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School History Textbooks and Historical Memories in Japan: A Study of Reception

Kazuya Fukuoka

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Abstract Memory wars in Asia still revolve around Japan. Much has been discussed on the so-called *kyōkasho mondai* (history textbook controversies), yet, not much has been explored on the domestic social function of history textbooks *per se*. Emphasizing creators of history narratives (and their production), the field tends to overlook the audience, or, *receivers* in the process. In this article, by referring to the original interviews with Japanese college students, I question the very assumption of the creator–receiver connection. How are history textbooks perceived as a source for promoting Japanese people's underlying historical consciousness? How have they been utilized in schools? Are they useful? If so, how? If not, why? I argue that in the case of Japan, how people reflect upon history issues is not necessarily the function of school history textbooks as often assumed, making a strong case for the importance of receivers in the analysis of public discourse.

Keywords Collective memory · War memory · Cultural reception · School history textbooks · Japan

Introduction

Memory wars in Asia still revolve around Japan. Among the recent political skirmishes between Japan and China/South Korea over how to commemorate Japan's past wrongs and atone for physical as well as psychological wounds it caused in Asia, the so-called *kyōkasho mondai* (history textbook controversies) have continuously shown that difficult pasts will not disappear easily. Theoretically, scholarly works have two main foci, i.e., (1) who gets the power to write an authoritative history and how (*hegemonic memory*) (cf. Halbwachs 1992 [1941]; Hobsbawn 1983), and (2) the struggle among and the roles of commemorative entrepreneurs (*memory pluralism*) (cf. Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991;

K. Fukuoka (✉)
Department of Political Science, Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, PA 19131-1395, USA
e-mail: kfukuoka@sju.edu

Barthel 1996; Fine 2001). Empirically, in the Japanese internal context, memory studies tend to focus on domestic power struggles between the conservative Education ministry[1] and the liberal/radical Teachers Union, which also reflects ideological tug-of-war between conservatives and liberals in post–World War II Japan (cf. Aspinall 2001; Hood 2001; Nozaki 2005, 2008; Duke 1973; Thurston 1973). Externally, scholars stress the international memory wars between Japan and the former victim nations, especially China and South Korea (cf. Ducke 2002; Rose 1998, 1999; Lind 2009).

Although this mainstream "politics of memory" approach (cf. Gills 1994) unveils the domestic as well as international maps of memory wars in and around Japan, it tells us only a part of the story. When the field emphasizes the creators of history narratives (and their production), it tends to overlook the audience, or, *receivers* in the process (cf. Griswold 1994). That someone creates a textbook with a particular intention does not necessarily mean that it will be received as intended. Focusing on the content of public discourses, in other words, social memory studies "[renders] the individual an automaton and therefore [reifies] the psychological in the social" (Schwartz and Schuman 2005: 184). It is true that "[c]reators and receivers constitute an interconnected meaning system" (Fine 2001: 22), yet, this association is neither given nor automatic.

In this article, by referring to the Japanese case, I question the very assumption of the creator–receiver connection. While the memory wars over Japanese history textbooks "have mainly focused on the exact phrasing and specifics—terms, numbers, actors—of particular events" (Schneider 2008: 113), not much has been explored on the *reception* of history textbooks *per se*.[2] While the creation of history narratives (and its content) is certainly important, we need to pay more attention to students and how they perceive, learn, and internalize the specific historical narratives developed in textbooks. Given the role that Japan's war memories have played in foreign policy agendas in the region, this void is significant. How have history textbooks been utilized in schools? Are they useful? If so, how? If not, why? How are they perceived as a source for promoting Japanese people's underlying historical consciousness?

This study will raise and discuss the following two questions:

1. What are the characteristic features of Japanese history textbooks? How are they actually utilized in schools? What are the Japanese people's overall perceptions of history textbooks in schools?
2. How important are Japanese history textbooks as a tool for cultivating people's historical understandings? Are the textbooks perceived as effective sources for nurturing the Japanese people's underlying perceptions of and feelings about Japan's wrongdoings in Asia?

These questions will be discussed by referring to my original interviews with Japanese college students conducted in 2009.

Methodologically, this research constitutes an attempt to restore individual subjectivity back into the study of collective memory (Homans 1964; Schwartz and Schuman 2005). That is, "[n]ewspapers, television programming, and textbooks tell us what communication and academic elites believe about the past; they do not necessarily tell us what ordinary

[1] In 2001, Ministry of Education (MOE) in Japan was merged with Science and Technology Agency, and it is called now as Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. In this study, I use MOE to refer to the Education Ministry before 2001.

[2] Notable exceptions are Peter Cave's (2003, 2005) elaborated comparative studies on history teaching in Japan and England based on his classroom observations of six junior high schools and 10 high schools and "semistructured" interviews" (Cave 2005: 308) with 16 teachers and 22 first-year college students in 2000.

people believe, or how they feel about what they believe" (Schwartz and Schuman 2005: 267). Therefore, without knowing what individuals believe about the past, we cannot expect to know how social context affects collective memory. Also, memory studies cannot provide an analytical framework to tackle the imminent question of why and how people in the world are still so attracted to the past.

In what follows, I begin by briefly revisiting textbook controversies in 1982, 1986, 2001, and 2005, the discussion of which should clarify the domestic as well as international context in which the reception of school history textbooks is problematized. Next, I lay out the theoretical foundation of the study by referring to sociological studies on cultural reception. Then, the analytic section will introduce and examine my interview data findings.

Textbook Controversies in Japan

Since 1982, Japanese history textbooks have provoked four crises. In 1982, China and South Korea charged that government-screened textbooks "softened" the language describing Japan's military activities in Asia (China) by changing the word invasion (*shinryaku*) to advance (*shinshutsu*) (Gluck 1993: 84; Takahashi 2002: 39).[3] Faced with the harsh criticism from Chinese and South Korean governments, Tokyo issued the "Neighboring Countries Clause" (*Kinrin Shokoku Jōkō*) and promised that in the textbook screening process[4] the government would consider the concerns of its Asian neighbors. In 1986, a reactionary high school Japanese history textbook, *Shinpen Nihonshi*, was published. The text was a product of the 1982 Neighboring Countries Clause in that it rejected the spirit and intent of that directive. The 1986 controversy was "more complex" than the first one (Muramatsu 1987: 317). In 1986, *Shinpen Nihonshi* passed the Ministry's screening for publication after numerous adjustments, including many factual errors. However, the book was still "biased" and "lacking in consideration for neighboring countries" even to the eyes of education officials and the Textbook Screening Council, and the ministry therefore requested "extensive revision[s]" even after the initial approval (it was unprecedented) so as to evade criticism (Nozaki 2005: 289). In the meantime, both the Chinese government and the South Korean media criticized this new textbook. Upon hearing of this, the Education Minister Toshiki Kaifu took "extraordinary measures" and another revision was requested (this was also unprecedented) (Nozaki 2005: 290; Muramatsu 1987: 317). *Shinpen Nihonshi*, however, did not sell well and eventually ceased to be published in 1993. After the two textbook controversies in 1982 and 1986, history textbooks contained more straightforward descriptions of Japan's military invasion in Asia (cf. Nozaki 2005). Thus, the 1990s saw the more direct description of Nanjing Massacre and comfort women issues (cf. Lind 2009).

As many point out, the 1982 initiative allowed the textbook authors to write about Japan's past atrocities in Asia from the victims' angles. Now, all editions of junior high school history textbooks approved for publication in 1984 included some mentioning of the

[3] Although it was later confirmed that "this particular revision had never taken place, and the mistaken report was a product of the circumstances" (Ducke 2002: 47), the progressives immediately utilized the accusation to criticize the Ministry of Education, and the Chinese and Korean media soon joined in. See also Buruma (1994), Johnson (1986), and Ijiri (1990).

[4] All textbooks in Japanese public schools must be screened and approved by the Education Ministry, and they are subject to revision every 3 years. For the screening system, see Rose (1998) and Nozaki (2005).

Nanjing Massacre. It was also the case with all the 1985 editions of high school Japanese history texts (Nozaki 2005: 287). Importantly, with the 1982 controversy, the issue of Japanese history textbooks became internationalized. And the Japanese textbook writings (and textbook screening system) were made subject to the prying eyes of the international community. Yet this new development triggered a series of backlashes by conservative policy makers.[5]

The most recent frictions in 2001 and 2005 followed the formation of the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho wo Tsukurukai*; hereafter *Tsukurukai*) in the late 1990s and its publication of controversial history textbooks. This publication was the culmination of the recent emergence of a "Japanese version of historical revisionism" (Ueno 1999: 129). It also revealed a defensive reaction of those *neo-nationalists* to the underlying general direction of history education in public schools. The organization intended to rectify the widespread public code of the Japanese society in the 1990s in which official apologies became more acceptable (even though Asian neighbors did not take them favorably) and more self-reflection was encouraged.[6] In their terminology, postwar Japanese history education became "masochistic" (*jigyakuteki*) and Japanese people lost the pride in nation. Their discourse became more popular in the last part of the 1990s in which renewed sense of national pride was explored by re-visiting and re-interpreting Japan's wartime behaviors, including the causes of Japan's military expansion in Asia. Their discussion also includes the revival of the notion of Japan as an Asian emancipator, approval and justification of Prime Minister (PM) Junichiro Koizumi's Yasukuni visits, and skepticism toward Chinese and Korean historiography on the issues such as Nanjing and comfort women. They also charged the neighboring countries for their political usage of history issues as diplomatic cards. This so-called *revisionist* viewpoint has been most eloquently articulated by the founder of *Tsukurukai*, Nobukatsu Fujioka, and a co-founder and influential cartoonist, Yoshinori Kobayashi. Kobayashi's best seller cartoon *Sensōron* (*Theory on War*) (1998) appealed to a wide range of generations; reportedly young adults constitute the large part of the readership of this "right-flavored" material. The book literally became a harbinger to make the debate spread into the broader public sphere.[7]

The report of the *Tsukurukai* textbook approval in 2001 (after the 137 factual corrections suggested by the Education Ministry) once again stirred the memory politics in Asia (Saaler 2005: 60). The South Korean Foreign Ministry denounced the textbook for "rationalising and glorifying Japan's past wrongdoings based upon a self-centered interpretation of history" (BBC 2001a). Similarly, China's official news agency, *Xinhua*, accused the book of "distorting historical facts and glorifying wars of aggression" (BBC 2001b). Importantly, the year 2001 was also the time when PM Koizumi started his controversial visits to the Yasukuni War Shrine (2001–2006). *Tsukurukai*'s history textbook for junior high schools, however, was rarely adopted by public schools. Despite its "seeming popularity," the

[5] See, for example, Gluck (1993) and Yoshida (1995).

[6] In the 1990s, Japanese attitudes towards the so-called history problem changed dramatically (cf. Seraphim 2006; Ishida 2000). Unlike the postwar victim mentality (i.e., ordinary people were deceived by militaristic leaders) that had been widespread and embedded throughout the postwar years (Gluck 1993; Yoshida 1995), the dominant beliefs in the 1990s marked the sense of regret and a new recognition and admittance of Japan as a former aggressor (cf. Seraphim 2006; Seaton 2007). Because of the activism of and interaction with the victims of their state's aggression, more Japanese people came to internalize the country's past wrongs as Japan's *national problem*, which was something as yet unseen under the framework of the victim mentality that was still prevalent in the early 1980s (cf. Schwartz, Fukuoka, and Takita-Ishii 2005). Japanese people were now cognizant of Japan's damaged image among its Asian neighbors in this period: Japan was a country that had not reflected enough upon its invasion of Asia (Gluck 1990).

[7] For *Tsukurukai*, see Nozaki (2005), Schneider (2008), and Saaler (2005).

nationwide adoption rate of the book was mere 0.04% (Mitani 2008: 85; BBC 2001c). After the third textbook controversy in 2001, however, conservative backlash caught a momentum and the textbook description of comfort women decreased.

In 2005, the revised *Tsukurukai*'s books again passed the screening. Although their adoption rate increased, it was still low (0.4%). Importantly, while it did not cause a major political skirmish as seen in 2001 (Schneider 2008: 120),[8] this led to anti-Japanese mass demonstrations in China that year. Chinese President Hu Jintao attributed the protests, including stone-throwing attacks to Japan's embassy in Beijing, to the textbook issue, along with PM Koizumi's controversial visits to Yasukuni War Shrine (BBC 2005).[9] The issue of history textbook adoption in Japan is yet to be resolved and continuously haunts Japan and the region.

With those domestic as well as international culture wars over the creation of history narratives as a background, the study now moves to the issue of cultural reception: how have the history textbooks in Japan been perceived by high school/college students?

Cultural Reception

School textbooks are essential devices for socialization (cf. Gills 1994; Hobsbawn 1983; Gellner 1983). Through the content of textbooks, students learn the officially accepted version of the national history. From this instrumentalist viewpoint, history writing can be "a weapon" (Schlesinger 1991; Baigell 1993). Given this alleged power of school textbooks, we have been witnessing the contemporary proliferation of international disputes over particular countries' history textbook descriptions about contentious pasts (cf. Wang 2009). For Eric Hobsbawn (1983): 264), more particularly, this process is to *invent tradition*: "…state [links] both formal and informal, official and unofficial, political and social invention of tradition." Similarly, referring to the famous party slogan in George Orwell's *1984*—"Who controls the past controls the future"—Schlesinger asserts that "*who controls the present controls the past*" (Schlesinger 1991: 45; emphasis added; see also Middleton and Edwards 1990: 9; Baigell 1993).

Although instrumentalists emphasize construction, culturalists insist that reception is crucial. According to Wendy Griswold (1987: 5), cultural reception is captured in terms of "the social agent's consumption, incorporation, or rejection of cultural objects." Importantly, cultural objects become meaningful only when they become "public." Cultural objects such as school textbooks need audiences or receivers who digest the former. Unless cultural objects have "people who receive them, people who hear, read, understand, think about, enact, participate in, remember them," their intended messages and cultural meanings cannot be enacted (Griswold 1994: 14).

There are two ways of looking at the interplay between cultural objects and receivers. First, the proponents of *mass culture* theory (e.g., the Frankfurt School and "cultural industry") tend to see relatively weaker autonomy of cultural receivers as opposed to the strong culture. In the extreme, therefore, "cultural meanings are tightly controlled and … receivers have virtually no freedom of interpretation" (Griswold 1994: 86). In contrast, the

[8] Overall, the market share of *Tsukurukai*'s history textbook from 2002 to 2006 was 0.039%. See Table 2 in Saaler (2005: 66). Also important is the issue of the intended audience for *Tsukurukai's* history textbooks. As many point out, they sold rather well in bookstores (Nelson 2002). This seems to render an important implication. If those *Tsukurukai* authors did not have students in mind in the first place, in other words, they were very successful in stirring the public inside and outside of Japan.

[9] For the recent anti-Japan movements in China see, for example, He (2007).

advocates of *popular culture* theory (cf. Radway 1991; Fiske 1989) maintain that cultural meaning is "a function of the receiver's mind" (Griswold 1994: 86). Thus, "the recipients of a cultural object can make meanings virtually independent of the cultural object itself" (Griswold 1994: 85).[10]

In this context, therefore, it is important to note that the issue of cultural reception unavoidably involves the question about the power and permeability of cultural objects in a particular social setting. Here, Michael Schudson's (1989) five dimensions of cultural power are helpful. As Schudson (1989) cogently claims, the question of how a certain cultural object influences audiences has no single answer. Not only do "no cultural objects work with everyone," but "[n]one of the effects can be presumed to stay the same across different situations even for the same individual" (Schudson 1989: 159). In this sense, therefore, a proper research question is not necessarily whether or not culture "works;" instead, the question should be posed in terms of "conditions" in which cultural objects are more/less likely to work. Schudson (1989) introduces five dimensions of a cultural object's power, i.e., (1) retrievability, (2) rhetorical force, (3) resonance, (4) institutional retention, and (5) resolution.

First, what Schudson (1989: 160) calls *retrievability* is important since "If culture is to influence a person, it must reach the person." In terms of Japanese history textbooks, they are certainly *economically* retrievable since textbooks in public schools are provided free of charge in junior high schools and with moderate price in high schools. However, the more important question here is to ask about the *social retrievability* of school history textbooks. How are they utilized in schools?

Given that a cultural object such as a history textbook is also "a communicative act" (Schudson 1989: 165), secondly, a rhetorical dimension must be considered (the degree of rhetorical effectiveness). In the Japanese context, the question is: what are the characteristic features of Japanese history textbooks? What are the rhetorical styles observable in Japanese history textbooks? Moreover, what are the Japanese students' overall images of school history textbooks?

Third, the notion of *resonance* refers to "the degree to which the cultural object is resonant with the audience" (Schudson 1989: 167). Though tricky, this notion pertains to the very notion of cultural reception: the relevance of cultural objects (history textbooks) to receivers (students) (cf. Swidler 1986). In terms of this study, how are the school history textbooks perceived as a tool for cultivating Japanese people's historical understandings?

For a cultural object to retain cultural power, fourth, it is important to secure social and/or institutional support (*institutional retention*) since culture is "reinforced in and through social institutions" (Schudson 1989: 170). Cultural power could be limited if cultural objects "never turn up in a school classroom" and "never become a part of common reference" (170). In the Japanese context, this poses no challenge. As discussed in terms of economic retrievability, school textbooks retain a high degree of *institutional retention*. Rather, the question is whether or not this institutional support affects the overall cultural power of history textbooks.

Finally, *resolution* means the degree of cultural power to "influence action" (Schudson 1989: 172). This poses a question of whether or not a cultural object

[10] Audiences (or, "cultural receivers") are certainly "active meaning makers" (Griswold 1994: 14). However, different people react in different ways (Griswold 1994: 81), and, empirically, it is important to bear this diffusive nature of cultural reception over time and space. It is also pointed that audiences make meanings based on what Jauss (1982) calls "a horizon of expectation"—expectations formed through individuals' previous cultural and social experiences (cf. Griswold 1987, 1994).

"[stimulates] action in concrete, visible, immediate, and, measurable ways" (172). In conjunction with the above third notion of resonance, are the history textbooks perceived as effective sources for nurturing Japanese people's underlying perceptions and feelings about Japan's past wrongs?

Data

The total number of interviewees is 19. Thus, one must bear in mind that these data do not necessarily constitute a representative sample (not to say the whole cohort of generations), yet they match on age (20–23) and education/occupation level (college student). The purpose of the interviewing was not to accumulate statistical data; rather, the study intends to elicit the common features and maximize differences, thus trying to illuminate the vocabularies and logics observable in the Japanese context.[11] Interviews were semi-structured and respondents were first asked to complete a survey on Japan's past wrongs, including those questions on the sense of war responsibility of contemporary generations (cf. Schwartz, Fukuoka, and Takita-Ishii 2005). By referring to their reflections on the survey questions, I asked more specific questions about Japanese history textbooks and the controversies around them.

Each of nineteen interviews (six males and 13 females) took approximately 90 min at a comprehensive private university near Kyoto. The school is upper middle level in terms of prestige (and difficulty to enter). My interviewees are composed of International Relations (IR) and Journalism majors. There are no first-year students and the interviewees consist of four second-year, eight third-year, and seven fourth-year students.[12] They were recruited through the combination of (1) in-class solicitation in several IR and Journalism classes and (2) snowball sampling.[13] Ideologically, they are more evenly divided. Among 16 respondents who were asked about their political leaning, there were six self-claimed political liberals (*kakushin-teki*) (two for "very liberal" and four for "liberal") and six self-claimed political conservatives (*hoshu-teki*) (two for "very conservative" and four for "conservative"). Four informants opted for "do not know/cannot decide." They were in high schools sometime during the period of 2003 to 2007, when Japan's troubled diplomatic relations with China and South Korea had become "the norm" (Hiwatari 2006: 29) with the series of political rows that included PM Koizumi's controversial visits to Yasukuni War Shrine (2001–2006) along with the 2001 and 2005 history textbook controversies.

[11] More concretely, focusing on college students, I employed a discriminate sampling technique and interviews were conducted so as to reach *theoretical saturation* (Glaser 1978; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Small 2009) in each conceptual category this study tries to delve into, and in that sense, I believe that the interview data helps maximize our understanding about the topic in question. Within this sampling logic, "the key is to conceive of every individual … as *a single case*" (Small 2009: 26; emphasis added). Each new interview, although systematically conducted, adds new questions based on the new understanding obtained through previous interviews. Those "increasingly refined questions" (26) will illuminate different aspects of categories under research so that "the category development [become] dense" (Strauss and Corbin 1990: 188).

[12] One may question my selection of college students (instead of high school students) for interview. This is a deliberate decision. With the interviews, what the study tried to delve into was the perceived significance of school textbooks. In other words, what is investigated is respondents' perception. Since the study deals with the respondents' historical memories, college students are better positioned to reflect upon the impact of school history textbooks on their own development of historical understandings and consciousnesses.

[13] Snowball sampling is "the well-known practice of asking interviewees to recommend other interviewees" (Small 2009: 14).

Analysis

In what follows, my interview data will be discussed by referring to three thematic points. First, the paper will examine the respondents' perceptions about the underlying styles of textbook description. Then, the textbook usage in classroom will be discussed, by referring to (1) the entrance examinations for high schools and universities and (2) the ideological contentions among the teachers themselves. Finally, I will discuss the overall perceived impact of school history textbooks for cultivating Japanese people's historical consciousness.

Styles of History Textbook Description

Julian Dierkes (2005) captures the postwar history education in Japan in terms of what he calls *unreflective empiricism*. School history textbooks are "overwhelmingly uncritical and empiricist, emphasizing the 'facts' of history and their chronological sequence to the exclusion of all other considerations" (Dierkes 2005: 271). Or, this reflects the observable "immobility" in the postwar education (Dierkes 2005; cf. Cave 2005). Textbooks are structured chronologically and "invariably written in an impersonal style" (Cave 2005: 312). Japanese education, thus, "rarely develops [students'] analytical skills" (Cave 2005: 310). Further in Dierkes (2005: 259):

> The lack of discussion of the broader meaning of particularly sensitive topics in the textbooks illustrates the focus on chronology and 'factual' narrative in textbook accounts. This pattern was strikingly visible in the treatment of Asia-Pacific War atrocities.… [A]s existing narratives of the course of the war usually involved little consideration of responsibility for its outbreak, the insertion of brief footnotes referring to the Nanjing Massacre in the early 1980s did little to prompt discussion of such responsibility but instead appeared as an additional data point on an otherwise unchanging timeline.

Because of this "dominant chronological paradigm," the changes in textbooks were only "omissions, additions, or the correction of previous information" (Dierkes 2005: 259).[14] This leads to the overall stability, or immobility, of Japanese history education in the postwar years.

Importantly, the narratives of my interviewees largely correspond to the above observations.[15] Also, many of my informants share fairly similar viewpoints with the result of Peter Cave's college student interviews about a decade ago (in 2000), which reports superficiality of classroom lectures and discussion (Cave 2005: 320–21). "Descriptions in history textbooks consist of mere mentioning of the events with a very shallow explanation of them," says Kazuyoshi (male, third-year IR major, ideologically conservative).[16] "Simply," as he claims, "history textbooks were not deep enough. There

[14] Dierkes (2005: 258) also warns against a progressive interpretation of the new policy direction after the first textbook controversy and maintains that, although the 1982 textbook dispute and its aftermath are "important issues in themselves," it is critical to heed that they "have generally taken place within a context of broad acceptance of the established narrative." Even in the "improved" textbooks such as *Kaitei Atarashii Shakai—Rekishi* in the early 1980s, it is to be noted that the description of Japan's invasion was very simple with only a few sentences. A relatively large footnote further develops the topic; however, it is not beyond the framework of *unreflective empiricism*.

[15] It is noted that different ideological inclinations of interviewees did not register for differed assessments of how they read their history textbooks.

[16] Names of interviewees are pseudonyms.

are descriptions of what and how; but, there are no discussions on why." Chie (female, third-year Journalism, liberal) "does not remember much about history textbooks." But, she does remember that "the way the textbooks describe the events was very shallow and by no means in depth." As Mari (female, third-year IR, liberal) recalls, the style of textbook description was "a series of bare facts." The text simply states that, for example, "an event A happened in the year of xxxx, and, then B occurred in xxxx." She says, although "we can learn the general course of historical events, we never get more than that." For Ichiko (female, fourth-year Journalism, conservative), history textbook is "a list of arbitrary words (*moji no raretsu*)." It is not always clear "who wrote those books" and she does not "even remember what kind of textbooks [she] used in schools." She further explains:

> History textbooks merely explain each event with two sentences or so. Japan was wrong and it invaded Asia, Japanese people also suffered, and there were A-bombs. As far as I recollect, there were no discussions on why things happened(Ichiko).

Also importantly, in this line, Dierkes (2005) reports percentage shares of historical periods gleaned from the textbooks' tables of contents. The data are from the textbooks for secondary education. Several clear features appear. First, "the shifts in the weighting of different historical periods do not surpass 10 percent overall" (Dierkes 2005: 263). It is remarkable to see that the amount devoted to contemporary (postwar) history only increased by 4.5% from 1950 to 2000 "even though 50 years of postwar history could potentially have been added to textbook narratives" during that period (Dierkes 2005: 264). Our informant, Yoshie (female, second-year IR, unknown), also remembers that textbook description about the contentious 1930s had only a few pages and the description was largely superficial. Also, they did not have enough sessions to cover recent issues in detail.

Similarly, Cave (2005: 311), conducting classroom observations of 17 history classes in 10 high schools and 8 sessions in 5 junior high schools, characterizes the Japanese style of history teaching as the "transmission of knowledge and development of understanding." As he reports, textbooks are invariably written "in an impersonal narrative style which gives the impression of authoritative objectivity" (Cave 2005: 330). My interviewees in 2009 also verified this point. As Satomi (female, fourth-year Journalism, unknown) explains, "the text and lecture never touched upon the lives and feelings of people in the countries invaded by Japan." Yuki (female, fourth-year IR, liberal) agrees, "what they teach is so simple: what happened and who did what. Class discussion was never profound.… [W]e never discussed who suffered and how." As Saori (female, third-year Journalism, liberal) explains, she remembers that there was a description of Japanese invasion in Asia in her history textbook. But, it was "never a detailed discussion and the way Japanese atrocities were described was nominal and often equivocal." She now thinks that this is very unbalanced although it never occurred to her then.

Shinji and Hiromi also echo these points. According to Shinji (male, fourth-year Journalism, liberal), his history class did cover the 1930s, but the discussion was "shallow at best." The way the school textbooks mentioned certain critical events was "in a very forthright and detached tone" and "we were supposed to merely memorize them." Hiromi (female, third-year Journalism, unknown) recollects that "the tone of textbook description was that Japanese military killed innocent Chinese people," but, the lecture barely touched the issue of Japan's past wrongs and "we just read the textbook aloud in class." In her school textbook, those important events were "highlighted in bold," but there was "no further discussion beyond the mere explanations of the events." In this line, Cave (2005: 311) also refers to one comment from his interviewees that "the textbooks were so boring

that nobody felt like reading them." Therefore, for one of my informants, Ichiko, "School textbooks are not worth reading."[17]

Textbook Usage in Classroom

Then, the question should be posed with regard to the nature of the history textbook usage in Japanese public schools. In his *Japan's Education Reform*, Christopher Hood (2001) refers to his personal experience and derives a rather surprising finding from the standpoint of an outsider. That is, they do not use it much. This is common knowledge among Japanese students (and my own recollection two decades ago) and, as Hood puts it, his observation was shared by many students he interviewed. Is this still the case? Here, I will examine this question by referring to (1) the severity of entrance examinations and (2) the ideological contentions among the teachers.

Entrance Examination Hell Japan's entrance examination fever also reveals an important aspect of the usage of Japanese history textbooks in the classroom. Entrance examinations have been very severe in Japan. Especially in the 1980s when the number of children peaked, the so-called examination hell became a social issue (Burks 1991: 172; Rohlen 1983). In the 1980s, the media widely covered the suicides of young students who failed to get into the schools to which they wanted to go (Rohlen 1983: 327–34; cf. Reischauer 1988). Entrance examinations in Japan have long functioned as "rites de passage" for youngsters to "[prove]" that they ("more often a male") had the guts and capability (and probably, the "stamina") to become a good company employee (Burks 1991: 179; cf. Lipset 1996: 238–40; Reischauer 1988; Rohlen 1983). Because of the social pressures on young children to "enter the 'best' high schools and universities," one of the important principles of postwar education, individualism, was even regarded as a "negative" thing for youngsters to endure the hard work for the entrance examination (Burks 1991: 172).

One of my informants, Ichiko, suspects that the reason why her history class did not cover the contentious 1930s was because of college entrance examinations. Chie's history teacher was more explicit. Although textbooks did mention Japan's past wrongs, he did not take time to discuss the topic "because the preparation for the entrance examinations was considered more important." Shinji went to the high school famous for its dedication to the students' preparation for college entrance examination. He understands that history was important only as a subject for entrance examinations. Thus, according to him, "the school did not bother to touch a sensitive issue like Japan's past wrongs."

Pressures in the classroom are also immense. Since "more students than ever are seeking to enter university," it must be pointed out that "virtually all classes had to be directed towards helping students pass the standard national university entrance examination" (Schoppa 1991: 4). Also observed by Reischauer (1988: 193) two decades ago, "much of the training in senior high schools [was] devoted not to learning as such but to preparing students to pass university entrance examinations." With this immense social pressure and high expectations, it is common sense as well as practical reasoning among the students that

[17] While my interviewees' perceived understanding of textbook style is for the most part consistent with the conventional understanding of Japanese history textbooks (most elaborately laid out by Dierkes and Cave), most of the interviewees did not remember which textbooks they used. None of them could name the history textbooks they used in junior high school, and only nine (9) students remembered the high school history books they used a couple of years before. Among them, eight (8) named the Japanese history textbook by Yamakawa. Yamakawa has the largest share of high school Japanese history textbook (57.5%) (Saaler 2005). Yet, their perceived impression about the style of textbook description was remarkably similar.

any topics irrelevant to the examination are NOT important. Remember Dierkes's (2005) elaborate study that shows how little textbook space was devoted to contemporary history. In terms of the entrance examination, this means that contemporary history is simply *not important*. Preparation efforts are rationally devoted to the earlier periods. This point corresponds to the above remarks by Chie and Shinji. Referring to this entrance examination practice among Japanese students, Kinmonth (1997) states that "whatever is said about the 1930s and after in textbooks may be largely irrelevant, because this period has not been stressed in entrance examinations, and it is entrance examinations that largely drive student attention to the textbooks" (E.H. Kinmonth in Hood 2001: 195).

In this context, it should be also pointed out that history (either Japanese or world) as a subject in the Japanese entrance examinations is largely considered to be a "memory subject" (*ankimono*) (Nakamura 1995: 6). For one of the interviewees, Etsuko (female; second-year IR, conservative), "history education means rote learning" (*anki*), and students studied history for entrance examination. What is required for the students to pass the exam is the ability to memorize the historical events chronologically. Since the examination style for history tests consists mostly of "multiple-choice and short answer questions," what is important is "knowledge of facts and short, prepackaged interpretations" (Cave 2005: 310; cf. Dierkes 2005). In other words, those skills such as "interpretation, analysis, and argument" are not expected and "hardly tested at all" (Cave 2005: 311). Therefore, history examinations in particular (and social studies examinations in general) tend to have "the encyclopedia quality," which is "like nothing more than a giant trivia contest compiled by scholars instead of popular culture freaks" (Rohlen 1983: 98, 100; cf. van Wolferen 1989: 86).

As Yoshie explained it to me, students "just memorize the terms and chronology for entrance examinations." She remembers that both lectures and textbooks were never structured so as to make students "think in depth" by all means. Therefore, "memorization comes first, and students simply forget what they studied after exams." Also claimed by Yurie (female, second-year IR, unknown), they simply "did not have the opportunities to think about history" because they were "supposed" to memorize certain topics and events for the entrance exams. Therefore, when students study those already *unimportant* topics about the Japanese military aggression in Asia, all they are typically expected to know is who did what and when. The "hows" and "whys" are rarely asked. Students might be asked, for example, which administration in Japan seized Korea in 1910 under which dynasty in Korea with which treaty. However, they will not be asked about the social and cultural implications of Japan's colonization to the Korean people and its society.

Ideological Contention Among Teachers Another important aspect of the nature of the history textbook usage lies in the issue of the ideological contentions among teachers, which potentially creates a *classroom vacuum*—Japanese students are not exposed to the controversial parts of Japanese history during the war years. The discussion here touches on Schudson's (1989) retrievability of cultural objects. Simply put, if progressive teachers had talked about Japan's military aggressions with their own ideological bent in the classrooms, it would have been quite likely that the conservative teachers and the board of education would either have implicitly or explicitly interfered. Similarly, if conservative teachers had glossed over Japan's military aggression in Asia, then the progressive teachers and the *Nikkyoso* teachers' union would likely have made an issue of it (cf. Nozaki 2005). For the education bureaucrats and the members of the local boards of education in general, the teachers' union consisted of "dangerous idealists at best and traitors at worst" with "too many 'alien' traces of leftist ideology" (Buruma 1994: 192–93). That is, what they practice is biased education *par excellence* (Nagano 1998: 70). From the union's point of view, the

governmental "militarist revivalism" was never acceptable and the official positions on the historical issues had been "dishonest, evasive, and nationalistic" (Buruma 1994: 192–93). For them, therefore, their classroom practices are to save the postwar principles of democracy and pacifism (Nagano 1998: 70; cf. Seraphim 2006: Chapter 3). The end result was an "endless" ideological and political "tug-of-war" (Buruma 1994: 192).

Hiromi is from Ehime prefecture (in Shikoku island) and went to public schools before moving to Kyoto for college. Since "Ehime is a conservative prefecture," she says, there were "no issues whatsoever in terms of *Hinomaru* national flag and *Kimigayo* national anthem at the school ceremonies."[18] Yet, as an attentive student as she is, Hiromi was fully aware of the ideological contentions among teachers:

> It seems that teachers, in order to avoid troubles, tried not to make any normative judgments and comments on the contentious history issues. They instead encourage us to read the textbooks (Hiromi).

As Cave (2005: 317–318) points out, this is the ironic side effect of ideological contentions among public school teachers. In order to "defend themselves from criticism about their teaching of this most controversial part of Japanese history," placing the pedagogical emphasis on knowledge and understanding based on positivist historiographical assumptions is simply "the most practical way." As Nicholas Kristof (1995) observes, most Japanese history teachers "arrange not to get as far as World War II by the end of the school year" in order to "avoid embarrassment."[19]

As Asako (female, third-year IR, conservative) explains, "in general, teachers teach modern history very superficially. Their emphasis was laid upon the pre-modern history." Also put by Kazuyoshi, although his teacher "thoroughly covered Japanese history up until Edo-era (and before Meiji Restoration in 1868), modern history was "only slightly covered." Yoshie is also explicit on this point, saying that "We did not have enough sessions to cover recent issues in detail. We did study ancient Greek civilization rather in depth, but not the 1930s. Also, textbooks have only a few pages on the 1930s and the description was shallow at best." Yurie also maintains that her high school history class covered ancient civilization in detail, but modern history was not thoroughly covered. Because the lecture spent a lot of time on the pre-modern era, Etsuko explains, "We just run out of time."

Yet, when history teachers happen to be ideologically left-leaning, students are exposed to the *facts* of Japanese military expansion in the 1930s rather extensively. Ichiko is from Hiroshima, the center of Japan's so-called peace education (though she thinks her political inclination is conservative). She remembers that those materials used for peace education were specific and in detail. Ichiko also remembers that one of her teachers in junior high school did not attend the graduation ceremony because he was against the *Hinomaru* national flag and *Kimigayo* national anthem at the ceremony. Mari's high school Japanese history teacher was "very enthusiastic" and provided a lot of his own materials for his lecture on Nanjing. As his former student recollects, he tried to dig into the facts of the

[18] *Hinomaru* is the Japanese national flag. Its direct translation is sun circle; it has a large red circle on a white background. *Kimigayo* is Japan's national anthem. Literally, the title refers to "the reign of the Emperor" and the song wishes a long-lasting prosperity under the reign of the Emperor. For the progressive intellectuals (especially school teachers affiliated with *Nikkyoso* teachers' union), Japan's *Kimigayo* anthem and *Hinomaru* flag are symbols of Japanese imperialism and its invasion in Asia in the prewar years.

[19] Similarly, in Hood (2001: 99), "The irony of the [history textbook] debate is that many children, based upon conversations that I have had with students, appear to remain unaware and unsure of what the 'correct' way to phrase certain events is. The situation is further confused by the fact that this area of history (regarding the events in the Pacific War) are barely covered in lessons, if covered at all, as they appear so late in the course that they usually come after the entrance examinations."

event. According to Yurie, it was her junior high school teacher who taught about Japan's notorious Unit 731 and its live-body experiment in Northern China.

Yuki is from Kyoto and the city is also famous for its liberal/progressive education. As she told me, she does not remember if she ever had an opportunity to sing the *Kimigayo* national anthem in school. Many of her friends even did not remember the lyrics. Yuki can sing it because her daycare taught it, yet, she does not necessarily know the meaning of each word in the song. One of her high school "English" teachers was an advocate of peace education and she remembers that she learned a great deal from him. Unlike her "History" teacher, this English teacher passionately discussed the meaning of Vietnam War and the importance of pacifism. He also took his students to the liberal Kyoto Museum for World Peace, famous for its progressive exhibition of Japan's war in Asia.[20] As Yuki recollects, "textbook description tend to be shallow (because of the former aggressor's point of views) and it reflects official points of views, which is in contrast with the exhibitions at the Kyoto Museum, which reflected victim's viewpoints."

Conservative (or, skeptical) teachers counter. As Takashi (male, second-year IR, unknown) remembers, his history teacher was skeptical about certain "facts" of Japan's military expansion. He questioned the actual number of people killed in Nanjing in 1937 and those facts related to comfort women. Eita (male, fourth-year Journalism, liberal) still remembers his high school history teacher very well. His teacher often asked his class what they would do in a critical situation like war. He asserted that they should react if their family and lovers were assaulted or killed. Eita still strongly agrees with the message.

There are certainly tensions between teachers (as explicated by some of the interviewees such as Hiromi) and there is an observable tendency of shallow coverage of contentious modern history (Asako, Yoshie, and Yurie). At the same time, however, some of my interviewees cogently suggest that teachers do interfere. This corresponds to Cave's in-class observations and interviews of teachers in 2000/2001, reporting that his four interviewees (among 16 teachers interviewed) make "an explicit commitment to a moral/political view, in terms of antiwar teaching, teaching students to avoid repeating the same mistakes as were made in the past, or developing a self-critical consciousness (*hansei shikan*) about the past" (Cave 2005: 316). My interview data support this from *students*' point of views; there are certainly attempts to fill the vacuum by the liberal (Ichiko, Mari, and Yuki) as well as conservative (Takashi and Eita) teachers.[21] While it would be certainly the case that history education in Japanese public schools is "still very superficial and uncritical" and "most Japanese students [were] not taught about controversial aspects of Japanese history" (Ducke 2002: 52), it seems also true that there is not always a classroom vacuum where teachers go beyond textbooks.[22]

[20] For the Kyoto Museum for World Peace, see http://www.ritsumei.ac.jp/mng/er/wp-museum/english/index.html.

[21] Although it is beyond the scope of this study to further explore why and how teachers do this and how extensive this has been practiced, the issue seems worthwhile and deserves further research.

[22] The relative decline of the *Nikkyoso*'s mobilization capacity should be noted. The late 1980s marked a political struggle among the *Nikkyoso* leadership, which eventually lead to an organizational schism in 1989 in which the moderate leadership split from the more extreme *Zenkyo* (Aspinall, 2001). The 1989 separation represented the point of no return for *Nikkyoso* and its membership rate in 1990 dropped to 36.9%. The slide continued, and it slipped quietly below 30% in 2004 (29.9%). In September 1995, *Nikkyoso* officially announced its retreat from the anti-*Hinomaru/Kimigayo* campaign along with the Japan Socialist Party's policy change on the issue. A year before this, Prime Minister Murayama of the JSP in the Diet publicly accepted *Hinomaru* and *Kimigayo*, thus dropping out from his party's anti-flag/anthem campaign. In August 1999, the lower house passed the legislation that legalized the *Hinomaru* flag and *Kimigayo* anthem and defined them as Japan's national symbols.

Overall Perceived Impacts of School History Textbooks

Is the history textbook perceived as an effective source for nurturing the Japanese people's underlying perceptions and feelings about Japan's past wrongs? Although the sample size of this study is not large, it is still notable that none of my interviewees referred to the lasting positive impact of school history textbooks on their historical understanding. According to Ichiko, history textbooks "had no impact" on her. She explains, "my historical understanding has nothing to do with the contents of history textbooks." Yoshie echoes, "school textbooks were not influential at all when it comes to my historical understanding." For her, TV news, documentaries and college lectures are more important. Saori also recollects that history textbooks have never been her major information source. For Daiji (male, third-year IR, liberal), because "textbooks are for exams" they are rarely effective in cultivating students' historical understandings. According to Asako, her historical consciousness is solely the product of her own personality. Hiromi agrees. She is "not the kind of person who follows what she is told." She constantly questions conventional facts because, otherwise, "you can be very naïve." Therefore, it is Hiromi's "personal character that matters when it comes down to historical understanding."

In terms of the overall image of Japanese history textbooks, some also have critical views. My informants are not naïve enough to believe that textbooks are always written in an impartial tone. Yoshie sees the shadow of the governmental authority behind the textbook description: "textbooks tell what the state wants to convey and they do not tell us what they do not want us to know." Also, Yurie claims that "because textbooks have to go through the governmental screen, they cannot be critical about Japan." For Chie, this is also the case with other countries, especially South Korea, saying that "there are aspects we have to know regarding Korean history textbooks; they do not always tell the truth." Saori believes that Japanese textbooks necessarily favor Japan.

> Historical understanding is in the end the issue of subjectivity and one cannot deny that we tend to favor our own country and this stems from the very simple sense of love of your country (*aikoku-shin*).… Textbooks mainly discuss events, or what happened, and they lack the views of victims and minority people. For example, they do not talk about the issue of *Zainichi* Koreans [resident Koreans] (Saori).

Agreeing with the overall irrelevance of school history textbooks, Kazuyoshi at the same time admits a certain role of history textbooks: "Yes, descriptions in history textbooks consist of mere mentioning of the events with a very shallow explanation of them. But, history textbooks may be useful in the sense that readers can grasp the series of historical events in a linear fashion." For Mari, too, the textbooks were useful because she "learned facts of history" through the textbooks, which became the basis of her historical understanding. Saori also shares this point, by saying that "textbooks could be considered effective as far as the purpose of it is limited to acquire basic knowledge about the historical events. There are still contentious cases over the very factuality of certain events, though." Certainly, historical knowledge can be enhanced by school textbooks, which, however, does not mean the facilitation of historical consciousness.

As an information source, history textbooks were not regarded highly. Cave (2005: 321) points out that there are "the variety of occasions and channels through which [students] had come to learn about aspects of war and aggression," including TV programs, films, comics, school trips to, for instance, Hiroshima and China (and the preparatory studies before the trips), and *juku* (preparatory school) instructors. Many interviewees in 2009 shared similar insights. Shinji, for example, explains that TV documentaries are his major source of information because "unlike classroom lectures and textbooks, they provide

background information in depth." Ichiko uses several sources, including newspapers and its letters column. For her, "objectivity" is very important and she believes that "we have to refer to as many sources as possible." Takashi also cautions that although he uses newspapers and online information, he understands that they are "often biased."

For Chie, her recent visit to the Kyoto Museum for World Peace opened up her eyes:

> At the museum, we saw pictures and videos, and even those clothes victims actually wore at the time, which was shocking to me.… I thought about the importance and necessity to stand on the same footing of the victims (*higaisha no tachiba*) and the absence of wars is the bottom line for peace (Chie).

Chie shared with me her journal on the day of her trip to the museum, which shows her simple, yet very strong sense of resentment about the reality that the contemporary world still suffers from military conflicts: "…Why do we always fail? So many people just want peace. But, we always fail." As discussed earlier, Yuki's trip to the museum with her progressive high-school English teacher also has a lasting impact on her historical understanding. Similarly, to meet the former victims and listen to their own voices also leaves a lasting impact. Saori's first-year Journalism seminar in college invited a former comfort woman from Korea. Her lecture made Saori almost painfully realize that "we should be responsible about the past because there are people who still suffer. Our responsibility is to recognize and know the past."

In addition, several interviewees point out the underlying influence of their family members. For example, Satomi often discusses Japan's past wrongs with her parents. They are Buddhists and her mother once told her that "wars will never bring peace." So, if a missile from North Korea hit Japan, her mother said that "all we can do is to die. We should not fight." She was inspired by her mother's conviction and she wanted to be as strong as her mother. Daiji still recalls his interview with his grandfather for a school project in elementary school. His grandfather was conscripted into the army and he told his grandson that "in Okinawa, he was first hesitant to point a gun against his enemies." This experience cogently told Daiji that the war inevitably involved ordinary people like his grandfather. Also, admitting that what Japan did in Asia is horrible from the contemporary moral point of views, Daiji at the same time maintains that those imperial acts were "normal" at that time.

Emi (female, second-year IR, conservative) stresses that her father has been very influential in nurturing her historical understanding about the past. Her father works for Prefectural Police Headquarters in a large provincial city along the Sea of Japan. He is traditional and still wears *kimono* at home. He raises the *Hinomaru* national flag on national holidays, which is now very rare in Japan. Emi told me that "the first thing my father did when we visited Tokyo was to pay a visit to the Yasukuni War Shrine." Although her mother is non-political and indifferent to the issue of Japan's past wrongs, her father is a frequent watcher of a very conservative pay-per-view program, *Sakura Channel*[23] (and she sometimes watches the program together with him). Emi is self-claimed conservative and she shares her historical view with her father.

> Japan's bad image regarding the war in China is a shame (*haji*). However, I just cannot agree with the view that only Japan is to blame. History textbooks may teach that way, but, I just do not believe it. Many countries did the similar things, and Japan was just one of the imperial powers.… To me, our responsibility is to remember what happened and not to repeat the tragedy. And, responsibility is certainly important; however, I cannot bear it because I am not sure about what really happened [in Asia] (Emi).

[23] For Sakura Channel, see http://www.ch-sakura.jp.

Also interestingly, some pointed that their encounters with Asian people forced them to rethink about Japan's past wrongdoings. When Yuki was in Australia for a study abroad program, a middle-aged Korean lady (who was also a student) rather abruptly told her that the contentious Takeshima/Dokdo island belonged to Korea. She was first confused "because Japanese people would not say those things to Korean people (or anybody)." When Yuki was in Korea for another study abroad trip, a 10-year-old girl who became friends with Yuki asked her about comfort women. She said that "Japan is a bad country" and asked: "Are you also bad?" In contrast to the Japanese situation, Yuki feels that the "socialization process in Korea is formidable." She also pondered upon China and its patriotic education under Jiang Zemin, asserting that "Chinese younger generations simply believe what the government teaches them. They would not question about it."

When Ichiko was in Canada, a teen-aged girl in her host family asked her about the Pearl Harbor attack. She did not know much about it back then and could not answer well, which prompted her to study Japanese history. Ichiko once heard of the story about a Japanese student from her college who studied abroad in Australia; two Korean students publicly accused him of Japan's past wrongs. But, she just cannot believe that all the Asian people hate Japan. Her Chinese and Korean friends in Toronto did not seem to care much about history. Instead, Ichiko felt that her friends had "a very good image about Japan through Japanese sub-cultures such as anime and Japanese pop singers." In a sense, it was surprising to her because her experience was "quite opposite" to what she thought she knew about Asian people before her trip to Canada.

Conclusion

This study's empirical findings cogently show that *reception matters* in the study of cultural objects such as school history textbooks. While the politics over the *content* of history textbooks offers an important aspect of the memory wars in Japan, this only provides a partial picture. Instead, this study reveals that in the case of Japan, how students reflect upon history issues is not always the function of school history textbooks, making a strong case for the importance of receivers in the analysis of history education in Japan. In other words, unlike the previous studies that mostly focus on public discourses per se, my study makes a more explicit contribution to the understanding of *reception* (or, the lack of it) of the discourse.

In terms of Schudson's (1989) five aspects of a cultural object's power, first, those Japanese history textbooks are certainly *socially retrievable* since they are provided to the audience (students) through schools. However, the real issue here is that history textbooks play a much smaller role than often assumed. This state of affairs is partly explainable in terms of the entrance examination war for high schools and universities. This institutional constraint is important since, emphasizing passing examinations, those analytical skills that enable one to investigate the questions on the "hows" and "whys" in history are rarely accentuated. The ideological tug-of-war between the progressive and conservative teachers further contributed to it. Although there are interventions by teachers who go beyond textbooks, it is reported that most history teachers tended to avoid covering the contentious issues regarding Japan's militarism in the prewar years and focus on less sensitive topics.

Secondly, in terms of textbooks' *rhetorical force* (i.e., the degree of rhetorical effectiveness), it should be stressed that the characteristic feature of Japanese history textbooks is overwhelmingly uncritical and empiricist, a style which focuses on the chronological sequence of the facts to the detriment of considerations about the reasons for

and contexts of the specific actions and events under study. Also important, this *unreflective empiricism* is found in the style of entrance examinations, which further hinder students (or, textbook readers) from developing a deeper understanding of the issues, not to say anything about Japan's historical responsibility in Asia. On this point, my interview data in 2009 clearly shows the resonance with the previous studies (Dierkes 2005; Cave 2002, 2005) and provides further empirical support.

In terms of what Schudson calls *resonance*, thirdly, the very lack of resonance characterizes the cultural reception of history textbooks in Japan. Simply put, it is clear from interviews that history textbooks in Japan are not relevant as a tool to cultivate individuals' historical awareness about the contentious 1930s. While they do provide a framework for historical knowledge, they are not perceived as a medium for nurturing historical consciousness. In this conjunction, along with TV documentaries and movies (cf. Cave 2005), this study further presents those cases in which family members are very influential in cultivating individuals' historical understanding. For some, the encounters with Asian others created the opportunities to face Japan's past and broaden their historical understandings about it.

In this context, however, although this study emphasizes that the textbooks' underlying power is less vigorous than assumed, it is noted that this does not mean that the study necessarily overlooks the power of silence in textbooks. That is, there is a possibility that because of the very limited information contained in the textbooks (and students' relative lack of exposure to the contentious war issues in schools), other sources of information such as the Kyoto Museum can be potentially more salient.[24]

Fourth, it would be safe to say that Japanese history textbooks hold a high degree of *institutional retention*. School textbooks are available free of charge in junior high schools and with moderate price in high schools. Yet, what is happening is that this institutional support for school textbooks (as a cultural object) does not necessarily lead to the overall cultural power.

Finally, in terms of the notion of *resolution* (i.e., the degree of cultural power to influence action), the cultural impacts of Japanese school history books are not strong at best (the level of resolution is low). As discussed in terms of resonance, even though some recognize the relevance of school history textbooks as the foundation of historical knowledge, these textbooks have likely not stimulated people's deeper understanding of history. The interview findings of this study add further depth to our understanding of the cultural power of school history textbooks in Japan.[25]

People do not remember the past as individuals. "Individuals do not know the past singly," writes Schwartz (2008: 11), since "they know it with and against other individuals situated in conflicting groups and through the knowledge and symbols that predecessors and contemporaries transmit to them." To put it differently, people remember as members of *mnemonic communities* (Zerubavel 1996; Booth 1999; Bellah, et al. 1985). This Durkheimian understanding is important with the notion of "collective representation" that connotes "socially generated sets of ideas that were not simply aggregates of individual ideas but belonged to a reality *sui generis*" (Coser 1992: 365; Olick 1999, 2003). Or, in this understanding, the past consists of "publicly available social facts" (Olick 1999: 335). In

[24] I appreciate the insight by an anonymous reviewer of the journal on this point.

[25] In this context, the study also raises questions about the nature and practical impact of official as well as unofficial trilateral projects between China, Japan, and South Korea to jointly produce history textbooks. While this study does not necessarily deny the possibility of joint history writing as a means for peacebuilding (Wang 2009), it is questionable if those textbooks written by like-minded (often liberal) intellectuals exert more influence than the current textbooks.

this process, mnemonic communities "maintain 'mnemonic traditions,' teach new generations what to remember and forget through 'mnemonic socialization'" (Schwartz 2000: 278). In other words, this is the "existential fusion" in which "our own personal biography with the history of the groups or communities to which we belong" becomes "an indispensable part of our social identity" (Zerubavel 1996: 290). This also explains the sense of honor, shame, or even pain we feel from time to time in terms of our national history (Zerubavel 1996: 290).[26]

In the case of Japan, however, the process of mnemonic socialization is not as straightforward as it is usually assumed. Teaching and learning are highly interactive processes, and it is certainly true that history textbooks do provide "a broad framework" (Cave 2005: 319) for both teachers and students (and in this sense, textbooks are certainly important). But, it is clear from interviews that they are not perceived as a medium for enhancing historical consciousness. This study also hints that if teachers intervene beyond textbooks, there is a possibility to enhance students' learning in schools, but, this is not necessarily the norm in contemporary Japanese history education. There are certain conditions in which the power of a cultural object (history textbooks) is efficiently enacted (or, the conditions that facilitate/hinder students' reception of history textbooks). As discussed earlier, the question is not necessarily whether or not culture works; it is rather about the conditions in which cultural objects are more/less likely to work. In the case of Japan, the cultural power of history textbooks is not well-grounded, if not entirely irrelevant, and school history textbooks fail to uphold those conditions necessary for successful reception.

That being the case, the question still remains: have history textbook controversies in Japan been misplaced?[27] Given the limited potential of school history textbooks, is the nature of controversies more about state's positions observable through the screening system and reactions to them from China and South Korea? This also opens up questions about the domestic audience. Is this simply a part of a memory war between conservatives and liberals? Or, though a bit twisted, is this perhaps an issue about how Asian neighbors interpret what is happening in Japan in their own ways? Such issues are beyond the scope of the current study. However, answering these questions will extend our knowledge and collectively provide a better picture of not only textbook controversies but also Japan's memory problems as a whole.

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[26] In this very sense, therefore, collective memory as "the properties of the 'collective consciousness'" is "a matter of social interaction" and "ontologically distinct from any aggregate of individual consciousness" (Olick 2003: 6).

[27] I appreciate the points suggested here by an anonymous reviewer of the journal.

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