

# Editor's Introduction

Ross King  
*University of British Columbia*

As advertised in a “Note to Potential Contributors” from the editor in chief in *SJEAS* 19, no. 2, since autumn 2019 the *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* has redefined and narrowed its focus to concentrate primarily on pre-1945 topics on East Asia in the humanities writ large, where East Asia is construed as the former “Sinographic Sphere” or “Sinographic Cosmopolis,” including notably Vietnam. One topic of research identified in that note as offering special interest and promise was translation studies and translation history in the sinographic East Asian region. Specifically, the multifarious interactions and negotiations between Literary Sinitic and East Asian vernacular traditions over the centuries, as well as the history, role, and place of translation in traditional East Asian literary cultures, hold out great promise for rethinking and recalibrating translation studies as a field, and reconceptualizing the history of literary cultures in the Sinographic Cosmopolis in comparison with other traditions.

To that end, individual articles related to translation studies have already begun to appear in the journal (e.g., Son 2021 and Han 2021); at the same time, colleagues on the Editorial Board agreed that the journal should strive to include not only works *about* translation but also translations themselves—especially in the case of shorter but important texts (too short, that is, to warrant treatment as an independent monograph, but perhaps longer than a typical journal article). Such texts deemed deserving of translation, when accompanied by a robust scholarly and philological contextualizing apparatus, are essential to teaching and scholarship. Besides individual articles about translation and scholarly translations of carefully selected texts, the Editorial Board also agreed that occasional special issues—whether on questions of translation or dedicated to other specific pan-regional or comparative themes—were a desideratum.

Thus it is with great pleasure that we present here our first special issue, dedicated to the topic of inter- and intralingual translation in the Sinographic Cosmopolis. The first two articles concern questions of translation in Edo Japan. In the first, Rebekah Clements examines the ideas and practice of Ban Kōkei 伴蒿蹊 (1733–1806) around translation. Kōkei was especially interested in the question of how to develop “expressive and useful Japanese prose for the present,” and Clements concludes that his ideas on how to craft such a vernacular prose “were drawn from the spectrum of written languages used in Japan in his day and involved intralingual translation from classical and written forms of Japanese, as well as translation from Literary Sinitic.” In the second Japan article, Matthew Fraleigh

examines *Remarks on Poetry from Makuzugahara* (*Katsugen shiwa* 葛原詩話, 1787, 1804) by the Tendai Buddhist priest Rikunyo 六如 (1734–1801). An analysis of Rikunyo's glossing, commentary, and translation strategies poses interesting questions about the definition of *yaku* 譯 in Edo times and about the boundaries between intra- and interlingual glossing, commentary, and translation, as well as about how Edo writers "conceptualized the relationship between Literary Sinitic and their own language." In particular, Fraleigh identifies a certain concern or even anxiety on the part of Rikunyo about how well locally coined sinographic renderings of certain local/Japanese words in Sinitic poetry would travel beyond the borders of Japan: "We can see in Rikunyo's pursuit of this question his sense that sinographic terms lacking currency beyond Japan were best avoided in Sinitic poetry."

The remaining articles are about Korea. Hideto Itō's article examines the translation strategies in the fifteenth-century vernacular exegesis (*ōnhæ*) of *Mongsan Hwasang Pōbō Yangnok* 蒙山和尚法語略錄, a late Southern Song work composed in so-called *baihua* 白話 or vernacular Sinitic. It emerges that—unlike contemporary Japanese Zen Buddhist temples, which continued to be bilingual spaces where monks had exposure to vernacular and colloquial Sinitic—Korean Buddhist temples had ceased to be such bilingual spaces since the advent of the Chosŏn dynasty at the end of the fourteenth century. As a result, the Korean translator had difficulties with many *baihua* tense-aspect markers, leading to errors and mistranslations. Among other things, Itō's article highlights the need for more research on how different East Asian literary cultures grappled with different registers of Sinitic.

Ross King's article attempts to complicate facile modern-day assumptions about translation in traditional Korea, especially about the status of Literary Sinitic as a "foreign" language within the premodern Korean ecology of inscriptional practices. Practices like *ōnhæ*, *idu*, and *kugyŏl* glossing were certainly a form of translation, but were they intralingual or interlingual? And is this distinction even helpful? King argues that it likely isn't, but that what we often assume to have been *interlingual* translation in Chosŏn may well have been conceived as something more intra- than interlingual by the practitioners themselves. Moreover, the traditional Korean case forces us to include script as a key variable when thinking about intralingual translation.

Daniel Pieper's article departs somewhat from the other articles in treating post-1945 publications, but it remains directly relevant insofar as it examines contrasting modern translations from North and South Korea of *Unyŏng chŏn* 雲英傳, an early seventeenth-century fictional narrative written in Literary Sinitic. For Pieper, the widely divergent North and South Korean approaches to translating an LS text into modern Korean reveal divergent language ideologies in action and also prompt "a reconsideration of what authors at this time considered to be foreign and native written languages."

The final contribution, by Young Kyun Oh, exemplifies the kind of well-contextualized scholarly translation that SJEAS wishes to publish more of in future. Oh prefaces his translation of Yi Ok's 李钰 (1760–1815) "Folk Vernacular"

(*Iŏn* 俚諺) with an essay about Yi Ok's life, the translated text, and the significance of Yi's "Folk Vernacular" for late Chosŏn literary culture. What is perhaps most interesting here is the contrast between Yi Ok's attitude toward sinographically rendered "names of things" and that of Rikunyo as studied in Fraleigh's article. One common stereotype about Chosŏn dynasty culture, even within Korea itself today, is that it slavishly copied things "Chinese" and somehow subordinated any sense of independent identity to *sadae* 事大 or "Serving the Great," but here we find Yi Ok taking an opposite tack to his near contemporary Rikunyo and proudly "embrac[ing] the unrefined peculiarity of the local wholeheartedly into the cosmopolitan tradition." Moreover, Yi Ok was not alone in this approach in late Chosŏn, so clearly we need more comparative work on both the early modern "discovery of language" alluded to in Clements's article and the different negotiations between cosmopolitan LS and vernacular Japanese and Korean in the Tokugawa and Chosŏn periods.

Finally, on the topic of special issues, I am pleased to announce that we are in the planning stage for a special issue on traditional Vietnamese literary culture, scheduled to appear in 2025.

## REFERENCES

- Han, Christina. 2021. "Turning Songs into Poems and Poems into Songs: Interactions of Literary Sinitic and Vernacular Korean in Chosŏn Literature." *Sungkyun Journal of East Asia Studies* 21, no. 2: 210–35.
- Son, Sung-jun. 2021. "The Translating Subject beyond Borders: Relay Translations of Biographies of George Washington in East Asia in the Early Twentieth Century." *Sungkyun Journal of East Asia Studies* 21, no. 1: 83–103.