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 Hungary. 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

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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) pointes 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