

FROM COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND CULTURAL TRAUMA TO CONTEMPORARY SCHOOL HISTORY TEXTBOOK NARRATION OF COLONIAL PERIOD IN LITHUANIA

KAROLĖ MIULLER

Vytautas Magnus University

E-mail: karole.miuller@vdu.lt

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on understanding connection between cultural trauma in the aspect of collective memory and its depiction through narration in history education. In this paper, the depiction of the Soviet Period and sovietisation in Lithuanian high school history textbooks "Laikas 12", part I and II was overviewed with the threefold theory through threefold methodological framework: hermeneutics, semiology, and frame analysis, focusing on how narration is created through language use. Textbook narration showed very clear role definition between perpetrator state (the contemporary Russia) and victim (Lithuania) through heavy usage of adjectives and figurative wording, thereby creating a continuous narration.

Keywords: collective memory, cultural trauma, history narration, history education, history textbooks, colonialism, post-colonialism, Soviet Lithuania, Soviet period.

INTRODUCTION

Studying how past is being understood in present has a triple meaning. Firstly, it helps to see the outlines of how past is being retold; secondly, it shows how the past influences the present; thirdly, it helps to forecast how the past might influence the future. History studies have drawn attention especially in second half of 20th century post-colonial period, when the modern nation formation and legitimization of existence was considered particularly extensively. During this period, the importance of

collective memory shared among citizens became an important target of governments for implementing state-followed ideology. Assmann (Assmann 2000, 50–52) suggests differentiating collective memory into communicative, cultural, and political memory. According to Assmann, longer than communicative memory, cultural memory lives on in the so-called “past culture carriers” – for example, memory halls, museums, national holidays, or textbooks.

The goal of this study is to understand how collective memory through cultural trauma is understood and depicted in history textbooks. This article seeks to answer the following questions: what is the connection between cultural trauma in the aspect of collective memory and depiction of it through narration in school history textbooks? How can it be investigated from theoretical perspective? In this case, research is focused on Soviet period in Lithuania. This paper aims to provide a theoretical and methodological framework for history textbook analysis with a particular emphasis on depiction of colonial period and then presenting a case study of Lithuanian history textbook “Laikas 12”, part I and II by Kapleris et al. issued by Leidykla Briedis.

HISTORY NARRATION

History narration, collective memory and trauma are contently re-entering international discourse, while many authors have expressed their thought on them. The coming sections seek organizing information and refine the essence. Firstly, a differentiation between academic history and historical politics / popular history / memory should be made. This paper predominantly focuses on the latter. History is not an unquestionable truth, but rather a construct of interpretations by those who write it. In other words, history is a construct: a historic narration (Polletta 2009). Ergo, key narrative of the story depends on the choice of events / cases that are either emphasized or downplayed; the starting and ending point of the story are crucial as well (Louch 1969, 69). Proper understanding of historiography of the given subject is critical to any scholar, especially since a social scientist is usually bound to conducting research building upon already completed historic research (Kumpis 2014, 39). History narration is especially important for post-colonial states still struggling with legitimizing their existence and independence. In many cases, challenges lie not only in legitimizing state’s independence internationally or by law, but as well as (re)building self-esteem and national identity. In this process, history always plays an important role of evidence. Putting reality into language is another problem. One expression is enough to change the meaning, as perception is

visible in word selection (Barthes 1968). This is how hermeneutic tradition comes into matter, – as Gadamer’s (2013) concept of fusion of horizons. White argues that written history is more than facts: “historical narration and conceptualization depends, ultimately, on the preconceptual and specifically poetic nature of their perspectives on history and its processes” (2014, 4). In other words, narration can depict intentions and ideology of a scholar or an institution he worked for. History narration can be found in different fields, and one of them is the history taught in secondary schools by means of history textbooks.

COLLECTIVE MEMORY, TRAUMA, AND POST-COLONIALISM

According to Halbwachs, memory is formed in society because people only remember, recognize, and locate their memories in society, and depending on how individuals’ thoughts interact with each other, the nuances of memory change because their perceptions are structured social arrangements (1992, 38). One of subdivisions of collective memory, according to J. Assmann, is cultural memory, which exists in the so-called “past culture carriers” such as texts, monuments, images, rituals etc., but can also be perpetuated by living beings such as teachers, priests, shamans (2000, 50–52). Considering the assumption that collective memory can thereby remain unchanged (despite possibilities of different interpretations) becomes an apprehension of the current discernment of reality. As mentioned previously, textbooks, especially for history teaching, can be used to preserve and transmit collective memory, thus becoming “past culture carriers”. Moreover, textbooks usually have a direct link to the government. Sharing the same type of narrative of collective memory connects people and collective feelings become important.

The concept of trauma was channelled into sociology from psychoanalysis by S. Freud in the 20th century. This idea gained grounds, and among the most prominent proponents of studies theorizing this concept (and its relationship with collective memory) are J. C. Alexander, R. Eyerman, B. Giesen, N. J. Smelser, and P. Sztompka (Alexander et al. 2004). These scholars introduced the term “cultural trauma”. Cultural trauma occurs, when members of a group feel they have experienced a horrific event that leaves an ineradicable stain on their group consciousness, permanently marking their memories and amending their future identity in fundamental and irreversible ways (Alexander et al. 2004, 1). The perception of reality changes their *modus operandi*, thus leaving a direct connection between a traumatic experience and perception of reality and decision making concerning the future.

N. Smelser claims that cultural trauma is a memory of a certain situation or event, which the representatives of the same group understand as: a) negatively affecting group, b) impossible to forget, c) threatening the existence of a society (or group) or influencing its essential culture, such as values, group identity, the basis of collective pride, etc. (2001, 18–19). This definition once again emphasizes – what is *actually* traumatic is not the event itself (which can be even imagined), but its memory and perception, which is characteristic of society’s everyday life (Štutiniene 2002, 58). Hirschberger also argues that “the tragedy is represented in the collective memory of the group, and like all forms of memory it comprises not only a reproduction of the events, but also an ongoing reconstruction of the trauma in an attempt to make sense of it” (2018, 1). Hence, the re-living of trauma can be seen through talking about it, for example, in textbooks. Consequently, it can be assumed, that cultural trauma is a sudden break in the usual social or cultural order of a group (society), and its consequences irrevocably change the group (society), its everyday life and its self-perception. Talking about trauma in sociological context keywords always re-entering the international discourse are colonialism, slavery, holocaust etc. This paper is confined to the problem of colonial trauma of former colonized states in post-colonial period.

The collective memory and the past are the key components while talking about post-colonial states trying to recover from traumatic colonialization period. National sentiment and international legitimization are exceptionally important moments in post-colonialism. Since colonialization is a cultural trauma, an analogy between the process of recovery in therapy and decolonization can be drawn (Lloyd 2000, 212). Nationally followed history narration is one way to form national identity, which is elaborated by collective memory. The emergence of a post-colonial reality goes hand in hand with the desire to forget (or emphasize) the traumatic colonial past. This desire takes many historical forms and is driven by a variety of cultural and political motives. Postcolonial amnesia is one of the common essentials for historical self-creation urge, the need for a fresh start, the erasure of painful memories of colonial rule (Gandhi 1998, 4 from Lloyd 2000, 213). There are couple of reasons why addressing historical trauma is important. Firstly, in this case, collective memory can be understood as a complex phenomenon, which is simultaneously influencing and being influenced by its surroundings and social context. Secondly, it is crucial to discuss it and to acknowledge trauma, since healing and acceptance can only happen, if the history is being treated as past events that have taken place but no longer have too much influence over the present. Thirdly, talking about trauma and not ignoring it helps to create a neutral (if correctly

implemented) hypsographical narration about the past without leaving out or ignoring major incidents. Lastly, it is important to accept the past as something that has happened and has left scars, but not necessary as continuing to dictate the future. The example of textbooks plays an especially decisive role in East Asia. Textbooks narrations and the depiction of colonial period has inspired attention, especially in the example of the Japanese colonial period.

HISTORY TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

The field of textbook analysis is not new; studies have been conducted applying linguistic scholarship (Kramsch 1993; Byram 1997, etc.), or problem and cultural content analysis (Kim & Kim 2009; Son & Diletti 2017; Chappelle & Risager 2013, etc.), as well as applying critical curriculum theory (Apple 2018). Weinbrenner (1992) suggests a division into 3 types of schoolbook research: process-oriented; product-oriented; reception-oriented. For example: critical discourse studies as “scholars conceptualize language as a form of social practice” (Fairclough, 2001 from Weninger 2018). As texts are part of social practices, analysis of these texts (history textbooks) allows to gain an insight into social and ideological backgrounds. “Content analysis, critical discourse analysis and multimodal analysis offer different but complementary methodologies for analysing linguistic and visual representations in textbooks” (Weninger 2018). This paper will focus on a threefold methodological framework: hermeneutics, semiology, and frame analysis focusing on how narration is created through language use.

Hermeneutics is used to deepen the understanding of a certain social phenomenon. Hermeneutics gives meaning to importance of language and its use, so the peculiarities of the text’s language can be seen. It is used to determine sentiment of narrative through choice of language used (e.g., adjectives), and what symbolic meaning it holds to the reader. “Saussure’s theory is considered as the proponent to the thought that language does not reflect reality but rather constructs it” (Yakin & Totu 2014). To be able to grasp the small nuances by critically reading and analysing the text is crucial. In addition, Goffman’s theory of framing is used to analyse the depiction of perpetrator country and the colonial period in history textbooks. The results should reveal how the colonial period (i.e., cultural trauma) is being articulated and represented in history textbooks so continuing to foster collective memory. At the same time, it should reveal how the already existing collective memory influences the creation of history narrative, which subsequently dictates the narration contained in textbooks.

LITHUANIAN HISTORY EDUCATION: TEXTBOOKS “LAIKAS 12”, PART I & II

History is a mandatory subject in Lithuania up until the 10th grade (or the 2nd grade of the secondary school). The national examination is not mandatory for secondary school graduation. Students who plan studying humanities usually choose history and take the examination, since universities usually require history examination results, unless the person is applying for a major in natural sciences. State-approved plan for history teaching stipulates that the part concerning the Soviet occupation is being studied in the 12th grade. Schools have the freedom to decide what textbooks they use for teaching in class; nevertheless, the textbooks must be state-approved. Usually, textbooks are written by history specialists working together in groups depending on their field of research. Textbook itself, after being approved as such by the state, is being distributed by private publishers. For this case most used textbook for the 12th grade (the 4th gymnasium grade) was chosen.

The textbook (part I and part II) covers the 20th and 21st centuries in both world and Lithuanian history. It is divided in 8 (4 in each part) chapters with additional two parts (short biographies of the major figures and glossary). The 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th chapters are mainly focused on the events related to SSRS, its occupation of Lithuania, the Soviet period in Lithuania. Combined, there are 303 pages of material in both textbooks. By means of three-fold methodological framework employing hermeneutics, semiology, frame analysis, the content concerning Soviet Lithuania will be explored in the next chapter.

CONTENT OVERVIEW

As noted above, we can evaluate the information of Soviet period in Lithuania in textbooks, following three steps: mood of narration, the used language indicating deeper symbolic meaning and by seeing, what frame this period is being fit into. As Smelser has argued, the period of remembering traumatic experience is as important as the traumatic event itself. Thus, information on Soviet times in Lithuania presented through narration of the textbook through mood and wording of this period gives an insight into how Lithuania frames Soviet Russia, and how it (re)creates the collective memory through textbooks which are, as Assman suggests, “past culture carriers”, and live on for generations longer than the communicative memory. Narration in the textbooks is being presented in chronological

way. Each greater part is divided into smaller subdivisational topics, and two additional study chapters (a conclusions chapter and an examination preparation chapter). This allows to observe how the textbook follows a given form, dividing each chapter into similar/equal number of topics, pages. The content itself can be divided into different sections: written content (the main chronological narration of events, additional information, exercises (questions) for students, concept explanations) and visual material (maps, chronological visualization of the key events, important persons, caricatures, illustrations visualizing the text).

Table 1. Narration about Soviet Union in textbook “Laikas 12”, part I & II

1. tabula. Stāstījums par Padomju Savienību mācību grāmatā “Laikas 12” I un II daļā

Chapter	Chapter 3 WWII	Chapter 4 Lithuanian society during WWII	Chapter 5 Society during the Cold War	Chapter 6 Lithuanian society: from the Soviet period until liberalization
Subchapters	3.1 Europe and the world on the eve of the Second World War 3.2. The beginning of World War II. The victories of the aggressors in 1939-1940. 3.3. USSR-Germany war 3.4. The end of the Second World War: the victories of the anti-Hitler coalition in 1942-1945 3.5. The consequences of the Second World War	4.1. Lithuania's international policy on the eve of the loss of independence 4.2. Loss of Lithuania's independence in 1940 4.3. Soviet annexation and sovietization of Lithuania 4.4. Anti-Soviet resistance and the June Uprising of 1941 4.5. Lithuanian society during the Nazi German occupation	5.1. The beginning of the Cold War 5.2. The Evolution of the Soviet Union: From Warming to Stagnation 5.3. The domination of the USSR in Eastern Europe 5.4. Arms races and local wars. 5.5. The collapse of the communist system	6.1. Lithuanian society during the Stalinist regime 6.2. Lithuanian partisan war against the USSR 6.3. Soviet Lithuania in the years of warming and stagnation 6.4. Peaceful opposition to the regime in the Soviet era 6.5. “Singing revolution”
Additional subchapters	Chapter Summary Exam preparation	Chapter Summary Exam preparation	Chapter Summary Exam preparation	Chapter Summary Exam preparation
Volume	30 pages	28 pages	30 pages	30 pages

Special attention is dedicated to the period of Stalin's rule, as it concerns the most of the collectively traumatic experiences: guerrilla wars and deportations, persecution of 1947–1951 (211), where the entire nation lost its relatives and loved ones. The sentiment of fighting for freedom, partisan wars and constantly resisting Soviet system is being reinforced. Moreover, the effect of forced collectivization as trying to delete Lithuanian culture, language, customs is being underlined. The additional information provided in the boxes next to the main text is especially significant, and acts as the mood-setting part of narration. Important parts shaping the period of the Soviet Union are introduced.

The narration of freedom fighters: “autonomous movement for freedom is the highest form of resistance” (128), “even those who did not participate wanted to brag about being part of it” (129). The 23 June rebellion for independence: “Tormented by brutal terror of Bolshevism, Lithuanian nation decides to build its future on the basis of national unity and social justice” (130). Writing about the so-called true meaning of guerrilla war, it was highlighted that Soviet regime was propagating false information about how the guerrilla fighters were violent bandits indulging in alcohol consumption, while in reality they were brave men fighting for independence. Although the war was lost, morally a triumph was sought in keeping the national sentiment alive and proud (210). This narration allows to see how installation of heroic figures is being used to celebrate the independence movement. In the circumstances when Lithuania at the time was a weak, colonized country, giving the examples of heroic figures, whose names are still celebrated today, helped to ignite a feeling of pride. In other words, textbook constantly reinforced the idea of uprisings and sentiment of Lithuanians to break free from the regime. The idea that no one liked being part of Russia is showed by including information about other nations fighting against the Soviet regime (175). “Singing Revolution” is also introduced and employed as a way of revoking national sentiment and a collectively achieved goal of freedom from the Soviet system.

The narration also underlines that the system was not working as perfectly as the Soviets tried to render it to the outside world: there was a constant food shortage, food itself was of very poor quality – and did not match the propaganda statements (175). Building up on narration of a corrupt system, the textbook includes the speeches from respected politicians, for example, the speech of V. Landsbergis referring to Soviet Union as “zombie Kingdom” (189). The explanation of *homo sovieticus* term, trying to paint everything in just black and white (215) shows how narrow-minded the elites were, trying to keep the people. Finally, the idea of Russia being a perpetrator state along with the stance that Lithuania still has not seen sufficient rightful redress of Russian wrongdoings even in post-colonial period, with

the example of 1991 massacre executors at Medininkai border patrol post (Medininkų žudynių vykdytojai) who have not been given up by Russia for sentencing (225).

LANGUAGE

Textbook narration uses handful of recurring phrases, adjectives to set the mood for the reader. It straightforwardly spells out, which side is good, and which is not. The sentences include adjectives and nouns of descriptive value, thereby creating a mood of helplessness of Lithuanian nation, while underlining the brutality of Soviets during the occupation (especially during Stalinist period). It clearly states that Soviets were unjust, cruel. Especially the outstanding and repetitive vocabulary has been used to describe the period of 1938–1947: falsely (*melagingai*), lie (*melas*), blackmail (*šantažas*), theatre / fakeplay (*teatras*), script/ed (*scenarijus*), performance (*spektaklis*). These words help to establish that the pre-occupation period and the occupation as an event itself was an idea that Stalin had implemented against the will of Lithuanians, whose country was occupied after they were tricked into it through an ultimatum.

Usage of word “allegedly” (*esq, neva*) has a special meaning in terms of declaring the fact that Lithuanians were tricked into losing sovereignty without being aware of actual occupation. It was also used as a way of showing how the Soviet side tried to deceive the rest of the world acting as a democratic state, while it was not. Other keywords, which are important, as they contribute to sharpening the mood of narration, are: historic injustice (*istorinė neteisybė*), absurdity (*absurdas*), predatory (*grobuoniškas*), ruthlessly (*negailėstingai*), without justification (*be jokio pagrindo*), repressions (*represijos*), terror (*teroras*), mass and cruel (*masiniai ir žiaurūs*), red terror (*raudonas teroras*). Furthermore, they are seen as important, since the usage of these words was heavy, nevertheless, decreasing in weight, as the topics of pre- and *de facto* occupation and repression changed to other Soviet society topics. On the other hand, the other party was described as the unfortunate (*nelaimingieji*).

The repeated depiction of Soviets as not trustworthy and lying fraction, can be observed through the words, such as: fictitious (*išgalvotus, pramanydavo*), concealed (*nutylėjo*), given a pretext (*suteikti pretekstą*), provoked (*surengta provokacija*), staged (*surengtas spektaklis*), deceived (*apgauti*), illegal (*neteisėtą*), misled (*klaidino*), assumptions (*prielaidas*), falsified (*suklastotas*). Once again, while describing the will of Lithuanians, it was stated: the purpose did not reflect the nation’s will (*tikslas neatspindėjo tautos noro*), to break Lithuanian population (*siekdama palaužti Lietuvos gyventojus*).

Likewise, inscribing words in quotation marks, such as “voluntarily” (“*savo noru*” and “*savanoriška*”) allows to create a more sarcastic or even cynical narration. Furthermore, the parallel was made – that being part of the Soviet Union was same as being in a prison. On the other hand, resistance movements are described as a heroic act: patriotism (*patriotizmas*), the natural right to liberty (*prigimtine laisvės teisė*), pre-occupation education about the nature of liberty (*neokupacinis auklėjimas apie laisvės prigimtį*).

NARRATION

The narration followed by the textbook depicts a clear line of collective memory re-creation. This sentiment is created with reinstalling the importance and the pain, just as discussed above through remembering and re-living the traumatic experience by way of retelling the story. Another method of creating a stronger collective understanding is through reminding the students that the story is their own, as it happened to their parents, grandparents. This is achieved through using the wording such as: our nation/country (*mūsų valstybė*) and motherland (*tėvynė*). This establishes a wakeup-call-like situation and reminds the students that the history they are studying is about their own ‘home’, as they are part of the Lithuanian nation. Moreover, through collective memory re-creation, and the re-telling of the cultural trauma through Soviet period in Lithuania, we can observe a clear division into the perpetrator state, which is bad, and the victim state, which is repressed, but has never given up fighting for independence, eventually re-gaining sovereignty.

CONCLUSIONS

Building upon the insights discussed above, the history education or, more accurately – history textbook analysis shows how narration supported by the state portrays a cultural trauma. The certain narration of trauma then manifests itself in the collective memory. Including theoretical framework of collective memory and cultural trauma into the analysis is crucial, since only after understanding these two concepts, other research results can be fully understood. Hence, this shows what kind of policy is being pursued, while talking about the decision-making and national identity, and allows to see, what past means to the state now. Moreover, it is impossible to see collective memory as an unchanging variable, since it is always influenced by its surroundings, while simultaneously influencing its surroundings.

“Laikas 12”, part I and II history textbooks cover the Soviet period extensively and continuously, while the narration of the textbooks shows the usage of adjectives for creating a dramatic atmosphere. Likewise, the use of terms such as “our nation”, “your country” serves as a kind of wake-up call for the readers, constantly and repeatedly reminding them that the presented history is actually their history. The most adjectives are being used while describing Soviet Russia and its actions during the main periods of occupation. The text constantly reminds the reader of how untruthful and dysfunctional Soviet Union was, underlining Lithuanian fight for independence after being tricked and forcefully annexed. Nevertheless, the usage of adjectives might also implicate an easier comprehension of the text and more entertaining narration, which would keep the student focused. Furthermore, visualizations are also an important part of creating a narration and impact on the student, the understanding of collective memory, but due to this paper’s limited format, a further study would be dedicated to interpretation of the caricatures, illustrations, etc.

Thus, talking about history education analysis, it is important to consider that the reality (how the problem of colonialization and the post-colonial period) can be understood and accepted differently by the students depending on their surroundings. Textbooks are just one of the four major key points in absorbing-reflecting-creating collective memory. Depending on the environment each student exists in, as well as the political and ideological orientation of the teacher, this can influence the elite-followed narration, which attempted to be transmitted through the textbooks.

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NO KOLEKTĪVĀS ATMIŅAS UN KULTŪRAS TRAUMĀM LĪDZ MŪSDIENU SKOLU VĒSTURES MĀCĪBU GRĀMATU NARATĪVAM PAR KOLONIĀLAJIEM ASPEKTIEM LIETUVĀ

KAROLE MILLERE

Vītauta Dižā Universitāte

E-pasts: *karole.miuller@vdu.lt*

ANOTĀCIJA

Šis pētījums tiecas izprast saikni starp kultūras traumām kolektīvās atmiņas aspektā un tās attēlošanu vēstures izglītības naratīvā. Šajā rakstā tika apskatīts padomju perioda un sovetizācijas attēlojums Lietuvas vidusskolas vēstures mācību grāmatas “Laikas 12” I un II daļā, izmantojot trīskāršu teoriju ar trīskāršu metodisko ietvaru – hermeneitiku, semioloģiju un rāmēšanas analīzi, koncentrējoties uz to, kā naratīvs tiek veidots, izmantojot valodu. Mācību grāmatu vēstījums skaidri parādīja vainīgo valsti (mūsdienu Krievija) un upuri (Lietuva).

Atslēgvārdi: kolektīvā atmiņa, kultūras traumas, vēstures naratīvs, vēstures izglītība, vēstures mācību grāmatas, koloniālisms, postkoloniālisms, padomju Lietuva, padomju periods.

Kopsavilkums

Šis pētījums koncentrējas uz teorētiskas pieejas konstruēšanu, lai izprastu saikni starp kultūras traumu kolektīvās atmiņas aspektā un tās attēlošanu vēstures izglītības naratīvā. Kultūras atmiņa, kas ir kolektīvās atmiņas sastāvdaļa, dzīvo tā sauktajos pagātnes kultūras nesējos, piemēram, vēstures mācību grāmatās. Turklāt kolektīvajai atmiņai un tās izmaiņām ir svarīga loma sabiedrībā un tās nākotnē. Kolektīvās atmiņas izmaiņām ir dažādi iemesli, piemēram, traumas. Straujas pārmaiņas, kas rodas traumatiskas pieredzes dēļ (piem., koloniālisms), kolektīvo atmiņu maina bez iespējas atgriezties tās sākotnējā formā. Kultūras traumas maina ne tikai sabiedrības locekļu pašapziņu, bet arī veidu, kā tiek saprasta pasaule un realitāte, tādējādi ietekmējot lēmumu pieņemšanu. Tas ir redzams vidusskolas vēstures mācību grāmatās. Šajā rakstā tika apskatīts padomju perioda un sovetizācijas attēlojums Lietuvas vidusskolas vēstures mācību grāmatās “Laikas 12” I un II daļā. Mācību grāmatas stāstījums parādīja ļoti skaidru lomu sadalījumu starp vainīgo valsti (mūsdienu Krievija) un upuri (Lietuva), tekstā izmantojot intensīvus īpašības vārdus un tēlainus formulējumus, veidojot nepārtrauktu stāstījumu.