Study on Spirituality ∞ Art ∞ Digitalization in Japanese Art Textbooks in the Late 20th Century

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1. Purposes and Background of This Study

This study examines the themes on ‘spirituality’, ‘art’ and ‘digitalization’ edited into Japanese art textbooks published in the late 20th century. In this study, ‘spirituality’ is referred to the motifs on peace, ‘art’ is referred to the motifs on traditional culture, and ‘digitalization’ is referred to digitalized art textbooks.

Among the systematic studies of Japanese textbooks with regards to art education, there are such studies as follows: Transitions in Art Education in Japan by Nakamura (1979), History of Art Education in Japan by Yamagata (1969) and Study on Modern Art Education in Japan: Meiji Period by Kaneko (1992). These studies, however, examine art textbooks that were published more than twenty years ago. There have been no other systematic studies on art textbooks for junior high schools in Japan.

The concept of the ‘textbooks’ referred to in this study is based on the definition adopted in Article 2 (Definition of Terms) of the Law Concerning Provisional Measures for the Publication of Textbooks enacted in 1948. The Article defines that a textbook is: “a book for children or students to be used by teachers as a main teaching material for a school subject, which is organized and arranged according to the framework of school curriculum for elementary school, junior high school, high school, secondary education school and the like schools; it has to either have been officially approved by the Minister of Education or have its copyright owned by the Ministry of Education”.

Every student enrolled in junior high school has possessed art textbooks regardless of personal preference, except for a certain time period just after the end of the Second World War. The total number of junior high school students enrolled from 1951 to 2001 is approximately 108 million (data released by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications; estimated total population of Japan as of October 2016 is 126,930,000). This means that virtually everyone born after the Second World War has possessed one. Moreover, these textbooks are the mirrors that reflect ‘the understanding of arts’ in each time periods, although it may depend on each editor’s views at the time of publication. Also, they play a part of establishing the opportunities for international dialogue through artistic cultures. In this sense, it is no exaggeration to say that art textbooks are valuable assets that have helped to create a new world in the 21st century.

The school education in Japan is operated based on the common national Educational Guidelines. The Educational Guidelines were first established in 1947, and the content has been reviewed and revised by the Ministry of Education in order to address the changes in society with the developments of the times. The Educational Guidelines for junior high schools in Japan was revised eight times: in 1952, 1958, 1969, 1977, 1989, 1998, 2008, and 2017.

The author focuses on the following seven editions of art textbooks used in the arts at junior high schools: 1) 1956 editions; 2) 1962 editions; 3) 1972 editions; 4) 1981 editions; 5) 1993 editions; 6) 2002 editions; and 7) 2012 editions. These were published in the respective years subsequent to the revisions of the Educational Guidelines. There are a total of 21 post-war textbook publishers. The latest art textbooks, published in 2016, were published by three publishers. In order of Publisher Number, they are: Kairyudo Publishing (first screening, 1954: Publisher Number, 9; hereafter, ‘KR’), Mitsumura Tosho Publishing (first screening, 1951: Publisher Number, 38; hereafter, ‘MT’), and Nihon Bunkyo Shuppan (first screening, 1955: Publisher Number, 116; hereafter, ‘NB’).
The author has conducted research on Japanese art textbooks published in the second half of the 20th century for the last nineteen years (since 1998), and has written papers in an academic journal published by the Japanese Society for Education through Art for the last fifteen years (since 2000). The subtitles and publication years of these are as follows: 1) “Study on Japanese Planar Artworks and Art Appreciation Education” (2000); 2) “Study on Western Planar Artworks and the Significance of Art Education” (2001); 3) “Study on Japanese Buddhist Statues and the Relationship between Art Textbooks and Sensibility” (2002); 4) “Significance of Three-dimensional Artworks” (2003); 5) “Study on Planar Design Works” (2004); 6) “Study on Digital Archiving and Three-dimensional Design Works” (2005); 7) “Study on Planar and Three-dimensional Craftworks” (2006); 8) “Study on Historical Architecture and Sensibility” (2007); 9) “Study on Visual Media Works” (2008); and 10) “Study on the Changes in Color Motifs and Associated Works” (2009). The above ten papers were dedicated to each artistic subject matter. After the tenth paper, based on the results from the previous studies, the author re-examined the issues of post-war school education (e.g. ‘spirituality’) in a cross-sectoral manner. The subtitles and publication years of these are: 11) “Study on Peace Motifs” (2010); 12) “Study on ‘Democracy’ Motifs” (2011); 13) “Study on the Descriptions of ‘Traditional Culture’ and Associated Works” (2012); 14) “Study on ‘Computerization’ and Art Education” (2013); 15) “Study on ‘Ageing’ and Art Education” (2014); 16) “Study on ‘Internationalization’ and Art Education” (2015); 17) “Study on ‘Adaptation’ and Art Education” (2016); and 18) “Review on the Last 19 Years of Studies on Art Textbooks and the Trends of Art Textbooks in 2016 (2016).

As of 2017, the first sixteen papers listed above are published online in PDF format, of which 1 to 13 are also available both in English and Japanese (http://www.ae-archiving.jp/art-e/).

2. Spirituality: Issues of School Education and Motifs on ‘Peace’

From the distribution of education system in 1872 to the 21st century, the issues of the modern Japanese school education can be summarized as follows. From the beginning of Meiji period to the end of World War II, Japan aimed to build the equal national power to those of the powerful Western countries. The issues of school education during this period were ‘to increase the wealth and military power’ and ‘to encourage new industries’. To fit in to this, the issue of art education was set ‘to nurture skillful eyes and hands’. After the defeat in the war in 1945, the former changed to ‘peace and democracy’ and the latter to ‘the harmony of society and the formation of individuals’. In the second half of the 20th century, the issues shifted to the ‘internationalization/ advanced information society/ aging society’ and the ‘basic and foundation/ one’s own culture/ individuality’. The author considers that the ultimate issues of school education in the 21st century are ‘to conserve the global environment’ and ‘to prevent the end of mankind’, and that those of art education are ‘to form individual “answers”’, ‘to mutually understand’, and ‘to develop the new ways of thinking’.

The Constitution of Japan was issued in 1946, and it has been known as the ‘Peace Constitution’. At the beginning, it reads “Japanese people hope permanent peace…”. Under the Constitution of the Empire of Japan, however, an image titled Bullets (Figure 1) are featured as drawing examples in Primary School’s New Sketchbook for the 5th Grade Males, which was the government-designated textbook published in 1910. Similarly, thirty three years later during the war, Sketchbook for the Primary School 4th Grade Males features examples such as Gun (Figure 2), Fortress (Figure 3) and the Memory of boarding on a battleship. From a few examples like these, one can clearly understand the social roles of textbooks and their impacts.

The word ‘peace’ is generally referred to a peaceful state of society without a war or a state of mind without struggles or worries. In this paper, the word is used in the former sense. ‘War painting’ is a genre in the artistic expression and can include paintings that praise the war by glorifying the military services, report on the war situation, or denounce the brutality of the war. This paper includes war paintings as ‘peace motifs’ as long as their content is against the war.
It should be reminded that the international society was carefully watching the Japanese textbooks. In the paper “The Problems of Education (Des Problemes de l’Education)”, which starts with the sentence “UNESCO has just finished its first meeting (p.211)”, Wallon (1947) stated as follows: textbooks “were used to impregnate young children with the fascistic idea” (p.218) and thus it is a “challenge to take peace among people into consideration” (p.218). Wallon (1947) pointed out that “the textbooks for history, geography, and citizenship education are relevant to the international understanding” (p.218), and emphasized that, for Germany and Japan in particular, it is necessary to inspect their textbooks for other subject areas as well.

As shown in the contrasts of the textbook editing before and after the Second World War, the enriched art learning under school education system cannot be separated from the ‘peaceful’ state of a society. Although it was under the ‘Peace Constitution’, the art textbooks in the 1950s were not edited with the focus on ‘peace’. This influence lasted for a long time.

The peace motifs saw a great improvement in the 2016 editions compared to other editions published after 1956. It is the evidence of the Japanese art textbooks’ continuous improvement in pursuit of realizing the purpose of UNESCO (founded in 1946) to “promote the world peace and the welfare of humankind” and achieving the mutual understanding of Western and Eastern artistic culture, which was the focus of UNESCO’s textbook conference.

In the above-mentioned paper “Study on Peace Motifs” (Yamaguchi, 2010), the author created a two-page list of eleven captions on Guernica by Picasso appeared in textbooks from 1972 to 2006 and five descriptions on the same work quoted from general art books. The first appearances of Guernica are: ‘KR’ in the 1972 edition (Figure 4); Gendai Bijyustu-sha in the 1981 edition; and ‘NB’ in the 1993 edition. In the 2012 edition, ‘KR’ spared two pages for the theme “Peace, Life, and Tie” and featured Guernica with a two-line caption using one third of the page; it was the first time ‘peace’ was ever adopted as a theme in the history of textbooks. In the latest 2016 edition (Figure 5), the theme has been changed to “Guernica” with the subtitle “What we can learn through art”, and is given 4 pages. The picture itself takes 2.5 pages of the space. On the right hand side, the process of creation and the different versions of sketches are featured in the space of 1.5 pages. The caption is approximately 1 page long. It passionately describes that an artistic expression is “to share the experience, feel, think, and act” (p.102). ‘MT’ kept exactly the same content for the 2012 and 2016 editions (Figure 6). It spares 2 pages for the work itself and features black-and-white photos of Picasso showing a vivid look and his hands while painting. It juxtaposes a poem “To Live” by Shuntaro Tanikawa at the bottom of the double-spread page. It is distinctive that it does not offer any interpretation of the work. The following four pages are spared for the work itself; apart from the small gaps on the sleeves in which the title, size, artist’s name, location and a short description are written, it is the largest image of Guernica ever printed on a textbook. The intention must be to let students understand from the work itself. ‘NB’ kept the same title “Guernica speaks” and featured the same works and six photos for both 2012 and 2016 editions (Figure 7). The subtitle, however, has been changed from “Picasso’s thoughts on venturing into a masterpiece” (2012 edition) to “Time, Society and Art” (2016 edition). The arrangement and interpretation are changed accordingly and a new point on how to appreciate the work is added. It is distinctive that it features a photo of the city at the time of the attack, “Destroyed City of Guernica”; it could be otherwise difficult for students to imagine the situation only from the sketches and the final work.
The descriptions of *Guernica* are important for students to understand the nobility of peace and the brutality of war. Although this study did not examine thoroughly, it is desired that not only paintings but also sculptures and designs with peace motifs to be edited in a better way. If a caption was biased, whether by a subjective ‘protest’ or an objective ‘tragedy’, the impression that students receive would be completely opposite. It is no exaggeration to say that the attitudes of textbook editors, which are reflected in their choice of artists, their understanding of art history, how they relate society and art, how they evaluate formative qualities in artistic expressions, etc., influences not only Japanese artistic culture but also the future of Asia and the rest of the world. In addition, it is an important responsibility for teachers to utilize textbooks. Therefore, it can be said that the quality of art teacher’s instructions is now challenged more than ever.

### 3. Art: ‘Traditional Culture’ and Learning of Art

Generally speaking, ‘tradition’ means a system which a group of people, society or organization has created over a long period of history, or a spiritual status which lies in the center of such system. ‘Culture’ means everything that humans produce. This includes material objects, systems, or spirituality.

A “Survey on Traditional Culture” was conducted in September 1972 in Tokyo by Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) to promote peace and welfare for human beings. This was in response to a request from the headquarters of UNESCO. The eight experts compiled the summaries of the survey and two symposiums *Dento Bunka to Gendai (Traditional Cultures and Modern Times)* and *Nihon ni okeru Dentouteki Keitai no Bunka ni kansuru Kenkyu (Study on Japanese Traditional Culture)* into a 247-page book titled *Gendai Nihon ni okeru Dento Bunka (Modern Japanese Traditional Culture)*. In this book, traditional culture falls into six categories: visual art; literature; drama and dancing; music; architecture; and crafts and art in life (Asian Cultural Centre for UNESCO, 1974). Japanese traditional culture has been fostered by ‘adaptability to nature’ including volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, typhoons, tsunamis, and
seasonal changes, and by ‘wood culture’, which formed a keen appreciation of impermanence. Traditional culture has been supported by the continuous craftsmanship and passed down by people.

In this paper, the author only examines: 1) the descriptions on the textbooks in which ‘traditional culture’ is used as themes, headings, or in the main texts; and 2) the list of works featured in the pages under the title of ‘traditional culture’. In order to collect statistics on the concept of traditional culture, for this particular study, the author has included art and craft works from Japan and abroad as well as works with artists’ names and historical architectures.

The total numbers of the word ‘tradition’ appeared in both ‘KR’ and ‘NB’ are: 0 in the 1956 editions; and 1, 2 and 1 in the 1966, 1972, and 1981 editions respectively. The numbers increased to 4 in the 1993 editions, surged to 14 in the 2002 editions, and increased to 19 in the 2012 editions.

Although ‘craftworks’ increased sharply in the 2012 editions, ‘pictures and comics’ showed a sharper increase and became the category most included. ‘Buddhist statue and 3Ds’ decreased to 5.

The first overseas items that appeared under the themes relating to ‘tradition’ were crafts made in Peru and chima jeogori (traditional Korean clothing) in the 1993 editions (i.e. 2 items in total). In the 2002 editions, 7 items are from Asia (2 from Thailand, and 1 each from India, China, South Korea, Mongolia, and Singapore). This exceeds the total of 2 from western countries (1 each from France and Italy). In the 2012 editions of ‘KR’, ‘NB’, and ‘MT’, 6 items are from western countries: 2 from the USA; and 1 each from Italy, France, Canada, and Austria. Asia decreases to 3 (2 from Cambodia, and 1 from Indonesia). 1 item from Australia is also added. It can be said that traditions are captured from a global point of view, since the countries above are located worldwide. The essence of traditions is especially seen in items of indigenous people, such as the Hopi and Ainu. Items are also carefully picked from all ages: the oldest are paintings in Lascaux Cave, France; a flame-style pottery from the Japanese Jomon era; historical picture scrolls of Ban Dainagon items; and Kimba, the White Lion, a recent comic book by Osamu Tezuka. The textbooks also contain items from several fields (except design) including caricature, fresco, folded screens, Japanese and Western paintings, comic books, Buddhist statues, 3D art, world heritage sites, temples, tea houses, room decorations, fireworks, dishes, fishing boat flags, costumes, shadowgraphs, lighting, and Japanese sweets. As shown in these examples, there is an effort to help students understand traditions from various perspectives. Looking at each textbook including the 2012 editions, however, it still requires a further improvement on the balance of numbers in terms of countries and fields featured.

‘Traditional culture’ means a system that a group of people, society, or organization has created over a long period of history or a spiritual status that lies in the center of such system. Putting together all three editions of ‘KR’ and ‘NB’ (1995, 2002, and 2012 editions) and the 2012 edition of ‘MT’, the featured works covers most of the world; it can be said that they capture ‘tradition’ from a global perspective. They also capture the essence of traditions by putting items of indigenous people in and out of Japan. Furthermore, the items are carefully picked from all time periods. The oldest are cave paintings in the Lascaux Caves of France, Japanese flame-style pottery from the Jomon era, picture scrolls, and recent comic books. In addition, as seen in the decorations of Chopsticks from China, the textbooks refer to the importance of traditions from other countries. Though further improvement is required in the balance of countries and fields within each textbook, the featured works clearly show that the textbooks have attempted to help students understand ‘traditional culture’ from various perspectives.

4. Digitalization: The Latest Situation of Digital Textbooks in Japan

The author’s co-researcher Kyoichiro Ando created a website Current Status and Issues towards the Practical Use of Art Digital Textbooks (sic) and stated that “utilizing the digital educational environment with such tools as a tablet, e-lessons were offered in Tahiti guaranteeing the same quality lessons as the mainland” (2014). Ando conducted a survey at schools in 2013 and examined the teachers’ views on digital art textbooks (hereafter, ‘DAT’). In the presentation in October 2014, Ando summarized the users’ views as follows: ‘what a waste’ on cost-effectiveness; ‘more works’ on burden-effectiveness; and ‘annoying’ on progress-effectiveness. He concluded that digital art textbooks are still in the process of development.

The author conducted surveys at the Japan’s largest specialist exhibition Education IT Solutions EXPO in Tokyo organized by Reed Exhibition Japan Ltd in 2016 (the seventh exhibition with 680
exhibitors) and in 2017 (the eighth exhibition held in May with 800 exhibitors). The author interviewed public relations offices from all of the three art textbook publishers, and collected materials including the ones from other industries.

Sanseido, Hitachi and other 12 companies including the three art textbook publishers (i.e. ‘KR’, ‘NB’ and ‘MT’) cooperated and created a ‘line of CoNETS digital textbooks’. They aimed for the realization of ‘one system: common gateway, operability and teaching material management’ and ‘linkage between terminals, storing history, creation of original e-learning resources and connections between subjects’. Although the three publishers published digital textbooks in 2016 and 2017 (i.e. ‘KR’, Digital Textbook for Junior High School: Trial Version; ‘MT’, Teachers’ Digital Textbook/Teaching Material: Junior High School; and ‘NB’, Digital Textbook for Teachers, Junior High School Art, Trial Version), none of them seem to have carried out essential renewal.

On another occasion, the author interviewed about the real situation of digital art textbooks with a relevant party, who is familiar with copyright issues, under anonymity. The reasons behind the lack of renewal can be summarized to the following four points. Firstly, the publication fee of a work on DAT is separate from the copyright fee for paper-format textbooks and teaching manuals. Secondary, DAT is sold on a server and transmitted publicly unlike DVDs; therefore, the contract is complicated and a managemental backup is necessary. Thirdly, the subjects such as Japanese, math, social studies, science and English have answers for each module and thus it is possible to create a dual program for teachers and students and to operate on the basis of one tablet for each student. On the other hand, art is based on themes; it is difficult to program as themes and students’ expressions are diverse. Lastly, although “equal education” is claimed, there are gaps in the tax revenues of each local authority and in the allocated budgets of each education board. The local authorities are divided into two: those who have digital whiteboards, in which DAT images can be projected or can be written with a pen, in every school and those who have not. Behind this issue is the impact of the economically trapped situation due to the prolonged recession. The mounting problems listed above exist in the hardware side and thus it cannot be overcome only by the effort of textbook companies, state and private junior high schools’ art teachers’ study groups or academic societies on art education.

5. Conclusion

Over half a century, Japanese art textbooks have developed the spirituality of ‘peace’ and promoted a cross-cultural understanding through art or ‘traditional culture’ of the world. If one looks at digitalization or the future-oriented digital art textbooks, however, the reality is that we are facing obstacles such as publication fees, copyrights and educational budget. In conclusion, it can be said that it is required that the art-education organizations in the world, researchers and practitioners should work together to promote research and practice and to transform the movement in terms of quality.

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