

Historical Nihilism and Ideological Security in Textbooks: A Case Study of the Hong Kong Age Chronicle Edition of "New Exploration of Chinese History"

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Abstract: *The Hong Kong high school history textbook "New Exploration of Chinese History" presents the characteristics of historical nihilism in terms of historical views, historical themes and topics, and historical narrative discourse, which seriously endangers the formation of positive values among Hong Kong students, the enhancement of national political identity, and the spiritual drive for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. To ensure the ideological security of the country in Hong Kong, a correct historical perspective should guide the compilation of Hong Kong history textbooks, establish a communication and mutual learning mechanism for the compilation of Hong Kong and mainland history textbooks, and improve the legal protection system for ideological review of textbooks.*

Keywords: *textbooks, historical nihilism, new exploration of Chinese history, ideological security*

1. Introduction

The trend of historical nihilism is still prevalent in some Hong Kong textbooks, and exposing and criticizing the historical nihilism in textbooks is a serious political struggle to maintain the ideological security of the country in Hong Kong. The book "New Exploration of Chinese History" launched by Hong Kong Chronicles Publishing Company in 2017 is a textbook used by high school students in Hong Kong. The historical nihilism contained in its modern and contemporary Chinese history is not conducive to the cultivation of national identity among Hong Kong youth. It is necessary to expose the characterization and harm of its historical nihilism from the perspective of ideological security and propose corresponding teaching material governance paths.

2. The characterization of historical nihilism in "New Exploration of Chinese History"

What kind of historical perspective is upheld in history textbooks, and what kind of writing logic and narrative methods are used, reflecting how editors view modern Chinese history, which is related to how they view the social system and development path chosen by China today[1]. "New Exploration of Chinese History" has significant characteristics of traditional historical nihilism in its historical perspective, and presents soft nihilism in its historical theme, main storyline, and narrative style.

2.1 Idealist tendencies in historical views

Firstly, take abstract value concepts as the ontology of history. Since modern times, when there have been dramatic changes in Chinese society, this textbook often praises Western values such as democracy, freedom, and human rights as symbols of advanced civilization, and regards them as objects for China to learn from and emulate [2]. The textbook defends Britain's Opium War from Western values such as equality, freedom, and the rule of law, rather than analyzing Britain's aggression from historical facts. The textbook believes that during the New Culture Movement, Western concepts such as democracy, freedom, and ethnicity played an enlightening role in the thinking of Chinese intellectuals, and "complete Westernization" was the necessary path for the liberation of Chinese people's thinking. The historical fact that Marxism, as the guiding ideology of the New Democratic Revolution, has shifted the spirit of the Chinese people from passive to active is rarely mentioned in textbooks. In the process of initiating reform and opening up in China, the Western

liberal ideology has once again taken to the historical stage. The textbook refers to the act of some people posting big character posters on the Xidan Democratic Wall in Beijing in the spring of 1979 as the "Spring of Beijing", and it is stated between the lines that their stance is against the Four Cardinal Principles. Secondly, the historical epistemology that rejects class views. The textbook deviates from the perspective of class analysis and attempts to justify historical figures such as Chiang Kai shek and Wang Jingwei by using examples and viewpoints such as "circumstances forcing" and "justifiable circumstances" at the time, rather than analyzing their words, actions, and policies from the perspective of their big landlords and big bourgeoisie. Therefore, they can only observe their appearance but cannot recognize their essence. The textbook does not agree with the mainland's view of the CPC rather than the Kuomintang as the mainstay of the War of Resistance. It does not see the compromise and vacillation of the Kuomintang, which represents the interests of the big landlord and big bourgeoisie, because of its class nature. It does not see the fundamental reason why the Kuomintang cannot fully mobilize the people to fight against Japanese invaders and cannot put forward the correct line of the War of Resistance, so it cannot play the role of a mainstay. Once again, the historical methodology of fragmented narrative. In the history of the War of Resistance against Japan, the textbook only describes the positive battlefield deeds led by the Kuomintang after the Lugouqiao Incident, does not say a word about the anti Japanese activities led by the CPC in the northeast, and deliberately obliterates the fact that the CPC took the lead in raising the anti-Japanese flag. The textbooks have a strong influence on the front battlefield of the Kuomintang, and they have either covered all the deeds in the battlefield behind the enemy led by the CPC except for the Pingxingguan Campaign, or ignored them as a whole. The CPC's efforts to maintain the anti Japanese national united front have not been seen in historical data. In the special topic of socialist construction in New China, the textbook only describes the tortuous experiences in the early exploration of socialist construction (such as anti rightist expansion, the Great Leap Forward, etc.), completely missing the achievements of socialist construction made by the Chinese people during this historical period. In the narrative of the cultural revolution period, the achievements made in the field of science and technology and governance and rectification in China during this period are meaningless.

2.2 The concealment and guidance of historical narrative discourse

Firstly, the narrative language is not straightforward in its meaning, while the discourse clues imply its meaning. Textbooks often leave important content related to stance, nature, values, etc. blank, but they set up discourse clues to guide readers to spontaneously draw their desired conclusions about the "blank" parts, in order to deconstruct past historical conclusions without revealing any trace [3]. The historical fact that the Communist Party abandoned its past grievances and facilitated the second cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party to resist Japan is said to be that the Kuomintang "let go" of the Communist Party out of national righteousness. In the analysis of the reasons for the resurgence of the conflict between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party after the victory of the War of Resistance Against Japan, textbooks point out that the Chinese Communist Party refused to obey the Kuomintang's instructions to stay on standby and entered North China and other areas to surrender, leading to military conflicts between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party. In the analysis of the causes of the outbreak of the full-scale civil war, textbooks accuse the Communist Party of "unwilling to compromise for the national interest, disregarding the cost of the suffering of the Chinese people.". To sum up, although the textbook editor did not show his true position, following the discourse clues of "infiltration", "intervention", "letting go", "refusal to obey", "unwillingness", and "disregard", it is easy for readers to see his sinister intention to deconstruct the glorious image of the CPC. Secondly, the guiding nature of narrative methods. The textbook re evaluates history through forms such as "exploring themes" and "multidimensional thinking", and uses guiding language to suggest the position of the receiving subject on the previously concluded characters and events. In the "Exploration Theme" of "The Relationship between Lin Zexu's Anti Smoking Action and the Opium War", Data One states that Lin Zexu's external ideological knowledge is bound by the times and is inevitably erroneous; Materials 2 and 3 depict the British legal system with a strong modern legal awareness. The questions after the question guide students to refer to materials 2 and 3 that praise legal systems for analysis, and the results can be imagined. In the theme of exploring the advantages and disadvantages of Chiang Kai shek's policy of "stabilizing the domestic situation before resisting foreign aggression", the textbook guides students to evaluate based on the internal and external troubles of China in the 1930s. What Chiang Kai shek called "internal worry" was the development and growth of the CPC, which in essence implied that the student Chiang Kai shek's policy of settling down at home before resisting foreign aggression was reasonable. Wang Jingwei's so-called "curve saving strategy" was set as a "multidimensional thinking" topic in the textbook, and was guided by the perspective of

historian Yu Yingshi, stating that "Wang Jingwei's pursuit of peace is because he firmly believed that war would lead to the downfall of the country, and China's resistance against Japan would inevitably lead to the end of the downfall." Therefore, he believed that the earlier peace was sought, the better. If it reached a completely defeated state, Japan could only be allowed to dominate... This was not Wang's view, but represented the general understanding of the people at that time that peace or war was just a means of saving the nation and could be motivated by 'patriotism'. Since it is a multidimensional reflection on historical figures, the intention is to induce students to think on the opposite side of existing historical conclusions.

3. The harm of historical nihilism to the ideological security of the country in Hong Kong

The selectivity of textbook texts indicates what they "strengthen" and "weaken", and the standards and basis for knowledge selection reflect the ideological attributes of textbooks. The tendency of historical nihilism in "New Exploration of Chinese History" will inevitably dismember historical cognition, leading to confusion in student values; Negating the leadership of the Party and the socialist path to cater to the infiltration of Western hostile forces in Hong Kong's ideology will inevitably undermine the political identity of Hong Kong students towards the country; The disintegration of cultural confidence and national spirit seriously threatens the implementation of the country's sovereignty over education in Hong Kong.

1) It has a negative impact on the formation of a correct historical perspective among young students in Hong Kong. The dissemination of historical nihilism in Hong Kong will inevitably have a serious impact on patriotic and Hong Kong education, compressing the social foundation of patriotic and Hong Kong education, and providing a soil for the breeding and proliferation of colonial and local historical views in Hong Kong. Shortly after the anti revisionist controversy subsided, there were incidents in Hong Kong schools spreading the erroneous view of historical nihilism. On April 28, 2020, a parent in Hong Kong accompanied their child to watch a video of a second grade elementary school common sense lesson. When analyzing the reasons for the outbreak of the Opium War, the teacher openly stated that "the British discovered that many people in China were smoking opium at that time, and launched a war to eliminate this opium." The educators of history education in Hong Kong are still spreading the view of historical nihilism, indicating that the trend of historical nihilism has not been completely eradicated in Hong Kong, and it is difficult for young students in Hong Kong to form a correct view of history.

2) Causing damage to the national political identity of young students in Hong Kong. The trend of historical nihilism has clear political demands. The various social movements after Hong Kong's return are a realistic projection of the political stance of some Hong Kong people. The demand of the "Anti National Education Movement" is to fear that Hong Kong students will be "brainwashed", and the "Illegal Occupy China Incident" directly points to the method of selecting the Chief Executive and Legislative Council members of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, which is essentially a boycott of the exercise of governance power by the central government. In the "anti amendment controversy", Hong Kong society opposes the transfer of fugitives between Hong Kong and the mainland, but does not oppose the transfer of fugitives between Hong Kong and other countries and regions, reflecting that some people in Hong Kong society do not trust the political and legal system of state entities. The repeated involvement of Hong Kong young students in various social movements is enough to confirm the destructive impact of historical nihilism on the formation of their national political identity.

3) Posing a serious threat to the implementation of the country's sovereignty over education in Hong Kong. Hong Kong young students are in a period of "jointing and sprouting", and their views on history, country, ethnicity, and values have strong plasticity, making them a key group of ideological infiltration by hostile forces. The historical nihilism trend spread in textbooks blurs the historical theme and main line, and neglects the leadership, reliance, and path selection issues of the two historical periods of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, "standing up" and "coming to prosperity and strength". This will inevitably have a negative impact on the ongoing "strengthening" process of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. If the younger generation in Hong Kong does not agree with the leadership of the Party and the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, Hong Kong education cannot cultivate a new generation of people who walk in the same direction as the motherland. The dissemination of historical nihilism is related to the fundamental issue of "what kind of people to cultivate, how to cultivate them, and for whom to cultivate them" in Hong Kong education, and whether the national education sovereignty can be implemented in Hong Kong.

4. The approach to rectifying historical nihilism in Hong Kong textbooks and maintaining ideological security

The compilation of history textbooks is related to the interests of national ideological security. It is necessary to adapt to the needs of Hong Kong in the new era of "patriots governing Hong Kong" and strengthen the governance of textbooks from the perspective of ideological security.

4.1 We should guide the compilation of Hong Kong history textbooks with the correct historical perspective

On November 12, 2019, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the "Outline for the Implementation of Patriotic Education in the New Era" (hereinafter referred to as the "Outline"), which pointed out that we should combine the great leap of the Chinese nation from standing up, getting rich to becoming strong, guide people to deeply understand where our country and people come from and where they go, and firmly oppose historical nihilism. This clarifies what kind of historical perspective and methodology should be followed for the writing of history textbooks, and clarifies the historical mainline and theme of modern Chinese history.

Long term colonial education has caused endless harm to Hong Kong's history education. The compilation of Hong Kong history textbooks has always been influenced by three historical views: colonial, local, and patriotic. The former two are often intertwined, giving rise to the emergence of historical nihilism in Hong Kong's history education. To cultivate a new generation of patriotism and love for Hong Kong, history textbooks are the carriers of patriotic education in Hong Kong, and should be compiled under the guidance of the historical concept of patriotism and love for Hong Kong. To this end, the Hong Kong Education Bureau should revise the "Guidelines for the Compilation of Printed Textbooks on Chinese History in Junior High Schools" and "Guidelines for the Compilation of Printed Textbooks on Chinese History in Senior High Schools", incorporating requirements for a historical perspective, abandoning colonial and local historical perspectives, and consciously using the Chinese national historical perspective to write Hong Kong history, emphasizing the correct value orientation: (1) Hong Kong history is a part of national and ethnic history, To incorporate Hong Kong's history into the narrative of national history and the development history of the Chinese nation, it is necessary to write Hong Kong's history from the perspective of the country and the nation. (2) According to the requirements of the Outline, patriotic education must unify national identity, cultural identity, ethnic identity, and political identity. In terms of political position and value guidance, Hong Kong history textbooks should reflect the narrative logic that the CPC has always stood on the right side of history and always represents historical justice in different historical periods, and should not question the positive role played by the CPC in history with one-sided historical materials and distorted views. (3) Oppose the narrative of historical nihilism. To make a correct evaluation of historical figures and events from the perspective of the overall interests of the country and the Chinese nation, we cannot portray the reality of historical nihilism through academic exploration.

4.2 We need to strengthen the communication and interaction between the editors and reviewers of history textbooks in Hong Kong and Chinese mainland

In order to align the editing and review team of Hong Kong history textbooks with national needs in terms of historical views and values, and to strengthen the exchange of experts and scholars in the history discipline between Hong Kong and mainland schools. At the national level, policies have been introduced to support and promote high-quality basic education resources from the mainland to host mainland curriculum schools in Hong Kong, consolidate the education exchange platform between the mainland and Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, and improve the management of student training in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. In addition, under the framework of integrated education development in the Guangdong Hong Kong Macao Greater Bay Area, schools in Guangdong and Hong Kong can fully utilize the mechanism of establishing sister schools to conduct academic discussions and work exchanges in history teaching, history textbook writing, and other aspects. In terms of organizational work, the Hong Kong Education Bureau and the Guangdong Provincial Department of Education can jointly lead the construction of a platform and regularly organize relevant experts to participate in exchanges and cooperation between sister schools in Guangdong and Hong Kong. Through communication and learning, history textbook editing experts from Hong Kong should understand the main viewpoints of historical nihilism, the erroneous positions of historical nihilism in ontology, epistemology, and methodology, and its new manifestations, especially the characteristics of

soft historical nihilism. On this basis, the value standpoint that history textbooks should follow can be clarified, and the influence of colonial and local historical views can be eliminated.

4.3 We need to improve the ideological security review mechanism for history textbooks

Firstly, it is necessary to strengthen the top-level design of ideological review in textbooks. The work of teaching materials in Hong Kong involves stages such as writing, review, publication, and selection. The Education Bureau is responsible for formulating guidelines for textbook writing, and publishers organize experts to write according to the guidelines. The manuscript is reviewed by the evaluation experts organized by the Education Bureau, and the approved textbooks are listed as applicable books before they can be published. Schools organize subject teachers to select textbooks, and parents purchase them themselves. The ideological review of textbooks is of great significance. The SAR government should strengthen top-level design, overcome the shortcomings of fragmented textbook governance, establish a specialized organization responsible for textbook work, and coordinate the review of ideological security in all aspects of textbooks. Secondly, establish detailed rules for the ideological review of textbooks, and strengthen the pertinence and operability of the review work. The phenomenon of prioritizing guidelines over detailed rules in Hong Kong's textbook work often leads to difficulty in deepening ideological review work. The Hong Kong Education Bureau should establish detailed review rules, specifying who will review, what will be reviewed, and how. "What to review" should refine the review content of history textbooks, such as the value stance of evaluating historical figures and events; There should be specific principles for "how to review". The textbook should not only require the macro principles of cultivating students' national identity and establishing positive values in the compilation guidelines, but also clearly specify the specific requirements of these principles, such as whether to support the leadership of the CPC, whether to respect the socialist system implemented in the Chinese mainland, etc. as the criteria to measure whether there is a historical nihilism trend. Once again, we will improve the system of ideological review and legal protection for textbooks. The guarantee of the rule of law is to solve the problem of what to rely on for review. At present, the Hong Kong National Security Law, as a specialized law for maintaining national security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, targets four types of crimes: "crime of splitting the country," "crime of subverting state power," "crime of terrorist activities," and "crime of colluding with foreign or foreign forces to endanger national security." However, it does not involve ideological security review in education. Therefore, the SAR government should strengthen ideological security legislation and provide legal protection for the review of ideological security in textbooks. The Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China is the basic legal basis for ideological review of textbooks. Although this law is not among the national laws implemented in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, there is no distinction between the two systems in maintaining ideological security in Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, only the responsibility of one country. Hong Kong can combine its own reality, draw on the provisions of the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China and its provisions on the ideological security of textbooks, and accelerate the legislative work of reviewing the ideological security of textbooks.

5. Conclusion

Ideological work is the work of standing at the heart of the country and forging the soul of the nation, which is related to the flag, the road, and national political security. The representation of historical nihilism presented in "New Exploration of Chinese History" is not conducive to the formation of correct historical, national, and ethnic views among Hong Kong youth students, thereby creating obstacles to the enhancement of Hong Kong students' national identity, and constituting a realistic and potential destructive factor for the stable and far-reaching implementation of Hong Kong's "One Country, Two Systems" practice in the new era. The compilation of Hong Kong history textbooks should be based on the maintenance of national ideological security, combining the high degree of autonomy in Hong Kong education with the comprehensive governance of Hong Kong education by the central government. Further modifications and improvements should be made to the guidelines for the compilation of history textbooks in the basic education stage, strengthening communication and exchange between Hong Kong and local history teachers and textbook compilers, and using the rule of law to regulate and guide Hong Kong textbooks, To develop towards cultivating a new era of Hong Kong young students who love their country and Hong Kong.

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