

Preface

This publication is a result of the Second International Conference held at the University of Selye János in Komárno (Slovakia) on September 12, 2014, “Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danube: EU Integration between Slovakia and Hungary from a Local Border Perspective (Part II)”. The conference was organized by the University of Selye János and the Japanese research group supported by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. The purpose of our joint project is to investigate the ethnic symbiosis system in the Mid-Danube region. We intend to research this system in the ethnically mixed area along the boundary of Slovakia and Hungary, from the viewpoint of historiography, national identity, religion, and the everyday life of its inhabitants.

Our concept of “transboundary symbiosis” was formed during the preceding joint project (2010-2012) by means of joint researches, field surveys and exchanges of views with researchers in Slovakia and Hungary¹. According to this concept, the possible tension in the interethnic relationship could be solved, in the long term, not by ethnic separation policies but by the construction of a multidimensional symbiosis system with the underlying condition of ethnically mixed residences. Based on this concept, our joint project intends to review the conventional approaches and investigations and research the real symbiosis system through field surveys. Utilizing the position of a third party (as Japanese researchers) we would also like to offer a new compound recognition to ethnic problems.

10 researchers from Slovakia, Hungary and Japan read their papers at the conference on September 12, 2014. During the morning we

¹ We published the book with the title “Transboundary Symbiosis over the Danube: EU Integration between Slovakia and Hungary from a Local Border Perspective”. Slavic Eurasian Studies No. 27, Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, Sapporo, March 2014, 136 p. This publication is the continuation of that.

had five presentations with discussions and after lunch we listened to another five presentations until 5 o'clock. Even after the closing of the conference all participants continued to exchange their views. We had almost 12 hours of intensive common academic space full of intellectual discussions.

This publication is based on the papers presented at the conference. According to the contents we divided them into two parts. In the first part titled "Historiography, history, discourse" Dr. Dušan Kováč (Institute of History at the Slovak Academy of Sciences) discusses the issue of Slovak and Hungarian national narratives and discourses from an historical perspective, Prof. Štefan Šutaj (University of Pavol Jozef Šafárik) analyses the common views and confrontations in the understanding of Slovak and Hungarian historians and Dr. Gabriela Dudeková (Institute of History at the Slovak Academy of Sciences) points out controversial interpretations in the Slovak and the Hungarian historiographies. Prof. Susumu Nagayo (Waseda University) and Prof. Barnabás Vajda (University of Selye János) takes up concrete historical examples; the former describes the naming process of Bratislava in 1919 and the latter analyses how the media in (former) Czechoslovakia reported the Malta Meeting in 1989.

In the second part, "Census, statistics, identity" Prof. Osamu Ieda (Hokkaido University), basing his paper on the national censuses in Hungary of 2001 and 2011 presents a statistical analysis of the data of the Slovak minority and Prof. Tadaki Iio (Josai University) considers the relationship between social capital and religion in Slovakia. Using questionnaire surveys, Prof. Tatsuya Nakazawa (Tokai University) discusses the compound national identity of students at the University of Selye János and Dr. Eva Győriová Baková (Ľudovít Štúr Institute of Linguistics at the Slovak Academy of Sciences) clarifies the situation of bilingualism in Komárno. Finally, Dr. Yuko Kambara (the University of Kitakyushu) analyses, basing her work on ethnographic research, the political consciousness of Hungarian minority elites in

southern Slovakia using the key word “symbiosis-spolužitie”.

We hope that our publication will make some contributions toward clarifying the different aspects of the “transboundary ethnic symbiosis”.

Before and during the conference Japanese participants were asked more than once by Slovak and Hungarian colleagues why they are interested in the ethnic problems of Slovakia and Hungary. The question is a good one. Japanese researchers do not consider these problems as problems of the “Other”. Japan’s relations with neighboring countries and nations have recently taken on a more serious character. The investigation of cases in Slovakia and Hungary from various viewpoints helps Japanese, and indeed, researchers of any background to find a better way of understanding one another. In this context the transboundary symbioses is also “our” problem.

Editors