

THE 20TH CENTURY THROUGH HISTORIOGRAPHIES AND TEXTBOOKS

CHAPTERS FROM JAPAN, EAST ASIA, SLOVENIA
AND SOUTHEAST EUROPE



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Preface

This volume is a product of the four workshops we conducted as part of the Second Bilateral Joint Research Projects between Slovenia and Japan, which took place in Ljubljana and Tokyo from 2014 to 2016 with the financial support of the Slovenian Research Agency and Japan Society for Promotion of Science (JSPS). Our joint research was given the title “A Comparative Analysis of the 20th Century in Slovenia and Japan through Historiography and History Textbooks”.

The results of the First Bilateral Joint Research Project were published in Ljubljana in 2013 as a book entitled *School History and Textbooks: A Comparative Analysis of History Textbooks in Japan and Slovenia*¹. At the First Bilateral Joint Research Project the following five points were discussed:

- 1) A comparison of the changes in the systems of history education and textbooks after Slovene independence in 1991 and after World War II in Japan from the viewpoint of regional history and national history,
- 2) Considering Slovene history education in the Former Yugoslavia and Japanese history education in East Asia from a wider perspective,
- 3) The possibility of history textbook studies as a field of area studies,
- 4) The formation of a network between historians and history teachers in each country,
- 5) The promotion of confidence-building between historians and linguists.

The Second Bilateral Joint Research Project started on the basis of the above-mentioned discussions. The main purpose of the Project was to compare the great changes of the 20th century in Slovenia and Japan through not only the

1 Shiba, Nobuhiro, Gabrič, Aleš, Suzuki, Kenta, Lazarevič, Žarko (eds.). *School History and Textbooks: A Comparative Analysis of History Textbooks in Japan and Slovenia*. Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2013.

countries' respective history textbooks, but also their historiography from an interdisciplinary point of view.

The 20th century is considered a very significant period in historiography. The whole century was marked with deep geopolitical, economic and social changes. State politics, economies and societies took on new shapes through many transformations, and new forms of economic and social life were introduced. In the case of 20th century we can distinguish two turning points; two watersheds which strongly affected historical developments in regional terms. The first one was WWI and WWII and the ensuing postwar reality and the second was the end of the Cold War (the transition period) with the subsequent collapse of the communist regimes in Europe and Asia and Soviet Central Asia, which in East Asia transformed itself into the communist party led capitalism we see today in China and Vietnam or remained basically unchanged, as in North Korea. Each of these events had a significant influence on creating new historical identities on the level of societies, interest groups and individuals, since the changes in geopolitical terms, statehoods and political and economic regimes were far-reaching. The establishment of a new identity framework that would enable different societies and individuals to legitimize their positions in the new social-political reality was a continuing process and an integral part of the historical developments in this century. This process did not emerge all of a sudden, but was created over time and under specific social circumstances - to which it also had to adapt. History was and is still an important factor, which we emphasize here as the assertion of our main thesis. From the aspect of society as a whole as well as its political, economic and cultural elites and individuals, the question of the historical substantiation of the political, cultural, social and economic character of societies had now become very important.

Such changes did not occur only on an internal level or on the level of individual states/societies, but also within the international framework. Our thesis was that after each great change, the analyzed regions were faced with the processes of reinterpretation of history due to the changes in the societal system(s) of values, priorities and perceptions. Furthermore, we claim that these reinterpretations were first elaborated in the historiography and gradually transmitted to the history textbooks. In a way, we can talk about the "battle for history", the "battle" for the interpretation of history from the aspect of the socio-economic positions of interest groups or individuals, with the intent of legitimizing their current positions, relations and interactions - also on the international level within the framework of international relations. The notion of the international environment and international relations is very important from the aspect of both analyzed regions. The basic concept of the project therefore represented a comparative and multi-disciplinary research study and interpretation of the

genesis, dynamics and typological process structure of identity concepts in Japan and East Asia and in Slovenia in comparison to the Southeast European region.

Our aim was to carry out an interdisciplinary historical and linguistic comparative analysis of changes and the prevalence of predominant historical discourses (coexistence or conflict relation) from the viewpoint of contents, re/interpretations and linguistic structural characteristics. With this we focused on the definition and comparison of changing re/interpretations in the national historiographies/monographs, on inter/national history as a whole, and the reflections of these changes in the history textbooks printed after World War II in the above mentioned two different cultural environments and sets of values. Analyses of such societal contexts are important for the understanding of the social mentality as well as the role of history in a given society in order to better understand the “battle for history”. The basic research issue of the project was precisely the interaction between the social environment and the structures, contents and interpretations of history at the level of historiography and history textbooks and their mutual interdependence in historical perspective on both the national and the international level. We could not necessarily attain all objectives, but are confident that some positive results may have been produced nonetheless.

Nobuhiro Shiba – Žarko Lazarević