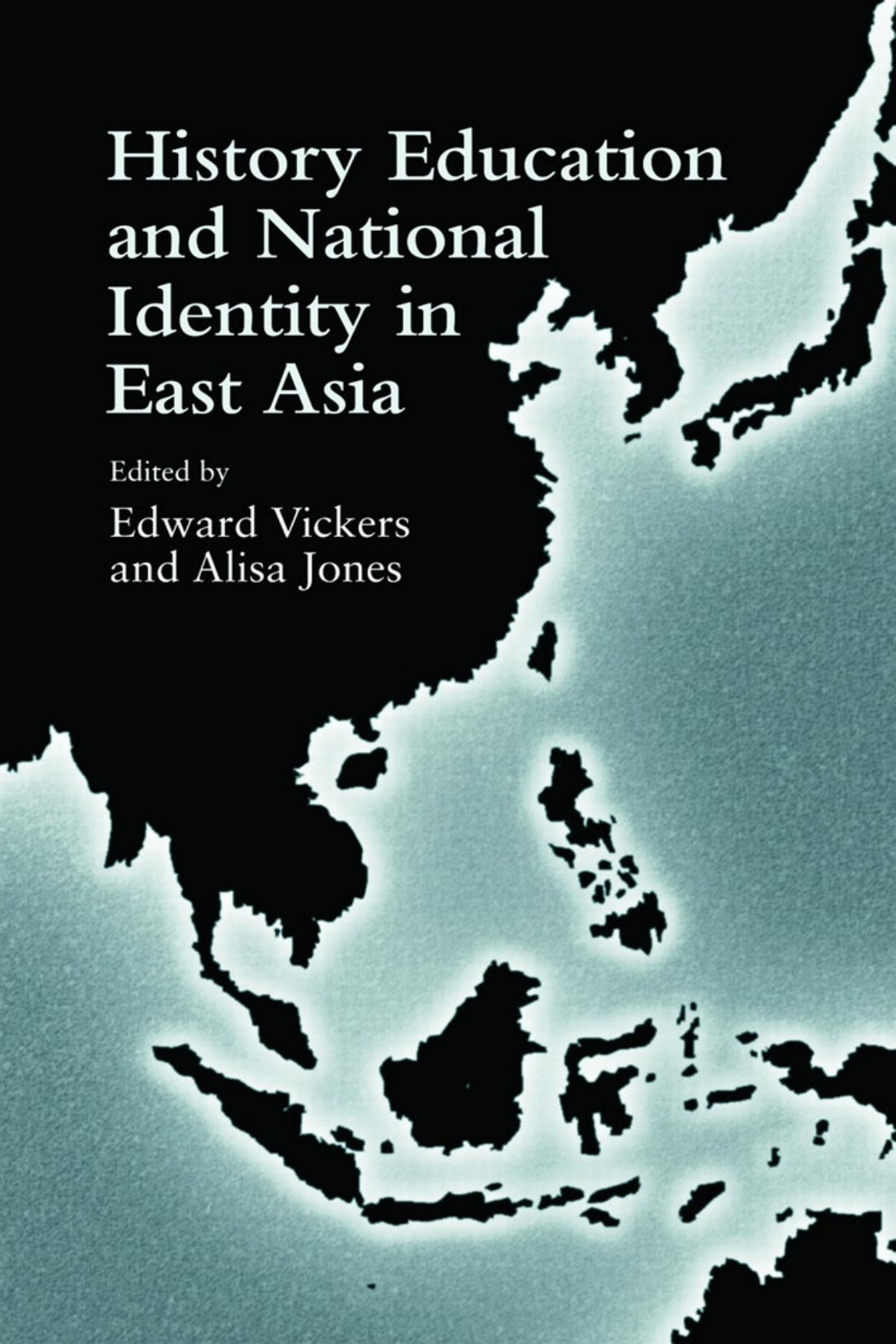
History Education and National Identity in East Asia

Edited by

Edward Vickers and Alisa Jones



History Education and National Identity in East Asia

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Series Preface

This series of scholarly works in comparative and international education has grown well beyond the initial conception of a collection of reference books. Although retaining its original purpose of providing a resource to scholars, students, and a variety of other professionals who need to understand the role played by education in various societies or world regions, it also strives to provide accurate, relevant, and up-to-date information on a wide variety of selected educational issues, problems, and experiments within an international context.

Contributors to this series are well-known scholars who have devoted their professional lives to the study of their specializations. Without exception these men and women possess an intimate understanding of the subject of their research and writing. Without exception they have studied their subject not only in dusty archives, but have lived and traveled widely in their quest for knowledge. In short, they are "experts" in the best sense of that often overused word.

In our increasingly interdependent world, it is now widely understood that it is a matter of military, economic, and environmental survival that we understand better not only what makes other societies tick, but also how others, be they Japanese, Hungarian, South African, or Chilean, attempt to solve the same kinds of educational problems that we face in North America. As the late George Z. F. Bereday wrote more than three decades ago: "[E]ducation is a mirror held against the face of a people. Nations may put on blustering shows of strength to conceal public weakness, erect grand façades to conceal shabby backyards, and profess peace while secretly arming for conquest, but how they take care of their children tells unerringly who they are" (*Comparative Methods in Education*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964, p. 5).

Perhaps equally important, however, is the valuable perspective that studying another education system (or its problems) provides us in understanding our own system (or its problems). When we step beyond our own limited experience and our commonly held assumptions about schools and learning in order to look back at our system in contrast to another, we see it in a very different light. To learn, for example, how China or Belgium handles the education of a multilingual society; how the French provide for the funding of public education; or how the Japanese control access to their universities enables us to better understand that there are reasonable alternatives to our own familiar way of doing things. Not that we can borrow directly from other societies. Indeed, educational arrangements are inevitably a reflection of deeply embedded political,

economic, and cultural factors that are unique to a particular society. But a conscious recognition that there are other ways of doing things can serve to open our minds and provoke our imaginations in ways that can result in new experiments or approaches that we may not have otherwise considered.

Edward R. Beauchamp
University of Hawaii

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Our thanks of course go to all of the contributors to this volume for the hard work they have put into preparing their separate chapters. However, we should express our particular gratitude to two contributors: Dr. Peter Cave

of the Unversity of Hong Kong and Dr. Stéphane Corcuff of the University of La Rochelle, who also helped in locating other contributors and by giving us very useful feedback on our own contributions.

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Edward Vickers and Alisa Jones

Introduction
History, Nationalism, and the Politics of Memory

EDWARD VICKERS

History education in East Asia is a subject that for many years has generated a great deal of journalistic heat, but upon which only isolated rays of academic light have been shed. The lack of published research on history education and national identity first struck editors of this volume while we were completing Ph.D. dissertations examining the development of history curricula in Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland. The compilation of these studies thus arose from a desire to supply the kind of reference work we would have wished for when pursuing our own doctoral research. That research — and our long experience of living, working, and traveling in Hong Kong, the Chinese mainland, Taiwan, Japan, and elsewhere in the region — brought home the extreme political sensitivity of interpretations of the past in East Asia and, in particular, the ways they are transmitted to high school students. When we ourselves were sixth form students in the late 1980s, the controversy in England over the introduction of the National Curriculum for History had already demonstrated to us the way that the selection and presentation of historical knowledge to students was intimately bound up with perceptions of national identity, with conceptions of the role of education in citizenship formation, and with ideas concerning the nature of history and of how we knew what we knew about the past. A great amount of scholarly ink has been spilled over the years in the course of the debates surrounding the English National Curriculum and the place of history within it (Phillips, 1998). However, the political struggles we later observed over history education in East Asia, in terms of both the extreme positions adopted by the contesting parties and the potentially disturbing implications of these for domestic and international stability, made that English tussle seem, by comparison, about as momentous and alarming as a towel fight at a netball match.

The distortion of accounts of the Second World War in Japanese history textbooks is an issue that has long aroused intense interest both within and beyond East Asia. Ian Buruma's stimulating and readable comparison of memories of

the war in Japan and Germany, *Wages of Guilt* (Buruma, 1994), was one of the first accessible works in English to discuss the Japanese textbook controversy in any depth and highlighted the way Germany had gone further than Japan in confronting its record of aggression and genocide. In 2000, Laura Hein and Mark Selden's edited volume, *Censoring History* (Hein and Selden, 2000), brought together essays looking specifically at history textbooks in Germany, Japan, and the United States, again taking memories of war — principally the Second World War, but also the Vietnam War — as its major theme. However, the relative paucity of studies that attempt to set the Japanese controversy in its regional context remains striking (one notable exception being Rose 1998). Recent articles for the *American Asian Review* by Tomoko Hamada, comparing middle school history textbooks in Japan and the People's Republic of China, and by Chunghee Sarah Soh, analyzing the Korean furor over Japanese history textbooks, have begun to remedy this lack (Hamada, 2003; Soh, 2003). We hope this volume will constitute a further contribution to plugging this scholarly gap, especially by broadening the scope of comparison to the East Asian region as a whole. The cases of Hong Kong and Taiwan, in particular, deserve more attention than they have hitherto received, not least for the way in which they highlight the role played by education in exacerbating the tensions and dangers resulting from Beijing's attempt to impose a one-size-fits-all vision of Chineseness on communities from Kashgar to Kaohsiung. Although most of the contributions to the present volume focus on individual societies, this introductory chapter and the historiographical chapter that follows attempt to analyze and explain some of the global, cross-regional, and country-specific factors that have influenced curriculum development in these different states and regions.

The Origins and Scope of the Present Volume

As every Chinese schoolboy knows, printing was one of ancient China's "four great inventions." Meanwhile, in Korea, schoolboys — and girls — can take pride in the fact that it was their people who gave the moveable type printing press to the world. The printed word as technological achievement has in these states been woven into the official historical narrative of national greatness. In practice, printing in premodern times was instrumental not only in the early formation of a common identity among China's educated elite but also in the development of cultural traditions shared across East Asia through the dissemination of Confucian classics, Buddhist scriptures, and much else from Japan to Java and from Taiwan to Tibet. However, the printed word in contemporary East Asia is at least as likely to be the vehicle for expressions of nationalist triumphalism, xenophobic resentment, or straightforward ethnic chauvinism as for the celebration of traditions shared within the region and beyond. Modern print capitalism in East Asia, as elsewhere, has been a powerful force for the formation of imagined communities (Anderson, 1983) but this region's

tortured recent past, and its portrayal through various media, has both shaped and been shaped by national communities that have constructed their identities in exceptionally absolute, totalizing, and homogenizing ways. In the hands of political and intellectual elites, history — of wars, of great men, or of great inventions — has tended to stress essential cultural virtues, the primordial and eternal unity of the nation, and the record of conflict and victimhood that has separated "our country" from its enemies. When it comes to national histories, the print medium in East Asia has become part of a message with a vengeance.

Meanwhile, the printing presses of Western academic publishers have been kept busy in recent years by the output of scholars researching the nationalism in the Far East. However, with some notable exceptions, remarkably little attention has been devoted to the role played by history education in schools in reflecting and constructing nationalist visions of the past. Barmé (1999), Befu (1993), Duara (1995), Dikotter (1992, 1997), Unger (1993, 1996), Fogel (2000), and others have analyzed political, popular, and academic discourse in these societies, and their findings — some of which are discussed in more detail below and in chapter 1 — have revealed the salience of often disturbingly extreme nationalist attitudes. Their work has traced the origins of these attitudes to the interactions between indigenous traditions and foreign cultural imports from neo-Darwinist racial essentialism to anti-Western postcolonialist cultural relativism. The contingencies of political history and the consequent rise and fall of particular legitimating ideologies also play their parts. Whatever ideological preoccupations color the view, the importance of visions of the past to the construction of political and cultural identity in East Asia is axiomatic, but what is less clear is the process by which such visions, and the values that they carry, are transmitted from generation to generation. Popular culture, in the form of literature, film, television, print media and, more recently, the Internet, undoubtedly plays a crucial role here and has justly attracted the attention of a number of scholarly and journalistic commentators.

Schools, curricula, and textbooks might also be expected to play a significant part in this process, but these have so far not been the focus of similar interest on the part of academic observers. The reasons for this almost certainly have less to do with the intrinsic importance of the subject matter than with the consequences of the typical division of academic labor within university campuses. The study of school curricula is generally seen as the province of specialists in education, and such specialists are seldom to be found within faculties or departments of history, politics, or Asian studies. Even within education faculties, only a small number of researchers look in detail at school curricula and, across much of East Asia itself, those inclined to approach this field critically may face political constraints in terms of what they can safely write and publish. Meanwhile, Western-based analysts of the history, politics, and culture of East Asia tend to focus overwhelmingly on the writings and

pronouncements of prominent intellectuals, artists, and political leaders. These are undoubtedly far more stimulating than the banalities of school history textbooks, but they are by no means necessarily more important or influential. Banality, whether in textbooks, on television, or in the popular press, tends to be more popularly influential than intellectual sophistication — and this is as true of America or Britain as it is of China or Korea. Analyzing the way history has been taught and learned in schools may thus contribute as much as the study of high culture to an understanding of the ways particular visions of the past have come to influence public discourse, and vice versa. The study of history textbooks and official curricula cannot necessarily tell us what people actually believe about their national past (or the pasts of neighboring nations). Nonetheless, it can tell us what those who draft these curricular materials — whether the state or its agencies, textbook publishers, or individual authors — would like children to believe: the kinds of national, local, or global identities considered desirable and appropriate.

The present volume aims to serve as a starting point for such an understanding, by exploring the post-1945 development of history as a school subject in seven East Asian societies: China, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the two Koreas. It expands upon an earlier collection of essays published in 2003 as a special issue of the *International Journal of Educational Research*, though that collection included no articles on Korea or Singapore and focused primarily on curriculum development over the most recent quarter century. These societies have been chosen because of their shared Confucian educational and historiographical traditions. On these grounds we could — and perhaps should — have also included a chapter on Vietnam, but a line had to be drawn somewhere, and it was decided that Vietnam and the rest of Indochina would be better left to a future volume devoted to history education and identity formation in Southeast Asia. Singapore, on the other hand, as a former British colony populated overwhelmingly by the descendants of Chinese immigrants, suggested interesting comparisons with Hong Kong. Moreover, the Singapore government's attempt to invoke Asian values in support of its neo-authoritarian political model, and to promote these values through the local education system, has aroused considerable interest among governing elites elsewhere in what might be termed "post-Confucian" East Asia.

With the exception of Peter Cave's chapter, which uses data drawn from interviews and classroom observations to compare aspects of the learning and teaching experience in Japanese and English history lessons, the focus here is primarily on published sources, in particular curriculum outlines and textbooks. Official curricular guidelines should always be treated with caution, since they serve as symbols of official intent and are not necessarily reflective of classroom reality. The same could be said of textbooks in some education systems, but the role of the officially recommended textbook in schools throughout East Asia has tended to be far more central than is the case in systems

where official regulation of the textbook market is much more limited, where the variety of teaching and learning materials available is consequently larger and where modes of assessment are designed to discourage the rote memorization of authorized texts. Across East Asia, the style of public examinations, the level of official control over textbooks, and a strong and long-standing belief in the need for authoritatively "correct" versions of history have all tended to reinforce the importance attached by both students and teachers to the approved texts (McClelland, 1991).

The extent to which traditional notions of the nature and purpose of history continue to influence official and popular views of the past is an issue that confronts any researcher investigating the historiography of the contemporary Far East. However, despite general acknowledgment of the fact that the states of East Asia share, Confucian heritage, surprisingly little comparative research has been undertaken into the different ways traditional views of the past and its relationship to national identity have been reinterpreted, co-opted, or rejected by modern nationalist historiographies throughout the region. Numerous studies have been undertaken at the country level, but the tendency among specialists on China, Japan, Taiwan, or Korea has been to burrow their way through lonely mountains of national data, only seldom emerging to survey the surrounding landscape. The first two chapters of this volume therefore set out to chart that broader vista, first by way of an overview of worldwide approaches to history and the politics of nation building and then through a closer mapping of the East Asian terrain.

History, the Modern State, and the Politics of Identity

In Europe, the birthplace of the modern nation-state, the open espousal of nationalist presuppositions is no longer as fashionable as it once was, at least in more intellectual circles. In particular, visions of national identity based on ideas of ethno-cultural homogeneity, let alone of common racial descent, have been subjected to systematic scholarly demolition in the decades since the fall of Nazi fascism and the dissolution of European colonial empires. The political and intellectual elites of postwar Europe have consciously sought to discredit the political — and economic — tribalisms of the prewar era, and to a greater or lesser extent subsume these within a vision of a peaceful and united pan-European community characterized by democracy, tolerance, and respect for human rights. That most European-minded of British intellectuals, Eric Hobsbawm, while recognizing that nationalism remains a force to be reckoned with in the contemporary world, suggests that the phenomenon may be past its peak, concluding his analysis of *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* with this observation, "The owl of Minerva which brings wisdom, said Hegel, flies out at dusk. It is a good sign that it is now circling round nations and nationalism" (Hobsbawm, 1992, 192).

However, even in supposedly progressive, twenty-first century multicultural Britain, this feathered friend of liberal internationalism is still more commonly found in the intellectual stratosphere than at ground level. Concluding his study of Victorian English historiography, J. W. Burrow suggests reasons for this as valid today as they were for the England of the Victorians, or for that matter when Burrow was writing in the 1970s:

> The class of purposive and justificatory historical myths of which English Whig histories are a distinguished sub-species is unlikely to be dispelled by any changes in the professional practice and ethics of historians. This is so not only because analysis may be impotent against prejudice, or because even being made to read learned articles in historical journals seems not so incompatible as might have been hoped with continued subscription to some form of political Manichaeanism. It is because, even in the conditions of exasperated tribalism in which such myths flourish most vigorously, the facts appealed to on both sides may be perfectly true: the Apprentice Boys did play a part in the defence of Londonderry. What gives such history its continuing power is not falsehood, or for that matter truth, but the sense of continuing identity, expressed in re-enactments by ritual or riot. The enemy of such myths is not truth but individualism, the dissolving of the sense of collective identities and temporal continuities — a fact which explains and justifies our ambivalence toward them. (1983, 297–298)

While academic historians continue to expose the mythological nature of the nationalist teleologies that characterize much popular history, these myths may remain to some extent necessary to our sense of community and to the cohesion of the societies in which we live.

The consciousness of a shared past is fundamental to the collective identities that underpin the legitimacy of our political institutions — so much so that where a shared past does not exist, it may be felt necessary to try to invent one. (On the politics of myth making, see Brown, 1999).

This applies not only to conventional nation-states but also to other political (or politico-religious) entities that claim our allegiance: the city, the federal state, the church, or a supranational entity such as the European Union. Indeed, Hobsbawm suggests that the antidote to narrow nationalism may lie in the multiplication of levels and forms of identity, so that "being English or Irish or Jewish, or a combination of all these, is only one way in which people describe their identity among the many others which they use for this purpose, as occasion demands" (Hobsbawm, 1992, 192). These communities of identity are each founded upon narratives of a common past, and the tensions and inconsistencies between these narratives might be expected to stimulate greater awareness of their mythological nature and to lessen the potential for unwholesome obsession with any single one. However, a boundary remains between

healthy skepticism and a relativistic, ultraindividualistic anomie that, by corroding the legitimacy of shared identities, may undermine the basis of social cohesion.

What, then, determines the currency of nationalistic visions of the past, and the degree of credence attached to these, in popular discourse? Many critics of what is often referred to as nineteenth-century nationalism blame nationalist attitudes for fostering a sense of ethno-cultural superiority, xenophobic paranoia, and intercommunal or international fear and insecurity. School history textbooks have often been seen as instrumental to this process and have frequently attracted international and domestic criticism on these grounds — the Japanese history textbook controversies being only one of the most recent and widely publicized instances of this phenomenon. (It is perhaps worth noting that in the 1920s and early 1930s, it was the Japanese who officially criticized Chinese history textbooks for their virulent anti-Japanese xenophobia. Such criticisms were made in the context of political instability and rising militarism in Japan and efforts to whip up anti-Chinese sentiment among the populace but, as Jones notes in chapter 1, Chinese textbooks of this period were indeed intensely xenophobic.) However, while criticisms of nationalistic or xenophobic history textbooks are often justified and necessary, simply calling for changes in textbook content may be ineffectual because the insecurities that fueled the xenophobia in the first place remain unaddressed. Bickers' observation concerning the British settler community in China 100 years ago could apply equally to other larger, national communities:

> They lacked, in the treaty system, an assured, unassailable future. The stridency of the treaty port propagandists, and the rigidity of the practices which preserved British identity from dilution or deterioration, stemmed from the fundamental insecurity of the improvised settlements in China. (Bickers, 1999, 223)

Education, and history education in particular, is just one of the many practices that a community may deploy to preserve its identity and cohesion from perceived threats. The way in which British schools in Shanghai or Tianjin taught national (British) history may be imagined, though it has yet to be researched. However, the broader point that emerges here is that structures that guarantee or protect political and economic security may be a precondition for a relaxation of the rigidity with which societies cling to narrowly nationalistic visions of their collective identities.

In their comparative study of history textbooks in Japan, Germany, and the United States, Hein and Selden (2000) make a similar point when they argue that it is political factors, rather than any essential cultural differences, that explain the contrast between the ways Germans and Japanese remember the Second World War and choose to transmit these memories to pupils. Implicitly criticizing the theories of anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict (1989),

who famously posited a distinction between a Japanese culture of shame and a Western culture of guilt, they write:

> Germans are still divided over how to remember the war, but they have greater incentive than their Japanese counterparts to satisfy neighbouring countries. This is not because the Germans feel guilt whereas the Japanese feel only shame. Nor are Germans more remorseful by nature than the Japanese. Some Germans feel guilt, shame and remorse for their wartime actions as do some Japanese. Others in both countries do not. Rather, larger numbers of Germans than Japanese currently believe that teaching their children positive accounts of Nazism and the war will cost them too much in the future. (Hein and Selden, 2000, 10)

Why do Germans believe this? According to Hein and Selden, this belief has much to do with the way Germany has been integrated politically, economically, and culturally within a wider European community through first the European Economic Community and later the European Union. A German official is quoted as saying, "You cannot preach a European Union and at the same time continue to produce textbooks with all the national prejudices of the nineteenth century" (16). In East Asia, by contrast, Hein and Selden (2000) point out that formidable obstacles remain to any similar Asian Union, the biggest one being "the deep mistrust potential member states feel toward one another." "Without clear incentives for regional reconciliation," they argue, "many Japanese are reluctant to take on the domestic battles inherent in rethinking their World War actions" (18). The experience of prereunification East Germany, where school history textbooks largely ignored the Nazi Holocaust and portrayed Nazism as the product of a bygone bourgeois era, is cited to reinforce the claim that "the contrast between Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany is political rather than cultural" (30).

This argument is convincing as far as it goes, but it leaves us needing to resolve a familiar conundrum: which comes first, the egg of exasperated tribalism or the chicken of the political and cultural forms (including school curricula and textbooks) that manifest and perpetuate it? In postwar Western Europe, the Cold War, along with American encouragement, prompted national leaders to overcome their mutual mistrust and to move toward closer political, military, and economic cooperation on the basis of mutual tolerance and respect for liberal-democratic values a process later extended to post-Communist Eastern Europe. Where political, economic, and military necessity led, culture and curricula eventually, albeit to varying extents, followed, so that today the specter of a German Fourth Reich sending its armies goose-stepping across the continent would seem an unreal, not to say paranoid, phantasm to most Europeans.[1] In East Asia, however, the Cold War led to a complex set of bilateral relationships between the United States and Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, but the East Asian nations were required to take little or no collective

responsibility for their common security, nor were they pressured into embarking on thoroughgoing internal democratic reforms. America's regional dominance protected these states from Russia, China, and North Korea, but it also insulated them from each other and allowed them to rebuild or reinforce internal social cohesion during the postwar period through old-fashioned appeals to naked ethno-nationalist sentiment, without having to confront any seriously adverse consequences in terms of their relations with their neighbors (although Taiwan, as we shall see, has more recently become something of an exception in this regard). The overbearing protection afforded by the American nanny thus allowed regional political elites to play nasty nationalist games without risk of injury; however, since the end of the Cold War, they have found themselves being coaxed and cajoled out of the nursery to face a neighborhood increasingly dominated by the intimidating presence of China. Meanwhile, the process of accommodating China within a stable new order in East Asia is complicated by that state's own troubled infancy. As Hein and Selden point out, "the political legitimacy of the People's Republic of China is built on the national memory of the war of liberation against relentless Japanese savagery" (83). This institutionalization of Sino-Japanese hatred makes it hard to conceive of a Franco-German-style reconciliation between China and Japan. Yet the long-term stability of East Asia requires precisely this kind of reconciliation not only between China and Japan but also between Japan, China, and Korea; China and Taiwan; China and Vietnam; and perhaps even China, Tibet, and India.

Chinese hatred for the Japanese may have been stoked by the Communist regime, especially in recent years as nationalism has displaced Marxism as the defining official ideology, but neither this hatred nor the broader sense of China's historical and cultural identity has been simply invented by the nationalist state. These are sentiments that most Chinese imbibe, almost literally, with their mothers' milk — through folklore handed down by families and local communities that serves to locate individuals, clans, villages, towns, or cities within a wider world. Stories told by state propagandists, or by history textbook authors, are likely to establish only shallow roots in popular consciousness if they fail to relate convincingly to the stories that families and communities tell each other. The power, or weakness, of the nationalist narrative of Chinese history as developed and refined under the Communists derives ultimately from its consonance, or dissonance, with popular folk memory. Folk memories may themselves be as false or distorted as the stories of party propagandists, but they are not simply the imaginative conjurings of political elites.

The case not only of China, but also of Japan and Korea, suggests that the arguments of Western scholars who extrapolate primarily from European examples to construct theories of nationalism as an invented tradition require some qualification. Hobsbawm, the European Marxist, and Gellner,

the self-proclaimed Enlightenment liberal, have highlighted the novelty of the modern nineteenth-century nation-state and the role of schools and universities as vehicles for the transmission of the shared national identities that constituted the social glue of these new polities. Schools undoubtedly were designed to perform this function, and frequently did so — but equally failed to do so. No amount of singing the "Marseillaise" or studying the history of the Grand Revolution transformed Vietnamese into Frenchmen, just as learning about the Magna Carta or the 1832 Reform Act did not turn Malays or Chinese into Britons. Where political socialization merely involves a clumsy top-down imposition of obviously alien histories and values, it is unlikely to succeed.

Ernest Gellner recognizes this when he argues that the importance in modern societies of access to the dominant high culture — "a literate codified culture permitting context-free communication, community membership and acceptability" — means that "if there is no congruence between the culture in which [people] are operating and the culture of the surrounding economic, political and educational bureaucracies, then they are in trouble" (Gellner, 1999, 33). In circumstances where a community feels so excluded, people may "automatically" become nationalists. Gellner cites the case of the Estonians, who at the beginning of the nineteenth century "did not even have a name for themselves" but who gradually developed the full paraphernalia of national identity and culture as a result of their sense of exclusion from the high culture of the German, Swedish, and Russian elites. The case of Estonia invites comparison with the more recent development of a sense of national identity in Taiwan and perhaps also of what might be termed a subnational or pseudonational identity among the population of Hong Kong. These examples suggest that Gellner is probably right when he claims that "cultural continuity is contingent and inessential" to the development of nationalism, if this continuity is defined as an ability to trace the cultural distinctiveness of a community back to "primordial" roots (33). In Chapter 4, Stéphane Corcuff forcefully propounds precisely this sort of antiprimordialist view in relation to Taiwan. Nevertheless, if this is valid as a general rule, it may require substantial qualification in the case of East Asian nationalisms more broadly and Chinese nationalism in particular. This is because national identity in China, and to a lesser extent in Japan and Korea, has come to be rooted in a consciousness of distinctive cultural traditions that are, demonstrably, exceptionally ancient. In these cases, premodern high culture did not, as in the case of ancient Greece, simply demarcate the distinction between "those who read Homer (or the Confucian *sishu*) and those who did not" (though this was in each case one of the most important ways of distinguishing between those who were or were not "civilised"). In much of East Asia, this high culture also imparted a sense of shared history and, importantly, of common ancestry, which underpinned the legitimacy of the state (Dikotter, 1992, 1997). These historiographical and

genealogical traditions may ultimately have been "invented", just as Estonian or Taiwanese nationalisms have more recently been conjured up apparently "out of thin air," but they were inventions whose artificiality was effectively obscured by the mists of time. Moreover, while in Japan and Korea nationalism may generally have constituted the features of a shared elite culture from which the mass of the agrarian population was largely excluded (as Gellner suggests is typically the case in premodern societies), throughout most of "China proper," these traditions arguably constituted a proto-nationalism that permeated both elite and popular cultures. History, along with genealogy (Dikotter, 1992, 1997; Faure and Liu, 1996; Siu, 1996), was also an important force in the spiritual universe of traditional China, and its principal function — as is discussed further in Chapter 1 — was to explain the rise and fall of ruling dynasties by reference to a set of eternal moral norms embodied in the Chinese classical canon. The ongoing exegesis of these classical texts by the scholarly elite, alongside the currency of bowdlerized versions of many of the stories they contained at the popular level, suggests parallels with the role of the Bible and of ecclesiastical history in premodern Europe. In the case of Europe, Chadwick has argued that ecclesiastical history eventually "begat" secular history and that the child "slowly began to change its father." He also claims that "men of Eastern philosophies and religions paid small heed to [history], neglecting it as a kaleidoscope of trivial little lights which pale before the sight of eternal being and truth."('). One wonders which particular "Eastern philosophies" he had in mind; however, in China, and perhaps to a lesser extent in those states that were part of the "Chinese World Order" (such as Korea, Japan, and Vietnam), history, far from being seen as "trivial", was regarded — at least among educated elites — as the touchstone of state legitimacy. The difference with "the West" lay not in history's absence, but in the way in which it was conceived. History in the traditional Chinese world, far from being the ungrateful child of religion, was its Siamese twin; for the elite, history *was* religion — and the state was both the object of worship and the ultimate source of doctrinal authority (Jenner, 1993).

This traditional obsession with the state, incorporating and reinforced by the deeply rooted practice of ancestor worship (Faure and Liu, 1996; Dikotter, 1992, 1997), perhaps helps to account for the extraordinary receptiveness of East Asian societies to the neo-Darwinist theories of nationalism that were fashionable in Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — just at the time when Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans were attempting to redefine and "modernise" their polities by reference to European precedents. Influenced by Darwinist ideas, they intensified, reinvented, or reimagined — but did not suddenly conjure up out of thin air — forms of nationalism that posited the existence of primordial, homogenous race-nations, their efforts given extra impetus by a laager mentality induced by the menace of Western imperialism. In the process, as Duara has shown, rival visions of history — both

indigenous and "Western" — that challenged this primordialist, state-centered master narrative by advocating more liberal, pluralist, or secular alternatives were swept aside (Duara, 1995). The task of "rescuing history from the nation" in China and elsewhere in East Asia was rendered all the more difficult by the early love match between the dominant native tradition of state-centered sacred history and the late nineteenth-century Western emphasis on the primacy of eternal, racially defined national communities. This union spawned a virulent brood of pseudoreligious, racialist nationalisms in China, Japan, and Korea and inspired revised standard versions of the old histories to serve as scripture for the faithful members of these reformed national communities.

Ways of Relating to the Past: A Question of Standards

It is important to emphasise at this point that the cultures and histories of the Far East are not in any fundamental sense incommensurable with those of the rest of the world; the cultural traditions of these communities may have predisposed them to adopt primordialist visions of their national past, but those traditions, however ancient they may be, are themselves the products of history and not of some ineffable "essence" and, as such, are contingent and subject to change. Just as German nationalism, historiography, and history curricula developed differently in East and West Germany in the decades after World War II, so in the People's Republic, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore visions of the history of China and perceptions of what it means to be Chinese have multiplied and diverged. There may be dominant trends in historical thought and in the way in which national communities construct their own identities but, as we argue in later chapters, in East Asia these dominant discourses — to adopt a fashionable term — have never held the field entirely unchallenged, whether from without or within.

The assumption that these dominant visions should be challenged, both for the health of these communities and for the good of the wider world, is one that informs the contributions to this volume. However, the claim that there are "better" and "worse" ways in which nations can go about constructing their identities historically and teaching history in their schools is itself open to attack, not least from those who may feel that the standards by which such judgments are made are "Western" standards, and thus are by definition inapplicable to non-Western societies. In what we are often told is a "postmodern" world, the relativity of all cultures and standards is often taken as axiomatic. Before proceeding to analyse the different ways in which history can be presented through school curricula and textbooks, it is important to address the issue of cultural relativism, especially since this idea, along with others associated with postmodernist and postcolonialist theory, has in recent years attracted considerable interest in East Asia.

Postmodernism, or the very wide range of ideas associated with it, has inspired much extremely valuable and stimulating research into such areas

as the history of culture and into previously neglected fields such as women's history. However, the value of the contribution made by this research, as with historical scholarship of any kind, still implicitly depends upon its potential for improving our understanding of the past. It is the capacity of history to do this at all that has come under attack in recent years from more "fundamentalist", or theoretically oriented postmodernists or poststructuralists. The latter have tended to argue that claims to "truth" on behalf of a particular interpretation of history or a particular culture, political ideology, or religion are all in the final analysis merely screens for a Nietszchean "will to power" (Jenkins, 1991, 1995, 1997; Foucault, 1997). Since "truth" is a mirage, the dominance of any particular set of beliefs at any time is irrelevant to their validity; it is merely a reflection of the power that those who benefit from their acceptance are able to wield over others. The acceptance or rejection of ideas or beliefs is not a matter of rational choice because that would imply a set of standards according to which any choice could be judged to be rational or otherwise, a possibility denied by relativism. Perceptions of "truth" are merely the consequence of an irrational preference — a preference that may be inherited, like one's genes, from predecessors within a cultural tradition, or may be foisted onto an individual or group as a result of unequal power relations (for example, between East Asians and Western "imperialists"). This, at least, is taken to be the usual pattern, since most people are trapped within "'dominant discourses'" that they believe to be "true" — apart from these extreme postmodernists themselves, whose role it is to expose and analyse these discourses for the rest of us. In doing so, they aspire to demonstrate that the list of choices — in narrative accounts of the past, as in political, religious, or moral beliefs — is theoretically endless. At the same time, however, many of them assert that it is desirable (they cannot, if they are consistent, claim to offer a rational explanation as to *why* it is desirable), that we should choose narratives or beliefs that are authentically "ours", while respecting the rights of other groups or individuals to do the same. The view is frequently advanced by its left-leaning Western advocates that postmodernism is fundamentally liberating, since exposing the way in which dominant discourses are rooted in political interests legitimizes struggles on the part of oppressed groups — workers, women, blacks, Asians — to construct "counter-discourses" of their own. However, as Richard Evans (2000) has pointed out, postmodernist relativism can be as "empowering" for neo-fascists as for neo-Marxists; self-styled "antibourgeois" irrationalism can serve right-wing as well as left-wing causes and indeed historically has done just that — both in Europe and in East Asia.

In his book *In Defence of History,* Evans asks rhetorically of one of his avowedly antirationalist critics, "Does he really want to live in a society where the evidence for an argument counts for nothing and the moral (or immoral) force behind its advocacy for everything?" (Evans, 2000, p. 300). The answer is obvious — the principles that the more extreme postmodernists advocate from

the security of their ivory towers bear no relation to the principles by which, presumably, they would wish to be tried in court if they happened to be wrongly accused of murder. Gellner similarly concludes his trenchant critique of postmodernism and religious fundamentalism by declaring to the "relativists" that "you provide an excellent account of the manner in which we choose our menu or our wallpaper. As an account of the realities of our world and a guide to conduct, your position is laughable." It may be laughable, at least as a cosy Western parlour-game, but the relativism that postmodernists avow has been thrown back in their faces by an emerging Asian "New Right" from Bombay (or Mumbai) to Beijing. The philosophy of extreme cultural relativism lends a veneer of intellectual respectability to pseudofascist proponents of *Hindutva* in India, just as it does to the new breed of self-styled "postmodernists" in China, who propound a deeply illiberal brand of cultural nationalism. And views of history — or of mythology masquerading as history, or even displacing it in a postmodern world where history and myth are indistinguishable — are fundamental to these political struggles over national identity and cultural exceptionalism. Thus, well-heeled Hindu nationalists in India weave the legends of Lord Ram into a pseudohistorical narrative of the national past to serve their own political ends, while Chinese nationalists invoke history in support of a totalizing and homogenizing vision of the Chinese "race-nation", whose unity and defining characteristics are traced back to immemorial antiquity.

Nevertheless, the relativist critique of rationalism raises serious philosophical issues that could, and indeed have, served as the subject of entire books. Notable among these are the works of the philosopher Alastair MacIntyre, who argues that extreme relativism stems from the inevitable collapse of the Enlightenment project to define the tenets of Reason or Truth scientifically, absolutely, once and for all (MacIntyre, 1985 and, 1990). Thus far he is in agreement with Nietszche and Foucault, and in disagreement with an Enlightenment rationalist such as Gellner. However, according to MacIntyre, reason is not an entirely lost cause, at least not if we see rationality as something internal to traditions of moral and philosophical thought, rather than an eternal absolute above and beyond them. Tradition, for MacIntyre, is moreover neither the solipsistic, self-referential discourse of Foucauldian genealogy, nor a fixed body of custom in the Burkean sense, but instead is (or should be) a living, ongoing debate over how to order the practices of our collective lives in conformity with reason and justice. In other words, traditions embody "continuities of conflict", and thus it should be the ultimate role of education to initiate students into these as active participants rather than merely passive bystanders (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 222). Like the historical philosopher R. G. Collingwood, MacIntyre sees philosophy not as an exercise in rarefied academic abstraction, but as a practical argument over the "good life", whose questions and problems, far from being arrived at arbitrarily, can arise only from the history of the debate itself (Collingwood, 1944, 1994). We cannot

aspire to a "perfect theory" — all we can aspire to is "the best theory so far," and any progress toward this is tentative and reversible, rather than a matter of Whiggish certainty (MacIntyre, 1985, p. 277).

Like most contemporary Western philosophers (though unlike some of their eighteenth-century predecessors), MacIntyre has little to say about Eastern philosophy in general, or Confucian philosophy in particular, though he has written on the potential for meaningful conversation between Aristotelians and Confucians (MacIntyre, 1991). However, as is demonstrated in Jones' discussion in chapter 1 of the development of historical thought and practice in East Asia, the same is emphatically not true of thinkers in general, and historians in particular, in modern and contemporary Asia. The business of distinguishing what ideas or practices are, or are not, part of indigenous Chinese, Japanese, or Korean traditions is rendered exceedingly complex by the interpenetration of Western and Asian philosophy and practice over the past century and more. Many have seen this as a symptom of the subjection of Asian minds to Western colonisation, but it can alternatively, and perhaps more convincingly, be viewed as a consequence of Asian attempts to deal with problems of modernisation, state formation, and the maintenance of social cohesion that are the common currency of a world that has been "jointly, if unequally, created" (Hopkins, 2002, p. 2).

The task of charting a course between the Scylla of dependency on the West and the Charybdis of the kind of wholesale rejection of international norms and precedents sometimes advocated by the relativists is one that has preoccupied intellectual and political elites throughout the developing world. In contemporary Asia, the relativists and cultural essentialists may sometimes make the most noise, but there have always been those who advocate more critical attitudes to the indigenous cultural inheritance along with selective borrowing from the West. Collingwood, for example, has been translated into Chinese, and his book *The Idea of History* has featured as a set text for postgraduate students of history education in Beijing. However, studying Collingwood, and thereby learning to view history as a critical craft rather than a body of received knowledge, presumably does not make these students any less authentically Chinese. In India, the eminent historian (and history textbook author), Romilla Thapar, was relentlessly pilloried by the Hindu nationalist acolytes of India's BJP administration precisely because she offered a secular, rational, evidence-based account of the early Indian past that exposed their neo-fascist mythologizing for the fraudulent, and dangerous, exercise it is, and she would no doubt dismiss allegations that such an approach marks her as somehow un-Indian (Thapar, 1999). Meanwhile, Li Shenzhi, seen by some as the doyen of Chinese liberals, has drawn a direct parallel between the penchant of the current Beijing regime for appeals to nationalist sentiment and the practices of fascist or totalitarian regimes in Europe and Asia.

Commenting on the massive celebrations organized for China's National Day in 1999, he wrote:

> "Hitler is dead, and Stalin is no longer around. There should be few countries in the world that would seek such a grandiose spectacle. Maybe I am a bit old-fashioned, but I suppose only a man like Kim Jong-il of Korea would have that kind of enthusiasm. … I have noticed that Jiang Zemin also likes to use Sun Yat-sen's words, 'The currents of the worlds are vast and mighty; those who follow them flourish, while those who go against them perish.' The problem is seeing clearly the currents of the world. Globalization is the current of the world, market economics is the current of the world, democratic politics is the current of the world, and increasing human rights is the current of the world. Those who follow these currents will flourish, and those who go against them will perish." (quoted in Fewsmith, 2001, pp. 222–223).

Li's view of globalisation may be somewhat starry-eyed, but this need not detract from his implication that appeals to nationalist sentiment are potentially as dangerous for China today as they were for Germany in the 1930s, and for similar reasons.

It should be borne in mind that for every Li Shenzhi–style liberal, one is likely to come across at least twenty Beijing taxi drivers who will confess that Hitler (along with Chairman Mao and Margaret Thatcher) is one of their heroes, "because he was a strong leader." However, this only lends all the more urgency to criticisms of the propagation, through state-controlled media as well as through the education system, of an uncritical, unreflective patriotism that prioritises the strength of the state above all else. It may be that a preoccupation with a strong state, or with strong leaders, conceived as the embodiment of a homogenous *volksgemeinschaft* is a tendency reinforced by old habits of thought in China (perhaps in part because, as in Germany before Bismarck, the unity, independence, and strength of the state has in the past so often been a distant ideal), but this does not render such an obsession any less disturbing. Nationalist cultural essentialism may appeal to the tastes and prejudices of many Chinese people, but this does not mean that their choice is therefore value-neutral, like the preference for a particular pattern of wallpaper (to borrow Gellner's analogy).

The dangers of extreme nationalism, and of the distorted views of history upon which such nationalism feeds, are a recurring theme of Chinese and Korean criticisms of Japan, and in particular of the Japanese failure to confront the atrocities committed by Imperial troops during the Pacific War through accounts of that war in school history textbooks. However, it is not nationalism in general, but Japanese nationalism in particular, that Japan's neighbors tend to view as problematic. The parallel drawn by Buruma between Hitler's manipulation of the Munich Olympic Games of 1936 and the way in which

the Seoul Olympics of 1988 became an occasion for the whipping up of often hysterical nationalist chauvinism would doubtless be greeted with outrage and incredulity by most Koreans (or by the Chinese, if a similar comparison were to be made between 1936 Munich and 2008 Beijing). After all, Korean nationalism (the argument runs) is a benign force. Koreans are a set-upon people who merely crave their rightful place in the community of nations; Korea is not a threat to her neighbors. Korean nationalism, in other words, is an inoffensive, unthreatening sentiment, because the aggressive and militaristic qualities that characterised wartime Japanese nationalism are simply not among Korea's defining national characteristics. Similar arguments are advanced by apologists for Chinese nationalism, some of whom portray the Chinese as a race innocent of the original sin of aggressive expansionism; the history of foreign invasions forms the basis of a self-justifying nationalist victimology. According to the orthodox nationalist account, foreign aggressors have relentlessly persecuted a China that has "never invaded another country," but that by refraining from aggression has, if anything, become a victim of its own moral superiority. With rare exceptions such as Li Shenzhi, most Chinese and Koreans — young or old — appear blind to any comparisons between their home-grown nationalisms and foreign varieties, a blindness reflected and reinforced by messages conveyed through the media and school curricula.

There is, it should be noted, nothing intrinsically or inevitably Asian about such attitudes; after all, only half a century ago Britain's greatest prime minister penned a triumphalist four-volume tract on the "History of the English-speaking peoples" — a work that owed much to nineteenth-century myths concerning the special historic mission of the Anglo-Saxon race. Nowadays, the mainstream of Western Europe's intellectual and political elites frowns on such ethnocentric triumphalism and sees nationalism as a dangerous virus to be isolated and contained whenever outbreaks occur. However, such outbreaks do continue and in recent years appear to have worsened, as witnessed by the strong showing of the Front Nationale in the French presidential elections of 2002, and of far right and Eurosceptic parties in other recent polls. Northern Ireland, despite the fragile success of the Peace Process, remains riven by sectarian divides that embody contradictory and irreconcilable readings of the Ulster past. Meanwhile, in many of the postcommunist states of Eastern Europe, nationalist historians have reinvented the past — and rewritten school history textbooks — to serve present political ends, often with a breathtaking disregard for what a naïve empiricist might term "the facts." In the case of a country such as the Ukraine, whose past has throughout most of recorded history been so closely interwoven with that of Russia as to render the two so-called "nations" virtually indistinguishable, revisionist accounts that aim to trace the primordial origins of a homogenous Ukrainian ethnic identity have given rise to particularly bizarre fictions (Wilson, 2002).

If nationalist extremism and intolerance remain a threat to the political health of both Asia and Europe, then how can the school curriculum help to innoculate societies against it? On this score, consensus has proved elusive. Debate over the function that formal education can or should play in inculcating the common values necessary to underpin social cohesion — overshadowed for many years in some countries by concerns to make education more directly serve economic ends — has recently resurfaced. The fierce controversy over the right of Muslim French students to wear the *hejab*, or traditional headscarf, has highlighted the way in which France remains, in Alexander's words, almost the "archetype of cultural reproduction" (Alexander, 2000, p. 166). The French education system retains its explicit and unabashed focus on the national goals served by formal schooling — the inculcation of common values of citizenship, general culture and the disciplined mind. In England, by contrast, attempts to define common values or a coherent vision of English citizenship through the school curriculum remain vague and tentative, creating "confusion about the kind of person the state, through its schools, seeks to produce" (ibid., p. 169) — a situation perhaps compounded by the confusion over what constitutes Britishness versus Englishness, Scottishness, or Welshness — let alone Northern Irishness. This, Alexander argues, has led to a situation whereby "at the turn of the century the vacuum or conundrum of identity in England is an open door to political appropriation; the more so as in England education is now more tightly controlled by central government than [in any other of the five countries in Alexander's study]" (ibid., p. 169).

History curricula in England and France reflect this contrast, with the French according greater prominence to a largely triumphalist narrative of national history, while the English curriculum at all levels tends to offer, in place of a coherent narrative, a more fragmented overall picture of the past, focusing in greater depth on particular periods and historical themes (see chapter 10 by Peter Cave). Similarly, the insistent and relentless appeal to patriotism that pervades political and popular rhetoric in the United States is reflected by and transmitted through school history curricula that generally still take the story of American progress as their unifying theme.

In discussions of the different forms of national identity, the distinction is often made between "civic" nationalisms, whereby nationality is seen primarily as a question of subscribing to common values and a shared sense of belonging, and "ethnic" or "ethno-cultural" nationalisms, which regard national identity as an inherited given. The validity of this rather black-and-white dichotomy has been challenged by some scholars, notably Anthony Smith (1999), who argues that all nationalisms ultimately have ethno-cultural origins; others, meanwhile, have sought to refine and qualify the distinction by pointing to how civic and ethnic bases for identity can coexist or overlap with each other and with other powerful sources of identity, such as religion, in complex and contradictory ways. Thus, while official or elite constructions of national

identity in Britain and France tend nowadays to be couched more in civic than in ethno-cultural terms (largely due to a need to maintain social cohesion in societies characterised by mass immigration), at a popular level, ethno-cultural markers of identity still exert a powerful hold on the imagination. Meanwhile, in America — the classic example of a "civic nation" — various exclusionary ethno-cultural (or multicultural) subnationalisms persist and proliferate, while the ideals of Protestant Christianity permeate public rhetoric and feature prominently in the nation's founding myth.

Those who place the most emphasis on the civic-ethnic divide often tend to assume that civic nationalism is "good" because it involves a recognition of the constructed nature of identity and tends to be associated with more open and tolerant polities, whereas ethnic nationalism is "bad" because, by definition, it sees national belonging as an exclusive and predetermined attribute. In theory, this argument may have much to recommend it. However, in practice, the American example illustrates that even if a civic ideal of national identity can be divorced from ethnic considerations (a big "*if*"), civic nationalisms themselves can become ramified into elaborate mythologies as fantastic as the inventions of ethnic chauvinists.

The ideological as well as the "factual" content of a school history curriculum — the civic values embodied in its narrative of the national past and the relative emphasis attached to the various ethno-cultural components of the national community — is nonetheless important. Even to the extent that constructing historical narratives may be an exercise in selective myth making, some myths are arguably better than others — and the myths of civic nationalism, insofar as they tend to foster a more inclusive and tolerant vision of citizenship, are perhaps better than ethno-cultural visions that emphasise the cultural, religious, or racial divisions between nation-states, while obscuring or denying diversity within them. However, when it comes to history education, the content is only half of the story. As significant as *what* history is taught is *the way in which* decisions are reached over content selection, and how that content, however selected, is presented to students. Historical knowledge can be presented as an authorised version beyond criticism, or as a living tradition of debate over the past, whose findings are always provisional and open to revision. In other words, process is as important as content, and two processes are involved here: the process of educational debate and curriculum development that determines the content of curricula and the process of historical investigation itself and the extent to which this — rather than merely its results — forms part of the subject matter of history classes.

The curriculum development process, as well as institutions of formal education more broadly, has tended to be portrayed by sociologists as a means whereby society imposes its rules and conventions on the individual. Some, like Durkheim (1961), have seen this exercise in a positive light arguing that formal education in a modern state should serve to inculcate a democratic

morality (involving, amongst other things, respect for reason) that cements social solidarity. Others, from Marx to Althusser and Bourdieu, have tended to argue that formal education bolsters and reproduces an unequal and exploitative class structure; for Althusser (1971), schools and universities have taken the place of organized religion as the dominant ideological state apparatuses in modern society, whereas for Bourdieu and Passerson (1990) schools are instruments of symbolic violence, inculcating modes of behaviour and belief that reinforce the existing social order. As Tremlett (2004) has indicated, the problem with this neo-Marxist perspective is that it posits a structure of social determinism that, if true, would also shape the thought of those such as Althusser or Bourdieu, who write as if they are observers situated at a vantage point above and outside the closed system they are describing. The same criticism applies, as was noted above, to Foucault and the postmodernist-relativist scholars, who see discourse as an enclosed and self-regulated system of rules and relationships; their position could be seen as one of cultural, or discursive, determinism.

A subtler, neo-Gramscian vision of hegemony as a negotiated process, rather than as a crudely deterministic and rigid structure of domination, might contribute more to an understanding of curriculum change. However, the way in which many educational scholars have deployed the concept of "hegemony" has tended to reflect less than subtle neo-Marxist assumptions. World System theorists, for example, observing the adoption by developing countries of curricular categories originating in the West (especially America), have seen this as evidence of blind imitation. Thus S. Y. Wong has argued that "The dramatic post–World War II worldwide shift from the traditional history and geography content to a new form of integrated subject matter called 'social studies' is a reflection more of a general change in world social patterns than of internal attributes of national societies. This change is also a response to the transformation of structural dominance among hegemonic powers since World War II in that social studies … illustrates the extensive influence of the United States in the rest of the world" (cited in Morris, McClelland, and Wong, 1997). Claims of this sort are usually based on a rather superficial analysis both of the processes whereby Western curricular models are adopted and adapted in non-Western contexts and of the content of the resulting curricula themselves. This point is also made by Morris, McClelland, and Wong (1997, p. 27–43):

> The ability to identify prevailing curriculum models that transcend national boundaries does not, of itself, explain curriculum change in any particular country. An adequate explanation would need to account for the internal and external pressures for change, as well as the source of the innovations promoted.

This applies to attempts to explain why, in recent years, a vision of history education as a vehicle for training students in critical thinking skills has aroused

interest among curriculum developers in East Asia. The idea that history lessons in schools, in addition to providing students with knowledge of past events, should also initiate them into the craft of the professional historian has gained popularity among history educators in Britain, America, and elsewhere in the West since the 1960s. In part, this has arisen from a perceived need to render a traditionally dry, academic subject more relevant and useful to secondary school pupils in an era of mass education. The emphasis on history as a training in analytical skills rather than as a didactic, moralistic narrative to be memorized and internalised has also tended to be associated more with liberal or left-leaning educators, for whom part of the attraction of the approach lies in its potential for assisting students to critique self-serving historical myths promoted by dominant social elites. The move away from teaching a single, received narrative of the national past and toward a more in-depth, contemporary, and thematic focus involving the use of primary sources has been promoted for its contribution, on the one hand, to developing generic analytical skills and, on the other, to encouraging attitudes of tolerance of diverse views and skepticism toward dominant interpretations of the past. At the same time, the decreasing emphasis on the traditional account of high politics has been accompanied in some systems by efforts to increase the amount of attention devoted to the history of previously neglected or despised groups — women, blacks, Native Americans, or Australian aborigines. In Western contexts, this vision of history education thus sees it as playing a crucial role in the formation of an active, tolerant, democratic citizenry.

However, this is not to imply that such an approach to history education is unproblematic, nor that it has swept all before it in the schools of the democratic West. Even, and perhaps especially, in ostensibly liberal-democratic societies, consensus over the best way to teach history to the young remains elusive. This is not just because conservative or reactionary elements wish to maintain or return to a more traditional, triumphalist narrative of the national past, though many undoubtedly do. In Britain, for example, serious concerns have been voiced, and not only by figures on the right of the political spectrum, over the way in which the focus in recent years on skills at the expense of broad narrative coverage appears to have left many youngsters with an extremely patchy and disconnected knowledge of the national and global past. In 2001, Germany's ambassador to London publicly voiced concerns over the impact that a disproportionate focus by history teachers on the history of Nazi Germany was having on perceptions of his country among English youth (*Economist*, 2001). Meanwhile, as we shall see, the idea that history education can play a role in developing the sort of generic thinking skills that are useful in a globalised knowledge economy, while attractive to politicians and curriculum developers in some parts of East Asia, has proved difficult to reconcile with strongly ingrained notions of the fundamental didactic and moralistic function of history education. The terms of the debate over history education may

appear similar in distant corners of the globe, but the outcome of the argument is not dictated by any Western hegemons; rather, it is primarily the product of pressures arising from within the local political, cultural, and social context.

If the school curriculum, and the curriculum for history in particular, is implicated in the construction of a kind of hegemony, then it is what Raymond Williams (1997, p. 112) calls "a lived hegemony" one which "does not just passively exist as a form of dominance" but that "has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended and modified" while also "continually resisted, limited, altered [and] challenged by pressures not all its own." Only when hegemony is seen in these terms does it become possible to envisage any potential for social or cultural change or to explain those changes that have characterised conceptions of the nature of history and the purpose of teaching it in schools in various countries. Thus this book begins from the premise that change — or the lack of it — in history curricula, as in history itself, has to be explained in terms of shifting, complex, and sometimes contradictory political, cultural, and socio-economic factors, rather than by reference to cultural essences or self-replicating hegemonic structures. Dictatorship, democracy, and the exasperated tribalisms or critical-liberal attitudes that underpin or undermine them — whether in Europe, America, or East Asia — have their origins within historical processes, rather than above or beyond them. Barrington Moore (1997, p. 486) perhaps expressed it best:

> The assumption of inertia, that cultural and social continuity do not require explanation, obliterates the fact that both have to be recreated anew in each generation, often with great pain and suffering. To maintain and transmit a value system, human beings are punched, bullied, sent to jail, thrown into concentration camps, cajoled, bribed, made into heroes, encouraged to read newspapers, stood up against a wall and shot, and sometimes even taught sociology. To speak of cultural inertia is to overlook the concrete interests and privileges that are served by indoctrination, education, and the entire complicated process of transmitting culture from one generation to the next.

An Outline of this Volume

The contributors to this volume fully acknowledge that any truly comprehensive study of the influences upon, and impact of, history education in schools would need to take into account a whole range of factors that lie beyond the scope of most of the essays presented here — from the nature and extent of the training that history teachers receive to the ways in which children themselves construct their visions of history (whether through formal study in the classroom, or exposure to extra curricular sources). Although most of the following chapters focus on the official process of curriculum development, this does not imply that we assume a uniform correlation between official curricula and

classroom practice, let alone any precise equivalence between the latter and the way in which students, as a result of a whole range of cultural influences, come to perceive the past and their place in it. Nevertheless, as noted above, research on curriculum in East Asia has indicated a relatively high degree of reliance on textbooks among teachers in the classroom and, even more so, among students outside it (Marsh and Morris, 1991). Top-down systems of curriculum development and official mechanisms for the vetting and approval of published teaching materials also ensure that what students read in their textbooks tends to conform closely to official syllabi. This does not mean that teachers or students always and everywhere simply parrot the authorised textbook account, but it does ensure that centrally defined syllabi — and especially examination syllabi — play a crucial role in determining what is taught and learned in history classrooms.

The bulk of this book is devoted to analyses of the development of curricula and textbooks in the various states of East Asia from 1945 to the present day. The end of the Second World War represented, for Asia as for Europe, a huge political watershed, heralding the demise of right-wing militarism in Japan, the rise of Communism (and the resultant Cold War stand-offs on the Korean peninsula and across the Taiwan Strait), and the process of decolonisation (immediate in the case of Japan's colonies, more gradual in the case of Britain's). Nevertheless, it is impossible to understand the development of history education in postwar East Asia without taking into account the shared inheritance of the premodern period, and in particular the influence of Confucian historiography. It is this Confucian heritage that Alisa Jones examines in Chapter 1, as she traces and explains the evolution of East Asia's historiographical traditions in the context of the political and cultural relationships that have shaped the region's past. As her analysis reaches the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, she underlines the strength of essentialist ethnocultural nationalisms in the reinvented nation-states of modern East Asia and shows how this affected the early development of history curricula for schools.

In Chapter 2, Jones continues to pursue the theme of nationalism, showing how in China the pre-1949 Kuomintang (KMT) regime and its post-1949 Communist successors, despite many ideological differences, shared similarly ethnocentric, homogenous, and totalising visions of Chinese nationhood. While the doctrine of class struggle and historical materialism came to pervade history textbooks in Mao's China, the assertion that China had always been (and forever would remain) essentially "one" — that national unity was immemorial and inviolable — was a belief that the Communists and their KMT enemies emphatically shared. This denial of diversity applied even — or perhaps especially — to the histories of China's minority nationalities (such as the Tibetans, Mongols, and Uighurs), as it dictated their incorporation within the party's uniform and teleological narrative of the national past. However, Jones' analysis reveals the Byzantine character of the curriculum policymaking

process in the People's Republic and the limits to the Party's ability to devise and impose a coherent vision of Chinese history. She argues that this lack of coherence has become increasingly clear in the post-Mao period, due partly to the tensions between a residual attachment to the tenets of Marxist "scientific materialism" on the one hand and the attraction of resurgent Han Chinese nationalism on the other. The latter has encouraged renewed celebration of elements of China's old feudal culture, including many of the Great Men of the traditional historical canon (such as Confucius). At the same time, as Communist ideology has been quietly downplayed, the promotion of patriotism has become the central aim of history syllabi.

Inculcating Chinese patriotism was also one of the main aims of history curricula in Taiwan under the KMT. Following its defeat in China's Civil War, the KMT regime fled to Taiwan, taking its school curriculum with it, as it attempted to turn the island into a 'base for the recovery of the mainland.' For four decades or more, Taiwanese schoolchildren studied a curriculum focused entirely on the history of the central Chinese state and entirely divorced from the Taiwanese context. However, as Mei-Hui Liu, Li-Ching Hung, and Edward Vickers show in chapter 3, this began to change under the leadership of Lee Teng-hui in the 1990s. In the progress of democratisation since the 1980s, syllabi and textbooks on the island change to reflect the popular sense of Taiwan's distinctiveness vis-à-vis the mainland. For the first time, significant teaching time has been allocated to Taiwanese history, and textbooks have acknowledged the relatively recent nature of Chinese settlement, the diversity of Taiwanese society, and the historical importance of both the non-Han aboriginal communities and of foreign influences from the Dutch to the Japanese. However, despite Taiwan's strikingly open political atmosphere, internal divisions and tensions in relations with the Chinese mainland continue to limit the extent to which curriculum developers feel free to confront the controversial issue of "historical identity."

In Chapter 4, Stéphane Corcuff provides a more detailed analysis of the most significant episode in the reform of Taiwan's history curriculum: the move in the mid-1990s to introduce a course in Taiwanese history at junior high (secondary) level in the form of the new *Renshi Taiwan* (knowing taiwan) programme. The authors of the teaching materials for this course (History, Geography, and Society) were for the first time intellectuals recruited from outside a party-state apparatus that under Lee Teng-hui had already started to lose much of its former ideological rigidity. They undertook a reevaluation of the Japanese colonial period, presented Taiwan's ethnic and historical plurality, and helped to nurture a pluralistic vision of national identity among young people. The reaction of conservative intellectuals and politicians — mostly of mainland origin — was one of vociferous outrage. However, proreformist native politicians and intellectuals defended the programme with arguments that reflected a process of introspection regarding the possibility and legitimacy

of distinguishing between Taiwanese statehood and Chinese ethnicity. Corcuff argues that the adoption of this programme, in the face of conservative protests, constituted an important step forward in efforts on the part of the elite to foster a sense of Taiwanese national identity. For the first time, students would be taught about the existence of a Taiwanese "community of destiny", before taking courses on China during their second year of high school. China's status in textbook accounts was transformed from that of the motherland for which Taiwanese were supposed to yearn to that of Taiwan's main, but no longer its sole, cultural matrix.

In this respect, the contrast between Taiwan and Hong Kong is striking. As Edward Vickers and Flora Kan show in Chapter 5, local history in Hong Kong, as in Taiwan, was absent from school syllabi until the 1990s. It was necessary to go back as far as the 1960s to find a time when local history was included in the curriculum for senior secondary level, though then it was treated as a subset of British imperial history. However, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a change in Hong Kong's political situation and, more significantly for any consideration of the treatment of the local past, in local culture and local people's sense of identity. By the 1980s, a sense of 'Hongkongese' identity had emerged, but this was scarcely reflected in the school curriculum. Meanwhile, perhaps more than their counterparts anywhere else in East Asia, curriculum developers in Hong Kong sought to make the subject of history a vehicle for the teaching of critical thinking skills. However, Vickers and Kan argue that attempts to promote a skills-based approach have been largely emasculated by a simultaneous concern, on the part of officials and textbook publishers, to steer clear of all issues liable to cause offense in pro-Beijing circles. The result has been a "Hong Kong history" that emphasises the positive aspects of the region's historical relationship with the motherland, largely ignores or downplays the impact of colonialism, and confines itself otherwise to "safe" topics in economic and social history.

In Singapore too, the account of local history presented to students in their government-commissioned textbooks has tended to paint a somewhat partial picture of the island's past, and one calculated to instill sentiments of patriotism and admiration for the legacy of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP). However, as Goh Chor Boon and Saravanan Gopinathan Goh demonstrate in Chapter 6, history in general and local history in particular for many years occupied a very minor place in Singapore's school curriculum. It was only from the late 1970s onwards, once the city-state had already attained a relatively high level of economic development, that the PAP regime began to focus increasingly on the development of a sentimental sense of Singaporeanness. Since the 1980s, history education has played a central role in schemes aimed at fostering an affective loyalty to a Singaporean nation that both embraces and transcends the ethnic communities that constitute it. The official vision of Singaporean identity has come to be rooted in a notion of Asian values that