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Review Article

War Memory, Nationalism and Education in Postwar Japan, 1945–2007: The Japanese History Textbook Controversy and Ienaga Saburo's Court Challenges

NOZAKI, Yoshiko
Oxon: Routledge, 2008
198 pp.

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This is a small, earnest book about big, fraught issues. Ienaga Saburo's three lawsuits challenging the government's textbook approval system serve Yoshiko Nozaki as a lens through which to view controversies over postwar education, the study and teaching of history, war memory, and the nature of citizenship and the state. Nozaki herself was a volunteer in the movement to support Ienaga. Neutrality, with sympathetic portraits of all sides, is not her goal. She would likely agree with Ienaga that fairness and truth are not incompatible with commitment and a perspective. Her commitment to Ienaga and his struggle brings more strengths than weaknesses to her book, which is based on her University of Wisconsin-Madison Ph.D. thesis.

Nozaki believes that war memory is at the center of national identity, and that the Ienaga movement shows that "citizens have the power to resist the combined forces of the state and right-wing nationalists" (p. 151) as these dark forces attempt to use war memory to shape and control the nation. Her theoretical approach borrows Foucault's concept of "games of truth," particularly in her descriptions of how Ienaga's court battles were debates over the nature of education and of historical truth. Despite the fact that she opens chapters with quotations from Foucault (three times), Marx, Homi Bhabha, and Gramsci, theory and jargon never get in the way of Nozaki's story and arguments.

Ienaga Saburō (1913–2002) played a central role in the textbook and war memory debates from the early years after the Asia-Pacific War until the end of the twentieth century. He was one

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of the authors of *Kuni no ayumi* (1946), one of the three history textbooks published after the war by the Ministry of Education (MOE), before the ministry instituted a system of screening and approving commercially published texts. Ienaga then authored a high school history text for the Sanseidō publishing company. When one team of MOE screeners rejected it in 1952 and then a different team approved the same manuscript, he began to be concerned about the effects the MOE and its screening system might have on history education and textbooks. Nozaki's chapter on these early postwar years offers fascinating portraits of the development of a new system in a time of occupation and confusion. The rest of the book shows how Ienaga's concerns were well-founded, and how he and others came to struggle against the new system in an attempt to force the MOE to accept in textbooks what he considered truthful descriptions of the Rape of Nanjing, the human experiments by Unit 731, the "comfort women" sex slave system, and the forced suicides and killings of civilians by the military in the Battle of Okinawa.

One thread in the book traces Ienaga's three lawsuits, filed in 1965, 1967, and 1984, and continuing until 1993, 1989, and 1997 respectively. These cases challenged the constitutionality of the screening system itself, the appropriateness of the MOE's decisions, and the accuracy of the historical facts and views put forward by Ienaga and the MOE. Nozaki's chapter focusing on the confrontations in court between witnesses for Ienaga and for the government is one of the most important contributions of this book. Since the screeners normally expressed their suggestions and requirements to publishers and authors orally and not in writing, these court sessions offered a fascinating glimpse of the MOE's reasoning. Nozaki characterizes the MOE's approach as veering between a problematic "objectivism" requiring texts to present only value-free "facts" or broadly accepted academic views, and an equally problematic "relativism" requiring the presentation of multiple views or interpretations where there could be any question as to which was correct. Nozaki shows how Ienaga's lawyers were easily able to point out the difficulties and contradictions in these approaches, particularly when the testimony focused on specific issues such as Korean resistance to Japanese colonization, the Nanjing Massacre and rapes of Chinese by Japanese soldiers, Unit 731, and civilian deaths in Okinawa. Nozaki seems less willing to recognize the difficulties and contradictions in the Ienaga side's arguments that facts and interpretations cannot and should not be divorced from values, and ought to be selected and used for the good of society.

A second thread in the book is the way that changing domestic and international political circumstances, as well as the questions raised in the court cases, affected the content of textbooks. The "right-wing nationalists" inside and outside government were strongest from the 1950s into the 1960s, and again more recently. When progressive forces were stronger, they were able to get more discussion of the war into textbooks, partly because the Ienaga cases brought the issue to national attention and mobilized large numbers of citizen-activists. But Nozaki does not see these fluctuations as repetitions of the same cycle. The most recent period, she argues, is different because new conservative nationalist groups (most notably the Japan Society for History Textbook Reform) have created their own textbooks, and because, in ways that remain unexplained, the MOE (since 2001 the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, or MEXT; Nozaki calls it the Ministry of Education and Science) has somehow persuaded publishers to practice "guided self-censorship."

There are minor typographical and other errors in this book, no macrons are used, and there are some things it does not do. We never get a full picture of Ienaga as a person or a thinker. For that, fortunately, we have Ienaga's autobiography, *Japan's Past, Japan's Future: One Historian's Odyssey* (translated and introduced by Richard H. Minear; Lanham, Maryland: Rowman &

Littlefield, 2001). Nozaki does not compare Japan's textbook system with those of other countries, but for that we have *Postwar History Education in Japan and the Germanys: Guilty Lessons*, by Julian Dierkes (Oxon: Routledge, 2010). Nozaki's book is full of implications for a broader understanding of postwar Japan but she does not flesh these out or engage much of the existing English-language literature on citizen's movements, war memory, and other issues, nor does she place the movement surrounding Ienaga's lawsuits firmly in the context of movements against the Vietnam War, pollution, etc. But one mark of a useful book is raising questions beyond its immediate topic, and this book is sure to spark lively seminar discussions.

The rulings in Ienaga's court cases were decidedly mixed, but Nozaki argues that the most important decisions are not made by judges. After discussing the dismissal of the first suit by the Supreme Court in 1993, she writes "One might wonder if Ienaga won his case in the arena of history textbooks, even though he lost his case in court" (p. 125). It is true that most textbooks mentioned "comfort women" by the late 1990s. But as a result of "guided self-censorship," in the early years of the 21st century mentions of these and other wartime atrocities were eliminated or greatly cut back in most texts. In her closing, Nozaki returns to her citizen-activist roots by concluding that "whether Ienaga's court challenges have lasting effects...depends in part on us—on how we build on the legacy of his struggle" (p. 156).