History Learning and Political Consciousness: Examination of Historical Writings of African Students in South Africa

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I. Summary

English Summary

This study will reveal the connection between South African people’s understanding of history and the implementation of the segregated regime through an examination of African students’ essays on the history of their own people in the first half of the twentieth century. In particular, I will inquire into how South African black students, especially Zulu students coped with the curriculum change which, according to studies on Black South African educational history, shifted its focus from “Europeanization” to “Tribalization” after the First World War. I will conduct research on historical essay competition to grasp how African students wrote their history. I will use essays sent to the contest called “Zulu tribal history competition” to answer following two questions. 1. what kinds of sources did students use when they wrote their historical essays? 2. was the experience of writing history natured the ethnic nationalism which confronts the regime based on segregation? The previous scholarly discussions on Zulu historical writings have delineated Zulu nationalism’s complicated relationships with territorial segregation by drawing the careers of eminent intellectuals. On the contrary to this trend, this study makes clear the grassroots process of ethnic formation by focusing on the classroom. This study aims to uncover how African students actually learned and reacted to what they were taught in the classroom.
日本語要約と日本語研究タイトル
歴史教育と政治意識：20世紀前半南アフリカにおけるアフリカ人学生の歴史作文の検討

本研究は、20世紀前半の南アフリカ（以下、南ア）におけるアフリカ人学生、特にズールー人学生による歴史叙述を検討することで、彼らがいかに「部族主義」の危険を避けつつ、自民族の歴史を表象しようとしたのかを明らかにする。1948年以降のアパルトヘイトを極致とする、南アの人種隔離体制は20世紀前半にアフリカ人を伝統的な「部族」として規定することで無権利の状態に置くことを正当化する体制を確立した。同時にアフリカ人教育の重点も、西洋文化の教授から、各「部族」の伝統生活の保持へと変化した。そのような状況下で自民族の歴史を描くことは、ズールー人学生にとって白人支配体制によって作られたズールー人像を実体化してしまうという恐れがあった。しかし、本研究はコンテストに投稿された学生のエッセイを対象として以下の2点を検討する。①彼らがエッセイの執筆にあたりどのような資料を利用したのか（伝承あるいは年長者からの聞き取りを利用し、白人宣教師・入植者の歴史書など）、②歴史に関する議論から自民族の過去を描くことは、支配体制に対抗的なナショナリズムの基盤となっていたか。ズールー人自身による歴史叙述を扱った先行研究は文学者や政治家など著名人のみを扱い彼らのナショナリズム言説と抵抗の結びつきを検討してきた。それに対し、本研究は学生の歴史エッセイを用いることで、「創られた伝統」としての部族主義の広がりの過程を検討する。
II. Research Activity

1. Introduction

After a regime change, people revise how they narrate their history. South Africa is no exception. After the end of Apartheid, historians have accelerated their effort to excavate the experience of black people. Museums focusing on the atrocities of Apartheid regime have flourished. College students have demanded to face colonial pasts. The recent example of the statue of Cecil Rhodes at University of Cape Town being removed in April 2015 epitomizes the intensity of this insistence. However, before washing out all that seems colonial legacies, we need to understand how South Africans conceived their history and how black and white people, often under unequal terms, cooperated to inquire into the past. History education is a focal point at which the representation of South African society is set by the authority and students to cope with it. By revealing history education under segregation/Apartheid, we can get a clue to consider what students should learn in the classroom in South Africa today. This study will reveal the connection between South African people’s understanding of history and the implementation of the segregated regime through an examination of African students’ essays on the history of their own people in the first half of the twentieth century. In particular, I will inquire into how South African black students coped with the curriculum change which, according to studies on Black South African educational history, shifted its focus from “Europeanization” to “Tribalization” after the First World War.² I have conducted research on Zulu tribal history essay competition (1912-1950) to grasp how African students wrote their history and how the white judge evaluated them. Moreover, this study aims to uncover how African students actually learned and reacted to what they were taught in the classroom. I have examined African students’ essays in tandem with textbooks, syllabi, and instructions for teachers. Reading these sources in juxtaposition will enable me to ascertain what students actually received from the lessons. This makes clear the grassroots process of segregation and African students’ reaction.

2. Study Area

a) In South Africa, I was affiliated with WiSER, Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research. Physically I studied there: reading materials I had gathered in archival research.

b) I have conducted research in several archives. Following is the list of the archives in which I have conducted research.

Killie Campbell Africana Library (Durban)
Archives of Inanda Seminary (Durban)
Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, National Archives of South Africa (Pietermaritzburg)
The Historical Papers Research Archive, the William Cullen Library, the University of Witwatersrand (Johannesburg)

I have also collected materials in the following libraries.
National Library of South Africa (Pretoria)
Msunduzi Municipal Library (Pietermaritzburg)

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c) I study the history of KwaZulu-Natal province with particular interests in education history and the use of history in political discourse.

3. Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Perspective

To achieve the objective mentioned in the introduction, I have used the perspective articulated by Mamdani which considers segregation and Apartheid not only as white racial domination but also localized institutions of autocracy. In other words, this perspective stipulates that for white minority’s domination it was necessary that black South Africans internalized compartmentalized and narrowly defined ethnic or tribal identities, disregarding more broader identities such as “Black” or “South African.” This study also relays on the perspective of “the invention of tradition.” By warning historians seeking authentic African traditions, Ranger explained how European settlers and colonial officials created ‘traditions’ in the continent from the 1870s to 90s. He also pointed out that Africans themselves utilized invented traditions for their benefit. In South African context, Hamilton argued that Africans were active collaborators of the process of invention, not passive recipients of the products. Therefore, the perspective of the invention of tradition is important in disentangling the process of the creation of tradition and this perspective is influential in the examination of Zulu nationalism. However, as Peterson points out this constructivist view on tradition does not explain “how the inventors of tradition convinced

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doubting constituents to acknowledge a normative account of history as their own. On the contrary to the above trend, this study explains how the type of Zulu ethnic consciousness produced by Zulu intellectuals and white officials and missionaries spread especially through education by analysing the essays submitted to the competition.

3.2 Archival research

I have conducted intensive archival researches in several university libraries and national archives mentioned above. Searching out materials related to history teaching in these archives provides a way into the actual implementation of teaching and reception of students, which can not be covered only by using governmental papers. By cross-checking various sources on the history of African people in South Africa, I aim to reveal the particularities of students’ papers and political meanings the students attached to the essays.

3.3 Source (students’ essays) criticism and reading strategies

Depending on the above mentioned theoretical perspective, I have conducted qualitative analysis on students’ essays by comparing them with teaching materials gathered from intensive archival research by focusing on the similarities and differences between how authorities defines ethnic identities such as Zulu and how students react to this trend.

I have used the essays in two ways. Firstly, I surveyed all essays written in or translated to English to see the distributions of students profiles such as their grades and schools, topics they chose, and the language in which they wrote. After summarily collecting these data, I have focused on the essays which won the prize. Because the judge commented on the prize-winning essays, they are useful windows to look into the evaluating process of historical writings. More specifically, I have analyzed prize-winning essays in to confirm the specific circulation of Zulu ethnic representation I have described in the summarily discussion on all essays.

4. Research Findings


This study focuses on Zulu Tribal History Competition held in 1912, 1942 and 1950 by Killie Campbell, famous Africana collector in Durban. The brief descriptions of each competition are as follows. In 1912 competition, 25 essays were sent to Killie Campbell. 9 were on Zulu history and all of them were written in English. 16 were on Basuto history. 2 were written in Basuto (not translated into English), the rests were written in English.

According to the advertisement written by Campbell and Daniel Mck. Malcolm, the chief inspector of native education and the judge of the competition, the purpose of holding the competition was to preserve

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Zulu people’s tribal history. For the competition of 1942, they called for essays written on the lesser known historical site. I found 110 essays in the files of this competition. All of them were on Zulu history. Only 15 were written in English. The rests were written in Zulu. Of them, 54 were translated into English.

For the competition of 1950, they called for essays written on tribal history. There are 180 essays. Only 4 essays were written in English. 94 essays were translated into English. Most of the essays which were not translated are ones which Daniel Mck. Malcolm, the chief inspector of Native Education regarded as “not entirely worthless” or “worthless”.

Malcolm asked submitters to include in their essays following information about “tribes”. (i) its origin; (ii) present locality; (iii) tribal history; (iv) the genealogy of its Chief; (v) the izibongo (prize poems) of its chiefs and other prominent men of the tribe, and (vi) any incidents of special interest.” He also demanded that the writers should not copy from books but find out the facts “from the old men and women of the particular tribe.”

4.2 Overall analysis of the essays

The number of the essays submitted itself shows that the fear was widely shared among Zulu people that if they would not preserve the history of certain “tribes,” their history would be lost soon. Dent, the chief inspector of native education succeeding Malcolm, congratulated Campbell on the result that the competition received “so wide-spread and enthusiastic response.” We can find out that the most contributors of essays wrote about the history of their “own tribe” to which they belonged. We can discern this point from the contents of the essays and the sir names of the submitters.

All most all the essays followed the instruction Malcolm gave in the advertisement. That is, they subdivided their essays according to the elements Malcom said should be included. And many of the essays used oral interviews as the main source, though there are a lot of essays which did not mention

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8 This is the number of essays I found in the archives. Killie Campbell wrote that she got 101 essays. It seems that some students sent several essays.
9 Though Killie Campbell claimed 190 essays submitted, 180 is the number I found in the files.
10 I used the term “tribe” with some hesitation. However, since what I am planning to delineate in this research project is the process through which the idea of the “tribe” as the natural governing unit for Africans in South Africa was accepted, I will use “tribe” as an historically value-laden term.
12 Following analysis of the essays, I will focus on the essays gathered in 1950 competition.
From the fact that the submitters conducted interviews and wrote their histories themselves, it is tempting to conclude that the act of writing history themselves functioned to destroy hierarchical binary between white authors/researchers and African/native informants. However, I have to deny the possibility. The essays were used to supplement the Zulu image presented by white authors, especially A. T. Bryant’s *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*. Malcolm judged the value of essays by clarifying how much new information each essay provide to the existent literature. Malcolm collated the contents of the essays with the authoritative text; he commented on each essay by writing, for example, “see Bryant 415.”

(Malcolm’s handwritten comment on the essay of T.W.S. Mthembu “Abakwa Shezi (the Shezi Tribe)”)

The allover effect of the competition was to give the impression that Zulu speaking people was neatly divided by the tribes and the governance by the chiefs had the legitimate tradition. Malcolm utilized the essays by publicizing them; the Natal Native Teachers Journal reprinted one of the prize-winning essays. South African Broadcast Zulu radio section not only announced the result of the competition but also had a program of reading of the first prize essay.

4.3 Analysis on individual essays
The analysis of individual essays shed a different light on the conclusion of the above section.
On the one hand, correspondence between submitters and Malcolm showed how interest in tribal histories spread in detailed ways. On the other hand, reading essays in close-up reveals that in some essays, the writers’ position affected the narrative of the essays. I will give two essays as examples.

4.3.1 “The Mathenjwa Tribe” by A.P. Myeni

From the correspondence between Myeni, the first prize winner, and Malcolm, we can see they shared the passion to preserve tribal histories.

As a serious student, Myeni asked Malcolm what he should include in the essay and tried to achieve the suggestion of Malcolm that he should write, in one essay, the history of one tribe as detailed as possible in many aspects. The result was the essay of 37 typescript pages, history of the Mathenjwa tribe focusing on the achievements of chiefs.

As the fact that this essay got the first prize, Myeni provided exactly what Malcolm was looking for; detailed descriptions of the events in the rein of each chief and izibongo of the chiefs.

I assume Myeni wrote this essay, being very much aware that Malcolm, white authority on Zulu history as the reader. He did not criticize the government directly though he treated incidents in which one of the chiefs was put into the prison. Moreover, Myeni wrote the narrative of Mathenjwa tribe along the timeline of Zulu chiefs, making the narrative easier to understand.

Myeni said advertisement in the Native Teachers Journal piqued his interest in writing an essay. If, as La Hausse indicates, NTJ was a forum on Zulu history, custom and language, Myeni’s letter suggests that articles on the above topics by white liberals and mission educated elites inspired the readers of the journal themselves to conduct research on Zulu history.

4.3.2. Essays by Simon S. Mkize

Mkize sent several essays on different tribes. Though he focused on Mkize tribe which he belonged to, he also wrote about other tribes by using his own recollection as the source.

Interestingly, he mentioned passingly that because in Biyela tribe the chief was appointed by the white government he did not have isibongo. This can be seen as a subtle criticism of the white government policy in that it peels away the naturalness of indirect rule.

This brief mention can be seen as an evidence that this essay competition functioned, in a subtle way, to make it seem obvious and just to govern Africans by an indirect rule of traditional chiefs appointed by the government. By reading tribal histories submitted alongside authoritative texts such as Byrant’s Olden Times, actually this is what Malcolm, the judge of the competition did in accessing the essays, give the impression that Africans could be neatly divided into tribes and each tribe had their own unique traditions and cultures. Therefore, this argument might go on, these traditions must be preserved.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

If I may categorize roughly, there are two views on the situation of using history in the first half of the twentieth century in KwaZulu Natal. On strand sees the history as the site of resistance. For example, Bhekizizwe Peterson argued that by writing historical novels and poems from the 1920s, “the African elite started to foreground culturalist forms of resistance.” The other strand argues that interest in history was deeply connected to the administration which used “tradition” as a way of governance. For Marks,

17 In some essays, criticism against white government is more direct. However, those essays were not highly valued by Malcolm (e.g. Mabata’s essay on Mabatha tribe).
Africans who participated Zulu Society, offspring of Natal Native Teachers Union aiming to preserve pure Zulu language and culture, shared their interests in Zulu history and culture with white officials. Their collaboration established Zulu ethnic consciousness, “which hampered radical vision.”

Essays I examined suggests that the vision of Zulu Society and white liberal officials were more influential and widely held among Zulu people. However, since the essays I have used in this research are ones submitted to the competition whose connection to the Department of Native Education was so obvious, this conclusion may be a hasty one. So, I have to end this report with questions.

5.1. Assuming that my tentative conclusion that the version of historical narrative which is congenial to the vision of Zulu conservatives and white liberals has some historical reality, is it possible to say that the rule of using tribal tradition had captured the minds of Zulu people? Should we assume those tribal histories submitted to Killie Campbell and Malcolm as examples of the discourse of the powerless people stipulated by James C. Scott?

5.2. The other question I might pursue further is: what distinguishes the kinds of uses of history? While Zulu conservatives in the 1920s and 30s and most of the essay writers I have examined used history to preserve their tradition, radicals including playwright H.I.E Dhlomo and later Anton Lembede relayed on history to criticize the present administration and instigate people to fight against the regime. What is the difference between them?

These questions will give more importance to my research I have conducted so far.

5.3. This conclusion might seem irrelevant to SDGs. I have to admit that pursuing my study would not improve any of the indicators of Goal 4, which is about inclusive education. Moreover, as I was trained to become a historian, I am a little hesitant about saying direct applicability of my research to present situation. However, I would like to conclude this paper by presenting one suggestion my analysis of the tribal history competitions offers on SDGs. This study offers insights to question and discuss the goals itself. Examining the history of education in colonial condition offers the mirror to reconsider the goals of education itself. The agenda set at the time the essays were written, was starkly different and quaint: revealing tribal histories. However, the aim of collecting and preserving tribal histories was questioned neither by the judge nor contributors. By examining how this goal was neutralized and widely shared, and eventually rejected will ultimately contribute to the discussion on how to decide the goal of education. Goal 4 of SDGs present several indicators in measuring the achievement of education. However, as with other indicators set by authoritative institutions, it is quite hard to reveal the background theory and the process by which the specific indicators have been decided. As Sally Engle Merry points out that the quantified indicators neutralize and give an objective appearance to the goals. Therefore, we have to trace the genealogies of indicators. This point assumes further importance in SDGs because, in addition to enrolment rate which MDGs focused, the quality of the education is now one of the targets. Not only

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blindly following the goals such as the number of computers in one school, we need to discuss the background theory and examine whether the specific indicators actually captures what we want to achieve. In this point, my research contributes to the SDGs in that this research offers detailed analysis on the process by which the specific goals were set and neutralized and then rejected as disguises of the racial oppression or appropriated in a different form. As a result, we might be able to realize that goals stipulated by powerful institutions can be questioned and we can envision goals by ourselves.

22 I am not saying that the increasing the number of computers is not important.
III Reflection to GLTP

1. My motivation to participate in the GLTP
I applied for this program just thinking that this is another grant which supports my research in South Africa. To my surprise, GLTP is really training program: Staffs of this program teach me how to develop a research plan. On each biweekly report I send to report my progress in the research, Dr. Natsuko Imai kindly commented. I am grateful for their efforts for I have an opportunity to check the progress of my research and reconsider the plan.

2. Field experiences
Assuming that the archives I used can be seen as a “field,” I will write about my experiences in the archives in South Africa. Sometime they are organized efficiently and staffs are experts on the field. I can find the materials in the files or boxes where they should be. I have to say that in some places, materials are lost and cannot be found or put in different files or boxes. But overall, archival research in South Africa first hand gave me a great opportunity to acquire valuable first hand data.

3. Challenges
I have to struggle hard to catch up historiography of South African history, especially the history of KwaZulu Natal. Writing a historiographical essay is one of the things Prof. Breckenridge suggested I should do. Since history is one of the underdeveloped fields in African studies in Japan and sometimes it is hard to get even indispensable books in Japan, staying in South Africa and being able to use the library of Wits University is a dreamlike opportunity for me.

4. How do I make use of this experience to my future career development
During my stay in South Africa, I have accumulated so many valuable materials. This I will use to write scholarly articles and my dissertation. Beside narrowly academic development, I think it was a wonderful experience to live in the place where diverse cultures exist in congenial (I should admit sometimes not a congenial way) as a referential point by which I see Japan.

5. Encouragement to other students
I am a little bit hesitant to claim that my experience in South Africa is in some way valuable as a reference to future recipients of GLTP. It is so obvious that this program assumes natural as well as social scientists in a broader way but not humanists. This program, however, is capacious enough to support my research. And this program is definitely a good experience in that it offers not only financial support but also opportunity to work with experienced researchers. Writing the research proposal, and biweekly reports checking the progress to them are not an easy task but surely fruitful experience.

Acknowledgment

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Breckenridge, who always gave me wonderful advice. Prof. Natasha Erlank and Thembisa Waetjen of UJ.
And of course Mbali, my isiZulu teacher. Thanks.

Picture 2 Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand
Mr. Senzo Mkhizi, Senior Library Officer at Campbell Collections, introduced me its archives.

References


