

# Preface

In the relatively long history of the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center (hereafter SRC) of Hokkaido University, Slavic linguistics has not occupied a significant place since the late Professor Shōichi Kimura (1915–1986), who was a founder of the antecedent of SRC and contemporary Slavic philology in Japan, left Hokkaido University in 1957. It is noteworthy that in 1953, in his article published in *Slavic Word* (edited by Roman Jakobson, André Martinet and Francis Whitfield) which is one of the special issues of the famous journal of the Linguistic Circle of New York *Word*, Kimura reported the situation of Slavic philology in Japan as follows:

In Japan, the study of the Slavic languages other than Russian has been completely neglected, and, accordingly, there has never existed such a thing as the study of Slavic philology as an independent academic discipline.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, activation of Slavic philology has been an important task of Slavic societies in Japan and of each Slavic scholar in the last half-century. As time goes by, thanks to the efforts of Kimura himself and his successors, Slavic philology (or linguistics in our case) has started to be recognized, though slowly, as a discipline and has begun developing and appearing in the international arena of the field especially after Japan officially became a member of the International Congress of Slavists in 1983. However, the discipline has seen no significant development at SRC, since its role was taken by other institutions and universities in Japan. Thus, it is not surprising that there has been almost no collaboration with institutions based in Slavic countries in the field of Slavic linguistics in the history of SRC. Hence, the joint symposium with the University of Belgrade entitled “The Serbian Language as Viewed by the East and the West: Synchrony, Diachrony and Typology” was a literary

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<sup>1</sup> See Shoichi Kimura, “The Study of Russian in Japan,” *Slavic Word: A Slavic Supplement to “Word”: Journal of the Linguistic Circle of New York*, no. 1 (1953), pp. 349–353.

historical event for SRC as one of the first steps in reactivating this field, which was initiated by our great precursor Professor Kimura more than six decades ago.

This collaboration was originally instituted by Ljudmila Popović (University of Belgrade) and her colleague Motoki Nomachi (SRC), the author of this passage, who collaborated with Professor Popović on several occasions before the symposium. In May of 2011, both Universities officially began collaboration on an institutional level and the symposium was the first concrete result of the collaboration based on the agreement. In the frame of this collaboration, we organized two events: the first one was a joint workshop titled “Identity Formation, Dissolution, and Reorganization in Multiethnic Societies: Toward the Establishment of a Vojvodina Area Studies,” which was held on February 2nd of 2014, at Tokyo Office of Hokkaido University. The second one was the joint-symposium mentioned above.

As for the topic of the symposium, it was not chosen by chance. It should be mentioned that the idea itself appeared in the autumn of 2006 right before my departure from Belgrade to Tokyo, during a conversation with Professor Predrag Piper (Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts) who is a common teacher and colleague of the editors. As we know, Russia has often been discussed with attempts to characterize her in the context of East and West in many fields including various (sub)fields of linguistics. However, Serbia can be also analyzed in the same manner in linguistics, because Serbia has indeed been historically situated between East and West, not only geographically but also politically, economically, and, most importantly, culturally. She has experienced the influence of both sides and, as a result of this process of amalgamation between East and West, Serbia has crystallized unique dualisms in her culture that can, in turn, be reflected in the language of the Serbs, which was a target of our diversified analysis. It goes without saying that it is impossible to analyze the phenomenon thoroughly in a single symposium with a limited number of scholars. However, our event was at least one of the first steps in tackling this highly interesting and important topic, which really

needs international collaboration with scholars of various backgrounds and for which interdisciplinary approaches will be effective. Thus, we will hopefully continue and develop this sort of collaboration from now on and it will become a good tradition of the two Universities.

This volume is basically a collection of the presentations made by the participants of the symposium, which took place on February 5th of 2014 at SRC. The original program of the symposium can be referenced at: <http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/eng/calender-2013se.html>.

In addition to the articles based on the presentations, we have also included several articles whose authors could not join the symposium for some reason.

As one of the participants of the volume, I would especially like to mention our dear colleague Shuko Nishihara (1987—2014). She originally intended to take part in the symposium as a speaker, and as an organizing staff member she helped us on many occasions. However, due to illness, she was not in fact able to participate. Later, when she recovered, she intended to submit an article for this collection of articles, but her unexpected death prevented her, forever, from writing her new article. But the editors have decided to include her article ever published, originally in Japanese, entitled “Digraphs in Sava Mrkalj’s writing system” since the editors nevertheless regard her to be a colleague who participated in the project at the early stages and was to be an important colleague with whom cooperation would be developed as a new tradition of Serbian and Japanese scholarship. Obviously, she did not have any chance to revise her article and, judging from one of the last conversations with her, she herself seemed to think that it needed revising, but after reading the manuscript, the editors have decided to publish the article as it stands in the original version.

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