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The role of historians in East Asia's history problem

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The Role of Historians in the History Problem

At first glance, historians may not look like the best candidates for facilitating a resolution of the history problem. This is because historians have traditionally used the nation as a primary unit of analysis, helping to naturalize it as a primordial entity. They have also created professional associations and delimited their membership along national borders, consistent with the nationalist logic of self-determination; for example, when Japanese historians write about the history of Japan, they often talk among themselves without consulting with foreign historians who study Japan. This nationally bounded content focus and membership reinforces the logic of nationalism that divides the world into discrete nations. Thus, even though historians are not necessarily supporters of nationalism, they have participated in nation-building as authoritative narrators of national history.[1]

But, at the same time, historians have regularly criticized nationalists for their tendency to simplify the past in order to create national myths and identity.[2] Historians are acutely aware that historical evidence is often incomplete to the extent that facts and interpretations of historical events are inevitably and inherently subject to controversy and future revisions. While nationalists often resort to emotionally charged commemoration to transform these open-ended historical controversies into immutable historical truths as foundations of national identity, historians contest such nationalist commemoration by exposing factual errors and unwarranted interpretations in light of available research.

In fact, over the last few decades, historians have become more critical of nationalism in the methodological sense, breaking away from the nationally bounded content focus and professional membership. Take, for example,

the recent growth of global and transnational historiography.[3] Historians working in this new genre focus on economic, political, social, and cultural interactions that traverse national borders, challenging the idea of nation as a discrete primordial entity. Historian Eric Hobsbawm even suggested that any historiography should entail a global and transnational perspective: "Historians, however microcosmic, must be for universalism, not out of loyalty to an ideal to which many of us remain attached but because it is the necessary condition for understanding the history of humanity, including that of any special section of humanity. For all human collectivities necessarily are and have been part of a larger and more complex world."[4] Moreover, the norm has emerged that historians as well as history teachers should collaborate across national borders in writing history of past international conflicts, as evinced by the growing number of joint historical research and education projects in East Asia and other parts of the world.[5] These joint projects represent the institutionalization of cosmopolitanism in historiography, which shifts a unit of analysis from the nation to transnational interaction while incorporating foreign perspectives into historical narratives.

In this chapter, then, I critically examine the potential for historians in problematizing nationalism and promoting cosmopolitanism in the politics of war commemoration. In recent years, the presence of historians in the history problem has increased, given that generations who did not experience the Asia-Pacific War became the majority in Japan, South Korea, and China—they learn about the war mostly from history lessons in school. In theory, then, historians who participate in joint historical research and education projects have the capacity to help these generations disentangle nationalist commemorations from the problematic historical judgment of the Tokyo Trial and move toward more cosmopolitan commemoration. But, at the same time, their actual influence on the relevant political actors in the field has yet to be systematically examined. To what extent did historians succeed in shifting governmental and public commemorations from nationalism to cosmopolitanism? What barriers did they encounter in trying to influence the dynamic and trajectory of the history problem?

Historians as Epistemically Oriented Rooted Cosmopolitans

To answer these questions, it is first necessary to understand the unique potentials of historians to act as "epistemically oriented rooted cosmopolitans."[6] Typically, *rooted cosmopolitans* are those based in a single country but

endowed with openness to foreign others.[7] They include immigrants whose biographies and social ties crisscross multiple nation-states, and activists who mobilize advocacy networks to address human rights violations in various parts of the world.[8] These rooted cosmopolitans show that openness to foreign others is not merely an individual attribute but also a collective property sustained by transnational networks. As sociologist Craig Calhoun put it, cosmopolitanism is not "simply a free-floating cultural taste, personal attitude, or ethical choice" but is instead always embedded in specific networks of actors.[9] According to this definition, historians, too, qualify as rooted cosmopolitans because they develop transnational social networks by organizing conferences and other professional activities to exchange methods, standards of excellence, and training programs, which are open to all nationalities.[10]

More importantly, historians are *epistemically oriented* rooted cosmopolitans. Historians participate in the politics of war commemoration in the capacity of what sociologist John Meyer called "Others," those who are defined as disinterested bearers of "truths" and authorized to act as consultants for other political actors pursuing self-interests.[11] In this respect, historians form "epistemic communities" with regard to the history problem, that is, knowledge-based networks of "professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area."[12] Put another way, historians are regarded as experts in providing reliable data and authoritative interpretations for relevant political actors in the field of the history problem to justify their commemorative positions.

Their epistemic orientations distinguish historians from other types of rooted cosmopolitans in the history problem. Perhaps the most visible type of rooted cosmopolitan is *advocacy-oriented:* members of Japanese NGOs supporting South Korean A-bomb victims, former comfort women, and other victims of Japan's past wrongdoings. They extended solidarities across national borders, shared information and resources at the transnational level, and coordinated their actions to press the Japanese government to adopt the cosmopolitan logic of commemoration. These advocacy-oriented rooted cosmopolitans, however, unwittingly intensified the history problem because they sacrificed historical accuracy for political expediency. Many NGOs in Japan and South Korea, for example, categorically defined the comfort stations as rape centers and the military comfort-women system as sexual slavery by following the UN special rapporteurs. As anthropologist C. Sarah Soh critically observed, such a categorical definition is "a political act

in support of the redress movement" and a "partisan prejudice" that eliminates complexities of the system that operated different types of comfort stations and depended on Korean cooperation.[13] The advocacy-oriented rooted cosmopolitans in Japan thus ended up perpetuating nationalist commemoration in South Korea while galvanizing Japanese nationalists to reject the claims by former comfort women as fabrications.

In contrast, historians acting as epistemically oriented rooted cosmopolitans have the potential to generate a different effect on the history problem. As historian Kosuge Nobuko pointed out, "The method of history, to interrogate historical materials (*shiryō hihan*), is best suited for correcting misunderstandings and distortions of the past. . . . By interrogating historical materials and conducting empirical research, historians cannot but become humble and accept scholarly asceticism [against indulging in manipulation of data and distortion of descriptions]."[14] Historians are therefore capable of critically reflecting on nationalist commemorations and preventing historical inaccuracies and problematic interpretations from fueling the history problem. Indeed, joint historical research and education projects by historians in Japan, South Korea, and China have shown their potential to generate mutual criticism of nationalist commemorations and promote the cosmopolitan logic of historical research.

Nevertheless, not all joint projects are equally effective in critiquing nationalist commemorations. The processes and outcomes of the governmental and nongovernmental joint projects show that the latter tend to be more successful in promoting the logic of cosmopolitanism.[15] The nongovernmental joint projects, most notably the History to Open the Future project, allowed historians from Japan, South Korea, and China to criticize each other's nationalist biases. They not only incorporated dialogues with foreign historians more effectively into the process of historical research but also shifted content focus from the nation to the interaction of nations.

The governmental joint projects, by contrast, appeared to have difficulty facilitating mutual criticism of nationalist commemorations. In fact, the Japan-South Korea Joint Project was severely constrained by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which had long resisted revisiting the 1965 Basic Treaty between Japan and South Korea. The ministry feared that any reinterpretation of historical events mentioned in the treaty, such as Japan's 1910 annexation of Korea, would pave the way for new compensation claims. One official in the ministry was reported to have said, "There is no room for a joint historical research project to reinterpret the 1965 Basic Treaty.

Since reinterpretation of the 1965 Basic Treaty could lead to reigniting the problem of compensation, the possibility of scholarly agreement between Japanese and South Korean sides is extremely small."[16] Similar constraints were also found in the Japan-China Joint Project, where Chinese historians were restricted by their government in publishing the results of the joint project.

I argue that the differences between the nongovernmental and governmental projects derive from the different frames of identification that they support. In general, two different frames of identification are available for participants in a joint project. The first is a nationally bounded frame, such as "Japanese," "South Korean," and "Chinese." The second is a nationally unbounded frame, that is, "historian."[17] The nongovernmental projects foregrounded the nationally unbounded frame of identification—the historian who is concerned about the escalation of the history problem—and this framing allowed the participants to suspend their national identifications to a significant extent. The governmental projects, however, foregrounded the nationally bounded frame and positioned participants as representatives of their countries. For example, the Japanese participants in the Japan-South Korea and Japan-China Joint Projects were selected by the Japanese government without consultation with professional associations of historians, and these joint projects were all managed by foreign ministries of respective governments.[18] This kind of structural constraint made it difficult for the participants to be open to foreign perspectives and dialogically transform their original positions.

The different processes and outcomes of the nongovernmental and governmental projects also appear to depend on the dispositions of participants—on the degree to which they were already open toward foreign others. For example, the Japanese participants in the History to Open the Future project included many left-leaning historians, such as Kasahara Tokushi, who had actively engaged in the social movement against conservative politicians and NGOs. The History to Open the Future project was, in some respects, an outgrowth of the existing transnational network of advocacy-oriented NGOs that had pressed the Japanese government regarding apology and compensation for foreign victims of Japan's past wrongdoings. The dispositions of participants can also partially explain the struggle of the Japan-South Korea Joint Project, to which the Japanese government appointed Furuta Hiroshi, a history professor at Tsukuba University known for his belief in the Japanese people's superiority over

Koreans.[19] In turn, the Korean side included Lee Man Yeol, a chair of the National History Committee, who insisted that "any research on Korea must presuppose love for Korea. . . . Only with very strong love for Korea, Japanese historians can begin to understand Korean history correctly."[20] These two historians with strong nationalist dispositions sat on the same subcommittee and contributed to spreading distrust among other participants. The dispositions of participants therefore constitute another mechanism that can either facilitate or forestall mutual criticism of nationalist commemorations because they situationally influence interactional dynamics among historians. In short, due to the more open dispositions of participants, nongovernmental projects tended to be more successful than their governmental counterparts in incorporating foreign perspectives according to the logic of cosmopolitanism.

Nevertheless, nongovernmental projects have limitations, given their overlap with advocacy-oriented activities. Take, for example, the History to Open the Future project. Overall, the Japanese participants in this trilateral project refused to shy away from criticizing nationalist biases in South Korean and Chinese versions of history, and the South Korean and Chinese participants were willing to include descriptions of Japan's victimhood and question official versions of history promoted by their own governments. The Japanese participants nonetheless sacrificed scholarly rigor for advocacy when they agreed to the first sentence in *A History to Open the Future*'s chapter 3, section 2.1, on the Second Sino-Japanese War: "On July 7, 1937, the Japanese military started the Marco Polo Bridge Incident in the vicinity of Beijing." This sentence came under heavy criticism from the community of Japanese historians who, based on available evidence, had concluded that the Japanese military had not plotted the incident.[21] Some Japanese historians also thought that *A History to Open the Future* as a whole was academically disappointing, and others saw it with suspicion because many of the Japanese participants were left-leaning and previously involved in advocacy activities for foreign victims of Japan's past wrongdoings.[22]

In fact, one of the Japanese participants, Saitō Kazuharu, was very much aware of the danger of "facile border-crossing (*an'ina ekkyō*), a failure to critically examine the nature of dialogue and solidarity, [which] may lead the joint history textbook to disseminate wrong understandings."[23] Put another way, the danger was that if the Japanese side simply expressed "facile" solidarity with the South Korean and Chinese sides and allowed problematic historical facts and interpretations, "the ultimate mission for the joint his-

tory textbook project . . . to overcome narrow-minded nationalism" on all sides would be compromised.[24] In turn, the potential of governmental joint projects to facilitate mutual criticism of nationalist commemorations cannot be dismissed too hastily, for it was the Japan-China Joint Project that ended up resolving the conflict regarding the description of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident: in its final report, both Japanese and Chinese historians agreed that the battle between the Japanese and Chinese militaries at the Marco Polo Bridge was started accidentally. This prompted Saitō to acknowledge that "on this point [regarding the Marco Polo Bridge Incident], the governmental joint project overcame the obstacle that the nongovernmental joint project could not."[25]

Mutual Criticism of Nationalist Commemorations

Observing these joint projects in East Asia, Falk Pingel, a member of the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Germany, offered the following reflection: "In East Asia, only Japanese textbooks are accused, while South Korean and Chinese textbooks are exempted from critical discussion. Reform is one-sidedly demanded on the Japanese side, and it seems impossible to establish open relationships for mutual criticism and critical self-reflections on one's own history."[26] Pingel's observation serves as an important reminder that facile solidarity on Japan's part could defeat the very purpose of any joint project—to problematize all relevant nationalist commemorations—but it also underestimates how much historians in Japan, South Korea, and China already engaged in mutual criticism of nationalist biases. For example, Kasahara Tokushi, one of the Japanese participants in the History to Open the Future project, has been vocal about factual errors and nationalist commemorations in history textbooks used in China. While Kasahara acknowledged that Japanese citizens failed to commemorate the Nanjing Massacre adequately, he also urged the Chinese side to "reconstruct 'their affective and somatic memory' from the higher perspective of human history," to pursue more scholarly rigor and move away from politically and ideologically motivated historical interpretations.[27]

Chinese historians also began to establish a critical distance between themselves and the Chinese government's official commemoration of the Asia-Pacific War. For example, after the first edition of *A History to Open the Future* was published in 2005, the Chinese participants received many criticisms from inside China for not specifying three hundred thousand as the number of Nanjing Massacre victims. Nevertheless, they maintained that

the estimated number of dead varied according to different sources.[28] As Cheng Zhaoqi and Zhang Lianhong, both of whom had participated in the trilateral project, explained, historical research on the massacre has become less emotional in recent years, and Chinese historians have increasingly recognized that more evidence is needed to estimate the number of dead accurately.[29]

These changes in attitude among Chinese historians were confirmed by Bu Ping, the director of the Center for Modern History within the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, who had participated in both the History to Open the Future project and other bilateral historical research projects. At an international symposium in Tokyo in April 2008, Bu observed, "Previously, Chinese historians conducted China-centered research and their knowledge of historical materials and research available outside China was inadequate. But this situation is changing. . . . Although many Chinese believe shared historical understanding and reconciliation are impossible, we must make an effort [to achieve them]."[30] Moreover, after the 2010 final report of the Japan-China Joint Project was criticized for not stating "more than 300,000" as the definitive number of victims of the Nanjing Massacre, Bu defended the report as the result of "the attitude to base [interpretation] strictly on historical materials," emphasized the importance of "pooling archival materials and information" between the Chinese and Japanese sides, and reiterated his belief that a "historical view can, and should, transcend national borders."[31]

Similarly, at the eighth Forum on Historical Views and Peace in East Asia, held in Tokyo in November 2009, Cao Yi, a researcher at the Museum of the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, observed that the Chinese commemoration of the Asia-Pacific War began to go beyond "anger and other feelings associated with being the victim," given the recent efforts to systematically collect data on Japan's wartime atrocities.[32] He then went on to suggest, "China should transcend the facile commemoration of the war motivated by anger toward the aggressor and by the interests of the Chinese people. It will be more rational, though painful, to adopt geographically wider and temporarily longer perspectives in reexamining the history, the reality of Sino-Japanese relations, and the war and its commemoration. But this is exactly what we should aim for."[33] These statements from Cao, as well as Bu, Cheng, and Zhang, show that Chinese historians have recently gained greater freedom to conduct research, despite the Chinese government's patriotic education and censorship.

In South Korea, too, NGOs that participated in the History to Open the Future project organized a forum in November 2005 to critically reflect on the textbook that they had just produced. At the forum, various participants pointed out that the textbook might have overemphasized Japan's imperialist aggression, leading South Korean students to believe that Japan is an evil country, and that it could have also included more descriptions of Japanese people's suffering during the war as well as positive aspects of Japanese history.[34]

In fact, a small but growing number of South Korean historians began to counterpose their critical reflections to nationalist commemorations in their country. In April 2002, the South Korean monthly journal *Contemporary Criticism* published three essays critically examining South Korean nationalism with regard to Japanese history textbooks. Ji Su Geol criticized ethnic-nationalist biases in research on modern and contemporary Korean history, while Yun Hae Dong advocated that the national history textbook should be replaced with a new system allowing the production of multiple history textbooks. The journal editor Lim Jie Hyeon, a history professor at Hanyang University, was perhaps most critical: "The South Korean government's national history textbook and JSHTR's history textbook clash with each other because they emphasize ethnic identities of South Korea and Japan, respectively. On the epistemological dimension, they are rooted in the same soil—namely, ethnic nationalism."[35]

As a member of the Conference of Japanese and South Korean Historians (Nikkan Rekishika Kaigi), Lim was also troubled by the tendency to draw the line between victims and perpetrators along national borders. For him, the task of historians was to articulate "an approach that challenges dichotomous thinking, 'Our ethnic group (*minzoku*) is the victim, and the other ethnic group is the perpetrator.' "[36] Lim therefore insisted, "The asymmetry in historical experience of imperialism and colonialism should not be used simply to criticize the nationalist historiography of Japan while helping to legitimate the nationalist historiography of South Korea. . . . Deconstruction of nationalist historiography cannot be confined within a single country but needs to be carried out simultaneously within East Asia as a whole."[37] Another conference member, Ahn Byung Jik, a professor of history at Seoul National University, was also concerned that "the South Korean memory of Japan's colonial rule is too rigid and self-contained. A prerequisite for reconciliation [between South Korea and Japan] is to open

up the memory. . . . For the purpose of reconciliation, it is not helpful to force one particular historical view."[38]

Some South Korean historians even tried to critically reflect on the issue of comfort women, perhaps the most explosive element in the South Korean nationalist commemoration. One of them was Lee Yong Hoon, a professor of economic history at Seoul National University. He was a longtime critic of the South Korean government's history textbooks, which had contained many overblown sentences, such as "Imperial Japan oppressed and exploited our people in a thoroughly atrocious fashion that has no comparable examples in world history."[39] During a television debate in September 2004, Lee stated that no historical evidence had been found to support the widely held belief that the Japanese military drafted Korean women as "volunteer corps" to serve in comfort stations. He also argued that South Koreans should criticize not only Japan but also Koreans who helped the Japanese military to recruit comfort women, and Korean soldiers who used comfort stations.[40] After the television debate, the Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan condemned Lee for "making statements that only the most extreme right-wing person in Japan is capable of making" and demanded his public apology to former comfort women and his voluntary resignation from the university. A similar controversy erupted in December 2006, when Ahn Byung Jik also stated on television that no historical evidence existed for the forcible recruitment of Korean women, and that Koreans played an important role in recruiting comfort women. He also revealed that he had left the Korean Council's publication project collecting the testimonies of former comfort women because he had felt that other project members had been "more interested in fighting against Japan than in learning about the historical facts."[41] Just like Lee, Ahn was subjected to heavy criticism from NGOs and citizens in South Korea.

Although these episodes demonstrated that the issue of comfort women was still highly charged with nationalist sentiments in South Korea, they also showed that it had become possible to raise critical questions about the South Korean nationalist commemoration that depicted Japan as solely and entirely guilty for making the Korean people suffer while accepting Korean victims' testimonies as objective historical truths. In fact, the sixth volume of the Korean Council's publication project in 2004 dropped the title "Forcibly Dragged Away Korean Military Comfort Women." The publication team decided to forgo the prevailing one-dimensional representation of

Korean comfort women as forcibly drafted, in favor of historical descriptions that highlighted the complexity of the comfort-women system, its multiple methods of recruitment, and different types of comfort stations.[42]

Limited Influence of Historians on Governments and Citizens

Thus, historians in Japan, South Korea, and China have begun to engage in mutual criticism of nationalist commemorations. But how much historians can actually influence the governments and citizens in the three countries is another matter. In this respect, Bu Ping made an astute observation when he defended the Chinese side's decision not to publish some of the papers and memos that the Japan-China Joint Project had produced. Bu argued, "The history problem between China and Japan has three dimensions: political judgment, popular sentiment, and scholarly research. . . . These three dimensions are partially overlapped, though never perfectly. If a problem happens on one dimension, that would affect the other two dimensions. That is, if we want to overcome one dimension of the history problem, we have to take into consideration the other two."[43] Put another way, even when historians—epistemically oriented rooted cosmopolitans—mobilize mutual criticism of nationalist commemorations, their criticism does not directly translate into changes in governmental and public commemorations, because the latter two have their own dynamics. Thus, while historians in East Asia have produced a variety of joint research reports and common teaching materials, they have had only a limited impact on commemorations of the Asia-Pacific War in their respective countries.

I argue that this limited impact of the "historians' debate" on the history problem stems from at least four institutional factors. The first factor is the absence of institutional mechanisms that authorize historians' critical reflections to influence governmental commemorations. As Hatano Sumio, a historian of international relations who participated in the Japan-China Joint Project, observed, "The first objective of the project, from the Japanese government's perspective, was to delegate the history problem to experts and 'depoliticize' it, so that it will not interfere with Japan's relations with China regarding such important issues as trade, investment, natural resources, and food security."[44] Similarly, another participant, Kawashima Shin, a historian of modern and contemporary China, thought that joint projects by historians would have only a "very limited contribution to resolving the history problem because their objective is mainly to prevent politicization of the problem."[45] Since governmental joint projects

are "depoliticized"—ceremonially treated as "venting mechanisms" for the history problem—they are unlikely to transform the existing official commemorations.

At the same time, the role of historians can be politicized in spite of the rhetoric of depoliticization. When Prime Minister Abe Shinzō tried to defend his visit to the Yasukuni Shrine in December 2013, he insisted that it was not politicians but historians who should decide on the interpretation of Japan's acts in the Asia-Pacific War: "Politicians must be humble (*kenkyo*) about the issue of historical view. Governments must not determine a particular historical view as a correct one. This issue is up to historians."[46] Similarly, when revisiting the 1993 Kōno Statement that apologized for the military comfort-women system, Abe's cabinet secretary, Suga Yoshihide, stated, "Our cabinet members agree that this issue [of comfort women] should not be turned into a political and diplomatic problem . . . and I hope that more scholarly research will accumulate."[47] Abe, Suga, and other conservative politicians, however, were most likely to welcome only the kind of historical research that would discount Japan's past wrongdoings. Thus, when the Cabinet Office established a five-member commission to examine how the Kōno Statement had been created, Hata Ikuhiko, known for his conservative orientation, was appointed as the only historian.[48] Hata's appointment was in effect political, to support the position of Abe's government, in the guise of "disinterested expert."[49] Here, historians are not really "depoliticized" but are part and parcel of the politics of war commemoration, exploited by politicians in power who seek to legitimate their commemorative position as "rational."

The second factor is the existence of mass media as a mechanism that mediates the influence of historians' debate on public commemorations. As historian Tessa Morris-Suzuki pointed out, "Today, more than ever, we learn about the past from a multiplicity of media," such as newspapers, television programs, and movies.[50] Indeed, the majority of citizens in Japan, South Korea, and China are likely to learn most of the "facts" about the Asia-Pacific War from media rather than from historians and their scholarly output. But media companies constantly put spin on historians' debate, given the political orientations of their readers and viewers. For example, when Murayama's government was preparing the Asian Women's Fund in August 1994, *Asahi shinbun* reported that the government planned to provide former comfort women with one-time "sympathy money" (*mimaikin*) collected from Japanese citizens, as well as published reactions from supporters of

former comfort women criticizing the government for trying to evade its responsibility. According to Wada Haruki, one of the promoters of the fund, this news report downplayed the extent of intended "atonement" (rather than "sympathy") within Murayama's government, undermined the ongoing efforts by some cabinet members to push for government compensation, and created distrust between the government and former comfort women and their supporters.[51] In South Korea, too, mass media rarely presented information and interpretations that would contradict the stereotype of unapologetic Japan.[52] Similarly, Chinese mass media lashed out against JSHTR's history textbook in 2001 but failed to report that only 0.039 percent of junior high schools adopted the textbook.[53] The escalation of East Asia's history problem thus owed no small part to the mass media in the three countries that circulated sensational but misleading and even distorted information about Japan's past wrongdoings and the Japanese government's actions.[54]

The third factor is the weak institutional boundary of history as an academic profession. As sociologists Andrew Abbott and Thomas Gieryn illustrated, any "experts," ranging from nuclear physicists to historians, constantly engage in "boundary work" to distinguish themselves from "non-experts" and defend their "jurisdictions," that is, their cognitive authority over certain kinds of activities.[55] Such boundary work may include the establishment of professional associations, codification of standard training programs, and legitimation of certain methods of collecting and analyzing data. History, however, is one of the fields in the humanities and social sciences where the distinction between experts and non-experts is highly ambiguous; for example, many local historical societies are organized by amateur historians, and there is a long tradition of memoirs that people narrate as historians of their own lives. Ultimately, as historian James Banner put it, "all humans [are] acting as historians when chronicling and understanding their own biographies, evaluating the meaning of the pasts they think relevant to their lives."[56] Since narrative is constitutive of representation of the past, the distinction between professional and amateur historians, both of whom use narrative, is more continuous than discrete.[57] This makes history a most democratic discipline in the humanities and social sciences, but it also prevents professional historians from effectively intervening in the history problem by correcting factual inaccuracies and unwarranted interpretations contained in official and public commemorations.

The weak authority of historians in Japan manifested most clearly in the way that the nationalist commemorations of comfort women and the

Nanjing Massacre escalated in the 1990s. The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, for example, claimed that the Japanese government forcibly drafted Korean "female volunteer corps" into the military comfort women system, with two hundred thousand Korean women forced into such work. But even the most sympathetic Japanese historians, including Yoshimi Yoshiaki, as well as some South Korean historians, disagreed with the Korean Council's claim. These historians pointed out that female corps and comfort women had been recruited separately, recruiters had included Koreans, and the estimated number of Korean comfort women was excessive.[58] These Japanese historians also suggested that testimonies should be carefully evaluated, as some former comfort women had changed details of their testimonies over time. But the Korean Council refused to change its claims and even denounced seven former comfort women who received atonement money, medical and welfare relief, and a letter of the Japanese prime minister's apology from the Asian Women's Fund. The president of the Korean Council, Yun Jeong Ok, even argued, "By receiving the money that does not accompany the admission of guilt, the victims [the seven former comfort women] admitted that they had volunteered to become prostitutes."[59]

In the case of the Nanjing Massacre, too, Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking* galvanized the American public, especially Chinese Americans. But Japanese and American historians who specialized in modern and contemporary Chinese history criticized Chang's book for its numerous inaccuracies and careless handling of historical evidence. David Kennedy, a professor of history at Stanford University, doubted the validity of Chang's claim that the massacre had been a systematic genocidal program comparable to the Holocaust, while Joshua Fogel, a professor of history at the University of California–Santa Barbara, criticized Chang's book for failing to carefully consider the credibility of the interviews and documents that she presented as "historical evidence," as well as for misrepresenting the massacre as completely forgotten by Japanese citizens.[60] Kasahara Tokushi also requested Chang, face-to-face, to be more careful about interpreting available archival materials.[61]

Despite various problems in Chang's book, the left-leaning publishing company Kashiwa Shobō planned to translate it into Japanese because the company believed that details of the Nanjing Massacre should be more widely known in Japan. When Kashiwa Shobō asked Chang to correct various errors and inaccuracies in her book, however, she agreed to make only

about a dozen small revisions. Moreover, Chang refused Kashiwa Shobō's proposal to pair the Japanese edition of her book with an anthology of commentaries critically evaluating the evidence and arguments presented in the book.[62] In the end, Kashiwa Shobō gave up the Japanese translation of *The Rape of Nanking* because the company feared that the book's serious flaws would only give Japanese nationalists more ammunition to discredit the Nanjing Massacre as a fabrication.[63] Instead, Kashiwa Shobō published *Thirteen Lies by Deniers of the Nanjing Massacre* (*Nankin Daigyakusatsu hiteiron jūsan no uso*)—written by a group of prominent history professors who specialized in research on Japan's wartime atrocities in China, such as Fujiwara Akira, Kasahara Tokushi, and Yoshida Yutaka—as a "counterpoint to the Nanjing Massacre denial in Japan revived by many factual errors in Iris Chang's book." But Chang never retracted her claim that at least three hundred thousand Chinese had been massacred inside the city walls of Nanjing as part of Japan's genocidal program.

Conservative NGOs in Japan, most notably JSHTR, seized upon these problematic claims made by the Korean Council, Chang, and other advocates of South Korean and Chinese victims. They invoked their own, equally problematic version of objective truth to justify the Asia-Pacific War as a heroic act of self-defense. In fact, they even challenged professional historians who defended the historical facticity of the comfort-women system and the Nanjing Massacre. In particular, one of the JSHTR's members, Fujioka Nobukatsu, declared that "the age of experts is over" and argued, "Ordinary people have misunderstood that only historians, experts of history, can understand how to interpret the history. But history is an academic discipline examining facts that are the closest to ordinary people's common sense and, therefore, ordinary people are allowed to evaluate historical research in light of their common sense. . . . Even amateurs can refute historians' distorted arguments if they use their sound reason."[64]

Thus, with regard to comfort women and the Nanjing Massacre, nonhistorians brushed aside questions raised by professional historians. Yun Jeong Ok was not a professional historian but a professor of English. Neither was Iris Chang a professional historian but a journalist. Two of the founding members of JSHTR, Fujioka Nobukatsu and Nishio Kanji, were not professional historians, either. They were both university professors, but they specialized in curriculum studies and German literature, respectively. Another JSHTR member, Higashinakano Shūdō, was also a university professor, but his specialty was Japanese intellectual history. Above all,

Kobayashi Yoshinori, at one point the most popular JSHTR member because of his *Sensōron* comic book series, was a cartoonist who had majored in French literature in college. Nevertheless, the problematic factual claims made by Yun, Chang, and the JSHTR members overwhelmed the cautious and reflective voices of Japanese historians who had dedicated their careers to studying Japan's past wrongdoings.

After all, the ambiguous distinction between professional and amateur historians is only part of a larger, more fundamental problem of the relationship between historiography and commemoration as two overlapping modes of representing the past—this is the fourth institutional factor that limits the influence of historians.[65] For a long time historians and scholars of collective memory have debated on the relationship between "history" and "memory." At first, many historians and sociologists drew a sharp distinction between the two by defining history as "rational" and "objective" vis-à-vis memory as "irrational" and "subjective." More and more historians, however, began to realize a variety of epistemological (and political) limits of their scholarship, given controversies over historical representations of the Holocaust, postmodernist challenges to "objective historical facts," growing awareness of the existence of "subaltern history," and acceptance of oral history and other new methods.[66] As a result, most historians and scholars of collective memory now accept historiography and commemoration as simply two different modes of narrating the past, where one has no epistemological superiority over the other.

In this respect, historiography and commemoration form what Paul Ricoeur called a truly "open dialectic," because their opposition can never be transcended into a synthesis of higher truth about the past.[67] Put another way, they form a dialogical, symbiotic relationship, where they mutually constitute and transform each other. As historian Aleida Assmann explained, "Historical scholarship depends on memory not only for oral testimony and experience, but also for criteria of meaning and relevance; on the other hand, memory depends on historical scholarship for verification, substantiation, and falsification."[68] It is therefore difficult for professional historians to invoke their cognitive authority to bring closure to the history problem because politicians and citizens have their own memories whose criteria of epistemological validity are different from those of the historians. Worse, historians are likely to be overwhelmed by memories of traumatic events, such as wartime atrocities, as in East Asia's history problem, for commemorations of traumatic events tend to be so emotionally charged that people

can often over-identify with victims and become unable to notice inconsistencies, omissions, and contradictions in available evidence.[69]

The difficulty that historians face is further compounded by the heterogeneity of historiography vis-à-vis commemoration. As the term "historians' *debate*" suggests, controversy, not consensus, is the norm for historians. When different historians maintain competing interpretations of the same historical event, these interpretations can be used by competing groups of political actors to legitimate their preferred commemorative positions. In such a situation, historians are unable to arbitrate competing commemorations. On the contrary, they are likely to exacerbate the competition by lending credibility to each of the commemorative positions.

East Asia's History Education Problem

Furthermore, the limited effect of historians' debate on governmental and public commemorations is aggravated by two characteristics of history education in East Asia that prevent younger generations from developing the competencies to critically reflect on the history problem. The first is the heavy focus on memorization. Since entrance exams for secondary and higher education are extremely competitive and based mostly on multiple-choice questions, Japanese, South Korean, and Chinese students are required to absorb large amounts of knowledge from elementary through high school. As a result, history education at primary and secondary levels forces students to memorize dates of important historical events and names of prominent historical figures in preparation for exams. Such memorization-based history education tends to create the impression that history is a field with clear, distinct answers, appropriate for multiple-choice questions, misleading students to accept a certain version of the past as an objective truth. Students are thus deprived of opportunities to develop the cognitive skills necessary to weigh conflicting historical evidence and adjudicate between competing interpretations—the very cognitive skills required to deal with the history problem.[70]

Especially in Japan, these shortcomings in history education are magnified by the limited coverage of modern and contemporary history in primary and secondary education. Japanese history textbooks devote considerable space to ancient history prior to the 1868 Meiji Restoration but provide only brief coverage of the twentieth century when Japan committed aggression and atrocities against South Korea and China. Lessons on the twentieth century are also typically offered at the end of the school year,

when both teachers and students are busy preparing for graduation ceremonies and entrance exams, ensuring students get only quick and superficial exposure to the historical period. In fact, the Japanese government deliberately limited the teaching of modern Japanese history in schools precisely because the historical period was central to the history problem. In August 2005, for example, Machimura Nobutaka, then minister of foreign affairs and former minister of education, admitted that the Ministry of Education advised schools to minimize the teaching of modern Japanese history so as to prevent some "Marxist-Leninist teachers"—JTU members in particular—from inculcating in students self-hatred toward Japan.[71]

Machimura's position, however, not only reflected the LDP's longstanding aversion to the JTU, but also pointed out an important problem with the pedagogical tendency among history teachers in Japan. For JTU teachers, "Never send our children to the battlefield again!" was their most important slogan, consistent with the Tokyo Trial historical view that allowed no justification for Japan's past aggression.[72] Accordingly, JTU teachers strongly criticized the conservative government for promoting the nationalist commemoration that presented Japan's past aggression as a heroic act of self-defense. At the same time, JTU teachers, and Japanese teachers in general, were trained in the existing Japanese education system, where history education was anchored in memorization. As a result, they did not always provide their own students with the kind of history education that would encourage critical evaluation of historical evidence and interpretations. Although education reforms during the Occupation changed the emphasis in history education from emperor-centered nationalism to pacifism, the basic structure of history education in Japan—the emphasis on memorization—did not change.

Postwar history education in Japan was therefore torn between two diametrically opposing forces: the conservative government promoted nationalist commemoration of the Asia-Pacific War, whereas JTU teachers promoted the Tokyo Trial historical view that judged Japan as solely and entirely guilty of the war. To preempt controversies over how to teach modern Japanese history, the Ministry of Education decided to reduce the coverage of the twentieth century in history textbooks and emphasize the chronological, empiricist approaches in history curriculum.[73] Since history education in Japan continues to downplay the modern period and emphasize memorization, the majority of Japanese citizens are ill-prepared to engage in constructive debates on the Asia-Pacific War among themselves or with South Korean and Chinese citizens.

The situation of history education is not much different in South Korea and China, either. Since South Korean students have to amass large amounts of knowledge to compete for admissions to universities, history education in the country is focused on memorization.[74] Similarly, while school curricula in China are heterogeneous across provinces and rapidly changing in recent decades, Chinese history lessons also heavily focus on memorization of historical events, as well as emphasize their moral-ideological implications.[75] The education systems in Japan, South Korea, and China thus share the tendency to present students with versions of the past as objective truths, rather than as provisionally settled interpretations open to future revision. As educational researcher Edward Vickers cautioned, "The prospects for implementing a pedagogy that truly encourages a critical approach to the past are likely to remain poor" in East Asia.[76] If younger generations in the three countries continue to be taught memorization-based history lessons, the history problem will retain the risk of escalating into an intractable conflict over incommensurable versions of the past.

Ultimately, however, the fundamental problem with history education in East Asia is not the focus on memorization per se, but the ability of the governments to control the content of history lessons via textbook inspection. In Japan, South Korea, and China, teachers can use only history textbooks that are approved by their ministries of education. Under these textbook-inspection systems, textbook writers and publishers have the formal freedom to decide on the structures and contents of their history textbooks. Given the legally binding curricular guidelines, however, many textbook writers and publishers are forced to exercise self-censorship.[77] After all, the governments have the power to require revisions according to the curricular guidelines and thereby exert significant control—almost censorship—over history textbooks.[78] As a result, history textbooks decisively influence citizens' historical views, as Ienaga Saburō recognized: "No bestseller can beat a textbook. You can stop reading other books if you do not like them. But you have to read a textbook, whether you like it or not, in order to graduate from school. For this reason, I think that a textbook is a more effective means than a public-security law for the government to influence the minds of citizens."[79]

Specifically, the Japanese government has insisted that history textbooks include only "facts," not interpretations or disputes.[80] Take, for example, the government's counterargument against Ienaga's lawsuit. At the Tokyo High Court in 1980, the government accused Ienaga of "making no distinction between history and history education. . . . At the level of compulsory

education, history education does not reach the level of specialized scholarship. Its aim is to provide students with basic historical knowledge that Japanese citizens should possess. . . . History textbooks should be written based on doctrines widely accepted in academia . . . and textbook writers should take into consideration developmental stages of students."[81] The government thus argued that historians' debate should not be imported into history education because the latter's ultimate goal is to educate members of the Japanese nation, not to train historians.

The government's counterargument, however, suffered from two serious problems. First, as Tōyama Shigeki, a history professor who supported Ienaga, pointed out, "Foundational historical questions, which require comprehension of complexly intertwined historical facts, necessarily lead historians to exercise their own historical judgments. With respect to these questions, disagreement among different doctrines is especially strong."[82] Put another way, if history textbooks are to include only descriptions of the past where historiographical debates are already settled, they cannot but become short because they are unable to provide details of important historical events, many of which are still contested—indeed, Japanese history textbooks are very thin. By demanding that students be taught only already established historical facts, the government kept Japanese citizens from developing the competencies to interpret the difficult past critically and independently.

The second and more serious problem is that the Japanese government assumed that students are not mature enough to work through conflicting interpretations. Again, Tōyama argued in defense of Ienaga:

> We should not make children and adolescents fear disagreement. We would like students to know that they can examine and refine their own ideas by having dialogues with other people who have different ideas. If there are only citizens who uncritically obey the government's decisions, democracy will be destroyed. The Ministry of Education argues that students in elementary, junior high, and high schools have no competence to make their own judgments. But this argument is based on the wrong understanding. If we carefully prepare teaching materials, students will show the astonishing ability to form their own judgments.[83]

Tōyama thus criticized the artificial separation between history and history education as the government's attempt to deploy history education to pro-

duce obedient citizens. Nagahara Keiji, another history professor and supporter of Ienaga, even more forcefully criticized the separation as reminiscent of the prewar system that had promoted "patriotic-spiritualistic history education by decoupling history education from history."[84]

Even though Ienaga's lawsuits helped increase descriptions of Japan's past wrongdoings in history textbooks, they ultimately failed to eliminate the system of textbook inspection itself. Moreover, by resorting to lawsuits, Ienaga and his supporters created the paradoxical situation wherein historians are forced to give up their professional authority to adjudicate competing historical judgments among themselves, and instead allow judges, who are not experts of history, to write official history in the form of judicial judgments. Ienaga was indeed aware of this paradoxical situation and the negative implications that his lawsuits created. This is why, after the Supreme Court's ruling in August 1997, Ienaga stated, "I hope that the textbook-lawsuit movement will develop to eventually abolish the system of textbook inspection itself. I really hope that the next generation will do it."[85] Here, Ienaga's long struggle and lasting hope is also relevant to historians and educators in South Korea and China, where the writing of textbooks is even more heavily regulated by the governments.

Given their power to define and impose legitimate versions of the past, then, the governments in East Asia remain the most important actors driving the dynamic and trajectory of the history problem, despite the growing role of mass media in recent decades.[86] So long as the governments in Japan, South Korea, and China control history textbooks via their curricular guidelines and inspection systems, officially approved history textbooks continue to teach nation-centered histories: history textbooks in Japan provide descriptions of Japan's past wrongdoings only in minimal amounts, whereas history textbooks in South Korea and China promote patriotism based on legacies of anti-Japanese resistance. In the meantime, since none of the teaching materials produced by nongovernmental joint projects have been able to pass governmental inspection, they are used in schools only as informal supplemental materials, thus failing to fully import historians' critical reflections into history education. In short, as Kosuge Nobuko observed, "One of the most urgent tasks in the process of resolving the history problem and moving toward reconciliation is 'to historicize history (*rekishi no rekishika*).' The problem in East Asia is the politics that does not permit the historicization of history and the plurality of historical interpretations, that is, the politics that supports and reproduces stereotypes about former enemies."[87]

From Historians' Debate to Cosmopolitan Commemoration

In theory, historians have the potential to influence the dynamic and trajectory of East Asia's history problem for two reasons. One is their unique status in the field of the history problem. Even though historians can engage in advocacy activities and act like any other political actors in the field, they mostly act as "disinterested others" who provide historical materials for other political actors to articulate their commemorative positions. Another reason is the demographic shift in the region. Since those who were born after the Asia-Pacific War are now the majority in Japan, South Korea, and China, their commemorations cannot but draw on evidence and interpretations put forward by historians. At this historical juncture, an increasing number of historians engage in joint research and education projects, forming a transnational epistemic community as an infrastructure of cosmopolitanism: they incorporate foreign perspectives into historical narratives and focus on transnational interaction as a unit of analysis. This growing historians' debate at the transnational level presents the potential to problematize nationalist commemorations in Japan, South Korea, and China and move other political actors in the field toward more cosmopolitan positions.

In practice, however, the cosmopolitan potential of the historians' debate is constrained in various ways. First of all, no institutionalized channels exist for joint projects by historians to effectively influence official commemorations in Japan, South Korea, and China. Furthermore, the ability of historians to effectively influence the governments and citizens is undermined by two other factors. One is that scholarly output of historians is almost always mediated by mass media willing to sacrifice accuracy for sensationalism. Another is that the coexistence of historiography and commemoration as two overlapping and equally legitimate modes of narrating the past grants historians only weak authority over non-historians. Especially in East Asia's history problem, which is concerned with extremely complex and emotionally charged historical events, historians themselves are embroiled in controversies over evidence and interpretations, and their historiographies can be easily brushed aside by nationalist commemorations. The potential for historians as rooted cosmopolitans is further curtailed by the disconnect between their debate and history education, engineered by national governments eager to deploy history lessons as moral education for their citizens.

Thus, the cosmopolitan potential of the historians' debate to help citizens critically reflect on their nationalist commemorations has not been fully

realized in East Asia. As a result, Japan, South Korea, and China remain trapped in the history problem. George Santayana's aphorism, "The one who does not remember history is bound to live through it again," is justly famous, but remembering the Asia-Pacific War according to the logic of nationalism will likely contribute to repeating a similar tragedy in the future. To ensure that citizens in the three countries will not "live through it again," is there any way to effectively deploy historians' critical reflections to shift commemorative positions of relevant political actors in a more cosmopolitan direction? The next chapter examines this question.