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The history textbook controversy has been an issue of debate since the end of the Second World War and it continues today. This annotated bibliography identifies works related to the background of the textbook controversy, current topics of debate within textbooks, textbooks in-use, and other works on a similar theme outside of Japan.

**Key Words**: History, Textbooks, Education

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**The History Textbook Controversy: An Annotated Bibliography**

デラ・リック  
Rick Derrah

This annotated bibliography is centered on the theme of textbooks and provides information on various works including books, textbooks, articles, and reports providing information on the history textbook issue within Japan. Each reference also includes information to help the reader identify nature of the information as related to textbooks.

With the occupation of Japan at the end of World War Two, textbooks in Japan underwent a radical change as the Supreme Command for Allied Powers (SCAP) officials eliminated sections of books considered to be a hindrance to the development of democracy in Japan. A second change occurred in the 1950’s with the end of the occupation. Finally with a third round of textbook changes in the 1980’s the issues have become international and the center of media attention continuing today. This bibliography is divided into several sections including the history of textbooks, historical points of debate in textbooks, and finally some additional books which discuss the general debate on history’s presentation in textbooks.

**The History of Textbooks in Japan from Occupation**

This section covers changes in Japanese high school textbooks from the occupation with a focus on educational policies developed during the occupation period.

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This book provides an overview of the Japanese educational system from feudal to modern times with an emphasis on contemporary educational organization. The last section of the book entitled “major problems” discusses the changes in textbook censorship and authorization from the 1950’s to the 1960’s.


This is a collection of documents concerning education with three documents in particular providing an interesting insight into textbooks in Japan. The first document, “Plan for Educational Control in Japan under Military Occupation”, describes the intentions of the occupation forces, but also describes actions taken by the Ministry of Education after the end of the war before occupation. The second document, “Revision of the Japanese Educational System” issued by the US Department of State in 1947, provides a list of subjects not allowed in textbooks along with objectives for new textbooks. The third document, “Reform of Elementary and Secondary Education” written in 1987 by the National Council on Educational Reform includes detailed information on the system of textbook authorization.

Provides an overview of education trends from early history to the present day. The focus of this book is on current issues in education such as the teaching of math or science and teacher training, but there is an interesting section on education reform in the 1980’s.


This article describes the initial changes to textbook policy from 1946 and the development of the first postwar textbook Kuni no Ayumi written in just five months and published in October of 1946. Ienaga Saburo was responsible for writing the section on ancient history which before the end of the war had provided the foundation of imperial ideology for schoolchildren. Caiger shows Saburo as a defender of the changes made in 1946 which led him to take the government to court in the 1960’s over the issue of textbook certification.


Thesis – education after the war had contributed to equality among adults in various terms including the workplace, home, etc. Discusses general trends in social studies textbooks by each year of high school. Students are first introduced to workers they may come into contact in their neighborhoods and then the companies which deal with these workers. Finally the student is shown the link between the companies discussed earlier and their relation to the environment with an emphasis on the issue of pollution.


The Japan/United States Textbook Study Project surveyed 14 Japanese and 28 American social studies textbooks and looked at the perceptions contained in these books about each other. Some of the findings related to the theme of this bibliography included the fact that both US and Japanese textbooks oversimplified the causes of the Second World War and that while the treatment of Japan and the US in each other’s textbook was generally accurate a lot of the information was based on stereotypes.


This book provides a description of the education reforms implemented by the occupation forces both in Japan and Germany after the end of the Second World War. Focusing on textbooks, this book, details the different strategies used in an effort to eliminate the use of wartime textbooks and the how these result differed in both Japan and Germany.


Thakur provides an analysis of textbook policies during occupation and shows that these policies still remain a large part of the textbook debate even after 1952. She follows the policies and links them to the recent attempts by Ienaga Saburo to fight the changes required by the Ministry of Education in his high school history textbook. There is also an interesting account of the discussion of how to deal with the creation myth in textbooks.


This book is the memoir of Joseph Trainor who worked for the Textbook branch of the Civil Information and Education Section within General Headquarters and provides a detailed account of his seven years in Japan. Contains several chapters detailing the development of textbooks during the occupation. While not directly related to textbooks, there is also a very interesting discussion of the attempt to replace kanji with romanji.

Hicks, George (1998). Japan’s War Memories: Amnesia or Concealment. Brookfield, Ashgate

A detailed chronology of the controversial issues surrounding textbooks with an interesting counter to, what the author describes as, right wing revisionist counterattacks to changes in textbooks. Some of these counterattacks include debates on the denial of the Nanking Massacre and the meaning of the Tokyo
War Crime Trials.

*The Japanese Education Reform Council (1950). Education Reform in Japan. Tokyo, The Japanese Education Reform Council*

This report was written by a group of Japanese educators who organized to cooperate with the American Education Mission which visited Japan in 1946. It discusses many of the issues in Joseph C. Trainor's *Educational Reform in Occupied Japan* (1983) cited above, but is largely a positive reaction to the findings of the American Education Mission. The last sections of the report states that funding is the greatest problem in implementing education reform and throughout the report there is accounts of spending. A roster of members of the council and their fulltime positions beyond the council is also interesting.


This is the story of Ienaga Saburo and describes his education from elementary school through university. Ienaga is perhaps most well known for the events described in the second half of the book, his lawsuits over textbook certification. He went to court after a textbook he wrote was rejected by a textbook authorizing committee, challenging the constitutionality of the textbook authorization system. The first court case in 1962 was in response to the 260 required changes in his textbook as stated by the textbook committee and called for freedom of expression and academic freedom. The court found that the certification system was constitutional. In his second case Ienaga was told to rewrite six sections of his book, went to court, and won with the decision stating denial to certify a textbook based on historical interpretations was censorship. The ruling was later overturned. The third court case was based on a rejection of Ienaga's textbook due to his wording. He used “invasion of China” instead of “advance into” as well as describing the Nanking as a massacre instead of an incident. He lost the case.


This booklet produced by the Society for History Textbook Reform states its objective is to produce a new history textbook with several changes from current textbooks. This group also states that Japanese history should be taught strictly from a Japanese perspective and argues that such topics as comfort women should not be included in textbooks. The reasons cited not including information on the comfort women includes an argument against the historical accuracy of the comfort women story and also an argument based on pedagogy.


This book compares and contrasts the attempts in Japan, Germany, and the United States as they try to use education to develop a democratic society while confronting issues in history textbooks. While there is a large amount of material on history in Japanese history textbooks there is also an interesting discussing of the representation of the Vietnam War in US history textbooks.


This article explains an interesting group of factors which have worked to limit change in history education and to also pressure for a nondirect approach to issues surrounding the Second World War. Some of these factors include alternate views of the war, revisionist interest groups, politicization of the past, and the sense of victim hood.


In addition to providing a general history of the textbook issue within Japan, Murdo’s book gives interesting examples of the phrasing used by Ienaga Saburo in his textbooks along with the requested changes and reasons for these changes from the textbook authorization authorities.


In the early 1980’s the term “invasion” of China was changed to “advance into” China by a committee authorizing school textbooks. This became a major news story involving not just the change but also...
the relationship between the Ministry of Education and the Japan Teachers Union, the authorization process, and foreign reaction to the change. This article discusses these various facets of the controversy arguing a defense of the authorization system and against bowing to foreign pressure concerning changes in the wording of textbooks.


This book states diversity in relationships between schools, individuals, and society has created inequality. The Japan Teachers Union or Nikkyoso (*nihon kyoshokuin kumiai*) is described as making a stand together for a democratic state forcing it into conflict with the Ministry of Education over textbooks issues.


Dower discusses some of the issues surrounding the perception that Japan, unlike Germany, has not accepted war responsibility. He focuses on aspects involved in this debate including denial of aggression with wartime propaganda, moral arguments based on the idea of victor’s justice, and the feeling of victimization which all together work to hinder a full acceptance of war responsibility as requested by some groups.


Before the end of the Second World War, one subject taught in schools, *shushin*, played an important part in teaching students imperial ideology. After the end of the war the occupation forces wanted to replace *shushin* with social studies. With the end of the occupation, however, there was a shift away from social studies. This article describes the complex interaction between various occupation and Ministry of Education officials concerning this subject. It also presents the confusion between the different objectives of a civics course and social studies course as seen by both sides.

**Historical Issues in Textbooks**

This section looks at some of the issues which are points of contention in history textbooks. Most of these issues are based on events from the Second World War.


The latter half of the book provides some discussion of Nanking in Japanese history textbooks stating that there is an academic cover-up of the issue as well as censorship by the media and some government agencies such as the police.


The story of Rosa Henson in the Philippines during the war and her subsequent court case against the Japanese government in the 1990s


History of the comfort women during the war with sections on various countries such as Vietnam and Burma. The personal stories of some people who were comfort women are also included. The discussion of postwar reaction includes reactions by both the government and society.


Ienaga’s book on the war provides a perspective which has been criticized as being almost pro-communist. One section he describes the ultimate defeat of Japan as being attributed to the democracy of the Chinese people with some material help by the United States. There is a large focus on the conflict between Japan and China in this work.


This book details the sexual exploitation of women in Korea and Dutch women in Indonesia. It also describes the violence against Japanese women during the occupation by US and Australian troops.
Links are made between the comfort women situation and the development of a military prostitution system during the occupation.


Written after Iris Chang’s *The Rape of Nanking* this book describes its intention as countering the idea that the incident was a planned action by the military but instead a tragedy of war. It also provides an account of the changes in textbooks concerning the Nanking incident.

**Current Japanese History Textbooks**

These two books have been used in Kawachinagano City in Osaka Prefecture. The two textbooks take different approaches to some of the issues mentioned earlier in this bibliography. In addition to the wording, it is quite interesting to look at picture selection in these texts as compared to US history books dealing with the same subjects.


This is the history textbook currently used by a public high school in Kawachinagano City, Osaka Prefecture. In reference to Nanking, this book uses the term _nankin daigyakkusatsu jiken_ or Great Nanking Massacre. This provides an interesting contrast to the term used by another high school in the same city. This other book can be found below: _Yamamoto Shupansha. (2003). Syosetsu Nihonshi. Tokyo, Yamamoto Shupansha_

This is a high school history textbook used by the private school located in Kawachinagano City, Osaka Prefecture. The issue of the comfort women is discussed in a footnote and explains that women were collected but does not specify their activity. Concerning Nanking this text uses the term _nankin jiken_ or Nanking incident.

**Other Books**

The debate on what to include and how it should be represented is not unique to Japan. While these books are not related to the issue of Japanese textbooks they do provide an insight into the current discussion of the representation of history in high school textbooks in countries beyond Japan.


_R.Derrah, The History Textbook Controversy: An Annotated Bibliography_