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The Highly Educated Chinese Youths' Attitudes towards Japan –  
Explanations According to the “Self” and “Other” Framework

Bachelor Thesis

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## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION .....	4
1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	6
1.1 Nationalism and the theory of “self” and “other” .....	6
1.2 Chinese nationalism and self-identity .....	7
1.3 Research problem .....	9
2. METHODOLOGY .....	11
2.1 Content Analysis .....	12
3. ANALYSIS .....	14
3.1 General perceptions of Japan.....	14
3.1.1 Culture, personality and technology .....	14
3.1.2 Historical and political perceptions .....	19
3.2 Explanations and reasons .....	24
3.2.1 Reasons for negative perceptions .....	24
3.2.2 Reasons for positive perceptions .....	30
CONCLUSION .....	34
REFERENCES.....	36
EXTRAS .....	39
Extra 1: Interview Topic Guide.....	39
Extra 2: List of interviews .....	40
KOKKUVÕTE.....	42

## INTRODUCTION

The power lines in the world are shifting and the growth of Asian countries and foremost The People's Republic of China, South Korea and Japan has resulted in big changes in the world economy. This has also sparked interest among a number of scholars who are trying to explain the history, success and development of the East-Asian countries. One of the most persisting questions seems to be concerned with the interdependency of Japan and China (Wirth 2009; Ching 2012; Wan 2014) and many still wonder (Gustafsson 2014; 2015; Cui 2012) how their different interpretations of the past could influence their relationship today.

This topic has often been discussed in the context of Chinese nationalism and their construction of self-identity. Most scholars like Elena Atanassova-Cornelis (2012, 95) and Shogo Suzuki (2007, 26) agree that Japan plays a primary role in the enactment of the Chinese identity. They suggest that Neumann's (1996) theory about "self" and "other" also applies to Chinese nationalism, and that most Chinese view Japan and the Japanese as the primary "other". Suzuki (2007, 26) notes that this perception is mostly based on negative differences between the "in-group" and "out-group" and therefore suggests that Japan and the Japanese are perceived as the victimizing "other". This perception reflects the Chinese official discourse which many scholars like K. Denton (2007) and Callahan (2004) claim can be described by an obsessive coverage of China's victimization by the Japanese.

Most of the research conducted on Chinese nationalism analyzes the top-down official discourse, and assumes that the Chinese public view Japan and the Japanese as the "other". Very little bottom-up research has been conducted. Although there is some quantitative research conducted among the Chinese general populace (Naftali 2015), which claims that the Chinese do indeed see Japan as the negative "other", we still lack in-depth understanding of how the Chinese perceive Japan and the Japanese in light of the much discussed historical confrontations. Due to its methodological constraints, quantitative analysis cannot explain how people actually feel about intricate and sensitive matters. Studies in this tradition have also failed to distinguish between different groups of the society and different areas of perceptions like history, politics, culture and technology.

There is also little evidence that the negative anti-Japanese sentiment applies to young and highly educated people. These are people who have no personal experience with the Japanese atrocities in China and are instead more and more influenced by the influx of Japanese pop-culture, technology and products. They usually live away from home and can be assumed to be less influenced by their parents' and grandparents' views. Since universities in China are generally more open to different discussions, it is also an environment where people can form their own elaborated opinions towards sensitive topics. Young highly educated people are also more in touch with the international community, have more direct contact with the Japanese people, and are likely to have more diverse information on the subject. Therefore it is important to analyze this group and their perceptions of Japan and the Japanese distinct from the general public.

The goal of this research paper is to explore the different views and attitudes that the highly educated Chinese youths uphold towards Japan and the Japanese. It also intends to see how these views relate to the "self" and "other" framework. By interviewing ten graduate students at the Tsinghua University aged 23 to 24 and analyzing the interviews by using qualitative content analysis, this paper also tries to find explanations to these perceptions. It is important to note that this paper does not intend to make generalizations about the whole Chinese population.

The following research paper consists of three main parts: theoretical background, methodology and analysis. The first section gives a brief overview of the theoretical background and focuses on three main topics. It first explains the concept of nationalism from the theoretical standpoint of "self" and "other", and then moves on to give an overview of the Chinese nationalism and self-identity and Japan's role in it. The second part explains briefly the methodological aspects of this research, followed by the third section where the ten conducted interviews are analyzed. In doing that the author first analyzes the general perceptions of the young interviewed students according to the "self" and "other" framework and distinguishes between perceived positive and negative differences and similarities. The discussion first focuses on culture, personality and technology and then on history and politics. The second part of the analysis intends to look for explanations for the respondents' attitudes.

# **1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The following section gives an overview of the theoretical background of the research. The first section gives an overview of the theory of “othering” and of the construction of self-identity through the interaction with “others”. The author then focuses on the formation of Chinese nationalism and explains what part does Japan play in it. The last section establishes research questions and gives a brief overview of why it is necessary to conduct qualitative research in the light of already existing quantitative studies.

## **1.1 Nationalism and the theory of “self” and “other”**

In order to explain what part does Japan play in the formation of the Chinese identity and nationalism, it is necessary to first give a brief introduction to the “self” and “other” theoretical framework and its connection to nationalism.

Nationalism, as defined by Elina Sinkkonen (2013, 1047), is a view that one’s home country is superior to other countries and which therefore provides support for that country’s actions. The construction of nationalistic feelings and national identity has been explained differently by many scholars with some relying more on propaganda and others on different psychological theories.

One approach that has lately caught most attention among the scholars researching international relations is the social identity theory. Rooted in psychology, this theory claims that an individual’s self-identity derives from a perceived membership in a certain social group and through the interaction with “others”.

The problem of “self” and its many “others” has been one of the most persisting questions since the time of pre-Socratic philosophers (Paipais 2010, 121). Different scholars have tried to explain the phenomena differently, but the most common definition of “other” is something different from “self”. This phenomenon is something that can be observed in different dimensions in both everyday life and in international relations (De Buitrago 2012, xiii).

Most scholars, such as Jonathan Mercer (1995, 242), argue that the universal desire for self-esteem results in large-scale cognitive differences between the “in-group” and “out-group”, which then leads to attaching negative qualities to the “out-group” and positive

identity to the “in-group” (Mercer 1995, 242). This implies that the relationship between “self” and “other” can only be negative and involves a lot of conflicts.

De Buitrago (2012, xv) points out that this is overly simplifying the theory and claims that the difference between self and other can also be described through positive content. Other scholars like Suzuki (2007) agree and therefore rely more on Neumann’s (1996, 142) approach, which claims that identity formulation should be thought of as a “lineation of an ‘in-group’ which must necessarily entail delineation from a number of ‘out-groups’”. This explanation, strongly concerned with the difference between groups, is more dynamic and involves both negative and positive dimensions.

Although this explains how it is possible to explain “self” through the existence of “others”, it is also important to note that self-identity and therefore also nationalism can only form through social interaction with these “others”. This highlights the intersubjective essence of identity formation. As Suzuki (2007, 30) points out, the interaction with several “others” can also result in different and often overlapping forms of self-identities and which particular identity is dominant will depend on the particular moment.

## **1.2 Chinese nationalism and self-identity**

As the previous section explained, the formation of self-identity and nationalism occurs through the interaction with others. This is also the case with Chinese nationalism. Many historians have suggested that the formation of the Chinese identity is strongly related to their encounters with the Western powers. Although there was a sense of belonging to the Chinese state already before their self-identity was not limited to certain territorial boundaries, but was more based on the continuum of culture versus barbarity (Suzuki 2007, 31).

Signing the so-called Unequal Treaties in the 19<sup>th</sup> century led the Chinese to conceptualize their self-identity more in line with the Western cultural norms and the concept of nation-state. The term *guo* (state) became gradually identified with the Chinese nation and their sense of belonging to the Chinese state became more visible (Suzuki 2007, 31). In order to provide unified resistance to the Western and Japanese imperialists and to build a powerful state, the leaders encouraged the people to imagine themselves as belonging to the “victimized” Chinese state (Suzuki 2007, 31-32). The

feeling of belonging to a Confucian Chinese culture was gradually replaced by a communal identity tied to China as a nation state.

The narrative of “victimization” leads back to the period that started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with The First Opium War and ended with the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. The period is often referred to as the century of national humiliation and can be described as the master narrative of the modern Chinese history (Callahan 2004, 204). As Callahan (2004, 204) explains it, the discourse recounts the century during which the Chinese were invaded by foreigners and ruled by corrupt regimes. Territories were taken away and sovereignty was lost. During this time the Chinese self-awareness also began to increase through the interaction with “others”.

It is important to note that the victimization narrative only emerged after the Tiananmen incident in 1989 and when Jiang Zemin took power in 1992. It was then that nationalism and the Chinese victimization became a dominant discourse. During the first decades of the People’s Republic of China and during the rule of Mao Zedong the dominant narrative was Chinese heroic resistance, which depicted China as a victor not as a victim (Coble 2011, 396-397). However in both narratives Japan has still been depicted as the “other.

Although the formation of the Chinese self-awareness was first sparked by the Western powers, researchers like Elena Atanassova-Cornelis (2012, 95) believe it is Japan who has occupied a primary place in the enactment of the past aspect of Chinese identity. Shogo Suzuki (Suzuki 2007, 26) claims that many Chinese still remember the invasion by the Japanese army during the Second World War and the cruelty that they inflicted on innocent Chinese civilians. Many scholars like Parks M. Coble (2011, 379) agree and suggest that in today’s China the public memory of the Japanese invasion and the War of Resistance in 1937-1945 is more visible than ever. The discourse surrounding the War of Resistance can be described by an obsessive coverage of China’s victimization by the Japanese and the heroic narrative of resistance has been replaced with tragic horror stories (Denton 2007, 248).

As Kaufman (2010) points out, it is often the defeats, humiliation and injustices related to Japan and Western powers that are paid close attention to and not the achievements of the Chinese people. The anti-Japanese sentiment is reflected in the whole Chinese



society through government-controlled media, school, textbooks, and even through large-scale anti-Japanese protests. The Anti-Japanese War has become the signature of the communists' legitimacy and the Chinese unity, and the Japanese devils are one of the most important "others" in the Chinese official discourse (Ching 2012, 718).

Researchers like Downs and Saunders (1998/99) claim that the Chinese government continuously uses the Japanese imperialistic history as a strategic tool to raise national awareness and to bargain on the political and international level. The narrative is used to legitimize the regime and is always enhanced during times of interior and international unrest. This suggests that the military confrontations with Japan have become what Volkan (2001, 88) describes as the "chosen trauma", which can be characterized as shared pieces of past that become entrenched in people's minds and link them together as a group. This "chosen trauma" can be reactivated by that same group or its leaders at any time to reconfirm or enhance their identity.

Nevertheless it is important to note that even though history and this shared "chosen trauma" can be used for regime legitimation, it would not be possible to do this if that kind of rhetoric would not have an audience who would be receptive to this information (Suzuki 2007, 26). Even though China has had military confrontations with several other nations, none of these amount to the extent that the Japanese invasion did (Suzuki 2007, 38).

### **1.3 Research problem**

While researchers like Shogo Suzuki (2007) do a good work in explaining how the concepts of "other" and "victim" are used in the Chinese official discourse, and Elena Atanassova-Cornelis (2012) explains how Japan plays a primary role in the enactment of the Chinese identity, there is little evidence that the Chinese people today actually think of Japan and the Japanese people as the unified "other".

A research conducted in 2013 by Pew Research Center viewed the perceptions of Japan in Asia and the results indicated that 90% of the public in China has an unfavorable opinion of Japan and 78% of the populace doesn't think that Japan has sufficiently apologized for its military actions during the 1930s and 1940s (Pew Research Center 2013, 5). Although this seems to indicate the Chinese general view towards Japan as a country, it fails to distinguish between different perceptions towards Japan and the

Japanese people. Although the research looks into how the Chinese people see Japan politically it does not necessarily explain their views towards Japanese culture, technology and their people in general.

Orna Naftali's (2015) research among high school students seems to be more in depth and sensitive to the possibility of different attitudes towards Japan/Japanese among Chinese as a group and also as individuals. It shows that the consumption of Japanese pop-culture does not necessarily reverse the negative attitudes, but produces a "love-hate" relationship (Naftali 2015). However, since this paper was only presented at the "All I Need Is Love? Nation, Affect and Aversion and a Post-Imagined-Community Asia" international workshop in Taipei and has not been published, its theoretical and methodological aspects remain vague.

Although there is some research done among the general Chinese populace and also among Chinese high school students, there is still little evidence of how Chinese view Japan and the Japanese in more detail, and whether this anti-Japanese sentiment also characterizes the highly educated Chinese youths. Since universities in China are generally more opened to different discussions, it is safe to assume that university students are more free to form their own opinions towards sensitive topics. These are people who don't have direct contact with the historical events related to Japan and who usually live away from home and are therefore less influenced by their parents' views. Young people in China are more and more influenced by the influx of Japanese pop-culture, technology and different products and seem to have more contact with Japanese people themselves. Given these considerations, the highly educated Chinese youths are more likely to have diverging opinions and attitudes towards Japan and the Japanese.

This research aims to add to our understanding of Chinese nationalism. Most analysts of Chinese nationalism posit on the negative attitude towards Japan and the Japanese. As this study intends to demonstrate, this is not always the case and some Chinese view Japan and the Japanese also in a positive light. The main research question for this study is how do the highly educated young Chinese people perceive Japan and the Japanese. In addition, the author also tries to look for factors that could explain the interviewees' attitudes.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The following research paper aims to answer the research questions by qualitatively analyzing interviews conducted with young Chinese people. Since the matter at hand is complicated, and we assume that people might withhold sensitive information or not be aware of their beliefs, qualitative research design with its emphasis on the complexities on social life is best way to find answers to the posed questions.

As qualitative research design tends to work with a relatively small number of cases and puts more focus on details (Silverman, Marvasti 2008, 14), information is gathered from ten Chinese youths. The interviewees are chosen by using convenience sampling. The author decided to limit the scope of the research paper and interview only people living in Beijing and studying in the same university. It is important to note that because the group of respondents is still relatively small, the author should avoid making generalizations. The goal of this research paper is to find different kinds of reactions to Japan among Chinese youths, and in order to make generalizations, this research should be complemented by other qualitative and also quantitative studies. Also, because of the interpretive nature of the technique, it is important to avoid being too subjective and biased in finding different meanings from the interviews to support the author's own opinions.

Exactly half of the respondents are male and half female. The interviewees come from different departments with some of them studying different types of engineering and others social sciences. All of the respondents are aged between 23 and 24 and are enlisted in a graduate program in Tsinghua University. These young Chinese have not lived during the Japanese aggression and their knowledge in this field comes either from outside sources like their parents, grandparents, media or school. Despite that, the people aged from 23 to 24 have usually lived away from their homes for several years and have started to form more thorough and elaborative opinions towards political and historical issues. Therefore the age of the respondents was limited accordingly.

Because of the sensitive nature of the paper, the interviews were individual to have more in-depth discussions with each of the respondents. To encourage people to talk more about their own opinions, they were ensured that all of their answers will be confidential. To avoid anyone attaching names to any information used in this paper, all

the real names have been removed and instead the author uses aliases. This was done to secure that the respondents feel confident in expressing their own opinions and not what they think they should say.

The interviews were half-structured to provide more flexibility during the process. The author used a topic guide (Extra 1) with some questions and key words to lead the discussion. Since the main research questions are strongly based on people's opinions, feelings and thoughts, the author needed to be extra careful not to push the interviewees to answer in a certain way. However, the author is aware that the influence of her presence could not be fully eliminated.

All the interviews were held in Tsinghua University Asian Youth Exchange Center in a room with only the interviewer and interviewee present. All the interviews were recorded on the permission of the interviewees with an audio recording device and later transcribed into text format. The interviews took place in the period between December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The length of the interviews varied from 19 minutes to 36 minutes.

## **2.1 Content Analysis**

To find answers to the established research questions, the interviews are analyzed by using qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is concerned with meanings, intentions and contents and pays a lot of attention to interpreting texts, images and expressions and is therefore the best technique to use in this paper.

Qualitative content analysis has its positive and negative aspects, but most importantly, it enables the author to be sensitive, precise and to pay attention to phenomena that are rare or unique (Kalmus, Masso, Linno 2015). Differently from quantitative analysis, qualitative measures help to approach every single respondent individually and to take into account their differences. Qualitative analysis enables to analyze all of the interviewee's opinions and feelings separately and to pay attention to details. Therefore it helps to understand the interviewed Chinese youths' attitudes towards Japan more thoroughly and to see if there are any exceptions in their opinions.

The author uses the MAXQDA coding tool to help with the analysis. It means that the interviews will be analyzed by identifying different codes or categories to one or more

passages which all relate to one thematic idea (Gibbs 2007, 54). Differently from quantitative analysis, qualitative content analysis isn't focused on coding text according to a certain fixed coding frame, but is more flexible in creating different codes and categories throughout the analysis (Kalmus, Masso, Linno 2015). Since most of the categories and concepts come from previously written research papers, the coding is more concept-driven (Gibbs 2007, 45), but it's not exclusive. Some of the coding is on the contrary data-driven, which means that the codes are formed during the coding process and come from the data itself. This is done mostly to avoid subjectivity and to find not only conceptually defined phenomena but also contradicting and unusual signs.

In the current analysis it means that in the first part of the analysis the author tries to find signs that the Chinese youths see Japan as being the "other". In doing that the author relies on the definition used by Neumann (1996, 142), which defines identity formulation as a lineation of an 'in-group', which must necessarily entail delineation from a number of 'out-groups'. Therefore the author looks for perceived differences. As the differences can be both negative and positive, the texts will be coded and analyzed accordingly. Since it occurred during the interviews that some of the young people see some similarities between the Chinese and Japanese, the author also looks for signs that the Chinese see the Japanese belonging to the same cultural group as themselves.

The second part of the analysis tries to find explanations to how educated Chinese youths view Japan/Japanese. In doing that the author first uses five categories drawn from the interviews to define the sources of information: Home/parents/grandparents, Movies/TV Series, School/Textbooks, Media/Newspapers and War Museums. This part of the analysis tries to find out why do the respondents perceive Japan the way they do and where does this information come from. It also helps to briefly explain the official discourse and the way the interviewed young people see it.

### **3. ANALYSIS**

The following section gives an overview of information collected from the ten conducted interviews and analyzes the data according to the methodological and theoretical framework set in previous chapters. Firstly, the analysis focuses on analyzing the interviewees' general views towards Japan. In doing that the author brings out the perceived negative and positive differences and also similarities in people's opinions. This means that the analysis tries to see if and how do the interviewed youths see Japan as the "other" and whether this is solely based on perceived negative or also positive differences. Secondly, the author tries to find explanations to these perceptions by discussing the sources and reasons behind people's views towards Japan.

#### **3.1 General perceptions of Japan**

The conducted interviews reflect a lot of different opinions, but one thing that stands out is that all of the respondents perceive Japan both in a positive and negative way. The following discussion focuses on both of these aspects and points out signs that some of the Chinese young people also see some similarities between the Chinese and Japanese. However, based on this analysis there is no way of telling whether this is characteristic only to the ten interviewees, the group of highly educated Chinese youths or to the whole Chinese populace. The section is divided into two parts – the first part focuses on culture, personality and technology and the second one on history and politics.

##### **3.1.1 Culture, personality and technology**

One of the most significant findings from the interviews was that the young interviewed Chinese people see Japan in a very diverse way. When it comes to the historical period before the 19th century, their thinking is relatively different from the period starting from the 19th century. Altogether seven respondents out of ten mentioned that the Chinese and Japanese can actually be considered relatively similar in some ways. This seems to imply that in some aspects Japan could actually be perceived as belonging to the same "self" with the Chinese. Several of the interviewees mentioned the Tang dynasty (618-906) and the positive relationship between the two countries at the time.

*“Several hundred years ago during Tang dynasty China was one of the most powerful and influential countries in the world. At that time Japan sent their diplomatic ambassadors to China, to learn from China. Actually they learned*

*everything from China at that time and even today at present Japanese culture and constitution is deeply impacted by China. You know the Japanese characters, I mean the language, it is also deeply impacted by Chinese.” (Li, male, 24 years old, major in international journalism and communications)*

This mentality reflected from several other interviews and it occurred that the young interviewees believe that the Japanese state and culture has roots in the ancient Chinese culture. They repeatedly mentioned the similarities between the two countries’ characters and traditions. One of the interviewees, a 24 year old electrical engineering student Huan, went as far as saying that the Japanese and Chinese could one day be united like Europe and therefore suggested that the Chinese and Japanese actually belong to the same “in-group”. At the same time he also pointed out that although the similarities do form a good basis for future cooperation, there are probably also too many differences that are impossible to change or overcome. These differences, which were mostly negative, will be further discussed in the next chapter.

The previous discussion seems to clash with the claim that Japan is perceived as the “other” in China, and does not align with the definition of “other” that scholars like Suzuki (2007) and Neumann (1996) have used. While their definitions were only concerned with the differences between the “in-group” and “out-group” or in other words between “self” and “other”, the interviewees seemed to also perceive certain cultural similarities between the Chinese and Japanese. This suggests that in a way they consider the Japanese as being one of their own and as belonging to their image of “self”.

As it was previously pointed out, all of these similarities seem to have roots in culture and with the change of topics the respondent’s views shifted more towards seeing differences between the Chinese and Japanese. When it comes to the Japanese mentality and personality in general, the views were still positive, but they were no longer perceived as being similar to the Chinese, but more as being positively different. One of the main perceived positive differences that the interviewees pointed out was the politeness of the Japanese people.

*“But I do really like Japanese people because they are very polite. Actually this term I got to know some of the Japanese people and they are really polite, much*

*more polite than the Chinese people. If you want to describe them in one word it would be polite.” (Zhen, female, 24 years old, major in earth sciences)*

The tendency to describe the Japanese people as being polite reflected in most of the interviews, but a lot of them believed that the biggest differences lie not only in their personality, but also in their way of thinking. A 23-year-old interviewee Ting noted that the Japanese delicate ways of thinking are among the main factors that have enabled Japan to develop to this successful country we see today and to do it a lot faster than others.

*“The Chinese people always like to imitate and the Japanese always like to see things in their own unique ways. And my impression of Japanese students is that they always take their little notebooks and note everything they see and make little marks. And Chinese people always just talk and talk about everything and like to gossip about what they see. That’s just a big comparison. So I think what the Japanese do is better.” (Ting, female, 23 years old, major in international journalism and communications)*

This reflects the differences between the Japanese and Chinese way of thinking, but it also points out differences between both countries’ technology and science. The Japanese people were seen as being more innovative – they pay much more attention to details and instead of just imitating things, they create things that are similar to the existing ones, but make them better and more advanced. The interviewees repeatedly mentioned Japan’s productivity in technology and science and the good quality of their products, which encourages the Chinese people to travel to Japan to buy things.

Because of the good perceived quality of the products, several respondents used Japanese electronic products like their phones, cameras and rice cookers. In addition, one respondent, Zhen, praised the quality of Japanese make-up products and pointed out that they are the best in whitening your face, which is considered as a beauty ideal by many Chinese. One of the interviewees, Jing, compared Japanese quality with the German quality and another said that the Chinese should definitely learn something from the Japanese in this aspect. A mechanical engineering student Shu pointed out that in their department they do talk about Japanese technology a lot and think of it as role



model. She emphasized the good quality control in Japan and noted that they are extremely good at robotics and cutting edge technologies.

This illustrates the Chinese mentality towards Japanese technology and production. The interviewed Chinese youths do see that they have something to learn from the Japanese and envy them for their quality control and innovation. The sentiment also seems to apply to the Japanese environment saving technologies and policies. This reflected especially in an interview conducted with Jing, a student from the department of environmental engineering, who was especially concerned about the troubling environmental situation in China and Beijing.

*“But yeah what I appreciate the most is that their environment is protected. And it’s better than in China. And there are also many kinds of environmental policies. At one point the environmental policy in Japan was also really bad, but they changed the conditions. And for a long time there were working units and now the environment is very good.” (Jing, female, 23 years old, major in environmental engineering)*

Apart from people’s good attitude, good technology, environment and products, the interviewees also had a somewhat positive view towards Japanese pop-culture. This sentiment especially applied to the Japanese animations, which several of the respondents not only watched when they were kids, but still watch them now when they are aged 23-24. A 24 year old software engineering student Peng noted that he could really be considered as an expert on Japanese animation because he has seen so many of them.

Although most of the interviewees had a relatively positive view towards Japanese animations, their opinions towards Japanese movies and music varied largely. Several respondents were relatively neutral towards Japanese movies and music and said that they don’t really watch or listen to them, but at the same time they don’t really have anything specific against them. Two respondents described the Japanese movies either being too terrifying or too emotional and psychological. As the 24-year old Zhen pointed out, they only focus on psychological things and are therefore not that fascinating.

A similar argument came out in another interview where Peng, a 24-year-old student, mentioned that the different descriptions and atmosphere make the Japanese movies and novels too strange to watch or read. Although this seems to reflect the differences between the Chinese and Japanese thinking and preferences towards movies and novels, others like 23-year-old Ai had a whole different opinion and said that the psychological aspect in Japanese movies is what makes them good.

When it comes to music, the respondents seemed to have a relatively neutral attitude. Some mentioned that they do listen to Japanese music occasionally, but none of them had anything really positive to say about it. One of the respondents, Zhen, just pointed out that the Japanese songs are relatively popular, but not as popular as Korean and therefore most people, including her, don't listen to them that often. Overall the respondents didn't seem to hold a really strong view towards Japanese pop-culture and although they did watch a lot of animations and enjoyed them, the views differed when it came to movies and were probably the most neutral towards Japanese music.

The previous discussion suggests that the respondents have a relatively positive view towards Japan when it comes to culture and technology. It seems that Japan was not necessarily seen as the negative "other" and that the interviewed youths were able to see both positive differences and also similarities between the two countries. Although the positive differences align with the definitions of "self" and "other" used by Suzuki (2007) and Neumann (1996), and point out that Japan was overall still seen as the "other" by the interviewed youths, it suggests that it is not necessarily seen as the negative "other" but also as a positive one, just as De Buitrago (2012, xv) has pointed out.

This raises a question though whether a group can be perceived as "self" in some areas and still be the "other" in other aspects? Suzuki (2007, 30) has noted that the interaction with several others can indeed result in different and often overlapping forms of self-identities and which particular identity is dominant will depend on the particular moment. The views of the interviewed youths do confirm this claim, but also suggest that the respondents' perceptions of Japan and whether they see them as belonging to their "self" or as being the "other" depends on the area that is discussed at that moment.

### 3.1.2 Historical and political perceptions

Although the views towards Japanese culture and economy were relatively positive, the opinions became more negative when the interview topics moved away from culture and towards history and politics. The negative attitudes seemed to draw from more recent history and as several of the respondents pointed out most of the negative incidents that have caused their bad attitude towards Japan took place during and after the 19th century. This is also in accordance with the narrative of national humiliation, which according to Callahan (2004) deprives from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and recounts the century during which the Chinese were invaded by foreigners and ruled by corrupt regimes.

The interviews suggest that when it comes to history, the respondents see Japan in a really negative light and that they see them as being the victimizing “other”. Every single interviewee mentioned the Second World War (WWII) and the cruelty that the Japanese inflicted on the Chinese at that time. One student pointed out that the WWII can be probably considered as the most important historical event that influences the two countries’ relationship today.

When asked to talk about a specific historical event that is related to both Japan and China, all of the respondents pointed out the Second World War and especially the Nanjing massacre, which is considered by many as the most gruesome event in Chinese history and the Japanese held responsible for it. The Nanjing massacre (also known as the Rape of Nanking) took place between December 1937 and January 1938. During this short period the Japanese soldiers invaded the city and murdered, raped and tortured hundreds of thousands of men, women and children; the estimated death tolls vary between 200,000 and 350,000 (Magclasscn 2015, 17).

In eight interviews out of ten, the Nanjing massacre was mentioned as the event that the respondents first remember when they think about Sino-Japanese relations in the past. Most of the respondents who described the Nanjing massacre pointed out the horrible acts done by the Japanese and also brought examples of the killing competitions that the Japanese soldiers held.

*“In fact, in November last year I visited Nanjing and there was a famous historical building explaining the “tusha” (English translation: massacre). It*

*meant that the Japanese people invaded Nanjing and killed many people there and they even had something like a killing competition. They seemed to like it and they didn't treat Chinese people like people. They were just killing for fun and were really cruel.” (Shu, female, 23 years old, major in mechanical engineering)*

This describes the common view that the respondents had towards the Nanjing massacre, the Second World War and the Japanese soldiers. They saw that it still influences their thinking and complicates the relations between the two countries and their people. The youths also mentioned that what bothers them the most about the history is that the Japanese still think of it differently. The example of Japanese textbooks telling a different and therefore a wrong story in the eyes of the Chinese was pointed out several times.

*“And another thing with Japan is that their government changed the content of their history textbooks so that they are denying the things that they did to China or to other countries. I think it's very unfair. Even to your own people it's not fair. People have the right to know everything, to know the truth.” (Shu, female, 23 years old, major in mechanical engineering)*

The textbook controversy also pointed out the negative attitude towards Japanese leadership. All of the respondents were extremely negative towards Japanese politics, especially when it came to how they handle the war-related topics. None of the respondents had a positive attitude towards Japanese politics and many of them said that they do not like it at all. What most of the interviewees saw as being really negative was the fact that the Japanese politicians still pay visits to the temples where the Japanese war heroes are worshipped. Several respondents pointed out that the Japanese leaders still treat the Second World War soldiers as heroes and noted that this is unacceptable and will keep causing conflicts in the future.

The problems surrounding the temple visits are also strongly related to the fact that the respondents felt that the Japanese haven't still sincerely apologized for the world war killings and invasion and haven't therefore expressed any regret. The same phenomenon also came out in the qualitative research done by the Pew Research Center (2013). One of the respondents, Li, also considered this as the main reason why most people,

including him, don't like Japan and Japanese and why they can never identify themselves as belonging to the same group with them. The interviewees continuously compared Japan to Germany by saying that the Japanese should have followed their example and apologized for their cruelty.

*“When I talk to some German people, they will say that the World War II is too bad and Hitler is too bad. But the Japanese don't think so. They don't feel so sorry for that history I think.” (Peng, male, 24 years old, major in chemical engineering)*

The interviewees felt that the Japanese avoid talking about the Second World War and that by doing it they are showing disrespect towards the Chinese people. One respondent, Ting, even compared Japan to small children who refuse to admit their mistakes and said that by doing this Japan loses all authority both among Chinese people and also on the international stage. Another young interviewee, Peng, also pointed out that what bothers him the most isn't what the Japanese did in the past, but the fact that they don't admit doing it. So in a way it suggests that although the perception of Japan being the “other” comes from history, the current political situation enhances this image even more.

Although the previously discussed attitudes reflect mostly on Sino-Japanese history, the negative perceptions also occurred when the respondents talked about political issues that do not have an obvious connection to history and especially to the century of national humiliation. Several respondents mentioned the territorial disputes like the Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute and said that this also influences their overall view of Japan. Li also mentioned the latest change in the Japanese constitution which states that the Japanese government is now allowed to send its troops to foreign countries and pointed out that this has made people's attitude towards Japan even worse. This change seemed to bring back old memories from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century and once again strengthen the image of Japan as the negative “other”.

These political issues seemed to be mostly connected with the current Japanese leaders and especially to the current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The interviewed young people saw the Japanese leading politicians as being arrogant and insensitive. Li pointed out that he strongly dislikes their current Prime Minister and considers him as being

provocative. At the same time he noted that he does not necessarily connect the Japanese politicians' actions with the Japanese people.

*“So I do like the Japanese people, but I don't like the Japanese politics. Especially Shinzo Abe, the prime minister. He is quite provocative“ (Li, male, 24 years old, major in international journalism and communications)*

Therefore it occurred from this interview and also from several others that although the attitude towards Japanese politics was extremely negative among the respondents, this does not necessarily have to influence their opinion of the Japanese people, culture and economy. In a way this suggests that even though the interviewees do perceive Japan as being the negative “other” in many ways, they are still able to distinguish between Japan as a political entity and the Japanese people in general.

But even though the respondents did not necessarily connect the historical and political issues to the Japanese people in general, they still felt that it influences their attitude. A 24 year old student Chen explained that since the Japanese come from a different environment and the Chinese discourse enhances the bad things that the Japanese have done to them, it is almost impossible to have a good attitude towards them. Others pointed out that it is okay to have Japanese friends and that they do have them, but that they could never become really close with them, because of their different views towards history.

*“Yeah I kind of tried to talk about it, but it turns out you can never get to the same point with them. And they will go to another part of the history, because they are taught different things I think.” (Ting, female, 23 years old, major in international journalism and communications)*

The contradicting views towards history were not the only reasons why the respondents felt that they could not become close with the Japanese. Although it was explained in the previous chapter that the interviewed youths see the two countries' cultures as being relatively similar, they also perceived some large differences between them. An electrical engineering student Huan pointed out an interesting difference between the two countries' attitudes towards pornography. He noted that while in China everything related to sex and pornography is taboo and people have a relatively conservative and

traditional mentality, the Japanese are really open-minded about it and have a very large sex-industry.

Perhaps the most interesting finding here is that the same respondent, who pointed out the big differences between the Chinese and Japanese people, was also the one who believed that the similarities between the two cultures could form a good basis for uniting like Europe. So although he did see that Japan could in a way belong the Chinese “self”, he also suggested that there are still differences that the two countries cannot overcome. Several other interviewees also noted that the two countries and their people have a really different mentality and that this is probably not easy to overcome.

*„I think the Japanese are actually different from the Chinese. You know we have different philosophy. I think China is a country who doesn't want to fight wars with any other country. You can see that China used to be the strongest power in the whole world for several hundred years. But you have rarely seen that China ever reached a war with a country around it, even when China was the strongest. But you see with Japan, Second World War. At that time Japan was not the strongest, but it was still there to challenge America. So you can see it from this aspect that we have different philosophy. Japan always wants to send their boats out of this small island. They want to find a large room. This is why this country is so ambitious. But China is not as ambitious as this country.” (Li, 24 years old, major in international journalism and communications)*

This illustrates most of the respondents' views towards Japan and the Japanese when it comes to them as a group and as a political entity. The students saw the Chinese as being relatively pacifistic and as being against war in principle, but Japan was on the other hand seen as an aggressor who sees war as a way for human development. The respondents also perceived the Japanese as being respectful towards China only when it's at its strongest and they noted that Japan always wants to be stronger and bigger and is therefore ambitious and sees war as the best way to achieve its goals.

These perceived differences, rooted not only in history but in their whole mentality, seem to suggest that although the respondents do see that there are some positive differences and even similarities between China and Japan, they still perceive Japan mostly as the negative “other”. In other words, even though they sometimes speak of

the Japanese and Japan as belonging to the same “in-group” or refer to them as a positive “other”, they at the same time emphasize the political and historical problems between China and Japan. The discussion suggests that this is mostly the result of the perceptions rooted in the historical period that Callahan (2004) has described as the century of national humiliation, but is further enhanced by the political situation and the overall mentality of the Japanese. On a more individual and also cultural level, Japan can still be considered as being a positive “other” or even belonging to their “self”, but this does not necessarily change the perception of Japan being the negative “other” in other aspects. Therefore the interviewed youths seemed to have very diverse and elaborated opinions when it comes to Japan and their attitude and the fact which self-identity is dominant strongly depends on the particular moment and the area or topic discussed.

## **3.2 Explanations and reasons**

As the previous section pointed out, the interviewees’ opinions are relatively diverse when it comes to different aspects like politics, history, economics and culture. Although the respondents perceive Japan as a negative “other” when it comes to history and politics, they are able to identify the Japanese as a positive “other” or even as belonging to their “self” when it comes to culture and technology. This section describes how the respondents’ perceptions of negative “other” are more associated with information from school textbooks and storytelling from parents and grandparents, and how the perceptions of positive “other” and “in-group” affiliations are more associated with information from media and first-hand contact with Japanese people and their technology.

### **3.2.1 Reasons for negative perceptions**

Although previous research suggests that the general population in China has an extremely negative view towards Japan, the interviewed Chinese youths did not seem to exactly follow the line. Orna Naftali’s (2015) research among high school children indicated that the consumption of Japanese pop-culture produces a love-hate relationship with Japan and its culture, but the analysis conducted here among Chinese university students suggests something a bit more complex. Although the respondents did see the negative aspects in Japanese politics and history, they also managed to see the positive in Japanese culture, economics, people, and even in some political aspects



like their environment. The biggest question here is that why are their opinions so different towards certain aspects and why is Japan considered as a negative or positive “other” in some and as a “self” in other aspects.

The main reasons behind this seem to lie in the fact where do the respondents get their information from and how does this information look like. When asked for the sources, most of the respondents pointed out that the most important ones are media and newspapers, school and textbooks, and movies and TV-series. Although all of them are interrelated, it seems that most of the political and historical information first comes from school, then from movies and TV-shows and finally from media.

Several respondents pointed out that the first and main place where they get their information about Japan is school. The interviewees explained that they start learning the Sino-Japanese history already in primary school and as they grow older the learning process becomes more meticulous. Usually these classes continue even in universities because to get into a post-graduate program every individual must take examinations where they have to know the Chinese history and also the parts of it related to Japan.

*“We learned the history between China and Japan from elementary school. Even at college we still learn about the history between Japan and China. We learn about the history of the Second World War. How Japan has impacted China, how the Japanese soldiers killed Chinese people.” (Li, male, 24 years old, major in international journalism and communications)*

This suggests that the main source of information for the Chinese youths is still school and its textbooks. At the same time it could also explain the negative view towards Japanese history and politics, because as several of the respondents pointed out, the history courses mainly focus on the negative aspects of the two countries’ relationship. Chun, a 24-year-old software engineering student, phrased it like this:

*„There’s not much positive there. I remember that in my history book the only positive thing about Japan is when China was building a good relationship with Japan after the PRC’s establishment. That is the only good aspect of that. Before that it was war, war, war.” (Chun, 24 years old, major in software engineering)*

Even though it is not certain that it is definitely school that creates the negative image that the respondents had towards Japanese politics and history, it is obvious that the young people do perceive the information they have gotten from school as being more negative. And as Li pointed out, they are really not allowed to not learn about these things. It is compulsory for all the students in China to know all the important facts about the Sino-Japanese history.

Another interesting thing that four respondents mentioned was that they are required to watch certain movies in class which describe the gruesome acts done by the Japanese during the Second World War. Two students described a movie called “Unit 731”, which pictures a Japanese unit doing experiments on Chinese people. Their memories of the movie seemed to still be very vivid, even after several years of watching it.

*“For example, they froze your hand, arms in a very low degree and then poured some boiling water on it. And they just heated the arm and the arm falls off. Things like that.” (Ai, female, 23 years old, major in software engineering)*

As another student, Chun, noted that he does not know why they show them the movie, but it certainly gives them a terrible impression of the war between China and Japan. In addition, the respondents pointed out the depressing pictures of the wartime horrors and the sad stories that the teachers tell. This seems to explain the negative attitude towards Japan when it comes to history and politics and also confirms the fact that the Chinese official discourse does strongly focus on the negative aspects of Japan and paints a picture of them as the victimizing “other”.

Besides school, more than half of the respondents felt that one of the biggest sources where they receive information about Japan is television. In addition to the movies that the Chinese children are required to watch in class, the interviewees mentioned that there are a lot of fiction movies about Japan on the television. Several respondents mentioned the dramas that focus on the noble Chinese and inhumane Japanese soldiers and pointed out that the Japanese are always pictured as ugly, rude, and stupid in the movies.

*“And also, there are a lot of movies, a lot of movies. In every single movie from that period the Japanese have very bad characters and they are very ugly. Not ugly, but very rude and stupid. And the movies play a very important role. Like*

*when you're a kid and you open the TV and people always like to, especially my father likes to watch these kinds of movies.” (Huan, male, 24 years old, major in electrical engineering, economics)*

All of the interviewees had seen similar movies that describe the war between the Chinese and Japanese and which all tell a negative story about the Japanese. According to them, the movies are on every single channel and everyone can watch them at any time they want. This also seems to confirm the fact that several scholars like Denton (2007, 248) have suggested that the current official discourse in China can be described by an obsessive coverage of Chinese victimization by the Japanese. This kind of storytelling seems to create negative perceptions, strengthen the perception of Japan as the “other” and also to complicate the relations between the Chinese and Japanese even today.

*“But when I was watching some materials like books and films about Japan, I just go extremely crazy and think that I really don't like Japan or Japanese. But after finishing reading or watching that and some time has passed, I kind of forget that feeling.” (Ai, 23 years old, major in software engineering)*

The previous paragraph suggests that the movies do have some influence on the respondents' views and attitudes, but that this influence might not last for long. Nevertheless, the image that seems to be a representation of a “chosen trauma” (Volkan 2001) still seems to stay in people's minds and can be reactivated at a particular moment by discussing these same sensitive topics. One respondent, Chun, expressed his opinion that the Chinese should stop creating these kinds of TV-series and movies because it only enhances negative emotions and does not necessarily have a good purpose. Another respondent had a completely different idea and believed that the movies are a way to help people to remember the past. Therefore, while some interviewees question the state policies and the propagation of Sino-Japanese animosity, others do not necessarily perceive it.

*“Yeah, that's the mainstream view that all the Chinese people should remember that. And we should remember that history. Maybe the fact how we react to it will change, but facts should never be forgotten.” (Ai, 23 years old, major in software engineering)*

Several other respondents seemed to agree to the fact that the movies do a good job at keeping the memories alive and helping people to see the bad in the past and good in today. One of the respondents, Shu, pointed out that every single Chinese person should know what happened in the past because there is something to learn from all of this. It ought to remind people that they should keep working hard because in order to avoid this kind of horror China should remain strong and not fall back to how they were during the Second World War. This is in accordance with Volkan's (2001, 88) theory that suggests that over generations such historical events, which he defines as "chosen traumas", become more than a memory. Instead they transform into shared pieces of the past that link members of one group together. So in a way it seems that the respondents perceive the negative historical events related to Japan as this "chosen trauma" that makes them feel more connected to the Chinese "self".

Another source that the respondents saw giving a lot of information about Japan and helping them to remember the past, was media. Some young students saw that the media coverage of Japan differs depending on the time and of the situation between Japan and China. Several even suggested that China uses Japan and their history with them as a weapon and the best way to spread their message is through media.

*"So if they want to send some message they can very easily achieve that goal and they want to hide some message they can do that too. So it's that the people are influenced by the media and the media is controlled by the government. So when there is something going on between China and Japan and the government wants people to have a specific attitude then the government can spread the message through media and influence people." (Chen, male, 24 years old, major in hydraulic engineering)*

Other interviewed youths also pointed out that spreading negative stories about Japan through media and also through other sources is the government's way to make everyone think the same and to make people fight against the Japanese. Others went further and explained that making people hate Japan is the government's way of hiding the problematic situation in China, which supports the argument that a "chosen trauma" can be reactivated by a group or its leaders at any time to reconfirm or enhance their own identity (Volkan 2001, 88).

*“Also I think the Chinese government also takes advantage of the bad relationship between China and Japan to minimize the conflicts inside our country. So they need the bad relationship between Japan and China to some extent. If all the people hate Japan, maybe they will not pay so much attention to the bad situation inside China. It’s like the government takes advantage of this to transfer the conflicts.” (Peng, male, 24 years old, major in chemical engineering)*

This view also supports the phenomenon that several scholars like Downs and Saunders (1998/99) have suggested that China does use its history with Japan as a strategic tool. The respondents felt that the history with Japan makes them feel more nationalistic and that Japan is an imaginary enemy in their eyes. This also supports the theory that the formation of self-identity takes place through the interaction with several “others”, which was especially emphasized in Suzuki’s (2007) research.

*“Japan is the imaginary enemy. Without Japan and without what they have done to us, maybe we would not have an imaginary enemy on our mind. We wouldn’t know who is our enemy. So we wouldn’t have the sense of patriotism towards our country.” (Li, male, 24 years old, major in international journalism and communications)*

The image of Japan as being an enemy seemed to also be enhanced by the respondents’ parents and grandparents who have had more direct contact with the Second World War events. Several of the interviewees had grandparents or relatives who had suffered because of the Japanese invasion and who had told them stories about the terrible times that they had to live through.

*“Actually my relatives, one of my relatives, he used to be a soldier in the Chinese troops and he fought against the Japanese invasion. So he told me that Japanese soldiers were really cruel to people and they just killed people, raped people and actually they did all kinds of inhuman things to the Chinese.” (Li, male, 24 years old, major in international journalism and communications)*

Some others told stories about how their grandparents’ lives were changed because of the Japanese invasion and how they had to hide in the mountains just to stay alive. The stories they heard seemed to influence the students’ views on a small level, but since they were stories that the respondents themselves had no contact with, it did not affect

them as much as their grandparents or parents. So although they understood that the history is indeed negative, it did not influence their views towards Japan in other aspects.

### **3.2.2 Reasons for positive perceptions**

The interviews suggested that the group of respondents in this research have much more diverse opinions of Japan and the Japanese than what previous studies have claimed. One of the sources, which seemed to paint a more diverse picture of Japan, was media. Although it was pointed out in the previous section that the respondents feel that media can be used as a tool to spread negative messages about Japan, it was seen as the channel that focuses also on positive aspects. One respondent, Ting, pointed out that she feels that media and newspapers today talk more about the positive aspects of Japan like their technology and economy than the negative. As others noted, this media coverage is changing constantly depending on the political situation between China and Japan and also inside China.

One of the main factors that seemed to explain the young highly educated youths' positive perceptions and also in-group affiliations was direct contact with the Japanese people. Since Tsinghua University has a lot of foreign students, including Japanese, having contact with them is relatively easy. Most of the interviewees pointed out that they have Japanese friends and at least one respondent had travelled to Japan herself. Therefore their knowledge of Japan didn't derive only from school, media, television or their parents and grandparents, but also from the Japanese people themselves. They had learned to know these people and formed their own opinions of their personalities and culture.

While discussing their own perceptions and their experience with the Japanese people, the respondents also differentiated themselves from people from older generations and those living in the countryside, and in a way perceived them as the "other". They felt that their opinions are more one-sided and tend to be really negative. They saw that since these people have more emotional connection to the negative history and no direct contact with the Japanese people today, they base their opinions on the stories they hear from school, movies or media.

*"Because maybe ordinary Chinese people still hate Japan a lot. Like one of our friends in Building 6 wants to bring his Japanese friend home for the new year,*

*but when his parents heard that they said no that's impossible, he will be attacked if he would go to the countryside to his home. It's totally impossible. So maybe some ordinary people still are indeed influenced by the government and they really hate Japanese no matter who it is.” (Peng, male, 24 years old, major in chemical engineering)*

Since the people Peng described hadn't had any positive contact with the Japanese people today, they seemed to base their opinion of the whole country and its people on the negative memories and the stories they had heard. Although the young interviewees were taught about the Sino-Japanese history and they had heard negative stories from school, television and media, their opinions were more diverse. Their contact with the Japanese people had enabled them to see Japan from different aspects and to perceive Japan not only as the negative “other” but also as a positive one. In addition, it enabled them to identify themselves as belonging to the same “in-group” with the Japanese when it came to culture.

Another interesting finding from the interviews was that the respondents themselves explained their more positive views towards Japan also through education and saw the less educated people as being the “other”. As it was mentioned before, all of the respondents in this research are postgraduate students currently enrolled in various master's programs in one of the most prestigious universities in China, Tsinghua University. They felt that their views differ largely from their classmates' views from middle and primary school, who they believe are not able to see complicated matters from different perspectives.

*“And I think my classmates from middle and primary school are more easy to be influenced. They comment on the internet and are much more aggressive towards Japan.” (Huan, male, 24 years old, major in electrical engineering, economics)*

Several others explained that it seems that the people with a lower education have more negative views and that bigger objectivity comes with education. As one respondent Zhen suggested, the history is just the past for the well-educated people, but the less educated seem to reflect the bad actions done by some Japanese soldiers or by Japanese politicians to the whole population. As the interviews suggested, the young highly

educated youths were indeed able to see the negative Sino-Japanese history, but their direct contact with the Japanese people enabled them to also consider the positive aspects about Japanese people and their culture.

The interviews also reflected the respondents' positive views towards Japanese technology, which seemed to be the result of having contact with their products. All of the interviewees mentioned using Japanese products and claimed that their quality is really good. They also pointed out that the Japanese technology and their quality measures are considered as positive examples in some of their engineering classes.

At the same time it is important to note that although direct contact with the Japanese people and their products resulted in positive perceptions, the same phenomenon did not apply for pop-culture. Although the Chinese young people admitted having quite a lot of contact with the Japanese pop-culture, such as music, movies and TV-series, they did not necessarily have considerably positive attitudes towards it. It seemed to improve people's views towards Japanese culture on a small scale, but since the movies, books and music seemed to be targeted to the Japanese people, whose mindset was seen as being different, the respondents did not feel connected to them.

Overall, the different opinions among the respondents seem to be explained through the sources of information, experience and contact. It seems that the negative perceptions towards Japan as a political entity derive from school, media and movies, which all represent the official discourse of the government. The positive perceptions and "in-group" affiliations appear to come from media and their personal experience with both the Japanese people and their technology and culture. But although this is what the previous analysis suggests, the sources are not efficient to prove this. Thus, this area still needs further research.

It occurred from the analysis that the younger generation was relatively self-conscious in a way that they were able to perceive both differences and similarities between themselves and the Japanese. The respondents were able to consider the Japanese as belonging to their "self" in some, but at the same time still perceive them as a positive or negative "other" in other aspects. They had also noticed that the negative history with Japan does indeed make them feel more patriotic and connected to their own country,



but they also felt that the government sometimes uses this “chosen trauma” as a strategical tool to spark nationalistic feeling.

Although the interviewees were aware of the negative history between the two countries, they believed that this is not the only thing that characterizes Japan and the Japanese. Their answers reflected that in some areas Japan was considered as belonging to their “self” and the people who are only able to see Japan as the negative “other” were perceived as being different and belonging to an “out-group”. These were mostly people from older generations and with a lower education level. The respondents felt that these people’s attitudes were solely based on the negative history and the stories that they had heard. On the contrary, the group of respondents had had actual contact with Japanese people and therefore their opinions didn’t only derive from other’s experiences, but also from their own contact with the Japanese people, their culture and technology.

## CONCLUSION

The formation of the Chinese self-identity through the interaction with “others” and foremost with the Japanese has been researched and explained by many studies (Suzuki 2007; Atanassova-Cornelis 2012). Nevertheless, most of them are based on the assumption that the Chinese public views Japan as the negative and monolithic “other”, and fail to analyze individual opinions and attitudes concerning complicated and controversial matters in Sino-Japanese relations. There is also little evidence that this anti-Japanese sentiment applies to young and highly educated people. Therefore, the aim of this thesis was to see how the educated Chinese youths perceive Japan and the Japanese and how this relates to the “self” and “other” framework.

The analysis suggested that the respondents have really diverse and elaborated opinions when it comes to Japan and the Japanese; and that their attitudes towards Japan depend on the particular topic discussed. The interviews indicated that although Japan was mostly considered as the “other”, this was not solely based on negative differences but also positive ones. These positive differences were mostly related to the Japanese people, culture and technology and the main things that the respondents pointed out were the politeness of the Japanese people, their delicate ways of thinking and the high quality of their products.

One of the most interesting findings was that the interviewees were very self-conscious and were able to consider the Japanese as belonging to their “self” in some and as the “other” in different areas. But although they did perceive some similarities between the Chinese and Japanese culture and even suggested that the two countries could one day unite, their attitudes turned more negative when the topics moved away from culture to history and politics. They felt that the memories from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century, which Callahan (2004) describes as the century of humiliation, are still vivid in people’s minds and the fact that the Japanese leaders have not sufficiently apologized for their actions is enhancing the negative image even more. In addition, they felt that the whole Japanese mentality is different from the Chinese and that this is something that is really difficult to change. This indicates that the respondents were able distinguish between Japanese culture, technology and other spheres of life from Japanese politics, and also separate Japanese people from their politicians.

The respondents' views and their more elaborative attitudes towards Japan seemed to be explained through several factors, such as age, education, experience and personal contact with the Japanese. It appeared that the negative perceptions towards Japan as a political entity derived from school, media and movies, which all represent the official standpoint of the government. The positive perceptions seemed to come from media and from having personal contact and experience with the Japanese people, their products and culture. As all of the interviewed students had had contact with Japanese people, they were able to identify themselves as belonging to the same "self" with the Japanese in some, but still see the negative aspects about Japan in other areas. The interviewees pointed out that this differentiates them from older generations and from those with a lower education who they felt had a more negative attitude towards Japan and the Japanese.

Since the number of interviewees was relatively small in this thesis, it is not possible to make generalizations for the whole population. This research simply indicates that the respondents in this research have very elaborative opinions and while they consider Japan as being the "other" in most aspects, they are still able to see them as a positive "other" or as a "self" in others. The author suggests that this topic should be further researched to make generalizations and to see if the different groups in the Chinese society do perceive Japanese differently and whether their opinions differ depending on the subject matter discussed.

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# **EXTRAS**

## **Extra 1: Interview Topic Guide**

### **Introductory questions:**

1. How do you like Japan?
2. What about Japanese pop-culture and their products? Their economy?
3. How much do you use their products? Listen to their music, watch their movies?

### **Explanations, going deeper:**

4. Why do you/don't you like Japan?
5. History (ask for explanations)
  - a. WWII, Nanjing, etc.
  - b. Explain some historical event related to Japan
6. Politics

### **Information sources:**

7. Where did you learn about it?
  - a. Parents
  - b. School
  - c. Media
  - d. Friends
  - e. What have they told you? What have you talked about?
8. What do you think is the official standpoint towards Japan?

### **Patriotism and differences among the general population:**

9. Patriotism
10. Differences between different generations
11. Differences between different educational backgrounds

### **Ending remarks:**

Do you have anything to add?

## **Extra 2: List of interviews**

### **Interview 1**

December 19, 2015; Tsinghua University, Asian Youth Exchange Center

Interviewer: Kai Kreos

Interviewee: Jing, female, 23 years old, major in environmental engineering

Length of the interview: 18min 36sec

### **Interview 2**

January 17, 2016; Tsinghua University, Asian Youth Exchange Center

Interviewer: Kai Kreos

Interviewee: Chen, male, 24 years old, major in hydraulic engineering

Length of the interview: 24min 47sec

### **Interview 3**

January 17, 2016; Tsinghua University, Asian Youth Exchange Center

Interviewer: Kai Kreos

Interviewee: Huan, male, 24 years old, major in electrical engineering

Length of the interview: 36min 5sec

### **Interview 4**

January 18, 2016; Tsinghua University, Asian Youth Exchange Center

Interviewer: Kai Kreos

Interviewee: Li, male, age: major in international journalism

Length of the interview: 20min 51sec

### **Interview 5**

January 18, 2016; Tsinghua University, Asian Youth Exchange Center

Interviewer: Kai Kreos

Interviewee: Ting, female, 23 years old, major in international journalism and communications

Length of the interview: 21min 52sec

### **Interview 6**

January 18, 2016; Tsinghua University, Asian Youth Exchange Center

Interviewer: Kai Kreos



Interviewee: Zhen, female, 24 years old, major in earth sciences

Length of the interview: 21min 01sec

### **Interview 7**

January 19, 2016; Tsinghua University, Asian Youth Exchange Center

Interviewer: Kai Kreos

Interviewees: Ai, female, 23 years old, major in software engineering

Length of the interview: 29min 32sec

### **Interview 8**

January 19, 2016; Tsinghua University, Asian Youth Exchange Center

Interviewer: Kai Kreos

Interviewees: Chun, male, 24 years old, major in software engineering

Length of the interview: 29min 32sec

### **Interview 9**

January 19, 2016; Tsinghua University, Asian Youth Exchange Center

Interviewer: Kai Kreos

Interviewee: Peng, male, 24 years old, major in chemical engineering

Length of the interview: 21min 44sec

### **Interview 10**

January 20, 2016; Tsinghua University, Asian Youth Exchange Center

Interviewer: Kai Kreos

Interviewee: Shu, female, 23 years old, major in mechanical engineering

Length of the interview: 21min 18sec

## KOKKUVÕTE

Käesoleva bakalaureusetöö eesmärgiks oli välja selgitada, kuidas suhtuvad Hiina noored Jaapanisse ja kuidas suhestub see Neumanni (1996) “mina” ja “teised” teoreetilise raamistikuga. Kuigi Hiina rahvusliku identiteedi kujunemist läbi suhtluse “teistega” ja eelkõige Jaapaniga on käsitlenud paljud uurimused (Suzuki 2007; Atanassova-Cornelis 2012), põhinevad need kõik eeldusel, et Hiina avalikkus näeb Jaapanit kui negatiivset ja monoliitilist “teist”. Seejuures ei ole varasemad tööd suutnud analüüsida individuaalseid arvamusi keeruliste ja vastuoluliste teemade osas ning pole tõestanud, et selline negatiivne suhtumine iseloomustab ka Hiina kõrgelt haritud noori. Antud uurimustöö keskendub seega just kõrgharitud Hiina noortele ja üritab kvalitatiivse sisuanalüüsi abil analüüsida nende suhtumisi ja mõtteid.

Uurimustöö esimene peatükk annab ülevaate uurimuse teoreetilisest raamistikust. Seejuures keskendub autor esiteks rahvusluse ja rahvusliku identiteedi tekkimisele läbi suhtluse “teistega” ning selgitab seejärel täpsemalt seda, kuidas on välja kujunenud Hiina rahvuslus ja nende “mina” ning millist rolli mängib selles Jaapan. Sellele järgneb uurimusraamistiku ja metodoloogia kirjeldus, mis annab ülevaate uurimisprotsessist. Nimelt intervjuueriti antud töö tarbeks kümmet Tsinghua Ülikooli magistritaseme tudengit ning viidi seejärel läbi kvalitatiivne sisuanalüüs, mille tulemusi analüüsiti lähtudes “mina” ja “teised” teoreetilisest raamistikust. Bakalaureusetöö analüüs on jagatud kahte suuremasse alapeatükki, millest esimene annab ülevaate noorte vastanute üldisest suhtumisest Jaapanisse ning eristab seejuures kultuuri, iseloomu ja tehnoloogia ning ajaloo ja poliitika vahel. Teises alapeatükis otsitakse põhjendusi neile suhtumisele.

Analüüsi käigus selgus, et uurimuses osalenud noored tudengid olid väga eneseteadlikud ning nägid Jaapanit väga mitmekülgsest. Kuigi Jaapanit nähti üldiselt kui negatiivset “teist”, ilmnes, et olenevalt ajahetkest ja käsitletavast teemast nägid noored enda ja Jaapani vahel ka mõningaid positiivseid erinevusi ja isegi sarnasusi. Seejuures suutsid vastanud eristada Jaapani kultuuri, tehnoloogiat ja muid valdkondi poliitikast, ja mitte peegeldada Jaapani poliitikute tegusid ja otsuseid kogu populatsioonile.

Kuigi intervjuueritavad suutsid näha Hiina ja Jaapani vahel positiivseid erinevusi ja ka mõningaid sarnasusi, muutus nende suhtumine oluliselt negatiivsemaks, kui teemad liikusid kultuurilt, tehnoloogialt ja inimestelt ajaloo ja poliitika suunas. Seejuures tundus tudengite negatiivne nägemus Jaapanist pärinevat enim ajaloolisest perioodist,

mida kirjeldatakse ka kui häbistuse ajastut (Callahan 2004), ja eelkõige sündmustest, nagu Teine Maailmasõda ja Nanjingi massimõrv. Samas tundsid intervjuueeritavad, et tänane poliitiline olukord ja Jaapani liidrite käitumisviis tugevdab seda negatiivset nägemust veelgi.

Noorte vastanute kaalutletud mõtteviis tundus olevat selgitatav läbi erinevate faktorite, nagu vanus, haridus, kogemus ja otsene kontakt jaapanlastega. Selgus, et negatiivsed nägemused pärinesid eelkõige koolist, meediast ja televisioonist, mis kõik väljendavad Hiina valitsuse ametlikku seisukohta. Positiivsed nägemused tulenesid vähesel määral meediast, kuid eelkõige isiklikust kontaktist Jaapani inimeste, toodete ja kultuuriga. Intervjuueeritavad tundsid, et nende noor vanus, kõrge haridustase ja kontakt jaapanlastega on neil võimaldanud välja kujundada väga mitmekülgse arvamuse Jaapanist, ning et just see eristab neid ka vanematest generatsioonidest ja madalama haridustasemega inimestest.

Kokkuvõttes võib väita, et uurimuses osalenud noorte tudengite mõttemaailm oli üsnagi keeruline ja mitmekülgne, kuid erinevalt varasematele uurimustele väidab siinne, et kõik hiinlased ei näe Jaapanit kui vaid negatiivset "teist". Läbi viidud intervjuud vihjasid hoopis sellele, et kõrgelt haritud Hiina noorte arvamus ja suhtumine on erinev olenevalt sellest, millist teemat käsitletakse. Samas on antud uurimuses kasutatud valimi suurus liiga väike, et teha üldistusi. Seetõttu vajab antud temaatika veel edasist uurimist.

## **Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks**

Mina, Kai Kreos,

1. annan Tartu Ülikoolile tasuta loa (lihtlitsentsi) enda loodud teose „The Highly Educated Chinese Youths Attitudes Towards Japan – Explanations According to the „Self“ and „Other“ Framework“,

mille juhendaja on Urmas Pappel (MA),

1.1.reprodutseerimiseks säilitamise ja üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemise eesmärgil, sealhulgas digitaalarhiivi DSpace-is lisamise eesmärgil kuni autoriõiguse kehtivuse tähtaja lõppemiseni;

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Tartus, **16.05.2016**