

Analysis of the Differences and Causes of Chinese and Japanese History Textbooks

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Abstract. The publication of Japanese middle school history textbooks caused great controversy between China and Japan, as well as between Japan and East Asian countries. This paper compares the differences in title, cause, content, illustration, and other aspects of Chinese and Japanese history textbooks in describing specific historical events, and finds through the analysis of differences that China is more objective in recording historical facts, while Japan has behaviors such as downplaying, distorting and denying historical facts. On this basis, the study believes that the reason for the difference between Chinese and Japanese history books is that China and Japan have different identities, traditional cultures, and goal pursuits. At the same time, only by proposing measures to narrow the existing differences between China and Japan by urging Japan to face up to and acknowledge relevant history, establish a common historical research organization, and promote cultural exchanges between the two countries can the relations between China and Japan develop healthily and in the long term.

Keywords: Sino-Japanese relations; Japanese history textbook; Historical facts; Tampering with history.

1. Introduction

As an important part of international relations in East Asia, exchanges and frictions between China and Japan have always been the focus of people's attention. On the one hand, with the continuous acceleration of the East Asian integration process, China and Japan have made amazing economic and trade development through in-depth cooperation. On the other hand, in contrast to the close economic relationship, the friction between China and Japan in other areas, such as politics and the environment, has prevented the relationship from reaching a higher ideal state. Among them, culture, as one of the important areas of confrontation between the two countries, plays a role that cannot be ignored in Sino-Japanese relations, especially around the issues related to Japanese history textbooks for post-war history education, and there are fierce contradictions between China and Japan. The Japanese Government has adopted a policy of non-political interference in the examination and approval of its textbooks, while China believes that Japan's move has seriously hurt the feelings of the peoples of Asian countries that have been subjected to Japanese aggression and is not conducive to the further development of Sino-Japanese relations. On the issue of Chinese and Japanese history textbooks, some scholars' research is based on the distorted relevant historical records of Japanese history textbooks, and analyzes their discrepancies with historical facts in detail, on this basis, further emphasizes the harm and danger of Japanese history textbooks to history teaching and historical cognition, and urges Japan to face up to and revise the problem of history textbooks [1]. Some scholars, taking the writing and distribution of Japan-related history textbooks as a starting point, have tried to explore the essence of Japan's move and its impact on Sino-Japanese relations and even international relations while taking into account Japan's domestic political policy and international background [2]. The above research focuses on the actual background, specific manifestations, and ultimate purpose of the Japanese history textbook incident, and provides a more comprehensive explanation of the Sino-Japanese textbook friction incident, but there are still insufficiently detailed and in-depth parts of the research to answer a series of questions such as what kind of differences

exist between Chinese and Japanese textbooks and why Japan wrote history textbooks in this way. At the same time, the above research is less involved in proposing effective methods for reference to solve practical problems. Based on this research situation, this paper attempts to make a supplementary study of the Sino-Japanese history textbook incident. Cultural exchanges and frictions can often play a deep-seated role and effect that cannot be replaced by political diplomacy and economic and trade relations in international relations [3]. Studying the characteristics of textbook differences between China and Japan and exploring the reasons for their formation, is not only conducive to the solution of the friction incident between Chinese and Japanese textbooks but also has a certain positive effect on the development of Sino-Japanese relations. Through case analysis and comparative research, this paper starts from the specific records of Japan's war of aggression against East Asia during World War II in the history textbooks of China and Japan, compares and analyzes the bias and emphasis of the two countries in the textbook writing content, and further explores the reasons for the formation of this difference from three aspects, such as the stance, cultural heritage, and ideal pursuit of the two countries. based on the differences between the two, and then better understand the crux of the textbook friction incident between China and Japan, To put forward effective suggestions and measures and hope for the future.

2. Differences in the Narratives of World War II in Chinese and Japanese History Textbooks

In the 20s and 30s of the 20th century, World War II broke out, and Japan launched a large-scale war of aggression in East Asia. There was a huge difference between Chinese and Japanese education in the later history of the war, that is, the writing of relevant history textbooks, represented by a series of actions after the Japanese occupation of Nanjing after the fall of Nanjing in December 1937. To better analyze this difference, this paper summarizes and compares the contents of the records that differ widely between Chinese and Japanese history textbooks.

2.1. Title Differences

Chinese history textbooks name this war "War of Aggression against China", which refers to the military operations carried out by the Japanese army after the occupation of Nanjing as the "Nanjing Massacre". Japanese history textbooks name these historical events "Japan-China War" and "Nanjing Incident". Japan's use of war nomenclature is more neutral than China's, with the possible intention of evading war responsibility and concealing the negative effects of war.

2.2. Discrepancies in Narratives about the Causes and Outcomes of War

Regarding the causes of the war, Chinese People's Education Publishing House's "World History (Ninth Grade Lower Volume)" published in 2018 believes that Japanese militarism has long had ambitions to covet the East Asian continent, and at the same time, in the context of Japan's domestic economic crisis that has hit Japan's industrial production hard, to seek a way out, its military-fascist forces have tried to resolve the increasingly intensified domestic and foreign contradictions through foreign expansion. Based on this, Japan blew up a section of the Shenyang Railway to counter the Chinese army and used this as an excuse to start its aggression against China. Japanese history textbooks define this war as "a just war to liberate Asia", while Japanese textbooks emphasize that a series of victories in the war brought Southeast Asians and Indians the courage to pursue dreams and independence, and was one of the key factors for Asian countries to achieve independence early.

2.3. The Difference between the Explanation of the Event Body and the Accompanying Picture

Take the Nanjing Massacre as an example. Chinese history textbooks have a detailed and comprehensive description of the causes, processes, and results of the Nanjing Massacre. A large number of negative adjectives with critical connotations such as cruelty, atrocity, inhumanity, and unspeakable are used in the depiction, and detailed and credible data are used to support the fact that

the Japanese army committed it. The pictures in the textbook also occupy a large space, and their content is mostly a presentation of the criminal facts of the Japanese army killing the Chinese people. In addition, Chinese history textbooks regard the war of aggression against China as an important study chapter, accompanied by a large number of after-school exercises to consolidate and deepen relevant historical knowledge. In stark contrast to Chinese history textbooks, Japanese history textbooks focus on the course of the war related to the Nanjing Massacre, highlighting the Japanese army's ability to expand its war front and gain war superiority despite stubborn resistance from all over the world. The pictures in Japanese history textbooks are mainly based on battle line maps, and the military strategy of the Japanese army is further explained through pictures. Among them, Japanese textbooks have downplayed the casualties caused by the Nanjing Massacre and added notes at the bottom of the page to challenge the final ruling of the military tribunal. In addition, in the version of the history book published by Yamakawa Publishing House and Meiseisha, there is no mention of the Nanjing Massacre.

Through comparative research, it is found that Chinese history textbooks attach importance to the historical education of related wars, and pursue the objective reproduction of historical facts with specific statements, textbook illustrations, and after-class exercises. Japanese textbooks tend to obscure the above-mentioned historical records, and there are problems such as deviation of focus and distortion of facts in terms of wording, content, and pictures.

3. The Causes of Differences in Textbook Writing

3.1. The Positions of the Two Sides Differ

Any historical cognitive process always starts from a certain subjective consciousness [4]. In the above-mentioned East Asian war of aggression, China and Japan were respectively the victim countries and the perpetrators, with different positions, different angles, and different experiences of war, so the two countries' perceptions and records of historical events are also different [5]. In the course of the war of aggression against China, especially in the Nanjing Massacre, the Chinese people suffered the brutal and tyrannical aggression of the Japanese army, and even though the war has ended for many years, the traumatic memory of the Chinese people has remained forever in the heart, and this traumatic memory is intertwined with the national consciousness of the Chinese people, coexisting and symbiotic. The position of the victims of war has led Chinese history textbooks to meticulously describe historical reality when recording the historical events of aggression against China, to reflect the indelible suffering caused by the Japanese army's war of aggression against China to the Chinese people. As the initiator of the above-mentioned incidents, Japan's status as the perpetrator made him consciously adopt vague, ambiguous, obtrusive, and evasive methods in the writing of a series of historical events involving Japan's war of aggression against China, in an attempt to achieve the purpose of shirking and covering up war responsibility by diverting the focus of textbooks and blurring facts [6].

3.2. Different Culture

The cultures of China and Japan played a non-negligible role in the writing of textbooks, which further led to the aggravation of the differences between the two. China and Japan respectively use Confucianism and Bushido as the mainstream ideology. Confucianism focuses on reality while taking "benevolence" as the core, and "Li Ji Zhong Yong" says that "benevolent people are also people", the essence of which refers to ethical and moral cultivation. Based on this, China's textbooks on the history of aggression against China emphasize the injustice of the nature of the war of aggression against China based on pursuing a vivid representation of historical facts. The essence of the Japanese bushido spirit is the master-slave relationship formed around the personal interests of the manor owner, so it emphasizes the elite group and class nature. On this basis, Japan records the history of aggression against China from a top-down hierarchical perspective, and based on Japan's ethnic, emperor, religious, and cultural superiority, it regards the war of aggression launched by Japanese

militarists as a just war for self-defense and liberation of Asia [7]. In addition, the essence of Japanese bushido is "loyalty, righteousness and courage", the main characteristics of which are loyalty supremacy and courage as the foundation [8]. Japanese textbooks focus on the strategic policy of the Japanese army and the external processes in the early stages of the war to create an image of the Japanese army as brave and good at war, while the rest of the content is downplayed, which also echoes the core of the bushido spirit.

3.3. Different Ideas

In the process of writing the content of history textbooks, China and Japan each have different goals and pursuits. From China's point of view, first, China hopes that the detailed account of historical facts will enhance the national cohesion and patriotic spirit of the Chinese people so that they Chinese people can always keep moving forward to seek their development while remembering history and learning lessons from history. Second, as China said in the textbook friction between the two countries, Sino-Japanese relations should "look forward" in the hope that China and Japan can transcend history [9]. China's move is not to hold China and Japan accountable for history, but to urge Japan to face up to history with its bloody wounds and to express China's pursuit of a beautiful vision of world peace with other countries. From Japan's perspective, the concept of honor-seeking based on a "culture of shame" has contributed to the biased behavior of its textbook writing. The unique thing about shame culture is that it is believed that repentance is tantamount to asking for trouble, so under the guidance of "shame culture", the Japanese psychology of confession and "guilt" is relatively indifferent. For traditional Japanese, "the eternal goal is an honor", and for the sake of honor, regardless of the facts, regardless of good and evil, this further led Japan to use honor as the first principle and goal in textbook writing [10]. In multiple versions of the textbook, Japan defends its reputation by shifting the focus of the incident, downplaying the impact of the incident, using neutral words to cover up its negative behavior, and adding footnotes to question the incident, and other behaviors.

4. Measures and Recommendations

The previous comparison found the differences between China and Japan in the writing of history books and analyzed the reasons for the differences. To reduce the differences between the two countries, peacefully resolve the textbook friction incident, and promote the friendly development of Sino-Japanese relations, the article puts forward the following suggestions based on the above contents.

4.1. Face up to History

There is constant friction between China and Japan over the textbook incident, in which Japan, as the party at fault, bears most of the responsibility. Through textbooks, Japan distorts historical facts and conceals historical truth, to justify the modern war of aggression launched by Japan. History textbooks play an important role in whether a nation can correctly understand the history of its nation and other nationalities. For Japan, a country that has invaded and colonized other countries and nations in modern times, telling the next generation the true historical facts through history textbooks is irreplaceable for accepting historical lessons and criticizing the policy of aggression [11]. Japan must face up to its history of aggression, take the initiative to assume its responsibilities and revise relevant history textbooks. Facing history squarely is not a reckoning of a series of wars of aggression launched by Japan, but urging Japan to better reflect on the negative impact of the war and avoid Japan from embarking on the old path of militarism. At the same time, facing up to history is conducive to enhancing Japan's sense of peace and responsibility, further enhancing the trust of its East Asian neighbors and even other countries in the world, and is of positive significance to the peaceful development of international relations.

4.2. Established the Institute of History

China and Japan have different degrees of understanding of historical materials and historical evidence, and this can be solved by establishing a Sino-Japanese joint historical research institution. In the process of research, Chinese and Japanese historians should maintain a fair and objective research attitude, and avoid excessive subjective and one-sided negative emotions affecting the study of history. Through more historical research, China and Japan can have a clearer and more objective understanding of the history of World War II, uncover the truth of the war, vigorously solve some ambiguous and controversial parts that occurred in the process of World War II, and further obtain an objective description of historical facts. The joint research organization will provide an official platform for historians to work together based on mutual understanding, reach a consensus on historical understanding to the greatest extent, and on this basis, make unique contributions to the healthy development of China-Japan relations.

4.3. Promote Cultural Exchanges between China and Japan

As early as the Han Dynasty, there were exchanges between China and Japan. Since the Tang Dynasty, the interaction between Chinese and Japanese cultures has become more and more frequent, which has promoted the economic prosperity and political stability of the two countries, and also improved the international status of the two countries in Northeast Asia [12]. Up to now, cultural exchanges have become an indispensable part of Sino-Japanese relations, playing an important role in promoting friendship between the two countries and increasing mutual understanding and trust between the two countries. Through mutual learning and reference from the differences and commonalities between Chinese and Japanese cultures, the two countries can deeply understand each other's cultures, traditions, and values, promote national emotional exchanges, resolve emotional contradictions, and achieve reconciliation of relations. It is believed that in future development, through further cultural exchanges between China and Japan, peace, stability, and prosperity in the region and even the world will be achieved.

5. Conclusion

The essence of the difference between Chinese and Japanese history textbooks is that Japan has vaguely distorted the content of the writing to evade the responsibility of the war. The root cause is the difference between China and Japan as victims and perpetrators, the differences in the cultures of the two countries, namely Confucianism and bushido, and the differences in the pursuit of peace and honor. To resolve this contradiction, the first point is that Japan must face up to historical facts and shoulder historical responsibilities. On this basis, the establishment of a Sino-Japanese joint historical research institution and the promotion of Sino-Japanese cultural exchanges and understanding can also alleviate the contradictions between Chinese and Japanese history textbooks. An in-depth analysis of the Sino-Japanese history textbook incident is not only of positive significance to the academic and educational circles of the two countries but also has a positive effect on Sino-Japanese political relations. It is hoped that with the joint efforts of China and Japan, the dispute over history textbooks between China and Japan can be properly resolved, and at the same time, Sino-Japanese relations will be put on the track of peaceful and steady development.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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