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The Commentaries

Michihisa Hosokawa, Kagoshima University

Both papers are intriguing in that they elucidate what has been happening in Australia concerning historical perception, education and scholarship. They are greatly helpful to me for suggesting a comparative perspective to understand what has been going on in Canada, my research field, and for reconsidering the relevance of academic history in today's radically changing world, which encourages my self-examination as an 'academic historian'!

Professor Nicholas Brown's in-depth description of the History Wars and National Curriculum as well as his own involvement with the National Museum of Australia is very instructive in comparing Canada and Australia, sister nations born out of the British Empire, sharing much in common in terms of political institutions such as their constitutional monarchies and their multicultural societies with both aboriginal peoples and immigrants.

Actually Canada is currently experiencing what we might call its own 'Canadian history wars', which appear in some degree similar to those in Australia. Stephen Harper's Conservative Party which took power in February 2006, replacing the Liberal Party regime which had lasted over twelve years, has been emphasizing the importance to share history, especially military history that undergirds the pan-Canadian identity. Last year, for example, the Harper Government spent $28 million on commemorating the bicentennial of the War of 1812. It also announced a plan to transform the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the largest museum in Canada, into the Canadian Museum of History by spending $25 million, along with a $12 million budget for establishing the Canada History Fund, awards for outstanding high school history teachers and students. These plans were timed for the sesquicentennial of the Canadian Confederation in 2017, but these met with opposition. For example, Ian McKay, history professor at Queen's University, charges the government by saying "Canadian history has been conscripted" and the Canadian Historical Association has been sending open letters to the government, regretting that social history is neglected while military topics are given particular weight. As McKay points out, there is an ideological affinity between Stephen Harper and John Howard—Howard visited Canada three months after Harper became prime minister, and in 2003 Harper copied Howard's speech to urge Canada to join the U.S. assault on Iraq (later his speech writer was forced to resign for plagiarism). So one could say that Harper is following Howard in these history wars, too.

On the other hand, regarding the national curriculum, the Canadian situation differs totally from what Professor Brown describes for Australia. Canada has no federal department

of education, leaving educational matters under the jurisdiction of provincial governments.[1] The Council of Ministers of Education, an intergovernmental body founded in 1967, serves as a means to consult and cooperate with national educational organizations such as the Canadian Education Association, and the federal government, but has no right to administrate provincial affairs to integrate a nationwide system of education. Canada and Australia are culturally and regionally diverse, but Canada, with two founding peoples, Anglophone and Francophone, or with two distinct societies, Quebec and the Rest of Canada, finds it much more impossible to have a nationwide curriculum, let alone agreement on the education of history. Therefore, museums, as its alternative, are expected to play an important role in forging a sense of belonging to Canada.

The 'Canadian history wars' appear to be a struggle between Harper's Conservative Party and the Liberal Party over interpretation of Canada's past—Conservatives favour its British and military heritage and 'great man' history, while the Liberals prefer histories of ordinary people and immigrants. Indeed, the Harper Government tends to emphasize the difference between the two parties, by, for example, doing nothing to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, one of the brilliant achievements by the late Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Liberal icon, while holding large-scale commemoration for the War of 1812.

However, things are not so simple. In this regard, Professor Fujikawa's paper is very suggestive in that he points out the bipartisan complicity behind the History Wars in Australia. This can apply to this Canadian case. The "Canadian history wars" can be traced back to the early 1990s. At the Creighton Lecture held at the University of Toronto in October 1991, Professor Michal Bliss delivered a lecture provocatively titled "Privatizing the Mind; The Sundering of Canadian History; the Sundering of Canada", criticizing the fragmented and specialized research in Canadian historiography to argue for the revival of comprehensive national history. And in 1998, Jack Granatstein, professor emeritus of York University and one of the most well-known and prolific historians in Canada, published a polemical bestseller, *Who Killed Canadian History?*, in which he complains that military and political history are being neglected in Canadian classrooms in favour of the social history of ethnic groups and regions. Their concerns about Canadian history and education were intensified by the Quebec separatist movement, too. Quebec nationalism led to the rise of regionalisms of other areas, which made many Canadians fear Canada would break up. It is true these historians greatly affect the Conservatives, but find their supporters among the Liberals as well. It was the Liberal Government that decided to finance the building of a new Canadian War Museum, and celebrated its opening on V-E Day in 2005, the Year of Veterans, on the suggestions of military historians such as Granatstein.

It can be said that, with the backdrop of a centrifugal or decentralized political atmosphere, the lack of a nationwide curriculum to foster a sense of belonging to Canada and the

(1) The Australian Constitution stipulates that the states retain legislative power over education as the residual power of the states (A comment by T. Fujikawa).

fragmentation of historical research caused the "Canadian history wars". Academic historians, who live self-contentedly as a rare species in "narrow circles" or chilly rooms in the house of history, are, therefore, partially—but mostly—responsible for it. They must reach out to public history sphere, as Professor Fujikawa argues.

Ichiro Maekawa, Soka University

Pluralism in Historical Interpretation:
The seminar was very productive but a bit annoying. It was, no doubt, rewarding because both lectures clearly highlighted the raison d'être of an 'academic historian' and addressed the role of academic history in society. The conclusion of the seminar, however, was rather troubling because the lectures exposed a disturbing reality of academic history—that in society we are often left behind in a 'commoditized' history. The irony of that statement is that, as Fujikawa notes, the national curriculum, which is an ideological weapon of the nation-state, will be the only hope for academic historians. Thus the 'anxiety' of historians in universities has been expressed everywhere

This 'anxiety' reminds me of two personal experiences. In the early 2000s, Japanese education witnessed a firestorm of controversy about the new school textbook written by the Japan Society for History Textbook Reform (HTR). I was then a member of the committee of the Historical Science Society of Japan (HSSJ) and criticized HTR's campaign against a 'masochistic view of history' after Japan lost the Second World War. The 'left' wing of the HSSJ criticized the 'right' wing HTR's descriptions of Japanese colonialism in Asia. In retrospect, I have an impression that it was a time when historians of both parties were likely shifting from their job to 'exploring' what happened in the past and, instead, tended to act like quasi-judges of history, searching all ways to find the opponents guilty of charges of writing 'incorrect' history. History then became something not so much to be 'explored' as something that was 'accused' and 'retried' because there had to be only one 'right' history and interpretation. At that point in time 'anxiety' began to disturb academic historians as did the situation in Australia during John Howard's time. Speaking for myself, the issue aroused a feeling of emptiness and was a bitter experience, and, as a result, I soon dropped out of the movement to politicize history.

However, Brown's notes about the pedagogical aspect of Australian school textbooks reminded me of another personal experience, one not so bitter. I translated a British textbook into Japanese a few years ago. The textbook, entitled *The Impact of Empire*, had been originally written for students at 'Key Stage 3' (11-14 years old) in Britain. The text was compliant with the British national curriculum and had the obvious intention of letting students seek historical evidence of a multi-cultural society in modern Britain through stories about the British Empire. Nevertheless, what was notable in this 'ideological weapon of the nation-state' lies not in its contents but in the fact that the authors put a great deal of thought into the so-called balanced perspectives. The authors gave serious consideration to not speaking only about a

particular perspective. Topics in the textbook were fully open to various interpretations of such controversial issues as the slave trade, British (English) colonialism in Ireland, and the hardship of Commonwealth migrants, among others. Every chapter had the so-called 'Discussion' and 'Activity' practices for students' critical scrutiny of what happened. At the root of this pedagogic manner was the dialogue between people with different views. In other words, the text encouraged students to have a kind of pluralism in historical interpretation and to carry on a constructive dialogue to hear about others' historical experiences.

There is not adequate space to cover this subject in depth but generally it can be said that a historical practice has been expected to make—what Hannah Arendt calls a 'public place' in her *Human Condition*—a place for the exchange of (political) ideas and actions between multiple people where they can act in concert. If this is a role of the academic historian, the textbook may have a meaning in society other than that of being 'an ideological weapon of the nation-state'.

Yuichi Murakami, Fukushima University

According to Professor Brown, in 2008 the Commonwealth and all state governments in Australia agreed to declare that in the 21st century "Australia's capacity to provide a high quality of life for all will depend on *the ability to compete in the global economy on knowledge and innovation*" [my italics], setting these as educational goals for young Australians.

While I was listening to Professor Brown's explanation of the present state of Australian history education, and to Professor Fujikawa's view on the commodification of history in the era of the postmodern capitalist world, I wondered how I had started being interested in the studies of history.

I still remember the first time I encountered the learning of history without memorizing historical facts when I spent a year as a high school exchange student to Australia in 1987. I was very surprised, for example, when I read a modern Australian history textbook asking students to write a letter to an Australian solider on the battlefield in Europe! After entering university in Hokkaido in 1989, I still did not know what I would like to be in the future, and even after choosing history studies as my major, I did not think of being either a history teacher or a historian at the time. Neither did I ever think of utilising my historical knowledge to make a living in my future while I was an undergraduate student. The point I would like to make is, how can such an academic historian like me teach students historical knowledge in order "to compete in the global economy"? The answer is very obvious.

I do understand that we "academic historians" must face the reality that globalisation and neoliberalism strongly influence our daily lives, and that these influences extend into history education. Governments such as Australian and Japanese ones have been pressuring those involved in history education to change their pedagogy in order to make use of "history as a psychological alternative to material benefits", as Professor Fujikawa correctly points out.

Even so, I still cannot help but imagine if there is yet another way to resolve such situations.

It is true that "Man cannot live by bread alone". However, it is also very true that we cannot live without (buying) food.

Those situations remind me of words in the film *The Leopard*, by Luchino Visconti in 1963: "We must change to remain the same". If the governments of Australia and Japan attempt to utilise history education by taking more control over their budgets, we must make the most use of the circumstances through changing our pedagogy not to please politicians or bureaucrats but to please our own history students.

Although I do not have an exact answer on how we could achieve such a goal, we need to explore unique and innovative strategies and tactics in order to survive and remain the same without "commodifying" our spirits as academic historians.

Hiroshi Tsuda, University of Tsukuba

Two papers convincingly demonstrate the expansion of historical discourses outside of academia in which diverse agencies, from local museums to the national government, are participating in the production of 'history'. With the 'commodification' of history itself, as Fujikawa suggests, professional historians have to present a historical narrative which has some 'public value' for society. In the context of Brown's argument, professional historians are now demanded to ease the 'history anxiety', not just to keep the established tradition of academic discipline. The subjects for historians, as a consequence, often involve politically sensitive matters, such as war and nationalism or history education and the 'national curriculum'.

As other commentators have shown, the issues discussed in these papers can be shared with those who are not specializing in Australian history. There are many common questions in Japan: the education of 'patriotism' proposed under Abe government, the construction of 'world history' suitable for the age of globalization and so on. These questions led our discussion to the pedagogical and practical problem. For example, there are virtually no descriptions on Australian history in history textbooks used by Japanese high schools. The history of Australia undoubtedly offers Japanese students with a new insight into history. Would it be reasonable, however, to kick out the history of any other country (say, the United Kingdom) to give more space to Australia? In what form, can the 'world history', which is composed of the histories of foreign countries, become most productive for our students? For this question, Brown's involvement in coordinating the 'national curriculum' gave us many implications.

For good or bad, as Fujikawa argues, professional historians cannot monopolize the right as legitimate producers of 'history' anymore. Whether at history education or local museums, we historians are asked to interact with often non-academic, diverse agencies. In other words, we should reformulate our academic history as a 'public history' in both academic and non-academic circles. Again, such trend is not confined to Australia and Japan. This seminar was a great opportunity to discuss highly intriguing issues, which are common to all historians, from transnational perspectives of our different fields.

Keita Morimoto, Osaka University

In Japanese high schools students must learn world history as a mandatory subject. I think that it is unusual to teach history in such a way in other countries. I believe that the world history in Japan is providing high school students with an opportunity to develop the ability to communicate inter-culturally. But the world history is one of unpopular subjects. The world history means simply a continuous task of memorizing for students. Many students tend to think that Japanese history is an easier subject than the world history.

Several professors at Osaka University, not Prof. Fujikawa, are struggling to solve this problem. They have prepared a design for a new world history and organized the Osaka University History-Education Seminars since 2005. For example, they are studying global history from an Asian perspective or in terms of Asian maritime or Central Eurasian history. Now they are writing an innovative textbook for high school students as well as university students. I am working with them as a research fellow. It's a very interesting project for me as I can understand history from new perspectives.

However, I believe that pedagogy is also an important factor as well as contents. Pedagogy in Japanese history teaching lacks an active learning. Many teachers only explain history. They don't use pedagogical methods such as discussion and researching. Students must memorize many things because Japanese educational system forces teachers to instill an enormous number of historical facts into students. I once taught the world history in high school as a part-time lecturer for one year. At that time I depended on explanation and had no time to use advanced pedagogical techniques. How can we teachers communicate new historical perspectives? How can high school students develop critical thinking by history? Please tell me about the teaching of history and training of teachers in Australia.

(In response we talked about the advanced pedagogical methods and techniques extensively used in text books adopted in the new curriculum for history in Australia.)

Atsuko Munemura, Osaka University

I have been studying South African history and I would like to hear your advice about the way to communicate about African history, Three years ago, I took part in the African Seminar, where I had an opportunity to see textbooks which several primary and secondary schools in Africa adopted. Since then, I have become keenly aware of the fact that historical education is perceived differently from one country to another. For example, it is becoming popular to make use of global history in Japanese schools. But as long as I recognized, what was regarded as important in that seminar was to discuss "writing national history". I am reminded of that difference again today.

I believe it is a critical task for us to cross-culturally share "basic knowledge" of history.

I learned history in a Japanese university, but in African countries, such orthodox historical departments are reportedly diminishing. In that situation, how can I communicate with local students about the African history in future?

(In response we do not think that any attendee could offer good advice to her, but many of us agreed that the issue of national history could be dealt with from diverse perspectives.)