
“National History” in Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese History Education: Its Current Role, Existing Challenges and Alternative Frameworks ¹

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Introduction

How should national history be taught in the age of globalization? Should one uphold the national framework, even though – or precisely because – the nation-state appears challenged in times of increased cross-national interactions; or should one affirm and further these trends with cross-national (“connected”), regional, or global approaches? There are also various ways to teach it – based on a civic, ethnic, or a primordial concept of national belonging; as a self-contained monolithic block or as part of the region and/or the world. In each country, different actors may answer these questions differently, and, depending on a host of factors ranging from the country’s international position to the institutional make-up of the education system, a different answer will prevail.

East Asian history education is often said to have until now been in the strong grip of contesting national histories (see, for instance, Vickers/Jones 2005). This paper examines the forces currently (re-)shaping the structure, narratives, and functions of national history in the People’s Republic of China and in Taiwan (Republic of China). In particular, it focuses on the tensions between what could be termed a “nationalist” and a “universalist” (liberal) approach to history education.² The former, which perceives history education as a legitimate and convenient tool in nation-building and national self-affirmation, remains influential in both contexts for – very different – political reasons; but the latter, less concerned about affirming (imagined) national boundaries, has recently (re-)gained some momentum, with important impulses coming from the field of pedagogy.

1. Shared Roots and Parallel Developments

1.1 “National history” in pre-1949 education

The creation of a “national” history ³ and its introduction as a school subject took place under the impact of a previous global trend: In the early 20th century, the establishment of the modern world system of clearly delimited, sovereign nation-states; made up of citizens formed in a state-controlled mass education system had become impossible to ignore for the previously self-contained, but since 1840 often ignominiously defeated (most recently in 1894/5 and 1900) “Middle Kingdom”. As part of the Qing’s “New Policy” (1902–10) state-building efforts, educational reforms combining traditional and modern teaching content were considered indispensable to casting off the ailing empire’s now clearly felt “backwardness”

and making it fit for inter-national competition – strong in military and prosperous in economic terms.

The first curricula (then still called *zhangcheng* – “constitutions”) stipulated a linear, continuous narrative prefigured – although not entirely determined – by dynastic rise and decline.⁴ Chinese history was taught separately from foreign history (*waiguo shi*), a division that should be upheld throughout most of the century. In its moral-political aspects, it highlighted the Qing’s “benevolent government” (*renzheng*) as well as role models provided by great personalities, to raise citizens (*guomin*) both loyal to the current polity and dedicated to the personal and national cause of “self-strengthening” (ZKB 2001: 5–7).

Since then, the teaching of national history has been serving various objectives, differing in emphasis depending on the respective historical circumstances and dominant political and educational thoughts. First, to define the (historical) Chinese collective self in time and space and to contribute to a sense of common belonging, connectedness (or even homogeneity) and thus inner unity. The “Chinese nation” (*Zhonghua minzu*), created in the early 20th century but projected backwards to form a time-transcending historical subject, became a central concept, even though the Communist (CCP) and Nationalist Party (KMT) should subsequently somewhat differently play out its various, partially conflicting, racial and cultural notions (Leibold 2008). Secondly, to define historical China’s role in the regional and global context, and its relationship to “significant others”. Here, the two most influential concepts have been Chinese cultural and political regional superiority and predominance for ancient, and imperialist victimization for modern history. Thirdly, to promote the “correct” relationship between the personal and (national) collective self. The individual – as a Chinese citizen and/or member of the “Chinese nation” – was to be positively connected to the latter through the central value of “loving the state/nation” (*ai guo*) – a term that first appeared in curricula after the founding of the Republic of China in 1912. Needless to say, the power of definition for “China” and its welfare, and thus the concrete attitudes and actions that “patriotism” was to contain, rested with the respective government. Fourthly, to explain and guide the present (and future) in its political dimensions, an important aspect of the traditional notion of using “history as a mirror” (*yi shi wei jian*). Also, to prove the legitimacy of the current regime – again not a recent invention, but inheriting the traditional concept of “orthodox succession” (*zhengtong*). Finally, to teach historical competences, that is, acquaint students with the methodological aspects of practising history as a science (*kexue*).

Historically, the only exception to dominance of the “nationalist” approach was a short intermezzo in the early 1920s, when Deweyan ideas had strong following in Chinese educational circles. For the subject of “History”, this had resulted in a universal framework integrating aspects of Chinese and world history; and a more prominent concern for the development of mankind more than for the Chinese nation (ZKB 2001: 14–15). However, not only was it little implemented, but the re-unification of the country by the KMT after the Northern Expedition (1926–8) almost immediately ushered in a backlash. The following teaching outlines, published in 1929, re-established the former separation, stipulated that

“internationalist compassion” were to be appropriate and attention to the necessities of the “Chinese nation’s” (here termed *Zhongguo minzu*) self-invigoration and self-defence not to be neglected (ZKB 2001: 21). The teaching goals of these and subsequent (1932–41) outlines in particular emphasized the Chinese nation’s historical greatness and cultural contributions, as well as its recent imperialist victimization, to both explain and compensate for the country’s (then-existing weak) international position. Students were also to be mobilized in support and defence of their country, in particular vis-à-vis Japanese aggression (ZKB 2001: 43, 60, 77, 88).

1.2 Post-1949 Developments: From Textbook Monism to Pluralism ⁵

After the establishment of two political entities in 1949, history education on the mainland and Taiwan shared a number of features. State agencies under the wing of the respective Ministries of Education (MOE)⁶ issued standardized textbooks written according to relatively detailed central curriculum outlines/standards. Chinese history figured prominently – both in terms of allotted time and, it goes without saying, political significance.

In both contexts, textbook pluralism started in the 1980s. In China, the first wave of – primarily functional – pluralisation started in the late 1980s upon the introduction nine-year compulsory education system. Four sets of national textbooks catering to different school types and social conditions were designed for the junior high level, while Shanghai and Zhejiang were allowed to implement their own local curriculum. The second major round of curricular reform (since 2001) introduced mechanisms of direct competition, with eight sets of textbooks for junior high and four sets of senior high textbooks (all still on trial) currently existing on the emerging textbook market.

In Taiwan, the first wave of textbook liberalisation in the late 1980s was limited to subjects non-related to the national entrance exam. With history being a “core subject”, the first batch of pluralized senior high textbooks was based on the 1995-curriculum standard; while the production of their junior high counterparts was not deregulated until 1999.

2. China⁷

2.1 Maoist China: Chinese History in a Marxist Framework

Until Mao’s death, Marxism-Leninism, complemented by Mao-Zedong-Thought, served as the CCP’s guiding ideology. The former stipulated specific laws of historical development, while the latter considered revolutionary struggle – both on the internal (class) an external (anti-imperialist) front – to be a major key to China’s path towards the final developmental stage of communism. As the history curriculum was pre-occupied with the transmission of these clearly defined, unquestionable, political and scientific “truths”, any concern with students’ abilities concerned their comprehension and application.

The national standardized textbooks presented Chinese history within the “universal”

stage-based framework of historical materialism (and only on a second plane the cyclical course of dynasties) as a continuous and teleological narrative advanced by revolutionary upheavals, in particular peasant movements. The division of Chinese and foreign history (from 1956 on called “world history”), meanwhile, was upheld both at the junior and senior high level, reinforced by a likewise division in academic historiography, and in the initially influential Russian model of history education. Textbooks contained strong anti-oppressionist and anti-imperialist rhetoric and were self-consciously didactic. However, tensions between facts and theory, political correctness and traditional notions were reflected in various instances. Thus, while the “masses” (*renmin qunzhong*) were defined as history’s main moving forces, great historical personalities – including those of “negative” class standing such as emperors – were also (re-)acknowledged as playing a pivotal role. Similar challenges were posed by the PRC’s multi-ethnic composition. Efforts were made to incorporate “minorities” (*shaoshu minzu*) into the grand historical narrative of state unity and ethnic brotherhood – all of them were said to have made contributions to the fatherland and inter-ethnic conflicts were traced to class contradictions; but the *Han*⁸ core of Chinese history was subsequently re-affirmed (ZKB 2001: 257) and Han-centrism never eliminated. “Patriotism” was to be based on national self-respect deriving from the “people’s” (*renmin*) past accomplishments, and, included, needless to say, loyalty to the Party.

Nationalism was thus continuously present, but subdued and counterbalanced – both rhetorically, as it was considered a bourgeois phenomenon and Marxism always had an internationalist impetus, and practically, as the mass campaigns were more relevant on the domestic than on the international front.⁹ This should, however, change, in post-Maoist China, when all other -isms should be quietly put to rest and social fault lines within Chinese society downplayed - in diametric opposition to their actual rise.

2.2 Post-Mao China: Chinese History Revised, Re-affirmed and Partially Re-structured

(Re-)defining China’s national identity has been one of the core issues of the “reform and opening” period. The re-establishment and subsequent multiplication of its ties with the outside world runs parallel to the tasks of finally finding a viable model of “Chinese modernity” and safeguarding inner stability. Apart from mobilizing all social forces for the country’s continued economic rise, this includes integrating a huge, socially and ethnically diverse, population. The potentially sensitive border areas Tibet, Xinjiang, but also the “renegade province” of Taiwan, have to be affirmed as (historically) belonging to China in order to thwart secessionist efforts. Strengthening and homogenizing the national self through the presentation of a shared national story therefore remains a high priority on the educational agenda.

The past should play no minor role in the discussions on China’s present and future. Many observers have noted that nationalism – both on the state and popular level – has been on the rise in China since the 1990s.¹⁰ On the official level, the “patriotic education” campaigns of the post-Tian’anmen years should indeed make ample use of China’s past for

present aims. While national pride and self-respect were to derive from China's multi-millennial glorious civilization, understanding of China's particular "national condition" (*guoqing*) and a self-affirmative attitude towards the "West" was to be instilled through a reinforced focus on the "history of imperialist aggression and heroic resistance by the Chinese people".

While the heydays of the patriotic education campaigns are over, the framework of "national history" has been strengthened in a number of respects. This holds especially valid for the standard "History" subject (*lishi ke*) on the mandatory junior high school level (grade 7 to 9). Taking up grade seven and eight (world history, taught in grade nine, is only accorded half the time), "Chinese history" has evolved from one continuous multi-millennial narrative to another: gradually freed from the straitjacket of the five stages of historical materialism, the most recent (2001) trial curriculum standard (*kecheng biao*) mirrors it back in time along central tenets of the PRC's official identity as a multi-ethnic, unitary state and delimited by its current borders. The seven textbook versions published on its basis forgo the (limited) freedom of arrangement it offers (LKB, p. 34), and instead closely adhere to its framework.¹¹ Moreover, trends in post-Mao academic historiography have trickled down into the curriculum, where they are re-fractured through the prism of history's functionalization for "patriotic education". Regarding the "basic lines" (*jiben suoxian*) of modern Chinese history, for instance, the orthodox "revolutionary" has been replaced by the "modernization" paradigm¹² during the last round of curriculum reform. In combination with the continuously strong anti-imperialist stance and a perceived need to shorten and simplify textbooks content, this – somewhat inadvertently – caused the downplaying of inner conflicts, and subsequently led to a more homogeneous picture of "China" vis-à-vis the imperialist others.¹³ Going back further in history, the Tang (618–907 AD) dynasty is no longer subjected to the traditional "rise and fall" (*xingtai*) narrative or toppled with the obligatory peasant uprising; instead, its portrayal as an economically and culturally prosperous, ethnically harmonious, politically open, and regionally influential entity reflects current China's ideal self-image as much as characteristics and developments of the time (ZKB: 6–9).

On the other hand, there have various attempts at fundamental reforms of the pre-existing framework. First, to break away from the previous system of repeating junior high history content in somewhat more depth in senior high school, the senior high curriculum has since 2003 been changed to an a-chronological approach. The mandatory (*bixiu*) section of the curriculum standard currently on trial is structured along the three major fields of political, socio-economic, and intellectual/cultural history. The 25 sub-topics repeat mandatory narratives and paradigms of Chinese history¹⁴, but may also discuss aspects of both Chinese and foreign history. It is also, more than its predecessors, concerned with the fostering of students' analytical and historical skills – albeit, understandably, within the political limits.

The trial junior and the senior high curriculum standard may be said to convey somewhat differing agendas with regard to our guiding question. The former has a clearer nationalist thrust: The aims of fostering patriotism and preserving the Chinese nation's cultural tradition

in light of the current global situation figure prominently already in the introductory section, and while the fatherland should be deeply *loved*, the world needs to (only) be understood and tolerated (ZKB 2001: 1). The latter, on the other hand, while also providing the usual patriotic terminology, puts humanity's (*renlei*) historical fate on a par with that of the "Chinese nation" as objects of concern (GKB 2003: 1), conveying a larger concern to educate students for China's peaceful rise as Chinese – and world – citizens.

On the junior high level, the integrated "social studies" approach has been proposed as an alternative to the classical division between history, geography, and moral-political education. Its local introduction goes back to first wave of curricular diversification after 1986, when the province of Zhejiang and the selected schools in the city of Shanghai established a course called "Society" (*shehui*). The Shanghai version upheld the division between Chinese and world (and "ancient" and "modern", that is post-1840) history, but replaced chronology by *topic* as the main structural device. Units, in particular for the ancient period, focused on socio-economic developments, specific social groups (e.g. "intellectuals and women") and overarching issues (e.g. "social contradictions and struggles") within larger, dynasty-transcending time sections (LSKBJ II 2002: 20).

Since 2001, the comprehensive subject of "History and Society" (*lishi yu shehui*) has been introduced in two versions on a nation-wide trial basis. Version I is in many respects similar to the abovementioned "Society" curriculum. It presents ancient Chinese history not as a continuous story, but as possessing certain "basic lines" (here namely continuity, national unity, and ethnic cooperation), complemented by aspects of Chinese ancient society ranging from developments in agriculture, handcraft and trade, passing by the role of war and cultural exchange, to the situation of women. The modern (1840-1949) section, meanwhile, has a more obvious nation-centred agenda. Aimed at raising awareness of China's then-existing crisis and its people's search and struggles to save it from extinction, it mainly delivers an event-centred, political history, with economic and cultural developments playing only a secondary role (LKS I 2001). Version II goes even further in using an integrated approach that examines aspects of Chinese history against the broader background of world civilization. Aspects of Chinese history are grouped under topics such as "The effects of cultural exchange", "Important historical events". Like all other reforms, it goes hand in hand with an adherence to official master narratives and political expediencies. Thus, not only is national unity presented as Chinese history's main historical trend and as a result of the efforts by all nationalities, but socialism is defined as the "Chinese people's historical choice" (LKS II 2001).

Though still referring to core master narratives of Chinese history, the abovementioned topic-centred approaches (partially) connecting Chinese and foreign history have the potential to cause Chinese history to somewhat lose its singular and monumental character. They have profited from the rise of social history in post-Mao Chinese academic historiography. Another facilitating factor was the official adoption of "quality education" (*suzhi jiaoyu*) as the guiding educational concept by a State Council (*guowuyuan*) decision in 1999 - proponents could

derive legitimacy for their own agenda from referring to “quality education’s” concerns with competence-based creativity and analytical thinking and real-life skills. At the same time, they face a number of challenges and are therefore far from replacing the standard “History” class. First, they have been decried by some historians as “a-historical” (for largely omitting temporality, thus not being “social history” but “social studies”) or as too “arbitrary” in their selection of topics, and thus as lacking in systematicness. Secondly, their innovativeness seems to cause difficulties in their practical implementation. Teachers are in part unfamiliar with the presented content and suggested methods, and the exam system appears to lag behind the reforms, causing concerned parents to perceive the integrated class as disadvantageous for their children.

Shanghai’s local curricular reform, which had shown similar developments, was stalled for a somewhat different reason. In its second round (implemented since 1999), a framework of “civilizational history” mainly inspired ‘by the French *Annales* School, had been adopted on the senior high school level. The curriculum standard and textbooks were thus structured along thematic units such as “Early civilizations”, “Human Life” (social structure, customs, etc.) and “Exchanges and clashes between civilizations.” This rather radical overhaul seems to have posed challenges and invited criticism similar to those of the national reforms. However, while it was long accepted (or at least ignored) by the central authorities, it was brought to a halt due to a rather unfortunate coincidence involving international media attention, namely its – positive – coverage in the American *New York Times* (Kahn 2006). As a result of the ensuing furor in the print media and on the internet, editors were ordered to drastically re-write the textbooks, the effects of which remain to be seen.

3. Taiwan¹⁵

3.1 Authoritarian Taiwan: Chinese history as national history in exile

After its flight to Taiwan in 1949, the KMT government continued to consider itself the legitimate government of the Republic of China and correspondingly basically upheld the version of Chinese history that it had constructed while still governing the mainland. While the school subject itself was called “history”, national and foreign history were de facto taught separately in a proportion of 2:1 in junior high and 3:1 in senior high school (for the mandatory part). Teaching on Chinese history was mainly shaped by the “historical source” school long dominant in ROC-historiography. Its (compared to Marxist historiography) a-theoretical thrust was reflected in the main matrix of Chinese history being a rather traditional, dynastic chronology, albeit supplemented by separate chapters on foreign policy, economics, and culture of certain larger historical periods; while it nationalist sub-current shaped – in concurrence with political expediencies – the overall perspective on historical China: Accounts were mainly written from the point of view of the central state and the *Han* majority¹⁶, lauded the accomplishments of Chinese traditional culture and Confucian values, and promoted anti-

imperialism¹⁷ and anti-communism.

Taiwan was by the KMT considered a Chinese province, even though efforts were made to turn the “basis for recovery” of the Chinese heartland into a model province to showcase its superiority to the CCP. With Chinese history taught as national history, the island’s history played only a minor role and was solely viewed through the prism of the former. Correspondingly, not only was the island’s indigenous population (of Austronesian origins) classified as a minority within the *Zhonghua minzu* (something that is still upheld on the mainland), but all non-Chinese regimes were portrayed as invaders and exploiters, while their “Chinese” counterparts figured positively as defenders of Chinese sovereignty over the island and/or agents of development and civilization.

3.2 Democratic Taiwan: Which “National” History (mid-1990s-to date)

By the 1970s, it had become clear that the recovery of the mainland was an illusionary goal. Moreover, after a number of setbacks in the international arena in the early 1970s, the foundations of the KMT’s political legitimacy began to crumble. Chiang Ching-kuo, Chiang Kai-shek’s son, thus pushed the “nativisation” (*bentuhua* – de facto Taiwanization)¹⁸ of the KMT. The process of democratisation which started in 1987 reinforced these gradual changes in power relations from the “mainlanders” (*waishengren*, those that came with the KMT in 1949, and their children) to the Taiwanese natives (*bensheng ren*, that is the Chinese population whose ancestors, mainly from Fujian and Guangdong, migrated to Taiwan before 1949).

The Taiwanese are divided on the island’s current “national” identity and political future, especially in relation to its most significant, and at times, openly threatening other – the PRC. The two major political camps - blue and green - may be characterised as “China-leaning” and “Taiwanese nationalists”, respectively. Taiwanese nationalism, while mainly centring on the island’s democratic, multicultural make-up, also has Chinese nationalism as the confrontative “other” which it needs to oppose. The current DDP-government under Chen Shuibian is part of the latter and is – within the narrow limitations set by Chinese threats and the American politics of deterrence – trying to construct an independent Taiwanese nation-state. Their efforts at “Taiwanisation” have not only involved ridding the island of various KMT-legacies, among others, its version of Chinese (and Taiwanese, for that matter), history.

As a result, Taiwan is second only to Japan among East Asian countries in regards to controversies on history textbooks and curricula. The first major public history textbook debate in 1997 concerned a series of (then still standardized) textbooks focussing exclusively on Taiwanese history, geography and society called “Knowing Taiwan” (*Renshi Taiwan*).¹⁹ Their mandatory introduction for first-year junior high school students assigned the island a new place: from a peripheral point of outlook to the Chinese homeland to the centre of attention. Chinese history was relegated to year two, to be followed by one year of world history. The move was informed (opponents may say “justified”) by the concept of “concentric circles [of concern]” (*tongxinyuan*). Referring to the successive teaching on Taiwan, China/East Asia and the world, it represented a compromise that was to remedy the – widely

acknowledged – previous neglect of Taiwan-related content, while trying to mediate the opposing demands by Taiwan- and China-leaning forces. The heated debates were a clash of two nationalisms, with both camps tending to conceptualise Chinese, respectively Taiwanese, history as “national history” in a traditional sense – that is, it ought to be presented as a continuous and “complete” narrative. The “Knowing Taiwan” textbooks themselves were also not free of nationalist underpinnings – by their occasional use of unifying and homogenising tropes, they mirrored established (nationalist) accounts of Chinese history as much as they opposed them in content (RT 1997).²⁰

Meanwhile, more cautious, but nonetheless significant, revisions were made in the 1995-senior high curriculum standard. Firstly, the section on Chinese history showed signs of a more detached attitude towards what was no longer termed “our country”, and partially “de-centred” the previous narrative by making accounts of China’s frontier and nomadic peoples mandatory. As a result, textbooks could – and some did – revise pre-existing narratives of Chinese history by assuming a more self-reflective Han perspective.²¹ Secondly, coverage of Taiwan was increased to 4 out of 19 chapters, but its status remained ambiguous – while no longer defined as the “model province”, it continued to be taught within the framework of Chinese history, which (still) implied that island’s history was an integral part thereof.

In 2003/4, another public debate should prove influential for the structure of its successor (now called “outline”, *gangyao*). The committee in charge had originally planned to design a separate courses on Taiwanese and Chinese history until 1500 in the first, respectively second semester of grade one, but then to integrate post-1500 Chinese and world history in year two. After the issue had received widespread attention in the mass media – not only in Taiwan, but also on the mainland, where the plans were heavily criticized as part of the “de-sinicization” (*qu Zhongguo hua*) scheme – one resorted to the template provided by the “concentric circles” model: One semester each was allotted to a linear and chronological account of Taiwanese and Chinese history. Taiwanese history proceeds from a discussion of its aboriginal population to the Dutch and Spanish colonial interludes, while Qing and Japanese rule and post-war developments are treated in more detail. Chinese history provides a sweeping overview from the pre-historic ages to current cross-Straits relations, but instead of tracing the rise and fall of each dynasty, opts for a broader, social history-inspired approach. This time, some central tenets of orthodox KMT historiography also underwent *enforced* revision. Among other things, the central textbook approval committee ordered textbook authors not to designate Chinese history as “history of one’s own country” (*benguo shi*) and made requests to delete the Sun Yat-sen’s previous honorific name “father of the nation” (Zhongguo shibao 2007). Meanwhile, “world history” (taught in year two), less fraught with political sensitivities, combines chronology and issue-focus that allows for numerous connections between “national” and global developments through topics such as “The rise and spread of Buddhism” or “Thought and academia in the early modern period”.²²

On the junior high level, recent educational reforms have provided the opportunity for structural innovation, but in textbooks, this new liberty was rarely used – and here, political

considerations may have actually been rather secondary. Thus, the central “integrated grade 1-9 curriculum guidelines” (*junian yiguan kecheng gangyao*) officially in effect since 2003 do not define individual subjects, but seven “learning areas” (*xuexi lingyu*), among them “social studies”. They also largely refrain from defining mandatory content and are instead structured according to ten “basic skills” and their respective academic attainment indicators. Regarding history, they only specify that students should learn about aspects of Taiwanese, Chinese, and world history, for instance, on their social systems, economic activities, political changes, as well as their interrelations (GKS 2003: 22-23). The respective textbooks, on the other hand, appear strongly inspired by pre-existing models and accounts, both their structure and narrative content. Three out of four textbook versions basically keep to the concept of “concentric circles” separating Taiwanese, Chinese (de facto: mainland), and foreign history, and only one has opted for a topic-centred approach that groups together examples from various periods and world regions (albeit without really connecting them). Economic considerations may play a significant role here – history teachers appear to prefer familiar models of teaching (Chen 2003: 199), and “conservative” textbooks may correspondingly be more easily marketable.

Overall, Taiwanese history education may be said to have undergone a transition from one well-defined national history to a state of liminality. The old bi-partite framework (national vs. foreign history) has been replaced by a tri-partite one (Taiwan – China – the world), which de facto contains two “territorialized histories” which – through a linear narrative - tell the coming into being of two nation-states. There is an obvious need to discuss Taiwanese history in depth – it is the territorial entity the student’s live in; and in political terms, the current “nation” is decidedly imagined as Taiwanese. But why continue to teach Chinese history? It is indeed relevant for Taiwanese students, as it introduces them to the main sources of Taiwanese culture and, in modern history, to necessary background information on the ROC on the mainland, as well as to the development of the PRC (which for Taiwan is the most significant “other” – positive in economic, and negative in political/military terms). In the final analysis, however, it is kept due to current political sensitivities. The “Taiwanese”/“Chinese” stand-off on the national identity issue has effectively had a neutralizing effect – neither history may be designated as “national”, and overt leanings to either side are kept at bay. However, it also impedes the implementation of other frameworks, for instance a combination of Taiwanese, Asian and world history. Moreover, in spite of “openness to the world” having become a central tenet of the newly constructed Taiwanese self-image, the “global” aspect of history education is often overshadowed by the tug-of-war over “Chinese” and “Taiwanese” elements.

Conclusion

In both contexts, the framework of national history has mainly been challenged by integrated approaches, but nonetheless continue to dominate history education. In China, history education continues to be functionalized for nationalist aims – to create an unreservedly positive national self-image, primordial ties and/or (unconditional) dedication to an idealised national community. On Taiwan, it remains influential because two opposing “national” identities (and thus histories) have to be accommodated. Chinese history has been demoted, some of its narratives revised, and the concept of the “Chinese nation” undermined, but the cognitive and pedagogical premises on which they had been constructed linger on. As a result, textbooks – in both contexts – sometimes postulate the existence of a national character or conflate people, state, and territory when describing “national history”. Due to the separation between “national” and “foreign” history, they also often portray trans-national issues and developments as national ones and leave other (gender, class, etc.) perspectives unexplored.

The described tendencies in the Chinese and Taiwanese context invite a number of more general questions regarding history education which are not easy to answer. First, the most suitable structure of its presentation: Should it mainly proceed chronologically or, more analytically, by topics? Secondly, its pedagogical aims: Should it mainly convey a certain body of knowledge (as so far it has mainly been the case in East Asia), or provide training in historical skills and critical thinking (as done, for instance, in Germany)? While in the many controversies on history textbooks it is often assumed that they a) should convey the “historical truth” and b) are relevant for students’ historical consciousness, the realities of the information age have it that they are just one among many, possibly contending, sources of historical knowledge for Chinese and Taiwanese students. It may therefore, after all, not matter so much what exactly is taught and which framework is used to organize it, as to sensitize students that “our” (or “their”) story may after all – be told differently.

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- 1 This is a slightly revised version of a presentation given at an international symposium title “Constructing Regional Histories – From Historiography toward History Education in the Balkans and East Asia” in Tokyo in November 2007. My sincere thanks to Professor Shiba Nobuhiro and his colleagues for their invitation and hospitality. For a more in-depth discussion on this and related issues in the Chinese, Taiwanese, and Japanese context, see Schneider (2008).
 - 2 In her analysis of world history in Taiwanese history education, Hsiung (2004) differentiates between a broad-minded “humanist universalism” and a pragmatic/utilitarian “nationalism”.
 - 3 Alternatively termed “Chinese history” (*Zhongguo shi*) or “history of one’s own country” (*benguo shi*).
 - 4 On the establishment of narrative as the predominant mode of history writing in this period, and the Japanese influence in the creation of Chinese national history, see Wang (2006).
 - 5 For more information on the transformation on textbook reforms, see Chen (2002) for Taiwan and Jones (2008) for China.
 - 6 The National Institute for Translation and Compilation (Taiwan) and the People’s Education Press (China).
 - 7 For an overview of relevant characteristics and trends, see Jones (2005, 2008).
 - 8 The Han are China’s ethnic majority.
 - 9 This is not to say that many mass campaign did not contain a strong anti-Western or anti-Soviet thrust.
 - 10 Through the growing marketisation of the publishing industry and the spread of the internet, popular nationalism has found more ways to express itself. It shows synergies with state nationalism in some areas, but challenges the government’s nationalist credentials in others, for instance Sino-Japanese relations. Cf. for instance Deans (2005) and Hughes (2006).

- 11 They do, however, somewhat differently evaluate historical figures and events, and some display a less self-affirmative attitude and affirm the country's opening to the world more than others. This may in turn be linked to different visions of "China's" past, present, and future (Schneider 2005).
- 12 For the underlying debates in academic historiography, see Lei (2008).
- 13 The challenges to orthodox verdicts have led to a number of both public controversies on the "correct" evaluations of historical events and personalities – not only in textbooks, but also in TV series etc. In 2006, an article titled "Modernization and History Textbooks" by history professor Yuan Weishi (Yuan 2006) criticized Chinese history textbooks as ethnocentric and xenophobic, providing distorted accounts of historical events, and – perhaps most offending - went even so far as to put mainstream Chinese historical consciousness on a par with its Japanese counterpart as "lacking in deep consideration on its recent history". The article was one of the catalysts for the temporary closing of the weekly supplement *Bingdian*.
- 14 For modern political history, this includes topics such as "Imperialist invasion and resistance by the Chinese people" and "The political reconstruction of modern China and national unity".
- 15 For more information on post-1949, and particularly recent developments, see Liu et al. (2005) and Vickers (2007).
- 16 The KMT narrative actually displayed more overt signs of Han chauvinism than its mainland counterpart.
- 17 KMT anti-imperialism was less vociferous than its CCP-counterpart against Western, but more against the Russian empire.
- 18 On the many ramifications of this term, see Makeham/Hsiao (2005).
- 19 For an in-depth analysis of this controversy, cf. Corcuff (2005).
- 20 A particular point of concern was the portrayal of Taiwan's Japanese colonisation – considered as more "comprehensive" by proponents, and as "beautifying colonial rule" by opponents of the reform. For a corresponding analysis of the "Knowing Taiwan" history textbook and its successors, see Schneider (2005).
- 21 Four different textbooks based on this standard were published.
- 22 The respective textbooks have not been published yet, so it remains to be seen how textbook authors approach these topics.