

Dear friends,

I am honored to present the first volume of 'Russian Japanology Review', which is a new English digest of academic works by Russian scholars specializing in different spheres of Japanese studies – history, diplomacy, domestic politics, economics and culture. The papers of the volume have already been published in Russian in different specialized editions, mostly under auspice of Russian Association of Japanologists – the quarterly journal *Yaponskiye Issledovaniya* (Japanese Studies in Russia) and *Yezhegodnik Yaponiya* (Yearbook Japan).

The aim of this project is to broad the readership of Russian academic work in the sphere of Japanese Studies. I strongly hope that the edition will attract attention of different categories of readers, including specialists, students, practitioners and educated laymen. I would be happy to receive all possible forms of feedback that would enable us to improve the edition, which we intend to publish on a regular base.

Two works are dedicated to Japanese diplomacy. Maria Malashevskaya dwells upon the evolution of Japanese-Mongolian relations in the context of Japan's Eurasian diplomacy adopted in 1997 by the Hashimoto cabinet. Dmitry Streltsov analyzes the recent development in Russo-Japanese relations. He emphasizes the differences in strategic thinking of both countries towards economic cooperation, which has become one of the major obstacles in its further development.

Two articles address the problems of Japanese diplomatic history. Vasilij Shchepkin and Kirill Kartashov focus their attention on the ritual features as the foundation for receiving Adam Laxman's expedition, the first Russian mission to Japan. An attempt to cover the biography of Sato Naotake, the last ambassador of militarist Japan in the Soviet Union and a prominent Japanese diplomat, is made in the paper by Olga Dobrinskaya.

Another historical paper written by Aleksander Mescheryakov presents the biography by Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962), an outstanding Japanese ethnologist who gained official recognition and nationwide fame in the post-war period.

The problems of modern Japanese economy and society are addressed in the papers of Irina Lebedeva and Irina Timonina. The first author examines the influence of education democratization, the ideology of lifetime employment, government policies of supporting weak sectors on the formation of the Japan's middleclass. The second work analyzes mechanisms of government support for creative industries which pursue the goal of boosting the domestic demand, expanding the country's capacity for exports, and creation of jobs.

Three works deal with Japanese culture. Elena Dyakonova's essay considers the creative activities by Iio Sogi, the best known renga master of Japan. Ekaterina Simonova-Gudzenko's article focuses on the role and place of toponyms in the medieval Japanese political culture. The third author, Maria Toropygina, analyzes in her article the problem of selection and organization of material of two medieval poetic collections, Shinsanjurokkasen and Koyasan Kongozanmai-in tanzaku, created in the middle of the 13th and the middle of the 14th centuries.

Please, enjoy the reading. I look forward for your critical analysis and suggestions that would help us to bring you more updates on the progress of this edition in its next volumes.

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Chairman of the Russian Association of Japanologists*