

Introducing Ancient Asia to the Classroom: a case study of Spring County high schools in the U.S.

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Key words(중심용어) : 서구 식민 정책 (Western Colonialism), 시간적 타자 (The Temporal Other), 아시아 고대 역사 (Ancient Asian History), 미국 교육 (U.S. Education), 탈식민주의 (Postcolonialism)

국 문 요 약

서구는 동양을 변화하지 않는 과거 속에 존재하는 대상으로 인식하여 왔다. 이와 같은 인식은 근대사회로서의 서구와 고대사회로서의 동양이라는 이분법적인 시각을 형성시켰다. 이 이분법적 시각은 서구의 식민 침략을 정당화 시켜주는 이념적 틀로 작용되어 왔다. 본 연구는 이와 같은 선입견이 현재 서구사회에서도 여전히 존재하고 있는지에 대해서 분석한다. 저자는 미국 사회의 교사들이 동양의 역사 특히 고대시기로 지정된 주 후 500년까지의 세계사 교육과정을 분석한다. 미국 중서부 지역인 스프링 카운티 지역의 9개 고등학교에서 13명의 역사 교사들이 설문조사와 개별면접으로 이루어진 조사에 참여하였다. 이론적 배경으로 탈 식민주의가 논의되었다. 탈 식민주의 학자들은 서구인이 동양사회에 적응하는 왜곡된 시간 개념을 적용함으로써 동양을 지배 받아야 할 타자(the Other)로 정의함으로써 자신들의 지배적 권위를 정당화하였다고 주장한다. 저자는 이와 같은 서구인의 식민주의적 시각이 미국교사의 수업시간에서 어떤 형태로 재구성되는지 연구결과를 통해 논의하였다.

I. Introduction

The idea of Asia, or the Orient, has been embedded in Western discourses since information on Asia was mobilized with the European colonial expansion. The West, at the peak period of colonialism, fully appreciated the necessity of constructing knowledge of Asia in order to understand itself (Said, 1978). The West practiced its power to produce new discourses and new kinds of knowledge of Asia. The focus of its attention was on the ancient aspect of Asia including ancient artifact of modern Asia. Many scholars, called Orientalists, made efforts to discover the cultures and languages of ancient Asia (Schwab, 1984). The ancient and traditional view of Asia was also perpetuated among non-academic writers. Travel writers offered the Western audience their stories of encountering ancient elements during their stay in Asia (Kamps and Singh, 2001). The West's discourses, either academic or personal, contribute to creating an imaginary time gap between the West and Asia. In such a teleological construction, the West is depicted as dynamic and progressive, which is in contrast to stagnant and backward Asia.

At this point, I raise another issue regarding the notion of Asia which was constructed by Westerners from the eighteenth century. I shift my focus to the current Western world for the West's knowledge of Asia. Formal education is one of the channels through which information about Asia is imbibed. It is easy to imagine that teachers teach certain knowledge of Asia in classrooms and students understand Asia in a certain way. This ordinary pattern of classroom learning draws my attention to the question of how teachers deal with the knowledge of Asia; whether they acknowledge the problematic nature of Western discourses on Asia? Whether stereotypes of Asian history have been challenged or whether they continue to structure the way in which the West understands Asia?

My research aims to emphasize and answer the above questions. I trace out important links between the knowledge produced alongside the West's colonial expansion and the knowledge circulated in the current Western world. For the research aim, I examine the history courses of U.S. education. The U.S. has always been sustained by the notion of Western/white power as a means to justify and exert its cultural domination over Asia (Kim and Chung, 2005). Thus, to dissect Asia in the school curriculum of the U.S. provides an insight into how certain parts of Asia are filtered through the Western perspective to render official knowledge in Western discourses.

For the theoretical framework, I review the works of postcolonial scholars who unpack a particular set of ideas and practices intersecting with the hegemonic construction of the past. Such postcolonial scholars as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Renato Rosaldo, and Richard King provide a theoretical backbone for my research. Representing the Asian region as ancient,

eternal, and timeless, the West creates an imaginary time gap between itself and Asia, which does not exist in the actual world. Said (1978) argues that the imaginary time gap is part of the European colonial strategy. He states that the modern image of the West is complemented by the backwardness of the Orient. Bhabha (1991) stresses the consciousness of spatial and temporal otherness which the West formulates in encountering the Orient. Rosaldo (1993) explains the notion of “imperial nostalgia” beneath the desire for the glorious past of Asia. King (1999) highlights the problematic nature of recognizing the Asian religions.

Using the ideas of the post-colonialists, I examine the curriculum for Asian ancient history which is currently implemented in U.S. education. My research involves a detailed examination of the process by which American teachers select, organize, and teach about ancient Asia. I collected the data of what teachers teach as part of world history and how they instruct their students in the ancient Asian section of their course. The data on the curriculum was collected through a questionnaire accompanied by a follow-up interview. The research target was Spring County, a Midwestern district in the U.S. Thirteen world history teachers from nine local high schools participated in both the questionnaire survey and the follow-up interview. This is a representative size of Spring County, particularly considering that there are fifteen high schools in the district and at least one or two teachers from these schools sent their results back. The results of this case study cannot be generalized over the whole country of the U.S. However, the results provide insights into ways in which students perceive ancient Asia in many American high schools.

In the Result section, I compare the collected data with the West’s typical narratives on Asia. In this process, I continually ask the question of whether the participating teachers challenge the existing framework in which Asia is represented in the history curriculum. This research work provides a better understanding of the nature of ancient Asian history which is taught in the classroom. In the final section, I discuss how teachers can go beyond reproducing the Western discourses on Asia.

II. Literature review

Postcolonial research draws attention to the knowledge that the West has produced about the Orient. At the heart of much postcolonial literature is a strong critique of the ongoing existence of a binary opposition between the West and the Orient. The post-colonialists below pay particular attention to the fact that Asia is represented as the existence fixed in the past.

Edward Said laid much of the foundation of Orientalist studies with his 1978 book *Orientalism*. He highlights the political aspects of the inherent linkage between Asia and the ancient Orient. According to Said, Western intellectuals invented a doctrinal ideology during the period of nineteenth century colonialism that constructed the West as modern and civilized and the Orient as pre-modern and primitive. When Westerners assume the Orient belongs to the past, what they consciously or unconsciously look for are signs of their own progress. Looking back to the ancient Orient, Westerners come to see how far the West has progressed with great rapidity. Said says that the distance between the past and the modern suggests a unit by which the progress of Europe could be measured. From the Western view, the Orient has been an imaginary standard against which Europe's progress and modernization could be assessed.

Homi Bhabha also provides an important critique on the two distinct temporal frames created by the West and how the time frames serve the colonial interests. He directs our attention to what happens in-between cultures. According to Bhabha (1991), cultures interact through what he calls *liminality* which is derived from the word 'limen' meaning threshold. Bhabha explains that *liminality* is both spatial and temporal. People living in different spaces are living at different stages of progress. They exist in different geographical zones as well as temporal states. The Orient, which is located far away from the West, is supposed to be situated in a separate temporal frame which is also far from the modern time of the West (Lewis, 2004). Bhabha explains that the European colonizers locate the native culture of the colonized at the early stage of human progress: "the colonial space is the *terra incognita* or the *terra nulla*, the empty or wasted land whose history has to be begun, whose archives must be filled out; whose future progress must be secured" (Bhabha, 1991, 205). In portraying native culture as "the empty or wasted" area, the colonizer participates in the ongoing construction of Orientalist doctrines which depict the colonized as the narcissistic inverted Other that satisfies the self-fulfilling prophecy of Western progress.

Renato Rosaldo, in his 1993 *Culture and truth*, notes the psychological function of the West's longing for a time in which the Orient was great and admired for its highly developed civilizations. Encountering the Oriental world, Westerners search for the earliest culture still visible in the present-day. They then become sentimental, feeling guilty for witnessing the present status of the Orient, which fails to proudly sustain its ancient greatness and traditions. Their attitude implies two types of Orient: a historically distant, dead Orient and a contemporaneous, living one. The former is the glorious stage of an Oriental culture. The latter is an exhausted present with no future. The two competing visions of the Orient make the West feel "imperial nostalgia" and the responsibility to revitalize the Orient (Rosaldo, 1993). Rosaldo considers "nostalgia" as an efficient means by

which colonizers negotiate their dominance: “Imperialist nostalgia occurs alongside a peculiar sense of mission, the white man’s burden, where civilized nations stand duty-bound to uplift so-called savage ones” (Rosaldo, 1993, 70). The Orient evokes two complementary images: on the one hand, the Orient deserves praise and admiration as the past, but on the other hand, it needs protection and assistance from the West, which is much further progressed in human history. The more the Orient is glorified, the more it deviates from the universal path of human progress. In the midst of this imaginary gap, the West captures the sentimental moment for the glorious past of the Orient and legitimates its dominance as a way of revitalizing the Orient.

Richard King (1999) highlights another psychological aspect of a yearning for the ancient Orient. In his *Orientalism and Religion*, he shows the parallel oppositions of society/individual, science/religion, institutional religion/personal religion or mysticism, and secular/sacred (King, 1999, 13). Based on these dichotomies, the West sees itself as socially oriented and scientifically minded. By contrast, the Orient is conceived of as mystical and spiritual. The scientific West/spiritual Orient dichotomy is used in two different modes which are actually part of the same Western thought, Orientalism. Dramatizing the difference between the West and the Orient has involved a fascination toward spiritual Asia. Notions such as mysticism and spirituality have often led to an image of Asia as a spiritual utopia. However, at the same time, the ancient religions are categorized under the generic rubric of “primal,” “tribal,” “indigenous,” or “preliterate” religions (Masuzawa, 2005). These popularized images fall under the categories constructed to subordinate the East to the West. They also contribute to reclaiming the universalist destiny of Western modernity. The competing visions of the Orient coexist in the Western discourses on the Asian religions, the haven of mystical wisdom and the backward land of primitives (Diem and Lewis, 1992). In this way, the West shows a dual practice of compassion and condescension for Asia, assigning to itself a flexible positional superiority in relationships with the Orient.

The above postcolonial scholars argue that Asia, as the Orient, occupies a temporal Otherness which is signified most easily by the sense of static space. Their arguments help us to see that the West’s time sense legitimates a vocabulary, a representative discourse peculiar to the understanding of Asia that becomes the way in which Asia is known (Ahluwalia and Ashcroft, 2001). Asia exists in a space outside time and remains stuck in primitive behaviors that modern Western societies left behind. Rendering Asia as the ancient helps the Western mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away. Even if ancient Asia is presented as the object of fascination and desire, it does not totally dissipate the imaginative, quasi-fictional quality one senses lurking in a time very different and distant from “our”

own (Said, 1978). The quest for ancient Asia in Western discourses, even with a good intention, produces the systematic consciousness of putting Asia back in history and serves as an efficient means for the West's dominance.

I have discussed the theoretical framework for the ways in which the Orient is considered to exist in a separate temporal frame. This framework helps me to confront the question of how Asia as a temporal otherness is constructed in the U.S., a country which is always sustained by the notion of Asia as the Orient. It provides many insightful suggestions into such questions as what the stereotypes of ancient Asia are, and how they possibly change in their flexibility and structure the conventional narratives on ancient Asia? Under this framework, I continue to explain the research methodology for examining the ancient Asian history section of the history courses of U.S. education. In the following, I introduce how I assess the current teaching of ancient Asian history taught in American schools.

III. Method

1. Procedures and Materials

To examine the teaching of ancient Asian history, I proceeded with two tasks which correspond to each other: measuring what teachers select for Asia in the ancient period and asking whether the history curriculum of U.S. education is transformed to challenge the stereotypes of ancient Asia. For the former, a designed questionnaire asking about the teaching time and method for different content topics of the history curriculum was used. For the latter, follow-up interviews with the teachers who finished the questionnaire were conducted.

As mentioned before, I try to trace the linkage between the West's stereotypes and the Asian section of the history curriculum taught in current American schools. To this aim, I employed a questionnaire which asks for the content topics and for the amount of time spent on ancient history of Asia. Asia in the questionnaire is geographically specified into four regions: Central, South, Southeast, and East Asia. Defining the 'ancient time' is guided by the curriculum standards which are commonly accepted in U.S. education. The National Standards for History categorizes world history teaching units into four groups: ancient, medieval, early modern and modern world history. The ancient world history section falls into the period before the medieval history, which roughly starts from 500 AD. Thus, the questionnaire in my research is designed to specify the time period and the region like the following figure.

		<i>Historical Eras</i>		<i>Expectations for Students in History</i>				
<none>	1	Preshitory-600 BC		Recall	Demonstrate / Explain	Analyze/ Investigate	Evaluate	Generate / Create
0123	101a	Central Asia		0123	0123	0123	0123	0123
0123	101b	South Asia		0123	0123	0123	0123	0123
0123	101c	Southeast Asia		0123	0123	0123	0123	0123
0123	101d	East Asia		0123	0123	0123	0123	0123
<none>	2	601 BC- 500 AD		Recall	Demonstrate / Explain	Analyze/ Investigate	Evaluate	Generate / Create
0123	201a	Central Asia		0123	0123	0123	0123	0123
0123	201b	South Asia		0123	0123	0123	0123	0123
0123	201c	Southeast Asia		0123	0123	0123	0123	0123
0123	201d	East Asia		0123	0123	0123	0123	0123

<Figure 1> Teacher Survey for Ancient Asian History¹⁾

The time periods and the geographic divisions of Figure 1 are displayed in a vertical manner in the questionnaire. Teachers’ expectations are viewed in a horizontal direction. These are Recall, Demonstrate, Analyze, Evaluate, and Generate. These are a continuum of teaching methods from direct to indirect. Direct teaching is a form of instruction in which the teacher provides explicit, clear, and “spelled-out” content (Tomlinson, 2005). Recall is considered the most direct format of teaching and Generate is the most indirect format. Thus, such direct teaching as Recall or Demonstrate is more often used for factual-level information.

The results of the questionnaire are displayed in two graphs. In the graphic results, the teaching time on the Asian region is viewed in vertical and teachers’ expectations in horizontal. I refer to the graphic results as the Content Map in the rest of the research. I provide the results with Figures 2 and 3 which will be covered in the Result section. The results were also used in the conversation with the participants. Their opinions on these results are summarized and discussed in the Result.

2. Participants

For the research site, I have chosen Spring County, a medium-sized district in a Midwestern state of the U.S. It is a typical Midwestern district in terms of its racial and socio- economic diversity. Thirteen teachers from nine local high schools participated in

1) The format of the questionnaire is adopted from the one which has been developed by the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum (SEC). For more information, visit the website at <http://seconline.wceruw.org>

both the questionnaire survey and the follow-up interview. I list all the participant teachers with their information in the following table.

<Table 1> List of the Survey Participants

Teacher	School	Gender	Race
Garry	Lincoln	male	White/Hispanic
Peter	Lincoln	male	White/Hispanic
Nancy	Stonewall	female	White
Jane	Stonewall	female	White
Katy	Washington	female	White
Betty	Kennedy	female	White
Stephen	Roosevelt	male	White
Miller *	Roosevelt	male	White
Bob	Franklin	male	White
Ritter *	Franklin	male	White
Susan	Middletown	female	White
Leah	East	female	White
Scott *	West	male	White

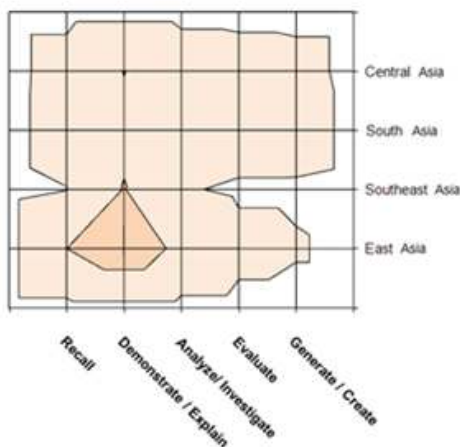
The survey has been practiced for two years, 2006 through 2007. The questionnaire which is displayed in Figure 1 was carried out in the year of 2006. Follow-up interviews were conducted in 2007. Three of the thirteen teachers were not contacted for the follow-up interview. They are marked with an asterisk in the table. After completing the questionnaire survey, some of them moved to other states and the others were not available for scheduling interviews. All of the participating teachers are in charge of a world history course in which American high school students are required to enroll. Thus, the characteristics of the research site and the participants are suitable for the analysis in which I argue whether American teachers consciously challenge the notion of Western knowledge of Asia.

In the following section, each content map is displayed with teachers' opinions and comments on it. The Content Maps would provide a systematic way of examining what is taught under the category of ancient Asian history in the regular classroom settings. The follow-up interview results show teachers' own approach to particular topics which have been captured in the Content Map results. Examining the data collected in the two formats, I discuss the nature of teaching Asian history.

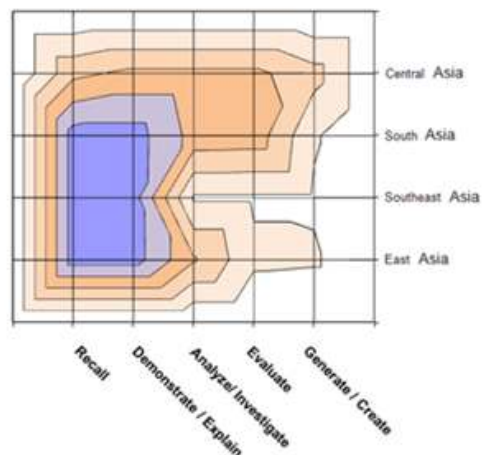
IV. Results

The following two Content Maps aim to provide summary information on the four Asian regions. Figure 2 covers the time period of prehistory through 600 BCE and Figure 3 deals with that of 601 BCE through 500 AD. It is important to see the degree of brightness in which each region is displayed. The darker the shadings, the more emphasized the region and time period are in the teachers' curriculum.

The Asian sub-regions are displayed in vertical (Y axis) and teaching practices are listed in horizontal (X axis). East and Southeast Asia in Figure 2 are painted in darker shades around Demonstrate than Central and South Asia. South, Southeast, and East Asia in Figure 3 are captured with much darker shades than the Asian regions than Figure 2. I will explain these Content Map results regarding the amount of teaching time and teaching practices in the following.



<Figure 3> Prehistory-600 BCE



<Figure 4> 601 BCE-500 AD

Figure 2 shows that the Spring County teachers give a similar amount of time to each Asian sub-region, except for Southeast and East Asia, which are allotted more teaching time with Demonstrate. Figure 3 displays that the teachers emphasize South, Southeast, and East Asia more than Central Asia. The teaching time for the three Asian regions is skewed to Recall and Demonstrate. As mentioned earlier in the Method section, such teaching practices as Recall and Demonstrate are supposed to have students memorize factual-level information with accuracy and speed (Tomlinson, 2005). Emphasizing Recall and Demonstrate for Asia implies that the students are expected to accept what they learn as factual-level

information. It also means that the teachers provide their students with fewer opportunities for questioning and expressing divergent and alternative views.

During the follow-up interview, the teachers whose questionnaire results had been included in the above figures provided detailed information on teaching topics. For Central Asia in Figures 2 and 3, the teachers listed the early history of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. For South Asia, they listed India's ancient civilization. Southeast Asia was related more with a specific racial group, Hmong people who have settled in the U.S. due to their cooperation with the U.S. military during the Vietnam War. For East Asia in Figure 2, teachers mentioned about Chinese ancient civilization. East Asia in Figure 3 included Japan's creation myth. These topics which I collected in the conversation with the Spring County teachers are grouped into two categories: ancient civilization and religion. I will examine the interview results by the two topics.

1. Ancient civilization

Many teachers mentioned that they cover the ancient civilizations. They are concerned little space for ancient Asian history as well as students' lack of information on ancient Asia. There are many reasons for little information on Asia in the history curriculum. First, ancient history is not expected to be taught at the high school level. Regarding this issue, Betty explains, "[Prehistory-600 BCE] was not even taught in my high school. I mean that they are expecting kids to learn about this at middle school." Another reason is students' lack of knowledge of Asia. Stephen points out, "They don't think about China as being one of the first ancient civilizations." Other teachers like Nancy and Katy also mentioned pupils' unawareness of "ancient advancements" of non-Western countries.

Teachers who feel the necessity of teaching more about Asia have developed a strategy to cover all the various civilizations by assigning a research project on the civilizations. Betty at Kennedy High School is one of those who count on the project for covering the earliest history of Asia:

We created a book which focuses on ancient or river civilizations. We start from 2000 (BCE) and end up around 500 AD. It depends on which civilizations we pack. We created a book that shows what did the civilizations accomplish? What are they known for? [Students] become experts in their particular civilization. We look at Japan. We look at China. We look at India.

Betty develops her history curriculum within the context of cultural diversity. She has students choose a certain civilization, research, and make a "portfolio." She seems to assume

that the methodology contributes to students' sophisticated learning.

Jane at Stonewall High School also teaches her history class in the "cross cultural" context. She says she tries to cover all the civilizations by looking at their elements of civilization including "geography," "music and dance," and "lifestyle." She mentions:

What I can do is sampling all over [ancient civilizations]. We do some stuff of Egypt, a few things with Chinese [civilization], just sampling of early civilizations. But more focus is on the Indus river valley and Mesopotamia.

Jane explains that she tries to show common threads among most ancient civilizations. In teaching the ancient time unit, she says that she does not teach "*history*". She emphasizes that her class particularly for the ancient time is thematic and cultural.

Not all of the participating teachers list the cultural aspects for the curriculum content topics. Betty highlights the social aspect of the earliest history. She mentions:

We are looking at how China created gunpowder and the compass, all the technical advancements. That would be one type of modernization and then we look at the current in the 1970s, Deng Xiaoping and the modernization policies that he had and foreign policies. It depends on how we define modernization.

Under the theme of modernization, Betty combines the inventions of ancient China with Deng Xiaoping's modernization policies. The time gap between the two topics is noteworthy. Asked whether China is emphasized with ancient advances, she answered "very much so."

As reviewed, Spring County teachers tend to teach the ancient history with commitment to multicultural diversity. They try to cover all the major ancient civilizations. The group project is an efficient methodology for covering all the civilizations. Students are split into a group which is assigned a specific civilization. Once a teacher has students demonstrate their project, all the civilizations are dealt with in the history class. This pattern of teaching corresponds to the map result of Figure 2. Figure 2 shows even coverage for each Asian region except for East and South Asia. With the multicultural agenda, teachers try to give a balanced coverage among all the regions. The reason for darker shadings on East Asia is that teachers select Chinese civilization for the class.

Figure 2 also displays darker color on Southeast Asia. Regarding this, I have learned that teachers reflect the presence of Hmong students in their class. Garry and Peter at Lincoln High school mention about the high percentage of Hmong students whose ancestors used to live in Southeast Asia. Regarding the question of what they teach for Southeast Asia, both of them say that they focus on family genealogies. Garry assigns family history projects. Peter also emphasizes family history:

Students have more interest in how they got here. As far as ancient history, they only have a sense of genealogy from Laos, from Vietnam. That's enough for them. Most of

them are assimilating into the mainstream American culture.

Despite their commitment to Hmong students, their teaching strategy for Southeast Asia seems to be problematic in that the history of Southeast Asia is limited to the private sector. Betty even mentions, “There is not a lot of history on [Southeast Asian countries].” Their assumption implies that while Southeast Asia may have civilizations and culture, it does not really possess “history in the sense of a dynamic, self-generated transformation force” (Lewis and Wigen, 1997, 110). Representing Southeast Asian history in this way reinforces the Westerners’ worldview which assumes the West as the sole driving force for progressive historical change in the world.

2. Religion

The topic of religion is taught by most of the participating teachers. Alongside ancient civilization, all the teachers mention about “world religions.” Betty provides a good summary of the teaching pattern for civilization and religions:

We do the civilizations and then we do religions. So I look at Buddhism, Hinduism. So we are looking at China again. We are looking at Zen Buddhism in Japan. The first part of the year, we are looking at the ancient civilizations. And then because of the state standards, we teach the world religions then we spend almost a month and a half in focusing on the religions. So we start to look at Hinduism and look at the origins of Buddhism.

As seen in the quote, world religion is characterized as connected to major world regions. For example, teachers’ teaching Buddhism leads to the re-coverage of such regions as China and Japan. Like ancient civilization, teachers also deal with the topic of religion with a multicultural approach and adopt a group project method. Bob at Franklin High School says that he has students choose one of the religions. Asked about his teaching focus, he answers that he would view religion spiritually. He mentions he encourages the research project and uses it as an assessment method as well:

Students have to research and find out some major anthropological questions for these regions. One major type of the questions is the function of spirituality. It gets into very early religion. Assessment is this research project [for prehistory through 600 BCE].

When asked whether the social and political effects of religion are added in this project activity, he commented his class is more spiritual. Spirituality is also mentioned by other teachers including Susan at Middletown High School. According to Susan, there is a

spirituality unit at the end of each semester. Like Bob, she also assigns each religion to a group of students for exploring spiritual ceremonies and rituals.

Through the interview, I have learned that there is a unique reason for emphasizing religion, especially Buddhism. Due to the global popularity of the Dalai Lama, Tibet is a well known Central Asian region to the teachers of Spring County. There is another factor in the popularity of the religious topic. Spring County has a Tibetan Buddhist Center in the city of Elm Tree. Many teachers say that they take students to the center for field trips.

Nancy at Stonewall High School is one of those who have organized field trips to the center. She explains how she uses this religious site in explaining essential foundations of practice, including tantric practice:

I teach about religions. I spend more than what is in the text. We go on field trips including to the Buddhist Temple in Elm Tree. When the Dalai [Lama] visits, that is where he stays. When I talked about Tibetan Buddhism and mentioned about tantric practice, one of my students said, "Oh no, we do not do that. That is only for people who are very advanced in forms of meditation. " So I have changed what I used to teach about Buddhism.

Nancy says that since the student pointed out about the misunderstanding of tantric practice, she has changed the relevant part of Buddhism. Besides Nancy, Jane and Betty say that they take their class on field trips to the center and talk with the monks about the religious tradition.

I have reviewed Spring County teachers' interview results as well as their questionnaire results. For the ancient time period before 500 A.D., the participating teachers list ancient civilizations and religions. The two topics are not separated. Most teachers teach religion as part of the broad category of ancient civilization, or right after teaching about the civilization. In the following, I will provide a detailed discussion of what I have found with the interview regarding the following questions: what the teachers teach for ancient Asia, how they deal with the Asian section, and whether they are critically aware of the Western discourses on Asia. Such content topics as civilization and religion need to be examined with the theoretical framework which I have introduced with the opinions of the post-colonialists.

V. Discussion

It is clear that Spring County teachers spend most time for Asian history in teaching ancient civilization and religion. Such topics are easily overlapped with the traditional Western narrative which systemically represents Asia as an ancient entity. Before we reach

the easy conclusion that teachers simply reiterate a Western view on Asia, it is necessary to note that they are critically aware of Eurocentrism in the history curriculum. As mentioned before in the previous section, many teachers are concerned that students do not have much knowledge of Asia. Bob even says that he tries to “de-emphasize” the European part. It is true that teachers make conscious efforts to challenge the Europe-centered curriculum. They try to include non-Western history as much as possible into their curriculum. This is why they use a group project or portfolio method and take the class on field trips to the religious site. However, their effort does not succeed in deconstructing the Western thought which produces the imaginary temporal gap between the West and Asia. I argue further why the teachers fail to challenge the West’s prejudices in the following. I also suggest what teachers should do to demolish the prejudices toward Asia.

For the topic of civilization, the outstanding achievement of ancient China has been credited. The advancements in the various sectors of ancient Chinese society are studied and researched. It might be necessary in that, as many teachers pointed out, students do not know much about Asian civilizations. The issue, however, is not whether teachers effectively highlight the advanced civilization of ancient China.

After covering the developed civilization, China is rarely related with the images of the modern and progress. As seen in the Result, ancient China before 500 A.D. is connected to modern China in the 1970s. In other words, China is emphasized in the ancient period and then shows up all of sudden in the modern period. This pattern is actually observed in many works of Orientalists. Tanaka (1993) argues that there are two Chinas in the mind of Orientalists. One is ancient China, which was advanced. The other is current China, which has failed to modernize itself. As Said (1978) explains, the gap between the two Chinas serves as a unit for measuring the progress of the West. While the West is actively involved in human progress, China stopped growing after its ancient blooming time.

This pattern of thought is applied evenly to all other Asian countries which are homogenized into the Orient. All Asian countries exist as temporal Others who remain in the early stage of human progress. Southeast Asia is worth more detailed discussion. As I argued, Asia is marginalized to the images of the pre-modern and the un-developed. Southeast Asia is re-marginalized in these prejudices. Except for family history, I have not collected any information for Southeast Asia. Limiting Southeast Asia into the private part might lead to the Oriental prejudice, *terra nulla* which Bhabha used in explaining the Orient as the empty land. Bhabha (1991) argues that the West often defines the Orient as *terra nullar* in which history ought to be started. When teachers do not make conscious efforts to see the history of Southeast Asia, they might reproduce the colonial practice of defining the Orient as the waste land which invites the merciful colonizer.

For the topic of religion, I have found that teachers' focus is predominantly spiritual. Unfortunately, this tendency seems to be overlapped with the West's Oriental view on Asia. The 'spiritual' East has been compared to the 'scientific' West since the periods of exploration and colonial expansion of Europeans (King, 1999). Under the binary framework between East and West, Europeans were considered to be more modern, more advanced, more rational or intellectually brighter than the inhabitants of the East. Spring County teachers visit the Tibetan Buddhism Center with students. Tibet specifically epitomizes a mystical East and a homogenized Buddhism (Santianni, 2003). Emphasizing Tibetan Buddhism requires a critical discussion on the common misperception of the exotic Otherness of Tibet. Teaching the spiritual aspect of Buddhism without examining the social and political part of Tibet reduces it to a traditional Orientalistic view on Asian religions. Thus, I suggest that teaching the religions ought to be accompanied by a social history of religion which emphasizes the social and political condition of particular discourses and practices.

The current teaching of Asian religions is in line with the traditional Orientalistic view of the Orient as spiritual, mysterious, and exotic. Teachers still bind Asia with the elements which dramatize the gap between the West and the Orient. We have noted that when Asia is defined as the temporal Other, the West has no problem in colonizing and exploiting Asia. Rather, the West assumes that colonization is their responsibility or burden in order to take the Orient into the track of modernization. I want to emphasize again that interpreting ancient Asian history with the typical narrative on civilization and religion is part of colonial strategies legitimating the West's dominance over the Orient. If teachers have the intention of challenging the White's superiority in the history curriculum, they have to move away from adopting the existing framework for ancient history, and embrace a practice which is capable of revealing the Western discourses on the self and Other.

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Abstract

Introducing Ancient Asia to the Classroom: a case study of Spring County high schools in the U.S.

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Representing Asian entities as ancient, eternal, and timeless, the West creates an imaginary time gap between the West and Asia. The modern image of the West is complemented by the backwardness of the Orient. I examine whether the two distinct temporal frames are still circulated in the current Western world. In order to answer the question, I examine the history curriculum of U.S. education. I collected the data of what teachers teach as part of world history and how they instruct students in the ancient Asian section which falls into the period before 500 AD. The data on the curriculum was collected through a questionnaire accompanied by a follow-up interview. Thirteen history teachers from nine high schools in Spring County were participated in the survey. For the theoretical framework, I review the works of postcolonial scholars who unpack a particular set of ideas and practices intersecting with the hegemonic construction of the past. The data is discussed with the opinions of the postcolonialists. In the final section, I discuss how teachers can go beyond reproducing the Western discourses on Asia.

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