

## The Antagonistic Complicity of Nationalisms

### --On 'Nationalist Phenomenology' in East Asian History Textbooks—\*

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In the midst of tumultuous historical debates provoked by the publication of revisionist Japanese history textbooks in 2001, *Sankei Shimbun*, a conservative Japanese daily newspaper that fully supported the contents of the revisionist volume, 'A New History Textbook', published a peculiar series of articles analysing South Korean history textbooks. While clearly the stance in the Korean textbooks on Japan's colonisation of the Korean peninsula differed markedly from the neo-nationalist Japanese account, the tone of the articles was not negative at all; indeed, Korean history textbooks were praised by *Sankei Shimbun*'s Seoul correspondent for their firm basis in ethno-centric national history. In dozens of articles dedicated to the analysis of these textbooks, the *Sankei* correspondent justified 'A New History Textbook' by referring repeatedly to Korean ethno-centric history textbooks. In comparing Korean and Japanese history textbooks, he located a master narrative common to both, one in which 'our nation' is the subject of history. Korean history textbooks thus confirmed his conviction that history textbooks should teach children of all nationalities 'national pride' and 'love for our own history' (*Sankei Shinbun*, June 25, June 26 2001).

This seemingly ironic episode helps to illuminate the topography of competing national histories in East Asia. Leaving aside some obvious falsehoods, distortions, and intentional silences, the history textbook conflict in East Asia appears not as a question of 'right or wrong' to be proven by objective facts, but as the inevitable collision of conflicting nation-centred interpretations. If reality is a cognitive construction, then 'historical facts' - in this context at least - may be said to be constructed by the nationalist *episteme*; that is, the reality

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\* Richter, Steffi (ed.). (2008). *Contested Views of a Common Past: Historical Revisionism in Contemporary East Asia*. Frankfurt/M., New York: Campus.

of the past is constructed by the present 'idea of the nation'. I would call this a 'nationalist phenomenology' because nationalism not only informs, but actually determines the construction of historical narratives in East Asian history textbooks. Nationalist phenomenology also confirms the historical relativism of the nation. As stated in *A New History Textbook*, 'History is different from nation to nation by nature, and there are as many histories as there are nation-states' (NHT, 2000: 7). This nationalist pluralism or relativism, informed by the constructivist way of thinking, thus lent credibility to '*A New History Textbook*' through its justification of teaching history from a nation-centric perspective.

This reveals a fundamental reorientation in the concept and use of historical constructivism. Historical constructivism in Japan was initially an effective tool for opposing the conservatism of Japanese positivist historians, for example, those who had negated the existence of 'comfort women' on the ground that there is no authentic written document. Through utilising the private, oral histories of comfort women as a textual resource, constructivist historians challenged the monopoly of written documents that conveyed only official viewpoints, and thereby refuted the claims of conservative historians who denied the existence of sexual slavery. The fashion for constructivist approaches to history, however, was soon co-opted by neo-nationalists, who emphasised historical relativism in producing textbooks that were legitimised by the assertion that every nation constructs its own national history.

This metamorphosis of historical constructivism to serve Japanese neo-nationalist ends in turn strengthened the position of Korean nationalist historiography, which claimed to be pitting its own objective truth against Japanese subjective falsification. Korean nationalist historians thus made use of that metamorphosis of Japanese historical constructivism for their counter-argument against the broader constructivist criticism of the national history paradigm by dismissing historical constructivism as nothing but a conservative way of benefiting Japanese neo-nationalism. Indeed Japanese neo-nationalists' twist of historical constructivism

for their own abuse seemed to provide Korean nationalist historians with the persuasive weapon of criticism to defend their own national history. It has been very often said that historical constructivism functions to justify Japanese revisionist and neo-nationalist history textbook. In this way historical constructivism was discredited among Korean readers, and thus its endeavour to deconstruct the national history paradigm. A sudden positivist turn in the Korean official historiography followed the textbook controversy.

If contemporary Japanese historical revisionism is supported by a twisted constructivism, Korean nationalist historiography has been nourished by historical positivism. Instead of pitting these two different weapons of criticism against one another in the historical controversy, the polemical arguments have simply remained parallel. This explains how national histories in East Asia, and perhaps in many other regions besides, have formed a relationship of ‘antagonistic complicity’ behind the scenes of open conflict (Lim 2005a, 2000). The parallel lines of nation-centred histories have no meeting point at which a reconciliation of historical interpretations might take place, and prevent the opposing parties from moving ‘beyond national history’ towards a re-conceptualisation of their shared pasts as ‘entangled history’, ‘trans-national history’, ‘border history’ and so forth. Instead, they simply force the general public to choose between ‘our own national history’ and ‘their own national history’. Any serious academic attempt to go ‘beyond national history’ is typically denounced as ‘anti-patriotic’ or ‘renegade’. Korean and Japanese national histories have thus been trapped in a ‘mutual siege’. For this reason, any breakthrough in the current stalemate over history textbooks must be attempted mutually.

With escalating tension over the past, the demands on history education increase. National history as a political project becomes deeply rooted in civil society. Professional historians, who benefit most from these circumstances, seize the opportunity to advance their group interests. They participate unhesitatingly in a disciplinary project to ‘enculturate’ the masses into the nation-state, using history textbooks as a tool for ‘the nationalisation of the

masses'. The crisis of history as a waning science thus ends and a sudden boom in history as a popular national project begins. The state-sponsored history foundations and committees, such as the 'Gogurye History Foundation', are endowed with extensive financial resources which they use to trumpet the glories of national history and fight against the national defamation by the neighbours. Thus, what the recent history of 'history wars' in East Asia shows, is that this antagonistic complicity strengthens the discursive hegemony of national history and enriches the parties who perpetuate the 'mutual siege'. In fact, looking at the century-long history of competing national histories in this region, it is not hard to find numerous instances of cultural transfers between ostensible rivals and examples of 'antagonistic acculturation' in which, for example, the hegemonic discourses of the colonisers have been appropriated by the colonised as the basis for anti-colonial resistance and their own nationalist projects (Nandy, 1989). This paper accordingly tries to deconstruct the nationalist *episteme* of history textbooks in East Asia by unveiling the antagonistic complicity of competing national histories.

### **I. Collective subject: 'we-the nation'**

Reading the preface of the 2002 state-produced middle school history textbook in South Korea, one might be perplexed by the frequent usage of 'we', 'we-the nation' and 'our own history'. As an example, I counted the number of times these words were used in the two-page long preface: 'we' appeared twelve times, 'our own history' seven times, and 'we-the nation' once (NHM, 2002: 2-3). Twenty instances of words emphasising that this textbook, history, is all about 'Us'! If a contextual reading confirms that 'we' implies 'we-the nation' or 'our nation', 'our Korean nation' clearly occupies the subject position in the narrative structure of that history textbook. The first sentence in the preface of the 2002 high school history textbook, also produced by the state textbook monopoly, declares that 'national history plays a role in making our national identity through exploring the substance of our national soul and

lives' (NHH, 2002: 2). It is based on the implicit assumption that every society calls for some kind of common identity and that national history should respond to that demand by creating national identities. At the same time, however, it contradictorily presumes that national history is not a 'perceived reality' *created* to fulfil such functions, but that it is 'the Real'.

In its introduction under the heading of the 'universality and particularity of Korean history', the high school textbook stresses that Korea has a history of more than five thousand years and emphasises the exceptional continuity of the homogenous nation as a particularity of Korean history. The national virtues of this homogenous nation are allegedly loyalty to the state, filial piety, and community(*Gemeinschaft*)-oriented values (ibid: 12). This self-asserted particularity of Korean history fits well with Ernest Gellner's definition of nationalism as 'a phenomenon of *Gesellschaft* using the idiom of *Gemeinschaft*' (Gellner, 1997: 74). As long as 'we-the nation' as a homogenous entity occupies the exclusive position of historical agency, the organic unity of *Gemeinschaft* cannot disintegrate into the various fragmented interests of *Gesellschaft*. And as long as 'our nation' essentially remains the collective subject of the narrative, it would constitute national blasphemy to ask 'whose imagined community' this nation is because that question presumes the nation to be a *Gesellschaft*, thereby challenging the unity of the nation-as-*Gemeinschaft*.

'*A New History Textbook*' in Japan similarly presupposes the nation as the collective subject of history. Compared to Korean history textbooks, however, its discourse reads more euphemistically. Instead of using 'our nation' and 'our history', it refers to 'the Japanese' and 'the history of Japan'. While Korean history textbooks stick to the term 'national history (*kuksa*)' (which is an ideological term borrowed from Japanese colonialism), '*A New History Textbook*' prefers the term 'Japanese history' to 'national history (*kokusi*)'. The Japanese history textbook's narrative sounds more modernist than the Korean one because it seems to be freer from emotional attachment to the nation by avoiding the use of terms such 'our nation' and 'our history'. If one classifies the concept of nation in these two history textbooks

as rooted in either a 'primordialist' or a 'modernist' view of the nation, however, it is obvious that to judge the textbooks simply by the terminology used to refer to national history would lead to rather inaccurate conclusions, and to miss the high degree of similarity between them.

The preface of '*A New History Textbook*' states explicitly that, 'in other words, Japanese history means the history of forefathers who share the same blood-line as you (student readers)' (NHT, 2005: 7). This clearly indicates that '*A New History Textbook*' considers the nation in terms of biological descent, something it has in common with Korean history textbooks. The epilogue of '*A New History Textbook*' also states that its aims to restore national pride hurt by the defeat of the Second World War and to give the nation more self-respect (ibid: 227). While Korean history textbooks aim at nationalisation of the masses in a newly independent nation-state, '*A New History Textbook*' contributes to the re-nationalisation of post-war generations of Japanese. The discourse of (re-)nationalisation of the masses in both history textbooks only appears to be based on the primordialist concept of nation, deeply intertwined with strong racist and xenophobic components. The primordialist way of nationalising masses is different from the modernist way, although the same mechanism of inclusion/exclusion works out in both.

## **II. An Organic Geo-body: naturalising borders**

While the nation remains the collective subject in these history textbooks, homogeneity is constantly emphasised over heterogeneity. The primordialist concept of nation reinforces national homogeneity by assuming national unity to be quite natural and beyond-historical, while the modernist concept of nation regards the nation as a product of modernity itself. The modernist concept of nation is not reluctant to concede the existence of the political, social, economic and cultural schisms among different statuses in the pre-modern period in order to stress the national unity among legal equals in the modern nation-state. The modernist theory also argues that national unity and integration are not imaginable without the concept of

‘people’s sovereignty’, which was realised only in the wake of civil revolution. That is, it historicises the nation by situating it in the historical context of nation-state formation.

On the contrary the primordialist view tends to neglect the various historical conflicts and schisms among rival political and social formations because it assumes the existence of the nation as an organic unity existing uninterruptedly since time immemorial to the present day. The eternal life of the nation is displayed on maps as well as in the narrative in history textbooks. As Tessa Morris-Suzuki has observed, a small map illustrating the gradual introduction of rice farming to Japan in ‘A New History Textbook’ shows the flow of rice cultivation technology between three places labelled “China”(中国), “Korea”(朝鮮) and “Japan”(日本), encouraging readers to understand the categories “China”, “Korea” and “Japan” as natural and eternal by projecting these labels back onto the world of six thousand years ago. The map thus illustrates a very widespread and deeply influential view which equates the history of East Asia with the history of centralised states, and sees these large centralised states as permanent entities persisting throughout historical time (Morris-Suzuki 2004: 198-99).

The handful of historical sites of Palaeolithic and Neolithic civilisation shown in the first map of the Korean history textbook are confined only to the Korean peninsula. This map tends to bring the reader not explicitly but indirectly to a notion that national history may stretch back to the Palaeolithic age (NHM, 2002: 11). In fact North Korean official historiography asserts that Palaeolithic inhabitants evolved into contemporary Koreans without any ethnic or cultural rupture (Lim, 2001: 383). While the South Korean history textbook never mentions that continuity explicitly, the desire for the continuity narrative resides in this map. Maps of ancient history in Korean history textbooks are more interesting in their expression of ‘Drang nach Manchuria’. Maps illustrating the development of the Three Kingdoms in ancient Korea bleach the national boundary of *Yalu* and *Tumen* rivers in

the Palaeolithic and Neolithic ages and stretch deep into Manchuria to include the kingdom of *Goguryeo* as one of three ancient kingdoms on which the later development of Korean history has been based. It should also be noted that contemporary place names such as 'Japan', 'Yellow Sea' and 'Eastern Sea (Sea of Japan)' are inscribed on these maps. Maps in Korean history textbooks are thus second to none in attempting to persuade their readers to understand today's political entities as natural and eternal.

In this way maps in both Japanese and Korean history textbooks contribute to instilling a sense of 'geo-body' among their readers. The concept of nation as a 'geo-body' presumes a naturally and organically integrated territorial unit which persists throughout time (Wini chakul, 1994). In this conception a violation of the organic geo-body of a nation equals an amputation of some part of the human body. That explains how contemporary political claims to the Dokdo/Takeshima, Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands or the southern part of the Chishima/Kurile Archipelago in East Asia have been inflamed by nationalist historiography. In both Japan and Korea the notion of geo-body has been relatively powerful because its geography of either island or peninsula contributed to the image of naturally self-contained homogenous entity. These claims resist examining the historical justifications of today's national frontiers because it would raise crucial, often dramatic, questions concerning citizenship, identity, political loyalty, exclusion, inclusion and the ends of the state (Anderson 1996: 1).

Borders may be constructed not just spatially, but also in social practice and discourse, through narrative, through providing people with a consciousness of common experience, history and memory. All borders are historical. All borders are man-made. Though we might think of some borders as 'natural', because they are defined by obvious geographical features such as seas, deserts, mountains or rivers, they are still historically constructed and contingent. But history textbooks in East Asia are constantly propagating the idea of natural borders. The idea of natural borders does not leave room for the possibility that political allegiances may be regionalised within certain states. A boundary does not exist only in the border area, but

manifests itself in many institutions such as education, the media, novels, memorials, ceremonies and spectacles. There is no doubt that the history textbook is one of those institutions that inscribes spatial borders as the geo-body onto readers' minds.

### **III. Essentialism: nation as 'the Real'**

The nation-centred interpretation pays scant attention to any collective subjects, such as peasants, plebeians, slaves and citizens, not to mention individual subjects, that might shake the concept of national homogeneity. In fact, to establish the homogeneity, unitary will and common destiny of the nation as the collective subject, dissenting voices of any individual or social group in history have been everywhere neglected, suppressed and silenced. It is no wonder that both the Japanese and Korean history textbooks deal with social conflicts, class struggles, gender inequalities either minimally or not at all. In approximately three hundred pages, the number dealing with societal conflict can almost be counted on one hand. Whatever does not fit into the framework of the linear development of the nation-state is neglected or ironed out to fit the linear narrative, since social conflict is viewed as a threat to the notion of national homogeneity.

What little substantial description of historical conflict is present is composed mainly of political struggles between ruling elites as these at least can be shown as instrumental in the linear narrative of nation-state development. Thus, descriptions of hegemonic struggles between the king and ruling elites, court and local elites, civilian and military elites prevail over the description of other social conflicts. Very often these power struggles are shown to result in a change of dynasty, ruling elite group or the political structure of the state, the outcome of which ultimately contributes to the linear development of nation. Alternatively, stress may be placed on political struggles between competing small political entities which results in the formation of a centralised state corresponding roughly to today's national territory, i.e. the formation of the proto-nation-state. The sole criterion for including or excluding a specific historical struggle is thus whether or not it contributes to constructing the

history of the nation-state's linear development. In this way, the nation as the supreme reality remains intact.

Compared to the modernist concept of nation, the primordialist concept of nation does not need to try hard to integrate the common men to a nation. In the modernist interpretation, the politics of representation, that is, that "the nation represents the people" is regarded as the critical factor in nation-building (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 93-113). The nationalist politics of representation is supposed to invoke the imagined equality among nationals in order to achieve national integration. By contrast, the primordialist concept of nation treats national integration as a *fait accompli* even without the principle of people's sovereignty. In this view, the chemistry of the nation as an organic unity surpasses the national integration achieved through the artifice of politics. Herein lies the fundamental difference between the modernist and the primordialist accounts of national history. The modernist narrative is not reluctant to deal with past social conflicts because the existence of social conflict or class struggle, especially in the pre-modern era, may in fact bring into relief the national integration of the modern nation-state such as 'national coordination (*Gleichschaltung*)' and 'national comradeship (*Volksgenosse*)' echoing around people's sovereignty. On the contrary, the primordialist narrative neglects most social conflicts as a serious threat to the organic nation.

This certainly does not mean that the primordialist view of East Asian history textbooks overlooks "people's history". There are some descriptions of manners, customs and the everyday lives of ordinary people especially in the Korean history textbooks. Those descriptions are quite different in their methodology and orientation from 'history of everyday lives (*Alltagsgeschichte*)' as a current of critical historiography. To draw a parallel with academic historiography, it reminds me of G. M. Trevelyan's miscellaneous or 'antiquarian history' rather than Alf Lüdtké's 'critical history'. In a word it is the simple history of "what they ate, what they wore, and how they lived", deprived of any political meaning immanent to history of everyday lives as a critical historiography. The accumulation of these miscellaneous

and trivial aspects of ‘antiquarian history’ is supposed to form the matrix of national culture. Very often it develops into a monumental history of the national heroes of grass root patriots. Thus, although one is tempted to call this “people’s history”, it is not immune to Raphael Samuel’s criticism of British “people’s history” in that “it treats ‘the common people’ as a collective subject, transposing the national epic from the field of high politics to that of everyday life” (Samuel, 1989: xi).

In this way, the nation is the supreme reality whether the narrative focuses on the high politics of ruling elites or on the everyday lives of the common people. The organic concept of nation precludes any schism, especially when dealing with the topic of national crises, such as wars and domestic instability. Particular attention is paid to the history of national struggles against foreign invaders, and also to the struggle for national sovereignty. This is especially pronounced in Korean history textbooks which stress the role of the people who defended the nation’s freedom and independence in the face of the thirteenth-century Mongol invasion and the Japanese invasion of 1592. In the case of the Mongol invasion, the narrative contrasts the patriotic resistance of the slaves who fought the enemy ferociously in the battle of Ch’ungju, with the cowardly actions of aristocratic officials who fled the battlefields. The description of the Korean-Japanese war of 1592, meanwhile, emphasises the resistance of guerrilla forces in the form of a coalition between the ruling elites, peasant farmers and Buddhist monks (NHM, 2002: 111-112, 147-149; NHH, 2002: 90-91). It shows vividly how nationalist discourse swallows up ‘people’s history’ or ‘history from below’ in history textbooks.

But there is no mention at all of the slaves who set fire to the royal palace even before the Japanese army’s conquest of Seoul (*Hanyang*) in 1592. The peasants’ capitulation en masse to the Mongol army is blacked out by a unilateral emphasis on the peasants’ and even slaves’ patriotic resistance during the Mongol invasion, and the partisan leader’s complaint that the peasants welcomed the Japanese army and did not respond to his call for arms against the foreign invaders is also totally ignored in the description of the *Imjin War*. Despite the

allegation that Korean history textbooks ostensibly cherish the values of historical positivism and factuality, those facts which are unfavourable to nationalist essentialism are omitted without hesitation. Here as elsewhere, primordialism posits the nation as the 'essence' of identity under any and all historical circumstances. The nation is supposed to be the element that makes a subject what it truly is, the element that gives the subject its authentic interest. In history, however, the nation has become divided along class, estates, and gender lines. Nation has fragmented. National oppression is linked with other forms of oppression in a way too complicated and contradictory to essentialize the nation as the prime agency.

Nevertheless nation as the essence of identity remains unshattered. Nationalist essentialism is reinforced by the self-perception of 'hereditary victimhood' inherent in both Japanese and Korean history textbooks. This hereditary victimhood constructs an image of a people with a unitary will formed through common suffering as an oppressed nation (Bauman, 1991/Lim, 2007). A 1992 study of Israeli identity among teachers' college students is a good indication. This survey found that close to 80 percent of those asked identified with the statement of 'we are all Holocaust survivors' (Segev, 2000: 516). Ernest Renan's classical remarks that shared suffering makes people united much more than common pleasure, and mourning is better than victory for the national memory confirms the victimhood nationalism in a more abstract level (Renan, 2002: 81). Thus it is not odd at all when heroic nationalism goes hand in hand with victimhood nationalism in history textbooks.

Japan's '*A New History Textbook*' depicts the nation as a victim of atomic bombs, carpet bombing and the Red Army's atrocities, and stresses the need to regain national pride hurt by defeat in war, and to shake the nation free of a widespread guilty consciousness imposed by the Tokyo trials. Korean history textbooks, meanwhile, tend to categorise all Japanese people as collectively guilty of aggression, war atrocities and brutality, and all Koreans as the hereditary victims of Japanese colonialism (NHT, 2001: 214-215; NHM, 2002: 254-262). Seemingly they are both competing for the position of victims in history. The transpacific fuss

regarding Yoko K. Watkins's autobiographical novel of 'So Far from the Bamboo Grove' shows vividly how the Japanese and Korean try very hard to appropriate the position of historical victims. Victimhood nationalism intends to justify nationalism and occasionally past victims may transform themselves into future victimizers in time (Lim, 2007). Regardless of the positional difference between victims and victimisers, however, the categorical thinking in terms of nation prevails in both sets of textbooks. It feeds the essentialism of the nation and thus constitutes the backbone of national history.

#### **IV. Originism: we were first, you followed**

Despite its insistence on the nation as an eternal entity, even the primordialist concept cannot avoid the question of the origins of the nation. In contrast to the modernist concept, which is satisfied with locating the origins of the (proto-) nation-state in relatively recent history, the primordialist concept traces the nation's origin back to the earliest possible moment in time. Thus the originism of the primordialist concept tends to mean "the older, the better". The discourse of national origins, often assisted by historical anthropology, stresses ethnic homogeneity or even purity and cultivates a disinclination for ethnic mixing. The first edition of *'A New History Textbook'*, for example, describes 'Zomon pottery', produced 16,500 years ago, as the oldest pottery in the world (NHT, 2000: 24). While the second edition revises this claim to "one of the oldest" (NHT, 2005: 18), "the oldest in the world" syndrome lingers on in a few other examples, such as the five-storey wooden Pagoda of *Horyuji* temple. In fact, both editions put an emphasis on the historical investigation of origin in their introductions. The broad usage of words such as "Japanese" and "Japanese culture" in the ancient past makes it quite natural and plausible to seek the origins of the nation in the immemorial past.

This tenacious originism conceals a secret of national history as "a curious inversion of a conventional genealogy" by starting from "originary present" (Anderson, 1991: 205). The originism of the primordialist concept of nation is much more stubborn than that of the

modernist concept of nation because the former regards the nation as an ancient community. Insofar as it remains a patriotic duty for historians to discover the ancient history of the nation, the tenet of 'the older, the better' takes on great importance. Once attached to originism, reciprocal trans-cultural exchange is denied. Rather a cultural diffusion from one nation to the other is emphasised as culture is presupposed to flow from the developed to the underdeveloped. In this way originism conjures up the past glory of 'our own national culture' and gives rise to 'monumental history'.

Korean history textbooks, which share the primordialist view with '*A New History Textbook*' in Japan, are second to none in their emphasis on originism. For example, they trace the world's first movable metal type to thirteenth-century Korea (NHM, 2002: 279). One of the key points in *A New History Textbook* against which Korean historians have argued is the sentence "Silla and Paekche paid tribute to Japan". This sentence was regarded as an abomination by Korean historians because the highly developed Korean culture of the time has been believed to have diffused to the islands of Japan. The high-school Korean history textbook gives two pages to cultural diffusion from *Paekche* and *Silla* to the Japanese islands under the heading "our culture went to Japan". In this section, it enumerates cultural items that Japan received from Korea: Chinese literature, Confucianism, Buddhist architecture and sculptures (such as the meditating half-seated Maitreya figure of *Horyuji*), medicine, mural paintings, shipbuilding, music and many more (NHH, 2002: 267-268). It reads like a modified Korean version of the famous historicist motto of 'first in Europe, then elsewhere' formulated by Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000: 7).

'*A New History Textbook*', on the other hand, interprets this 'cultural diffusion' as a way of *Paekche* paying tribute to the *Yamato* dynasty or as a result of Japanese intervention in the politics of the Korean peninsula. A few sentences in this Japanese textbook make it explicit that this culture originated not in Korea, but in China (NHT, 2005: 33). Stress is also laid on the direct contact between 'China' and 'Japan', skipping over Korea. It is in tune with the

Okakura Tenshin's thesis that the Japanese nation constructed its own art by appropriating the quintessence of Oriental art. Oriental art could thus be represented *only* by Japanese art (Takagi, 2004: 171-173). Despite the interpretational differences, both stress their own national uniqueness and superiority, and attribute eternal characteristics to their nations. The uniqueness and superiority of 'our nation' is thrown into relief through providing negative examples of nations that were/are "inferior". The primordialist concept of nation on which the two rival history textbooks are built has strengthened the originist tendency in this way.

In regards to understanding culture, the originist stance assumes national culture as 'the Real'. It poses the question "what is the essence of the national culture?", and provides a framed answer. Living culture, namely the way in which people produce, consume and interact on multiple levels in their everyday lives, is replaced by the fossilised essence of the so-called national culture. The particularity discourse helps to construct national culture because it implies the peculiarity of the national experience. But the particular and the universal have to be configured in order to extract the peculiar essence of national culture. Where China occupied the position of the universal in pre-modern East Asia, today it is Europe that has become a hegemonic mirror in which both Japanese and Korean national cultures reflect themselves. In this way, the discourse of national culture in history textbooks essentialises not only their own national cultures but also the national cultures of 'Others', which in turn results in cultural reinforcement of national essentialism.

#### **V. Autochthonism: lest their history step into 'our own territory'**

In the primordialist concept of nation, even prehistory serves as a political instrument to argue for territorial claims. Contemporary political claims to disputed territory are likely to be linked with historical controversies, and tend to derive from primordialist viewpoints. This explains why autochthonism is prevalent in East Asian and East European historiography, rather than historiography based on the modernist concept of nation. Autochthonism tends to

ignore “foreign” enclaves in its native land or to extend the reaches of “native” territory as far as possible. National archaeological research, meanwhile, serves to internalise this autochthonism, and very often nationalised archaeology is also linked with historical anthropology, which further contributes to the national myth-making project by making a distinction between ‘foreign blood’ and ‘unmixed peoples’ (Hroch, 1996: 295).

In East Asia, autochthonism is most palpable in the controversy between Korean and Japanese historians over the alleged Japanese commandery, called *Imna*, established in Kaya around the fourth century CE. ‘*A New History Textbook*’ states that the ‘*Yamato* royal court led its army cross the sea to Chosŏn and established a military base in *Imna* – on the southern coast of the Korean peninsula - in the late fourth century’. It goes on to say that the *Yamato* army helped *Silla* and *Paekche* to fight against the army of *Gogurye*, and, in return for Japanese assistance, *Silla* and *Paekche* paid tribute to *Yamato* (NHT 2001: 37-40). Leaving aside the question of factual accuracy, this controversy reveals serious nationalist politics. Regardless of ‘fact or fake’, the history of the *Imna* commandery originated in a discursive process of making China and Chosŏn/Korea Japan’s own “Orient”. Japanese colonial historians constructed the image of the Japanese commandery of *Imna* to justify Japanese colonial rule over Korea in the twentieth century. That explains why Korean historians react vehemently to the claims regarding the *Imna* commandery, criticising it as neo-colonialist history. As a result *Imna* exists only in Japanese history textbooks.

This phenomenon is not peculiar to East Asian historiography. The controversy over the *Imna* commandery brings to mind the dispute between German ‘*Ostforschung*’ and Polish ‘*Westforschung*’. The German ‘*Ostforschung*’ has interpreted the mediaeval German settlement in East Central Europe as Germany’s right to ‘land and rule’, and made use of it as a historical justification for the so-called civilising mission of the *Kulturvoelker* over the Barbarians (Piskorski, 2002: 7-24). The Polish response was to emphasis the cultural continuity and Slavic nature of the ‘Regained land’, Western lands of former East Prussian

territory newly acquired after the Second World War (Raczkowski, 1996: 208-213). Where German *Ostforschung* represents the peculiarity of German Orientalism in regards to the Slavic East, Polish *Westforschung* is deeply imbued with the ‘Desire towards West (Drang nach Westen)’. That parallelism between East Asia and Eastern Europe originates in the autochthonism immanent in the national history paradigm.

But Korean historians do not stop at negating the Japanese enclave in ‘our own territory’. Confronting the undeniable fact of the ‘Han commanderies’ in the north of the Korean peninsula, Korean history textbooks describe it very vaguely in just one sentence (NHM 2002: 19). Never using the word ‘commandery’, it merely mentions the end of Old Chosŏn in the year 108 BCE, the territory of which is said to have extended into Manchuria as far as the lower reaches of the Liao River. Regardless of historical facts, Korean history textbooks reflect the sentiment that foreign enclaves on the Korean peninsula should not be recognised. Such autochthonism never makes room for understanding the ‘Han commanderies’ as a historical moment at which a developed culture was introduced to the Korean peninsula. What it finds in the Han commandery, rather, is the proto-colonial relationship between Han-China and Chosŏn-Korea, a shameful history. It is certain that nationalist presentism has overwhelmed historical contextualism in this debate.

It is this same autochthonism that dominated the controversy over the historical sovereignty of *Goguryeo* between Korean and Chinese historians (Lim 2005). The controversy broke out when the Chinese historians began to insist that *Goguryeo* was part of the “local history” of the ancient Chinese state and attempted to incorporate *Goguryeo* into Chinese national history. That view reflected a basic principle of Chinese national history which defines the present territory of the People’s Republic (as well as some currently disputed territories) and the 56 ethnic groups who inhabit it as China’s historical space. This is in sharp contrast to the traditional Chinese perception of minorities as barbarians. The barbarian others of traditional historiography have suddenly become a part of ‘we-Chinese’ in

contemporary Chinese historiography which integrates the traces of national minorities in border areas into the history of a unitary and centralised multinational state. *Goguryeo*'s shift from the barbarian others to China's "own history" is attributable to the magic of "national history". A retrospective genealogy inherent in the national history paradigm looks back on the pre-modern past with the multinational state of the PRC as a reference point.

In Korean history textbooks, however, *Goguryeo* belongs to Korean history from the perspective of historical origin, not territorial integrity within the present borders. They presume that the *Goguryeo* people were descended from the *Yemaek* people of *Buyeo* who eventually developed into the Korean nationality. They emphasise that the Korean peninsula and Manchuria-Liadong have been closely linked to each other in cultural and physical terms since the prehistoric era. It is not a coincidence that some ultra-nationalist Koreans, under the slogan of "restoration of former territories", argue for the extension of Korean state sovereignty to include Manchuria. This sovereign desire manifests itself in 'Drang nach Manchuria'-a Korean version of the Polish 'Drang nach Westen'. Miroslav Hroch pointed out that a nation-state, based on the concept of political nation, defines the present political border as its historical domain, while an ethnic state, based on the concept of an ethnic nation, tends to look back to prehistoric times for historical legitimacy (Hroch, 1996: 295). His argument seems to be applicable to the ongoing historical disputes over *Goguryeo* between China and Korea.

But neither historiography makes room for the Khitan, Mohe, Jurchen and other nomadic peoples who also established their own polities or states within these regions, such as Liao and Jin in present-day Manchuria. Their traces are suppressed, ignored and erased for the linear development of either China or Korea. At best, histories of these nationalities are marginalised in a teleological writing of history, the final destination of which is the existing unitary nation-state, the PRC and the Republic of Korea. Thus, in Chinese history textbooks for example, the states established by the Jurchen and other steppe peoples serve principally

to bolster the grand narrative of “ethnic integration” and “national unification”. The paradigm of national history thereby reframes plural “histories” into a single “History”. As such, it cannot but be violent as well as shameless. The controversy over *Goguryeo* between Korean and Chinese historians shows that the autochthonism is not peculiar to the primordialist ethnic nation but is also elemental to the modernist political nation.

## **VI. The defenceless past?**

What history textbooks in East Asia teach seems to be not history, but a political idea. The anachronisms inherent in projecting the perceptual framework of the modern nation-state onto the remote past do not appear to matter. By disseminating the idea that a modern nation-state is a natural entity with a communal destiny dating from the immemorial past, these anachronisms serve to strengthen national legitimacy; indeed, in the presentist cause of serving the nation, such anachronisms are positively encouraged. The past seems defenceless in the face of nationalist historians who pompously alter the past. The past in East Asian history textbooks thus seems clearly to be subject to political manipulation. Even “God” cannot alter the “Past” as “the Real”. But the past comes to us as perceived reality. That is why a set of cognitive frameworks that influence the perceptual process is more important than questions of “right” or “wrong” in the analysis of history textbooks. In other words, one should ask the phenomenological question before the positivist question.

Finally, it should be remembered that it is mostly the ruling regime’s speech rather than scholars’ speech that dominates history textbooks in East Asia, due largely to government supervised textbook inspection systems. The result of regime-dominated speech is a nationalist phenomenology which sets the nationalist episteme as the cognitive norm by which historical facts are constructed. Viewed from the perspective of this nationalist phenomenology, the antagonistic complicity of national histories, which has been hidden

behind a thick curtain of vociferous disputes, controversies and arguments over the past, is revealed. I would hope that the past is not completely defenceless thanks to scientific criticism, but only through deconstructing the national history paradigm can a path be cleared for the development of a mature culture of scientific criticism. Scientific criticism never means a return to naïve positivism; rather it demands a deconstruction of the positivist myth. And perhaps the greatest myth in modern historiography has been the claim of nationalist historians to the “scientific status” of their knowledge.

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