

Wartime Enemy or “Asian” Model?

An examination of the role of Japan in history textbooks in Hong Kong and Singapore

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ABSTRACT: This article compares the history curricula of Hong Kong and Singapore since the 1980s with respect to their treatment of Japan, particularly its involvement in World War II. It examines the role played by Japan as one significant “Other” against which its former victims define themselves. As well as being cast as a wartime aggressor and agent of local “victimhood,” Japan has also been hailed as an economic and military model worthy of emulation. By comparing portrayals in school history textbooks and their shifts over time, the author shows how images of Japan have been used by state elites in these two former British colonies to construct significantly divergent official visions of “postcolonial” identity.

KEYWORDS: history, images, “Other,” textbooks, war, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore.

Introduction

Hong Kong and Singapore are two societies that experienced Japanese expansionism in the twentieth century while under British colonial rule. Hong Kong had been ceded by the Qing government to the British in 1842 following the First Opium War, while Singapore was “founded” by an official from the British East India Company in 1819. During World War II, both societies experienced Japanese military assault, swift capitulation by the colonial authorities, followed by three and a half years of occupation that caused hardship and suffering among the local population. Given this, it is unsurprising that the narratives of invasion and occupation in Hong Kong and Singapore share similarities. However, the way in which the respective governments use memory of the war and Occupation in their efforts to shape national identity, as reflected in official history curricula and officially-vetted school textbooks, evince significant differences. This article compares the ways in which Japan has been portrayed as an “Other” in Hong Kong and Singapore in school textbooks in the period since the 1980s, focussing particularly on those texts currently in use. The portrayal of Japan is interpreted with reference to the socio-political context, and the approach to the construction of national identity, in the two societies.

Following the Japanese surrender, Hong Kong and Singapore were returned to British rule. Singapore remained under British control until it gained self-government in 1959, with independence following six years later, while Hong Kong was reunified with the Chinese mainland in 1997. Since achieving self-rule, Singapore has been governed by the People’s Action Party. Although its population is predominantly Chinese, it is known as a multicultural society because of the significant proportion of other ethnic groups: in 2012, the Chinese made up 74.1% of the population, Malays 13.4%, Indians 9.2%, and others 3.3%.⁽¹⁾ Singapore is a democracy in that the government is elected through popular suffrage, although the style of governance has often been described as soft authoritarianism, and the media is subject to strong official control. By contrast, the end of colonialism in Hong Kong heralded not independence but the incorporation of the territory into the People’s Republic of China as a “Special Administrative Region” under the “One Country, Two Systems” policy. Its government is

headed by a Chief Executive who is not popularly elected, but is chosen by an Election Committee approved by Beijing. While Hongkongers cannot choose the Chief Executive, there is a free press and a strong civil society. Today, the Hong Kong population is 94% Han Chinese, with the remaining 6% comprising Indonesians, Filipinos, Whites, Indians, Pakistanis, Nepalese, Japanese, Thai, other Asians, and others.⁽²⁾

For the people of Hong Kong and Singapore, the Japanese Occupation constituted a significant and in some cases traumatic historical episode, and the experience of being invaded and occupied by foreign troops created a strong sense of the “Other.” The concept of the “Other” has been expounded on by a number of scholars in different contexts. Mead⁽³⁾ writes about the “generalised other” with reference to the social roles and norms that children play with in the process of developing a self; de Beauvoir⁽⁴⁾ examines how women are regarded as the “Other,” with men as the primary, “essential” subject; Said’s⁽⁵⁾ interest is in the notion of Orientalism, and the view of the Orient in contradistinction to the West; on her part, Spivak⁽⁶⁾ uses the term “subaltern” to refer to colonial subjects who were of a lower status than the European elites, while Bauman’s⁽⁷⁾ focus was on the individuals or groups within a society who were stigmatised as the “excluded Other.” What many of these writings share is the claim that attempts to classify a particular group necessarily involve the creation of individuals or

I would like to thank the two anonymous referees, and Prof. Paul Morris and Dr. Edward Vickers, for their very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

1. Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade and Industry, “Table 1.3 Ethnic Composition of Resident Population,” *Population Trends: 2012*, 2012, p. 3; available at www.singstat.gov.sg/Publications/publications_and_papers/population_and_population_structure/population2012.pdf (accessed on 23 July 2013).
2. Racial Relations Unit, Home Affairs Department, “The Demographics: Ethnic Groups,” 2012, available at www.had.gov.hk/rru/english/info/info_dem.html (accessed on 23 July 2013).
3. George Herbert Mead, “The Genesis of the Self and Social Control,” *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 1925, pp. 251–277.
4. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex: A study of modern women*, translated and edited by H. M. Parshley, London, Jonathan Cape, 1972.
5. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London, Penguin Books, 2003.
6. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, London, Macmillan, 1988, pp. 24–28.
7. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Cambridge and Malden, M.A., Polity Press, 2007.

groups who are excluded from this classification. As de Beauvoir puts it, "No group ever sets itself up as the One without at once setting up the Other over against itself."⁽⁸⁾ There is therefore a sense in which the self and "Other" are conceptually related, with the "Other" (or "Others") typically central to the way in which a group or community defines itself.

A nation has been described as "an imagined political community,"⁽⁹⁾ with some scholars attempting to define the nation and national identity with reference to shared culture.⁽¹⁰⁾ Gellner believes that to do so casts the net too wide, as it may bring in cases that do not fit most understandings of a "nation"; he also observes that a nation comes about under certain conditions:

...when general social conditions make for standardized, homogeneous, centrally sustained high cultures, pervading entire populations and not just elite minorities, a situation arises in which well-defined educationally sanctioned and unified cultures constitute very nearly the only kind of unit with which men (*sic*) willingly and often ardently identify.⁽¹¹⁾

Nation states perform a number of roles to bring about the conditions for creating and sustaining a nation, and to foster a sense of national identity. As Bauman puts it in hyperbolic fashion:

They laud and enforce the ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural *homogeneity*. They are engaged in incessant propaganda of *shared* attitudes. They construct *joint* historical memories and do their best to discredit or suppress such stubborn memories as cannot be squeezed into shared tradition... They preach the sense of *common* mission, *common* fate, *common* destiny. They breed, or at least legitimize and give tacit support to, animosity towards everyone standing outside the holy union.⁽¹²⁾ (original emphasis)

Of the conceptions of the "Other" listed above, it is Bauman's that comes closest in terms of describing the way in which Japan is used by the political elites in Hong Kong and Singapore to define their respective societies. As will be seen, Japan is sometimes used as a contrast to define what a society is – or what its members would like to think it is – as well as a model of what they want it to be. Japan is by no means the only, or even the main, "Other" for Hong Kong and Singapore. As societies that have experienced British colonial rule, the British or the "West" also feature as significant "Others," and regional neighbours (China for Hong Kong, especially prior to 1997, and Malaysia and Indonesia for Singapore) came to loom larger as Britain headed for the imperial exit. This article will focus on the portrayal of Japan: although the Occupation took place seven decades ago, and for a relatively brief period, it still plays a significant role in history textbooks today.

Hong Kong and Singapore use a centrally mandated curriculum. Textbooks are commercially produced, but are written according to curriculum guidelines issued by the education bureau or ministry, and subject to its approval. Hence, while schools are able to choose from a range of commercially available textbooks, the views in the texts invariably reflect those of the government, and present the official, approved narrative and values. Through comparing the historical narratives of textbooks used in the two societies, this article will analyse the images of Japan that they convey, and the political ends that these are used to serve.

There are a number of studies that have analysed Hong Kong and Singapore in isolation with respect to the use of history, and how the school curriculum and textbooks portray the Japanese.⁽¹³⁾ The present article will draw on this body of work, and on recent original research⁽¹⁴⁾ carried out by members of the Leverhulme International Network on Japan and East Asia National Identities,⁽¹⁵⁾ in which I am a key participant. By drawing together these single country studies, the article will present a comparative analysis of the representation of Japan in history textbooks in Hong Kong and Singapore, particularly with respect to the Japanese Occupation. By placing these portrayals in social and political context, it will show how these have been influenced by domestic situations and considerations.

The Portrayal of Japan in Hong Kong and Singapore

Singapore

In Singapore, history as a compulsory subject is taught in two subjects in secondary school – History and Social Studies. In her study of Social Studies textbooks, Kho speaks of the "single dominant perspective,"⁽¹⁶⁾ and I have elsewhere written about the "overriding sense of a single, approved narrative"⁽¹⁷⁾ that is presented in the texts. This perspective or narrative refers to the particular interpretation of history – locally referred to as the Singapore Story – that is approved by the political elite, and that conveys the values and messages they consider necessary for the country's future and survival. According to this interpretation, the modern history of Singapore begins with its founding by a British official Stamford Raffles in 1819; the story

8. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex: A study of modern women*, op. cit., p. 16.
9. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London and New York, Verso, 1983, fourth impression 1987, p. 15.
10. See, for instance, Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1991.
11. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford UK and Cambridge USA, Blackwell, 1983 (1993 reprint), p. 55.
12. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, op. cit., p. 64.
13. For Hong Kong, the studies include: Flora Kan and Edward Vickers, "One Hong Kong, Two Histories: 'History' and 'Chinese history' in the Hong Kong school curriculum," *Comparative Education*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 2002, pp. 73–89; Edward Vickers and Flora Kan, "The Reeducation of Hong Kong: Identity, Politics and Education in Postcolonial Hong Kong," *American Asian Review*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 2003, pp. 179–228; Edward Vickers, Flora Kan, and Paul Morris, "Colonialism and the Politics of 'Chinese History' in Hong Kong Schools," *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 2003, pp. 95–111; Edward Vickers, *In search of an identity: The politics of history as a school subject in Hong Kong, 1960s–2005*, Hong Kong, CERC, 2005; Flora Kan, "The functions of Hong Kong's Chinese history, from colonialism to decolonization," *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 2010, pp. 263–278. For Singapore, the studies include: Chor Boon Goh and Saravanan Gopinathan, "History education and the construction of national identity in Singapore, 1945–2000," in Edward Vickers and Alisa Jones (eds), *History education and national identity in East Asia*, New York, Routledge, 2005, pp. 203–225; Kho Ee Moi, "Demonizing the Japanese Occupation: Exploring ideological discourses in Singapore History and Social Studies Textbooks," paper presented at the international conference The Japanese Occupation: Sixty Years after the End of the Asia-Pacific War, Singapore, September 2005, 2005; Christine Han, "History education and 'Asian' values for an 'Asian' democracy: The case of Singapore," *Compare*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 2007, pp. 383–398; Khatera Khamsi and Paul Morris, "Constructing the nation: Portrayals of national identity in Singapore's school textbook narratives of the Japanese Occupation," in Mark Baildon, Kah Seng Loh, Ivy Maria Lim, Gül Inanç, and Junaidah Jaffar (eds), *Controversial History Education in Asian Contexts*, Oxford and New York, Routledge, 2013, pp. 92–108.
14. Paul Morris and Edward Vickers, "Reconstructing the Nation: The role of Sino-Japanese History in Hong Kong's Schools," and Khatera Khamsi and Christine Han, "The Portrayal of the Japanese Occupation in Singaporean Textbook Narratives," both in Paul Morris, Naoko Shimazu, and Edward Vickers (eds), *Imagining Japan in Postwar East Asia*, London, Routledge, 2013 (in press).
15. The Japan and East Asia National Identities Education Network (JEANIEN) led by Professor Paul Morris of the Institute of Education University of London, and funded by the UK's Leverhulme Trust.
16. Kho Ee Moi, "Demonizing the Japanese Occupation," *art. cit.*, p. 9.
17. Christine Han, "History education and 'Asian' values for an 'Asian' democracy," *art. cit.*, p. 394.

then continues through the colonial period, and World War II when Japan invades and occupies the country, followed by the return to British rule, merger with Malaysia, and independence; there then follows the years of struggle to make Singapore the success it is today.

Interestingly, significant coverage of the Japanese Occupation in history texts only started from 1984, and should be seen as part of wider efforts aimed at promoting a particular vision of national identity and values. Political socialisation is usually carried out through Civics and Moral Education, in which values such as respect, responsibility, integrity, care, resilience, and harmony⁽¹⁸⁾ are promoted alongside the National Education messages centred on the importance of being rooted to the country, and the willingness to defend it.⁽¹⁹⁾ The (re)introduction of the Japanese Occupation into the curriculum should therefore be viewed as part of these efforts to impress on young Singaporeans the values and messages deemed to be essential for the survival of the country.

The inclusion of the war and Occupation in school history texts from the 1980s was not the first time there had been reference to Japan in Singapore. Avenell has written about the “Learn from Japan” campaign that was conducted during the same period, in which Japan was held up by the political leaders as a model for Singapore, and campaigns were conducted to promote “Japanese” approaches to productivity, work ethic and labour-management relations. Japan’s economic success and its productive and harmonious workplaces were linked to its societal values, which were interpreted as broadly “Asian.”⁽²⁰⁾

Where the primary history textbooks are concerned, Saito, Alviar-Martin, and Khong note how the portrayal of the Japanese contrasts with that of the British: the latter are “depicted as a partner and decision-maker – although acting primarily in self-interest,” while the former are “represented as a violent aggressor that ruled Singapore with severity and harshness.”⁽²¹⁾ Khamsi and Morris’s study of lower secondary texts between 1985 and 2007 focuses on the ethnic element in Japanese rule, and provides an analysis of how the focus of the coverage of the war and Occupation has shifted from one that stressed Chinese suffering, and the role of the Chinese during this period, to one that consciously represents the experience of all ethnic groups equally. They argue that this has effectively meant a shift from an ethno-cultural portrayal of the nation to one that is more multi-cultural.⁽²²⁾

The recent and more comprehensive analysis of the lower secondary history textbooks between 1985 and 2007 by Khamsi and myself⁽²³⁾ elaborates on the earlier work of the scholars cited above. The analysis shows the way in which the texts emphasise the cruelty of the Japanese. In the current text, for instance, one chapter – entitled “How did World War II affect Singapore?”, and comprising 33 pages – is devoted to the war and Occupation and the immediate post-war period.⁽²⁴⁾ In it, there is reference to the Sook Ching, which is described as an operation aiming “to identify and eliminate suspected anti-Japanese elements among the Chinese community.”⁽²⁵⁾ There is also reference to the savage and unpredictable violence to which the local population was subjected:

The Japanese used fear to rule Singapore. The cruelty of the *Kem-peitai*⁽²⁶⁾ kept people in a constant state of anxiety and fear.

At the slightest offence, punishment was swift and severe. Many anti-Japanese subjects were subjected to terrible torture or decapitation at the *Kempeitai* centres.⁽²⁷⁾

A highlighted text box describes an incident in which individuals identified as anti-Japanese are taken in lorries to a beach, and provides an eyewitness account of what follows:

We were next told to move off towards the sea. When all of us were in the water, the machine guns opened fire. I was at the far end of my group. When my companions were hit, they fell down and pulled down the rest of us. As I fell, I was hit on the face by a bullet. The machine guns then stopped firing. The soldiers came round to knife us with their bayonets. I shut my eyes. A soldier stepped on me to knife my neighbour. He did not turn to knife me. I kept my eyes shut. After some time, I heard the sound of lorries driving off.⁽²⁸⁾

The texts also portray the Japanese as discriminatory rulers, who take for themselves “the best of everything: rice, sugar, meat, fish, whisky and cigarettes”⁽²⁹⁾ in a time of severe shortages. The Japanese are also depicted as imposing an alien culture in their attempts to “Japanise” the local population by promoting the “Japanese spirit,” Japanese symbols of national identity such as their national anthem, and the Japanese language.⁽³⁰⁾

Where there is collaboration, this is placed within the context of the methods used by the Japanese. In addition to the local population being subject to coercive methods used to extract information,⁽³¹⁾ the Chinese as a group are “made” to make large contributions to the Japanese as a punishment for having supported the anti-Japanese war effort in mainland China.⁽³²⁾ By attributing to the Japanese the capacity for brutality and manipulation, the texts absolve the local people of personal responsibility for collaboration.

The overall effect of the portrayal of the Japanese Occupation is a layering on of details describing the horrors of an enemy occupation – the powerlessness in the face of the occupying force, the ever-present possibility of violence, and the humiliation to person and country.

While the focus in the 1980s texts is on the suffering of the Chinese,⁽³³⁾ the emphasis in the later texts is on common suffering, and care is taken to

18. Curriculum Planning and Development Division, *Civics and Moral Education Syllabus: Secondary: 2007*, Singapore, Ministry of Education, 2006, available: www.moe.gov.sg/education/syllabuses/aesthetics-health-and-moral-education/files/civics-and-moral-education-secondary-2007.pdf (accessed on 29 September 2013).

19. The National Education messages are:

1. Singapore is our homeland; this is where we belong.
2. We must preserve racial and religious harmony.
3. We must uphold meritocracy and incorruptibility.
4. No one owes Singapore a living.
5. We must ourselves defend Singapore.
6. We have confidence in our future.

Ministry of Education, “National Education messages,” 2013, available at www.ne.edu.sg/ne-messages.htm (accessed on 18 July 2013).

20. Simon Avenell, “Beyond mimesis: Japan and the uses of political ideology in Singapore,” in Paul Morris, Naoko Shimazu, and Edward Vickers (eds), *Imagining Japan in Postwar East Asia*, op. cit.

21. Eisuke Saito, Theresa Alviar-Martin, and Khong Thi Diem Hang, “How can we teach the old foe’s wounds? Analysis of descriptions of the Japanese occupation and the atomic bombs in Vietnamese and Singaporean textbooks,” in Mark Baildon, Kah Seng Loh, Ivy Maria Lim, Gül Inanc, and Junaidah Jaffar (eds), *Controversial History Education in Asian Contexts*, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

22. Khatera Khamsi and Paul Morris, “Constructing the nation,” art. cit.

23. Khatera Khamsi and Christine Han, “The Portrayal of the Japanese Occupation in Singaporean Textbook Narratives,” art. cit.

24. Curriculum Planning and Development Division, *Singapore: From Settlement to Nation - Pre-1819 to 1971*, Singapore, EPB Panpacific, 2007 (2013 reprint).

25. Curriculum Planning and Development Division, op. cit., 2007 (2013 reprint), p. 112.

26. This was the Japanese military police.

27. Curriculum Planning and Development Division, op. cit., 2007 (2013 reprint), p. 110.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

29. Curriculum Development Institute of Singapore, *History of Modern Singapore 1*, Singapore, Longman, 1994 (second edition), p. 151.

30. Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2007, op. cit., p. 114.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

33. Khatera Khamsi and Paul Morris, “Constructing the nation,” art. cit.

feature individuals from the various ethnic groups who put up heroic resistance against the Japanese.

Notwithstanding the traditional portrayal of the Japanese as the historical enemy, the imperial army is also presented in an unexpectedly positive way. As well as their capacity for brutality, there is reference to their military effectiveness: the Japanese are loyal to their country and Emperor, and determined and willing to sacrifice their lives for the cause; they also employ astute military tactics that succeed in taking in the British.⁽³⁴⁾ In contrast, the British are disorganised and make tactical errors; above all, they lack commitment to the country, and abandon it in its hour of need.⁽³⁵⁾ Here, the message is that it is the commitment and loyalty of the Japanese troops that give them military success, and it is precisely this lack of commitment on the part of the British that led to the Occupation and the years of suffering.

In the narrative, therefore, the Japanese are presented as an "Other" to both the local population and the British. This otherness is emphasised in the way the Japanese are characterised: brutal invaders and incompetent and discriminatory occupiers who seek to impose their alien culture, and whose actions cause great suffering to the local population. In emphasising common suffering among the various ethnic groups, divisiveness among the local population is avoided, and common unity fostered. The Japanese are also depicted as very different from the British in their loyalty, commitment, and military strategy. In this, the ineffectual British "Other" serves as a contrast to highlight the qualities of the Japanese that make them militarily successful.

In a chapter leading up to the World War II, schoolchildren are told with respect to colonial rule that:

Asians were often discriminated (sic) by the British government. For example, in the government service, most of the high-ranking officials were Europeans and well-qualified Asians were not given senior or important posts.⁽³⁶⁾

Despite this, British colonial rule is generally positively presented:

Singapore fared well under British rule. There was order, security, and general improvements to the people's standard of living.⁽³⁷⁾

This benevolent-but-discriminatory portrayal of the British serves to highlight the brutality and incompetence of the Japanese as rulers. Taken together, the British and Japanese "Others" – the one discriminatory, ineffectual, and uncommitted, and the other effective in battle but brutal in occupation – make the point that Singaporeans can and should only depend on themselves when it comes to ruling and defending their country.

Where Japan is concerned, it serves as both a negative and positive model. It represents the historical enemy – as well as potential enemies – against which a nation needs to be prepared to defend itself. It is an also example to be emulated if a people are to retain their freedom, particularly with respect to the qualities that make an army effective.

The attempt to use the Japanese "Other" as a model in schools is part of a wider effort by the political elite to use Japan as an Asian example of economic development and nation building. As an Asian country that had successfully industrialised and – in the process – combined the best qualities of East and West, the political leaders considered Japan an appropriate model of development for Singapore. As Avenell notes, during the 1980s,

"Japan', freely imagined [...], served as a useful ideological device for governmental elites as they attempted to manage and shape the social and economic transformations accompanying the shift to advanced industrialization in their country."⁽³⁸⁾ In the history texts, Japan is presented as the first Asian nation to challenge the superiority of the West. In this, the narrative accepts at least some of the discourse in Japan with regard to the war being waged in East and South-East Asia to stand up to the exploitative and colonial "West," and uses this to stiffen the sinews of Singaporeans in nation building, and inspire a young Asian nation to take its place in the world.

Hong Kong

In Hong Kong schools, history is covered in two subjects at the upper secondary level: traditionally, Chinese History focuses on the five thousand years of Chinese civilisation, and History (sometimes referred to as "World History") on modern Chinese history. The work of scholars such as Vickers, Kan, and Morris⁽³⁹⁾ demonstrates that, in the period leading up to the retrocession, history – particularly Chinese History – was used to promote a Han-centred view of the past, foster a Chinese cultural identity, and socialise young people into the values and norms associated with Chinese culture. It was an identity rooted in a classical past, and detached from current realities, because the British government needed to depoliticise the curriculum to avoid threats to its legitimacy.⁽⁴⁰⁾ As the Chinese History curriculum was updated in the 1980s and 1990s to encompass more twentieth-century history, coverage of modern Japan's aggression against China has increased accordingly. History was traditionally more influenced by Western (i.e. Anglo-Saxon) educational theory and practice, and officials responsible for this subject increasingly espoused a concern with teaching "skills" of historical analysis; in 1996, a year before the handover, the curriculum was expanded to include Hong Kong history, and further revisions in 2003 led to the inclusion of local history at senior secondary level, as well as an increased focus on the twentieth century.⁽⁴¹⁾

In their recent analysis of the treatment of Japan in the most popular senior secondary History (1996, 2004, and 2009) and Chinese History (1993, 2005, and 2009) textbooks, Morris and Vickers identify certain trends before and after the retrocession.⁽⁴²⁾ The portrayal of Japan in History up to the 1990s is quite positive because of its focus on the Meiji Restoration: the overriding theme is admiration for Japan's rapid modernisation and nation building, although there is no mention of the country's contribution to late Qing reforms. In this, as in the Singapore texts, the "West" is an implied "Other" to both China/Hong Kong and Japan: it is the "benchmark for

34. Ministry of Education, 1985, cited in Khatera Khamsi and Christine Han, "The Portrayal of the Japanese Occupation in Singaporean Textbook Narratives," *art. cit.*

35. Khatera Khamsi and Christine Han, "The Portrayal of the Japanese Occupation in Singaporean Textbook Narratives," *art. cit.*

36. Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2007, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

38. Simon Avenell, "Beyond mimesis: Japan and the uses of political ideology in Singapore," *art. cit.*

39. Edward Vickers and Flora Kan, "The Reeducation of Hong Kong," *art. cit.*; Edward Vickers, Flora Kan, and Paul Morris, "Colonialism and the Politics of 'Chinese History' in Hong Kong Schools," *art. cit.*; Edward Vickers, *In search of an identity*, *op. cit.*; and Flora Kan, "The functions of Hong Kong's Chinese history, from colonialism to decolonization," *art. cit.*

40. Bernard Luk, "Chinese Culture in the Hong Kong Curriculum: Heritage and Colonialism," *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 1991, pp. 650-668.

41. Paul Morris and Edward Vickers, "Reconstructing the Nation," *art. cit.*

42. *Ibid.*

‘modernity’,” and also a force of aggression⁽⁴³⁾ that East Asian societies need to catch up with in order to engage on a more equal footing. In the post-1997 texts, the positive portrayal gives way to a more negative one in which the focus on militarism and Japan’s modernisation is portrayed as part of a process of relentless militarisation and conquest.

Hence, Japanese militarism is covered in both History and Chinese History. The 1993, 2005, and 2009 editions of the Chinese History texts feature chapters on “Japan’s Invasion of China,” “China’s All-Out Resistance against Japan’s Invasion,” and “China’s Foreign Policy during the War of Resistance.” In the later texts, this coverage is expanded to include a new section on “Japan’s fierce attack on China’s rear base” (i.e. the bombing of Chongqing and Kunming). At the same time, the terminology in the later texts is matched to that on the mainland: for instance, the chapter title “Sino-Japanese War” in the 1993 text becomes “War of Resistance against Japan” in the 2005 text, wording similar to that used in mainland textbooks. And, as with history textbooks in Singapore and other countries in East Asia,⁽⁴⁴⁾ the Chinese History texts describe Japanese atrocities in all their brutality: there are accounts of the 1937 Nanjing Massacre, and other atrocities such as Japanese soldiers bayoneting or beheading Chinese victims or burying them alive, with the number of photographs of such atrocities increasing in the later texts.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Hence, there is significant – and increased – coverage of Japanese brutality and atrocities on the mainland.

In addition, there has been a clear overall shift over the years in the way Japan is presented, especially in the History texts, where Japan morphs from a model of modernisation to one of militarism. Japan is also presented as an “Other” to Hongkongers and, particularly in the post-1997 texts, an “Other” that Hongkongers share with their mainland compatriots: Japanese brutality on the mainland is increasingly used to highlight Chinese suffering and victimhood, and to create a sense of shared history and identity. The matching of the terminology in the Chinese History texts concerning the invasion and occupation of China with that used in mainland texts reinforces this intent. The attempt to encourage Hongkongers to share the wartime experience on the mainland needs to be seen as part of a wider strategy to appeal to a common set of cultural values and experiences; alongside the promotion of common, “traditional” Chinese values and culture on the mainland as in Hong Kong,⁽⁴⁶⁾ it is part of ongoing efforts to bring about deeper reunification between the Special Administrative Region and the mainland.

In addition to Japan, there is also the British or Western “Other.” The “West” was the model for Japan in its early modernisation, a process that is framed in terms of Japan’s need to defend itself against the former’s aggression; at the same time, the point is made that, “while adopting Western practices, the Japanese were conscious of keeping their traditional values and spirit.”⁽⁴⁷⁾ Here, the “West” is both a positive model for modernisation for Japan and, by implication, Hong Kong and the mainland. And Japan’s ability to modernise without losing its national spirit could be endorsed by today’s Chinese Communist Party, and used to support its approach to modernisation.⁽⁴⁸⁾

When it comes to the war and Occupation in Hong Kong, one chapter – “The political and institutional changes during Japanese occupation, 1941–1945” – is devoted to this in the current, most widely used History text⁽⁴⁹⁾; it is six pages long.⁽⁵⁰⁾ As the title suggests, the chapter focuses on political and institutional changes during the Occupation, and the Japanese attack, Occupation, and government are treated in an objective and largely dispassionate way. With regard to the experience of the local people during the Occupation, the text – with considerable understatement – describes Japanese “attention to people’s quality of living” as being “very limited.”⁽⁵¹⁾ There

is mention of shortages and rationing, the worst of this, when “rice was in short supply,” being that “people had to eat tree leaves and roots out of hunger.”⁽⁵²⁾ There is also mention of the Repatriation Scheme in which, in an effort to ease the pressure on limited resources, the Japanese authorities instituted a policy to return local residents to the mainland:

Repatriation policy meant forcing the residents to return to the mainland through persuasion and coercion. By December 1942, as many as 600,000 people had left Hong Kong.⁽⁵³⁾

There is also reference to the Japanisation policy:

Japanese language, Japanese culture and the national affairs of Japan were taught in schools. Some of the streets and buildings were given Japanese names.⁽⁵⁴⁾

In contrast with the coverage of the Occupation in the Singapore texts, there is relatively little focus on human suffering, and an absence of the use of emotive language. Where the Japanese are clearly marked out as the brutal occupying enemy in the case of Singapore, they are strangely absent from the Hong Kong narrative; the focus instead falls overwhelmingly on the local Chinese community, as is true more broadly of the coverage of local history in Hong Kong texts.⁽⁵⁵⁾ Of the six pages in the chapter, one and a half pages are taken up by the description of the system of government that was set up under the Japanese, and these highlight the part played by local residents. Here, the Japanese are portrayed in a slightly positive light, and the attempt to incorporate the local Chinese into the system is seen as “a breakthrough for Chinese participation in the political system.”⁽⁵⁶⁾ At the same time, the local elite who collaborated with the Japanese are depicted as performing a positive role:

Chinese leaders [...] had no choice but to cooperate with the Japanese. [...] [T]hey repeatedly took risks in demanding the Japanese government to improve food supply, keep social order, adopt health measures against epidemics and maintain economic production. Such actual work managed to ease the hardship of some Hong Kong citizens...⁽⁵⁷⁾

43. Paul Morris and Edward Vickers, “Reconstructing the Nation,” *art. cit.*

44. See, for instance, the article on Chinese history textbooks by Edward Vickers and Yang Biao in this issue.

45. Paul Morris and Edward Vickers, “Reconstructing the Nation,” *art. cit.*

46. *Ibid.*

47. Wong, W.F., *New Certificate World History* (Vol. 1), Hong Kong, Hong Kong Educational Publishing, 1996, p. 84.

48. Paul Morris and Edward Vickers, “Reconstructing the Nation,” *art. cit.*

49. Wong W.F., Leung K.P., Ho W.C., Chui C.P. and Cheung K.W., *New Horizon History* (Theme A), Hong Kong Educational Publishing Co., 2009.

50. In Hong Kong, textbooks follow the official syllabus quite closely, and the syllabus specifies the topics and subtopics to a level of detail sufficient to indicate to commercial textbook producers where the emphasis in coverage should lie.

51. Wong W.F., Leung K.P., Ho W.C., Chui C.P. and Cheung K.W., *New Horizon History*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

52. *Idem.*

53. *Idem.*

54. *Idem.*

55. See Edward Vickers and Flora Kan, “The Reeducation of Hong Kong,” *art. cit.*, p. 215.

56. Wong W.F., Leung K.P., Ho W.C., Chui C.P. and Cheung K.W., *New Horizon History*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

57. Victor Zheng and Charles Chow, 2006, cited in Wong W.F., Leung K.P., Ho W.C., Chui C.P. and Cheung K.W., *New Horizon History*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

When it comes to Hong Kong itself, therefore, the portrayal of the Japanese invasion and Occupation is very different in tone and emphasis from that in Singapore, where it is used to drum up antipathy to the invading forces and, with this, a sense of common identity and purpose. In the Hong Kong text, there is a largely dispassionate depiction of the Occupation, and an emphatically pro-establishment account of the development of the Hong Kong Chinese community. The focus is on Hong Kong social history, and the contribution of the local Chinese elite to maintaining the stability of local society through difficult times. The effort to generate fear and hostility towards the occupying forces and, hence, a sense of a people under siege needing to pull together, is focussed entirely on the experience of Chinese on the mainland, through the accounts of mainland atrocities and suffering in Chinese History. The History text even manages to give a positive spin to its account of the Japanese Occupation, by focusing especially on the role of local Chinese elites, and emphasising the developments during this period that laid the basis for improvements in the rights and autonomy of the local Chinese community after the war. The efforts made by the Japanese authorities to secure the collaboration of the local elite are represented as an advance on the lack of participatory involvement before the Occupation, and as a harbinger of further progress in co-opting local elites after the war; this episode is thus slotted neatly into a smooth narrative of improvement, in which the continued dominance of a coterie of established tycoons is implicitly represented as part of the natural order of things.

The coverage of Japan is extended into the post-war period and, in the post-1997 History texts, the blame for international disputes, such as visits to the Yasukuni Shrine and the Diaoyu Islands, is placed on Japanese leaders.⁽⁵⁸⁾ At the same time, Japan's recent political problems are attributed to the frequent changes of government resulting from its democratic system, while the long dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party over the political landscape is described approvingly as having provided the necessary stability for stability for successful modernisation.⁽⁵⁹⁾ Here, again, the message that a single-party state would be best for a country's stability and development would not be one that the Communist Party would dispute. When it comes to the coverage of local history, however, the very significant role played in Hong Kong's economic development by trade with Japan (the territory's largest trading partner for most of the post-war period until the 1970s), and the huge impact of Japanese popular culture on its local counterpart, receive almost no mention whatsoever.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Not only Japanese, but also British agency in Hong Kong's post-war history is accorded little acknowledgement. By contrast, no opportunity is lost to emphasise the "contributions" made by China to Hong Kong's development.⁽⁶¹⁾

Hence, despite its relatively short duration, the Occupation, together with aspects of history involving the Japanese, feature significantly in the history curriculum in Hong Kong and Singapore. Japan is portrayed as the historical enemy through narratives of invasion, war, occupation, and suffering, and the strength of this negative portrayal has increased markedly over time. The manner of the portrayal differs in the two societies: in Singapore, the emphasis is on common suffering and the united response among the local population, while in Hong Kong, the atrocities and suffering that are highlighted are those on the mainland, and are intended to foster identification. However, Japan is also occasionally portrayed in an unexpectedly positive light. There is recognition of its success in early modernisation and post-war reconstruction, and even admiration for the bravery and effectiveness of its imperial army; there is also appreciation for the first opportunity it presents for local participation. Hence, the de-

piction of Japan in the history textbooks is Janus-like, and the "face" that is presented, and the manner in which this is done, has changed over time according to the requirements of political socialisation as perceived by each society's governing elites.

At the same time, Japan is presented as an "Other" to the local population, as well as other significant countries and regions, especially Britain and the "West." In Singapore, the cruelty of the Japanese troops – particularly the *Kempeitai* – and the selfishness of the Occupation administration are highlighted and contrasted with the innocent victimhood and stoicism of the local people. In both Hong Kong and Singapore, the Japanese are presented in contradistinction to the British. The latter are seen as discriminatory colonial rulers in the two societies, and their reluctance to allow political participation in Hong Kong makes the limited participation under the Japanese seem progress by comparison, while in Singapore, their benevolent but ineffectual approach is shown to be powerless when faced with ruthless, efficient, and committed Japanese troops. Highlighting the alien nature of Japanese brutality – with respect to the atrocities committed by imperial troops, for instance – also enables a society to define itself in terms of the normal and the good. In addition, the experience of suffering under the Japanese "Other" is used as a force for unity – unity with mainlanders in the case of Hong Kong, and among the different ethnic groups for Singapore. The qualities of the Japanese also highlight by contrast the moral inferiority and weaknesses of the British or Western "Other": despite being portrayed in places as a positive model of modernisation, Britain is nonetheless a military aggressor, and a foreign ruler that is unwilling to allow local participation, or is benevolent but ineffectual and uncommitted. The point is that both the Japanese and British were unsatisfactory rulers, and represent an unlamented colonial past in the official historical narratives of Hong Kong and Singapore.

Highlighting the alien and brutal nature of the Japanese "Other" also enables a society to define itself in terms of the civic virtues that it wishes its people to acquire. These virtues are most clearly stated in Singapore, where they take the form of the National Education messages. In this, the Japanese serve as the once and future bogeyman, an example not only of what has happened, but also what could happen to the local population, if they fail to take seriously the vulnerability of the country and its defence. Here, the portrayal of the Japanese is unexpectedly positive in that their military prowess is something to be emulated. The positive portrayal of strong Japanese military leaders, and the commitment and effectiveness of their troops, suggest that what is required in Singapore is strong leadership – a role that the ruling People's Action Party would be willing to continue to perform – and the unswerving loyalty of its people to the country and its leaders.

Japan is also a positive role model for modernisation. In the earlier Hong Kong texts, there is admiration for its efforts at modernisation and nation building, not just with respect to the military, but also the economy. The deliberately selective nature of the admiration can be seen from the fact that it is limited. It was noted how the Hong Kong texts do not mention Japan's contribution to reforms in the late Qing period in China. Admiration for Japan therefore stops short of acknowledgement of the country's cul-

58. Paul Morris and Edward Vickers, "Reconstructing the Nation," *art. cit.*

59. *Idem.*

60. Japan's importance as a trading partner is tacitly acknowledged in a graph in Wong W.F., Leung K.P., Ho W.C., Chui C.P. and Cheung K.W., *New Horizon History*, *op. cit.*, p. 111, but this rates no comment in the actual text of the chapter.

61. Edward Vickers and Flora Kan, "The Reeducation of Hong Kong," *art. cit.*, p. 215.

tural debt to the historical enemy. This omission upholds the portrayal of a five-thousand-year-old Chinese civilisation essentially unsullied by external influence, least of all that of the nation's most hated foe; and thus avoids implicitly devaluing this unparalleled gift from China to humanity as a whole, and the Communist regime's recently much-vaunted role as its custodian.

Finally, the narrative in the texts provides support for the current domestic social and political directions adopted by the political leaders. In the Hong Kong texts, the focus is on shared suffering with the mainland and the need for national unity, and past strong political leadership in Japan is used to justify a strong state. At the same time, current Japanese foreign policy actions are implicitly associated with past villainy so that the victims – the Special Administrative Region and the mainland – are able to claim the same relationship in ongoing international disputes with Japan, and to continue to occupy the moral high ground. In the case of Singapore, the narrative is strongly derived from that of the People's Action Party and – in stressing the need for strong leadership, self reliance, multiculturalism, and communal values – reinforces its discourse. Hence, the past is recast and used to justify a society's – and its political leadership's – position and vision at the present time.

Discussion: Implications of the portrayals of Japan for conceptions of identity and “Chineseness”

The ways in which Japan is portrayed in history has implications for the construction of nationhood (including “Chineseness”), and how this can be understood. This section will show how images of Japan have been manipulated by the state elite in an attempt to construct diverse forms of identity consciousness – in certain times and places emphasising a sense of “Chineseness” or national distinctiveness.

There is a literature on nationalism and national identity formation that has focussed on the distinction between civic and ethno-cultural nationalism. Ethnic nationalism is largely characterised in terms of a focus on common descent, and civic nationalism by civic institutions. The way Smith makes the distinction is typical: nations with a civic form of nationalism “have a measure of common culture and a civic ideology, a set of common understandings and aspirations, sentiments and ideas, that bind the population together in their homeland.”⁽⁶²⁾ As Brown puts it, the nation is thus “defined in terms of a shared commitment to, and pride in, the public institutions of state and civil society, which connect the people to the territory they occupy.”⁽⁶³⁾ In contrast, nations that are conceived in ethnic or ethno-cultural terms are essentially “a community of common descent,” and emphasise the “community of birth and ethnic culture.”⁽⁶⁴⁾ Hence, the concept that forms the basis of these nations is “ethnocultural sameness.”⁽⁶⁵⁾ Sociologists of nationalism have generally abandoned attempts to make clear distinctions between ethnic and civic nationalism because they recognise that historical cases of nations and nationalism usually involve a combination of the two, and hence that there is a need to find other ways to conceptualise nationalism.⁽⁶⁶⁾ Nonetheless, the theoretical distinction between the two, which represent opposite ends on a spectrum, is useful in the present context because the ways in which Japan-related history is presented cast an interesting light on the transition in the form of nationalism in the two societies.

It was noted that Chinese History in Hong Kong has traditionally promoted a Han-centred view of the past, and has attempted to socialise

young people into the values and norms associated with a conservative, highly Han-centric vision of Chinese culture. In Singapore, there are efforts to encourage ethnic identity and culture by requiring schoolchildren to learn their “mother tongue” (referred to as the “second language”), in addition to the English language; there is even an annual national campaign to encourage the speaking of Mandarin.⁽⁶⁷⁾

In the current history texts in Hong Kong and Singapore, there is reference to the efforts of the Japanese to “Japanise” the local population, which represent a threat to local culture(s). Alongside this in Hong Kong is the emphasis in *Chinese History* on the glories of the Chinese (i.e. Han) cultural heritage. Where political union may still be fraught for some Hongkongers, a longstanding common culture, and the sharing of the experience of mainland suffering, is used to override the modern experiences that separate them from their mainland compatriots, such as years of colonialism and differences in political ideology. The emphasis on the purity of Chinese civilisation and on Japanese aggression, particularly in the later *History* texts, reflects assumptions concerning the homogeneity of Chinese identity and the collective moral superiority of the Chinese nation. In political terms, the reference to traditional Chinese culture brings to mind the role of custodian of Chinese civilisation that the Communist Party has latterly undertaken, and serves to undergird its political legitimacy to govern the mainland and the Special Administrative Region.

Where Singapore is concerned, explicit references to “Chineseness” are notable for their absence. It comes up primarily in the context of the different treatment meted out by the Japanese to the various ethnic groups during the Occupation. In multi-ethnic Singapore, these differences are downplayed, and what is highlighted instead is the common experience of suffering and the resulting inter-communal unity, with care being taken to ensure that texts feature war heroes from the different communities. This is not to say that “Chineseness” is unimportant in the Singapore context. Indeed, the emphasis in the texts on the attempt to “Japanise” the local population strongly suggests an attack on local ethnic cultures. But, in light of the potentially divisive effect that references to differential treatment by the Japanese may engender, it has been considered politic to present the Occupation as a common, unifying experience for the local population. Here, the implicit claim to legitimacy on the part of the ruling People's Action Party is its ability to bring about the conditions, and nurture the requisite qualities, for peace and harmony in a multi-ethnic society.

We have seen how historical memory – the creation of a shared past and a consciousness of common suffering under an enemy – has been used in both societies to foster national unity and identity. But beyond the sense of national identity is the question as to the form of nationalism that underpins it. Where Hong Kong is concerned, there is no popularly elected parliament, but there was and still is strong freedom of the press and expression. There is also a clear sense of civic identity in which the role of

62. Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, op. cit., p. 11.

63. David Brown, *Contemporary Nationalism: Civic, ethnocultural and multicultural politics*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 34.

64. Anthony Smith, *National Identity*, op. cit., p. 11.

65. David Brown, *Contemporary Nationalism*, op. cit., p. 35.

66. See, for instance, Brendan O'Leary, “On the Nature of Nationalism: An appraisal of Ernest Gellner's writings on nationalism,” *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 191–222; and Rogers Brubaker, “Myths and misconceptions in the study of nationalism,” in J.A. Hall (ed) *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

67. 2010 Speak Mandarin Campaign, “Speak Mandarin Campaign,” n.d., available at www.mandarin.org.sg/ (accessed on 28 September 2013).

civic action, and the more symbolic role of the “rule of law” as a concept, distinguishes Hong Kong from the mainland.⁽⁶⁸⁾ This can be seen in the penchant among the population to turn out to demonstrate, either on major anniversaries such as that of the Tiananmen Square Massacre (4 June), or simply issues relating to perceived violations of freedoms or rights. In the face of this, the attempt to encourage Hongkongers to share the historical experience of mainlanders, and the emphasis on a shared cultural heritage, reflect an official drive to portray the ties that bind local people to “the nation” in increasingly ethno-cultural terms.⁽⁶⁹⁾ The account in the history texts of a Chinese civilisation unsullied by Japanese influence is a case in point. For the Chinese Communist Party, the promotion of a civic form of nationalism is unlikely to be attractive, given the attachment that Hongkongers already have to civic institutions such as freedom of the press and expression; hence, the appeal to an ethno-cultural form of nationalism would be more acceptable both to the Party and Hongkongers. In 2003 and 2012, there were large public protests against, respectively, the introduction of an anti-subversion law and the compulsory school subject National and Moral Education; these measures were resisted precisely because they went beyond a focus on a shared cultural heritage. Protests such as these raise questions as to how attractive deeper political unification is to Hongkongers beyond the appeal to cultural heritage.

Singapore treads a delicate path between ethno-cultural and civic forms of nationalism. As a Chinese majority society amidst non-Chinese neighbours, Singapore has long had to battle fears of being a Third China (the first two being the mainland and Taiwan). At the same time, the political elite are suspicious of “Chinese chauvinists,” who they fear wish to promote Chinese culture and interests at the expense of social harmony. Despite this, there are policies promoted by the political leaders that are underpinned by an essentialist view of ethnicity, one in which values and culture are seen to be necessarily embedded in the individual’s ethno-cultural heritage. For instance, ethnic culture and identity are encouraged, and even enforced, by the requirement that, in addition to English, children should learn a second language associated with their ethnic group. Indeed, the former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew was – for a time in the 1990s – a self-appointed spokesman for “Confucian” (subsequently, “Asian”) values. In the history texts, however, “Chineseness” is conspicuously absent. In a society with significant ethnic minorities, and where ethnic conflict has led to riots in the past, a civic approach to nationalism is the only recourse. Hence, “Chineseness” – for the ethnic Chinese majority – is promoted in a bounded way, e.g., in subjects such as the second language. In the main, the portrayal of the Japanese is meant to reinforce the National Education messages, which were introduced as a result of the political leaders’ concern that young people were ignorant of recent history and lacked commitment to the country. In this, the political leaders can only appeal to civic ideals because to do so in ethno-cultural terms would be socially divisive. For these reasons, history – and the Japanese Occupation in particular – is used to promote a set of values and messages, and a form of nationalism, conceived in civic terms.

Hence, the portrayal of the Japanese is used to foster a set of civic national values in Singapore, while it serves to reinforce Chinese history and cultural heritage in Hong Kong; the latter takes the form of an emphasis on “Chineseness” in national identity, which contrasts with a predominantly civic conception of local distinctiveness drawing on aspects of the British colonial legacy and a long tradition of oppositional political activism. The reason for the different treatment of history relating to the Japanese is the socio-political context of the two societies, and the vision and goals of the current

leadership. In Hong Kong, the portrayal of Japan is harnessed to the desire among some of the political elite to bring about deeper union with the mainland. However, a number of factors have resulted in a vibrant civil society in Hong Kong, and a strong culture of opposition to government policies: these include a free press, a tradition of a colonial government that was sensitive to public criticism given its low level of legitimacy,⁽⁷⁰⁾ a school curriculum that highlights the rule of law and low levels of corruption as defining features of Hong Kong, and the fact that many Hongkongers are descended from refugees who fled the mainland to escape political persecution or famine. The strength of civil society was most evident in the government having to abandon National and Moral Education following large public protests by those who considered it to be political indoctrination.⁽⁷¹⁾ In addition, schools in Hong Kong are free to choose their textbooks, and there are institutions and organisations – such as the religious groups that run many schools, parents’ associations, student groups, and teachers themselves – who represent independent voices in Hong Kong, and challenge the views of pro-Beijing members of the Legislative Council. In Singapore, five decades of government by the People’s Action Party has meant a consolidation of the party’s control of the mainstream media and – in education – the curriculum, as well its ability to infuse into the latter the values and messages it considers necessary for the survival and wellbeing of the country and its people. In this, the portrayal of the Japanese Occupation in the textbooks is informed by the political leaders’ vision for the future, which includes the promotion of unity by appealing to a conception of nationalism that is acceptable to the various ethnic groups.

Conclusion

In the history textbooks of Hong Kong and Singapore, Japan has variously been depicted as a historical enemy, but also as an “Asian” model to be emulated. The account of suffering under the Japanese is used in Singapore to unite the different ethnic groups and foster a sense of common national purpose. In Hong Kong, by contrast, especially since 1997, textbook allusions to the Chinese struggle with Japan have featured more prominently, or have been given a more nationalist “spin,” as local officials have sought to promote closer identification with the “motherland.” Nonetheless, texts in both places have also presented Japan in a positive light. The Hong Kong texts acknowledge Japan’s success in its early modernisation and post-war reconstruction, as well as the effect of the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong on the development of a more participatory approach to local governance. For Singapore, Japan’s military success is seen as having lessons for its people, and is used to reinforce the National Education messages the government wants schoolchildren to imbibe.

There are critical differences in terms of the uses to which the portrayal of Japan is put, particularly with respect to the role of “Chineseness” in national identity. For Hongkongers, the focus on mainland suffering during the war is

68. Malte Kaeding, “Identity Formation in Taiwan and Hong Kong: How much Difference, How Many Similarities?”, in Gunter Schubert and Jens Damm (eds) *Taiwanese Identity in the 21st Century: Domestic, regional and global perspectives*, London, Routledge, 2011, pp. 258–279.

69. See Edward Vickers, “Learning to Love the Motherland: ‘National Education’ in post-retrocession Hong Kong,” in Gotelind Muller (ed), *Designing History in East Asian Textbooks*, London, Routledge, 2003, pp. 85–116.

70. Paul Morris and Ian Scott, “Educational reform and policy implementation in Hong Kong,” *Journal of Educational Policy*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2003, pp. 71–84.

71. Sebastian Veg, “Hong Kong’s enduring identity crisis,” *The Atlantic*, 16 Oct 2013, 2013, available at www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/10/hong-kongs-enduring-identity-crisis/280622/ (accessed on 20 October 2013).

part of wider efforts that include the promotion of Chinese cultural heritage, and are aimed at deepening union between its people and those on the mainland. This reflects the emphasis of a broader, on-going official campaign of “national education” that involves appeals to an unequivocally ethno-cultural form of nationalism. For Singaporeans, Japanese-related history is represented very differently – as a common experience shared by members of various ethnic groups, the memory of which can therefore be used to reinforce sentiments of inter-ethnic solidarity. It is also used to promote other messages and values that the political leaders deem necessary for the survival of the country; in this, the form of nationalism appealed to is conceived of in civic terms.

The elasticity of the interpretation of historical events in these two societies reflects the very different social and political conditions in which history curricula have been developed in each case, and the very different visions of the collective present and future that officials aspire to project backwards into the past. In Hong Kong, the coverage of Japan’s role in local history in particular reveals the sensitivity of acknowledging significant ex-

ternal agency in the shaping of the territory’s modern history; hence the overwhelming focus on the agency of the “local Chinese community” under colonial rule (British or Japanese). The principal external contribution to Hong Kong’s development, in the textbook account, is represented as deriving from the Chinese mainland. Hong Kong is the unproblematically “Chinese” offspring of an ever-solicitous “motherland.” By contrast, Singapore’s political leaders, governing a predominantly “Chinese” community situated amongst the non-Chinese societies of South-East Asia, have seemed eager to invoke Japan – whether as common wartime enemy or “Asian” exemplar – for purposes of constructing a broad civic identity that transcends the “Chineseness” of the majority.

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