

Introduction to the Translated Texts

The present volume has evolved as an effort to translate a collection of articles originally published in Slovenian in 2019 under the title *Procesi in odnosi v Vzhodni Aziji – zbornik EARL* [Processes and Relations in East Asia – the EARL Collected Papers]. These articles, initially part of a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the University of Ljubljana, aimed to acquaint the Slovenian public with the intricacies of the field of Asian studies and to create an interdisciplinary volume within our academic space, where such work had been lacking until then. Covering a range of topics from ideational commonalities, cultural heritage, language, and scripts to internal challenges and international relations, the EARL (East Asia Resource Library) Collected Papers reflected the collaborative research efforts of two central institutions at the University of Ljubljana: the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The present volume is a translation of a selection of those articles that appeared in the above-mentioned book, namely those that were written by the members of the Department of Asian Studies of the Faculty of Arts. The reasoning behind the translation is simply that despite the subsequent global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting geopolitical landscapes, the relevance of the work endures and the texts thus still merit a translation into English, making them accessible to a broader, international audience. In this way we would like to offer a snapshot of the work being done at the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Ljubljana, and showcase its quality and diversity.

Almost thirty years ago, under the guidance of the Faculty of Arts, the leading humanities institution in Slovenia, a group of scholars, dedicated to Japanese Studies and Sinology, established the Department of Asian Studies. This department later expanded its focus to include Korean Studies, a testament to the dedicated work of linguistic and cultural experts. The complexities of East Asia have become a focal point on the global stage for the past three decades, marked by an intense redistribution of power. As the Asia-Pacific region gains prominence, reshaping the balance of economic and political power, these changes pose challenges related to material and ideological paradigms.

We believe the work being done at the Department is more important now than it has ever been, as the East Asian societies have become architects of progress in the 21st century, with a significant impact on global economic and political dynamics. Understanding these transformations requires comprehensive perspectives that consider individual cultural and social backgrounds, beyond economic and ecological aspects, to include the political and social dimensions of ideologies and culturally conditioned values. These values form the epistemological foundations of enduring institutions in these societies. A deeper global understanding of the East Asian region is therefore of utmost importance.

The translated texts cover three thematic areas: philosophy and intellectual history, politics and economy, and language and writing.

The first section, on philosophy and intellectual history, examines the different aspects of East Asian thought and ideological traditions that form the common ideological heritage of the region. While I – Marko Ogrizek – present its traditional interactions throughout the East Asian region, Téa Sernelj offers a critical analysis and interpretation of the central document of the renewal of traditional values, the so-called “Confucian Manifesto”, which in the middle of the 20th century encapsulated the East Asian revival of Confucianism and its concomitant culture, and Jana S. Rošker provides a contrastive analysis of the Confucian revival in Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China.

The next section, on politics and economy, contains three articles, each describing a particular problem or challenge facing the political region of East Asia and the different countries in the region. Nataša Visočnik’s contribution presents the issue of population ageing and related immigration to Japan. Helena Motoh focuses on contemporary ideological trends in China through an analysis of the Belt and Road Initiative, while Saša Istenič Kotar presents

a topic that is – if not directly, at least indirectly – greatly relevant to our engagement with East Asia, as it focuses on the most important security-political strategies of the East Asian regions.

In the final section, on language and writing, Kristina Hmeljak Sangawa, Andrej Bekeš and Mateja Petrovčič focus on the peculiarities of East Asian languages and scripts. While Hmeljak Sangawa's paper deals with the macrostructure of pre-modern Japanese dictionaries through the lens of the relationship between Chinese originals and Japanese modifications, Bekeš's paper focuses on a broader perspective of script transformations in the countries of the Sinographic cosmopolis. The last paper in this series, by Mateja Petrovčič, is devoted to the highly topical issue of the contemporary digitization of Chinese scripts and other complex scripts in Asia in general.

The compilation of these translated texts not only marks a significant milestone in the advancement of Asian studies in Slovenia, but also serves as a bridge connecting Slovenian academia with the broader international scholarly community. This endeavour, stemming from the collaborative efforts of the members of the Department of Asian Studies, exemplifies its commitment to fostering global academic discourse and understanding. The translation of these texts into English is not merely a linguistic exercise, as it represents a commitment to sharing knowledge and insights about East Asia with a wider audience, thereby enriching the global conversation on this dynamically evolving region.

As this volume reaches readers across the world, it stands as a testament to the enduring relevance and growing importance of East Asian studies. The diverse range of topics covered in this collection – from philosophical discourses to economic challenges, and from linguistic intricacies to the digitization of scripts – offers readers a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of East Asia. This understanding is crucial in an increasingly interconnected world where the cultural, political, and economic landscapes of East Asia have significant global implications. As such, this volume not only contributes to academic scholarship but also to a deeper, more informed dialogue among cultures and nations, fostering mutual respect and understanding in our global community.

Marko Ogrizek, editor and translator

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