative in function of a *Québécois* nation-state ideology" (p. 9). The critical review recommended that the textbooks be pulled entirely from schools, but Québec's education minister, Jean-François Roberge, responded that there would be no changes to the high school history curriculum and that "history will always be subject to debate" (CBC News 2018). However, Létourneau and Gani (2017) maintain that the absence of a shared or common grand narrative would not inhibit integration or a shared collective identity. Banting and Kymlicka (2010) also suggest that shared values which accommodate differences can also create bonds and a sense of solidarity between Canadians with long established histories in Canada and recent immigrants.

## Ethnocultural Diversity

Canadian history involves a long record of exclusions based on race. State-sanctioned exclusions and racialisation historically prohibited many ethnocultural groups from integrating into Canadian society. Adopting an ideology of multiculturalism demands recognition and reconciliation with this legacy through teaching and learning about the past. Projections suggest that by 2036, immigrants and children of immigrants will represent close to one in two Canadians and visible minorities aged between 15 and 64 years.[11] This poses a specific challenge for history education in addressing the linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity of its students.

Carla Peck has led Canadian scholarship surrounding students' ethnic identities and historical thinking, including studies that examine how students ascribe significance to historic events. Peck (2018) theorises that students "do not simply absorb [a] historical narrative or interpretation transmitted in school but filter them through their own identities and

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[11] Canada's Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities "as persons other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour".

backgrounds" (p. 327). These findings call on teachers to engage with students' identities in history class more explicitly. Lévesque (2011) maintains that a disciplinary approach will enable students to explore personal histories in the classroom, particularly how such narratives "intertwine with those of the communities they inhabit" (p. 45). With a deeper understanding of the interpretive nature and complexity of history, students are better equipped to appreciate or resolve potentially conflicting narratives which they may encounter (Seixas 1997).

An exploration of the concept of historical significance has particular promise for students belonging to ethnocultural groups, being primarily concerned with deepening students' understanding of how and why certain people, events or developments are remembered, talked about and taught. For example, students are expected to arrive at the understanding that events, people or developments are ascribed significance if they resulted in change with deep consequences for people over periods of time, shed light on issues either in the past or in contemporary life, emerged through the construction of a meaningful narrative and varied over time and between groups (Seixas and Morton 2012). An exploration of historical significance allows students to examine how individuals or nations decide what is important to learn about the past while probing the constructed and interpretive nature of history. Peck (2010) examines how students' ethnic identities influenced their interpretation of Canadian history. Students ascribed significance to specific events or developments as forms of "'identity resources' in order to locate themselves" within a story of Canada (p. 606). For members of ethnocultural groups whose histories have previously been silenced or marginalised, an exploration of historical significance provides an opening into questioning who or what decides what is important to study about the past. Since debates over national history are frequently centred around "which story to tell", a historical thinking approach allows students to question how and why the past is remembered and the role of history in shaping the narrative and identity of a country.

Historical research has the potential to facilitate bringing new or silenced stories to the forefront in yielding new narratives. Rigney (2018) highlights the importance of articulating previously subsumed histories to draw connections between historical memories. This in turn might

also allow students to make connections between groups that are often unlinked in Canadian history, such as the history of Chinese miners in Nlaka'pamux territory during the Gold Rush, or the stories of Japanese Canadian redress activists who advised First Nations bands on land claims.

## Some Limits on and Future Directions for Historical Thinking

Some criticisms levied against a rational, disciplinary approach to history education suggest that a historical thinking framework actively fails to provide students with the tools needed to recognise the intersections between politics and history, or challenge their understanding of power, citizenship or the state. Cutrara (2009) argues that historical thinking fails to explicitly engage students with the ways in which settler colonialism and racism have shaped contemporary Canada. Anderson (2017) suggests that historical thinking concepts are limited in their ability to critically examine, contest and rebuke the national narratives that may omit or marginalise Indigenous People or other ethnocultural groups, stereotype *Québécois*/French Canadians or appropriate ethnocultural minorities. Beyond the inclusion of previously omitted histories, history education would need to move students beyond a recognition that *difference* exists. Further engagement would aim to gain insights from different intellectual traditions, develop a critical eye towards the interpretive nature of history and challenge the assumptions surrounding past perspectives and belief systems.

Conversely, criticisms of the historical thinking framework and its potential harm can also be potentially problematic if they inadvertently assume that young people, namely Black, Indigenous and racialized students, have no agency or ability to question what they encounter. Studies on ethnic minority families have demonstrated that prominent features of parenting within these contexts include ethnic and racial socialisation and a preparation for bias and discrimination (Hughes et al. 2006). Hébert et al. (2008) have found that immigrant youth are able to shift between, redefine or disregard cultural, racial, ethnic and linguistic

identities and boundaries. Some students may in fact be more empowered to engage with material because their own life or familial experiences have allowed them to recognise that anything is conditional on what perspectives help to shape them (Chesler et al. 1993). Monte-Sano and Reisman (2016) make a case for further research on historical understanding that considers how disciplinary practices and lived experiences might interact or intersect.

McGregor (2017, p. 13) further stresses that knowledge surrounding historical thinking is derived from "a particular group of people, in particular places, with culturally situated understandings of the past, of the flow of time and of meanings derived from human experience". Expanding on this criticism, many of the scholars cited here have prefaced their analyses by self-identifying as non-Indigenous or non-"white".[12] This underscores the relevance of identity within this research. Since Peck (2009, 2011, 2018) and others have argued that meaning making is filtered through the lens of identity, then much of Canadian research surrounding historical thinking can be said to be filtered through the lens of whiteness. While some scholars may articulate their positionality as "white", they do not articulate how the predominance of scholarship by white scholars might shape or limit Canadian research on historical thinking. Ethnicity and race may be viewed as a narrow lens by some, but to scholars for whom identity is a central component of their interactions with society, the significance is real. This accentuates a pressing need to make room for voices, particularly those of Indigenous and racialised scholars, that bring relevant lived experiences and nuanced discourse on identity politics to researching history education. This will not only serve to diversify the perspectives that shape Canadian history education scholarship, but also compel change from within the field in order to generate and bring new knowledge into historical thinking in multiethnic and multicultural contexts.

Létourneau and Gani (2017) caution against placing unrealistic expectations on the potential and capacity for history education to unify people, provinces or nations, particularly when its impacts have not been measured. The introduction of a historical thinking framework also does

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[12] See, for example, Anderson (2017) as well as Gibson and Case (2019).

not determine its use or outcomes in the classroom (McGregor 2017). There is a need to not only evaluate current practices of history education but to measure the potential effectiveness of historical thinking. While Ercikan and Seixas (2015) articulate the challenges in developing assessments of historical thinking, Duquette (2020) cautions that without effective assessments aligned with provincial or ministerial mandates, history teachers will not be incentivised to shift their teaching practices towards adopting this approach. A national research project, "Thinking historically for Canada's future",[13] has recently been funded to examine how history and historical thinking is being taught nationwide and across different contexts. The findings from this seven-year study will potentially chart a new course for Canadian history education and research on historical thinking.

## Conclusion

In a 2015 interview, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau claimed that "there is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada. There are shared values" (Lawson 2015). If Canada were to seek a simple, singular narrative of nationhood, it may be one that articulates its national identity as an aggregation of many different identities. Being a democratic nation, democratic methods help to produce and shape its identity. Recent contributors to Canadian history education scholarship have not called for a new inscription of a national identity or narrative as a way forward (Anderson 2017), but rather push towards developing the tools to foster an appreciation for and understanding of coexisting narratives nationwide (Lévesque 2017). Since identity is not fixed, history education surrounding national identity must also remain open and be presented as a concept "that can be questioned rather than proof that must be preserved" (Létourneau 2017, p. 240).

A common point of convergence is found not in a unified national history or identity, but in the promotion of a shared set of skills which allows citizens to make sense of the past in ways that are relevant to their

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[13] See https://thinking-historically.ca.

lives. Instead of an extant identity, a focus on the process may contribute towards shaping a Canadian identity based on a "historical commitment to a distinctively Canadian deliberation about the past and future of the country" (Lévesque 2017, p. 238). While the underlying purpose of history education cannot be extricated from notions of nationhood and social cohesion, there is a case to be made that a move towards providing students with critical tools in historical thinking may afford citizens the ability to critically engage in more nuanced public debate and discussion about issues relevant to the country. A historical thinking approach can prompt young people to critically engage with the role of national narratives, public memorials and other sites of memory that may perpetuate specific narratives, values or ideologies (Gibson and Case 2019). Seixas (2009a) suggests that the historical thinking approach be viewed as a "starting point" (p. 30), emphasising the importance of offering young people critical thinking tools and skills "to steer between mindless pie-in-the-sky utopianism and deadly despair as they shape themselves into the historical agents of their own futures" (Seixas 2012, p. 871). This approach, with an agenda towards accommodating diversity, can potentially offer two critical outcomes: an understanding that many divergent narratives and perspectives may coexist in pluralistic societies, and that citizens will be able to meaningfully and critically engage with the past and one another.

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# 8

# National Identity in the History Curriculum in Australia: Educating for Citizenship

## Heather Sharp and Robert Parkes

## Introduction

Creating a cohesive national identity and sense of citizenship is a key motivation for many modern nation-states, as part of their nation-building endeavours. For postcolonial nations, this can also involve decolonising policies and practices, frequently expressed through schooling and in particular history education. Even with increasing globalisation, national identity and nationalism are still relevant (see, e.g. Giroux 1998), as seen in regional and national responses to the COVID-19 outbreak. Even if there is a trend towards transnational and comparative histories in the research arena or public institutions such as museums, this is not generally replicated in the school curriculum, which maintains a firm focus on the history of individual nation-states, even if positioned within an international context. Histories of nations are commonly

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presented to students as distinctly compartmentalised, for example, global colonisation practices of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

History is highly political, as both a discipline and a human experience, especially the collective remembering of past and public events. This was demonstrated through the so-called history/culture wars and debates that proliferated both in Australia (c. 1994–2007 and continuing, albeit to a lesser degree) and internationally. The purposes of teaching national history in schools (and its content) were at the forefront of many of these public debates. For over two decades, history education in Australia has been a site of struggle over the collective memory of the national past (Parkes 2007, 2009, 2011; Sharp 2012, 2013, 2014), although the politicisation of history is not new. These history wars (MacIntyre and Clark 2003; Taylor and Guyver 2012) have taken the form of conflicts over "whose history" is taught, leading to politically motivated calls for curriculum reconstruction (Howard 2006) and review (Donnelly and Wiltshire 2014). The context within which it was taught in schools can be viewed as a reflection of discourses of contemporaneous core or dominant societal sociopolitical values.

The *Australian Curriculum: History* developed out of these conflicts and continues to be a battlefront (Parkes 2015). Significant investment went into the development and dissemination of this pilot curriculum in 2011, implemented as part of Australia's first national school curriculum. Despite previous attempts to establish a national curriculum, curricula remained entirely under the jurisdiction of individual states and territories. Largely in response to two decades of debate over how and what history should be taught in schools, history formed part of the initial rollout of subjects alongside English, science and mathematics. Representations of the nation's colonial past (including treatment of its Indigenous peoples, the Australian Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders) and commemorations of nationally significant events such as the First World War are increasingly viewed as political binaries, presenting a concern for how this impacts students' sense of national identity (Parkes and Sharp 2014).

History education has been a vehicle for promoting national identity, especially when subsumed under "the politics of remembering and forgetting" (Giroux 1998, p. 181) in relation to matters of national

historical importance, and its manifestation in contemporary ideas of what it means to belong to a nation. While national identity can be seen as fluid or "shifting" (p. 188), how these shifts play out in curricular documents and supporting textbooks, with a specific focus on ethnic diversity and uniformity, will be identified below.

An earlier analysis of social science (including history) curricular materials leading up to the 1988 Bicentenary celebrations of British colonisation found that:

> by and large representations of individuals and groups of people who do not fit within narrow Anglo-Australian constructs are portrayed as adhering to stereotypical ideas of how these people behave and activities they engage in. Therefore, a type of multicultural exotica results, whereby Anglo-Australian cultures are constructed as banal and of the everyday and all other cultures are portrayed as exciting and elusive (in doing this, it also positions Anglo-Australians as belonging to one cultural group, void of any complexity. (Sharp 2012, pp. 9–10)

In other words, representations of citizens who do not correspond to the assumed homogenous "white" group are only included when there is cause to highlight differences, for example, in cultural celebrations. Ethnic diversity is presented as "exotic". These groups are in a sense silenced when participating in mainstream, everyday activities of citizenship.

This chapter analyses the representation of Aboriginals, Torres Strait Islanders and non-"white" Australian migrants in the syllabus and current history textbooks using two case studies: "The Batman Treaty" (an important historical instance in early contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians) and "The Afghan Cameleers" (early non-"white" migrants instrumental in opening up Australia's Outback, or interior). Australia has oftentimes publicly celebrated its diversity by promoting its first nations peoples—Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders—and multiculturalism through immigrants who have responded to calls by various Australian governments to migrate, often with the promise of economic security (as did post-First World War immigration incentives targeting British citizens) and a better lifestyle through enjoyment of the

natural environment. It is important, therefore, to identify how these groups are portrayed in the curriculum, and for the purpose of this research, in representations specifically within the history curriculum in relation to national identity. How the ideas of national identity within this curriculum aim to educate for citizenship in an ethnically diverse nation is our focus here.

## Multiculturalism: Public Discourse on Ethnic and Cultural Diversity

Multiculturalism emerged in the 1970s as a priority area for successive Australian governments. This occurred as the White Australia Policy (the colloquial and commonly used term to describe Australia's first enacted legislation, the Immigration Restriction Act, 1901), which was put in place to restrict non-"white" immigration, was diminishing, having already undergone a number of revisions. Ideas of multiculturalism put forth in a paper commissioned in 1977 by the Fraser government, prior to enacting the relevant legislation, included themes of "social cohesion, equality and cultural identity" (Australian Ethnic Affairs Council 1977, p. 3), where "multiculturalism exists where one society embraces groups of people with different cultural identities" (pp. 3–4). In 1979, the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs Act 1979 became the first multicultural legislation passed by a federal government. The purpose of the institute can be read as a definition of the Fraser government's view of multiculturalism, being:

a) to develop among the members of the Australian community:

   i. an awareness of the diverse cultures within that community that have arisen as a result of the migration of people to Australia; and
   ii. an appreciation of the contributions of those cultures to the enrichment of that community.

b) to promote tolerance, understanding, harmonious relations and mutual esteem among the different cultural groups and ethnic communities in Australia;

c) to promote a cohesive Australian society by assisting members of the Australian community to share with one another their diverse cultures within the legal and political structures of that society; and

d) to assist in promoting an environment that affords the members of the different cultural groups and ethnic communities in Australia the opportunity to participate fully in Australian society and achieve their own potential. (Australian Commonwealth Government, ss. 5.)

Along with its general acceptance by the broader community, aspects of multiculturalism quickly found their way into the curriculum. Whereas in previous decades of the twentieth century, when British heritage formed the foundation of "Australian" identity, this now shifted dramatically to one of multiculturalism, with people identifying their patriotism through a multicultural lens. Celebratory discourses are prevalent and obvious in a quick scan of the types of histories published for general audiences, especially leading up to the 1988 Bicentennial. These books and documentaries were often commissioned by the government or government-funded agencies, offering by and large a rose-tinted view of Australian history.

What does it mean to *be* Australian? Australia, like other nations, can be seen as conceptualising its national identity in part through celebrating public holidays or commemorating dates of national importance. Along with Christian religious days such as Christmas, Easter and Good Friday, gazetted national public holidays reflecting Australia's founding and majority religion (although now largely celebrated as secular events by the majority), two non-religious, nationally important days—Australia Day and Anzac Day—are observed annually. In addition, all states and territories have a public holiday for the British monarch's birthday, recognising her as the head of state. Several secular and non-secular celebrations reflecting the ethnic and cultural diversity in Australia (although not public holidays themselves) are growing in national importance, as can be seen in the increased number of people who attend these events, pointing to an existing cohesive multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism has been accepted in the main in Australia, which is often upheld internationally as an example of successful multiculturalism—although it is not without its problems. Outbreaks of violence

rarely occur, with the Cronulla Riots and the Cabramatta violence being relative exceptions. There is evidence, however, of both institutional and individualised, low-key racism. For example, the responses by some Australians towards ethnic Chinese (whether Australian citizens or not) in the wake of COVID-19 demonstrates that as far as national identity and citizenship goes, there is still some way to go in accepting a multicultural Australia. Aside from that, Australia's postcolonial history does not sufficiently acknowledge the historical injustices committed against its Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders.

## Australian History Curriculum: The National Context

The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training, and Youth Affairs has, since 1989 and approximately once a decade, developed the guiding document for the nation's education goals (*The Educational Goals for Young Australians*), the latest being the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration (2019). This document signals cooperation between the states, territories and the Commonwealth to establish and maintain national, broad objectives to guide education policy for young people, although not as a direct link to school action. The latest declaration identifies "active and informed citizenship" as an area to be developed in students. The second of its two stated educational goals refers to aligning ideas of national identity with a cohesive idea of nationhood, including references to ethnic and cultural diversity: "Goal 2: All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community" (Education Council 2019, p. 8). While it is not an overt articulation of nationalism within the curriculum, the language around issues of national importance, including ideas of what it means to be Australian, is frequently mitigated through the language of citizenship. The idea of creating an ideal young Australian is expressed through notions of active and informed citizenship.

Under the *Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences* (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA] 2015) and across the four years of junior high school (Years 7–10), topics covered in history include the ancient world; the beginning of the modern world, c. 650–1750 CE; the making of the modern world (1750–1918), which includes the First World War; and the modern world and Australia from 1918. As might be expected, these contain multiple references to discourses of "national identity", "diversity" (i.e. ethnic, religious, cultural) and their intersections, especially in relation to citizenship. At the start of the curriculum document, in a section titled "How the learning area works", cultural diversity and national identity are included, together with the statement:

> Who we are, who came before us, and traditions and values that have shaped societies. Students explore their own identity, Australia's heritage and cultural diversity, and Australia's identity as a nation in the world. They examine the significance of traditions and shared values within society. (ibid., p. 5)

Here, it is overtly articulated that students' individual identities are placed in relation to Australia's heritage, cultural diversity and place within the global context. The notion of "shared values" is considered an important area to teach in order for students to understand themselves, and to identify and celebrate similarities over differences by bringing people together through observed traditions and communal activities.

There are many mentions of national or community identity (38 times), citizenship (116 times) and ethnic, religious and/or cultural diversity (54 times) throughout the *Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences* (ACARA 2015), especially for the primary school years. This is not the case for the high school history curriculum, despite a whole year being dedicated to the study of Australian history. In Year 10, there are only two mentions, both in the area of "Historical Knowledge and Understanding". The first relates to "the challenge to established ideas and national identity" (ACARA 2015, p. 249) in relation to post-Second World War changes in popular culture; and the second refers to the intersections between national identity as well as ethnic and cultural

diversity in "[t]he contribution of migration to Australia's changing identity as a nation and to its international relationships (ACDSEH147)" (p. 251). Here, the notion of Australia's national identity is explicitly attributed to immigration, changing both within itself and outwards—towards the international community. Students are taught that national identity can be seen in the light of global relationships and standing in the international community, including fulfilling treaties and other obligations, not just as an insular expression of citizenship. Immigration, as an important focus of Australia's cultural growth, is not overlooked.

## Curriculum Materials: History Textbooks in Australia

Given the complexity of the K-10 history syllabus, the vast number of topics and depth of content, coupled with textbooks only being written for high school students, this chapter focuses on high school history. Publishers coordinate the writing and production of textbooks covering the topics raised in the official curriculum, although this used to be done by education departments. In Australia, there are fewer than ten publishers who market their books nationwide: all are privately owned companies or attached to global publishing houses such as the Cambridge and Oxford University Presses.

History textbooks are well-recognised as educational artefacts that reveal how a curriculum is translated from policy to practice (Valverde et al. 2002). Although we do not assert how teachers—and their students—use textbooks in the classroom, history textbooks remain implicated in the introduction of national ideology to young people (Foster and Crawford 2006) and in the construction of national attitudes and identities (Crawford 2008). While many teachers do not regularly use textbooks in the classroom and downplay their influence, their circulation is substantial enough for publishers to continue producing them. Schools are free to select their own textbooks (including deciding against using them at all), and there are no compulsory textbook requirements or mandated publishers. No textbooks are state approved, and instead

schools and teachers can freely determine which curricular materials are best for their students (and within their usual budget constraints).

Contemporary textbooks in Australia usually include a variety of primary sources, accompanying quality narratives and aesthetically pleasing and engaging-to-teenagers layouts. They are generally written by education academics and respected schoolteachers experienced in researching and/or teaching the subject area. Arguably, these factors contribute to the voluntary, widespread use of these curricular materials. This chapter provides a diachronic perspective of how two key groups—Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders (especially in relation to European colonisation) as well as non-"white" Australian migrants—are represented in the syllabus and textbooks. The Year 9 depth study, "Making A Nation", specifically the content topic "The Making of the Modern World", focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander intersections and Australian migrant experiences, hence providing a good example for studying representations and connections with other groups in the curriculum and in high school textbooks (typically for ages 14–15) used across Australia. To compare any intersections between the groups and mainstream culture, the same depth study was selected for investigation because it explicitly includes both abovementioned focus groups. The five main and nationally available textbooks published for the *Australian Curriculum: History* were selected for analysis (Table 8.1).

## Intersections with Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders

In the past—that is, throughout the twentieth century—the inclusion of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders was frequently done in relation to another group (usually explorers), on the fringes of the content or as tokenistic inclusions (e.g. as helpers of or trackers for explorers). This dispensability means that first nations representations remain on the fringes of curricular content, providing students with a very basic level of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representations in historical events (Sharp 2013). The curriculum has

**Table 8.1** List of *Australian Curriculum: History* textbooks selected for analysis

| Publisher | Title | Authors | Year of publication |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cambridge | *History for the Australian Curriculum Year 9* | Angela Woollacott, Michael Adcock, Margaret Allen, Raymond Evans, Alison Mackinnon | 2012 |
| Jacaranda | *Retroactive 9: Australian Curriculum for History* | Maureen Anderson, Ian Keese, Anne Low, Kate Harvey | 2012 |
| Macmillan | *History 10: The Modern World and Australia* | Paul Ashton, Mark Anderson | 2012 |
| Nelson | *Connect with History: 9* | Vicki Greer, Robyn Bowman, Kate Cameron, Philip Fielden, Chris Gates, Lisa Phillips, Merredith Southee | 2012 |
| Oxford | *Oxford Big Ideas: Australian Curriculum History 9* | G. Carrodus | 2012 |

changed since and now includes three cross-curriculum priorities—
"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures," "Asia and
Australia's Engagement with Asia" and "Sustainability" (ACARA n.d.). It
is expected that these priorities can be integrated within the content
taught, where relevant, rather than as standalone topics. The recognition
of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders across each subject is testament
to the rising importance of ensuring that this topic is included in mean-
ingful ways (albeit not explicitly connected to concrete topics within
subjects).

Despite this cross-curriculum priority privileging the importance of
"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures" and the
education that pre-service teachers receive during their tertiary studies,
some teachers still assert that they find it difficult to teach this topic
(Bishop 2020, paras. 5, 8, 9):

Many teachers don't feel confident or capable to include Indigenous per-
spectives in our classrooms…

Teachers involved in the project had the best of intentions and a fierce willingness to learn. Some had been teaching for more than 20 years and openly admitted their ignorance towards Indigenous dispossession and the way schooling was used as a vehicle of colonisation.

Another teacher expressed the problem of not having adequate skills to teach Indigenous perspectives.

These responses show that there is some way to go until teachers feel competent about including this cross-curriculum priority.

Mandating the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, the "Rationale" of the K-10 history syllabus (Board of Studies 2013, p. 9) states at the outset that:

The study of History strengthens an appreciation for and an understanding of civics and citizenship. It also provides broader insights into the historical experiences of different cultural groups within our society and how various groups have struggled for civil rights, for example Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, migrants and women.

The "Making a Nation" depth study is included in each of the five main textbooks (Table 8.2). Each textbook includes content on Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in connection to contact with colonisers, their experiences prior to "European settlement" (p. 88) and the historical and legal aspects of the creation of Australia as a constitutional federation, as per the syllabus requirements (ibid.):

**Table 8.2** Topics covered by each textbook

| Textbook | Covers the depth study | The Batman Treaty | The Afghan Cameleers | Chinese | Japanese | South Sea Islanders | Immigration Restriction Act |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nelson | x | x | x | NA | NA | NA | X |
| Macmillan | x | NA | x | x | NA | NA | X |
| Jacaranda | x | x | x | x | x | x | NA |
| Oxford | x | x | NA | x | NA | x | X |
| Cambridge | x | NA | x | x | x | x | NA |

The extension of settlement, including the effects of contact (intended and unintended) between European settlers in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (ACDSEH020)

Students:

- outline the expansion of European settlement on a map of Aboriginal Australia to 1900
- describe both the European impact on the landscape and how the landscape affected European settlement
- use a range of sources to describe contact experiences between European settlers and Indigenous peoples

The experiences of non-Europeans in Australia prior to the 1900s (such as the Japanese, Chinese, South Sea Islanders, Afghans) (ACDSEH089)

Students:

- explain why ONE of the non-European groups came to Australia
- describe how the chosen group lived and worked in Australia
- describe the contribution of non-European workers to Australia's development to 1900

## Case Study: The Batman Treaty

Given the vast array of content that includes Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders within the depth study, the focus of this case study is the so-called Batman Treaty (three out of the five textbooks include information about this event). John Batman, an Australian-born settler, moved from his birthplace of Parramatta (New South Wales) to Tasmania (then Van Diemen's Land) and was widely known for his capture of a bushranger. In 1835, he arrived by boat at what is modern-day Melbourne from Launceston, Tasmania, with a group of other white settlers and seven Aboriginals from Sydney, New South Wales. Batman, with their assistance, negotiated the treaty with the local Wurundjeri population,

exchanging vast tracts of land for blankets, tomahawks and other items, with the promise that these types of goods would be supplied each year. The treaty was soon abandoned since the government of the day, led by Governor Bourke, refused to recognise it.

When it comes to the textbooks themselves, there is limited content that contains intersections between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the colonisers. For example, the first mention of these groups occurs on the fifth page of the corresponding chapter of the Jacaranda textbook (Anderson et al. 2012, p. 212), under the heading "Early Settlements":

> The British had little respect for, or understanding of, the Aboriginal relationship to the land. They maintained that because the Indigenous Australians did not appear to farm the land, the continent was terra nullius. The occupiers took the attitude that they were free to take possession of whatever land they needed.

Three of the five textbooks analysed use the term *terra nullius*, which explains the intersections between British colonists and Aboriginal peoples in terms of their respective understandings of land ownership and guardianship. The subheading in the Jacaranda textbook uses the rather benign term "settlement" (Anderson et al. 2012), although the content takes a more radical approach by describing the British colonists as "occupiers". With a focus on land exploration and convict settlement, the next mention of Aboriginal Australians—and this time with a clear intersection between them and the colonists—includes the signing of the Batman Treaty. However, in this section ("Expansion in Eastern Australia"), only one sentence and one large image (with no source attribution) are included. The sentence reads: "John Batman left Launceston with seven Sydney aborigines and went through a process of 'negotiation' with the local Aborigines to purchase land from them" (p. 214). The accompanying image—also featured in the Nelson (Greer et al. 2012, p. 281) and Oxford textbooks (Carrodus 2012, p. 172)—is an oil painting by J.W. Burt in 1885 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the treaty, with Batman and his party in a friendly pose with the "local Aborigines" (p. 214) to depict their negotiation—however one sided that may be.

In the Jacaranda textbook, Aboriginal people are anonymised elsewhere within and referred to in the most general terms. In the twenty-first century, when all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations across the Australian continent have been mapped, at least the tribal names (if not those of individuals, which have often been lost to history) would have been appropriate to include. The Nelson and Oxford textbooks both depart from the Jacaranda textbook by naming the local Aboriginals as the Wurundjeri people. Referring explicitly to the local population, the Oxford textbook includes the following Batman Treaty content:

> John Batman crossed Bass Strait from Tasmania and explored the area around the Yarra River. He claimed to have purchased the land from members of the Wurrundjeri [sic], the local Indigenous communities. (Carrodus 2012, p. 172)

Including their tribal name goes some way towards ensuring that the Aboriginals are not anonymised through the use of generic terms, and implicitly indicates differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, thus teaching students that they are not a homogenous group. The notion of *terra nullius* is also included in the section about the Batman Treaty, defining it as:

> a belief that … emerged with the arrival of the British explorer and navigator Captain James Cook in 1770 … what this attitude overlooked was that Indigenous Australians had a close and intimate relationship with the land. (Greer et al. 2012, p. 281)

The Macmillan textbook states that:

> the British settlers operated under the law of *terra nullius,* they felt free to take the land without consulting Aboriginal people or paying for it. (Ashton and Anderson 2012, p. 161)

The Nelson textbook names the Wurundjeri people and reads:

In June 1835, John Batman organised a treaty with local Wurundjeri elders to buy 240 000 hectares of land in the Port Phillip Bay area. The Aboriginal people were to be paid with blankets, knives, shirts and food over many years. Although the treaty is still controversial, many historians believe that Batman acknowledge the Aboriginal ownership of the land, which the British government did not. Batman's treaty was declared illegal as all land in Australia belonged to the Crown. (Greer et al. 2012, pp. 281–282)

The textbook then continues to discuss conflicts between the Aboriginals and British colonists (the terminology used in the textbook) for a further five pages, including information about the more contemporary history/culture wars, using both primary sources and explicit secondary sources from a modern-day historian, Henry Reynolds.

Current representations of the Batman Treaty in textbooks are not new but have been included in various history and/or social studies curricular documents over the twentieth century. Taking a look at the 1950s and 1960s curriculum from Queensland, the three available textbooks mention the Batman Treaty with a great variance in detail and perspective. Students were first introduced to it in social studies in Year 4. This narrative describes Batman's attempt to take advantage of the Wurundjeri population in order to secure large tracts of land:

When natives gathered to watch what the strange white men were doing, Batman said, "This is their country. I shall try to buy some of their land."

He gave the natives blankets, knives, mirrors, flour, scissors, coloured handkerchiefs, and many other presents. He then asked them to sign a treaty making them owner of a large stretch of pasture land. So pleased were the chiefs with the wonderful gifts that they willingly put their queer marks on the paper. They also gave Batman a sod of earthy showing that they agreed that now the land was his. (Department of Education 1954/1963/1966, pp. 82–83)

The terms consistently used to describe the Aboriginal Australians whom Batman dealt with throughout this narrative are (unironically or without any sense of reflection) "natives" and "chiefs" (pp. 82, 83). Even though Batman's Treaty forms the focus of this narrative, very little

content is directed to the Wurundjeri people; instead, they are passive players, neither named nor heard. Regarding the negotiation and signing of the treaty, this knowledge is presented as unproblematic, with no attempt to engage students to think about whether the Wurundjeri people (who did not speak the same language as Batman) actually understood that they were signing a treaty and the consequences of Batman's actions. Whilst later in the narrative, the governor is reported as dismissing the treaty ("A treaty! ... Nonsense! The natives could not read what was on any paper you gave them to sign. Therefore, it is worthless" [p. 83]), there is no explicit articulation of the role played by the Wurundjeri people in this event. The underlying ideology present in this narrative is that even when the event directly relates to actions in which they are involved, Aboriginal Australians are not an important, voiced part of history; they are silent, passive and "watch" the "white men" (p. 82).

In high school, students were again taught about Batman, with two of the textbooks containing information about him (Connole 1962; Blackmore et al. 1969). An example reads:

> In 1835 John Batman from Van Diemen's Land landed near present day Melbourne, and finding a tribe of Aborigines, offered to buy their land. Batman made an unusual deal with them and "bought" 600, 000 acres of land for a few tomahawks, mirrors, knives and blankets. While this seems laughable it was the first time that any white person had offered the native people of Australia anything in return for the land they had taken. Batman's claim to the land was not accepted by the authorities. (Blackmore et al. 1969, p. 56)

In this small passage, no explanation of why this treaty "seems laughable" (ibid.) is provided, nor are there any attempts to mediate this for students. However, the textbook places the content within the times by acknowledging that such treatment of the Wurundjeri people was not fair. Overall, in the curriculum, the treaty is given scant attention, despite this being a monumental case in early contact history and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Attempts to cover the treaty and the Wurundjeri population do not provide their tribal affiliations or individual names to the reader, thus furthering the

discourse of anonymity. There is no detail of what the treaty included, how it was negotiated and the reasons why the government did not acknowledge it. Instead, a fragmented history of early interactions between farmers and Aboriginal Australians is presented, far removed from an established historical context.

The language used to describe Aboriginal people *has* changed over the last 50 years, in line with community expectations. In current textbooks, generic terms such as "natives" are replaced with the acceptable "Aboriginal", and in two of the textbooks, the correct name of the local population, the Wurundjeri people, is included. Former paternalistic terms are being replaced with more accurate and nuanced ways of describing Australia's Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. However, while they are still being included in relation to other groups (e.g. European colonisers), Australia's first nations peoples are *only* included in the curriculum in relation to another group and usually as the subtopic to the main idea being presented.

## Case Study: The Afghan Cameleers

With regard to migration experiences of non-Europeans in Australia prior to the 1900s, four groups are covered across the five textbooks (Table 8.2), including Afghans, Chinese, Japanese and South Sea Islanders. Teachers can select which group(s) to focus on in the classroom. Four of the five textbooks include "The Afghan Cameleers" as a content topic. The "Afghans" were in reality from a range of countries in the Middle East and Asia, such as present-day Turkey, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan (it was then typical for Australians to see these men as being from only one nation). In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the cameleers were instrumental in opening up Australia's interior to trade, commerce, settlement and the overland railway. In particular, they covered the geographic areas of South Australia, the Northern Territory and western New South Wales.

The Nelson textbook takes the cameleers as the focus of migrant experiences (Greer et al. 2012). Highlighting the general way in which migrants were discussed in the past, the textbook explains that:

not all [the men] were from Afghanistan. Afghan was a general name given to men from India, the Kingdom of Afghanistan and present-day Pakistan, who led camel teams in outback Australia. (p. 287)

The textbook goes on to explain that the reason why they were granted entry into Australia was because they were either subjects of part of the British Empire or their respective countries had supported the British in the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878–1880). Their non-"white" status was "excused" due to political stances. The Macmillan textbook traces the Afghans to three individuals arriving to support the 1860 Burke and Wills inland expedition. The textbook estimates that they eventually numbered between 2000 and 6000 cameleers, and "these men had a major impact on the development of Australia's interior" (Ashton and Anderson 2012, p. 166). The Macmillan textbook also includes information on how they did not receive immigration status due to the Immigration Restriction Act. Similar to the Nelson textbook, the Jacaranda textbook explains that the cameleers came from a range of areas:

Although the men were given the collective name of Ghans, as a shortened form of Afghanistan, they came from a wide region of south Asia and the Middle East—ranging from Turkey in the west to the Punjab region of India in the east. (Anderson et al. 2012, p. 222)

The Cambridge textbook focuses on the "2000 to 3000" (Woollacott et al. 2012, p. 175) cameleers that came to Australia and discusses them in relation to explorers and their employment by companies to deliver goods, also briefly explaining some aspects of the cameleers' culture, including Islamic prayers and their celebrations of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr. The section is also accompanied by a cameleer network map and photographs of cameleers and their families. This textbook includes cameleers' attempts to make Australia their home by bringing their cultures and religions as well as starting families. Mention is made of the cameleers continuing to practise Islam in each of the textbooks.

## Language Used to Describe the Cameleers

In the Nelson textbook, the cameleers are described as "the backbone of the Australian economy", "strong and skilful" (Greer et al. 2012, p. 287), among others. The writers implicitly equate being religious to being good workers, writing that "many … were practising Muslims, had a strong work ethic, a respect for the law and an understanding of the often-moody camels" (ibid.). The Cambridge textbook refers to the cameleers as men who "contributed greatly to the exploration and development" (Woollacott et al. 2012, p. 175), while also implying that they were hard workers: "(they) walked all day with their camels, leading trains of up to 70 camels" (p. 176). The common trope of migrants working for low pay compared to Australian-born workers is emphasised explicitly ("most significantly for the Australians who owned horse and bullock teams, the cameleers worked for low wages") (p. 287), thus implying that wage exploitation may have occurred.

The Macmillan textbook focuses on what is termed "non-Europeans in Australia" (Ashton and Anderson 2012, p. 165). It asserts that there was a hierarchy of race or culture and gender, according to where migrant groups settled and which countries they were from, writing that:

> Germans in South Australia … were generally treated as equals. Wealthy Chinese merchants were like any other gentlemen with capital. But the majority of non-Europeans were providers of cheap labour. They were generally exploited and they were largely hated and feared. (p. 165)

Two photos of cameleers are included, both taken in the late 1880s, showing what the cameleers and their teams of camels looked like. Four additional secondary sources are included (all from the original 1989 text) that discuss the cameleers using terms such as "hardy", "strong" and "independent"—with the term "exotics" in inverted commas—where their "vigorously determined tribal culture … alien to … the European colonists" was "feared and hated" (p. 166). The Jacaranda textbook states that the cameleers were "respected" (Anderson et al. 2012, p. 223).

## The Cameleers in Relation to Other Groups

The cameleers, like the Wurundjeri people, are included only in relation to other groups (the existing population, explorers, employers, etc., who saw them as racially inferior to Europeans). The Jacaranda textbook also talks about the cameleers in relation to helping explorers, writing that they "carried … supplies", "accompan[ied] explorers", "assisted in building the Overland Telegraph line" (ibid., p. 222). In a sense, they are relegated to a supporting role, despite their skill in opening up the interior to European exploration and permanent settlements. Similarly, the Cambridge textbook refers to the cameleers as being in an employee-employer relationship with Australians/Europeans and in personal relationships with Aboriginal and with European-background women:

> Some had families with Aboriginal women and some Aboriginal families still have surnames like Khan, Abdulla and Dadleh. Others, like Abdul Wade, married women of European backgrounds. He and Emily Ozadelle married in 1895 and had three sons and four daughters. (Woollacott et al. 2012, p. 176)

In relation to other groups, the Nelson textbook writes: "They [the Afghans] did not mix with the European population, although they sometimes married Aboriginal women" (Greer et al. 2012, p. 287). The Jacaranda textbook describes the cameleers being "opposed" by "some Europeans" (Anderson et al. p. 222). A tax on new immigrants was suggested as one strategy to disincentivise their arrival on the continent. Both these examples imply racism at play, especially in relation to them not mixing with the "European population".

With no explanations or sources (which is not to dismiss its accuracy or otherwise), the Cambridge textbook writes that "European Australians believed that they were superior to the Afghans and looked down on them" (Woollacott et al. 2012, p. 176), clearly identifying a separation between the groups, and that:

anti-Afghan prejudice grew … some Europeans wished to drive Afghan people from Broken Hill or the West Australian goldfields, where recent migrants claimed Australia should be for the white man. (p. 177)

It also discusses the discrimination experienced by the cameleers, writing that "[g]overnment policies were discriminatory … in the 1890s some colonies passed acts restricting the immigration of people" (ibid.). In these textbooks, the racism experienced is either only implied or not dealt with in a significant or meaningful way, and opportunities to link it with the present are missed.

## Conclusion

We have analysed how the two case studies are discussed in five popular textbooks—whilst their inclusion is still in relation to their experiences with other groups (as minor partners), the studies are structural rather than fringe parts of the unit. They are indicative of the ways in which the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders and non-"white" migrant groups are represented throughout the curriculum—that is, the inclusion of their intersections with other groups, namely "white" Australians. They are included when the topic specially addresses them, but otherwise the curriculum largely maintains the mainstream, "white" representation. The two groups are seemingly included in relation to the dominant culture, rather than for their own sake. This binary, or diachronic perspective, sees the mainstream "white" culture holding a superior place in Australian history, by including other groups as secondary topics. For students learning history in Australia, the message is that those who don't fit within the mainstream sit on the periphery of Australian culture and identity—engaging in civic life and being featured in Australian history only when they are exotic, out of the ordinary and/or far removed from the "usual" Australian experience.

The case studies selected are interesting because they are both placed within the unit that explicitly teaches students about the origins of Australia as a nation; how featuring these groups shows something of how Australians saw themselves when emerging as an independent nation.

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# 9

# Potentially Transformative: Aligning Māori Perspectives, Difficult Histories and Historical Thinking

**Mark Sheehan**

## Introduction

The New Zealand senior school history curriculum (for ages 16–18) places a premium on the ability of students to think critically about the past (Seixas and Morton 2013), [1] but it does not mandate content knowledge. Teaching this country's difficult histories (in particular the process of colonisation) is left to individual teachers in self-managing schools. A consequence of this high autonomy model is that until recently, the process of developing an in-depth understanding of controversial aspects of New Zealand's past has been minimised in many classrooms (Manning 2011). This poses a challenge, given the wider societal commitment to

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[1] For a New Zealand version of this model, see Davison et al. (2014).

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reconciling the relationship between indigenous Māori and non-indigenous New Zealanders as well as addressing Māori aspirations in education.[2] Critical thinking is an essential feature in preparing young people to participate constructively in a liberal and representative democracy (Nordgren 2017), and New Zealand is becoming an increasingly diverse society. If history is to become a transformative school subject, one which informs young people about the need to engage in constructive dialogue about the past, the present and the future, youths also need to develop an understanding of Māori perspectives on the past (Sheehan 2020; Wood and Sheehan 2020). This chapter examines the challenge of aligning the disciplinary-based historical thinking orientation of the senior history curriculum with Māori notions of history. It argues that rather than this being a binary issue, both approaches have more commonalities than differences.

This is a timely question to examine because the government has recently committed to the introduction of a core social sciences curriculum (for youths aged 5–15), which includes New Zealand's history.[3] A compulsory curriculum will be implemented in 2023,[4] one which will require all young people to develop an evidence-based understanding of the difficult features of this country's history, including Māori perspectives on the past. This initiative is a major reorientation for teaching and learning history in this country. Young people seldom develop an in-depth understanding of this country's history (neither in the core social sciences curriculum—Years 1–10—nor in senior history programmes). However, while this initiative has the potential to provide young New Zealanders with a sense of historical awareness that, for many, has been largely absent from their schooling, the extent to which the new curriculum will align critical/historical thinking approaches with Māori

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[2] See, for example, the recent Māori Education Strategy: *Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia* at https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/overall-strategies-and-policies/ka-hikitia-ka-hapaitia/. Accessed 18 November 2021.

[3] See https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Aotearoa-NZ-histories/MOE-Aotearoa-NZ-Histories-A3-FINAL-020-1.pdf. Accessed 18 November 2021.

[4] The curriculum was due to be implemented in 2022 but delayed a year due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

histories poses an ongoing challenge. This chapter aims to contribute to the discussion of how this issue might be addressed.

In New Zealand, the process of colonisation is arguably the most difficult aspect of its past. It was typically a traumatic experience for the majority of Māori and the cause of many of their contemporary social, economic and cultural problems. The organised settlement of New Zealand, predominantly by British, Scottish and Irish settlers, began in the 1840s after the Māori and the Crown signed the Treaty of Waitangi, in which Māori authority (including control of their lands and resources) (Orange 2015) was to be guaranteed. Despite this, the treaty did little to protect the Māori from the worst excesses of colonisation after 1840 and was largely ignored by successive governments over the subsequent 100 years. By the early twentieth century, the majority of Māori land had been confiscated or sold through dubious land purchases that took little account of traditional Māori practices, and as a consequence of war and disease, the population had declined by more than half of what it had been a century earlier (Anderson et al. 2014).

The worst excesses of colonisation gradually dissipated during the twentieth century, but it would not be until the 1980s that New Zealand began the process of becoming a bicultural society based on the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. Since then, there has been an increasing commitment to addressing historical grievances—a key factor in understanding the contemporary social and economic disparities between the Māori and non-indigenous New Zealanders (especially in health, education and housing)—which are a consequence of colonisation. Having an understanding of the process of colonisation is therefore an integral feature which young people in New Zealand need in order to develop the knowledge and dispositions to operate constructively in a bicultural society. However, the low priority given to controversial features of this country's past in many senior history classrooms limits the potential for history to become a transformative subject, one that equips young people to operate as historically aware critical citizens.

This chapter begins with an outline of how the highly autonomous New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) operates and provides the context for an examination of the changing landscape of teaching and learning history over the last decade. The second part considers the challenges in

aligning an emphasis on critical thinking in the senior history curriculum with indigenous notions of the past, and explores what this might mean for teaching and learning history as a transformative experience.

## Commemorating the New Zealand Wars

The current NZC[5] was introduced in 2007. It reflected international initiatives to address "new ways that people in the 21st century may work, travel and engage with others" (Yates et al. 2017, p. 24) as well as ongoing disparities between advantaged and disadvantaged students and school communities. This was to be achieved by allowing for a high degree of local autonomy and flexibility as to what young people would learn. There was little emphasis on the knowledge to be imparted. With regard to senior history, teachers in self-managing schools have largely been left to decide on what their students will learn. Typically, engaging young people on the difficult features of this country's past has not been a priority. While history teachers have not ignored New Zealand's past outright, they have largely reflected the wider silence among non-indigenous New Zealanders over the traumatic impact of colonisation on the Māori (MacDonald 2019). There have been exceptions to this ethos. The New Zealand History Teachers' Association (NZHTA) highlights numerous examples of how innovative teachers have promoted the learning of controversial aspects of New Zealand's past, and who serve as "change agents" in their learning communities.[6] There is also an emerging literature by teachers who engage with young people on controversial questions of the experience of colonisation (Harcourt and Sheehan 2012).[7] Furthermore, the lack of focus on New Zealand's history in the curriculum has been of concern to the history teaching community for decades (Low-Beer 1986; Hunter and Farthing 2004; Guyver 2008). In addition, recent years have seen a growing public impatience with young people not learning enough

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[5] The NZC is to be subject to a "refresh" based on the current curriculum over the next five years (by 2026) but the shape of this framework is unclear at the time of writing. See https://www.educa-tion.govt.nz/our-work/information-releases/issue-specific-releases/national-curriculum-refresh/.

[6] See the NZHTA's website at www.nzhta.org.

[7] For an outstanding example of teacher-led research, see Harcourt (2020).

about the country's past. These trends reflect a wider societal interest in how the past can help us understand questions of inequality, environmental degradation and continuing disparities among New Zealanders in health, education and housing. However, despite historians increasingly focusing on this country's past (O'Malley 2019; Salmond 2017; Binney 2009) and New Zealand's evolution into a bicultural society which is conscious of an independent, Pacific-based identity, it is only recently that a growing number of history teachers have chosen to reflect upon this focus in their teaching.

The watershed moment in the growing momentum to make learning New Zealand's history compulsory in schools was in 2015, when Waimarama Anderson and Leah Bell, two secondary school students from Ōtorohanga College, began a petition that called for the New Zealand Wars to be commemorated and included in the curriculum (O'Malley and Kidman 2018a; Blundell 2017; Manning 2017). After a class visit to major battle sites in Waikato that were central to the wars between the Crown and particular tribes, Anderson and Bell felt frustrated that these momentous events in New Zealand's history were largely ignored in the school curriculum. This was remarkable, given that it was a curriculum initiative which was largely driven by students (O'Malley and Kidman 2018b). The aims of the petition were to "raise awareness of the Land Wars", introduce them into the NZC and to "memorialise those who gave their lives on New Zealand soil with a statutory day of recognition" (ibid.). Signed by over 12,000 people, the petition was presented to the Māori Affairs Select Committee at parliament in December 2015 and public submissions were heard early the following year.

The petition was well timed, having been presented in the midst of the First World War centenary commemorations (which generated an increasing interest in war remembrance)[8] and motivated a number of prominent commentators to question why the wars between the Māori and the Crown in the nineteenth century were largely ignored while war remembrance focused almost exclusively on the First World War experience. Vincent O'Malley (2016), in his award-winning book, *The Great War for New Zealand*, provided a comprehensive account of the Waikato

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[8] See https://ww100.govt.nz/ Accessed 3 March 2020.

War and argued that the New Zealand Wars were as nationally significant as the First World War.

The Anderson/Bell petition served as a catalyst for addressing this question. In August 2016, the government established a national day on 28 October to commemorate the New Zealand Wars (Anderson and Bell 2016) and commemorations are now held annually in regions where the conflict was significant. On this day in 1835, prior to the signing of the treaty, Māori chiefs in Northland signed the Declaration of Independence which "asserted that sovereign power in New Zealand resided fully with the Māori, and that foreigners would not be allowed to make laws".[9] The focus on the 1835 declaration reflected the view that the Māori *did not* cede sovereignty in the treaty, but rather agreed to a version of governorship and showed a willingness to govern in partnership with the Crown. This commitment to commemorate the New Zealand Wars with a national day, however, did not extend to teaching young people why these commemorations were significant. The petition did not result in any changes to the curriculum, and in its submission to the select committee which considered the petition, the Ministry of Education was adamant that history *should not* be a compulsory part of the curriculum (Price 2016).

> What we are not doing—and are not going to do—is make this or any other topic compulsory. The National Curriculum is a framework for schools and Kura. It provides them with guidance on covering key learning areas and designing their own curriculum. How they do that and what they include in their curriculum should be for them to decide, in consultation with their local community. (Rodgers 2016)

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[9] See https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/interactive/the-declaration-of-independence. Accessed 18 November 2021.

# Curricular Autonomy and Meeting the Needs of Local Communities

The ministry's opposition to history being a compulsory subject was not intended to discourage young people from learning about the past. Indeed, the ministry initiated a number of projects over the last decade to encourage teachers to engage with New Zealand's history, including providing written and digital resources.[10] These initiatives added to a range of existing resources for history teachers, including textbooks (which are not monitored or approved by the government), support from the NZHTA and the work of the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, which has been especially proactive in supporting schools to teach New Zealand's history.[11]

Rather, the opposition to establishing a compulsory history curriculum by the Ministry of Education actually reflected the prevailing neoliberal mindset in the New Zealand education arena which has existed since the 1990s—one which prioritises local communities' autonomy over knowledge to be taught to young people. From the 1990s, the centralised structures that framed social and economic policies since the end of the Second World War were dismantled, in response to the impact of the worsening international economic situation. The role of the centralised government was reduced, in line with neoliberal models in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. With regard to education, the government stepped away from its responsibilities in administering schools, which became self-managing and autonomous entities with the flexibility to make decisions aligned with priorities in their local communities (Wylie 2012; Openshaw 2009).

However, the responsibility for designing the curriculum remained with the Ministry of Education. Initially, curriculum initiatives were kept separate from structural changes in education at this time. The New Zealand Curriculum Framework (1993) was developed during the 1990s and constituted a comprehensive set of seven volumes (one for each

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[10] The ministry currently supports schools with resources. See Ministry of Education (2016).

[11] The Ministry for Culture and Heritage manages two web portals that provide a number of useful resources supporting history: see nzhistory.govt.nz and teara.govt.nz.

learning area) which set out a detailed body of knowledge and skills (O'Neill et al. 2004). Although the social sciences were a highly controversial learning area (the first draft was abandoned for being perceived as unbalanced with regard to the treaty and colonisation), the final document outlined essential knowledge about New Zealand (including the treaty) that was to be covered. It reflected the view that there was some knowledge that all young people should learn. However, this was at odds with the neoliberal, high-autonomy ethos that shaped New Zealand's educational policies at the time. The framework was regarded as a poor fit for a society that was becoming more socially open, liberal and diverse, with significant waves of migration arriving from non-European countries (Byrnes 2009; Smith 2013). Over the last 20 years, the prevailing ethos in education has seen the encouragement of greater autonomy, thus shifting responsibility for educational decisions to local communities. In this context, the idea of a centralised curriculum which aimed to meet the needs and interests of all students (and prescribed particular aspects of knowledge) was seen as unrealistic, bureaucratic and inappropriate.

Such is the background for the development of the current, highly autonomous NZC (2007), a one-volume document that encapsulates all learning areas but specifies little knowledge. Its principal aim is "to set the direction for student learning and to provide guidance for schools as they design and review their curriculum" (Ministry of Education 2007, p. 6). While schools are expected to align their local curriculum with the NZC, they "have considerable flexibility when determining the detail" (p. 37). This model is premised on the assumption that if responsibilities for the curriculum are decentralised, then local communities would make the best decisions for their children. Well-resourced and well-connected schools, whose students, parents and teachers have high levels of cultural, social and economic capital, have appreciated the opportunities for such flexibility.

However, some schools are far better resourced to deliver a broad, balanced curriculum than others. The New Zealand education system is very far from equitable. It is one of the most unequal education systems in the world: in fact it is ranked on the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund's annual *Innocenti Report Card* as 33rd out of 38 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

countries (Chzhen et al. 2018) in terms of educational equality. There are "significant gaps between high and low achievers and learners from low socio-economic status communities", including Māori and Pasifika communities, who are overrepresented in the low achieving group, while students from affluent communities (who are predominantly European and Asian) "are over-represented in the high achieving group" (Grudnoff et al. 2016, p. 451).

Despite these high levels of disparity between different communities, curricular choices have been placed in the hands of teachers and schools, regardless of whether or not they are supported with the resources to make informed decisions to meet their students' needs. In the senior history curriculum, teachers are given minimal guidance about content and there is little cohesion between (and even within) schools in terms of content/knowledge. It is up to the individual teacher to decide on the topics to be studied. There are only brief guidelines in the NZC, with learning structured around six learning objectives (two at each year level), for example: "Understand how people's perspectives on events that are of significance to New Zealanders differ" (Ministry of Education 2007, Level 7). The phrase "of significance to New Zealanders" provides a guideline for what teachers may choose to teach, but this can be interpreted very loosely and allows for a wide range of historical topics to be studied—in some cases, these may have little apparent connection to New Zealand (Sheehan 2011b). In senior schools, this problem is compounded by the high-stakes qualification framework (the National Certificate of Educational Achievement, NCEA), where knowledge has been fragmented into small portions which can be assessed accordingly (Hipkins et al. 2016). The more open-ended curriculum and flexible assessments have not led to students learning a broader range of history; rather, they are exposed to less and offered a narrow range of content that in many cases has seen students emerging from courses with a detailed knowledge of only a few narrow areas of the past, rather than a broad understanding (Ormond 2017).

## 'Give Me My History!'

If the secondary school student petition was a watershed moment for raising awareness of the question of compulsory history with the general public, for the history teaching community it was the 2018 NZHTA national conference (Ball 2020). This was the catalyst for the NZHTA chair, Graeme Ball, to launch a different petition—"'Give me my History!' Teaching our nation's past in our schools" (Ball 2019). He argued that learning knowledge of New Zealand's history (including controversial events such as the Treaty of Waitangi) was a "basic right" for all young people. To quote Ball:

> Too few New Zealanders have a sound understanding of what brought the Crown and Māori together in the 1840 Treaty … it is a basic right of all to learn this at school (primary and/or secondary) and students should be exposed to multiple perspectives and be enabled to draw their own conclusions from the evidence presented in line with good historical practice. (Gerritsen 2019)

The petition was presented to parliament in 2018 and garnered support across the political spectrum. The centre-left coalition government was totally supportive: Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern remarked that New Zealanders needed to know more about their own history and the centre-right opposition education spokesperson, Nikki Kaye, saw history as the core of national identity. Such widespread support, however, was to no avail. Citing the flexibility of a high autonomy curricular model, the NZHTA petition was rejected by the Education and Workforce Committee (2019). The petition was seen as out of step with curricular developments that prioritised flexibility and autonomy for local communities, even if this came with the unintended consequence of young people being unable to develop a sense of historical awareness of New Zealand's past. However, on 12 September, within days of the report being released, Ardern announced that all young people between the ages of 5 and 15 would study New Zealand's history in a compulsory curriculum which would include the process of colonisation, the Treaty of

Waitangi, immigration and the changing nature of New Zealand's identity.[12]

The decision took many by surprise, including those in the history teaching community, but while the reasoning behind the government's changed stance is as yet unclear, it was a popular initiative among the general public and within the Māori community. In part, this reflected the fact that there had been little public discussion about the purpose of learning New Zealand's past, and in particular why teaching history mattered if young people were to become historically informed, critical citizens who could successfully operate in a bicultural democracy. Unlike in other countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, for example, where the way schools teach the past has been fiercely debated at political levels—in what are known as "history wars" (Nash et al. 1997; Clark 2004; Sheehan 2011a)—the curriculum in New Zealand has generated little interest outside the history teaching community. The momentum noted above is recent, indicating a wider shift with regard to educational priorities.

## Aligning History with Indigenous Views of the Past: *Ka mua, ka muri*

The new history curriculum places a high priority on Māori knowledge (*mātauranga Māori*), but recontextualising discipline-based, historical thinking models into a history curriculum that incorporates understandings of indigenous perspectives on the past is far from a straightforward exercise. With regard to the content that has been prioritised in New Zealand, it has until recently reflected the wider view within the Anglophone world of the uniqueness and importance of the European experience (Goody 2007). Local history teachers have typically viewed the past through the lenses of western conceptual frameworks, and the privileging of Euro-American (and in particular British) history has been evident in senior history programmes. Young people have seldom had the

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[12] See https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/nz-history-be-taught-all-schools. Accessed 17 November 2021.

opportunity to develop an in-depth understanding of New Zealand's past (especially the experience of the Māori) and until recently were more likely to learn about sixteenth- and seventeenth-century British kings and queens rather than local events, trends and personalities (Sheehan 2010). However, while there is an increasing focus on New Zealand's colonial past in history programmes, the question of how the disciplinary-based model of historical thinking in the curriculum can be aligned with indigenous Māori notions of the past presents a challenge.

The Māori way of thinking about history has been described as walking forward into the future while looking back into the past, as reflected in the Māori proverb *"Ka mua, ka muri"*. In *Te Ao Māori* (the Māori World), this philosophy is encapsulated in a way of thinking known as *Te Taiao*—one where the natural world contains and surrounds people in an interconnected symbiotic relationship.[13] At a broader level, the primary aim of indigenous approaches to the past (which are aligned with notions of historical consciousness) is to institute an approach that is holistic, connected to contemporary challenges and informed by traditional accounts of the past which have an inherent consistency (Nordgren 2019). Thus, for many Māori, a fundamental aim of teaching history in a school setting is not primarily about critique, analysis, argument or chronological understanding, but rather to connect the past with the present. In the context of colonisation, this is also interconnected with challenges in the contemporary world of the revitalisation of language and traditional practices (Henry and Hone 2001). The past is entwined with the present and connected to ongoing and changing relationships in what Alison Jones, reflecting on her life as a non-indigenous New Zealander working closely with the Māori World, calls "relationality". Māori, she notes:

> understand the world as a series of never-ending, never-resolved relationships—between people, objects, time, and space and on and on … boundaries do not contain absolutes … relationality seriously throws into disarray our sincere dreams for answers and end points—and our assumption that,

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[13] See https://www.environmentguide.org.nz/issues/biodiversity/maori-and-biodiversity/. Accessed 17 November 2021.

one day, we will wake up and *all will be well*. Relationships are never like that. They are contingent, fluid and always on the move, always in the process of being and becoming something. In the end, the most important things are ineffable, unexplainable, difficult, and sometimes even contradictory. (Jones 2020)

There is a tension in aligning Māori perspectives on the past, such as relationality, with a history curriculum framed by the ethos of historical thinking. It requires teachers to not only ensure that their students have a critical understanding of historical details and the ability to analyse and interrogate sources, but that they also develop, through their programmes, authentic understandings of how the Māori are connected to their past. For teachers, this can be a challenge. Most are not indigenous and are unlikely to have engaged with Māori ways of thinking about the past in any depth during their own education. While new requirements for schools, teachers and teacher education institutions are changing this situation, for many history teachers, such Māori perspectives are unfamiliar territory.

With its common disciplinary core, the priority of historical thinking is largely to enable young people to critique historical narratives, argue points of view based on verifiable evidence, understand how historians interpret the past and develop the capacity to think independently. It is these qualities that give historical thinking the sort of explanatory power which is so important for participating constructively in the democratic process. However, the protocols of historical thinking and indigenous views of the past may not be as far apart as they initially appear to be. An increasing number of teachers have the intellectual confidence and pedagogical abilities to teach students about the difficult features of New Zealand's past, including engaging with *mātauranga Māori*. These teachers are equipped with an understanding of both the relevant knowledge and the interpretive/critical features of the subject and see the transformative potential of history as coming from a mutually respectful dialogue on the uncomfortable features of New Zealand's colonial legacy, rather than positioning the criticality of historical thinking and indigenous notions of the past as binaries. It is not an either/or situation: both approaches have more in common than meets the eye. People in all

societies use history to address contemporary issues, orientate themselves and make meaning of past experiences. The issue of mythological origins and explanations is not just the preserve of indigenous peoples. The modern nation-state is founded on the idea of imagined communities—in a New Zealand setting, this is evident in how the experience of war, in particular the Gallipoli campaign, is closely linked to the origins of a sense of national identity (Pennell and Sheehan 2020). In addition, Māori historians also approach the past with a critical understanding of New Zealand's historical details (including the capacity to analyse and interrogate evidence). When it comes to the differences between indigenous ways of thinking about the past and historical thinking, this may very well be "more a question of degree than kind" (Nordgren 2019).

This is not to suggest that there are no tensions, but this fact should be of no surprise given that history education is at a crossroads—one where the discipline meets anthropology, education, sociology, philosophy, psychology and neuroscience (Nordgren 2019) as well as indigenous perspectives. However, resolving these tensions may lie in preparing teachers to incorporate critical, historical thinking approaches with meaningful content knowledge (which addresses the process of colonisation) and an openness to Māori notions of how the past and the present are connected. For example, in the new history curriculum students are required to engage with *mātauranga Māori*, including different ways of considering sequential and chronological understandings. It is in this space that different approaches have the potential to become transformative for learners. For example, if young people initially hold the assumption that compensation for the Māori whose lands were confiscated after the wars of the nineteenth century is not justified and has no place in contemporary society but, after critically interrogating the evidence (including *mātauranga Māori* sources), recognise that these grievances are legitimate and can better understand the historical relationship between the Māori and non-indigenous New Zealanders, then something transformative has happened. It indicates a developing sense of historical awareness, based on empathic views of the past and a willingness to reevaluate fundamental assumptions: this is achieved by thinking critically about historical evidence and being open to different perspectives. However, it requires considerable expertise, knowledge and skill on the part of teachers for

this transformation to happen, based on a firm grasp of historical content, an ability to teach students how to think critically about the past and the confidence to consider how they can align their programme with Māori cultural values.

## Conclusion

Thinking critically about the past equips young people with the ability to operate as historically informed, critical citizens and provides insights into the world that go beyond "common sense". However, if young people are to engage in deep learning about the past, they need to not only make evidence-based judgements about the validity of particular historical narratives and competing claims of historical truth, but also to question their assumptions by learning about difficult features of the past and different perspectives. The nature of teaching and learning history in New Zealand is currently going through a significant transition. While the focus of this chapter is on the senior history curriculum, the initiative to make learning New Zealand's history compulsory for all students is likely to see young people developing a sense of historical awareness which is closely connected to this country. This awareness will have an impact on senior history programmes, where there is currently very little alignment between junior social studies programmes and senior history courses. This represents a significant shift and may very well see the development of a history curriculum where not only do young people engage with difficult histories, but are also encouraged to think critically as well as develop an openness to Māori perspectives. In short: a history curriculum that is potentially transformative.

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# Part III

**Reconciling Ethnonationalism with Ethnic Diversity in Asia**

# 10

# Reconstructing the Nation: Struggles in Portraying Ethnic Minorities in Chinese Mainstream History Textbooks

Fei Yan

## Introduction

Despite the multiethnic reality of China and the strategic importance of Chinese minority ethnic groups (*shaoshu minzu*), China has often been seen as a homogenous entity (e.g. "China as a civilisation") (Jaques 2012). But this view creates problems in understanding the notion of modern

China has 55 officially recognised ethnic minorities, with a combined population of almost 125.47 million (8.9 per cent of the total 1.4 billion population) (National Bureau of Statistics 2020). Unlike Western countries such as the United Kingdom or France, these ethnic minorities are largely indigenous and mostly live in the border regions, which account for more than half of China's territory. Many of these so-called minority ethnic groups are actually the majority in the local regions in which they reside. Scholars such as Mullaney (2012, p. 2) argue that the concept of Han ethnicity is a modern invention of the early twentieth century, and that Han identity in fact functions "more like an umbrella term encompassing [a] plurality of diverse cultures, languages and ethnicities".

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Chinese identity, since it not only downplays the longstanding diversity of China's society, culture and politics, but also implies the equivalence between the Han and the Chinese people and culture, that is, seeing China as a Han state (Gladney 2004, p. 6). In this narrow understanding of Chinese-ness, ethnic minorities are often viewed as peripheral to the Han, echoing the traditional Sinocentric view of the world which treats ethnic minorities as subjects of the Chinese "civilising mission" (Harrell 1996; Vickers 2015). This Sinocentric view is often supported by so-called "assimilationist" historians such as Ping-ti Ho (1998), and indeed most Chinese historians generally argue that ethnic minorities were often attracted to the more advanced Han Chinese civilisation, so that even those groups who conquered and ruled China were assimilated by the Han and ultimately became Chinese.

Recent historical studies on China have criticised this Sinocentric vision, seeing Chinese history from the perspective of the "margins" instead, that is, the non-Han ethnic minorities. For example, the "new Qing history" historians (Crossley 1999; Elliot 2001; Perdue 2005) reject the view of the "assimilationist" scholars and argue that non-Han groups who conquered and ruled China (such as the Mongols and the Manchus) were not simply assimilated by the Han Chinese, but instead tried to maintain a distinct ethnic identity, one which was fundamental to their strategy of ruling China and the surrounding regions.

Sinologists focusing on modern Chinese history point out that one crucial task of China's nation-building project was constructing a vision of the Chinese nation which incorporated these non-Han groups as it transformed from a traditional empire into a modern nation-state. Indeed, Leibold (2007) examines the policies and narrative strategies of both the Kuomintang, or Nationalist Party, and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) towards non-Han groups before 1949 and concludes that these non-Han groups were at the core of both parties' visions of the Chinese nation, although in slightly different ways. Harrell (1996) and Vickers (2015) look at the strategies adopted by the People's Republic of China (PRC) after 1949 and argue that a Chinese version of the "civilising mission" has been carried out to incorporate the non-Han groups by assimilation. The representation of ethnic minorities thus becomes an indispensable part of the construction of the multiethnic Chinese nation,

much like the troupes of all-singing, all-dancing, quaintly costumed ethnic minorities chorusing their gratitude to the CCP on China Central Television's annual New Year galas. As Gladney (1994, p. 93) rightly points out, "the politics of representation in China reveals much about the state's project in constructing, in often binary minority/majority terms, an 'imagined' national identity".

This chapter examines four versions of history textbooks for junior middle school students (ages 13–16) published by the People's Education Press (PEP)[1] between the 1950s and 2000s.[2] Among all school subjects, the history volumes relating to Chinese ancient history, which span the prehistoric age to the First Opium War during the late Qing Dynasty,[3] are the ones where ethnicity is most discussed. They typically relate how ethnic minorities "came" to be Chinese, thereby legitimising Chinese rule. The dates in Table 10.1 indicate the publication year of volumes from the different versions of the textbooks examined.

This chapter compares the portrayal of ethnic minorities in textbooks published in different periods to explore how textbook contents have changed, and how this is reflective of policy changes and societal development. Based on the data analysis, three main themes involving most issues related to ethnic minorities are identified in this research: the introduction of ethnic minorities; ethnic relations, including conflicts; and the rule of ethnic minorities over China.

Historical writing, especially in writing national history, often takes the form of a narrative to make sense of historical events. What children

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[1] These textbooks were the products of collective writing and editing. Cf. Yan and Vickers (2019) for a discussion of the role of editors in compiling the PEP textbooks. The PEP is chosen because it remains the biggest and most influential publisher in the Chinese textbook market, and between 1949 and 1992 it was the only publisher allowed to edit and publish textbooks used nationwide. The PEP, under the Chinese Ministry of Education, is believed to be the best reflection of the state's official ideologies pertaining to national identity in textbooks. The junior secondary level is chosen because history has never been taught comprehensively in primary schools, and at times history was subsumed under social studies (*shehui*) (Jones 2005). History as a subject is not compulsory in senior secondary schools, and so only a limited number of students would read it.

[2] Between the 1955 and 1992 versions, another four versions of history textbooks were published by the PEP and used nationwide. The 1962 version is not examined for the reason of its unavailability. The 1978, 1981 and 1986 textbooks are similar to each other in terms of content, and they show an increasing trend of ethnic inclusivity that is best represented in the 1992 version.

[3] The CCP's official historiography regards the First Opium War (1840) as the beginning of modern Chinese history. This periodisation is normally adopted in PRC history textbooks.

**Table 10.1** Versions of PEP history textbooks

| Version | Volume | Year issued | Year revised | Year printed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1952 | 1 | July 1952 | April 1953 | May 1953 |
| | 2 | January 1953 | October 1953 | November 1953 |
| | 3 | May 1953 | April 1954 | April 1954 |
| 1955 | 1 | 1955 | 1960 (fifth edition) | July 1960 |
| | 2 | 1955 | 1960 (sixth edition) | July 1960 |
| 1992 | 1 | October 1992 | Unknown | April 2000 |
| | 2 | April 1993 | Unknown | October 1996 |
| | 3 | Unknown | October 1994 | April 1999 |
| 2001 | 1 | Unknown | June 2006 | June 2012 |
| | 2 | December 2002 | Unknown | November 2011 |

are told in school history textbooks can therefore be seen as "stories" about the nation told by the state to help students to make sense of their nation. So, this chapter mainly adopts a narrative analysis to analyse how historical narratives in textbooks tell "stories" of the nation to students, and how "stories" of ethnic minorities are incorporated into this nationalist narrative.

# 1952 Textbooks: Non-Han Groups as Non-Chinese 'Others'

The CCP defeated the Kuomintang and established the PRC in 1949, therefore winning the opportunity to realise its vision of the Chinese nation. After the founding of the PRC, the CCP began to carry out its nation-building project to consolidate control over the land and people within its borders. The CCP was aware that the stability and legitimacy of the newly founded socialist state depended on meeting two main challenges: transforming the masses (both Han and non-Han) into socialist citizens and co-opting the frontier groups as national subjects of the PRC. To tackle these two tasks, the CCP, like its Soviet "big brother", carried out a Chinese version of a communist "civilising project" throughout the 1950s (Harrell 1996). This included the indoctrination of socialist ideologies such as the doctrine of class struggle (*jieji douzheng*) and the construction of a multiethnic conception of a new China. While the

former also involved various political and economic campaigns, for example, Land Reform in 1951, the latter was implemented through initiatives such as setting up autonomous regions (*zizhi qu*) for ethnic minorities and, most importantly, the "nationality identification (*minzu shibie*) project".[4] The CCP was then able to construct a multiethnic narrative which reconceptualised China as a unified, multinational state (*tongyi duominzu guojia*) with all nationalities (*minzu*) working together towards common goals (e.g. socialism). This multiethnic conception of China was reflected in the first PRC constitution issued in 1954, which stated that China was a "unified, multi-national state" and proclaimed "equality among different nationalities".

It is clear that the 1952 history textbooks had adopted a socialist narrative to interpret Chinese history.[5] However, they had not yet developed a multiethnic understanding of China and therefore defined China as a Han nation-state. China started its "nationality identification project" in 1952, and so the textbook editors had not yet established a new way of conceiving the nation which included all the different groups. In fact, the term *shaoshu minzu* ("minority nationalities" or "ethnic minority groups") was not used at all in the 1952 textbooks, which instead used "tribe" (*buluo*), "race" (*zhongzu*) or "tribe-race" (*buzu*) to refer to non-Han groups. Moreover, those non-Han groups were generally portrayed as "foreigners" or "aliens" through the usage of words and descriptions such as "outside race" (*waizu*), "different race" (*yizu*) and "other race" (*biezu*). This terminology suggested that these non-Han groups were still not seen as "Chinese" by the textbook editors in the early 1950s.

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[4] The project was launched in 1952 and involved classifying the Han and non-Han into categories of different *minzu*, in accordance with Stalin's criteria of common territory, language, economy and psychological nature, and also classifying these groups into particular stages of the Marxist notion of the universal progression of history: whether they practised primitive, slave, feudal, capitalist or socialist modes of production (Harrell 1996, p. 23). As in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, this project involved sending many researchers (who were often Soviet-trained), including ethnographers, sociologists, historians and linguists, to all areas of the country where local groups had claimed the status of separate nationalities.

[5] For example, the textbooks adopted a socialist model of historical materialist evolution and interpreted Chinese ancient history as a linear development from "primitive society" to "slavery society" and "feudal society". Class struggle was clearly the dominant theme in the 1952 textbooks and was used to explain the rise and fall of China's ruling dynasties.

Following this traditional conception of Chinese identity, the non-Han groups were generally portrayed as rival groups or enemies of China, and the words "enemy" (*diren*) and "threat" (*weixie*) were often used in association with non-Han groups in the 1952 textbooks. In fact, the depiction of the relationship between the Han and non-Han concentrated on conflicts, as reflected in the table of contents. While 8 of the 56 lessons were directly related to non-Han groups, 7 of these focused on conflicts. For instance, the title of the chapter about the relationship between the Northern Song (960–1127), founded by the Han/Chinese group, and the Liao (916–1125), founded by the Khitan group, as well as the Xixia (1038–1227), founded by the Tangut group, was "Conflicts between the Northern Song and Liao and Xixia". The lesson focused exclusively on the wars between the Northern Song and these two non-Han regimes, with detailed descriptions about how the latter invaded China and how the Chinese people resisted. Words such as "invasion" (*ruqin* or *qinlue*) were frequently used to refer to non-Han attacks on the Han regime, and the brutality of the non-Han also became a focus of the discussion. Moreover, the heroism of the Han/Chinese people and their resistance to "invasion" also became the key features of discussions on interethnic conflicts. For example, when discussing the conflicts between the Southern Song (1127–1279) and the Jin (1115–1234), founded by the Jurchen group, the 1952 textbooks described them as such:

> Since the invasion of the Jin people [*Jinren*], the Chinese people [*zhongguo renmin*] had been continuously enslaved, insulted and massacred. Farming fields had been continuously occupied and their production had been continuously destroyed. … In order to defend the native land and motherland, the Chinese people picked up any weapons that they found, and formed a rebellious army to fight fiercely against the enemy. (PEP Textbooks 1952 [2], p. 67)

Interestingly, the description above bears a striking similarity to the discussion of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945) in post-Mao historical narratives in China (Mitter 2003). This way of writing was clearly designed to stimulate both patriotic feelings among students and a Han-centric exclusivist vision of national identity. In other words, the

1952 textbooks still portrayed non-Han groups as the "Other"—as fundamentally different from the idea of China/Chinese-ness.

Consistent with this Han exclusivist vision of China, the rule of non-Han groups in China was portrayed negatively to stress the illegitimate nature of their "alien rule". The 1952 textbooks focused exclusively on how the Han people (and other minority ethnic groups) were oppressed by these "alien rulers" and how they had resisted them. For example, in discussing Mongol rule during the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368), the 1952 textbooks focused exclusively on the brutality of the Mongols and the Han resistance: the three sections of this lesson were called "Destroying the Rural Economy", "Racial Oppression" and "The Great Peasants' Uprising".[6] The lesson provided a lot of detailed information about how the Han were suppressed and exploited by their Mongol rulers.

This narrative of "alien rule" also applied to the discussion of the Manchu Qing Dynasty. To delegitimise Manchu rule, Han resistance was a dominant theme in these lessons. For example, in the lesson on "The Ruling Policies of the Qing and the Anti-Qing Struggles of Various Ethnic/Racial Groups", the first half focused on how the Manchu rulers suppressed the Han and other ethnic/racial groups, including the Mongols, Uyghurs and various groups in the southwest, while the second half recounted anti-Qing struggles organised by the Han and other groups (PEP Textbooks 1952 [3], pp. 53–61). As a result, the Qing Dynasty was generally portrayed as a conquering dynasty, and its distinctive racial background was emphasised throughout the lesson to stress the illegitimate nature of their rule. This shows that the 1952 textbooks still followed what the revolutionaries in the early twentieth century believed when they carried out the Han nationalist revolution to overthrow the Qing ruler.

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[6] In contrast, the titles of the four sections on the rule of the Ming Dynasty (which overthrew the Mongol Yuan) were "The Development of Handicraft Industry", "The Development of Maritime Transportation", "The Link of Great Canals in the South and North" and "The Prosperous Development of Business and Cities"—all focusing on positive developments of China under the Han rulers, who replaced the "barbarian" Mongol foreign rulers.

# 1955 Textbooks: Non-Han Groups Becoming Chinese Minority Nationalities

The narrative of a narrowly defined exclusivist Han view of Chinese-ness began to change in the history textbooks published in 1955. As mentioned, the CCP began its "nationality identification project" in 1952, and in the first few years nearly 40 nationalities were identified. Subsequently, the table of contents of the 1955 textbooks indicated an embrace of a multiethnic historical narrative. For a comparative example, when introducing the non-Han groups during the Han Dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE), the 1952 textbook had simply called this lesson "The Hun (*Xiongnu*), Various Kingdoms in the Western Region and the Qiang People", whereas the 1955 version adopted the idea of nationality and changed its title to "Various Nationality Groups in the Frontier Regions During the Two Han Dynasties". The use of the term "nationality" here was a clear sign that this version had started to abandon a Han monoethnic vision of China for a multiethnic one, reconceptualising China as consisting of various nationalities. Consistent with this new multiethnic narrative, some of the non-Han groups which were labelled as "outside" or "different" races (*yizu* or *waizu*) in the 1952 textbook were redesignated as "minority nationalities" (*shaoshu minzu*).

As a result of the adoption of this multiethnic vision, the 1955 textbooks introduced new information about some nationalities such as the Tibetans, Khitan and Jurchen, including their lifestyles, economic production models and cultural development. Moreover, instead of focusing exclusively on the antagonism between the Han and the non-Han, the 1955 textbooks also provided more information on the communication and exchanges between them. For example, in the lesson on the various nationalities of the Qing Dynasty, there was a section entitled "The Development of Frontier Regions and the Economic Links Between People of Various Nationalities" to stress the idea that within the unified country, trade and friendship between different nationalities were greatly developed (PEP Textbooks 1955 [3], p. 74). This was very different from the 1952 version, which had exclusively portrayed the oppression of various groups (both Han and non-Han) and their resistance to the Qing.

This new emphasis clearly reflected the changing political rhetoric of the period towards constructing a multiethnic China.

Since these non-Han groups were now regarded as Chinese minority nationalities, the 1955 textbooks tended to downplay and reinterpret conflicts between Han and non-Han groups. Indeed, although the 1955 textbooks still focused on the rivalries between them, the term "enemy" was abandoned and the conflicts were downplayed since these groups were all regarded as Chinese. As a result, the Khitan Liao's "invasion" (*qinrao*) of the Northern Song was replaced with information that the Liao "went down south" (*nanxia*), and detailed descriptions of the cruelty of the Khitan Liao and Jurchen Jin armies were also simplified (PEP Textbooks 1955 [2], pp. 35–6).

Accordingly, non-Han rule was now portrayed less negatively than in the 1952 textbooks. For example, the 1955 textbooks not only recognised the Mongol contribution to bringing Tibet into the "territory of the motherland" (pp. 46–7), but also noted the improved economic production during the Yuan Dynasty (p. 47). This was strikingly different from the 1952 version, which described the rule of the Mongols as devastating for the Han and the Chinese economy. A similar change also applied to Manchu rule during the Qing Dynasty. For example, Qing contribution to national unity and economic development was also recognised and highlighted, and the previous discussion of resistance by various groups to Manchu conquest was either downplayed or completely removed. It seems that the 1955 textbooks began to legitimise Manchu rule over these groups, since the Manchus were now regarded as one of China's minority nationalities. The title of the lesson on Manchu rule was changed from "The Expansion of the Qing Empire" to "Qing: The Multi-ethnic Feudal Nation/State [*guojia*] with Vast Territory" in 1955. The abandonment of the term "empire" and its replacement with "nation/state" is significant here, because this implied a reconceptualisation of the Qing from an expansionist imperial power to a multiethnic nation, whose territory would be inherited by the PRC.

While these historical non-Chinese/non-Han groups were now regarded as ethnic minorities within the Chinese state, it is notable that the 1955 textbooks also tended to use the concept of class (*jieji*) to interpret interethnic relations, reflecting propagandic slogans such as

"nationality struggle is a matter of class struggle" in the 1950s (Hawkins 1983, p. 192). Clearly, the concept of class helped textbook editors deal with current and historical memories of ethnic antagonism while trying to construct both a multiethnic and communist narrative. As a result, conflicts between these non-Han regimes and the Han were reinterpreted in accordance with the doctrine of class struggle. For example, in the lesson about the conflicts between the Khitan, Jurchen, Tangut and Song, the 1955 textbooks clarified, at the beginning of the lesson, that:

> The relationship between these kingdoms was mainly peaceful, communicative and friendly relations between the peoples. However, due to the conflicting interests between the ruling classes, these kingdoms often waged wars against each other. (PEP Textbooks 1955 [2], p. 55)

It is clear from this statement that the 1955 textbooks highlighted class differences *within* each group and blamed the ruling elite for interethnic conflict (i.e. the "good Han, bad Han" strategy. See Bulag [2012]). This was different from the 1952 textbooks, which, despite adopting a class narrative, stressed the racial nature of these conflicts to reinforce the rivalry between the Han ("us") and non-Han groups ("Others").

In a similar way, the adoption of the doctrine of class struggle in the 1955 textbooks also helped legitimise non-Han rule. In reference to the Han rebellion against the Mongol Yuan ruler, the 1955 textbooks not only removed any mention of "struggles with racial meanings" and "expelling the barbarians and restoring China" found in the 1952 textbooks, but also avoided using vocabulary related to nationalities, such as Mongol and Han. Using words and phrases like "ruler of Yuan", "peasants" or "poor people" in discussing the rebellion which led to the fall of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty (PEP Textbooks 1955 [2], pp. 48–50), the rebellion was described as an uprising of peasants against a ruling class whose nationality was not emphasised. Hence, the 1955 version conveyed a narrative that crossed ethnic lines to alter the previous "us-vs-them" rivalry between the Han and the non-Han, enabling the reconstruction of a new vision of Chinese identity. This new identity would be both proletarian and multiethnic, as proclaimed in the new constitution.

# 1992 Textbooks: 'Diversity in Unity' and the Most Multicultural Conception of Nationhood Defined in PEP History Textbooks

Chairman Mao Zedong died in 1976, and this signalled the end of the ten-year Cultural Revolution. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping instituted the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CCP, which came to be seen as a turning point in the ideological domain and national development strategy. From then on, China entered the "Reform and Opening Up" era, eschewing the radical pursuit of egalitarian social goals that had marked the Mao era. Apart from rehabilitating the devastated economy, the CCP also had the difficult task of restoring the damaged loyalty of non-Han groups, whose self-images had been seriously damaged during the Cultural Revolution. With the decreasing deployment of crude or overt political indoctrination in the reform era, the CCP also started to relax constraints on the cultural expression of minority nationalities and emphasised the principle of equality among nationalities. As a result, the government issued a series of policies and laws to guarantee the rights of minority nationalities to reclaim their distinctive cultural identities and pursue their diverse needs.[7] Therefore, in many ways, the non-Han groups' cultures and special needs were acknowledged and respected, and it appeared that many policies and practices towards these groups reflected a spirit of multiculturalism.

It was against this background that in the 1992 textbooks, non-Han groups were introduced with more information and treated more equally than in previous textbooks. For example, when discussing the cultural achievements during the Sui (581–618) and Tang (618–907) Dynasties, after introducing the medical progress made by a Han medical expert and his book, the 1992 version added a short paragraph stating that "medical studies had also developed in minority nationality regions" and provided an example of a Tibetan medical expert, claiming that his medical

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[7] For instance, in 1984, the important Law of Nationalities and Regional Autonomy (*minzu quyu zizhi fa*) was enacted, which intended to protect minority nationalities' rights to cultural autonomy.

writings laid the foundation for Tibetan medical studies (PEP Textbooks 1992 [2], p. 49). This was different from previous textbooks, where only the Han medical expert was introduced. It is clear that by including non-Han cultures, the 1992 version attempted to construct a multiethnic image of Tang China.

The improved status of the non-Han groups and the promotion of the idea of ethnic equality were also reflected in the inclusion of non-Han heroes for the first time, referred to using positive terms such as "outstanding leader[s]", "famous politicians" and "heroes" as well as having "outstanding talents". The stories of these non-Han heroes basically shared similar storylines—how they had overcome various difficulties since childhood to become leaders of their groups. In a way, these non-Han heroes, previously depicted as "enemies" who brought disasters to China in traditional historical narratives, were now seen as role models for students to emulate.

Under the spirit of multiculturalism with more equal ethnic relationships, interethnic conflicts were also reinterpreted. In earlier versions, the non-Han were generally portrayed negatively in such discussions as the enemies of the Han or China. But this was no longer so in the 1992 version. In discussing the conflict between the Ming and the Manchus in the late sixteenth century, where previous textbooks condemned the Manchus for attacking the Ming, occupying their territory and exploiting former imperial subjects in northeast China (PEP Textbooks 1986 [2], p. 67), the 1992 version reinterpreted the conflict as Manchu "resistance against ethnic oppression of the Ming Dynasty" (*fankang mingchao de minzu yapo*) and condemned the latter for initiating the war (PEP Textbooks 1992 [2], pp. 173–4). The lesson told students that the Ming ruler bullied the Jurchen, forcing them to pay tribute and even "catching and killing" Jurchen people (p. 173). The 1992 version even praised the Manchu victory over the Ming as "one of the famous battles in Chinese war history" (p. 175). This was the first time that PEP history textbooks praised the non-Han so highly for defeating the Han. This new narrative was very different from previous textbooks, which tended to depict the Han as always righteous in their conflicts with non-Han "bandit" enemies.

The discourse on non-Han rule also underwent dramatic change. Not only was new information on the contributions of non-Han rulers added,[8] but the previous "invaders" and "alien rulers" were now even portrayed as "patriots" and "heroes" of China. Manchu rulers were reinterpreted as defenders of national unity by virtue of their role in cracking down on secessionists (i.e. the Uyghurs) and defeating outside colonisers (i.e. the Russians). Previously depicted in the 1950s as "colonisers" who competed with Russia in the northeast and exploited native groups, the Manchus were now transformed into defenders of Chinese territory as they "worked together with various local ethnic groups to fight against the Russia[n] invaders" (PEP Textbooks 1992 [3], p. 11). The Manchu emperor Kangxi was also described as a national hero who personally joined the battle to "defend the national border against invasion" (p. 12).

More importantly, the 1992 textbooks not only acknowledged non-Han rule as Chinese rule, but also revealed the non-Han features introduced under these dynasties. This was different from the "assimilationist" viewpoint, which, as noted above, argued that non-Han groups who conquered and ruled China would eventually be assimilated by the Han and therefore became Chinese. For example, in the lesson about Yuan rule, the 1992 version included a picture of an official seal with scripts on it (PEP Textbooks 1992 [2], p. 119). The lesson explained that the scripts were in the Mongolian language (the *Phags-pa* alphabet), which was created by Basiba (Drogon Chogyal Phagpa, a Tibetan monk and Yuan official), thus implying that Mongolian was used as the official language under the Yuan. The textbook explained that Marco Polo, who visited China, understood Mongolian (and could therefore communicate with the ruling class), but made no mention of whether or not he also knew Chinese, the language of the Han (p. 121). These examples show that the 1992 version recognised that the Mongol Yuan rulers had maintained their distinctive cultural identity.

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[8] For example, the lesson on Mongol rule included sections entitled "The Yuan Emperor Paying Attention to Agriculture," "New Developments in the Textile and Porcelain Industries," "The World-renowned Yuan Capital", "[The Development of] Water Transportation" and "The Prosperous Development of the Quanzhou Port and the Frequent Contacts between China and Foreign Countries"—all directed to convey an image of a prosperous China under Mongol rule.

The 1992 version also tended to highlight the multicultural features of non-Han dynasties. For example, the Yuan capital (the Yuan Dadu, on the site of present-day Beijing) was described as having Buddhist and Daoist temples, Islamic mosques and Christian churches, along with artists from various ethnic backgrounds (p. 118). In the more tolerant and multicultural atmosphere of the 1980s, the 1992 textbooks represented Yuan China as a multiethnic empire ruled by a non-Han group—a new narrative in line with the argument made by the "new Qing history" scholars, one very different from the traditional master narrative of inevitable assimilation.

## 2001 Textbooks: 'Unity Above Diversity' and Returning to a Han Ethnocentric Understanding of National History

While the 1980s seemed like a rather promising period for China in many respects, from the mid- to late 1980s, as "Reform and Opening Up" accelerated, China experienced "a potent mixture of economic growth, social problems, and criticism of corruption, cronyism, and the progress and scope of reform from both liberals and conservatives" (Jones 2005, p. 86). Meanwhile, there were also serious theoretical debates on China's political future, which not only challenged orthodox Marxism-Leninism-Maoism thought and the leadership of the CCP, but also inspired a reflection on Chinese identity, as represented in the quasi-historical documentary *Heshang* (River Elegy), broadcasted in 1988 (ibid.). This mixture of uncertainty and anxiety finally culminated in the massive protests in and around Tiananmen Square and elsewhere in 1989, followed by the CCP's harsh response. Meanwhile, in the ideological domain, the CCP also reacted quickly to condemn "over-Westernisation" and relied on nationalism as its absolute dominant ruling ideology. It was against this background that patriotism was chosen and heavily promoted by the CCP in order to regain ideological control and

re-establish legitimacy. The promotion of patriotism after 1989 involved an intensified focus on ideological education and the promotion of patriotic values in the Chinese national education system. This was referred to as the Patriotic Education (*aiguo zhuyi jiaoyu*) campaign in official discourse which, according to Zhao (2004, p. 238), was a "state-led systematically engineered project" to promote patriotism. The campaign was an intensive undertaking by the CCP from 1991 to 1994, and thereafter patriotism became one of the fundamental, intrinsic and core values propagated through the education system (He and Guo 2000; Zhao 2004).

Moreover, the 1980s also saw increasing separatist feelings among some non-Han groups, particularly in Tibet and Xinjiang, which both saw mass protests in the 1980s and 1990s. Sensing the threat of national/ethnic secessionism, the CCP adopted an overriding ideology to manage Chinese interethnic relationships: *minzu tuanjie* ("interethnic solidarity" or "unity among nationalities"). Although *minzu tuanjie* had always been the official rhetoric to regulate ethnic relationships in China, its usage has gained popularity since 1990s. As Bulag (2002) claims, *minzu tuanjie* became an ideological framework used to define the Chinese minority relationship.

The changed political climate after 1989 also inevitably led to changes in historical narratives in school textbooks, particularly in the portrayal of non-Han groups. The 2001 textbooks can be seen as the first ones published after the campaign began, edited directly under the guidance of Patriotic Education.[9] As a result, it seems that the editors were fully aware of the requirements by the government to promote patriotism, and thus the unity and solidarity of the Chinese nation would become far more central themes in these textbooks. Indeed, analysing the table of contents of the 2001 version, one can immediately see the differences from previous versions: socialist content was reduced (e.g. terms such as

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[9] Editing of the 1992 textbooks was actually based on the 1988 History Curriculum Guideline, the bulk of which had been completed before the start of the Patriotic Education campaign (Research Institute 2010).

"slavery" and "feudal" had all disappeared) and the linear development of the nation itself became the only dominant theme.[10]

Since socialism was no longer at the core of the historical narrative in the 2001 textbooks, enhanced ethnonationalism seemed to become the core of Chinese identity. This enhanced ethnonationalism was reflected in a new emphasis on the Yellow Emperor (*Huangdi*, a semi-mythical figure traditionally regarded as the ancestor of the Han people. See Chow [1997]). Described briefly in the 1992 texts as the "leader of a tribal alliance," in the 2001 version he was allocated an entire lesson as "The Ancestor of the Huaxia [the proto-Han peoples of ancient China]" (PEP Textbooks 2001 [1], p. 12). A new section hailed the Yellow Emperor as the "first ancestor of [Chinese/human] civilization" (*renwen chuzu*), citing the inventions traditionally ascribed to him (including boats, wagons, the lunar calendar and medicine). He was represented as a symbol of Chinese-ness, conceived in thoroughly primordial and even biological terms.

Ethnic pluralism nonetheless remained an important theme in the 2001 textbooks. Indeed, several new passages on non-Han groups were added. Following the lesson on interethnic relations during the Tang, a new class activity instructed students to survey their classmates to see if any possessed minority backgrounds, exhorting them to learn about and respect minority customs and cultures (PEP Textbooks 2001 [2], p. 27). A new section on interethnic relations during the Qing Dynasty hailed the Manchu emperors' tolerance of non-Han minorities, praising their policies as "pragmatic and farsighted" (*zhuoshi yuanjian*), "benefiting the unity of the nation" (p. 114).

Nevertheless, the overwhelming promotion of the "oneness" of China inevitably led to a decreasing representation of its diversity in the textbooks. As a result, while themes instilling a homogeneous conception of Chinese nationhood were highlighted in the 2001 version, discussions of

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[10] The seven units on ancient Chinese history were "The Origins of Chinese Civilisation", "The Birth of the Country and Social Reform", "The Foundation of a Unitary Country", "Divided Regimes and Ethnic Merging", "A Prosperous and Open Society", "Moving the Economic Centre to the South and the Development of Ethnic Relationships" and "The Consolidation of a Unitary Multi-ethnic Country and Social Crisis"—reflecting a teleological progress towards a unitary, multiethnic modern Chinese state.

some independent histories of non-Han groups introduced in the 1992 version were deleted or shortened. Indeed, much content dealing with minority cultures and customs were deleted in the 2001 version. For example, the mention of the Tibetan medical expert featured above was deleted, while the passage on his Han counterpart was retained. This change certainly made the image of the Tang less multicultural than in the 1992 textbooks. Similarly, many newly designated minority heroes from 1992 were ejected from the national pantheon or mentioned only by name. One of the notable exceptions was Genghis Khan, whose "unifying" contribution was evidently considered too important to be ignored.

While minorities' cultural distinctiveness and claims to heroism were thus downplayed, episodes highlighting national unity and the immemorial origins of central rule in restive frontier regions (notably Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan) were accorded new emphasis. In one instance of the deployment of newly fashionable "active learning" in service of uncritical patriotism, a new lesson required students to organise a historical quiz on the following topic: "Xinjiang, Tibet and Taiwan have been Chinese territory since ancient times" (p. 132). The knowledge to be tested on consisted of the dates when these regions came under the rule of the central regime. Notably absent from this lesson were any references to the local inhabitants, their cultures, customs or histories which were unrelated to their ties with China.

Accounts of rule under the "minority" Yuan and Qing Dynasties retained a positive gloss, but acknowledgements of their distinctively non-Han or multiethnic features were largely eliminated. The reference to the introduction of the *Phags-pa* script under the Yuan was removed, as was the discussion of religious diversity in their capital. The effect of these changes was the dilution of the "ethnic" character of these dynasties, making them appear more assimilated to mainstream "Han" culture.

Revisions also suggested a growing reluctance to acknowledge past interethnic antagonism, with accounts of Han-minority conflicts significantly curtailed. Moreover, stories about Ming responsibility for provoking the conflict with the Manchus that led to its collapse were also deleted. These revisions seem to suggest that discussions of past instances of Han-minority conflict, let alone acknowledgements of justifications for minority challenges to Han authority, had become more sensitive as nervousness

over regime legitimacy heightened amid mounting evidence that economic growth was not reconciling the Tibetans and Uyghurs to Han dominance (Zang 2015, p. 153).

## Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter examines the portrayal of ethnic minorities (or non-Han groups) in four versions of history textbooks published since the establishment of the PRC. It finds that due to the changing nature of the dominant political ideology, the conception of Chinese nationhood has been defined differently in successive versions of history textbooks published since 1949. Ethnic minorities in particular have been portrayed in changing or even contradictory ways in these different versions. In the history textbooks of the early 1950s, the Chinese nation was largely defined as a Han nation-state, and other ethnic groups were generally represented as non-Chinese who had historically been threats to or enemies of the Han/Chinese. The 1955 textbooks demonstrated the beginning of an effort by editors to incorporate non-Han groups into the Chinese self through their historical narratives. The reform era saw Chinese nationhood being systematically reconceptualised in history textbooks as more inclusive and multiethnic in character. As a result, not only was more non-Han history introduced into the textbooks published during this period, including their cultures, heroes and so on, but non-Han rule was also portrayed much more positively and conflicts with the Han were downplayed. However, as the CCP began to use nationalism/patriotism to replace socialism as its legitimising ideology, Chinese nationhood, as defined in history textbooks published in the 2000s, once again became overwhelmingly dominated by a Han ethnocentric vision of the nation. As a result, non-Han histories and information on their distinctive cultures were either largely reduced or removed from history textbooks again.

This chapter therefore argues that through careful editing and even complete rewriting of national history as presented in school textbooks, the CCP has used the "past" to indoctrinate state-sanctioned notions of national identity in order to legitimise its authority and maintain power

in a changing political context, as well as to justify its nation-building project and corroborate its claim to sovereignty over the current PRC territory and population. History education has thus been assigned an important role in justifying Chinese rule, not least to non-Han groups whose loyalty has been seen as strategically important to China's stability and development.

The 2001 reversion to a significantly more Han-chauvinist, ethnocentric narrative disproves previous studies' (Baranovitch 2010; Chen 2017) claims of a linear progression of national identity in official Chinese discourse, from Han exclusivism to a growing recognition of ethnic pluralism. The 1992 textbooks clearly represented a high point in terms of textbook recognition of minority histories and their contributions to national development. This chapter therefore disputes Baranovitch's and Chen's conclusions that textbook discourse on Chinese history has followed an increasingly "multiethnic" trajectory, rendering "any future resistance to the legitimacy of Chinese rule in minority areas more difficult", enabling the government to maintain "its political unity in an era of rising ethnic nationalism" (Baranovitch 2010, p. 116). Instead, the interethnic violence of 2008 and 2009 in Tibet and Xinjiang (and subsequent "terrorist attacks" in Xinjiang and elsewhere) occurred in a context in which the state was backing away from its limited embrace of multiethnic inclusivity, as evidenced in the retreat from the PEP's 1992 history textbooks. A turn towards a significantly more Han-centric discourse of Chinese nationhood can only exacerbate a sense of marginalisation amongst minority ethnic groups on one hand, and the arrogance and ignorance of the Han majority on the other. While school textbooks on their own cannot be blamed for this outcome, they have reflected and arguably contributed to the climate of heightened Han chauvinism and intolerance that has been a key factor in the downward spiral of interethnic relations in China during recent years.

Moreover, the reversion to a more Han-chauvinist, ethnocentric narrative in recent textbooks, along with the persistence of an assimilationist approach towards minority groups, reflects the fundamental dilemma faced by the Chinese government in its efforts to incorporate minority groups into the national self. China has struggled (and is still struggling) to "stretch the short, tight skin of the nation over the gigantic body of its

empire" (Anderson 1991, p. 86). As a result, textbooks published in China have, on one hand, attempted to adopt a multiethnic narrative to incorporate non-Han into the Chinese historical self, but on the other, they still maintain a Han-centric narrative which largely defines the non-Han as non-Chinese "Others".

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# 11

# Historical Narratives and National Identity in Lower Secondary History Textbooks in Malaysia (1959–2020)

## Helen Mu Hung Ting

## Introduction

The construction of a historical narrative is an integral element in the articulation of the national identity of a nation-state. More than just a story of the past, "history is rooted in the social need to orient life within the framework of time" (Rüsen 1987, p. 276). The articulation of a national history tells of the origins of the nation and who this nation is, hence orienting the outlook of the nation and its citizens. Historical consciousness and identity are so interrelated that Rüsen understands historical education as "an intentional and organized process of identity formation that remembers the past in order to understand the present and anticipate the future" (p. 285). While Rüsen refers to education in the general sense of lifelong learning—both formal and informal—which informs the historical consciousness of a person, history education in school constitutes part of that process and is arguably the most accessible

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channel, wherein most citizens experience some form of organised historical learning.

As noted in the introductory chapter, many nation-states have used history education as a means of nation building and even political indoctrination. In these countries, history textbooks articulate a historical narrative that reflects how official nationhood is conceived by the curriculum planners and textbook writers. The omission of crucial facts and viewpoints which are viewed as not in line with the official narrative could introduce systemic biases in the ways that students interpret historical events (Foster and Crawford 2006). This chapter explores how the Malaysian state wants the younger generation to remember the shared past of the multiethnic and multireligious nation in history textbooks, and how this perspective has changed over time since independence. It investigates two aspects of textbook contents, namely the changing pattern of the themes covered in the textbooks and how these changes were rationalised, and how the textbook narratives relate to national identity formation in terms of their representation of ingroup identity and intergroup relations.

The framework for analysing national identity formation takes inspiration from Korostelina (2013), whose elaborate model accounts for the impact of history education on social identity and promotes a culture of peace. Only the barest of her framework will be applied heuristically here due to space constraints. Drawing from social psychological theories, Korostelina posits that historical narratives could affect social identity formation and shape intergroup relations in three aspects: how the connotation of ingroup identity is established, how justification is provided for intergroup relations and social hierarchies and how power structures are legitimised and collective actions are mobilised.

As all good historians know, historical development as a social process can be contradictory and complex, multidimensional and messy, and the making of historical meaning out of historical events can often be rather equivocal or arbitrary. While this complexity can render historical studies more interesting and thought provoking, the state's mission of propagating its version of national history to the masses often takes on a more streamlined and even reductionist narrative for greater efficacy. Hence history education in school is sandwiched between two competing

demands—one academic and another political—to teach critical historical thinking and promote national identity. In Malaysia, citizenship education was first explicitly integrated as part of the history curriculum in 1988 (Anuar 2004). As will be discussed, official nationalism had already influenced how history was to be told and taught before that, but the late 1980s marked the further incremental and overt promotion of patriotic values as an important dimension of history learning at the expense of critical historical thinking (Ting 2015).

History as a subject is currently taught in Malaysian schools from Standards 4–6 at the primary level and as a compulsory subject throughout the first five years of secondary education. This chapter will focus mainly on the historical evolution of the writing of lower secondary school history textbooks (i.e. Forms 1–3) from the time of the independence of Malaya in 1957 to the formation of Malaysia in 1963 and until the present.

The first post-independence history syllabus for Malaya was implemented in 1959. A revised syllabus was put in place in 1967, after Singapore was separated from Malaysia. From then on, the Ministry of Education conducted a history syllabus review every decade, with some exceptions. Based on a content inspection of the textbooks, we propose to analyse their contents and narratives in three periods: namely 1959–1977, 1978–1988 and 1989–present. Distinct features are discernible for each period, and Period I may be called—to borrow the title used by a popular history textbook writer then, Joginder Singh Jessy— "Malaya/Malaysia in World History". Period II may be called a "Malay-centric multicultural narrative", while Period III may be called an "ethno-Malay nationalist narrative".

# Background

After the Second World War, the changing political atmosphere in Malaya led to a reorientation of colonial policy towards allowing for a certain degree of local self-government. Correspondingly, the imperial history

curriculum taught in Malayan English-medium schools[1] was revised to inject a certain "Malayan outlook" to foster a greater sense of Malayan citizenship (Blackburn and Wu 2019). Professor Cyril Northcote Parkinson, who was the first Raffles Professor of History at the University of Malaya in Singapore, played an important role in this postwar colonial effort. He chaired the subcommittee to review the history syllabus for Singapore while serving as a member of the Federation Committee formed in 1953, which was chaired by Gerald Percy Dartford, then head-master of the Victoria Institution in Kuala Lumpur, the federal capital. The Federation Committee produced the new history syllabus which was used in Malayan English-medium schools from 1955. Dartford later became the chief education officer of Selangor and authored several early history textbooks for secondary schools.

Following the 1955 Federal Legislative Council Election, which marked a major step towards self-government, a committee chaired by the education minister, Abdul Razak Hussein, was formed to restructure the education system. The ensuing Razak Report recommended a stan-dardised and Malayanised common syllabus to be taught in schools of all language groups. Consequently, a new history syllabus was introduced in 1959.

At independence, an urgent need to produce suitable history textbooks to replace those based on colonial perspectives was felt.[2] In effect, the teaching of a more comprehensive history of Malaya was hampered by a lack of suitable teaching material. Kennedy Gordon Tregonning, who succeeded Parkinson as the Raffles Professor of History in 1959, was a leading historian in the drafting subcommittee of the new history syllabus. Tregonning actively advocated a shift from a Eurocentric per-spective of history writing to an "Asia-centric" one. Under both Parkinson

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[1] In postwar British Malaya, English-medium primary schools existed alongside community schools teaching in the Malay, Mandarin and Tamil languages, and secondary education was available mainly in English- and Mandarin-medium schools. There was also one Tamil secondary school.

[2] In fact, the entire curricula in all schools were not Malaya-oriented, as noted in the Fennand Wu The-yao Report (1951, p. 7): "The Chinese schools have been criticized for not providing a Malayan outlook … English schools in Malaya are still heavily oriented in outlook toward England and Europe, Indian schools toward India and Malay schools toward a Malay nation." Similarly, readers and other educational books used in the Islamic schools were all written in and imported from foreign countries (Rosnani 1996, p. 32).

and Tregonning, the history department at the University of Malaya in Singapore energised a generation of history undergraduate students to study Malaya in its regional context, and work on local history based on a Malayan perspective. J.S. Jessy, who studied and graduated under Tregonning, went on to become a prolific history textbook writer. Conferences for history teachers were organised to discuss ways to teach the new "Asia-centric" history in schools. The first prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, endorsed this historical narrative of a multicultural Malaysian nation (Blackburn and Wu 2019).

More "Malaya-centric" historical studies were published from the mid-1960s onwards, even as academic debates on the indigenisation of history writing perspectives were taking place. Scholars debated on what constituted a "national history" and what it meant for historians to look at Malaysian history from a local perspective (Cheah 1997; Ting 2014). The 1969 ethnic riots further polarised ethnic relations and marked the ascendency of an open assertion of Malay nationalist discourse (Funston 1980). Two contradictory initiatives were undertaken by the government in the name of fostering national unity: the formulation of five-point national principles which recognised the multicultural basis of Malaysian society known as the *Rukunegara*,[3] and the National Culture Policy, which states that the indigenous culture and Islam shall form the core of national culture while suitable elements of cultures originating from outside the region may be considered.

The 1978 history syllabus marked a distinct break from the post-independence orientation of historical narratives. It adopted the perspective of taking the "Malay culture as the basis of national culture" (reflecting the 1971 National Culture Policy) and using "Malay history as the basis of national history" (Cheah 2003, p. 241). However, non-Malay history was still accorded a definite space in the Form 2 textbook. The then director of the Curriculum Development Centre of the Ministry of Education, Asiah Abu Samah, listed three elements which "provided the guidelines for the formulation of a new syllabus" (cited in Blackburn and Wu 2019,

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[3] The five national principles of *Rukunegara* are belief in God, loyalty to king and country, supremacy of the constitution, rule of law and courtesy and morality. Notable is its five-point preamble, one of which affirms the guarantee of "a liberal approach towards her rich and varied cultural traditions".

p. 117). These three elements were the *Rukunegara*, the National Culture Policy as well as two Malaysian History Seminars organised in 1973 and 1974 by Zainal Abidin bin Abdul Wahid, professor of Malaysian history at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, who essentially believed in a Malay history told as national history. The idea of the 1978 syllabus, according to Asiah Abu Samah, emphasised that a "Malay base" was the foundation of history and culture, yet it acknowledged the diversity of the races and cultures which shaped Malaysian history.

It proved difficult to maintain the balance between emphasising the "Malay base" claim and conceding a multicultural past. Zainal Abidin's view was echoed more forcefully by Ismail Hussein, professor of Malay studies at the University of Malaya, who in 1977 objected to referring to Malaysia as a "plural society" and suggested regarding the Malays as the "base society" of Malaysia, with non-Malays as "immigrants" who were just "splinters" broken off from their own societies (Cheah 1997, p. 37). This "base society-versus-splinter group" perspective of the writing of national(ist) history became entrenched in a whole generation of Malay academics, as articulated in *Tuntutan Melayu* (lit. "The Malay Demand"), a book authored in 1981 by a historian-later-turned-politician, Malik Munip (Ting 2014).

The 1980s saw several public controversies erupting in the public sphere, including a perceived attempt to minimise the major contribution of the Chinese *Kapitan* Yap Ah Loy in the historical development of Kuala Lumpur. There was also backlash among non-Malays against the National Culture Policy, followed by disputes over the historical authenticity of the Malays as the true "original inhabitants". The counterargument made by Malay nationalists to the latter contention was that despite the relatively recent immigration of a large number of Malay people from the surrounding islands—even in the first half of the twentieth century—they could not be considered "immigrants" because they came from the same stock and cultural sphere, that is, the Malay World (*Alam Melayu*). (Incidentally, this concept was introduced in the 2017 Form 2 textbook.[4])

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[4] The boundary of the Malay World seems arbitrary and ambiguous. The textbook cites five scholars who give varying geographical coverage of what they consider to be the Malay World, regarded as a region sharing commonalities in terms of languages and culture (Suffian Mansor et al. 2017, pp. 6–7).

In response, the then minister of education announced in 1987 that "the historical identity of the Malays as the indigenous people would henceforth be written explicitly into the new history syllabus" (Ting 2014, p. 43). Moreover, history as a subject was henceforth made compulsory for secondary students until Form 5 (Cheah 2003). These contentions and political developments formed the backdrop against which the history syllabus was periodically revised, and the rest of this chapter will examine how these tensions and policy directions affected the writing of history textbooks over time.

## Thematic and Discourse Analysis of Textbooks by Period[5]

The two notable shifts unravelled by a study of the themes covered in lower secondary history textbooks between the 1960s and early 2000s confirm that the periodisation which we use here captures important changes in textbook contents. As noted in a study published by CMCS and Nantah (2011), the textbooks used in the 1960s (Period I) allocated 16 chapters (38 per cent of the total) to domestic history, as compared to 26 chapters (62 per cent) to history outside Malaysia. The textbooks published in the 1970s (Period II) devoted 24 chapters (69 per cent) to domestic history and 10 (31 per cent) to history outside Malaysia. After 1989 (Period III), practically all the chapters focus on domestic history and none specifically on international history (ibid., p. 6).[6] In other words, the initial predominance of international over domestic history has shifted to a near-total focus on domestic history. This aspect will be discussed further below, period by period.

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[5] I wish to thank Professor Lee Kam Hing for facilitating my access to the vast collection of old textbooks in the library of New Era University College in Kajang.

[6] In some places, international histories are presented briefly as the context for local history. For instance, in the early millennial edition, one chapter in each form did touch on histories outside Malaysia, such as brief descriptions of some early kingdoms in Southeast Asia, nationalist movements in Asia and the Middle East as well as the historical context leading to the Japanese invasion of Asia.

A second notable shift is the relative extent to which historical themes related to major ethnic groups in Malaysia were covered in successive periods. The ratio of themes related to ethnic Malays, Chinese and Indians in Period I was 36:11:16 per cent, respectively (totalling 63 per cent). The rest concerned historical coverage outside Malaysia. In Period II, the ratio of themes related to ethnic Malays, Chinese, Indians and East Malaysian natives was 62:7:4:3 per cent, respectively (totalling 76 per cent), while the rest covered topics outside Malaysia. In Period III, the coverage of Malay themes further increased to around 80 per cent, compared to 3 and 1 per cent of Chinese and Indian themes, respectively. On a positive note, East Malaysian natives were given more attention compared to the previous period, amounting to about 15 to 18 per cent of the total pages in the lower secondary history textbooks (ibid., p. 13). In other words, the coverage of ethnic Chinese and Indians in history textbooks has experienced a drastic reduction and is currently quite insignificant.

## Period I (1959–1977): Malaya/Malaysia in World History

The lower secondary history syllabus during this period was taught in a chronological order, covering major developments in Europe, India, China and Southeast Asia. Both the 1959 and 1967 history syllabuses followed a similar framework. The timespan encompassed the ancient empires in the Indian subcontinent and China through the Classical Ages, the European Renaissance, the history of major religions, the expansion of Islam to India and Southeast Asia, scientific and modern political revolutions in the West and colonial expansion in Asia until the struggle for independence. Students were effectively studying European and Asian histories, the latter with a particular focus on Southeast Asia, India and China. The political histories of China and India were given great prominence because these were "closely connected with Malaya" (Dance and Dartford 1963, p. ix). The learning of ancient Indian and Chinese histories aimed at helping students "understand better the great

influence that these countries had on the countries of Southeast Asia" (Jessy 1961 Book I, p. 1), including Malaya.

Comparatively, the coverage of Malayan history was less elaborated on due to the lack of detailed historical knowledge and material. The sketchy history of Malaya before the fifteenth-century Melaka Kingdom was covered briefly and cast in the context of an account of other Indianised, more powerful kingdoms in the region such as Funan, Srivijaya and Majapahit. Themes receiving more in-depth discussions included the Melaka Kingdom, the impactful settlement of the Acehnese and Bugis in Malaya between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries and British colonialism. The study of the Ming Dynasty cross-referenced its relationship with the Melaka Kingdom and the latter's fall into the hands of the Portuguese. The occupation of Melaka by the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch, was narrated within the context of European colonial expansion into Asia.

The tone of historical narratives of textbooks during this period was factual and rational. The narrative told of the intertwined ancient histories of Malaya and Southeast Asia with India and China. It narrated the historical integration of ancient Indian culture, languages and religions into local society and political institutions, thus giving rise to "Indianised settlements" and "Indianised states" such as the Old Kedah kingdom and Langkasuka (Jessy 1961 Book I; Rajendra and Rajendra 1969 Book I). An excerpt is as follows:

> The Indians, however, brought important changes in the government of the early Malay settlements. These changes were slow and took many years. Gradually, the Malay chiefs adopted Indian names, Indian religion and many of the ways and customs of the Indians. They introduced many Indian ceremonies and rituals in their court. In fact, they began to rule very much like Indian kings. We call them *Indianised* kings. We call the states they ruled *Indianised* states. (Rajendra and Rajendra 1969 Book I, pp. 105–6)

The ingroup as a nation during this period was composed of "three main races" with equal status, such that histories of ancient China, India, Islam and Southeast Asia were all given prominent emphasis. The royal

intrigues between the Tamil Muslim and Hindu Malay lineages—told via the personalities of Tun Ali and Tun Perak—were discussed freely as insider conflicts in Form 2 textbooks authored by Jessy as well as Rajendra and Rajendra.

Besides the mention that Chinese traders had been frequenting the peninsula, Chinese historical influence was contrasted with that of the Indian subcontinent: "As far as China was concerned, her influence in South-East Asia was of a different kind. It was political and not cultural and religious as that of the Indian" (Jessy 1961 Book I, p. 57). It was acknowledged that the Melaka Kingdom became a vassal state of the Ming emperor in exchange for protection against Siamese domination (Jessy 1964 Book II; Rajendra and Rajendra 1978 Book II).

The reality of a multiethnic Malayan society at independence was stated as a matter of fact and embraced as a feature of ingroup identity:

> Malaya today is inhabited by a multi-racial society. The three main races are Malays, Chinese and Indians. In addition to these there are Ceylonese, Indonesians, Pakistanis, Europeans, Eurasians, Thais and people of many other races. (Jessy 1963 Book III, p. 241)

There was thus an emphasis on commonalities and shared historical roots among the three main ethnic groups through centuries of interaction, while acknowledging the historical contribution of all to the development of modern Malaya. The narrative was inclusive, devoid of any exclusionary nationalistic or moralistic elements. One notable omission, however, were the Orang Asli. They were mentioned only in passing in Rajendra and Rajendra, Book I (1969, pp. 101, 103).

The historical narrative during this period did not suggest any notion of social hierarchy or political primacy among the different ethnic groups. The Malays were acknowledged as the indigenous inhabitants, while it was also stated that "some of them are fairly recent immigrants from Indonesia", referred to as "Malaysians" in census reports (Jessy 1963 Book III, p. 242). "The rest of the inhabitants of Malaya are immigrants" (ibid.). It was also explained that Malaya "before the founding of Penang" was sparsely populated, followed by the description of the immigration of the Chinese into the Straits Settlements, Johor and other Malay states on

the west coast of Malaya, as cash crop planters and miners. The description of the immigration of Indian labour into Malaya on a large scale was followed by a paragraph explaining that "a large number of Indonesians also began to migrate into Malaya" from the surrounding islands "to settle especially in Singapore, Selangor and Johore" (Jessy 1963 Book III, p. 243).

Hence the term "immigrants" was not solely attributed to the non-Malays, and it had yet to gain its current political connotations—that is, as derived from the discourse of the Malays as the "base society" (Ting 2014). In the words of Cheah (2003, p. 241), history was yet to be instrumentalised "to contest and determine the status and rights of each ethnic group" in the nation. The usage of indigeneity to justify an unequal status between Malay and non-Malay citizens and their respective cultures had yet to acquire an official status through policies such as the National Culture Policy. Social boundaries were represented as fluid, as illustrated in the description of the historically intimate interactions and assimilations of Indian and Malay cultures and religions. The authors did not hesitate to present both negative and positive aspects of the historical dynamics of all ethnic groups—hence the representation of intergroup relations was balanced.

## Period II (1978–1988): Malay-Centric Multicultural Narrative

Period II lasted only a decade, when the 1978 syllabus was in use. The three-part version examined here was the most popular textbooks then, authored by M. Thambirajah, a member of the syllabus committee. In an interview in December 2019, he stated that the most significant shift in the syllabus was its more "Malaysia-centric" orientation. In the "Preface" to the Form 2 textbook, the author explained that the formation of national identity and the nation-state (*kenegaraan*) formed the core of the new syllabus, and the contents chosen in the textbooks were geared towards such purposes. In a radical departure from the textbooks in Period I, more than half the contents focused on Malaysian history (6 out

of 11 chapters in Book I, 8 out of 11 in Book II and 8 out of 12 in Book III).

The main theme of Book I was traditional Malay society, elaborated in detail in terms of its political, legal, economic, cultural and literary dimensions. The aim was to show that Malay society between 1400 and 1900 was managed in an orderly way, even if it differed from modern society (Thambirajah 1977 Book I, p. iii). It explained that the whole peninsula was under the control of the Melaka Kingdom at the beginning of the fifteenth century; hence it was "already united as a country" only to be interrupted by the Portuguese occupation of Melaka (p. 14). The earlier chronological approach was discarded in favour of a social history approach. However, the underlying assumption of the historical continuity of Malay society through five centuries seems quite ahistorical. It sidestepped the complicated political history of the rise and fall of the various Malay dynasties, the military ravages or domination wielded by the Acehnese and Bugis and their subsequent settlement on the peninsula and the socioeconomic transformation from an entrepôt, maritime trade-based urban polity to a commodity-based economy.

Early Indian influence on Southeast Asia, which included the Malay Peninsula and predated the Melaka Kingdom, was recounted only after the six chapters on traditional Malay society. Nonetheless, evidence of earlier Indian influence was discreetly mentioned, such as the acknowledgement that the first ruler of the Melaka Kingdom was a Hindu who adopted the Hindu kingship concept of the ruler as a representative of God (*dewa-raja*), a brief mention of early Indian cultural influence on Malay literature and the adaptation of the *Ramayana* into some of the popular romantic Malay oral stories.

The local contents in Form 2 textbooks focused mainly on three elements during the colonial era: Malaysia's relationship with the West, especially British colonialism; societal changes in terms of economic and social developments and the making of a plural society in terms of its inhabitants; and the emergence of various strands of Malay nationalism and the Japanese Occupation. Notable was Chapter 5 of Book II (Thambirajah 1978), which gave a comprehensive description of the three ethnic communities as well as the societies of Sabah and Sarawak. The description of the various ethnic groups and intergroup relations was

relatively balanced. In addition, examples of intraethnic heterogeneity, such as the successive cohorts of Chinese immigration—the Baba and Nyonya, the Straits Chinese and *Singkheh*—were discussed. The assimilation of Indian culture and religion by local inhabitants and the integration of Indian Muslims into the court of the Melaka Kingdom were also highlighted. There was hence an emphasis on the permeability of social boundaries, a history of positive interactions and common experiences.

Book III discussed the nationalist struggle and nation building. Local contents recounted postwar events leading to the communist insurrection in 1948, the independence of Malaya in 1957 and the formation of Malaysia in 1963, but the bulk dwelled on the post-independence era—such as important features of Malaysia as a nation-state, foreign relations as well as the educational, economic and national culture policies of the Malaysian government. In reference to the National Culture Policy itself, the author emphasised the importance of Malay culture, religion and tradition in constituting the mainstay of national culture, while affirming at the same time the necessity of accepting "some suitable aspects of other cultures" as part of this national culture, so as to enrich it and "to reflect the feelings and spirit of all the people in this country" (Thambirajah 1979 Book III, p. 228). The author hence tactfully rendered a slightly more inclusive interpretation of a policy judged by minorities as promoting an unequal relationship between Malay and non-Malay cultures.

Coverage of the textbooks on contemporary developments outside Malaysia in Forms 1 and 2 was concerned mainly with Southeast Asia, although histories of major religions, West Asian and Greco-Roman civilisations as well as brief histories of China, India and Japan were also included. Book III contained one chapter each on Germany, the United States, ideological developments of democracy and fascism in the West, and communism in Russia and China.

Despite the professed intention of presenting a "Malaysia-centric" perspective of history, the Form 1 history textbook was overwhelmingly Malay-centric in focus, representing a sea change in the articulation of national identity. This heavy emphasis on Malay traditional society was a translation of the ideology of the National Culture Policy, which stipulates that cultures indigenous to the region shall constitute the mainstay of national culture. The textbook seemed to be an attempt at portraying

the various societal features of Malay traditional society as the culture of the "base society". In this sense, the narrative presented an essentialised cultural form of national identity even though, as mentioned above, earlier Indian influence was discreetly acknowledged.

In conclusion, radical changes were evident in the 1978 history syllabus beyond the marked increase in "Malaysian content". The narrative constructed a national identity which affirmed the primacy of Malay culture and Islam while acknowledging the historical development of ethnic diversity, depicting a somewhat unequal, hierarchical sense of cultural belonging. Thambirajah was forthright in explaining the ideological perspective behind the textbooks, which was heavily influenced by the official nation-building agenda in line with the National Culture Policy. There was a marked shift towards what could be described as a Malay-dominated historical narrative, albeit without being dismissive of the historical emergence of the multiracial and multicultural Malaysian society—as yet.

## Period III (1989–Present): Ethno-Malay Nationalist Narrative

From 1989 onwards, only a single version of the history textbooks has been used in schools, and history as a subject has been made compulsory until Form 5. Notable during this period is the exclusive focus on Malaysian history throughout the three years of lower secondary schooling. History outside Malaysia, dubbed "world civilisational history", is concentrated in the Form 4 textbook. The early millennial edition of the Form 4 textbook on civilisational history saw a drastic increase in Islamic history (taking up half of the textbook), while the history of the Western civilisation was squeezed into a single chapter, sparking a chorus of objections from parents and civil society actors (Ting 2015). This imbalance was corrected in the latest 2017 history syllabus, but world civilisational history has been moved from Form 4 to Form 1, hence displacing the original Form 1 content by a year.

After more than three decades, the historical narrative, as articulated in Period III, appears to have become entrenched. The narrative of this

period is marked by its heavy emphasis on the heritage of the Melaka Kingdom and the continuity of Malay rule. The "greatness of the Melaka Malay sultanate", which became the "foundation" of the present government, was the main theme of Form 1 textbooks in successive editions (Zainal Abidin bin Abdul Wahid et al. 1989, p. iii; Ahmad Fawzi Mohd Basri et al. 2002, p. xi), although in the current edition, this has been moved to the Form 2 syllabus with some adjustments to the narrative. In the latest edition, the main theme of Book II is "national heritage", which then further branches into two sub-themes, namely "kingdoms (*kerajaan*) in the Malay World" and "the Melaka Malay Sultanate as the foundation of the present government" (Suffian Mansor et al. 2017, p. vi).

About a quarter of the chapters in the earlier editions of Form 1 textbooks were consecrated to detailed discussions on the Melaka Kingdom, followed by other Malay states which were narrated in continuity with Malay rule in Melaka. It wrapped up with a chapter which examined the "heritage" (*warisan*) of the Malay states or sultanates. Interestingly, the chapters on the two Bornean states of Sabah and Sarawak, whose non-Muslim traditional societies do not fit into this framework, were placed after that, seemingly peripheral to this "heritage".

The Form 2 textbook, based on the 2017 syllabus, introduces the concept of the Malay World to propose that its early kingdoms shared a regional pattern in terms of their kingship systems, language and culture, and that these kingdoms were "on equal standing with other contemporary civilisations in the world" (Suffian Mansor et al. 2017, p. vi). The Melaka Kingdom inherited and shared these regional features, which were then passed onto the Johor-Riau Sultanate and so on and so forth, thus rehashing the previous narrative of the Melaka Malay Sultanate as the foundation of the political structure of Malaysia today. Here, only one chapter is devoted to the Melaka Kingdom, and other Malay states are given more space while Sarawak and Sabah are henceforth placed within the Malay World.

Within the framework of the Malay World, features of these early kingdoms are examined thematically, which leads to a rather fragmented and patchy understanding of these early societies spanning 15 centuries. In fact, it would have been more enlightening to use the concept of "Indianised states" or "Indianisation" to explain the regional patterns of

early kingdoms, followed by the changes brought about by the coming of Islam. A historian has questioned the "insufficient and inconsistent treatment" in the textbook on the undeniable and far-reaching Hindu-Buddhist historical influence on the Malay World before the coming of Islam (Sundara Raja 2018).

Book II (Book III in the 2017 syllabus) of the various editions during this period typically discusses the colonial period and the emergence of local resistance to British colonialism, while Book III examines key events from the Japanese Occupation until the attainment of independence by Malaya and the formation of Malaysia. The Form 3 textbook of the 1989 syllabus included several chapters discussing issues and features related to post-independence Malaysia, such as the federal political structure, state symbolism and nation-building policies, but these themes were moved to the Form 5 textbooks in subsequent editions.

Period III has seen the gradual metamorphosis of the historical narrative towards a Malay ethnonationalist perspective, occurring incrementally in successive editions of the textbooks. Narratives during this period put a great emphasis on the Melaka Kingdom as the prototype of the Malaysian nation-state, and on the greatness and fame of the former. The emphasis is on the continuity of Malay rule in Malaya, hence their political primacy over other ethnic groups. To cite the latest edition, two chapters repeat that despite the extension of British control over the protected Malay states, which admittedly eroded the power of the sultans, sovereignty of these states remained in the hands of the Malay rulers and their authority was preserved (Azharudin Mohd Dali et al. 2018, pp. 77, 101). Chapter 8 of the history textbook (Azharudin Mohd Dali et al. 2018, pp. 219, 101) also mentions that "the wisdom of the Malay rulers and state dignitaries in handling the challenges of British intervention was able to preserve the continuity of the heritage of the nation".

The greatly reduced number of pages relating to the historical role of non-Malays in successive editions during this period means that they are rendered almost invisible and assigned to the margins of these narratives. In the first edition issued during this period, Chinese and Tamil schools were mentioned briefly when discussing the colonial system of education. Non-Malays were also mentioned in the context of discussing problematic interethnic relations as obstacles to fostering unity (Sabihah Osman

et al. 1990, pp. 50–1). It was elaborated that differences between Malays and non-Malays over a range of issues were the cause of disunity, such as the granting of citizenship to non-Malays, the designation of the Malay language as the only national language, the education system, the official status of Islam and interethnic disparities in terms of ways of life and standards of living.

The early millennial version of the history textbooks which, exceptionally, was in use for nearly two decades, saw the introduction of the controversial term *ketuanan Melayu*, which signifies Malay dominance or hegemony, being justified on the grounds of Malay indigeneity. As analysed in Ting (2009), the:

concern to justify the continuity of *ketuanan Melayu* based on the native/immigrant argument … overshadows generally the selective description of the immigration and settlement of the various races in Malaya as well as their historical role. (p. 45)

The non-Malays were:

mainly described as migrant workers who took advantage of the wealth and resources of the land and entrenched themselves in the modern sector. Here again, they were positioned in contrast with the Malays who were relegated to the traditional sector, seen as a root cause of their impoverishment and backwardness. (p. 46)

Hence non-Malays were described as outsiders who benefitted at the expense of the Malay community. This perspective was quite a change from the earlier periods whereby centuries of early historical linkages between the three cultures were emphasised. The perspectives on contentious issues remained rather one-sided and unbalanced.

The latest edition of the history textbooks no longer uses the contentious term *ketuanan Melayu*, and the use of pejorative language against the non-Malays has also been generally eliminated. This improvement, when compared with the early millennial edition, may signify that the loud and prolonged campaign by civil society against the latter (Ting 2014) has been heeded. Nonetheless, acknowledgement of the historical

place and contribution of non-Malays remains absent and the space allocated to them remains negligible. They do get mentioned here and there, interspersed and lost in the texts that confirm their peripheral position in the narrative. This approach echoes the strategy of tokenism to pacify minority objections of their absence in the text through the process of "mentioning" (Apple 1999).

Clearly, the overarching framework provides insufficient room to help students understand the perennially cosmopolitan and constantly evolving nature of local society hundreds of years before the establishment of the Melaka Kingdom, as well as the transformation of local traditional society taking place over the past few centuries.

## Conclusion

As a demographically multiethnic and multireligious society, where Malays constitute around 55 per cent of citizens, the state project of fostering national identity and cohesion through history education has undergone an interesting trajectory. The historical narratives, as articulated in the history textbooks, went through several stages of transformation—from an initially inclusive perspective which embraced multiculturalism to one which exhibited a distinct Malay-centric bias, with scant mention of the historical role played by non-Malays in the development of modern Malaysian society.

At independence, the initial impetus in history education was to "decolonise" Eurocentric perspectives and construct a historical perspective of the nation "from inside out", which in turn directed attention to the question of what it meant to write an "indigenous history". More than an academic question, it was as much a political one—and as discussed, very much enmeshed in the ethnic identity politics of the nation. Over time, the "nation-of-intent" became clouded by Malay ethnonationalist ideology, and the contents of history textbooks effectively served as an expression of this officially articulated national identity. Their academic quality aside, the history textbooks discussed above have offered at least three distinct versions of the "story of the nation". They are not merely a story of the past. As we noted at the start, citing Rüsen

(1987), how we remember the past shapes how we understand the present and anticipate the future. Historical perspectives shape social identity and intergroup relations within the nation and are often used to justify social hierarchies, legitimise power structures or mobilise collective action (Korostelina 2013). They have implications for the type of society envisioned and influence the understanding of how social cohesion could be fostered and feeds back to the nation-building agenda.

An overinsistence on integrating moralistic lessons into the learning of historical events leads to a tendency to emphasise the greatness and accomplishment of the past and promotes uncritical patriotism as well as unquestioning subordination and loyalty to the authorities and the government. Does the existing moral framework encourage an ethos of mutual acceptance and peaceful coexistence which facilitates the elimination of prejudice and discrimination as well as the equitable resolution of eventual conflicts between ethnic groups and regional entities? No, if we examine it based on the framework for a culture of peace as constructed by Korostelina (2013).

The main theme of the existing historical narrative is not a tale of the origins of the plural and diverse Malaysian society. Rather, it is how the fifteenth-century Melaka Kingdom has maintained its historical continuity and perpetuated Malay political sovereignty until today. It emphasises repeatedly that the Malay sultans remained in charge, despite the erosion of their power under British indirect rule. The greatly reduced space allocated to non-Malay histories leaves no doubt as to the assumed equivalence between Malay history and *the* national history. Notwithstanding the increased space allocated to the histories of Sabah and Sarawak, their presence remains peripheral to the Malayan—and Malay-centred—narrative.

A rendition of the historical origins of a nation (read, a political community sharing a common citizenship within a state) serves as a building block for the construction of the collective identity of the putative nation—the ingroup—and is fundamental to the maintenance of its sense of cohesion. When this "genesis story" marginalises its minorities, who constitute a significant proportion of its citizenry, and positions them as "outgroups", the misfit in identity becomes a divisive barrier against national cohesion.

This analysis has illustrated the constructed nature of so-called national history and how the production of different versions of history textbook outlooks and narratives was, and still is, influenced by policymakers, textbook writers, academics and politicians. They reflect the dominant views of the political elites, what they expect the younger generation to remember about the past and the type of social world and moral framework they want to perpetuate or transmit. Such textbooks are a projection of their social identity onto the nation, rather than a project of inclusion to foster national belonging.

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# 12

## National Identity and History Teaching in Singapore: Bringing the Malays Back in

### Michael D. Barr

## Introduction

History classes in school are natural vehicles for transmitting national identity in any modern society, but in the case of Singapore, the government gave every appearance of being reluctant to utilise history for nation building until nearly two decades after independence. This apparent reluctance disguised a series of early missteps as the ruling elite sought to navigate what it regarded as a treacherous contemporary terrain of ethnic mistrust and insecure politics. Once it found its confidence, the government resumed its efforts with a renewed focus, force and professionalism, returning more successfully to many of the themes that were embedded in its early attempts. The most contentious and pivotal element of the history curricula from the 1970s to the 2000s was the consistent refusal to acknowledge the existence, let alone the importance of Singapore's precolonial Malay history, insisting instead that Singapore's history started with the first British settlement in 1819. The decoupling of Malay

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history from Singapore's history was an important part of the nation-building narrative propounded by the ruling elite, thus allowing Singapore's success story to be mostly told as a history of ethnic Chinese endurance and achievement. Thankfully, since the mid-2000s, the myth of 1819 has substantially collapsed under the weight of new scholarship—and the school history curriculum has been gradually catching up.

## The 'Problem of Race'

When Chinese-majority Singapore left Malay-dominated Malaysia on 9 August 1965 to become an independent republic, this Separation concluded two difficult years as part of Malaysia. By this point, the government had spent years telling Singaporeans that they were Malaysians and that they should be proud of this fact, but overnight they lost their Malaysian nationality and became "mere" Singaporeans. The Chinese population and the indigenous Malays had starkly different reactions to these developments. The Chinese, comprising 74.6 per cent of the population, celebrated Separation with fireworks in Chinatown, while the indigenous Malays (14.4 per cent) mourned their lost status as members of the national majority in Malaysia (Ministry of Culture 1970, p. 64; The Straits Times 1965). The problem for the Singaporean government was that the politics of Separation were drenched in the language of race and communalism. Thus, any focus on either ethnicity or Separation risked fuelling communal division among Singaporeans.

An additional dilemma for the government was that it regarded both the Chinese and the Malays as politically suspect. The Chinese population was suspect because it was ostensibly susceptible to radicalisation by Chinese communists and communalists. The Malays were mistrusted because the government doubted that they would be more loyal to Singapore than to Malaysia and Indonesia.

The government's mistrust of the Chinese population was, however, more nuanced, because despite being uncomfortable with the politics of the Separation-era generation, it harboured deep-seated prejudices in favour of the genetic and cultural supremacy of Singapore's Chinese population and was convinced that Singapore owed its success to Chinese

enterprise and labour (Barr 2000, Chaps. 5, 6 and 7). Note particularly this "parable" told in public by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in December 1967:

> Three women were brought to the Singapore General Hospital, each in the same condition and each needing a blood transfusion. The first, a Southeast Asian [read, Malay] was given the transfusion but died a few hours later. The second, a South Asian [read, Indian] was also given a transfusion but died a few days later. The third, an East Asian [read, Chinese], was given a transfusion and survived. That is the X factor in development. (Barr 2000, p. 185)

This "parable" lays clear the racial hierarchy through which Lee and his closest confidants saw the politics of ethnicity and economic development.

The government was therefore unwilling to either celebrate Singaporeans' shared past or to use ethnic identity as a binding force. Instead, it accepted communal identity as an unyielding reality, but worked it into a new, forward-looking Singaporean identity based on materialism, modernity and achievement (Barr and Skrbiš 2008). Unfortunately, this new vision was inextricably infused with Lee's instinctive disdain of Malay culture and achievements as well as his belief in Chinese supremacy.

## The 'Problem' of History: The 1960s and 1970s

The "problem" of history was thus seeded in racism and politics, making it extremely difficult to find an inclusive narrative that would please everyone. The Ministry of Education (MOE) did spend a few years trying to craft such a distinctive Singapore story in schools but gave up at the first hurdle.

This first attempt began as a review of the colonial-era history curriculum. In 1969, the MOE co-opted the Department of History at the University of Singapore (later the National University of Singapore [NUS]) to produce a new set of local history textbooks for schools. According to one member of the department at the time, the effort was

"designed to enable young Singaporeans, through a study of local history, to identify with Singapore more intensely and to appreciate the cultural heritage of Singapore's multi-racial population" (Chiang 1973, p. 16). This effort to inject a local element into history classes ended in 1973, after accusations by Malay leaders that their heritage was being treated with disrespect surfaced.

At the heart of Malay discontent was the fact that the new curriculum excluded everything before the arrival of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles on the banks of the Singapore River in 1819. Starting the narrative in 1819 disregarded a centuries-long history, one in which the Malays considered themselves as active, powerful and prosperous actors, consequently creating a clean slate where a new story of British and immigrant achievement could be written. They were right to be concerned, but by this stage the direction of scholarly leadership on this subject had already been running against them for many years.

Both the current and previous heads of the Department of History went on record declaring that centuries of Malay settlement and activity in and around Singapore before the arrival of the British (of which they were fully aware) were of no consequence for understanding modern Singapore and had no place in national history. "Modern Singapore began with the founding of the port in 1819 by Raffles", declared the incumbent head, Professor Wong Lin Ken (The Sunday Times 1970). Wong's predecessor, Professor K.G. Tregonning (cited in Kwa 2018, p. 2) was even more adamant, writing in 1969 that "[m]odern Singapore began in 1819. *Nothing that occurred on the island prior to this has particular relevance to an understanding of the contemporary scene; it is of antiquarian interest only*" (emphasis added). Wong had argued this case in his University of Malaya Master of Arts thesis, which was completed when Singapore was still a Crown Colony (ibid., p. 1). We also know that throughout the 1960s, he had been a powerful advocate at the university for teaching and researching what he called "contemporary history" (Ho 2008, pp. 51, 52).[1] His scholarly leadership of both the department and its academic journal, the

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[1] The distinction between politicians and academia was in any case somewhat blurred since Wong was a PAP member of parliament while he was head of the Department of History. He eventually left academia to become the minister for home affairs.

*Journal of Southeast Asian History (JSEAH)*, focused almost entirely on the present: "developmental patterns", "modernizing forces", "economic development" and politics (Ho 2008, pp. 47–8, 51).

Starting Singapore's history in 1819 created a misleading story, one where Singapore prospered on the backs of British overlordship and Chinese sweat. The Malay response to this truncated version of Singapore's history was mostly one of muted acceptance, thanks to the alignment of most of the Malay elite with the ruling People's Action Party (PAP), but among those who did speak out, the critique was targeted very tightly. As one Malay politician said in 1967:

> According to the Singapore government, Singapore was founded by Sir Stamford Raffles and that she did not belong to anybody. I say Singapore belonged to the Malays, [and] with the defeat of the imperialists, Singapore has become what she is today. (Utusan Melayu 1967)

In 1970, the MOE published its new history textbooks, the outcome of the 1969 review, which echoed and reinforced the new narrative about the centrality of Raffles. Singapore's history started firmly in 1819 (Blackburn and Wu 2019, p. 141)—where according to the official school syllabus, the main lessons to be learnt were "the need for thrift and industry as exemplified by our pioneering forefathers", "the importance of tolerance and respect for one another's religious beliefs" and the need "to build a strong and unified nation, ready and able to defend the freedom of our country while living in peace with our neighbouring countries" (p. 142). The subtext of these messages is not difficult to discern: the "pioneering forefathers" were Chinese and the problematic "neighbouring countries" were Malaysia and Indonesia.

Reactions to the publication of these textbooks were predictable, except perhaps in their clarity and theatricality. On the one hand, the youth wing of the main Malay political party, the Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Singapura (Singapore Malay National Organisation), responded by burning copies of the textbook outside its headquarters, claiming specifically that:

- it humiliates the Malays,

- distorts Singapore's historical facts,
- idolizes Raffles and some Chinese traders as creators of Singapore's history,
- makes fun of the history of Temasek [the ancient name of Singapore] before the arrival of Raffles by treating it as mere legend, and
- deals with Singapore's history as though it commenced from the time of Raffles. (Utusan Melayu 1970)

On the other hand, the Chinese press was content that the Chinese community was cast as one of the creators of modern Singapore (Nanyang Siang Pau 1968a, 4 January, b, 18 June, 1969, 25 September). Insofar as they expressed resentment, it was about having to share credit for Singapore's success with Raffles and the British (Sin Chew Jit Poh 1969).

The book-burning turned out to be the end of a cycle of history teaching for the rest of the decade. In 1973, the decision was taken to remove history from the primary school curriculum and to make it an elective in high school, both because it presented difficulties for the government and also because it was a low-priority subject. Such was the level of interest in history as a school subject that the upper secondary curriculum was left unchanged from the late colonial period throughout the rest of the 1970s—with barely a mention of Singapore (Blackburn and Wu 2019, p. 144; Chia 2015, p. 124).

## History Revived, the 1980s

By the end of the 1970s, the concerns that had driven the government to all but kill off history had subsided, and the national elite had begun looking towards the long-term future. Overall, the government was not happy with the school system, and so Prime Minister Lee charged his deputy and most trusted lieutenant, Goh Keng Swee, with planning the system's reorganisation (Goh et al. 1996, Chap. 3). Lee was pleased with the new direction set by Goh but wanted more attention to be paid to "the moral and character aspects of education" (Lee 1979, p. iv). In response to Lee's concerns, the government commissioned an inquiry

into moral education, led by Minister for Communications Ong Teng Cheong. The committee's report instigated frantic activity on moral, civic and even religious education programmes that persisted with varying efficacy for nearly two decades (Ong T.C. et al. 1979; Tamney 1996; Chia 2015, Chaps. 4 and 5).

History was absent from both Goh's and Ong's reports, but we know that it was on the minds of policy planners because in February 1979—contemporaneous with the Goh and Ong reports—Lee called for schools to resume teaching the history of Singapore (Blackburn and Wu 2019, p. 146). On 20 January 1980, he made another call:

> To understand the present and anticipate the future, one must know enough of the past to have a sense of the history of the people. … It is necessary to remind our young that, when we started, in 1954 and we formed government in 1959, we did not have the basic elements of a nation. (Lee 1980, p. 3)

A week later, the minister for trade and industry and future prime minister, Goh Chok Tong, called explicitly for teaching:

> young Singaporeans … the whys and wherefores of Singapore, the struggles for independence against the communists, the building of a modern state, the values that were taught, the society that was formed and the nation that was built. (The Straits Times 1980, 28 January)

Two years later, in August 1982, the minister for education announced that the Secondary 1 and 2 history curricula would henceforth be devoted entirely to teaching the history of Singapore (Blackburn and Wu 2019, p. 148) and then it was to be made compulsory from 1984 onwards.

At this point, the Department of History's occlusion of Singapore's Malay past returned into focus. In 1971, Constance Mary Turnbull became the last expatriate academic to leave the country under the government's programme of "academic decolonization" (Thum 2012, pp. 10–11; Toh 1973). From her new base in the University of Hong Kong, she wrote a national history of the country that had just driven her away (Hack 2012, p. 25). She published her history of Singapore in

1977, and by doing so, provided the next generation of school and university students with a standard template for the historiography of the new nation. It was written exclusively from colonial and English-language press records and awed the reader with its attention to detail. These details did not, however, obscure the overarching thesis, which was declared in the opening words of the "Introduction", even before the opening of Chap. 1:

> Modern Singapore is unique in that she was founded in 1819 on the initiative of one individual, Sir Stamford Raffles, despite almost universal opposition. An unwanted child, foisted upon the English East India Company, Singapore managed to survive and flourish, but her story was not one of steady and unchecked progress. Her prosperity and sometimes even her existence were threatened many times. (Turnbull 1989, p. xii)[2]

Thus, Singapore's first national history took the form of a classic narrative of achievement in the face of adversity, but it was seemingly a colonial story rather than an Asian one.

## Turnbull as Template

Turnbull was not the first to conceive or write of 1819 as the beginning of Singapore's history, but she was the first to explicitly present colonial Singapore as the incubator of the nation. She also made her mark by framing Singapore's foundation with hardly an Asian in sight, having excluded both the Malay holders of the island's sovereignty with whom Raffles negotiated (Temenggong Abdul Rahman and Sultan Hussein Mohamad Shah) (Barr 2019a), and the 2000 Asians who were already living there (Bastin 2014, p. 35), along with centuries of Malay and other Asian history that preceded 1819. To be fair, she did acknowledge the presence of "the local chieftain" when she opened Chap. 1 but did not see fit to tell the reader his name nor his title for many pages (Turnbull 1989, pp. 1–5).

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[2] The first edition was titled *A History of Singapore: 1819–1975* and was published in 1977.

This account makes it sound like her book was a colonialist apologia, but it was not. She expressly intended to write a nationalist history and considered that she was giving expression to this ambition in two ways: by filling her book with social histories and factual stories of the struggling, suffering and sometimes successful Asians who populated and built colonial Singapore, and by extending the story into the independence era and praising the new government.[3] These two elements mitigated the colonial perspective considerably, except that even when she adopted an Asian perspective, she was reliant upon colonial sources and—perhaps unwittingly—reproduced the racial stereotypes generated by colonial authority and scholarship. Hence, she attributed most of the credit for Singapore's achievements to both the colonialists and the Chinese immigrants.

When the MOE decided to reintroduce history in 1983, Turnbull's book was its template and the recommended reference book for teachers (Blackburn 2012, pp. 76–77). It even followed Turnbull's practice of presenting the lived experiences of both real historical characters and generalised representations of social fractions (e.g. nineteenth-century Chinese "coolies") as a technique for engaging students' interest. In Turnbull's hands, this ameliorated the Chinese focus somewhat, but in the hands of the history textbook writers of the 1980s, this pedagogical technique did the opposite: it facilitated the repeated depiction of Chinese colonialists as positive role models and nation builders, while either writing more dismissively of other communities or not mentioning them at all. In the main lower secondary textbooks of the 1980s, *Social and Economic History of Singapore* (Lower Secondary History Project Team 1984a, b), their Chinese bias was considerably stronger than in Turnbull's original scholarship. For instance, the Secondary 1 textbook on the nineteenth century contained a key chapter called "Partners in Trade and Commerce", which was essentially a British and Chinese story. It contained three pages and three large photographs depicting European merchants, two pages and

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[3] In a roundtable discussion in 2006, she was emphatic that her focus on social history was a deliberate break from the colonialist perspective and intrinsic to her "national" approach. During the same discussion, she confirmed her admiration for Lee Kuan Yew and his government, regarding them as the architects of Singapore's success. See Blackburn and Wu (2019, pp. 149, 151) and Blackburn (2012, pp. 77–79).

two large photographs depicting Chinese merchants and then half a page and no photographs about Indians, Malays and Arabs (Lower Secondary History Project Team 1984a, Chap. 18).[4] The outlier status of the Malays was emphasised by their relegation to "The Malays and other Muslims", in contrast to the Chinese who were ubiquitous throughout most of the book. The Secondary 2 textbook on the twentieth century depicted the Japanese Occupation as a period of Chinese suffering, including one photograph (Lower Secondary History Project Team 1984b, pp. 160–162, 154), and Chinese heroes, with two photographs (pp. 165–171). Stories about the "other races" during the Occupation were relegated to three paragraphs that tainted both the Malay and Indian communities with the suggestion of collaboration (ibid., pp. 162, 166; Khamsi and Morris 2013, pp. 115, 116). "How Events in Other Countries Affected Singapore (1901–1925)" was devoted exclusively to events in China (16 pages), including six photographs and a map (Lower Secondary History Project Team 1984b, pp. 8–15, 17, 18), supplemented by four paragraphs covering India and Turkey (pp. 15–6). Chinese dominance came across just as strongly in the photographs and drawings that adorned the book: 34 pictures depicted a Chinese person or a group of Chinese people, and a total of 6 depicted the "other races". (This survey excludes group photographs depicting a mixture of people of different races, or where the subjects' race was indistinguishable.)

This pattern of ethnic dominance and stereotyping should not, however, be seen in isolation. The early 1980s marked the beginning of a broad-based government-driven programme that privileged the depiction of Chinese Singaporeans at the expense of Malays, Indians and Eurasians—with a directness and bluntness that had not been present in the 1970s (Barr 2019b). Barr and Skrbiš (2008) highlight how English reading primers for junior primary school classes indulged in overt racial stereotyping that portrayed the Chinese in positive, active and powerful roles in contrast to the passive or even derisory depictions of Malays and Indians (pp. 162–168). More recently, Kwek (2018) has identified the same phenomenon in the history textbooks published throughout this

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[4] The text describing the Chinese merchants was not much longer than that for the other Asians, but the two "Chinese" photographs created the overwhelming impression of a Chinese story.

decade, stereotyping the Malays as ignorant people who did not appreciate the value of education, and the Chinese as energetic and civic-minded people who valued education (pp. 164, 165). The fact that overt racism bleeds across multiple curricula, and more broadly, multiple arms of government throughout this period, is disturbing. This feature did not spring raw from within the government and society at the beginning of the 1980s, but, as we saw above, it was openly on display during the initial round of curricular reforms in the late 1960s and early 1970s—suggesting that the Malay book-burners of the early 1970s had a point.

At this time, the MOE did not directly produce or dictate the history textbooks but allowed schools to choose between an approved selection of texts that were written with varying degrees of MOE involvement (Sim and Rajah 2019, p. 153).[5] *Social and Economic History of Singapore* became the main textbook in the 1980s—but it was not the only one. *History of Modern Singapore* was also published in 1984, but it was not adopted as the mainstream textbook for Secondary 1 and lower secondary history textbooks until 1994. The second-generation textbooks followed the Turnbull model even more closely, with both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, they were less dismissive of non-Chinese contributions and included Malays and Indians much more frequently and positively in their main narratives, even though the overarching narrative was still that of a British success story implemented by Chinese enterprise and muscle (Secondary History Project Team 1994a, b; Khamsi and Morris 2013, p. 117).

On the negative side, they added a chapter called "Building a Nation" that was uncompromisingly effusive of the PAP government's record. It is indicative of its messaging that the 29 paragraphs of this final chapter contained 14 laudatory mentions of "the government" and 2 expressions of praise for "the leaders of Singapore" (Secondary History Project Team 1994a, b).[6] It also devoted a chapter to the PAP's rise to power and Singapore's entry into Malaysia, and another chapter on Singapore's two years in Malaysia, each faithfully presenting Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP

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[5] By the 1980s all the history textbooks were in English.
[6] See "Acknowledgements" and copyright pages, pp. 188–194, across both books.

as fearless fighters for Singaporean interests (pp. 166–187). Naturally, it also started recounting Singapore's history from 1819.

The application of Turnbull's template can be seen in the excerpts copied below, right down to the praise for British wisdom that provided the foundation for modern success.

> In Chapter 7, you read how the British promoted entrepot trade and brought wealth to Singapore. But by the 1950s and 1960s Singapore could no longer depend entirely on entrepot trade to grow rapidly and to create enough jobs. (Secondary History Project Team 1994a, p. 189)

> Under the British rule, law and order was maintained, and new ideas in government, business and education were introduced. Many of these ideas are still used today even though the British have left Singapore. (p. 194)

For those who might have otherwise missed the point, the front covers overlaid the statue of Raffles and a Union Flag across a photo of Lee Kuan Yew and his cabinet marching proudly along a street.

## National Education and *The Singapore Story*

The Turnbull version of history proved to be remarkably successful as a template for the mid-1980s revival of history in schools, but it is nevertheless surprising that this book—or any single book, for that matter—could have retained its intellectual hegemony as completely or for as long as *A History of Singapore* did. Released in 1977, it was still the primary resource for history teachers until the second half of the 1990s and remains a standard resource today. Yet both scholarship and politics are intrinsically restless, and a change of some sort was nearly inevitable. By the century's end, a cohort of mostly foreign scholars had been challenging aspects of the Turnbull story for years. Some of this scholarship directly challenged the occlusion of Singapore's precolonial history from the national narrative (Trocki 1990; Miksic 1985; Regnier 1987), while the remainder threw new light on colonial or postcolonial history.

This tension between scholarly adventurism and official conservatism might have survived even longer, except that in the mid-1990s, Lee Kuan Yew (then a senior minister without a portfolio) and his son, Lee Hsien Loong (then a deputy prime minister without a portfolio), pushed scholarly tolerance a little too far. Between them, they decided to create a new nationalist education programme called "National Education" (NE), to be based on Lee Kuan Yew's forthcoming memoirs. Deputy Prime Minister Lee launched NE in May 1997, and his father launched the first volume of his memoirs, *The Singapore Story*, a year later (Lee 1997, 1998, 2000).

NE changed the teaching of history and also intensified the focus on the teaching of history per se (Chia 2015, pp. 126–151). This renewed emphasis on history—and indeed the entire NE initiative—was prompted by a new discovery: despite the teaching of Singapore's history since 1984, young adults still had no idea why they had to be grateful to their national leaders (Barr and Skrbiš 2008, p. 186). It was Lee Kuan Yew himself who inadvertently prompted this realisation: in 1996, he floated the idea that Singapore might at some stage rejoin Malaysia, only to discover that many young Singaporeans could not see why this would be a problem or why Singapore was so special (Goh 1996). It seems that they had insufficient understanding of the trauma of Singapore's Separation in 1965 and were therefore not sufficiently appreciative of the great service that their national leadership had provided in saving and building the nation. The MOE henceforth took direct control of the writing and production of all history textbooks that covered Singapore's history, while continuing to allow choices with the other textbooks (Sim and Rajah 2019, p. 153). History was consequently moved to the frontline of "character building" in schools and junior colleges through the NE programme.

The cornerstone of NE was the set of Lee Kuan Yew's memoirs, which provided their template even while the memoirs themselves were still being written. *The Singapore Story* allowed Lee to claim a place for himself as the second founder of Singapore, following the other "great man", Raffles (Lee 1998, 2000; Barr 2019a, Chap. 1). T.N. Harper (2001) described it as "a biblical narrative of deliverance" (p. 6), whereby Lee Kuan Yew delivered Singapore from chaos: communal discord; the pull of extra-national loyalties by ethnic homelands; communism and leftist

subversives, students and unionists; overbearing regional neighbours; and poverty. Even this conceit may have been accepted with relative equanimity by the local scholarly community, but the two Lees then went a step further, claiming that *The Singapore Story* was the definitive history of Singapore: one set, it seemed, in stone. In Lee Hsien Loong's words:

> The Singapore Story is based on historical facts. We are not talking about an idealised legendary account or a founding myth, but of an accurate understanding of what happened in the past, and what this history means for us today. It is objective history, seen from a Singaporean standpoint. (Lee, 1997, p. 11)

The Lee Kuan Yew story thus became the Singapore Story, which became the heart of NE. This, it seems, was a step too far. These two projects were virtually indistinguishable from each other: Lee's memoirs provided the template for NE in much the same way Turnbull's *History of Singapore* had for the history syllabus.

In the absence of new, purpose-written textbooks (the next new history textbook was not available until 2000) (Chia 2015, pp. 138–139), the NE programme was embedded into the school curriculum and activities, with history and social studies as its main vehicles. In the meantime, the Turnbull-inspired *History of Modern Singapore* proved to be easily adapted for the new era of teaching, indicating the extent to which the Singapore Story had been built upon the foundations laid by the Turnbull story. When the MOE did issue a new NE history textbook and syllabus in 2000, its treatment of the colonial era was relatively cursory. Not only did *Understanding Our Past: Singapore from Colony to Nation* collapse its coverage of the nineteenth century to 44 pages (down from about 250 pages in the 1980s and about 100 pages in the 1990s), but teachers were given the discretion to drop parts of colonial history (Curriculum Planning and Development Division 1999, pp. 4–48; Chia 2015, p. 163). The sectional themes within the textbook contained value-laden messages of vulnerability, resilience and national pride: "Our Modern Beginnings" (nineteenth century); "Our Vulnerability" (the Great Depression and wars of the twentieth century); "Our Tumultuous Years" ("communist" strikes and riots in postwar Singapore); "Our Road to

Independence"; and "Building our Nation" (achievements of the PAP government). And of course, Singapore's history still started with "The Founding of Modern Singapore" in 1819 and told a story of the "immigrant pioneers who helped build this country" (Curriculum Planning and Development Division 1999, p. 3; National Library Board 2020, entry for *Understanding our Past*).

## Bringing the Malays Back in

Somewhat unexpectedly, the publication of Lee's memoirs and the ubiquity of the NE was so offensively self-serving that it provoked a direct and highly critical reaction from scholars—mostly foreign scholars, but for the first time Singaporean scholars working in Singapore also began publishing revisionist scholarship. The scholarly challenges to the Singapore Story covered many different aspects, but if we keep our attention on the specific issue of Singapore's precolonial history, we can see that contrarian scholarship began entering the Singaporean mainstream towards the end of the 2000s. In 2010, Karl Hack et al. (2010) produced a collection of essays by mostly overseas scholars that was easily the most adventurous academic exploration of Singapore's precolonial history at that point. Meanwhile two scholars at local universities—Peter Borschberg and Kwa Chong Guan—started publishing the fruits of their separate original research enterprises, specifically on precolonial Singapore (which had been in gestation since the 1990s). Another local scholar, John Miksic, was drawing together the strands of three decades of archaeological research on precolonial Singapore into a single, impressive volume (Miksic 1985; Miksic and Low 2004; Miksic 2013; Borschberg 2010; Borschberg 2014, 2015; Kwa 2017, 2018). Their contributions, particularly the new data that Borschberg had uncovered in non-English European archives, transformed Singapore's historiographical landscape beyond reversal (Kwa et al. 2009; Curriculum Planning and Development Division 2014; Kwa et al. 2019).

During the 2000s, these deviations from the Singapore Story were still mostly working their way towards publication, but those revisionists who were involved in teacher training and curricular development had already

been pushing forward with reforms from within. The first tentative sign of change came with the publication of the 2006 lower secondary history syllabus, containing a new unit called "Early Beginnings, c.1300–1819" (Curriculum Planning and Development Division 2005, p. 20). The main lessons of this unit focused on the novelty of using new evidence to "reconstruct" and "interpret" the past in a different way, and there was little incentive for teachers to draw connections between this precolonial, explicitly Malay history and the mainstream national narrative. Nevertheless, this unit provided the modest foundations for a considerably more detailed unit on precolonial Singapore in the 2016 syllabus (Curriculum Planning and Development Division 2016, p. 12). The contemporaneous Secondary 1 history textbook devotes 78 pages out of 199 to Singapore's precolonial history, with sections on Singapore's links to the world, century by century. Malays and kindred Asians are ubiquitous throughout this section, which follows the rises and falls of the fortune of the region and its people (Curriculum Planning and Development Division 2014, pp. 2–79). Significantly, the arrival of the British is presented not as the beginning of something completely new, but as one in a long series of arrivals in the region in "Singapore's Connections with the World (19th Century)" (p. 80). Thus, thanks to direct inputs into the design of school textbooks and university teacher training courses by a handful of dedicated scholars, revised versions of history have been accepted into the school curriculum; if the history textbooks of 1969 had been more like these, Malay activists would have had less cause to burn any books.

In terms of the quest for long-term institutional acceptance of these shifts, one of the more heartening aspects of these developments has been the active involvement of a member of the Lee family—Kwa Chong Guan—in driving forward some of these scholarly reforms. A second plus has been the involvement of another establishment figure, one-time Yale-NUS president, Professor Tan Tai Yong, most notably in the production of a new "mainstream" history of Singapore that overtly explores Singapore's precolonial Malay history. It does so without imparting any explicit lessons that might challenge the narrative that Raffles, Lee Kuan Yew and the PAP were the keys to Singapore's success (Kwa et al. 2009), but it is clearly a major development nonetheless, especially

since the book is being used as a university textbook by trainee teachers and other students of Singapore's history.

By 2019, Singapore's precolonial "Malay" history was centre stage in Singapore's historiography, to the point that the 2019 Bicentennial Celebrations of Raffles' landing unexpectedly devoted much of its attention to looking before 1819 at precolonial Malay history, albeit with a tunnel vision that sees everything through the prism of the island alone, rather than the island as part of an integrated and dynamic region (see, e.g. Institute of Policy Studies 2019; Channel NewsAsia 2019, 4 January). The recognition of Singapore's Malay past is a welcome development, although tension lingers in the question of how much bearing this history has on understanding Singapore's colonial and postcolonial achievements.

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# 13

# Constructing the Thai Race in Thai History Textbook Narratives

**Thanet Aphornsuvan**

## Introduction

This chapter examines how history education in Thailand, both formal and informal, has successfully sustained and strengthened the core values and practices of the Thai nation-state, as envisioned by the traditional elite. Using a *longue-durée* perspective, this chapter begins by looking at the early twentieth century, when the kingdom struggled to preserve its independence from Western colonial powers, then at mid-century nation building, with state-driven cultural nationalist ideologies which refashioned the history that was to become the staple of Thai school textbooks. In this history, the central Thai-speaking peoples claimed pride of place over the numerous minorities in the kingdom/nation. By the latter part of the twentieth century, the long-term consequences could be seen, and when history texts were changed, the political outlook was already poor for minorities. While the official or formal history reproduced in textbooks was hegemonic, it was not uncontested.

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This essay also draws attention to the role played by a brilliant radical historian, Jit Phumisak, who was assassinated in 1966 but in whose short life managed to highlight the dignity of indigenous and minority peoples. The histories that survived outside of and in open contention with textbook history include those of the Malay-Muslim minority. Central to national identity is the narrative of a relatively homogeneous Thai national history—based upon the pertinent qualities of the Thai race—from the early period of constructing the Thai nation-state in the late nineteenth century to the present. The promotion of ethnic diversity, however, was not the goal in the formation and growth of national identity. The first part of this chapter focuses on the conceptualisation of the Thai nation (*chat Thai*) and race (*chon chat*) in relation to the formation of the nation-state. Next is the invention of Thai national history and government policies on ethnic homogeneity and national identity, which have been utilised in school textbooks. The final part discusses the impact of nation building and monoethnic policies and sheds light on the origin and development of ethnic problems facing the kingdom.

## Origins of Thai History

The successful invention of modern Thai history benefited greatly from its ability to combine European historicism with traditional Siamese royal chronicles and legends (Wyatt 1994). The process of rewriting Thai history proceeded under the reforms undertaken by King Chulalongkorn (Rama V, 1853–1910), which revamped the *saktina* (Thai feudalism) system and imposed a modern form of government. The spirit of reform gave an impetus to the writing of Thai history from the latter half of the nineteenth century onwards. The royal Siamese elite developed this modern national history while Siam was struggling to maintain its independence from the French and British. The main storyline of this history emphasised the struggle for freedom of the Thai people in the first city-state of Sukhothai in the fourteenth century, which marked the beginning of later independent Thai-speaking kingdoms.

King Vajiravudh (Rama VI, r. 1910–1925) and Prince Damrongrajanubhab (1862–1943) each shaped Thai history writing.

Educated in an English public school, King Vajiravudh later read law and history at Oxford. He was deeply immersed in European history and interpreted Sukhothai's Golden Age through such a lens, lamenting the decline of its glorious past. He invented the myth that the Sukhothai city-state was at the origin of the ancient Thai civilisation, which had subsequently decayed due to the ignorance of the Thai people. King Vajiravudh visited the ruins of Sukhothai and wrote that its monuments reminded him that "our Thai nation is not a young country and not a country of savages or, to put it in English, uncivilized people. Our Thai nation has been prosperous and thriving for a long time" (Peleggi 2013, p. 1530). He regarded himself as an enlightened monarch who unearthed the truth of the lost civilisation and promoted it under his rule.

King Vajiravudh encouraged patriotism, in which the most important principle was loyalty to the king. If one did not profess such loyalty, one could not claim that he or she was Thai. The two crucial elements were a Buddhist king and Thai race: the foundation of the homogeneous nation-state populated by one race, religion and language, made possible by the power of the king. The emergence of the ideal (and idealised) racially homogenous nation was thus instrumental in the process of creating a new dynastic state out of the many languages, races and religious beliefs under its rule.

The urge to define nationalism in this way came from an awareness of the Chinese Revolution in 1911, during which many Sino-Thais became fervent nationalists. In reaction, the monarch issued the Nationality Act and forbade the teaching of the Chinese language in schools. The king incited hatred towards ethnic Chinese in Siam, condemning them as the "Jews of the East" who exploited the Thai people. The restrictions on minority languages and perception of ethnic minorities as threats to national security were tactics that would be employed again in the 1940s and 1960s, in response to the threat of communism from the People's Republic of China.

Prince Damrong, on the other hand, provided evidence from archaeological excavations of old ruins and Buddha images found in various sites around the kingdom in order to claim that Sukhothai was the first free Thai state, which had liberated itself from Khmer domination and rule in the 1240s. Sukhothai, which had previously been considered a kingdom

of northern Thai people, now became a kingdom founded by the Thai race (Beemer 1999). With the ratification of the Anglo-Thai Treaty by the British parliament in 1909, the geo-body of Siam was finally securely constructed. In 1927, Prince Damrong gave a public lecture in front of King Rama VII on "The Nature of Government in Siam since Antiquity" *(Laksana kanpokkhrong prathet sayam tae boran)* (Damrong 1927). It was the first systematic and full-length treatment of Thai national history, based upon his archaeological studies under the guidance of and coopera-tion with the famous French archaeologist, George Cœdès. Together, they constructed a modern narrative of Thai history, based upon old royal chronicles, legends, inscriptions and Buddhist art history. The invention of the Sukhothai myth-history by King Vajiravudh and Prince Damrongrajanubhap in the late nineteenth century as *the* history of the modern nation-state is testament to this process of historicising Thailand.

## The Role of History Textbooks: From Absolutism to Democracy

Even though the invention of official Thai national history was meant to impress and demonstrate to Western nations that the civilised Thai nation was also equipped with a modern history, the use of history subsequently became urgent in the new education policy to create government officials and able citizens of the emerging nation. By 1850, the majority of Thai people lived within the boundaries of the Siamese-Thai Empire, includ-ing several ethnic minorities—some of whom were indigenous inhabit-ants, slaves and war captives from neighbouring states, foreign merchants, mercenaries and so forth. Siam was clearly ethnically diverse. However, the majority of the population spoke the ethnic Thai language (Chayan 2005). Undoubtedly, the immediate goal was to inculcate people on the principles of the ethnic and cultural homogeneity of a nation.

Given the persistence of the monarchy and conservative forces in the Thai political system, the narratives of Thai history textbooks have thus been the same from the early nineteenth century to the present. In spite of many years of change, transformations of government and even

historic changes in the nature of the Thai state (from an absolute to constitutional monarchy in 1932), the main theme of national history remains undisturbed. The uncontested version of Thai national history was eventually named the "Damrong School of Thai History" in honour of the prince who founded history-writing in Thailand. Since the elite and educated senior officials and scholars controlled and dominated the practice of historical writing and dissemination, public debate and criticism was limited and at times prohibited. Once the government launched national education, it also oversaw the production and authorisation of textbooks—and the censorship of private textbooks. Most of the time, Thai history textbooks follow the standard official narrative and look out for any disagreements from left and radical intellectuals with their unconventional views of history, which arise from time to time. The inculcation of nationalist and royalist notions among Thais is thus formulated early in the primary through secondary school system but becomes less doctrinaire at higher education levels. Be that as it may, criticisms and critiques of Thai history emerge from changing political environments and economic growth as well as the widespread impacts of international human rights organisations and regimes on the issues of equality, justice and diversity of citizens.

   History was one of the subjects which touched upon social topics (in contrast to spiritual learning in temple education) in school curricula since the experiment in providing formal education to all Thai subjects started on a limited scale in 1884. Pupils at primary and secondary levels read royal chronicles for the history subject because there was no textbook at the time. Students learned history together with geography. King Chulalongkorn's education reforms could only provide modern schooling to upper-class children and gradually to a few middle-class families in Bangkok. His reforms in 1882 centralised Bangkok's rule and power over outlying provincial tributary states in the north, northeast and south, with their different Lao, Shan, Cambodian and Malay ethnic groups. Bangkok met with provincial resistance to these reforms, resulting in violent rebellions. The Thai state, from the beginning, was fully aware of the existence and political implications of the various ethnic groups in relation to the encroachment of Western powers, which manipulated ethnic minorities to create conflict in the kingdom. In 1906, the government

launched a policy of national education, where Thai history and language were required subjects. The 1911 curriculum for history indicated for the first time the government's desire that learning Thai history would impart students with a history of and love for the nation.

Following the enactment of the Compulsory Education Act of 1921, all pupils in every school in the kingdom were required to learn the same curriculum; the government saw the need for an official history textbook which would uniformly inculcate the official narrative of national history. The first attempt to launch national history education for all pupils met with dismal results, mainly due to internal conflict among various ministries and government officials, whose concerns stemmed from inappropriate preparations, a lack of a clear policy and financial support in implementation. The responses from various provincial governors varied—from being supportive to half-hearted acceptance—due to specific problems facing each province. The most support for this act, surprisingly, came from the southern province of Patani, where the majority population was Malay-Muslim and opposed Thai rule. Its officials were disappointed because in the past, local parents did not send their children to Thai schools due to language and religious regulations. With the new coercive education law, they now could force all Muslim pupils to come to school or face punishment by law. On the other hand, officials in Bangkok did not want to impose such a draconian law because they did not have enough funds and teachers. They preferred a gradual enrolment of pupils when the conditions were ready. Clearly, political considerations also played a role in the implementation of historical learning at that time.

The theme of elementary curriculum was the creation of a good or moral citizen, emphasising the quality of the desired subjects. The content of primary school textbooks on social studies thus portrayed two types of children—one civilised and the other barbarian—reflecting King Vajiravudh's idea of the nation and its citizens. In this view, the civilised pupil reads history and is aware of the need for gratitude towards their elders and the king. The textbook likened the state and government to parents whose ideology is based on the concept of *Dharma-raja* (righteous king). The "nation" is a community of Thai people—literally meaning "free people", who are not servants of any other person. Since the master of the country is free and independent, it follows that all the

people who live under the rule of the master also become free, or "Thai" (Lakkana 1999).

In the absolutist period, history was taught as a subject, together with other social topics like language, arithmetic, geography, health and home economy. In 1928, students in upper secondary grades were divided into three sections (intermediate, Thai language and science), and all needed not take history. The structure of Thai history became more concrete, with many new supporting studies and evidence to show that the Thai race had migrated from southern China in many waves and established various Thai city-states in the northern part of the present-day Siamese/Thai state. Next was the role of famous kings, particularly King Chulalongkorn, who emancipated slaves in Siam and successfully defended the independence of the kingdom from Western colonialism. The concept of the Thai citizen was one who was deeply loyal and obedient to the monarchy. The ideal citizen had a good education and lived and worked in the city. There was no conception of rurality and ethnicity—the Thai citizen was to be a cosmopolitan in a country which was mostly agricultural and rural (Lakkana 1999).

The next period was the democratic revolution in 1932 by a group of civil and armed officials known as *khana ratsadorn* (People's Party), which overthrew absolutism and replaced it with a constitutional monarchy. By the late 1930s, the government began its efforts to integrate and assimilate all ethnic groups into one Thai race and nation. Most political leaders of various groups and creeds, together with their local supporters, agreed that some kind of assimilation policy was necessary for members of ethnic minorities to enter the majority group, so that ethnicity would cease to be an issue. One of the limitations of this approach was that it ignored the fact that ethnicity was not fixed, but instead negotiable—and therefore it was possible for people to maintain more than one ethnic identity and to change ethnicity according to the situation in which they found themselves as individuals or as a group (McVey 1984).

Education was one of the six principles that the People's Party promised to uphold, according to the needs of the public and not only the select privileged classes. From then on, the enrolment of pupils increased nationwide. The Primary Education Act of 1936 superseded the previous 1921 Act. The distribution and use of textbooks in schools increased

because of the greater participation of wider populations and areas. Private publishers were allowed to write textbooks for various subjects, but the government kept strict control and still authorised the use of textbooks. In 1937, primary pupils were not required to learn history but simply general knowledge about Thailand. Secondary and high school students, on the other hand, had to study Thai history. Nevertheless, the curriculum of 1948 extended history learning to the primary level. Students at the pre-university level studied five subjects—the Thai language, social studies, mathematics, English and a special subject. History was grouped under social studies, which in turn covered civic duties, morals and geography.

The distinct character of textbooks in this era was the advocacy for democracy and its values as the main message for young pupils. The emphasis was on instilling a democratic consciousness among citizens. The nation and country, according to these new textbooks, were no longer the sacred realm of a divine king, but a community of equals. Governments were like elder brothers, while the people were akin to younger brothers. Governments persuaded people to perform public activities for the common cause. To be a Thai citizen, simply having a nationality was not enough—one needed to behave according to the principles of good citizens: respecting national interests, never betraying the nation and following the instructions of the government. The concept of rights came together with that of the duties of citizens, and the state tended to emphasise the latter. People had duties towards the constitution, rather than asserting their freedom from it. The textbook proclaimed: "One's race can't be change[d] but nationality can" (Lakkana 1999).

## The Era of Nation Building and the Monoethnic State

Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram, who served as prime minister during two separate periods (1938–1944 and 1948–1957), led the country into a new nation-building programme, aiming to create a strong and civilised

country, as modern as Japan and the European countries. Phibun, as he was commonly known, had been a member of the People's Party, and he changed Siam's name to Thailand (Prathet Thai) in 1938 and sought to popularise the nationalist idea of a superior Thai race. The government's nation-building policy was aimed at reforming and reconstructing Thai society and culture. In his address to the cabinet and senior officials in 1941, Prime Minister Phibun said:

> the government is forced to reform and reconstruct the various aspects of society, especially its culture, which here signifies growth and beauty, orderliness, progress and uniformity, and the morality of the nation. (Thinaphan 1978)

The main architect of Phibun's nationalist ideology was Luang Wichitwathakan (1898–1962), a Sino-Thai official who rose to the top of the bureaucracy based on his exceptional abilities. An autodidact, Luang Wichit became director-general of the Fine Arts Department and initiated cultural programmes to instil a nationalist consciousness among citizens. The popularisation of Thai songs, dances and sculptures, including the modification of the Thai alphabet, aimed at the glorification of the Thai race and nation, went in full swing with the participation of state agencies and the support of private enterprises (Barmé 1993).

Luang Wichit recognised the importance that a *real* Thai history would have in nation building; he elevated the status of the "Tai" race, extolled Sukhothai's history and devalued minorities. Luang Wichit contended that in the beginning, the word "Thai" did not mean "free", as opposed to slavery, but actually referred to the great "Tai" race. He borrowed from Prince Damrong's thesis on Sukhothai but pushed it to extremes, claiming that there had been no slavery, but listed distinct characteristics of slaves and free persons. In this version of history, many runaway slaves from Ayutthaya fled to Sukhothai, where they could become free persons (or Thai). Therefore, this etymology emphasised the importance of the Sukhothai polity, thereby giving another political meaning in addition to that of the great race. Thai history textbooks from the 1950s to 1960s disseminated the idea of a homogeneous nation populated by one Tai race. Historians and archaeologists added more new theories and

evidence, confirming the origins of the Thai race and its movement to the present location.

To accentuate these efforts, Phibun's government created the Cleansing Thai History Committee [คณะกรรมการชำระประวัติศาสตร์ไทย] in 1952. The committee's main task was to emphasise "real" Thai national history, in which Sukhothai history was to be the guiding light of Thai nationalism (Manop 2000). Another task of the committee was to correct any "misinformation" published by foreign media about Thailand. An article, "Angkor—Lost City of the Jungle" by Clarence W. Hall, was one notable case: the author had written that the Thai people were once slaves of the Khmer Empire.

The committee consisted of senior scholars and eminent royalists who set out to compose a "complex Thai history" (in their own English phrasing) from the earliest times to the present Bangkok Empire. The structure and outline of Thai history was divided into five chronological periods, namely before the Thai moved into Indochina, Sukhothai (1239–1431), Ayutthaya (1350–1767), Thonburi (1767–1782) and Bangkok (1782–1932). The committee relied on Chinese and European historical sources and local legends to push the origin of the Thai state back to the early Tai communities in southern China. Its historians managed to give a historical account of each era, together with political and economic explanations. Overall, the major themes of the previous historical narrative remained intact, and the particular characteristics of the Thai race and righteous kings retained a central role in shaping national history—not the people themselves.

During Phibun's governments, official Thai nationalism (based on the Thai race) had adverse effects on two major ethnic groups: the Chinese and the Malays. The former were largely immigrants and their descendants, who had resided and raised their mixed families in Thailand for at least half a century. The main sin of the Sino-Thai was their control of business and commercial activities, resulting in anti-Chinese sentiment in 1938. The Sino-Thai managed to survive the forced assimilation policy by co-opting and cultivating business connections with the political leaders, who were anxious to turn many foreign-controlled private businesses into Thai enterprises (Wasana 2020). They willingly changed their given

and family names into Thai, married Thais and adopted Thai Buddhism and culture, eventually becoming promoters of Thai boxing and music.

## The Malay-Muslims with the 'Wrong History', Highland Peoples with 'No History'

The Thai state's assimilation policies had many casualties. This section examines the consequences for both the Malay-Muslims of Southern Thailand and the highland peoples in the north. The Malay-Muslims had the "wrong history", meaning a history of resistance, differences from and conflicts with Thai national histories. Nevertheless, in the historical imagination of the Malay-Muslims themselves, they were proud of their history and did not want it to be forgotten or misrepresented. The situation of the highland peoples with "no history" speaks to the ways in which these upland minorities have been written out of Thai national history; their right to citizenship has been undermined historically and up to the present. The so-called hill tribes are represented mainly in social studies and official discourse on diversity, but their own pasts are elided and rendered insignificant.

The Malay-Muslims share a long history with the Buddhist Thai, but their relationship turned hostile and antagonistic after the arrival of the British in the Malay Peninsula in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Siam agreed, in the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909, to cede four Malay states (Kelantan, Terengganu, Perlis and Kedah) to the British in order to maintain rule of the remaining Malay states of Greater Patani (under Siamese rule) as its border against British power. To force their integration, the Siamese government abolished *Sharia* (Islamic law) and *Adat Melayu* (Malay customary laws). The reforms systematically replaced Islamic law, which was previously applicable in all Muslim regions, with Thai secular law, except in family and inheritance cases.

The Compulsory Education Act of 1921 affected Malay-Muslim educational infrastructure, which relied on mosques and *pondok* (Islamic religious schools). Thai schools required students to read and write in Thai and study secular subjects such as Thai national history. Muslim children

were also required to study Buddhism. Muslim families were reluctant to send their children to public schools, believing that the Thai government was "trying to stamp out the hated Malay language … changing the natural status of the rising generation of Malay to Siamese" (Surin 1985). In 1910 and 1911, and on an even more serious scale in 1922, rebellions broke out under the leadership of certain *Haji* (religious leaders).

In 1948, Hajji Sulong, the leader of the Patani People's Movement who disappeared in 1954, sent a letter to Tengku Mahyiddin, the exiled son of the former Patani raja who resided in Kelantan. The letter stated that:

> We, the Islam Malays under the reign of Siam, beg to inform you that we cannot bear any more injustice, hardship, oppression and the loss of all personal liberty that has been imposed on us by the officials and Siamese government. (Surin 1985)

Resistance to the central authorities in the south grew stronger, notably in the Haji Sulong and Dusun Nyor Rebellions in 1948. One important outcome was the creation of a sense of Muslim identity among the Malays of the southernmost provinces, as distinct from the majority Thai Buddhists. The legacy of Malay resistance and rebellion against the rule of the Thai state has become myth-history in the official Thai national history. Invented by the Thai government in the 1950s and 1960s, this myth-history represents the Malay-Muslims of the south as threats to national identity and security.

Thai governments, from the Phibun (1938–1957) to Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat (1958–1963) administrations, enforced the socialisation of the south through education and the Thai curriculum. In 1960, Sarit paid an official visit to the southernmost provinces, during which he remarked that:

> Some provinces near the border seem not to be like Thai provinces because translators are needed. If it were you, Thai brethren, who are patriots, what would you think of this? I am sure you will have the same feeling as myself. (*The Bangkok Post* 1960)

He urged Thai Buddhists from the northeast, the north and the central parts to settle down south and earn a livelihood, stating that: "They should increase loyal Thai blood there" (ibid.).

From the 1970s to 1980s, the government oversaw the voluntary transformation of *pondok* into "private schools for Islamic education". The Thai language replaced Malay and the religious curriculum accommodated the new secular programme. The *pondok* gradually came to be managed like other private schools, run by headmasters who were required to have six years of secondary education (*Mathayom Suksa 3*), but only a handful of the *tok guru* (Islamic spiritual teachers) qualified (Surin 1985).

Long before armed separatist organisations and movements started attacking and bombing secure government locations and stations in 2004, public schools in the "Deep South" were already targeted and torched by local Malay separatists and sympathisers. With the increasing violence in the south, schools and their teachers—Thai Buddhists on one side and *ulama* (Islamic scholars) and *ustaz* (religious masters or teachers) in the *pondok* on the other—have been the main targets and are either perpetrators or victims of the conflict. Given the longstanding conflicts and heavy-handed policies imposed by the state, Thai history has yet to treat the history of Patani as anything other than that of unruly and disobedient subjects of the Thai state.

Closer to the present, in 2006, the new system of using the Thai script to write the Patani Malay language in schools was introduced. The Patani-Malay-Thai Bi/Multilingual Education project enabled Malay pupils to read and write the Thai language better than in the past. Some local Malay-Muslims, who were sceptical about using the Thai script instead of their script *(Yawi)*, resisted the new practice.

In contrast, the highland peoples live along the northern mountain borders with Myanmar and Laos. These "hill tribes" consist of ten major ethnic groups: the Karen, Hmong, Mien, Akha, Lahu, Lisu, Lua (Lawa), Khamu, H'tin and Mlabri. Official data as of 2003 found that they numbered 922,957 (1.5 per cent of Thailand's 63 million population) (Mukdawan 2013.) The common term used to refer to them is *chao khao* (meaning "ethnic minority groups"), who are seen to have migrated into Thailand over the past 30 to 50 years. But the use of this term also

distorts the fact that some of the highland ethnic peoples, like the Lua, Karen, Khamu and Lahu, have long settled the highlands before catching the attention of the Bangkok government. Their existence was visible during the Cold War, with the emergence of the Thai communist movement in the north and northeast border areas, whose fighters and sympathisers included the "hill tribe peoples".

Government propaganda and school textbooks have produced a long-standing stereotypical assumption about the "hill tribes" as non-Thai, primitive people with no culture, language and religion. The most damaging accusation was that they destroyed forests by practising slash-and-burn agriculture. Through Border Patrol Police units (set up with help from the United States) and the Royal Project, the state has managed to convince the "hill tribes" to adopt the Thai culture and language, using development and relocation programmes to sustain their lives in the lowlands.

Contrary to the Malay-Muslims in the south, there was no mention of the highland peoples in Thai history. The latter are eventually willing to be assimilated as Thai and want Thai citizenship to improve and enrich their livelihoods. They welcomed government public schools which taught the Thai language (by Thai teachers). While the government was also eager to see them adopting Thai citizenship, in reality the majority of the "hill tribe peoples" still lack citizenship, despite the Nationality Act granting citizenship through *jus soli* and a subsequent Cabinet Resolution (2005) granting them this right.

Negotiations between the highland peoples and the Thai state went through many stages. In 2009, representatives of the highland ethnic minorities proposed using the term "indigenous peoples" in reference to themselves, starting in 2007 when a coalition of 17 ethnic groups formed the Network of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand and declared 9 August as Indigenous Peoples Day (Mukdawan 2013). Through these adaptive strategies, they have been able to achieve certain basic rights, for example, migrant children's rights to education—thanks to the landmark 1999 Education for All Policy and the 2005 Cabinet Resolution on Education for Unregistered Persons. All stateless and non-Thai children have been able to enrol in primary and secondary schools for free, just as Thai pupils do. But when applying for Thai citizenship, the highland peoples were

and are still regarded as non-Thai and thus rejected. With "no history", they cannot claim "Thai-ness"—an identity limited to Thai-speaking Buddhists loyal to the king.

## History Textbooks in the Era of National Education Reform

The Thai political scene and social awareness began to change after the Sarit regime launched its first Five-Year National Development Plan in 1961 and imposed the so-called "Thai Democracy" model based on Sarit's authoritarian government and rule, with no elected parliament or constitution. With military and economic aid from the United States, the capitalist economy was expanding, together with the growing middle class, especially the youth. Those in tertiary education would play an unexpected role in political democratisation from 1973 to 1976. Many social reforms and changes took place, including in education, which began to turn to the American education model. American-educated officials, teachers and lecturers, together with private entrepreneurs, pushed for a modern national education plan in 1960, where the objectives of education were finally aimed at serving society and individuals, and not the state bureaucracy.

This period saw the rise of resistance and criticism of official Thai history. The most agitating voices that threatened conservative Thai nationalist history resulted from the emergence of radical historical discourse under the influence of the Communist Party of Thailand, which began to criticise official history and offered a Marxist historical materialist interpretation of Thai history. A prominent and famous historical text was Jit Poumisak's (1987) *The Real Face of Thai Feudalism Today*, which dealt a devastating blow to the official version of Thai history, overthrowing the glorious and great rulers of the kingdom and replacing them with descriptions of oppression and exploitation of peasants, *corvée* labour (*phrai*) and slaves of the monarch and nobility. The book was censored but its radical methodology and ideology was disseminated and gained an audience among university students and lecturers. Jit Phumisak (1930–1966) was

the first public intellectual who studied and declared the dignity and rights of indigenous and "hill tribe" people, who otherwise had no place in the Thai history textbooks.

The study and writing of Thai history in the American Era (1960–1970) also shifted to the deep interpretation of the origins and development of premodern Thai kingdoms because of diverse and interdisciplinary historical studies by foreign scholars, particularly from the United States. In 1965, David K. Wyatt, a prominent Thai history expert from Cornell, wrote an article on "Chronicle Tradition in Thai History" (Wyatt 1994), depicting the use of local traditional sources, especially legends and chronicles, which were thus far underutilised by scholars of Thai studies. American anthropologists, secretly used in the counterinsurgency operations in rural Thailand, trained and assisted Thai experts in the exploration and excavation of old ruins in central and northeast Thailand. Archaeological methodology and new evidence, however, did little to change the main nationalist narrative of Thai history. Instead, they helped to add nuance to the writings and explanations of the complexity and heterogeneity of the Thai people and kingdoms.

The massive demonstration of students and people on 14 October 1973 eventually brought down the military government of Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn, opening a short-lived democratic era with radical views for the future. The student revolt in 1973 epitomised the feelings and expectations of the rising middle class, whose political loyalties had turned away from self-styled autocrats and towards more progressive and liberal policies. They called for reform in many sectors of the government and society, in which education reform figured prominently. Even though political reform was the first to go, after the bloody military coup of 6 October 1976, the idea of education reform remained intact and continued as a goodwill agenda. The earlier plan for education reform was eventually resumed in the 1977 National Education Plan, which accomplished little because of unstable governments in the 1980s. By that time, many progressive and critical studies on Thai history had emerged and gained public acceptance in a society where freedom of expression was curtailed. However, the contents and goals of Thai history textbooks did not change in a meaningful way because of political conservativism, which

continued to resurrect and exert its domination over the Education Ministry and textbook contents.

The impact of neoliberalism on Thai social and economic growth in the 1980s encouraged public intellectuals and journalists, especially in the humanities, to speak up on human rights and pluralism. Of course, the problematic subject of Thai national history emerged as the most controversial debate among historians and anthropologists as well as other scholars of Thai studies. This time, the private sector could compete with government agencies in handling the narrative of Thai history. The *Art and Culture (Silapawatthanatham)* magazine was founded by Sujit Wongthes in 1979, popularising Thai history, which had been previously restricted to academic circles, for mass consumption (Hong 2011). Writers associated with the magazine (most prominently Sujit Wongthes, Srisakara Vallibhotama, Dhida Saraya and Nidhi Eoseewong) mainly argued against the established narrative of Thai history (which focused on Tai immigration from southern China) and instead stressed the diversity of Thailand's cultural origins.

The concept and notion of a homogeneous nation has now vanished in many parts of the world, as shown by increasing ethnic and cultural political struggles and the heterogeneity and complex social diversity of democratic societies. In the case of the Thai nation-state, the notion of the dominant role of the state in building society and official nationalism (particularly Thai national history) has been questioned and criticised by small group of academics and intellectuals. They argue that a nation (*chat*) means a community of various races who share a cultural commonality, particularly defined by being subjects of the same monarch. Both *chat* and *banmuang* (hometown) therefore came to signify a "common cultural and geographical community defined by royal power" (Thongchai 1994, p. 135). The Thai country, *prathetchat* (country-nation), conveys a sense of common origin, cultural commonality, royal sanctity and spatial roots. From the 1980s onwards, one could say that there were at least two competing schools of Thai history—one was the official Thai nationalist history with its monopoly of textbooks, and the other was the unofficial, radical and liberal reading of Thai nationalist history, as enabled through print capitalism and (recently) social media, totally outside the classroom.

The National Education Act of 1999 was the most comprehensive policy and practice, involving all stakeholders and government agencies in the centre and the periphery. The major change regarding history teaching in schools was the relocation of history as one component of social studies, religion and culture. From now on, history would not be offered as a standalone subject, but to be studied as part of complex social institutions and cultural relations, thus avoiding criticisms that it was too subjective and narrow in its content and relevance. Here, we can see some mention of ethnic and minority groups—their local lives, religious beliefs and cultural practices—but not in Thai history texts. The latest *History of the Thai Nation* (2015) published by the Fine Arts Department of the Ministry of Culture testifies to the persistence of the Thai race and nationalism in history. The book came about because of the call by General Prayuth Chan-o-cha, the prime minister, to remind all Thais of how independence was protected and prosperity pursued by their ancestors. This definitive official version resists previous critical comments and progressive studies by scholars and historians. Its content has seen some modifications in view of the most recent studies and contentions. For example, the emphasis on race is toned down while culture (Thai only) takes over. The book is divided into five major historical developments:

- Development of land and people in the territory of Thailand
- Early cities in Thai territory: Dvarati, Chen-la, Srivijaya, Haripunjai
- The birth of the Thai state: Sukhothai, Ayutthaya, Thonburi
- Bangkok: Eras from Rama I to Rama IX
- Thailand after the change of government, from 1932–present: After the Change, 1932–1947; Authoritarianism, 1947–1973; Adjustment to Democracy, 1973–1992; Political Reform, 1992–present

History textbooks continue to treat Thai's neighbouring countries—like Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia—with derision and bias. The storyline and premise of national history, based on Thai nationalism, have not changed. The Grade 5 textbook (the latest one published in 2015) emphasises the war for "independence" by King Naresuan the Great in 1610, even when recent studies remind us that there were no nation-states at the time, and thus the king's battle was not the same as an

independence struggle. Another important topic is the loss of territories to Western colonial powers to preserve the independence of Siam. Revisionist historians have contended that instead of losing its own territories to the West, Siam managed to incorporate more territories— owned by provincial lords and rajas in the north and south—into the Bangkok Empire (Thongchai 1994).

Who are the important figures in Thai history? The historical component in the current social studies textbook portrays biographies of kings, nobles and senior Buddhist monks. Among them, eight times more men than women appear. The only religion presented is Buddhism. For Thai history textbooks, their production and revisions have followed certain political contexts, mostly under authoritarian governments and with support from conservative and commercial groups (Rawiwan 2015). In these textbooks, the questions are: who was king, where the Bangkok Empire is and when the Thai nation-state was founded. In their attempt to forge popular historical memory, textbooks are political and easily manipulate people into accepting a ruling class worldview. The production of historical memory in contemporary Thailand is:

> best understood as hegemonic: manufactured by Thai elites who although recognise the different paradigms of Thai history, guide society to see the nationalist paradigm as natural and inevitable. (Vongon 2017)

## Conclusion

The official narrative in Thai national history essentially originated in and was conceived by an elite class of Buddhist defenders that was able to preserve their independence and power over the kingdom during the expansion of colonialism in Southeast Asia. The practice of transnational or "borderland" history is not relevant in this narrative, even though the former points to a multinational situation rather than an antinational one. These new histories tell new stories, focusing on the times before or the spaces between nations. For conservatives and the elites, there is a price to pay for allowing people to think outside the framework and premise of the "nation". How do we secure and continue all-encompassing

stories about the past? How will historians write our particular histories if a grand narrative, national or worldwide, no longer frames them or gives them meaning (Maza 2017, p. 82)?

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# 14

# Afterword: Minorities and History Teaching

**Luigi Cajani**

There is no conclusive international legal definition of what constitutes a "minority". One of the fundamental texts in the field, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, mentions ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (article 27) without specifying the differences between these three categories. A fourth category, that of national minorities, was added into another United Nations document, the *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*, adopted in 1992. Even in this case, there is no description of their features. The *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 1994, only refers to national minorities—as its title indicates—but defines their identity in terms of "their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage", thus conflating all these dimensions (Roter 2018).

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A useful analytical tool is the more general definition of minorities given by the jurist Francesco Capotorti in a study conducted for the United Nations:

> A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members—being nationals of the State—possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language. (Capotorti 1979, p. 96)

Indeed, by looking at the very complex reality of minorities worldwide through the lens of this definition, one can observe that national, ethnic, linguistic and religious dimensions can be present in varying degrees. In terms of number and size, minorities within a state can be few or numerous, scattered or concentrated in particular territories and can constitute, individually or as a whole, different proportions compared to the majority. Concerning their historical background, there are minorities that have existed for centuries and others that immigrated more or less recently; indigenous minorities who have been variously oppressed by colonisers; previous conquerors who became minorities following independence; and minorities who became such as a result of border changes, in various ways still maintaining contacts with the majority in neighbouring states. There are various kinds of relationships between minorities and majorities, ranging from harmonious coexistence to various levels of conflict stemming from episodes of violence over time. Having been marginalised and ignored for a long time (when not repressed and silenced outright) for the purpose of constructing monolithic nation-states, after the Second World War many national minorities began to be progressively recognised by democratic states. In Europe, this process got a strong impetus after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Immediately in 1990, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe affirmed that "with the change towards democracy in Central and Eastern European states, grave minority problems also come to light in these countries [which] had been ignored and neglected for many years by authoritarian rule" (Council of Europe 1990). The Council of Europe and the European Union

henceforth promoted a set of measures to protect the rights and foster the development of minorities (Gilbert 1996; Jackson Preece 1998; Pentassuglia 2001).

The preservation of cultural identity is one of the fundamental rights of minorities and is implemented through various forms of educational autonomy. Indeed, how such autonomy articulates itself depends on one hand on the kind of relationship that the state establishes with the minority, and the main education policy of the state on the other, especially in the case of approval procedures for textbooks. The following examples will show different articulations of educational autonomy.

In Israel, there is a separate school system for the Palestinian minority that uses textbooks of its own while remaining under state control (Benavot and Resh 2003; Alayan 2018, pp. 28–30). In Croatia, the Italian, Serbian, Czech and Hungarian minorities have specific curricula and can use either their own textbooks or those imported from their respective mother nation-states—under all circumstances, textbooks must be approved by the ministry of education (Zastupnički Dom 2000, articles 6 and 15; Payne 2003; Bandov 2011). Romania hosts several minorities, the larger ones (with relevant differences in size) being Hungarian, Roma, Ukrainian, German, Russian, Turk, Tatar, Serb and Slovak. A law approved in 1999 established that persons belonging to national minorities, besides learning their own languages, should also learn Romanian history and geography according to a particular set of rules. In primary school these subjects are taught in the language spoken by a given minority but following the main curriculum and textbooks. In middle and secondary school, they are instead taught in Romanian. Only in the case of the subject "History and traditions of national minorities"—introduced in middle school—do minorities have the opportunity to learn their own culture (Murgescu 2001).

In Italy, unlike Israel, Croatia and Romania, textbooks are not subject to approval. In Alto Adige/Südtirol, the province bordering Austria, there live two large communities, Germans (69 per cent) and Italians (26 per cent), divided in the recent past by strong nationalistic tensions, and a much smaller one, the Ladins. After the Second World War, the German community was able to achieve a large degree of autonomy and an independent school system. In their lower secondary school since the 1950s,

history has been taught through their own textbooks or special editions of German textbooks, and through German or Austrian textbooks in upper secondary school. In order to promote dialogue among the three communities, in 2006 the provincial administration launched a project to introduce a common textbook on the history of the province to be used in upper secondary schools, to complement the textbooks for general history. As a result, three volumes have been written by experts from the three communities and were published in German and Italian between 2011 and 2013 (Mezzalira 2015; Pichler 2015).

Besides the educational autonomy of minorities, another important problem concerns the way in which these minorities are presented to the majority in history, geography and civics courses. In fact, the way in which their cultures and social lives are presented here reflects the degree of pluralism of the state community and undoubtedly has a bearing on the way in which various ethnic groups relate to one another.

Mirela-Luminiţa Murgescu reported in 2001 that the Romanian history curricula prescribed the topic "Unity and diversity in the Romanian space" in school, but the absence of clear guidelines resulted in very different renderings in textbooks. Some authors treated the matter very superficially, while others were more accurate; some stressed positive aspects, while others took a negative approach. She also questioned the choice of having separate courses on the history and traditions of each minority which, in her opinion, could lead "to building up mental Bantustans and break the channels of communication" (Murgescu 2001, p. 241). On the contrary, she suggested that all minorities be dealt with in a single history course to be taught in all schools, including those catering to the majority population.

In multicultural societies characterised by recent immigration, minorities can challenge the majority narrative in many ways and for different reasons. This has been the case, for instance, with the Hindu population in the United States, where textbook approval is managed by state boards of education, which are generally open to dialogue with representatives of civil society. In 2005, two Hindu organisations claimed to have found several flaws in history textbooks about the way the history of India was narrated. In their views, the most erroneous and discriminating points concerned the Aryan invasion of India, Hinduism, the status of women

and the caste system, and therefore they had requested the California Board of Education to reframe these themes accordingly. These Hindu organisations were close to the nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party in India and followed the same agenda of history textbook revision according to the Hindutva ideology which this party implemented in 1998 when it came to power. A large number of experts protested to the California Board of Education, arguing that those amendments were erroneous and ideologically biased. After reports were solicited, hearings took place and Hindu associations with different political orientations were consulted, causing most of the corrections to be rejected (Visweswaran et al. 2009). It is perhaps worth recalling that heated controversies on education are typical of the American education system, mainly due to the fact that members of the boards of education are either appointed by state governors or elected. Therefore, their actions can reflect political orientations rather than scientific expertise (Young et al. 2021). Indeed, curricula and textbooks are often the sources of ongoing controversies, fuelled not just by minority citizens but also by the various political visions of the majority. Such controversies do not only concern history, but also literature, civics and above all the natural sciences. In the latter case, science textbooks have repeatedly come under fire over the issue of creationism versus the theory of evolution (Delfattore 1992).

Controversies can also arise in informal ways in multicultural classrooms. In 2007, the United Kingdom's Historical Association published a report on the difficulties in teaching historical topics which proved highly controversial and even caused some pupils emotional distress, listing several cases. For example, the Holocaust and the Crusades were sometimes avoided by teachers, lest they cause negative reactions on the part of Muslim pupils; Christian parents challenged teachers' presentations of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the history of the state of Israel; and Black pupils were particularly sensitive towards topics such as the transatlantic slave trade and its abolition (The Historical Association 2007, p. 15).

The democratisation of history gives voices to long-silenced groups. This is an important feature of citizenship and enlarges multi-perspectivity, which is a fundamental requirement in both research and education. Nonetheless, in certain multicultural contexts, this can also lead to

memory wars which hamper history teachers' tasks. This danger was foreseen in the current history curriculum for the Italian school system's first cycle (Grades 1–8):

> In more recent times … the past and in particular the themes of memory, identity, and roots have strongly characterized public and media discourse on history. … In addition, the formation of a multiethnic and multicultural society brings with it the tendency to transform history from an instrument of knowledge to an instrument of representation of different identities, with the risk of jeopardizing its scientific character and, consequently, of reducing the formative effectiveness of the curriculum. (Ministero dell'istruzione 2012)

This curriculum highlights a crucial problem for history educators today—precisely the fact that history, in its public uses, may be distorted to serve political agendas. In order to counter this trend, instructors should stimulate awareness on the part of their pupils by including the public uses of history in their teaching. The key is to develop students' critical thinking, because "[a] teaching which fosters the achievement of critical tools prevents history from being used instrumentally and improperly" (Ministero dell'istruzione 2012).

This is undoubtedly a difficult but necessary task for teachers because they need to master anthropology, psychology and social psychology in order to manage possible conflicts in class and guide students towards an unbiased, source-based analysis of historical facts and their different interpretations.

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.