

## **Education, Politics and Sino-Japanese Relations: Reflections on a Three-year Project on *East Asian Images of Japan***

VICKERS, Edward\*

*Drawing on a recent collaborative and interdisciplinary study of East Asian Images of Japan, this article discusses contemporary Chinese portrayals of Japan, their political context, and their significance for Sino-Japanese relations. It questions some widely-held assumptions concerning the extent of 'thought control' in an authoritarian state, the nature of popular protest, and the relationship between official propaganda and popular lived experience. While the main focus is on portrayals of Japan in mainland China, for comparative purposes some reference is made to Hong Kong and Taiwan. The latter part of the article also features a brief discussion of images of China in Japan, especially relating to the Second World War. This reflects particularly on the role of museums as vehicles for 'peace education,' focusing on two key institutions in Kyushu. China's 'bases for patriotic education' and Japan's 'peace museums' ostensibly embody radically different institutional missions. However, while Japan's memorials to the war evince greater diversity, in harping on national victimhood and obscuring the reasons for war, key sites of 'peace education' arguably deliver a message that is just as nationalistic as that conveyed by their Chinese counterparts. The article concludes by arguing that, notwithstanding its 'totalitarian' facade, China's social and political fragility in fact limits the scope for the authorities there to moderate anti-Japanese public discourse. In democratic Japan, by contrast, a more honest and open engagement with the national past is—or should be—far more achievable. For both moral and political reasons, scholars and educationalists in Japan therefore urgently need to consider their role in improving Sino-Japanese relations, not least through more forceful engagement in public debate over the socialization of the young.*

**Keywords:** China; history; politics; Sino-Japanese relations; peace museums

---

\* Kyushu University  
e-mail: vickers.edward.645@m.kyushu-u.ac.jp

## 1. Introduction

*Frankly speaking, until around ten years ago, we Japanese for the most part did not really take China seriously.* (Ikegami 2013)

On August 8 2004, China played Japan in the final of the Asian Cup in Beijing's Workers' Stadium. Watching the match in a nearby bar, I suddenly noticed something odd about the transmission. CCTV had stopped relaying images of fans in the terraces or live crowd noise: only the players on the pitch were visible, only the voices of the commentators could be heard. Meanwhile, viewers in Japan were witnessing a near-riot amongst Chinese supporters, incensed at the referee's failure to spot a goal-scoring handball by Nakata Koji. Japan went on to win the match 3:1. After the final whistle, local fans burnt Japanese flags, hurled bottles and attacked a car carrying a Japanese embassy official. Outside the bar, cars raced along 'Peace Boulevard' (*Ping An Da Jie*), horns blaring, their enraged occupants waving the national flag and yelling anti-Japan slogans.

In many ways, this incident encapsulates contemporary Sino-Japanese relations. The outburst of popular hostility was spontaneous, but occurred in the context of an ongoing 'patriotic education campaign' that has fuelled resentment at China's past subjection to foreign 'bullying', not least by Japan (Zhao 1998). Half-hearted attempts by state media to strike a cooler, more measured tone, focusing on the failings of the referee, stopped short of confronting the underlying current of xenophobia. Meanwhile, for many watching Japanese, the images of Chinese fury came as a rude shock. Largely ignorant of modern China, and accustomed to viewing their own country as a peace-loving outpost of 'advanced' modernity committed to aiding its 'backward' neighbours, most young Japanese were ill-equipped to comprehend Chinese antipathy. Predictably, over subsequent years this incomprehension has in its turn stoked resentment, as Japanese opinion has turned dramatically anti-Chinese.<sup>1</sup>

Drawing on a recent collaborative study of *East Asian Images of Japan*, this article discusses contemporary Chinese portrayals of Japan, their political context, and their significance for Sino-Japanese relations. This project cannot claim fully to capture the diversity and complexity of Chinese images of Japan. However, in embracing a multi-disciplinary approach, examining not just school textbooks and curricula, but also museums, cinema and other media, its findings suggest a need to revise certain widely-held stereotypes and assumptions—for example, concerning the extent of 'thought control' in an authoritarian state, the nature of popular protest, and the relationship between official propaganda and popular lived experience. For illustrative purposes, some reference is also made to my own experience of living, teaching and researching in Chinese societies over a period of more than twenty years.

The latter part of the article briefly addresses the other side of the Sino-Japanese coin: images of China in Japan, especially relating to the Second World War. Having researched depictions of Japan in Chinese museums and their relationship with 'patriotic education', in looking at Japan I reflect on the role of museums as vehicles for 'peace education,' focusing on two key institutions in Kyushu. Mainland China's 'bases for patriotic education' and Japan's 'peace museums' might be supposed to embody radically different institutional missions. However, while Japan's memorials to the war are more diverse in tone and message than China's, in harping on national victimhood and obscuring the reasons for war, key sites of 'peace education' arguably deliver a message that is just as nationalistic. Public avoidance of historical controversy is by no means

an East Asian specialty, but its consequences here are especially dangerous. Notwithstanding its ‘totalitarian’ facade, China’s social and political fragility severely limits the scope for the authorities there to moderate public discourse concerning Japan. In democratic Japan, by contrast, demanding an honest engagement with the national past is—or should be—both possible and central to the vocation of educators, academics and the media. The article therefore concludes that, for both moral and political reasons, scholars and educationalists in Japan urgently need to consider how they might contribute to improving Sino-Japanese relations, not least through seeking to engage more forcefully in public debate over the socialization of the young.

## **2. State Propaganda versus Populist Politics in Public Representations of Japan: a Note on Hong Kong and Taiwan**

The dramatic recent deterioration in relations between China and Japan stems from a spat over the Japanese government’s 2012 move to nationalize the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in response to maneuvers by Ishihara Shintaro, then mayor of Tokyo, to buy them for his municipality. Reports in the Japanese media or in the online ‘blogosphere’ of the resulting furore in China have generally drawn little distinction between the official position of the Beijing regime and public opinion, reflecting an assumption that, in ‘authoritarian’ China, ‘brainwashing education’ renders the latter a reflection of the former (see Ogura et al 2013).<sup>2</sup> However, the very prominent role in China’s ‘Protect the Diaoyu’ (*Bao diao*) movement played by activists in Hong Kong—and, to a lesser extent, Taiwan—suggests that the truth is rather more complicated.

Within Hong Kong, it is the anti-Beijing Democrats who have been at the forefront of the ‘Protect the Diaoyu’ movement, while their pro-Beijing opponents have remained relatively quiescent (Matthews 2001). This pattern has held ever since the early 1970s, when the first outburst of Diaoyu-related activism occurred in the context of America’s retrocession of Okinawa to Japan (Gries 2004, 121–2). No popular anti-Japan protests took place then in mainland China, where anti-Japan demonstrations rarely enjoyed official sanction. As late as the autumn of 1996, when Hong Kong activists were sailing for the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, the Beijing government was arresting anti-Japan agitators and insisting that the territorial dispute should be handled through ‘cool government-to-government negotiations’ (Gries 2004, 122–5). ‘Protecting the Diaoyu’ has been for these Hongkongers largely a matter of asserting a ‘Chineseness’ that transcends statehood, exposing the hypocrisy of the Party’s patriotic propaganda, and celebrating the freedoms accorded by the local rule of law.<sup>3</sup> The issue has thus been a handy stick with which to belabour not only a reviled former enemy, but also a remote and autocratic Communist regime. At the same time, both for the Beijing authorities and their local opponents, what lends potency to appeals to anti-Japan nationalism is the reservoir of war-related folk memory into which they tap.

Most Hongkongers today can trace their origins to the postwar refugee exodus from the mainland, at its height during the Civil War of the late 1940s. Those refugees had previously lived through China’s long struggle with Japan, from which the Communist Party (CCP) emerged claiming superior ‘patriotic’ credentials to the Kuomintang (KMT)—a claim naturally hotly contested by the latter. Many Hong Kong residents have thus harboured resentment both of the Japanese and of the Communists—for squandering the fruits of victory in an internecine bloodbath, and foisting a brutal authoritarianism onto a ravaged society (Leung 1996; Vickers

2005). And such memories have been passed down through generations. As a schoolteacher in mid-1990s Hong Kong, I heard vehement anti-Japanese sentiments voiced by many of my students, even though their history textbooks at that time portrayed Japan in relatively positive terms (see Morris and Vickers 2013).<sup>4</sup>

In postwar Taiwan, meanwhile, orthodox narratives of the recent national (i.e. Chinese) past highlighted the KMT's achievement of victory over the Japanese, while emphasizing the subsequent perfidy of the Soviet-backed Communists. KMT efforts at political socialization sought to cultivate an identification with the Chinese 'motherland' and the KMT itself—portrayed as the defender of the nation against foreign imperialists and internal 'bandits' (Jones 2013). However, such messages collided with the experience and folk memory of 'native-born' (*bentu*) Taiwanese, for whom KMT rule, especially in the early postwar years, was experienced as an external imposition, if anything more brutal than the Japanese colonialism that preceded it. Far from hailing the KMT as liberators, many became inclined to view the Japanese era with a sort of hazy nostalgia. Propaganda declaring the imminence of a triumphant Nationalist return to the mainland rang increasingly hollow, while lurid reports of Communist excesses may if anything have served further to exacerbate a sense of alienation from 'China' on the part of many Taiwanese.

The cases of Hong Kong and Taiwan demonstrate that the influence of programmes of political socialization is highly dependent on the extent to which these resonate with lived experience and folk memory. Many Taiwanese, despite decades of Chinese nationalist indoctrination, rejected an identity associated with a regime experienced as an alien imposition. Meanwhile, many Hongkongers, despite—or perhaps because of—the assiduous efforts of the British to 'depoliticise' local schooling (Vickers 2005), vociferously asserted their patriotism in defiance of both the colonial administration and the Communist authorities in Beijing. Both anti-Japanese agitation in Hong Kong, and pro-Japanese nostalgia in Taiwan, were thus popular, oppositional movements tapping memories ignored or belittled by the state. In neither society was officialdom able simply to implant in a passive populace its preferred vision of Japan; nor has this been the case on the mainland.

## 2. Anti-Japanese Images on the Chinese Mainland

The Communist regime's recently more uncompromising stance over China's territorial claims in part reflects the generally greater assertiveness of its foreign policy. However, it must also be understood against a backdrop of internal political and social instability, with simmering public discontent over issues ranging from profound social inequality to environmental pollution and rampant official corruption (see comments by Ako, in Ogura et al 2013). The spectacular fall of Bo Xilai is just one symptom of this febrile political atmosphere. In this context, CCP leaders may calculate that facing down popular pressure for a strong anti-Japan stand would risk turning resentment against the Party itself.

But where does this popular antagonism towards Japan come from and, specifically, what role has official propaganda played in intensifying such sentiment? As the case of Hong Kong suggests, Chinese citizens are perfectly capable of harbouring profound resentment towards Japan without exposure to Communist-directed 'brainwashing'. At the same time, Chinese society is by no means as monolithic or undifferentiated as it may appear from afar; increasing

wealth, levels of education and overseas travel for a privileged few as well as, for many more, an explosion of internet use mean that sources beyond the state-controlled media play a growing role in shaping public opinion. And if more and more information about Japan arrives largely unmediated by the Communist regime, this compels us seriously to reflect on the extent to which responsibility for stoking Chinese antagonism may lie within Japan itself.

In Hong Kong, textbook narratives of the 'War of Resistance against Japan' have in recent years increasingly converged with the orthodox account on the mainland (Morris and Vickers 2013), but this convergence has been two-way. At the same time as Hong Kong texts have adopted a more explicitly 'patriotic' tone and a greater emphasis on Japanese atrocities, so the Marxist framework of mainland accounts has steadily broken down, leaving a residue of ethno-cultural nationalism to fill the ideological void (Rose 2013). One consequence is a much-reduced emphasis on the shared suffering of oppressed 'masses' everywhere. Until the 1990s, mainland texts stressed the hold of 'feudal remnants' over the pre-war Japanese state, largely absolving the common people from war responsibility. At the same time, the international dimension of 'class struggle' was invoked in attributing the rise of fascism and militarism largely to external forces—imperial rivalries and the effects of the global economic depression (Vickers and Yang 2013). The same emphasis on inter-class 'contradictions' informed the standard narrative of early twentieth-century Chinese history, framed as a struggle between the proletarian 'masses', championed by the Communists, and assorted 'feudal remnants', bourgeois capitalists and imperialist running-dogs gathered under the flag of the KMT (Rose 2013).

Since the mid-1980s, the end of the Cold War, the democratization of Taiwan, and an ideological shift from socialism to state-centred patriotism have all contributed to a 'new remembering of Japan' on the mainland (Coble 2007). Rather than stressing class-based antagonism with the KMT, the CCP has become anxious to underline the wartime unity of all 'patriotic Chinese'. This reflects not only the ideological elevation of patriotism, but also a concern to foster better relations with the KMT on Taiwan which, unlike its pro-independence rivals, remains at least theoretically committed to reunification with the Chinese 'motherland'. The anti-Japanese struggle has thus come to assume heightened importance as a symbol of Chinese unity and CCP legitimacy.

This was particularly so during the 1990s and early 2000s, when under President Jiang Zemin the 'War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression' became a major theme of the Patriotic Education Campaign. This encompassed not only the school curriculum, but also patriotic films, and museums and memorials commemorating Japan's wartime atrocities (Denton 2007). Through a range of media, young Chinese were confronted with shocking and graphic representations of Japanese brutality. More recently, less emphasis has been accorded to Chinese victimhood, and more to its triumphant transcendence; thus Beijing's refurbished 'National Museum' features new paintings and sculptures emphasizing the strength and unity of popular resistance, and the comprehensiveness of the moral and military victory over Japanese barbarism (Vickers 2013). But if the tenor of public representations of the war has changed, they retain their centrality to official attempts to shape a conception of Chinese identity premised upon moral superiority over the 'militarist' Japanese. This enterprise is sustained by a studied avoidance, in official historical narratives, of allusions to acts of barbarism or atrocity committed by the Chinese themselves.

There is thus much evidence to support the view that anti-Japanese sentiment in post-1990 China has been manufactured by CCP propaganda. At an international symposium on *East Asian*

*Images of Japan*, held in Fukuoka in September 2013, the distinguished Harvard sociologist Ezra Vogel endorsed this interpretation. Citing his numerous visits to China during the 1970s and 1980s, Vogel claimed never to have encountered expressions of anti-Japanese sentiment. Indeed, during this period China's elites were assiduously cultivating the Japanese—as key contributors of aid, investment and advice for the nascent 'Reform and Opening' drive. Deng Xiaoping and his key lieutenants were keen to bury the hatchet with Japan, and to emulate as far as possible the miraculous economic success of their eastern neighbour (Vogel 2011, chapter 10).<sup>5</sup> This impulse was shared with, and perhaps reinforced by, the authoritarian leader of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, who was simultaneously launching a very public 'Learn from Japan' campaign (Avenell 2013). The Communists never feted Japan in such explicit and unqualified terms, but Deng publicly invoked the inspiring example of Meiji-era modernization. Meanwhile, unauthorized translations of Vogel's 1979 bestseller, *Japan as Number One*, circulated widely throughout the country. However, did a desire to emulate Japanese economic success betoken deep-seated feelings of warmth and friendship for the wartime enemy? And even if elites were (for a time) willing to let bygones be bygones, to what extent, or on what terms, was the wider populace willing to do the same?<sup>6</sup>

By the mid-1980s, the garden of Sino-Japanese friendship was already disfigured by some decidedly prickly weeds. A Japanese controversy in 1982 over war-related history textbook content provided Deng with the opportunity to 'shore up domestic political unity' by adopting a staunchly critical stance vis-à-vis Japan (He 2013, 11). In the summer of 1985, Prime Minister Nakasone's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, and apparent disavowal of Japan's war guilt, triggered vehement criticism in the Chinese press and demonstrations on university campuses; another wave of student demonstrations followed in 1986–7, following a renewal of the textbook controversy (Yoshida 2006, 110). Critical media coverage of these issues was related to intra-Party power struggles, notably maneuvering to unseat the allegedly 'pro-Japanese' Hu Yaobang (Communist Party General Secretary, 1982–1987). Nevertheless, the demonstrators were not simply puppets of party apparatchiks; indeed, it was partly through shared experience of anti-Japanese activism that an autonomous student movement developed in the late 1980s (Liao 2006, 167). Ironically, when students gathered on Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989, it was originally to mourn the recently-deceased Hu Yaobang, but they came to commemorate his legacy as a liberal reformer—not his supposed friendship for Japan. In the aftermath of the 'Tiananmen Incident', awareness of the appeal of anti-Japanese populism informed the CCP's choice of xenophobic nationalism as an ideological substitute for discredited socialism.

Anti-Japanese sentiment in mainland China is thus latent in popular consciousness: available to be tapped and manipulated, but never entirely susceptible to official control. Moreover, like China's burgeoning wealth, resentment of Japan is not evenly distributed or universally shared amongst the country's population. Wealth has bred a class of highly-educated, cosmopolitan urbanites with direct experience of the world outside China. For work, study or leisure, Japan has been high on the list of preferred destinations for this relatively cultured, privileged elite.<sup>7</sup> More research is needed on the socio-economic background of anti-Japan rioters, but resentment seems strongest amongst those several rungs below the top of the social ladder. Attacks on Japanese products and symbols are simultaneously directed at the often-corrupt domestic elites who can afford Toyota Landcruisers, *sushi* banquets and skiing holidays in Hokkaido.

At the same time, contradictory images of Japan provoke conflict not only between groups or factions, elites and 'masses', but often within the minds of particular individuals. An attrac-

tion for Japanese popular culture is widespread in mainland China as it is elsewhere in East Asia, perhaps especially amongst girls and young women. Lisa Leung, researching online forums frequented by Chinese fans of Japanese soap operas, has documented the sometimes agonized reflections of bloggers, often university students, whose idolizing of aspects of Japanese culture and society often places them at odds with classmates, or online ‘friends’, who profess to see nothing good in Japan. For many, the tension between admiration for things Japanese, and a sense (related both to peer pressure and propaganda) that they *should* feel patriotic outrage, prompts considerable guilt and anguish (Leung 2013). This tension was evident in responses among Chinese bloggers to the Tohoku disaster of March 2011. While some evinced a disturbing *schadenfreude*, many professed admiration for the impressively swift, ordered and calm Japanese response to the earthquake and tsunami (if not the associated nuclear meltdown) (Yang 2011).

Emotional tension and complexity are, of course, grist to the artistic mill, and in recent years directors at the art-house end of Chinese cinema have attempted to transcend stereotyped portrayals of ‘good Chinese’ and ‘bad Japanese’. Jiang Wen’s masterpiece *Devils on the Doorstep* (*Guizi Laile*) (2000) depicts war as a terrifying, degrading and blackly comical experience for Japanese soldiers and Chinese peasants alike. Also eschewing Manichaeian stereotypes is Lu Quan’s *City of Life and Death* (*Nanjing! Nanjing!*) (2009), which narrates the brutal 1937 occupation from the point of view of a Japanese soldier. These works reveal a sophisticated sensibility far removed from the banalities of patriotic propaganda. However, despite success on the international film festival circuit, they were quickly withdrawn from general distribution on the Chinese mainland (Yau 2013). In speculating on the reasons for this, it is important to remember that the Communist Party itself is not monolithic—intra-party factions differ over the ‘correct’ line vis-à-vis Japan. Ultimately, however, public controversy is something authoritarian regimes anxiously avoid, and attempts to humanize Japanese soldiers on film are inevitably controversial in China—especially in the internet age, when perceived appeasers risk the instantaneous wrath of nationalist ‘angry youth’ (*fen qing*). (In this connection, it is worth noting that even in supposedly ‘democratic’ Japan, films such as *Nanjing! Nanjing!* are unavailable to buy or rent, and right-wing thugs have intimidated cinemas into cancelling or curtailing public screenings; see Yau 2013.)

The relationship between the media and the state in China today is not what it was thirty years ago. A vast and diverse media industry has emerged, responsive in some measure to market forces. The censorship apparatus of the Party-State remains powerful, but censors do not constantly peer over the shoulders of writers and producers; rather, they define the parameters of political acceptability through intervening to block unacceptable material.<sup>8</sup> The more adventurous test these parameters at the risk of having work withdrawn and careers set back; the more cautious self-censor. At the same time, media organisations must turn a profit by appealing to the politically more ‘correct’ tastes of their readers or audience. In this context, anti-Japanese content has come to seem a safe bet: stories of the war offer drama and tension, heroism and tragedy, and are hard for a regime wedded to ‘patriotism’ to censor. The number of anti-Japanese television dramas approved for distribution rose from 15 in 2004 to 177 in 2011–12, prompting official moves to curb the flow of xenophobic bile (Economist 2013). However, the authorities must tread a fine line, since a public clampdown on anti-Japan material could turn nationalist ire against the Party itself.

It may not be coincidental that this rapid rise in anti-Japan programming began during the

premiership of Koizumi Jun'ichiro, whose visits to the Yasukuni Shrine were widely reported in China. Such actions are guaranteed to provoke popular anger, stoking demand for televisual depictions of Japanese soldiers dying horrible deaths. Nor is this pattern of Japanese provocation and Chinese outrage new; Nakasone's 1985 visit to the Yasukuni Shrine sparked the first significant anti-Japan protests in the 1980s, and another prime ministerial visit in 1996 was part of the backdrop to the Senkaku/Diaoyu incident that autumn. Some Japanese observers express understandable frustration that more positive aspects of Japan's role, not least its vast disbursements of bilateral aid, have not been duly acknowledged in China (Hayashi 2012). However, even if this aid were partly intended as a form of tacit reparations, Chinese skepticism over the nature and extent of Japan's reckoning with its wartime past appears amply justified. Would a citizenry fully-apprised of the nature of Japan's East Asian wars elect, then re-elect, defiant apologists for those wars to the governorships of Tokyo and Osaka? And would not a governing establishment genuinely committed to a clean break with Japan's imperialist past take steps to ensure that young Japanese were challenged to think critically about that past? Such questions compel consideration of the ways in which Japanese action, and inaction, contributes to the exacerbation of Sino-Japanese tensions—and therefore of what steps Japanese actors might take to improve matters.

### 3. 'Peace Education' and Nationalism in Japan

The headline article in the September 2013 issue of the high-brow Japanese monthly *Bungei Shunju* features a selection of experts discussing 'Japan, China and Korea: a Hundred Years' War' (*Nichi Chuu Kan Hyakunen Senso*) (Ogura et al 2013). Here, as in the public sphere more generally, it is the arguments of those on the political right that come across most forcefully: 'However much we apologise, demands for apology will never end!' (Hata, p. 95; Kitamura, p. 96); 'It's a fact that China and Korea suffered a lot of trouble (*meiwaku*) in past wars, but this was in the time of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers!' (Kawamura, p. 96); 'Chinese and Koreans have been brainwashed by "anti-Japan education"' (Hata, p. 100); 'Why have China and Korea not managed to become modern states?' (Hata, Furuta, Kawamura and Kitamura, p. 101); 'The comfort women issue has been overblown' (Hata, Kawamura, p. 103); 'The South Korean army operated comfort stations during the Korean War' [so who are they to point the finger?] (Hata, p. 104). For such commentators, the causes of anti-Japan sentiment are to be found exclusively within China and Korea: their pathological collective psychology, dysfunctional politics, brainwashing education, megalomaniacal desire (on China's part) to restore imperial hegemony over East Asia, and craven willingness (on the part of Korea) to connive in this (Matsumoto, pp. 98-9). According to this view, the fundamental problem in East Asian relations is that China and Korea have yet to mature into the sort of settled, rational modernity that Japan exemplifies.

As we have seen, Chinese portrayals and perceptions of Japan do indeed need to be understood in the context of internal political and social tensions. Ako Tomoko, a sociologist of contemporary China who also participated in the *Bungei Shunju* discussion, underlines the links between anti-Japan agitation and broader social discontent in China today. She also reminds her interlocutors that some more liberal Chinese intellectuals, concerned at their country's profound environmental and social crises, have called for China to learn from Japan's experience. This highlights, she argues, the scope for Japanese to build constructive relationships with Chinese



counterparts at the non-governmental level (p. 111). At the same time, Ako and Ogura Kazuo (Japan's former ambassador to Korea), alone among the seven *Bungei Shunju* discussants, emphasise the pressing need for Japanese to 'first reflect on our own country's history' (Ogura, p. 97). After all, as Ako points out, it is not just in China that 'angry youth' exchange xenophobic screeds on the Internet; 'amongst Japanese youth, the rise of "hate speech" and extreme nationalism [directed at China and Korea] is a cause for concern' (p. 112). This, she says, is something for which researchers, educators and the media all need to take responsibility.

The problems with history education in Japanese schools, not least the highly superficial coverage consequent upon adherence to a conventionally chronological approach, have been exhaustively analysed elsewhere (e.g. Cave 2012).<sup>9</sup> Here I confine my remarks to another aspect of schooling highly relevant to the portrayal of Sino-Japanese relations: 'Peace Education'. Few can object to the desirability of 'peace', or to the importance of impressing upon the young a sense of the horror of war. However, it matters which horrors, and which wars, are selected for this purpose, and how they are contextualized and explained. Almost all schoolchildren in Kyushu are taken to Nagasaki's Atomic Bomb Museum (*Genbaku shiryukan*) at least once, and many in the south of the island visit the Chiran Peace Museum for Kamikaze Pilots (*Chiran Tokkou Heiwa Kaikan*), near Kagoshima. Both the atomic bombing and the kamikaze programme are tragedies that warrant commemoration. But what sense do these sites convey of the place of war in the national past and its significance for Japan's external relationships—past and present?

In September 2013, I took a visiting Indian professor to visit both these museums. My guest, a distinguished historian, has been prominently involved in debates over history teaching in South Asia, and runs a course on peace education at a top Indian university. A fierce critic of nuclear weapons, he was keen to see how the atomic bombing was commemorated in Nagasaki. Having previously visited Hiroshima, he felt that changes to the Peace Memorial Museum there had diluted the horror of the bombing—on this measure, the more graphic display at Nagasaki merited approval for its greater 'shock value'. However, the museum addresses the historical context for the bombing only as an afterthought. Prominence is given to a large timeline entitled 'Events leading up to the atomic bombing', but this deals with the bomb's invention and testing, without referring to the broader context of the war. My Indian friend sympathized with this approach; coming from South Asia, where a nuclear arms race is in progress, he felt that the overwhelming focus should be on the horrific nature of the weapons themselves. He was intrigued, but apparently untroubled, by the pseudo-religious atmosphere of the museum, the Peace Memorial Hall and the nearby Peace Park, with its heavily symbolic statuary.

Designed for a global audience, the Nagasaki museum seeks to transmit a universal message concerning the awfulness of nuclear weaponry. By contrast, the Chiran museum delivers a message tailored more exclusively for Japanese consumption. The adjacent shrine to the fallen pilots makes this site reminiscent of the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, which features a large museum (the Yushukan) commemorating Japan's military exploits. That the similarity is more than superficial is clear from the outset of the exhibition: 'The aim of [the Greater East Asian War] was to liberate South East Asia from the Great Powers of the world and to make mutual prosperity of them (*sic.*) because almost all of the countries in this area were the colonies of the United States, England, France and Holland' (Kawatoko 2012, 7).<sup>10</sup>

The young men of the *tokkoutai* are represented as martyrs to a noble cause, rather than as victims of a reckless military adventure. Much space is devoted to photographs of the pilots and

their moving final letters to loved ones, expressing patriotism, stoicism and solicitude for wives and mothers; but visitors are never reminded that these missives were subject to strict military censorship. A picture described as ‘the symbol of our museum’, *The Chiran Requiem (Chiran Chinkon no Fu)* shows ‘six heavenly maidens... helping a lone pilot to escape from the bowels of the plane and taking him to a safe destination in the sky’ (Kawakoto 2012, 70). My Indian visitor commented: ‘Amazing! I never realized that the Japanese invented suicide bombing! Everyone in India thinks it was Muslim extremists in Pakistan and Afghanistan!’ The portrayal of the kamikaze pilots evinces a similar glorification of suicidal fanaticism, and a similar exploitation of adolescent male psychology—epitomized by the promise of bliss in the arms of ‘heavenly maidens’.

That the kamikaze pilots were not martyrs to a sacred cause but victims of a state warped by militarism is an interpretation nowhere entertained in the Chiran museum. Here the cause for which they died is portrayed as a heroic struggle to liberate ‘Asia’ from the forces of the imperialist ‘West’—primarily America. But as to what other Asians made of this, the museum tells us nothing. A book of ‘impressions of foreign visitors’, almost all Western, contains predictable expressions of shock, sorrow and sympathy for the fallen pilots. But if any Chinese or Korean visitors left impressions, these have not been recorded.

A ‘peace education’ consisting largely of visits to sites such as these can shed little meaningful light on how its Asian neighbours were affected by Japan’s wars. Taken together, these museums portray Japanese as victims or heroes of the ‘Pacific’ or ‘Greater East Asian’ War, while either downplaying or wholly ignoring the role of the Japanese state in precipitating the conflict; and in this respect they are broadly representative of mainstream public discourse. It is from an assiduously cultivated public memory of *Japanese* suffering that lessons concerning the importance of ‘peace’ are derived. It requires little effort to imagine how those who have internalized this narrative might react to anti-Japan demonstrations in China or Korea—even if, in orderly Japan, outrage expresses itself not in violent street protest, but in quiet electoral support for nationalist candidates.

#### 4. Reflections and Implications

That many Japanese should appear relatively uncritical of the vision of national victimhood conveyed in these museums is understandable, for precisely the same reason that many Chinese accept the ‘patriotic’ propaganda to which they are relentlessly exposed. These messages are plausible because they are true—but their truth is dangerously partial. China was subjected to horrendous atrocities at the hands of Japan’s imperial armies, but invasion was also intertwined with bitter internecine struggles that continued after the Japanese had left, and took millions more lives. This history of internal strife in turn helps to explain why anti-Japan posturing has become a potent political tool not just for China’s rulers, but also for their opponents, for example among Hong Kong’s Democrats. For their part, the Japanese undeniably suffered hugely during the war (a fact largely ignored in Chinese accounts), but this suffering was the foreseeable outcome of the collective folly of the country’s military-bureaucratic-political elite.<sup>11</sup> If ‘patriotic education’ in China deserves some of the blame for stoking xenophobic nationalism, then so does ‘peace education’ in Japan, in so far as it fails adequately to acknowledge the suffering inflicted by Japan on non-Japanese.

For most of its post-war history, Japan, like China, has been governed by one political party. In the Japanese case, this has been led by figures drawn from precisely the same elites that ruled the country prior to 1945—a fact that raises questions (not least amongst Chinese observers) concerning the nature and extent of Japan's post-war 'democratisation'. It comes as no surprise that Abe Shinzo and many of his colleagues are at pains to preserve the honourable memory of their grandfathers. For their part, China's Communist rulers always related their legitimacy in part to their purportedly 'vanguard' role in the national resistance to the Japanese onslaught (Gries 2004, chapter 5). It is thus no puzzle why they have been keen to play the anti-Japan card, especially in a post-Cold War context in which socialism has been decisively abandoned as the regime's legitimating ideology.

Despite such similarities, those Japanese commentators most vocal in ridiculing Chinese or Korean 'anti-Japan' prejudice tend to posit a fundamental contrast with their East Asian neighbours. Where the latter are 'backward', Japanese are 'modern'; where they are puerile, Japanese are mature; where they are fanatical, Japanese are rational; and where they are 'brainwashed', Japanese are, it is to be supposed, clear-sighted. Such posturing, premised on a highly selective narrative of Japan's own past, may be primarily intended to impress a domestic audience, but when broadcast to audiences in China and Korea serves to reinforce the very same anti-Japan nationalism its exponents profess to condemn.

As Ako indicates, many Chinese intellectuals, concerned primarily with China's acute domestic crises, are keen to learn from Japan's experience of modernization. And, notwithstanding the economic problems of the past two decades, Japan has a compelling story to tell—not least as regards its evolution from imperialist aggressor to prosperous and peaceful democracy. However, incessant flouting of Chinese and Korean sensibilities by prominent Japanese public figures ensures that this 'good news' story is drowned out amidst the din of nationalist tub-thumping—on all sides. Meanwhile, an overwhelming focus on their own wartime victimhood, and corresponding neglect of Chinese victimization at Japanese hands, cripples the ability of the public to grasp why Chinese antipathy is so widespread and profound.

If, as the *Bungei Shunju* contributors assert, Japan's status as a 'democracy' differentiates it from Communist China, then Japanese educators, scholars and journalists possess freedoms largely denied to their Chinese counterparts. If the vicious circle is to be broken, it therefore falls first and foremost to Japanese educators to initiate a more honest and critical debate over the problems afflicting bilateral relations. The much-discussed step of revising history textbook content is necessary, but insufficient; also desirable is a revision of history pedagogy, to encourage students to engage more fully and critically with the East Asian past.

However, the amelioration of Japan's relations with its 'near abroad' also demands a more fundamental reorientation of the national mindset; away from a persistent fixation on America and 'the West', and towards embracing a shared East Asian destiny. Obsession with the West is reflected in the tendency to frame wartime memory primarily in relation to 'the Pacific', the conflict with America and the atomic bombings—rather than in relation to Japan's invasion of China. It is also evident in the association of 'foreign language education' exclusively with English, and of educational 'internationalisation' overwhelmingly with promoting ties with Western institutions. Only a tiny fraction of Japanese secondary schools at present offer instruction in Chinese as a foreign language, despite the intimate historical, cultural, linguistic and, in recent years, commercial ties between the two countries. Drastically reorienting strategies of educational 'internationalisation' towards East Asia might go some way towards providing the

basis for a healthier Sino-Japanese relationship in the long term.

It requires courage and determination to confront the well-funded, well-organised and often thuggish right-wing groups that tend to dominate ‘civil society’ in Japan—but it is possible, as was demonstrated by Ienaga Saburo’s long campaign to challenge Monbusho’s textbook censorship procedures (Ienaga 2000). Since Ienaga’s death, his incremental gains have been eroded (Cave 2012), and the 2012 return to power of LDP raises the prospect of a turn towards more explicitly ‘patriotic’ curricular content, and further suppression of coverage of the Asia-Pacific War. To return to the footballing theme with which this article opened, such moves would constitute a tragic ‘own goal’ for Japan, in terms both of the country’s external relations and the health of domestic democracy. Public debate over Japan’s modern history is a serious sport, and needs active, alert and forceful refereeing—a role that professional educators above all should be ready to undertake.

### Notes

1. The Pew Global Attitudes Project found in 2013 that just 5% of Japanese had a positive view of China, down from 34% as recently as 2011, and 55% in 2002 (Stokes 2013).
2. An early stereotype of Chinese ‘anti-Japan’ education in action is provided by Kobayashi Yoshinori in his bestselling *manga*, *Senso Ron (On War)*. A panel shows Chinese schoolteachers inciting students to hatred of ‘Japanese devils’. Kobayashi claims, misleadingly, that ‘one third’ of the primary school history curriculum (as of the 1990s) was taken up by accounts of ‘Japan’s war of invasion’ (Kobayashi 1998, 123). A sense of the sort of reactive nationalism that anti-Japan demonstrations in China provoke amongst many Japanese bloggers can be gained by typing *hannichi kyouiku* into any search engine.
3. It is worth noting that the main local organization formed to commemorate the Communist crackdown on the Student Movement in 1989—the ‘Alliance in Support of the Patriotic Democratic Movement in China’—in trumpeting the patriotism of its supporters implicitly damns the Beijing regime for betraying the same virtue. However, there are signs that, for a younger generation of Hongkongers, the force of such appeals to patriotism may be waning (see Veg 2013).
4. For the headmaster of this school, who had grown up in Hong Kong during the wartime occupation, memories of Japanese oppression were first-hand. He recalled having to forage in the countryside for edible roots and leaves to feed his younger siblings.
5. But Vogel neglects to recount how Deng in fact began to play on anti-Japanese sentiments from the mid-1980s onwards, as a means of bolstering his legitimacy (see He Yinan 2013, p. 11).
6. In the case of Singapore (whose importance as a source of inspiration for China’s reformers has been considerable), Avenell suggests that, despite the government’s hailing of Japan as an exemplar of ‘Asian’ modernity, the public remained far from convinced (2013, 46). Moreover, as Japan’s economic performance faded during the 1990s, the ‘Learn from Japan’ campaign was quietly shelved, and history textbooks subsequently invoked images of common resistance to wartime Japanese oppression as a means of reinforcing inter-communal cohesion (Khamsi and Han 2013).
7. Several longstanding friends of mine in Beijing and elsewhere in China have in recent years developed a taste for travel to Japan; one has bought a holiday home in Hakone. Another friend teaches at one of Beijing’s most prestigious high schools. Visiting this school at the height of the September 2010 Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute, I invited one class of 15–16-year-olds to share their views of Japan. Their responses appeared to divide on gender lines—some of the girls expressed admiration for Japanese culture and fashion, while the boys were more likely to express bellicose sentiments. In addition, those who had visited Japan—of whom there were a number (many students coming from decidedly wealthy and privileged backgrounds)—also appeared more moderate in their views of the country.
8. I have direct experience of the workings of censorship within a state-owned Chinese publishing organization, having spent three years writing English textbooks for the People’s Education Press in

Beijing. I discuss this experience in an article (in Japanese) published in the September 2012 issue of the magazine *Gai Kou (Foreign Affairs)*.

9. In the summer of 2013, I conducted a very brief survey of about 240 first-year students at Kyushu University (South West Japan's premier higher education institution), to gauge the extent of their awareness of key aspects of the Second World War relating to Japan. Their knowledge of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki appeared relatively extensive and detailed. However, 170 students (72.6%) were unable either to give the correct date (year) of the Nanjing Massacre, or to explain the nature of Unit 731—the Japanese army's notorious biological warfare research unit in Manchuria; only 5.5% knew the correct answers to both of these questions. More students gave 1941 (the date of the Pearl Harbor Attack) as the date of the Nanjing Massacre than gave the correct answer (1937). Only two wrote that the massacre 'never happened' or was 'a fiction', but many others guessed at dates in the 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century, suggesting that they had little or no awareness of this event. About as many students (27, or 11.5%) thought that Unit 731 was a 'kamikaze' (*tokkoutai*) unit as knew its real nature. This is despite the fact that all these students would have been required to study history ('World History', 'Japanese History', or both) at high school, from which they had graduated only several months previously.
10. This quotation is taken from the English-language guidebook, but the audio tour (both Japanese and English versions) begins in exactly the same way.
11. And was, in fact, foreseen—by, amongst others, Yoshida Shigeru, Japan's ultra-conservative (though nominally 'liberal') post-war Prime Minister, who was sympathetic with the imperialist aims of the 'war party' but convinced that war with Britain and America could only end in defeat. See John Dower *Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience, 1878–1954*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 'Introduction'.

## References

- Simon AVENELL (2013). 'Beyond mimesis: Japan and the uses of political ideology in Singapore', in Paul Morris, Naoko Shimazu and Edward Vickers (ed.) *Imagining Japan in Post-war East Asia*. London and New York: Routledge, 29–48.
- Peter CAVE (2012). 'Japanese Colonialism and the Asia-Pacific War in Japan's History Textbooks: Changing Representations and their Causes', in *Modern Asian Studies*, 47, 2, 542–580.
- Bernard CHAN (2012). 'Foreign interference claims fuel a vicious circle', *South China Morning Post*, December 14.
- Parks M. COBLE (2007). 'China's "New Remembering" of the Anti-Japanese War of Resistance, 1937–1945', *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 190, 394–410.
- Kirk DENTON (2007). 'Heroic Resistance and Victims of Atrocity: Negotiating the Memory of Japanese Imperialism in Chinese Museums', *Japan Focus* no. 2547 (October 2007).
- ECONOMIST (2013). 'Staged warfare: the government reins in "overly dramatic" anti-Japanese television shows' (June 1 edition).
- Christine HAN (2013). 'Wartime enemy or "Asian" model? An examination of the role of Japan in history textbooks in Hong Kong and Singapore', *China Perspectives*, December 2013 (forthcoming).
- Keiichi HAYASHI (2012). 'It's time for China to calm down', *Financial Times*, November 13.
- HE Yanan (2013). '40 Years in Paradox: Post-normalization Sino-Japanese relations', *China Perspectives*, 2013/4 (December), pp. 7–16.
- IENAGA Saburo (2000). *Japan's Past, Japan's Future: One Historian's Odyssey*. Rowman and Littlefield.
- IKEGAMI Tsuyoshi (2013). Preface, 'The Unknown China: A Bizarre Empire' (*Chuugoku shirarezaru: Igyo no teikoku*), in *Bungei Shunju*, June 1, 2013, p. 175. [In Japanese]
- JONES, Alisa (2013). 'Triangulating Identity: Japan's place in Taiwan's textbooks', in Paul Morris, Naoko Shimazu and Edward Vickers (ed.) *Imagining Japan in Post-war East Asia*. London and New York: Routledge, 170–189.
- Takeshi KAWATOKO (2012). *The Mind of the Kamikaze*. Chiran: The Peace Museum for Kamikaze Pilots.
- Khatera KHAMSI and Christine HAN (2013). 'The portrayal of the Japanese occupation in Singaporean

- textbook narratives', in Paul Morris, Naoko Shimazu and Edward Vickers (ed.) *Imagining Japan in Post-war East Asia*. London and New York: Routledge, 210–228.
- KOBAYASHI Yoshinori (1998). *Senso Ron (On War)*. Tokyo: Gentosha. [In Japanese.]
- Benjamin K.P. LEUNG (1996). *Perspectives on Hong Kong Society*. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Lisa LEUNG Yuk-ming (2013). 'Where transnational popular culture meets nationalist politics: Chinese netizens discuss Japanese dramas', unpublished paper presented at a workshop of the Leverhulme International Network on Japan and East Asian National Identities.
- LIAO Xuanli (2006). *Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy Towards Japan*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.
- Gordon MATTHEWS (2001). 'A collision of discourses: Japanese and Hong Kong Chinese during the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands crisis', in Harumi Befu and Sylvie Guichard-Anguis (ed.), *Globalizing Japan: Ethnography of the Japanese presence in Asia, Europe and America*. London and New York: Routledge: 153–175.
- Paul MORRIS and Edward VICKERS (2013). 'Reconstructing the Nation: the role of Sino-Japanese history in Hong Kong's schools', in Paul Morris, Naoko Shimazu and Edward Vickers (ed.) *Imagining Japan in Post-war East Asia*. London and New York: Routledge, 149–169.
- OGURA Kazuo, HATA Ikuhiko, KAWAMURA Yuusuke, FURUTA Hiroshi, MATSUMOTO Kenichi, KITAMURA Minoru, AKO Tomoko (2013). 'Prepare for a Hundred Years' War with China and Korea', *Bungei Shunju*, September 2013, 94–112.
- Caroline ROSE (2013). 'Changing Views of the Anti-Japanese War in Chinese high school history textbooks', in Paul Morris, Naoko Shimazu and Edward Vickers (ed.) *Imagining Japan in Post-war East Asia*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 129–148.
- Bruce STOKES (2013). 'Asia's view of China: mostly wary, but Japan most of all', *Pew Research: Global Attitudes Project* (online): <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/08/05/asia-view-of-china-mostly-wary-but-japan-most-of-all/> Accessed 16/10/2013.
- Edward VICKERS (2005). *In Search of an Identity: the politics of history as a school subject in Hong Kong, 1960s-2005*. Hong Kong: Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong.
- Edward VICKERS (2013). 'Transcending victimhood: Japan in the public historical museums of Taiwan and the People's Republic of China', in *China Perspectives* (special issue on Sino-Japanese relations, edited by Edward Vickers), forthcoming December 2013.
- Edward VICKERS and YANG Biao (2013). 'Shanghai's history curriculum reforms and shifting textbook portrayals of Japan', in *China Perspectives* (special issue on Sino-Japanese relations, edited by Edward Vickers), forthcoming December 2013.
- Ezra F. VOGEL (2011). *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kinnia YAU Shuk-ting (2013). 'Meanings of the imagined friends: Good Japanese in Chinese war films', in Paul Morris, Naoko Shimazu and Edward Vickers (ed.), *Imagining Japan in Post-war East Asia*. London and New York: Routledge, 68–84.
- YANG Yi (2011). 'Weibo, China and Japan', *The Diplomat* (online resource of the School of International Service, American University, Washington DC): <http://thediplomat.com/new-leaders-forum/2011/10/19/weibo-china-and-japan/>. Accessed October 17, 2013.
- Takashi YOSHIDA (2006). *The Making of the 'Rape of Nanking': History and Memory in Japan, China and the United States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Suisheng ZHAO (1998). 'A state-led nationalism: the patriotic education campaign in post-Tiananmen China.' *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 31(3), 287–302.