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New Insights
in the History
of Interpreting

edited by

Kayoko Takeda

Jesús Baigorri-Jalón



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New Insights in the History of Interpreting

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New Insights in the History of Interpreting

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New Insights in the History of Interpreting

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Introduction

Jesús Baigorri-Jalón and Kayoko Takeda

This compilation of new research on the history of interpreting originated with the First International Symposium on the History of Interpreting, held at Rikkyo University, Tokyo, in May 2014. Researchers from diverse backgrounds gathered at the symposium to discuss an eclectic assortment of interpreting phenomena in history, covering different geographical areas (Asia, Americas, Europe, etc.) and eras (9th century to the modern day). This inclusive environment challenged participants to widen their perspectives and stimulated bold debate on how to build a historical narrative of the roles interpreters have played, how the practice of interpreting has evolved to address the needs of different historical contexts, and how understanding interpreting history is relevant to interpreters and interpreting practices in the present.

While this volume draws primarily on select papers from the Symposium, two complementary submissions were added at the thoughtful suggestion of the Associate Editor of the Benjamins Translation Library series. We are grateful to the scholars who participated in the Tokyo event and to the two additional contributors. We are also indebted to the eminent colleagues who anonymously participated in the process of reviewing the contributions, individually or as a whole. Further, we would like to acknowledge that the Symposium would not have been possible without the generous funding and support of the Rikkyo University SFR (Special Fund for Research) program, as well as the Alfaqueque Research Group at the University of Salamanca and the European Academy of Yuste Foundation.

With this volume, we wish to make a new contribution to the development of historical knowledge and research in the field of interpreting studies and beyond. Our belief is that no discipline can do without a past if it is to have a future, as attested by the long tradition of historical studies in well-established disciplines such as Law and Medicine. Through inquiry into the historical evolution of interpreting, we can situate our professional identities and practices along a continuum with the past, allowing us to strengthen our awareness of what being an interpreter means for current and future practitioners, and to better understand the nature of issues related to the practice of interpreting.

Our focus on interpreting does not necessarily mean that we advocate interpreting be examined *in silo*, as one of our contributors describes it. In fact, as many chapters of this volume evidence, interpreters have engaged in written translation and other non-interpreting tasks, such as administrative work, guide and cultural brokering, throughout history. Our attention to interpreting in this volume aims to address the deficit of interpreting-focused research in the historical studies of translation (in the wider sense). We are aware that historical research has traditionally occupied a subordinate position in interpreting studies, which itself is considered a subdiscipline of translation studies, although it is worth noting that Pöschhacker (2015:72) identifies History as one of the major topics in recent interpreting research. Significant exceptions include compilations such as Bowen and Bowen (1990) and Kurz and Bowen (1999), general descriptions of the history of interpreting (e.g. Bowen et al. 1995; Andres 2012; Delisle and Woodsworth 2012), a number of specific historical case studies, including some published by contributors to this volume (e.g. Torikai 2008; Takeda 2010; Lung 2011; Baigorri-Jalón 2014/2000), and now the pioneering Rikkyo symposium. However, Bastin and Bandia's view (2006) of interpreting as one of the "blank spaces" in the history of translation still holds true. Recent efforts to reexamine methods and approaches in translation history (e.g. *Translation Studies* 5(2) 2012; *The Translator* 20(1) 2014) still address very few cases of interpreting.

Granted, compared to translation, which handles written texts, there are much fewer records related to interpreting and interpreting activities due to the ephemerality of speech and the generally subaltern status of interpreters as agents in historical events. Nonetheless, through diligent effort in seeking and analyzing references to interpreting in historical records and personal accounts, we can paint a collective picture of how interpreting has been practiced over time and space, as the contributors in this volume demonstrate. There is, however, much uncharted territory to explore to bring the canvas closer to completion. We are still at the stage of filling the gaps. This task demands firstly the identification, construction and preservation of sources, which have thus far proven scarce and often difficult to access. Secondly, researchers must apply appropriate methodologies to decipher those sources as historical artifacts. Finally, researchers must build coherent narratives about their understanding of the interpreting phenomena, events or individuals within this historical framework.

The *raison d'être* of historical studies is to know about the past, a "territory" that can and should be explored and reassessed with a fresh look by each generation and by each researcher. It seems clear that perspectives vary according to the epoch in which researchers carry out their work and the "paradigm" on which they base their studies. History specialists may realize, by reading historical works focused on interpreters, that oral communication among individuals or groups of

different linguistic and cultural backgrounds cannot happen without intermediaries. It has been the case throughout history – and is still today – in all types of interlingual interactions. Interpreting takes place in different settings and for various purposes: from trade to colonial administration; from peaceful coexistence in multicultural and multilingual social groupings – like many of our present-day societies – to diplomacy, espionage, conflict, and war; from the circulation of news to the experience of tourism; from forced or labor migrations to international or supranational institutions. In other words, history specialists may acknowledge that this historical focus on interpreters can be conceived, rather than as a mere footnote, as an approach to history from a different angle, complementary of other types of research.

For instance, the Nuremberg trials can be seen from several perspectives: a landmark event in the development of international criminal justice; an episode of the national histories of the various participating countries; a collection of biographies of defendants, prosecutors, or judges, etc. Often missing among these approaches is an awareness that communication in the four languages of the proceedings (English, French, German, and Russian) was possible only through interpreting and that the presentation of written evidence resulted from the intellectual work of interpreters and translators. An interpreting-focused perspective of the Nuremberg trials, however, would allow us to explore the trials as an event – in fact, a succession of events – where interpreters (or *transpreters*) played various functions without which the trial could not have taken place. An analysis from this angle would reveal, for example, that if consecutive interpreting, instead of the simultaneous mode, had been the *modus operandi*, the trial would have lasted three times longer, with a potential impact on the final judgments, the implementation of international law and public opinion.

We believe that interdisciplinary and international dialogue among researchers is essential to the critical, disciplined examination of interpreting phenomena in history, which can lead to a deeper understanding of shared research interests. There are indeed differing views on how the studies of translation history should be positioned within and outside translation studies or on what approaches and methods should be applied to examine translation history *vis-à-vis* more-established historiographies (e.g. O'Sullivan 2012; Rundle 2012, 2014; St-Pierre 2012; Hermans 2012; Delabastita 2012; Bandia 2014). The consensus, however, seems to direct to interdisciplinary approaches which call for translation/interpreting historians to engage more with scholars in different academic communities that deal with history. Exchanges with researchers from different backgrounds can lead to broader contextualization and new perspectives on the functions of mediators in the studies of intercultural encounters in history.

We would also like to reiterate Pym's call (1998) for attention to people, rather than text, in research into translation/interpreting history. Here, an examination of interpreters' agency as facilitators of communication and shields against cultural shock would demand consideration of a series of elements, including: the acquisition of linguistic and cultural skills, often as a "natural" result of their social backgrounds, such as growing up or living in multilingual/multicultural settings and diasporic or migration contexts (sometimes work-related dislocations); the training (frequently "on-the-job") and recruitment for employment (where seniority or power were not always fully dependent on qualifications, but often on loyalty to the employer); and the manner in which they carried out their duties (sometimes requiring geographical mobility, the assumption of risks, and the performance of a variety of functions).

Since interpreted events always involve people, they never happen in a laboratory-like aseptic vacuum, but rather in circumstances where issues such as the personal positioning of interpreters, the power relations with their employer or interlocutors, the complex array of independent variables (such as the quality of sound and the speech style of interlocutors) that impact on their conduct, need to be taken into account when analyzing the case studies. As this volume shows, those factors involve not only the functional knowledge of the relevant languages, but also the possession of a series of norms, a *habitus*, associated with a professional code of ethics and a social identity that have evolved through time.

The chapters in this volume reflect on questions such as: What is history of interpreting about? What are (some of) its methodological approaches or how do we get to know the past? How do we incorporate interdisciplinary approaches? What do techniques and practices of interpreting in various historical periods and places reveal about the profession as we know it? How can historical research be useful for practicing or would-be interpreters?

The expression "history of interpreting" lends itself to different word games. If history is an interpretation of the past, the history of interpreting is, as it were, the interpretation of interpreting. Interpreting history could thus be understood as a specific explanation of the past or as the history of the interpreting trade or profession. The following are some of the most salient points we wish to underscore.

1. We approach the analysis of records with a view to building history bottom-up. By studying the roles of interpreters, we are echoing their voices, traditionally silenced in standard history books, rescuing them from invisibility – or, more accurately, inaudibility – and adding their polyphonic sonority to the more general portrait, as a means to foster self- and collective recognition and identity.

2. We shed some light on methodological issues. If mainstream history is built on the basis of documentary evidence, we reflect on how those records – multifarious and always fragmentary – become intelligible and useful sources only when aptly interrogated by researchers, always based on their definition of their object of inquiry and on their far from impartial subjective aims, preconceptions, or moral standpoints. Digital technologies have hugely transformed archives and records accessibility. But it seems clear that not all sources, including oral and visual records, are equally significant or reliable, so they should go through the researchers' critical scrutiny and interrogation in order to become valid instruments to provide an explanation – one among many other potential versions – of the past. Different objects of analysis require different approaches, and eclecticism has been a constant in the development of historical studies. The blurred boundaries of the fault-lines between history, sociology (the group vs. the individual), anthropology (the “other”), psychology (the influence of the irrational in decision-making) etc. may emerge in some of the case studies presented here. Thicker or thinner readings of events may also be warranted and applied.
3. Being aware that “historical truth” is a slippery concept, we aim at contributing to clarify how the social practice of interpreting has been conceived across time in different cultures and geographical or geopolitical regions, covering various historical periods, with an “ecumenical” scope and with interdisciplinary approaches. In so doing we encourage researchers to reflect not only on interpreting historical events but also on interpreting practice. In this context, we think history can help, by showing the interplay between long-term continuity and conjunctural change, relativize certain concepts or preconceived ideas, *inter alia* that not all historical accounts are equally valid.
4. We invite new research, including that of academic, “departmented” historians, to overcome the quasi monopoly of this type of research by *practisearchers*, as Daniel Gile calls them, or *histerpreters* in this particular field. This does not call into question at all some of the assets in the *bona-fide histerpreters'* tool-box, such as the fluency in more than one language, the mastering of more than one set of cultural references, or the genuine participant observers' familiarity with what the interpreting process involves.
5. New research initiatives could materialize in regular or occasional symposia devoted to the topic of the history of interpreting, in historical research seminars, or in the design of courses or modules that draw on the historical research production. More ambitiously, a handbook on the history of interpreting – although no single synthesis seems possible at this point – or the establishment of an academic journal on the topic could be interesting spinoffs of the Rikkyo Symposium.

6. An important element of a meaningful history of interpreting project includes the encouragement to create new repositories and to explore and preserve existing public archives, or those which become open or declassified, but also private ones, often at risk of being lost forever. This is part of the heritage, the surviving relics of the interpreting profession, that in our view are worth protecting in safe and accessible environments. New ethical issues may arise as to ownership and access, but discovering, cataloguing, and ferreting out the archives to produce transcripts of their contents are indeed key activities for the benefit of future generations of scholars.

There is no common approach in the historical case studies presented here, due to the diversity of authorial voices, the heterogeneity of instances that have been explored, and the variety of primary and secondary sources available and methods that have been used. While trying to build history may be an endeavor we all share, we do not do it under the conditions of our own choosing, as Karl Marx would say: the usually quite limited number of evidences and their relative significance and reliability, have a bearing in the potential results. We hope this book will inspire follow-up conferences and publications on the history of interpreting, and lead to more international dialogue across different academic communities, which could result in mutually beneficial and enlightening findings.

Rachel Lung starts our volume by taking us farthest back in history – the latter half of the first millennium in East Asia. Lung presents the geopolitical and historical backgrounds of “Sillan interpreters” and the multiple roles they played in various interlingual and intercultural exchanges, mainly between Tang China (618–907) and Japan. Particular focus is placed on the references to “Sillan interpreters” in the diary of a Japanese monk, Ennin, who traveled in 9th-century China. Lung analyzes the various tasks “Sillan interpreters” engaged in and finds them to be mostly non-interpreting activities. Referring to different interpretations of “Sillan interpreters” by prior research, she then casts a question about what the terms “Sillan” and “interpreters” actually meant in those days and alerts us to the evolving nature of terminological conceptualization for interpreters and interpreting practices. All of these arguments can be extended to other instances over different places and times, as Lung briefly draws parallels with interpreters in the Roman Empire.

Icía Alonso-Araguás touches upon the need of interpreters in the Spanish colonial empire in the Americas, who were needed in order to make explorers and administrators understood, impose their laws, evangelize, trade and rule the new territories. She draws on primary and secondary sources to trace the evolution of the recruitment and performance of interpreters. In particular, the degree of sophistication of the regulations enacted by the Spanish Crown on interpreters

should be noted. The reading of the *requerimiento*, a legal procedure whereby the Crown's representative imposes the cession of property over the territory by the assumed "sovereign" of that land, shows interpreters as quasi-diplomatic intermediaries. Official interpreters appointed by the Crown were quite a modern symbol of recognition of the Other and the Other's right to be heard. The examples given by the author about interpreters' recruitment and involvement show the continuity of standard practices, like kidnapping, but also historical breakthroughs, such as the pioneering definition of an interpreter's *habitus*.

Marcos Sarmiento-Pérez chronicles interpreters who acted in Catholic tribunals of the Spanish Inquisition as instruments of sociopolitical control. Religious orthodoxy was a unifying element of all the political subjects under the Spanish Catholic monarchs and Inquisition tribunals were a branch of the executive power to suppress heresy, once all subjects who professed other religions had been expelled from the metropolis and the colonies (Jews in 1492; Muslims in 1609–10). The Spanish monarchs focused on a great deal of their international effort on the Muslim Ottoman Empire and rebellious Protestants in the Northern provinces of the Spanish Crown. Inquisition tribunals mirror the mosaic of conflicting religions from the 15th to the 18th centuries. Interpreters were needed when subjects did not speak the language of the Tribunal (Castilian Spanish, although Latin was the official religious language), so foreigners' confession and potential conversion narratives were done through language intermediaries, not only in metropolitan Spain but also in the colonial empire.

Focusing on a similar time period as the authors of the previous two chapters, **Torikai Kumiko** discusses *tsūji* (interpreters) mainly stationed in Nagasaki, Japan, from the 17th to 19th centuries. She provides an overview of previous historical research on *tsūji* and proposes the use of fiction as a tool to look into their roles and experiences. This approach underscores the interest of checking literary narratives against standard historical sources. Focusing on Yoshimura Akira's four historical novels, Torikai examines how interpreters are depicted as they faced the challenges and risks of mediating Japan's contact with Western powers. This chapter may invite a didactic use of fiction for discussing the important role interpreters play in history, the effort they make to address the evolving needs of interpreting, and the personal dilemmas they may experience with issues of identity, loyalty, and fidelity.

David B. Sawyer describes how, as the United States grew immensely in power during the early twentieth century, the State Department addressed the need to prepare its diplomatic interpreters by founding a Corps of Student Interpreters. Using the administration's archival records, the author discusses the selection process of student interpreters, the in-country language training they received in Chinese, Japanese, and Turkish, and their career progression within the Department. The

chapter focuses on the program in China by drawing on both administrative and personal accounts. Memoirs of student interpreters show the difficulty they experienced in their learning of “exotic” languages. The descriptions of the training reveals how different it is from what we would expect nowadays: namely, the training consisted of immersive language acquisition rather than the systematic development of interpreting skills. As Sawyer suggests, this study might inspire historical examinations of state-run interpreter training programs in other countries.

Sergei Chernov bases his research on primary sources from the Russian national archives in Moscow to present first-hand information on the first experiments of simultaneous interpreting in the Soviet Union. In an attempt to resolve a long debate about whether the West or the USSR was first in simultaneous interpreting, he proves that the technical revolution of simultaneous interpreting had parallel theaters of application in both sides almost overlapping in time: the West, represented in the 1920s and 1930s by the League of Nations and the International Labor Organization, and the USSR, represented by the Communist International (Comintern). The use of Soviet-designed simultaneous interpreting devices in Moscow in 1928 almost coincides with the application of the Filene-Finlay simultaneous interpreting system the same year in Geneva. These parallel developments could be seen as precedent for the various technological races between the USSR and the West. The records analyzed by Chernov include the schematic drawings of the Soviet tests, which feature interesting technical solutions to the perceived impossibility of interpreters to cope with long speeches, and excellent photographs showing these proto-simultaneous interpreters in action.

Jesús Baigorri-Jalón discusses the use of photos as effective sources for historical research into interpreting. The chapter proposes an approach to studying the history of simultaneous interpreting at the United Nations in the late 1940s from the perspective of photographic images. Through a critical examination of theoretical and methodological discussions in prior research on the use of photos in academic investigations, the author argues that photos are valid sources for historical analysis. Photos from the UN archives present vivid memories and evidence of how the practice of simultaneous interpreting evolved with the advance of technology.

The last three chapters all address interpreters in conflict – the topic that has attracted increasing attention in recent years. Although both **Shi-chi Mike Lan** and **Kayoko Takeda** discuss interpreters prosecuted in postwar trials for Japanese war crimes, they approach the subject from different angles: one from the perspective of colonial/imperial history, and the other from the perspective of issues concerning interpreters’ role, visibility, and identity. The two chapters jointly provide a fuller description and analysis of both the role of interpreters in that particular setting in history and the nature of interpreting in war in general. Meanwhile, **Anthony Pym** proposes a framework to assess the behavior of interpreters in

conflict zones, which could be extended to other historical analyses of interpreters and their actions.

Lan focuses on the consequences suffered by Taiwanese who were recruited by the Japanese military and engaged in interpreting, formal or ad-hoc, in the Asia-Pacific region during World War II. Based on records from British and Australian postwar tribunals, Lan highlights the large proportion of those who had acted as interpreters among the Taiwanese convicted as war criminals, and investigates in detail under what circumstances the relevant incidents occurred. The fact that Taiwanese, former Japanese imperial subjects, were convicted in postwar trials over Japanese war crimes and condemned as traitors in Chinese courts only add to the complexity and gravity of what could happen to interpreters in warring situations. Lan also points to the postwar power shifts in the East Asian colonial sphere, manifest by war crimes trials administered by former colonial powers, taking place in colonized regions against the defeated colonizer. This chapter underscores the extremely difficult situation experienced by interpreters, unwilling and untrained, in conflict and colonial contexts.

In **Takeda's** chapter, various experiences of Japanese interpreters in the postwar occupation period (1945–1952) are examined, from those who interpreted, were prosecuted or testified in war crimes trials, to those who worked in the operations of the Allied occupiers. The mostly American occupation that followed Japan's surrender on August 15, 1945, can be seen as one of the quietest and most successful in history: there was no single incident of Japanese assailing the occupiers, and Japanese locals fervently tried to learn American English to engage with the occupiers. This case study stimulates reflection on how local interpreters in conflict or post-conflict situations are perceived by their employers, by their fellow citizens and also by themselves.

Anthony Pym focuses on a microhistory event in a conflict situation, that of Afghanistan, from the angle of how risk analysis can be applied in assessing interpreted events. In this case study the multilingual encounter takes place between US military forces and local Afghan populations, who differ vastly in their various interests and backgrounds, through the mediation of mostly local Afghan interpreters hired by the US military. In this “thick reading” of a specific instance, ethical issues intermingle with the daily lives of local interpreters after hostilities end or after foreign troops withdraw from a territory. The mixture of oral and written sources – including the verbatim words and transcription of interlocutors and interpreters with the issue of conflicting narratives – are entailed in this approach, which fits into the “history of the present” historical research current.

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CHAPTER 1

Defining Sillan interpreters in first-millennium East Asian exchanges

Rachel Lung
Lingnan University

Interpreting officials are rarely documented in standard histories of imperial China; civilian interpreters are even harder to trace. Surprisingly, however, Japanese monk Ennin's (794–864) diary of his China sojourn (838–847) contains thirty-eight references to Sillan interpreters. It is a significant firsthand archive that throws light on Sillan interpreters and interpreting in first-millennium East Asia. Based on a close reading of this diary, I attempt to clarify the idiosyncratic title of “Sillan interpreters.” Using quantitative and qualitative analyses, I outline finer categories of these interpreters, which in turn address questions pertaining to their identities and roles. This chapter demonstrates the value of textual analysis in empirically pursuing the definitions of “interpreter” at a particular place and time.

Keywords: East Asian interpreting, Sillan interpreters, Ennin's travelogue, Silla (ancient Korea), textual analysis

1. Introduction

While examining designations of interpreters in imperial China, I noticed a gradual shift from general to specific usage. Three millennia ago, numerous terms were used to refer to interpreters. The more generic terms were *sheren* (舌人) (literally, tongue man) and *xiangxu* (象胥) (literally, interpreting functionaries).¹ The emphasis on “tongue” understandably relates to the oratory skills of the practitioners in the

1. An ancient Chinese belief holds that the tongue of an interpreter could flip in order to switch to a foreign language during interpreting. 《大戴禮記·小辯》：“傳言以象，反舌皆至，可謂簡矣。” According to the chapter on “Minor Arts” in Elder Dai's Book of Rites, “... only use *Xiang* officials to transmit the words, and people who [flip their tongues (author's addition, missing in the translation)] speak other languages will all gather around you. That, indeed, is simple” (Cheung's translation 2006: 31).

trade.² Other designations of interpreters in the Chinese archive appear to be more region-specific. These are most systematically spelt out in one widely quoted reference, which survives as China's earliest discourse on translation, written around 1000 BC, as follows:

五方之民，言語不通，嗜欲不同。達其志，通其欲，東方曰寄，南方曰象，西方曰狄鞮，北方曰譯。
(禮記·王制; 禮記注疏)

The people of the five regions differ in words and languages, as well as in their predilections and desires. Trusted to make accessible their will and communicate their desires, those mediating in the east are called *ji*, in the south, *xiang*, in the west, *Didi*, [and] in the north, *yi*.

(Royal Institutions of the *Book of Rites*, [in the *Liji Zhushu*, commentaries and subcommentaries to the *Book of Rites*]; Lung's translation 2011:3)

Yet there is no consensus regarding the exact meaning of these four titles. Cheung (2006) and Chen (2010) claim that these were titles of interpreting officials serving in the four quarters or regions. Behr (2004) and Lung (2011) maintain that these titles might simply be the transliteration of respective indigenous terms being used to refer to interpreters.³ The former belief is essentially Sino-centric. It suggests that the four designations were titles “assigned” by the Chinese kingdom to interpreters serving in the four quarters. Yet, in reality, the four quarters were beyond the sovereignty realm of Zhou China, and it certainly had no mandate to assign these titles to foreign interpreters. Realistically, China's chroniclers might have simply recapped and recorded the designations of foreign interpreters by sound translation. In fact, it is not uncommon in China's archive that foreign objects and persons were being referred to, sometimes clumsily with multiple syllables, by transliteration of their alien-sounding names. These four designations might well have been how foreign peoples referred to interpreters, phonological representations of which were then archived by China's historians. Indisputably, this theory better explains the bi-syllabic features of *Didi*, since classical Chinese is characteristically monosyllabic for nouns.

Moving onto Han China (206 BC–220 AD), more uniform designations of interpreters, such as *yiguan* (譯官) (interpreting officials) or *yiling* (譯令) (interpreting

2. Incidentally, in medieval Spain, the use of “haber lengua” (“to have tongue”) was used to signify the verbal contact with foreign people particularly in seafaring expeditions. The term “lengua” (“língua” in Portuguese) was used as an equivalent to “interpreter” (Baigorri, personal communication, February 1, 2015).

3. A Chinese translation historian, Ma (1998:2–3) remains cautious on this issue. He only maintains that Zhou China (1046–256 BC) used these four terms to refer to interpreters transmitting the languages of the four quarters.

officers),⁴ were adopted for imperial China's interpreting functionaries.⁵ In Tang China (618–907), more encompassing terms of *yiyu* (譯語) (literally, interpreting languages) or *yiyuren* (譯語人) (literally, interpreting language personnel) were used in general to denote interpreting or translation officials. Notably, these generic designations focus on interpreters' mediating job nature, not their ethnicity or their linguistic edge. This is the case in China's archival reference to most foreign interpreters, be they of Sogdian or Turkic ethnic origins.

Yet, this is not the case for Sillan interpreters.⁶ Is it simply because they were civilian interpreters? Civilian interpreters of Sillan origin were rarely shortened or generically labeled as *yiyu* (譯語),⁷ but more fully and specifically represented as *xinluo yiyu* (新羅譯語) (Silla interpreters). The growing specification of interpreters' designations might have suggested the increasing sophistication of the use of interpreters for more specific contexts in the socio-political milieu in the first millennium. What made Sillan interpreters so special to have warranted this specific title?

This chapter studies the definitions of "Sillan interpreters" and attempts to explore the implications underlying this somewhat unconventional usage. It also addresses the question of their identity based on quantitative and qualitative evidence from a close reading of monk Ennin's diary.⁸ Finally, this chapter examines duties of Sillan interpreters with textual evidence in an attempt to reconstruct

4. See Hung (2005:77) for a table listing official interpreters' designations throughout imperial China.

5. It is understandable why only government, not civilian, interpreters were mentioned in the Chinese archives. The standard histories were commissioned by the imperial government to make a record of what mattered to the imperial clans.

6. The term "Korean Interpreter" is used instead of "Sillan Interpreter" (pronounced as "Shillan") in Reischauer's translation of Ennin's travelogue (1955a). The translator might have deliberately given up the proper term, Silla (新羅), used in Tang China, with international readers in mind. Yet, this usage is intrinsically problematic since Korea did not exist until 1897.

7. In early July 845, however, Ennin labels Yu Sinōn simply as "劉譯語" (literally, Yu, the interpreter) or "譯語" (the interpreter), rather than the full form of "新羅譯語" (Sillan interpreter) or "楚州譯語" (Chuzhou interpreter) (Ennin 2007: 149–150; Reischauer's translation 1955a: 374–5). By then, Ennin had known this interpreter for six years and might have been his friend, not just his interpreting patron. Besides, Yu Sinōn was frequently mentioned in these two pages. This may explain why Ennin started to simplify the term of address. Although, in principle, he was an interpreting clerk of the Chu prefecture, the nature of his work and service for Ennin was no different from that of a civilian interpreter, as we shall see.

8. The original of Ennin's diary was not punctuated. I refer to its punctuated and annotated version, also in classical Chinese, published in 2007 throughout this chapter.

their roles in East Asian communication. The chapter begins with the historical background of United Silla (668–935), followed by a brief introduction to Ennin and his travelogue. It then proceeds to presenting the quantitative and qualitative analyses of Sillan interpreters documented in Ennin’s account, including their identities and duties. These empirical data serve to clarify, and inform us of, the definitions and the misleading title of “Sillan interpreters.”

2. Historical background of the three kingdoms on the Korean peninsula

The kingdom of Silla (57 BC–668 AD), later known as United Silla, existed long before its unification of the peninsular kingdoms. Located in the southeastern part of the Korean peninsula, Silla was the last of the three kingdoms to have established diplomatic ties with, and learned from, China.⁹ Yet, Silla exercised astute statecraft and conquered Koguryō (37 BC–668 AD) and Paekche (18 BC–660 AD) with Tang China’s aid, notwithstanding its smaller size and greater distance from China. Dreadful of being annexed by its neighboring kingdoms, Silla actively reported and exaggerated the unruliness of their moves to China. It played its part as a loyal vassal to China and gained sympathy for its predicament. By 668, Silla had united the entire peninsula and become a sovereign state recognized, albeit reluctantly, by China.¹⁰ Therefore, in this study, “Sillans” refers to nationals of United Silla, regardless of their ancestral origin, including Paekche and Koguryō. Given United Silla’s position between Japan and China, it played a pivotal role in the thriving maritime transport and commerce of East Asia. The scale of the exchanges was no doubt advanced by the unification.

In many ways, Ennin’s travelogue is testimony to the dynamic interaction of East Asian countries at the time. It gives graphic details of the Sillan assistance he received and Sillan residents or traders he encountered in China. One third of its contents relates to Sillans (Zhao 2003). This lopsided coverage powerfully speaks

9. In 521, Silla’s envoys tagged along with Paekche’s envoys to pay tribute to Liang China (502–557). Silla also relied on Paekche in the provision of a Chinese state letter for the diplomatic event, since it had little exposure to Chinese learning at the time (*Liangshu* 54:806).

10. Upon defeating its two rival states, Silla had disputes with Tang China over the handling of old Koguryō boundaries (Kyung 2010). In China’s political taxonomy, “Koguryō, right next to Northeast China, was considered a Chinese province” (Wang 2011: 57–58; my translation); China had thus wanted troops to be stationed there after crushing it in 688. Yet, Silla convinced China to leave its territories intact and respect Silla’s sovereignty over the entire peninsula. China eventually budged because its strength was compromised after a series of military campaigns on the peninsula.

of their ubiquitous traces in East Asian exchanges.¹¹ One of the results of these active exchanges was the formation of Sillan enclaves or residential communities in villages or towns along eastern coastal China. Their formation was rooted in centuries of civilian and commercial exchanges with the peninsula. Under the reign of Qin China (221–206 BC), tens of thousands of people fled to the southern peninsula, hoping to escape from its notoriously harsh labor and brutal penalties. In Han China (206 BC–220 AD) when the government became less autocratic, many ethnic Chinese returned. Around 108 BC, after pacifying some tribal conflicts on the peninsula, Han China established four commanderies that governed parts of its territory and Northeast China (Zhang 2006; Kyung 2010). At these early times, therefore, China regarded the peninsula as its province. So the movement of the two peoples was taken as internal relocation. In time of peninsular calamities, such as drought, famine or political turmoil in the late eighth century,¹² China was naturally taken as a safe haven because of its “geographically convenient conditions” (Fletcher 2011: 15). Besides, smuggling of Sillan slaves was blatant in coastal China at the time (Zhao 2003). Sillan migrants from different sources were thus rooted in China for generations.

One of the demographic consequences of centuries of such inter-national relocation was the growth of bilinguals in coastal China (Wu 2004). Sillans’ mobility, by choice or otherwise, in East Asia prompted their acquisition of Chinese or Japanese vernacular. With the growing civilian and diplomatic exchanges of these East Asian neighbors, more polyglots were nurtured. Tōyama (1998, in Ma 2005) believes that one of the sources of interpreters in ancient Japan in the late 7th century was, as a result of Sillan unification, Paekche migrants. Around this time, families of educated and literary backgrounds in Chinese language and civilization moved to Japan and taught Chinese there to make a living. It is possible that some of these migrants and their offspring were hand-picked by the Japanese authorities to consciously acquire Japanese in preparation for their later interpreting careers (Ma 2005). Ma emphasizes, however, that Japan’s reliance on foreign interpreters to liaise with China was the case only in earlier times, before the training of its own interpreters was in place. “In the 9th century, all the six experts in Chinese [in Japan] were Japanese” (ibid.: 112; my translation).

11. Korean sources about the Sillan interpreters in the second half of the first millennium are flimsy, but traces of these interpreters can be found or inferred in Japanese histories (Ma 2005). However, it is important to note that Sillan interpreters in the Japanese sources might probably be ethnic Japanese, not necessarily Sillan as those mentioned in Ennin’s diary. This distinction has not been carefully identified in the literature dealing with Sillan interpreters to date.

12. The *Samguk Yusa* (Legends and History of the Three Kingdoms of Ancient Korea) records that earthquakes and famines were widespread in Gyeongju, Silla’s capital, from 787 through 790, and again in 796 and 797 (Zhao 2003).

Besides, some Sillans spoke Japanese because of years of staying or being stranded for work in Japan. Hence, it was not unusual to encounter Sillans comfortably conversant in Chinese and Japanese. In Ennin's account, there is a strong sense of linguistic transparency when he interacted with Sillans in China. The vibrant civilian and official trade in East Asia must have motivated Sillans to master these languages to make a better living. The same, however, cannot be said about his encounters with Chinese, with whom Ennin often had to resort to written Chinese for communication.¹³ For Japanese visitors, the Sillans' mastery of the Chinese vernacular and the local culture positioned them as apt mediators. That is why Sillan interpreters, although labeled as such, were quite capable of assisting the Japanese merchants for non-linguistic matters.

3. Data source: Monk Ennin's travelogue

Ennin's travelogue was written in classical Chinese in four scrolls,¹⁴ using about 80,000 characters, during his sojourn through seven provinces in China from 838–847.¹⁵ The original is not extant. The oldest surviving text, copied in 1291 by an old Japanese monk, was found in 1883 in the library of a Kyoto monastery, called Tōji. Its status was elevated to a national treasure in Japan. Various copies from this Tōji text were since in circulation, and the first printed version was published in Japan in 1907. It was not until 1936 that China first published Ennin's diary, and much later its annotated versions in 1986, 1992, and 2007. The journal has since been translated into Japanese, Korean, English, French, and German. Its English translator is Edwin O. Reischauer,¹⁶ a US ambassador to Japan and an acclaimed scholar in Japanese and Chinese studies. The travelogue is of immense value to first-millennium East Asian research on humanities and social sciences. Its value, in the words of Reischauer, is that

13. In the first scroll of Ennin's diary, I located twelve instances of his exchanges with non-Japanese through written Chinese.

14. Although Ennin had acquired a decent level of written Chinese competence, he could not converse in Chinese. After almost a decade's stay in China, it is possible that his spoken Chinese might have improved. The diary itself, however, has not given us any concrete hints in this regard.

15. Ennin's diary records his journey from western Japan to Yangzhou, Shandong, Wutaishan, Chang'an, the Huai valley and, finally, back to Shandong, before crossing the Yellow Sea, skirting the coast of the Korean peninsula, and eventually returning to Japan.

16. Wright (1955), in his review of Reischauer's translation, laments that the translator's literal approach fails to recap the charm and sophisticated details of Ennin's original.

[t]he lengthy record of his wanderings and of his tribulations and triumphs is not only the first great diary in Far Eastern history; it is also the first account of life in China by any foreign visitor... although medieval in time and Far Eastern in place, is a part of our common human heritage, with significance beyond these limits of time and space. It is the report of an important traveler in world history and an extraordinary, firsthand account of one of the way stations on man's long and tortuous journey from his lowly, savage beginnings to his present lofty but precarious position. (1955b: vii–viii)

Capitalizing on its significance, Dong (2000) published a synchronic linguistic survey by categories on its vocabularies and technical terms. In recent decades, a dozen articles were published in history journals in China, with a focus on the growth of Sillan communities (Chen 1996, which was translated into English by Fletcher in 2011) and Sillans' interpreting roles in East Asian communication (Li and Chen 2008; Chen 2009b). More elaborate studies on Sillans were also conducted by Zhao (2003) and Chen (2009a) in their master's theses.

Despite the more recent focus on Ennin in research on linguistic mediation in China, no effort has been made to examine the idiosyncrasies in the umbrella term of "Sillan interpreters." Indeed, Sillan interpreters have often been handled indiscriminately and impressionistically (Li and Chen 2008; Chen 2009a). Li and Chen (2009), for instance, mistook a Sillan official, Chang Yǒng (張詠), and other Sillan traders (Wang Chǒng [王請] and Ch'oe Un Sibirang [崔暈第十二郎]) in Ennin's account as interpreters.¹⁷ These casual assumptions undermine the validity of their discussions about the origins and features of Sillan interpreters.

It is a pity that six decades after the publication of Reischauer's translation in 1955, its potentials and impact on the history of interpreting have not been duly appreciated in literature published in English. Thus, the present study hopes to fill this void by alerting interpreting and translation scholars to its untapped value. It analyzes Ennin's textual references to these interpreters and their concrete tasks in East Asian exchanges. I also examine their identities based on the quantitative and qualitative data derived from Ennin's account. By means of textual and discourse analyses, I investigate the nature of their work and how exactly they assisted the Japanese embassy and Ennin. Hopefully, this would clarify the

17. Ch'oe Un Sibirang used to work "as the Commissioner of Troops of Ch'onghaejin"- (Reischauer's translation 1955a: 378) under Chang Pogo (張保臯) (787–846), a powerful maritime figure in control of seaborne trade and routes between Japan, Silla, and Shandong peninsula. When Chang Pogo was murdered because of his involvement in and influence over the inheritance of the Sillan throne, Ch'oe Un Sibirang hid his real identity and lived in Lianshui county as a trader (Qi 2009). His coming forward to assist Ennin was consistent with Chang Pogo's continued support of Ennin's pilgrimage in China. He was not referred to as a Sillan interpreter in Ennin's diary.

Japanese agenda behind the “mysterious” hiring of Sillan, instead of Chinese, interpreters for its diplomatic cause.

This journal contains meticulous details about the life, peoples, events, authorities, and languages in 9th-century China in a dynamic context that involves the Chinese, Sillan, and Japanese.¹⁸ Ennin was sensitive with languages and observant of people’s subtle demeanors. Notably, Ennin would make a note of who was warm and kind and who was not. Wright (1955: 124) characterizes this diary as “the record of a conscientious if pedestrian traveler to bring to life the people, the sights and sounds, the culture of a great age of China’s past.” In his critical review of Reischauer’s translation, he relates to Ennin’s sophisticated description of people around him.

These are not the taxable units which appear in the dynastic histories, nor the romanticized abstractions which appear in political theory as ‘the people’. These are believable human beings of their time and milieu. Some are pious and kind but short of grain and condiments; others are rude, inhospitable or greedy; still others combine Buddhist piety with prudence and are always prepared to serve a good meal to a wandering monk. (ibid.: 123)

Most crucially, it was an account written by a monk, not a commissioned work tainted with imperial influence, making this diary more independent and credible. Coming from interpreting studies, I am particularly drawn to its thirty-eight references to Sillan interpreters.¹⁹ Such prominent textual attention to interpreters is unusual, and certainly unconventional, in any extant historical records. The other anomaly in this text is that the interpreters were not placed at the back stage as “*kurogo*” (Torikai 2009), as commonly envisaged and perceived. Instead, they were highly efficient in coordinating the logistics arrangements. They also liaised actively with the Chinese authorities for Ennin. With the diary’s intricate description of Sillan interpreters, we can actually capture, even today, their human touch and emotions while working for the monk.

Having traveled with the embassy, Ennin faced problems with the Chinese authorities. His quasi embassy identity forbade him from pursuing pilgrimage and traveling in China. His inability to speak Chinese added to Ennin’s predicament.

18. Xian (2000) relates the value of Ennin’s diary as an authentic ethnographic account of people and life in late Tang China. Chinese historian Niu (1993) compliments the diary as an objective account, which fills gaps in the standard histories of the Tang dynasty.

19. Tallying results of references to Sillan interpreters in Ennin’s account can be controversial. I decided to give up the mechanical counting of occurrences of these interpreters and opt for the more indicative entries in which they engaged in specific events as either an active or passive agent.

In his decade of wanderings in China, he witnessed the horror of the imperial persecution of Buddhism from 842 to 846 in the Huichang reign period of emperor Wuzong (r. 841–846). To protect himself, he put on civilian clothes to conceal his stigmatized Buddhist identity. These eventful episodes are relevant to this study because several Sillan interpreters assisted him to pass these hurdles. These Sillan activities, however, were not captured in the standard Chinese records, despite China's pride over its voluminous historical collections. Yet, Ennin's record contains considerable firsthand textual references to these interpreters. This makes a detailed investigation of his travelogue all the more important for a historical inquiry of East Asian interpreters and mediation.

4. Sillan interpreters in Ennin's diary

Sillan interpreters were common in the early history of East Asian exchanges. Their ubiquity, as evidenced in Ennin's diary, legitimately raises the questions of their identities and work nature. One way of defining these interpreters is to quantify and categorize their occurrences in his diary, before generating a broad picture of their contextual identities, functions, and roles. To avoid any presumptuous bias, I conducted a tally of their occurrences, as shown in Table 1. Each count is an independent event or action, but it does not align simply, if mechanically, to textual reference of Sillan interpreters. In my analyses, a count may involve one or more references to interpreters in a specific text. My method is therefore not a straightforward numerical count of their occurrences. This approach would ensure that each count concretely informs us of their actions and identities. In line with this principle, I then created a second table (Table 2) profiling their job duties as depicted in the diary. Based on the primary counts, Table 1 below shows the names of four interpreters documented and the frequency of their references in Ennin's account.²⁰

20. Li and Chen (2009: 69) both claim that Chang Yǒng was "a Sillan interpreter." Yet, they contradict themselves by suggesting, with certainty, that I Sinhye (李信惠) (Ennin 2007: 154; Reischauer's translation 1955a: 387) was Chang Yǒng's interpreter (Li and Chen 2009: 71). They must have confused "Commissioner (Chang Bogo)" (Wang 1999: 370), a Sillan maritime tycoon, with "Commissioner Chang Yǒng," both abbreviated as "張大使" (Commissioner Chang) by Ennin. In short, if Chang Yǒng was indeed a Sillan interpreter, logically he would not have required an interpreter for himself, as Li and Chen claimed he did. Chen (2009a: 23) again mistakenly categorizes Chang Yǒng as "Sillan interpreters like Kim Chǒngnam and Yu Sinǒn" (my translation). These mistaken claims might have originated from Ennin's first reference to Chang Yǒng as "當今新羅通事、押衙張咏" (2007: 52). Reischauer's translation is "At present the Korean Interpreter Guard Officer, Chang Yǒng" (1955a: 131). Historically, however, *tongshi*

Table 1. Sillan interpreters in Ennin's travelogue and the nature of their employment

Name	Kim Chǒngnam 金正南	Pak Chǒngjang 朴正長	Yu Sinǒn 劉慎言	Tohyǒn 道玄
Occurrences	6	1	23	8
Nature of employment	Hired in Japan for embassy visit	Hired in Japan for embassy visit	Staff interpreter in a Sillan enclave in Chu prefecture (present-day Jiangsu province), China	Sillan monk, might have volunteered in East China to stay with the embassy ships

Kim Chǒngnam and Pak Chǒngjang were freelance interpreters hired in Japan to be stationed with the first and the second ships of the nine-ship embassy for China in 838.²¹ They were probably hired because of their proficiency in Sillan, Japanese, and Chinese, as well as their seaborne expertise. They were referred to by name at the beginning of Ennin's journal, suggesting that their employment was crucial and of high profile. Somehow, deploying Sillans for such diplomatic expeditions seems commonplace, judging from how matter-of-factly Ennin relates the details.

[八月]十日，辰時……即聞：第二船著海州。第二船新羅譯語朴正長書送金正南房。(Ennin 2007: 12)

[Aug] 10th: At 8am... We then heard that the Korean interpreter of the second ship, Pak Chǒngjang, had sent a letter to Kim Chǒngnam.

(Reischauer's translation 1955a: 29)

Once the embassy ships reached China, I notice similar descriptions of Sillans and Sillan interpreters in the monk's diary.

(通事) in the mid-9th century, at the time of Ennin's usage, does not refer to interpreters. Yao, a Liao historian, (1981: 13) maintains that "*sheren* (舌人) (tongue man) were retitled as *tongshi* around the final years of Tang China, if not early Liao China (907-1125) or early Song China (960-1127)" (my translation). In 9th-century Tang times, *tongshi* merely refers to a general officer. Chen (1996: 163) is careful not to have confused Chang Yǒng as an interpreter. Fletcher aptly renders Chang's concurrent post of *tongshi* as a "Silla diplomat" (2011: 12).

21. Wang (2011: 172) maintains that "a total of 19 Japanese embassies were sent to Tang China from 630 to 894. At first, there were only one or two ships, each taking about 120 persons. On average, there were four ships taking around 600 passengers" in each embassy visit (my translation). Wang (1975) says, however, that of these 19 attempts, two never completed, one was to take the previous Japanese envoys back and three were to chaperone the Chinese envoys back to China. The number of completed Japanese embassies sent to Tang China, in total, was therefore thirteen.

十七日〔……〕押領本國水手之外，更雇新羅人諳海路者六十餘人，每船或七或六或五人。亦令新羅譯語正南商可留之方便，未定得否。

(Ennin 2007:34)

17th Day [...] Besides the Japanese sailors under their command, they [the officials] have also hired over sixty Koreans who are familiar with the sea routes... The Korean Interpreter Chôngnam has been ordered to devise some scheme whereby I can stay [in China], but it is not yet certain whether or not anything can be done.

(Reischauer's translation 1955a:93-94)

We may find it strange, from a modern-day perspective, to use interpreters of the Sillan ethnicity, not Japanese alone,²² for an embassy mission in the name of Japan. Or perhaps should Chinese interpreters have been deployed instead, since it was a China-bound embassy? Surprisingly, though, in the 839 embassy mission at least, there was no trace of Japanese skepticism of the use of ethnic Sillan interpreters. In fact, the government's contingent deployment of Sillan interpreters was twice documented in earlier Japanese records, as follows:

《日本後紀》記載：（812）大宰府報告，西海出現三艘新羅船，因語言不通，消息難以了解，差新羅譯語……

(Oyung 2001:169)

The *Nihon Kōki* recorded that, (in 812), the Dazaifu, [a regional government in Southern Japan] reported seeing three Sillan boats appearing on the west sea [of Japan]. Since linguistic communication could not be bridged and information hard to make sense of, a Sillan interpreter was assigned [...]. (my translation)

《日本後紀》記載：（815）春正月壬寅，是日停對馬使生一員置新羅譯語。

(ibid.)

The *Nihon Kōki* recorded that, (in 815), in lunar January, spring, [the Japanese officials] stopped by the Tsushima Island and assigned someone to be the Sillan interpreter.

(my translation)

The above historical records were commonly quoted in discussions about Sillan interpreters (Oyung 2001; Ma 2005; Yuzawa 2010; Jin 2012). However, the term “Sillan interpreter” could have been more critically examined in the literature. For example, none of the authors discusses the ethnicity of the Sillan interpreter in the two contexts. Was he an ethnic Sillan conversant in Japanese?²³ Was he ethnic

22. Wang (1975:69) observes that the usual interpreting personnel in the China-bound Japanese embassies include the categories of “譯語” (interpreters) and “新羅譯語” (Sillan interpreters). The former category might have referred to Japanese interpreters with Chinese competence.

23. According to the *Shoku Nihongi* (續日本紀, Chapter 36, 455), in 780, a Sillan envoy [visiting Japan] related the Sillan king's words, saying “as usual, Sillan students are sent [to Japan] to learn the language” “又依常例，進學語生” (in Ma 2005).

Japanese having acquired the Sillan vernacular (Old Korean)?²⁴ Both are possible, although the existing information cannot ascertain either way. As Yuzawa (2010) suggests, although Chinese was supposed to be the language for diplomatic exchanges between Japan and Silla,²⁵ their civilian exchanges might have been conducted in Japanese or Sillan. From the above records, it seems that deploying Sillan interpreters was indeed a viable measure in a time of linguistic barriers in Japan. Locating Sillan interpreters for impromptu tasks did not seem particularly challenging either, although Yuzawa (*ibid.*) points out that there were no records of regular posts of Sillan interpreters in either Nara or Kyoto. This suggests that some such interpreters might have been regularly stationed in Tsushima, an outlying island located between the southern tip of United Silla and the west of Japan, after 815. The above discussion about the possible ethnicities of Sillan interpreters is relevant to my purpose. It serves to delineate that “新羅譯語” in the Japanese records refers possibly to ethnic Japanese with knowledge of the Sillan vernacular. The “新羅譯語” in Ennin’s diary, although identically worded in Chinese characters as those in the Japanese records, absolutely refers to ethnic Sillans, with conventional Sillan surnames. It is essential that this distinction is made. My discussion in this chapter, therefore, will not deal with the kind of Sillan interpreters mentioned in the Japanese records.

In 9th-century East Asia, many Sillans in all likelihood might have settled in coastal Japan or China in order to take up any such mediating odd jobs. Was there an affinity, close and yet distinctly foreign, between Japan and Silla to have nurtured such cultural serenity? Whatever the nature of their bonding, Sillan interpreters’ linguistic versatility positioned them as astute mediators in East Asia.²⁶ This linguistic void represented a huge opportunity for the multilingual Sillans, especially when imperial China was comfortable of its nationals being largely monolingual until the mid-19th century. As Hung (2005) observes,

24. According to the *Shoku Nihongi* (續日本紀, Chapter 23, 276), in 761, 太政官“令美濃武藏二國少年，每國廿人習新羅語，為征新羅也。” (in Ma 2005). This text reveals that twenty teenagers from each of the Mino and Musashi provinces were officially assigned to learn the Sillan vernacular, in order to conquer Silla.

25. Diplomatically, it seems that neither the Japanese nor the Sillan vernacular was used in Japanese-Silla exchanges, because either Japanese official interpreters for Silla (新羅通事) or Sillan interpreters for Japan (新羅訳語) are found in the Japanese list of diplomatic personnel for [Silla’s] mission visiting Japan (“Engi-Shiki,” 延喜式) (Yuzawa 2010).

26. Before Japan managed to train its Chinese interpreters, earlier migrants or their descendants from Paekche and Silla were deployed to meet the court’s needs for diplomatic interpreters well versed in Chinese. In 730, the government issued an order to establish an academy for officials (大学寮) with the intent to train ethnic Japanese to serve as Chinese interpreters (Ma 2005).

[s]ince a main characteristic of Huaxia (Chinese) culture was a strong sense of superiority, there was little interest among mainstream intellectuals in acquiring foreign knowledge or foreign languages... That many governments had to rely substantially on the linguistic ability of new migrants or foreigners for such work was probably considered a fact of life, if not a matter of course. It was right and proper for foreigners to learn Chinese, but the Chinese had better things to do than to learn foreign languages. (ibid.: 72–73)

This translation tradition in imperial China partly gave rise to the entrepreneurial Sillan interpreters in East Asia. Ennin's diary contains numerous anecdotes about circumstances in which some Sillans in diaspora acquired spoken Japanese and Chinese. These additional linguistic skills enabled them to interpret to make a living. At a time of thriving East Asian exchanges, being Japanese interpreters seemed to be a popular way of earning an extra income for versatile Sillans. However, one should not presume that these language assets would necessarily overshadow the niche of their native Sillan competence, a vernacular of currency in East Asia.²⁷ In short, the Sillan vernacular was no less significant than spoken Chinese or Japanese in first-millennium exchanges. Yet, most researchers of Sillan interpreters underrate the value of the Sillan vernacular (Li and Chen 2009; Chen 2009b). In coastal Sillan enclaves, the ability to speak Sillan indeed greatly eased the communication and logistics needs of visitors to eastern coastal China. The Sillan tongue, so to speak, was the lingua franca in that part of China. Most notably, even the local authorities there were staffed by Sillans in the spirit of loose rein or autonomous administrative style (Chen 1996), often practiced among non-Chinese population within the Chinese empire (Li 1996).²⁸

5. Tasks of Sillan interpreters

Ennin's travelogue includes sophisticated descriptions about activities of Sillan interpreters. With these elaborate details documented throughout his sojourn, we can then categorize the nature of their concrete duties. I classified their tasks based on contextual information from the thirty-eight references identified earlier.

27. According to Lee and Ramsey (2011: 4), the Sillan language "effected a linguistic unification of Korea" since it became the peninsular lingua franca after the unification. "It gave rise also to Middle Korean, which is the direct ancestor of Korean spoken today" (ibid.).

28. Ennin (2007: 61–62) recorded that the Sillan vernacular was used in Buddhist lectures in the Sillan monasteries in Shandong.

Table 2. Work categories of Sillan interpreters in Ennin’s account

Categories	Frequency (%)
A. Liaising, networking, and transferring messages	24 (63%)
B. Logistics (transport, manpower, room, storage, etc.)	10 (26%)
C. Trading brokers	4 (11%)
Total:	38

Table 2 shows a breakdown of the types of work Sillan interpreters undertook, as described in Ennin’s diary. Surprisingly, interpreters did not interpret. Textual references to their jobs contain no trace of interpreting-mediated encounters. Instead, they were mostly (63%) deployed to liaise independently with other Sillans or Chinese, often without their Japanese patrons being present. The interpreters were also frequently dispatched to deliver messages or to seek clarification for the Japanese. Such delegation of duties often required the interpreters to be independent agents to get things done for their patrons. Besides, about a quarter (26%) of their tasks involved handling the logistics problems for their patrons. These included arranging for boats, technical maintenance, sailors, food, supplies, and seeking accommodation and storage fixers. Lastly, there were four counts of interpreters, amounting to 11% of tasks, acting as trading brokers for the Japanese monks. This brokerage function of Sillan interpreters was unique and warrants further discussion, with concrete examples, in the following section. For now, it suffices to suggest that, unlike our stereotypical perception of interpreters, Sillan interpreters were unusually proactive, taking a forefront position in the mediation. Their edge was to run errands to approach other Sillan residents and local authorities, using the Sillan and Chinese vernacular, while reporting the updates to the embassy members and Ennin in Japanese. The East Asian context at the time required these interpreters to remain mobile and dynamic rather than static or passive.

Typical Sillan interpreters in Ennin’s account seemed to be trilingual polyglots, conversing in Japanese and Chinese with ease. It is entirely legitimate to assume that they must have been hired to interpret in the exchanges of Chinese and Japanese. Yet, one should not neglect the importance, and in fact, the greater frequency, of their liaison between the Japanese and the Sillans in China. For the Japanese embassy, it is only natural to expect frequent and direct exchanges with the Chinese. However, Ennin’s account proves otherwise. The truth is we notice more textual references to Sillan interpreters acting as go-betweens, passing on messages. It then leads to the question: whether the designation of “Sillan interpreters” might have meant something else other than sheer language mediation at the time? Did Sillan interpreters in my data undertake other occupations as well?

If so, was interpreting a main job or a sideline practice? Li and Chen (2009) give two reasons for the freelance and adjunct nature of Sillan interpreters. First, they stress that the Sillans' multilingual competence was often acquired through their initial or primary jobs relating to seaborne trade, before attempting to interpret to generate more income. Naturally, it was only much later that they could speak, and interpret, using Chinese and Japanese. Second, the interpreting jobs were too unsteady to sustain full-time interpreters, given the limited technology and scale of marine transport in East Asia. That explains why Sillan interpreters often took other non-interpreting jobs.

6. Sillan interpreters as trade brokers

One of the non-interpreting jobs Sillan interpreters might have undertaken was trading agents. According to the Tang code of law, tributary embassies could only travel in China with permits and conduct trade through official channels under close supervision.²⁹ While foreigners faced numerous trading restrictions in China, Sillan interpreters, as Chinese residents in principle, gained greater freedom in terms of inland mobility and commodity transactions. In other words, the interpreting title might possibly have endorsed their mandate to travel and facilitate their mainland access and trading freedom in China, which foreigners would not otherwise enjoy. This was indeed possible because Ennin's beginning scroll reported the arrest of several Japanese embassy members for their illegal private transactions in town. Similar events happened often in Ennin's travelogue. His diary entries from the 20th through the 22nd of February 839, as quoted below, recorded the arrests of the Japanese simply for shopping in town.

〔二月〕廿日……緣上都不得賣買，便差前件人等為買雜物來……勾當軍將王友真相隨向楚州去。不許永藏等賣……即打鼓發去……不久之間，第上四船監國信並通事緣買敕斷色，相公交人來喚，隨相入州去……晚際，第四船通事、知乘等被免趨來。長〔判〕官……等四人為買香藥等下船到市，為所由勒追，舍二百餘貫錢逃走，但三人來。 (Ennin 2007: 30)

[Feb.] 20th Day: ... because they had not been able to buy or sell at the capital, the men mentioned above had been sent here to buy various things... Wang Yu-chen, the Manager and Military Officer, accompanied them to Chu-chou

29. Officials in the court of diplomatic receptions (*Honglusi* 鴻臚寺) in Tang China would assess and record the value of the tributary gifts in order that gifts from China of equivalent or approximately equal value would be "bestowed" in return to the embassy concerned. This is called tributary trade, a form of international trade in disguise.

and would not allow Nagakura and the others to sell [things and, when they were about to trade,] would strike the drums and start forth... At 2pm... men came from the Minister of State to summon the Supervisor of the National Tribute Articles and the Interpreter of the fourth ship,³⁰ because they had bought some items under Imperial prohibition, and they went off with the officers to the prefectural [offices].... At dawn the Interpreter and Ship's Master of the fourth ship were released and hastened back. The attendants... these four, debarked from the boats and went to the market place to buy incense and medicines, but because local officials questioned them, they fled, abandoning over two hundred strings of cash, and only three of them got back...

(Reischauer's translation 1955a: 84)

〔二月〕廿一日，早朝，發去。大使〔謙從〕粟田家繼先日為買物下船往市，所由捉縛，州裡留著，今日被免來。又第四船射手被免放來。

(Ennin 2007: 31)

[Feb.] 21st Day: The Ambassador's [attendant]... had gone to the market place to buy things, and the local officials had arrested him and had detained him at the prefectural [offices]. Today he was released and came back. An archer of the fourth ship also was released and came back. (Reischauer's translation 1955a: 84)

〔二月〕廿二日，辰時，發。射手身人部貞淨於市買物，先日被捉，閉縛州裡，今日被放來，又不失物。不久之會，第四船射手、水〔手〕二人被免卻來。史〔生〕越智貞原先日往市買物，所由報州，請處分，今日趨來。

(Ennin 2007: 31)

22nd Day: At 8am, we started. An archer... who had bought things in the market place and had been arrested the other day and locked up in the prefectural [offices], was released today and came back. He did not lose the things [he had bought]. Before long an archer and sailor of the fourth ship were released and came back. The Scribe... had gone the other day to the market place and bought things, and the local officials had informed the prefectural [government] and had asked for a judgment. Today he hastened back.

(Reischauer's translation 1955a: 84–85)

Over a matter of three days, there were already six counts of Japanese trading violations and associated detentions (Lung 2015). Ennin's apprehension of the detention risk from private purchases must have convinced him to resort instead to

30. Reischauer rendered *tongshi* 通事 as "interpreter" several times in his translation. Although it is true that *tongshi* denotes interpreters from Song (960-1279) through Qing (1664-1911) dynastic China, the term does not bear this connotation until the final years of Tang China at the earliest. Besides, in the present context, this title refers to a Japanese member of the embassy. Yet, in Ennin's account, this person displayed no Chinese competence; it is therefore questionable if the *tongshi* in this example indeed meant an interpreter.

interpreters' brokerage service. Exactly a month after the reported arrests, Ennin implicitly engaged a Sillan interpreter concerning the purchase of some goods using his gold dust.³¹ Entries from two consecutive days in the monk's account bear the description of him "giving" two taels of gold dust and an Osaka sash to Yu Sinõn and "receiving" from the interpreter some powdered tea and pine nuts in return.

卷一(三月)廿二日。早朝。沙金大二兩。大阪腰帶一。送與新羅譯語劉慎言。
(Ennin 2007: 34)

First Scroll (March) 22nd: Early in the morning I sent two large ounces of gold dust and an Osaka girdle (sic. sash) to the Korean Interpreter, Yu Sinõn.
(Reischauer's translation 1955a: 94)

The first entry (dated March 22) was rather mysteriously worded, with no contextual clue justifying such expensive gifts to a newly-acquainted interpreter whose name was first mentioned at this point in his diary. The mystery, however, was solved in the monk's diary entry the next day when Yu Sinõn came and gave Ennin "ten pounds of powdered tea and some pine nuts," again unusually generous gifts for a new acquaintance.

卷一(三月)廿三日。未時。劉慎言細茶十斤。松脯贈來。與請益僧。
(Ennin 2007: 34)

First Scroll (March) 23rd: At 2pm Yu Sinõn came and gave me ten pounds of powdered tea and some pine nuts.
(Reischauer's translation 1955a: 95)

Yu Sinõn was an interpreter affiliated with the Sillan enclave office of the Chu prefecture.³² He assisted his superior, the chief in this office, in managing the residents in the enclave and helping Sillan or Japanese visitors there. Being a Chinese resident and a civil servant, Yu Sinõn was free to purchase in town. In theory, however, it might be controversial for him to accept gold dust from Ennin, which could easily be considered a bribe for an illegal dealing. What was the nature of their commodity exchange? At a time when barter trade was the dominant form of transaction, the exchange was in effect a business deal. In the first scroll, Ennin was accustomed to presenting powdered tea and pine nuts to newly-acquainted

31. Examining Ennin's diary from historical economics, Zhang and Zou (1998: 49) confirm that gold dust could be valued through either official or private agents, but "usually at a discounted rate," in Tang times. They claim that "three small taels of gold dust were equivalent to one big tael of gold dust" in 9th-century China (my translation).

32. Chuzhou was in the north of Nanjing at the intersection of the Grand Canal and the Huai River, which at that time flowed into the Yellow Sea.

monks and officials. The two entries above were probably subtle references to a market purchase in disguise through the Sillan interpreter. Not confined by the restrictions, Yu Sinǒn might have traded on Ennin's behalf possibly for a brokerage reward. He understood why Ennin approached him in this context. Yu was fully aware of the legal loopholes, through which he had not only done Ennin a favor but also possibly managed to profit in the transaction. A Chinese interpreter might not have been so bold as to risk breaking the law. Yet, a Chinese interpreter might not have access to the Sillan social network to conduct such secret transactions within the enclave either.

7. Discussion and implications

7.1 What is in the title of "Sillan interpreters"?

The construction of the term "Sillan interpreter" is idiosyncratic and somewhat arbitrary. Now, if a Chinese person is proficient in French and could interpret using both French and Chinese, this person is called a French interpreter, not a Chinese interpreter, although he would be called a Chinese interpreter in France. The same idiosyncrasy, however, does not apply to the Sogdian (ancient Iranian) interpreters, who were more typically called *yiyuren*, or interpreters, in Tang China. Their ethnicity was not often mentioned in the interpreter's title. In Tang times, the niche of Sogdian interpreters was not Sogdian, but their command of Turkic and Chinese. However, they were never addressed as Turkic or Chinese interpreters. In the Tang historical documents, interpreters were generically labeled as *yiyu* (literally, interpret languages) or *yiyuren* (literally, interpret languages person), emphasizing the work nature, rather than the languages they work with or, least likely, their ethnicities.

The designation of "Sillan interpreters," however, is unorthodox, since apparently the interpreters' ethnicity was highlighted, not the linguistic expertise specified. Or is it really the case? Does "Sillan" in "Sillan interpreters" refer to the Sillan ethnicity or the Sillan vernacular? This distinction is crucial and yet often overlooked (Li and Chen 2009; Chen 2009a). Modern scholarship rarely pays attention to the Sillan vernacular, the predecessor of Middle and Modern Korean (Lee and Ramsey 2011). Most Chinese studies (Zhao 2005; Li and Chen 2008), except Oyung (2001) and Chen (1996), on ancient Korean communities monolithically assume that the word "Sillan" in "Sillan interpreters" refers only to their ethnic origin. Yet, researchers might have inadvertently dismissed the currency factor of the Sillan vernacular. With this blind spot, their analyses will be limited when

they fail to appreciate the vernacular's diplomatic and commercial value in the interpreting tradition of East Asia.

Now that the importance of the Sillan vernacular is acknowledged, how do we explain the idiosyncratic coinage of "Sillan interpreters"? One may argue that "Sillan interpreter" was coined to accentuate Sillans who could interpret using Japanese and Chinese. This argument, however, is weak, since realistically not *all* Sillans were polyglot. It is possible also that "Sillan interpreters" were at the time perceived to be the Sillans in China who were not simply interpreters, but who had broad networks among the regional Chinese authorities and the Sillan migrant enclaves. This conceptual association would be harder to rebut. It fits well into the image of Sillan interpreters in Ennin's description: they engaged mostly in tasks beyond the linguistic realm and they bonded closely with the subcontracted Sillan sailors and carpenters from other enclaves.

7.2 The misleading title of "Sillan interpreters"

If the title of "Sillan interpreters" was indeed commonly associated with multi-tasking Sillans at the time, then, no doubt, the label is intrinsically misleading. In my data, neither Kim Chǒngnam nor Pak Chǒngjang was simply an interpreter, although they were labeled as such in Ennin's account. As effective marine transport coordinators, they obtained the contract to mobilize seaborne manpower and technical resources for the Japanese cause. In Ennin's depiction, these Sillan interpreters were professionals in the China-Japan voyage in charge of logistics arrangements and sailing expertise in rough waters. Clearly, Kim Chǒngnam independently coordinated the nine ships and sixty Sillan sailors in Japan for the trip. Kim's alacrity in preparing for the marine support was impressive. Once he landed in Yangzhou or the Yang prefecture, he instantly traveled to the Chu prefecture to commence preparing for the embassy's return journey. His brisk coordination attests his maritime connections in East Asia. His specialized network explains why Kim was hired to take this high-profile job, a job practically comparable to the captain of this voyage.

四日,依金正南請,令修理所買船。令都匠、番匠、船工、鍛工等卅六人向楚州去。(Ennin 2007:28)

4th [Intercalary January, 839]: In response to a request from Kim Chǒngnam, they are having thirty-six master carpenters, general carpenters, ship's carpenters, and founders go to Chu-chou to repair the ships he has bought.

(Reischauer's translation 1955a:76)

All such logistics preparations seemed routine procedures to Kim, easily accomplished with a wave of his hand. Notably, he showcased his maritime expertise by promptly responding to the ambassador's query about color change of the sea water towards the Chinese coast,³³

新羅譯語金正南申云：聞道揚州掘港難過，今既逾白水，疑逾掘港歟。
(Ennin 2007:4)

The Korean Interpreter, Kim Chǒngnam, stated that he had heard it said that it was difficult to pass through the dug channel of Yang-chou and that, since we had already passed the whitish water, he suspected that we may have passed by the dug channel.
(Reischauer's translation 1955a: 5)

So far, I have established that Sillan interpreters' tasks were not exclusive to language mediation, but in fact included multifarious duties of liaison, networking, coordination, and marine travel consultancy. The most legitimate question to ask is then: why were these marine experts, trading agents and middlemen categorically labeled as "Sillan interpreters"? Or alternatively, how come Sillan interpreters were regularly entrusted with a range of tasks not immediately related to interpreting? Interestingly, such incongruences are not exclusively found in relation to Sillan interpreters. For instance, a multiplicity of interpreters' roles was identified also in the Roman empire. Mairs (2011) observes that the Latin (*interpres*) and Greek (*hermêneus*) terms for "interpreters" in the Roman empire may be understood as multi-faceted "commercial go-betweens," "negotiators," "mediators," or simply someone who "explains." Although these two foreign terms are regularly, and narrowly, anglicized as "interpreters," their scope of references went beyond sheer linguistic mediation. In some cases, the so-called interpreters or negotiators were purely trading brokers in the Roman military services (Mairs 2012).

This inconsistency is particularly problematic in regard to which occurrence in the archive is counted as an interpreting case and which is not. If this is not

33. Ennin never mentioned any problems conversing with Sillan interpreters. I am therefore more inclined to believe that, as far as this record is concerned, they simply conversed with the monk and other embassy members in Japanese. One notable exception is when the village elder Wang Liang (王良), of Sillan ethnicity, spotted Ennin hiding in the mountain, obviously a foreigner unable to speak either Chinese or Sillan. Unlike the Sillan interpreters in the travelogue, Wang Liang spoke no Japanese, so he could only write Chinese to communicate with Ennin. "卷一(四月五日)爰村老王良書云:和尚到此處,自稱新羅人。見其言語,非新羅語,亦非大唐語。見道日本國朝貢使船泊山東候風,恐和尚是官客。" (Ennin 2007:38) "(April 5): The village elder, Wang Liang, wrote, saying: You monks have come here and call yourselves Koreans, but I see that your language is not Korean, nor is it Chinese. I have been told that the ships of the Japanese tributary embassy stopped east of the mountains to wait for [favorable] winds, and I fear that you monks are official visitors [to China]..." (Reischauer's translation 1955a: 104).

immediately clarified, the methodological implication is huge. Possibly, textual references to *interpretes* or *hermèneus* so collated in archival searches might *not* be all about interpreting, but were unfortunately mistaken as such. The data thus collected would have been misleading to, and possibly misread by, researchers. Given the range of possible semantic references to the term “interpreters,” textual references to interpreters cannot be taken for granted, but should be finely analyzed, giving due consideration to their historical contexts of usage.

Ennin’s travelogue is an ideal source for a textual investigation of interpreters, as exemplified in this study. Ultimately, the results could throw light on parallel situations in the European context. As such, the present study adds not only one more example of interpreters with myriad tasks and talents to the database, but also informs us of the contexts in which they functioned. Table 1 is certainly a first step towards a better understanding of Sillan interpreters. Nevertheless, the quantitative data collected raise yet another question. How come there was a total absence of face-to-face mediated exchanges in the diary, despite the frequent references to interpreters? Admittedly, task multiplicity appears to be a major distinction between official interpreters and civilian interpreters. For interpreting officials, the work was often confined to diplomatic or ethnographic interpreting.³⁴ For civilian interpreters, versatility might have been the precise niche of their marketability. Understandably, interpreting alone did not seem sufficient to achieve the goal of survival in those days. Without a stable income, these dynamic interpreters had to be proficient in several trades to ensure that they could cope financially.

8. Conclusions

Ennin’s depiction of these civilian interpreters represents a vivid, individualized, and in-depth, if subjective, account of East Asian go-betweens. In China’s standard histories, interpreters are mostly anonymous and textually transparent, as if they were obsolete in mediated exchanges. Taking note of a similar feature in Spanish records, Alonso and Baigorri (2004: 129) consider it a case of “fiction of intercommunicability.” Ennin’s travelogue, however, gives a radically diverse impression of interpreters. We can see them in action; we can hear them talking to Ennin. They are anything but invisible or inaudible. In fact, their words, actions, ideas, and sometimes emotions intimately intertwined with the monk’s

34. As a Tang imperial practice, visiting envoys would be interviewed in the court of diplomatic receptions with the active probing of the court interpreters. The information collected was mostly about the geography, customs, culture, and climate of the foreign countries in question.

sojourn and fortune. The personal touches and interactions between the patrons and interpreters stand in stark contrast to the flat and flimsy references to interpreters in standard historical records.

It is perhaps not a coincidence that both Sillan interpreters and the interpreters in the Roman empire were found to have regularly engaged in tasks not confined to interpreting. Lung (2011) identified the multilingual Tuyuhun people being equally versatile and entrepreneurial in making their living across national boundaries of 6th-century Asia. Yet, why were these astute polyglots, coincidentally all from first-millennium records, persistently labeled as interpreters? It is possible that the interpreting title might have been used to conveniently overshadow non-linguistic tasks undertaken by interpreters. Undeniably, what came with the interpreting designation was one's mobility, at home and in foreign countries, to trade, travel, and enlist manpower support. I am not clear about policies in the Roman empire, but this was certainly true in Tang China, in which an individual's rights to travel across provinces required permits from regional authorities. In this light, the designation of "Sillan interpreters" might have carried non-linguistic associations tacitly acknowledged at the time. As Wakabayashi (2012: 182) observes in her review of various conceptualizations of translation historiography, "multiple interpretations of a particular terminological concept can coexist in a given period, and the meaning often changes over time." Conjecturally, for instance, "Sillan interpreters" were perceived to be not *simply* interpreters, but multilingual contractors or sub-contractors of various odd jobs related to seaborne trade and transport. The blending of these jobs, nevertheless, was not random. Note that they shared one similarity: the need to be mobile. In this perspective, the unusual emphasis on "Sillan" in the interpreters' designation might have been a way to accentuate their Sillan competence and Sillan connection in East Asia, which were conducive to their versatility as the middle-men.

Ennin's record is an unusually intricate archive pertaining to East Asian interpreting. Its recurrent references to Sillan interpreters, one may conclude, are simply a result of the monk's reliance on their advice and services. Yet, it might also be a clue to a broader picture of East Asian exchanges. The diverse Sillan interpreters in his diary, taken together, sketch an outline of the interpreting tradition in first-millennium East Asia. It should be recalled that these interpreters were organic entities of a social reality at the time. Ennin's frequent references to these polyglots convincingly attest to the ubiquity of Sillans and Sillan interpreters. This argument strikes a chord with Reischauer's observation (1955b: xv) that Ennin's diary is valuable "in the over-all picture it gives of life in ninth-century China." Baigorri (2006: 102) argues that examining the profiles and situations of a group of interpreters counts far more than the mere "gleanings of information" of an individual interpreter.

The current study is in tune with Baigorri's call. Here, we are presented with a social context in which many multilingual Sillans thrived, some bearing the title of interpreters but, in practice, being far more versatile, dynamic, and resourceful than purely interpreters. It was a time and place in which they shrewdly capitalized on their niche in the diplomatic, commercial, and civilian exchanges in East Asia.

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CHAPTER 2

Interpreting practices in the Age of Discovery

The early stages of the Spanish empire in the Americas*

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This chapter reflects on the evolution of interpreting practices of explorers and conquerors in Spanish America, comparing interpreters' roles and profiles during the initial journeys of discovery (1492–1524) and the period of early colonial administration in New Spain, where there was a complex mosaic of languages. The evolution is traced using primary and secondary sources. Initially Spanish explorers and conquerors resorted to Old World traditional strategies to solve their linguistic and cultural challenges, but after the conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlan new strategies were designed, for instance those used at the *Audiencias*, where the *Laws of the Indies* contained specific legislation on interpreters. This regulation of the interpreter's trade can be seen as a pioneering initiative applied throughout the vast Spanish empire for centuries thereafter.

Keywords: linguistic intermediaries, interpreting practices, early colonial Mexico, Laws of the Indies, colonial *Audiencias*, staff interpreters

1. Previous research, sources and theoretical framework

My initial interest in the history of interpreting practices was focused on linguistic and cultural mediation in the first Spanish expeditions to the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico in the Age of Discovery. Based on a variety of sources, mainly chronicles of the Indies, but also on primary records from historical and administrative archives and the religious orders' internal correspondence, I tried to identify interpreters, to define their social origins, to analyze their professional (or non-professional) profiles and to describe and evaluate their role(s) in various social settings. Further research, mainly conducted within the Alfoque

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Research Group, has contributed to broadening this field of study to encompass other colonial periods and geographical areas in the Americas, including Guatemala, Paraguay and Chile (Baigorri and Alonso 2007; Alonso, Baigorri and Payàs 2008; Payàs and Alonso 2009) and also to include new approaches and methodological tools for research into the history of interpreting, such as the analysis of visual images and the adoption of a historical and anthropological perspective (Alonso and Baigorri 2004; Payàs and Zavala 2013). The scientific debate on this topic has recently been enriched by research from the fields of history (Ratto 2005; Roulet 2009), ethnohistory (Schwaller 2012; Yannakakis 2008, 2012), linguistics (Malvestiti 2012), translation and interpreting studies (Payàs, Zavala and Samaniego 2012; Valdeón 2013) and sociology and visual syntax (Fernández-Ocampo and Wolf 2014). All of these studies have emphasized the prominent role played by bilingual intermediaries in the establishment of relations between cultures in conflict and in shaping both institutional and everyday life in early colonial societies.

The aim of this chapter is to compare the linguistic strategies used during the first stages of the Spanish expeditions to the Caribbean and to the territories of modern Mexico (1492–1524) and those that emerged when a new form of administration in New Spain, mainly the *Audiencia* (see 3.1), was established as a tool of colonial rule in the New World. The timeframe for this second stage would be between the establishment of the *Audiencia* of Mexico (1527) and the foundation of the Viceroyalty of New Spain with the appointment of the first viceroy, Antonio de Mendoza (1535–1550).

Combining chronicles of the Indies with legal documents, records from historical archives and Inquisition cases, among other sources, I examine the different ways in which linguistic intermediaries between Spanish and Mesoamerican cultures carried out their tasks. In doing so, I try to confirm the following hypothesis: interpreting practices in early colonial Mexico showed a rather fast evolution from the 1520s onwards toward the establishment of a series of official positions under specific regulations. Such evolution could be considered as a process of adapting the various ways of “being in-between” in social interactions to the new colonial order when demands for linguistic mediation arose.

Conflicting and converging interests were linked to the specific linguistic requirements of each person or social group at different moments, although the contours of those needs were often blurred. While I am aware of the major social and cultural role played by missionaries and religious orders in institutional and everyday life in the colonies – the imperial endeavor was indeed a joint venture between the Spanish Crown and the Catholic Church –, I will focus here mainly on the daily linguistic interactions between Spanish explorers, conquistadors, rulers or civil servants and the indigenous populations.

From a methodological point of view, it can be assumed that at this early stage of colonial rule, as in other historical periods, both oral and written mediation skills – applied to many extralinguistic functions – were required and were frequently performed by the same person (Alonso-Araguás 2010; Yannakakis 2012; Andres 2013). That is why an extensive typology of mediated situations managed by a variety of so-called interpreters (Pöchhacker 2004: 15) responds better to a general category of linguistic and cultural mediation, men and women in between (Yannakakis 2008), than to the concept of interpreter as an established profession.

2. Traditional interpreting practices during the first voyages of discovery

Planning to reach Japan and China sailing westward, Columbus included as an interpreter in his crew a recently converted Jew, Luis de Torres, fluent in Spanish, Hebrew, Chaldean, Arabic and most likely a little Latin (Colón 1995, 1st voyage, November 2, 1492). Torres had acquired his linguistic skills serving as a private clerk for the Fajardo family in the Christian kingdom of Murcia. For many years during the *Reconquista* (a period from the eighth to the late fifteenth century in which Muslims, Jews and Christians coexisted in present-day Spain and Portugal) he was in charge of writing and translating their private and official correspondence from and into Castilian and Arabic (Vilar 1995: 248–249). Columbus assumed that the languages covered by his interpreter would allow for sight-translation of the official letters, written in Latin, that he took with him as diplomatic documents to exchange with the Japanese and Chinese authorities. That high-level diplomatic interpreting turned out to be useless, and Luis de Torres failed on his first attempt to communicate with Taino peoples on Hispaniola Island (current Dominican Republic and Haiti) on November 2, 1492. But Columbus was aware of previous explorations by the Portuguese along the West African coasts in which the cooperation of interpreters (*os línguas*) from different backgrounds, including assistance in the kidnapping of natives, was a real priority for explorers and merchants. That is why, three weeks before his official interpreter first attempted to communicate with the natives, the Admiral took a native Indian¹ from Guanahani Island – the first crime of the New World according to Greenblatt (1990: 17) –, to be used later on as an interpreter (Colón 1995, 1st voyage, October 14, 1492). The young indigenous boy would be named Diego Colón.

1. The expression “Indian,” used in this chapter, is taken directly from the sources. It applies to various native peoples in the area of study who were identified by the first explorers as people from India, the intended destination of their early voyages.

Precedents of interpreting practices that used captives as interpreters during the early Spanish voyages of discovery to the Americas can be found in various instances. In the political entities created during the Muslim occupation of the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages (711–1492), continued interaction between Christians and Muslims required sustained language mediation, often performed by Jews, the main intercultural intermediaries (Pym 2000: 71; Alonso and Payàs 2008: 44). The early Portuguese and Castilian voyages of exploration in the 14th and 15th centuries led them respectively to the West African coast (Russell 1980; Pinheiro 2008: 30), and to the Canary Islands (Sarmiento-Pérez 2011: 160). In both cases, the use of linguistic mediators was necessary to establish trading posts and routes and to put new territories under political control, and kidnapping was a medium-term strategy explorers put in practice to procure interpreters for subsequent voyages.

Those customary solutions were used during the four voyages of Columbus (1492–1504), the following trade-driven Andalusian voyages to the Caribbean coast of Venezuela and the Antilles (1499–1504), and the early campaigns of Grijalva and Cortés into the continent (1518–1524). They involved the kidnapping of young natives to be immediately used on site as guides and linguistic intermediaries, or to be trained in Spanish during a variable period of time to serve as interpreters.

It seems clear that the first spontaneous solution did not guarantee effective interpretation, as the kidnapped natives did not speak or understand Spanish. However, primary sources from that period show us many instances of kidnapped local young boys, recruited during voyages as guides and informants, to be used either on board ships or on the ground.² According to available sources, they were far from cooperative and usually eager to escape from their captors or to rise up against them. The case of Melchorejo, a young Mayan boy captured with Julianillo by Cortés in March 1517 in Punta Cotoche (Yucatan Peninsula) who escaped two years later near Tabasco (Díaz del Castillo 2000, I: 88), shows that the quite logical reaction from captured natives did not contribute to facilitating on-site communication.

Regarding the second solution, there were many instances of local people being forcibly taken to imperial administrative centers, such as the city of Santo Domingo on Hispaniola Island, which became in 1511 the temporary headquarters of the first Royal *Audiencia*, or even to the court of the Catholic Monarchs in Spain.³ The aim was to teach them Castilian so they could be taken back to work as

2. As a matter of fact, we can find such a profile of intermediaries in very different places and times (see Karttunen 1994). Indeed, captivity in border territories became a phenomenon which promoted transculturation processes between cultures in contact (see Operé 2001: 264).

3. The term “Spain” designates, for the purpose of this chapter, the kingdom consolidated under Isabella and Ferdinand around 1492, which included territories and peoples that exceeded

interpreters, after being baptized with Christian names, often with Spanish explorers or officers acting as godparents. Young Diego Colón, kidnapped on Guanahani Island with other natives and taken to the Indies as an interpreter one year later, was only the first in a long series of indigenous people captured for the purpose of resolving communication problems. Kidnapped on October 14, 1492, during Columbus' first voyage, he received the same name as the Admiral's legitimate son. After a one-year stay in Spain, he was considered fluent enough in Castilian to serve as an interpreter and thus was taken by Columbus on his second voyage in 1493 (Colón 1995:242).⁴

Hundreds of similar cases of kidnappings during these early years, especially after Columbus's second voyage, are well-documented in primary sources such as Columbus's logbooks,⁵ in many chronicles of the Indies,⁶ and in the General Archive of the Indies.⁷ Those abductions, encouraged by Columbus to provide interpreting services in the future, were tolerated and justified by the Spanish Crown and became a regular practice that immediately gave rise to an incipient

present-day Spain, but whose main administrative base was located in the former kingdom of Castile and Leon. The expression "Spanish language" should be understood as Castilian, as was specifically formalized by Nebrija in his 1492 grammar.

4. "(...) and after he had spoken with my Indian – Diego Colón, one of those who had gone to Castile and already speaks our language very well." (Columbus 1994, I:281). For a more detailed description of the interpreter Diego Colón in the second voyage, see Alonso-Araguás 2012:51–53.

5. Columbus made in 1495, during his second voyage, a clear proposal to the Catholic Monarchs to send Indian captives to Castile in order to teach them Castilian and to use them as interpreters in the future: "Please consider whether it might be well worth it to take six or eight boys, set them apart, and teach them to write and study, because I believe they will excel at learning in a short time; in Spain they will learn perfectly and here we will learn their language, and our objective will be realized" (Columbus 1994, I:355). See also Columbus's testimony about some natives captured during his first voyage who were taken back to the Americas in his second voyage: "I sent only one caravel to leave ashore [Samana] one of the four Indians taken last year – he had not died of smallpox like the others – when I left for Cadiz and others from Guanahani or San Salvador" (Columbus 1994, I:215).

6. For instance, Fernández de Oviedo (1959, I:31) provides detailed information about several captives' stays in Spain, and Las Casas (1957, I, ch. 85–86) refers to the return of some of them as interpreters to the Americas.

7. See "Real Cédula a Cristóbal de Mendoza" (June 19, 1496) in Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Indiferente, 420, L.8. About the role played by Hispaniola Island in the provision of interpreters, see also "Asiento y capitulación que se tomó con Alonso de Ojeda para ir a descubrir a las Indias" (September 30, 1504) in AGI, Indiferente, 418, L.1, fol. 134r–137v; "Gente de La Española para la expedición de Tierra Firme" (1513) in AGI, Panamá, 233, L.1, fol. 55–57r; "Orden a Diego Colón" (May 5, 1513) in AGI, Indiferente, 419, L.4, fol. 146r–146bis r.

trade of Indian slaves. As a matter of fact, very few of these kidnapped Indians were taken back to their places of origin in the Americas.⁸ At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Catholic Queen Isabella tried to reduce the number of captives through a series of royal decrees and ordinances restricting the allowance to just a small number of linguistic intermediaries (the so-called *indios lenguas*) and to the rebel cannibals (the *Caribe* peoples). As was to be expected, many abuses occurred, and new decrees with a similar purpose had to be enacted through the sixteenth century.

From a strictly linguistic point of view, this approach seems to make sense: it is easier to teach the language when the learner is young. Besides, kidnapping was a common practice in internal local wars too, so the practice would not have been seen as something unusual by the indigenous peoples. Such a strategy brings to the fore the role played by translation in those cross-cultural contexts. Immediacy was of course a decisive criterion in recruiting interpreters to the detriment of others parameters, as accuracy or a high level of professional skills. But the tactical benefits of using captives in military conflicts, especially in colonial settings involving power balance and asymmetrical relationships, should not be overlooked. By ranking captive natives on their side, colonizers had a (forced) means of incursion in the Other's physical and mental territory: being seen in the company of members of the Other's own community was indeed a tactical advantage, at least in the initial stages of the encounter. In that context, local interpreters were perceived by colonizers as valuable repositories of – maybe limited, but privileged – inside information on their societies and cultures, that is, “not only because of *what* they do but because of *who* they are” (Cronin 2000: 72, my emphasis). Therefore, cultural mediation, information control and loyalty seem to have been more valued than translation quality, and the success of military campaigns and early colonial occupation was more linked to the mere presence of indigenous mediators on the colonizers' side than to their far from optimal translation skills. Apart from their role as language intermediaries, local potential interpreters could, within their “geopolitical” range, readily provide knowledgeable information about topography, customs and alliances or relationships between different native rulers and various population groups.

Certainly, the use of these natives as guides was based on the erroneous idea held by the Spaniards that the two types of societies worked on the same spatial

8. See “Carta de los Reyes al obispo Fonseca para que entregue cincuenta indios a Juan de Lezcano para el servicio de las galeras” (January 13, 1496), in Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), Cámara de Castilla, 1. 2º, 2ª, fol. 156. It is worth noting that at the end of the fifteenth century the slave trade from the Canary Islands and Africa was quite usual in the major cities on the Iberian Peninsula, such as Lisbon, Seville or Cadiz.

scale. The Spaniards had crossed the ocean, covering thousands of kilometers, while the small indigenous groups they met, especially at the beginning in the Caribbean, had a quite restricted area of movement, limited by the combination of powerful natural forces (storms, winds, heat, insects, and so on) and very simple technology (canoes, bows and arrows). If the Spaniards thought that they could be guided in their further explorations by people taken from these small hamlets, they were wrong, at least for two reasons: those children knew only their limited area, within walking or canoeing distance; and, since they did not speak Spanish, their potential explanations would be incomprehensible for the Spaniards. So the place-name system used by Spanish colonists in the American territories, commemorating religious figures or paying tribute to their places of origin (Hispaniola, Isabella, Nombre de Dios, Veracruz, Nueva Galicia, Nueva España, for instance), represents the contrast between the two worlds in contact. This new imperial cartography reflects not only the conquerors' symbolic power to name places, things and individuals that already had their own names, but also their ignorance of the natives' worldview and languages.

Kidnapping, as an extreme form of physical appropriation of the translator's body (Cronin 2000: 135), was certainly the first, fastest and easiest way to place translators or interpreters in a subordinate position within power networks.

In addition to the use of captives or abducted natives, the learning by sailors, soldiers and missionaries of a smattering of local languages was, of course, a complementary way to provide medium- to long-term linguistic solutions. Long stays inside indigenous communities afforded some of them the essential linguistic tools to communicate in daily affairs. Over the years, some became interpreters, including Cristóbal Rodríguez, a sailor with Columbus, whose nickname was *la lengua* (the tongue) (Las Casas 1957, I: 470–1; II: 97, 175); Cortés's page boy, Orteguilla, later on a highly valued interpreter between Montezuma and Cortés (Díaz del Castillo 2000, I: 92, 95); García de Pilar, the well-known sailor in Cortés's campaign (Thomas 2003: 133–4), or even the Franciscan friars Bernardino de Sahagún and Alonso de Molina, who acted as senior interpreters in ecclesiastical courts (González-Obregón 2009: 29).

Finally, potential interpreters and cultural intermediaries were also recruited from among the groups of women, children or young men offered by local rulers or *caciques* as servants or slaves.⁹ Among these “good-will gifts,” the Mayan princess Malintzin, *doña Marina*, is perhaps the most famous but by no means an isolated case, especially during the military campaign of Cortés in the Yucatan

9. This widely-used Spanish word *cacique* comes from Taino, an Arawak language spoken in the Great Antilles when Columbus arrived during his first voyage. It means an indigenous dignitary, a local Indian chief.

Peninsula. Data about other indigenous women that played an important mediation role can also be found in archival records and secondary sources (Karttunen 1997). In the asymmetrical relationship between the colonizers and the colonized, the role of these indigenous interpreters, with conflicting interests and allegiances, poses ethical questions (Valdeón 2013), such as their loyalty or impartiality as regards the two sides in conflict.

3. New communication strategies in the early colonial administration: Steps towards stable institutional interpreting practices

New approaches to the language barrier issue had to be tested once an early colonial administration was established in the territories gradually conquered overseas by the Spanish Crown. Local intermediaries contributed to shaping the colonial legal administration when, after the fall of Mexico-Tenochtitlan and the death of Montezuma (1521), the way to more stable and sophisticated legal and administrative practices was smoothed. Some of the administrative bodies that emerged during the Middle Ages in the Iberian Peninsula under the Christian *Reconquista* process, and the subsequent resettlement of the population, were adapted by the Spanish colonists in the Americas as a mirror image of the Spanish State administration.

The procedure used by the colonial administration to confiscate the natives' lands was basically the *repartimiento* and *encomienda* system.¹⁰ In both cases, native people were part of the reward received by the beneficiaries of those endowments, so a certain level of communication between Spanish masters and local servants was necessary for the system to function.

As a result of this process, a legion of functional bilinguals capable – sometimes barely – of understanding the orders given by the masters also acted as cultural and linguistic brokers or facilitators in informal everyday interactions. Among them, some would learn a little more Spanish than others, probably in a

10. The *repartimiento* system (meaning “distribution”) answered the need to provide Spanish colonists with a sufficient amount of indigenous manpower to allow them to work the land or to exploit the mines. To avoid conflicts among colonists, the Spanish Crown established a quota system to supply forced labor. The *encomienda* (meaning “to entrust someone with land and people in exchange for certain duties”) entailed the colonists' obligation to protect and educate native communities in exchange for their loyalty, tributes and labor. Educational obligations included the teaching of Spanish and instruction in the Catholic faith, the so-called *adoctrinamiento* (indoctrination). Needless to say, colonists more often than not failed to fulfill their legal obligations.

relatively short time, and they would eventually become overseers or foremen of their fellow workers. Those local intermediaries (i.e. speakers of local tongues and fluent in Spanish but not necessarily literate) or Spaniards fluent in local tongues provided a kind of mediation in routine affairs rather than in official administrative settings (Yannakakis 2012: 669). They were “people in between,” unofficial interpreters, who played a crucial role in preserving their traditions and in promoting hybridization among ethnic groups and cultures, as pointed out by Schwaller (2012: 710 ff.). This was a widespread modality of interethnic, intercultural and interlinguistic relations that coexisted with the more sophisticated language regime used, for instance, in the *Audiencias* (see 3.1). In fact, some of these people in-between participated as incidental interpreters in ecclesiastical courts and in collaboration with official (and perhaps professional) interpreters, as was the case with the two indigenous servants who interpreted in don Carlos of Texcoco’s Inquisition trial in 1539 (Alonso-Araguás 2012: 53–58).

Furthermore, the establishment of new administrative bodies led to the replacement of the early mediated encounters (mostly isolated contacts which were common during the military campaigns) by institutionalized contacts in many sectors of the incipient colonial government in which better language skills were required: justice and law, tax collection, or, for instance, activities carried out by the Catholic Church (Pöchhacker 2004: 15–16). The preceding social structure, where asymmetrical power and class relations also existed on both sides before the conquest, did not disappear with the arrival of the Spaniards, and both oral and written skills in the new imperial language, Castilian Spanish, became a valuable asset to improve the social or economic status of those who mastered it. Those who became proficient were seen by the local population as part of the ruling elite and that gave them an exclusive advantage to exert political control over indigenous groups. Those intermediaries, often Indian natives or *mestizos*, who would eventually become staff interpreters in the *Audiencias*, played a crucial role in building colonial America. However, they were faced with an uncomfortable situation, derived from their ambivalence: they failed to be completely assimilated into Spanish society and they would be seen with suspicion by their own people, as collaborators with the colonizers and Spanish officials. Their condition was far from simple, because, as Yannakakis (2008: 6) has rightly pointed out referring to loyalties at the early stages of colonial Mexico, “the categories of ‘Spaniard’ and ‘Indian’ and their correspondence to the terms *conqueror* and *conquered* have little meaning.”

3.1 Appointment of staff interpreters in colonial *Audiencias*

For the purposes of this study, staff interpreters refer to those individuals who occupied official positions as language intermediaries within the colonial administration. Following a specific appointment, they carried out linguistic mediation tasks under the authority of the viceroy, the tax collectors, the town councils (*cabildos*), other colonial functionaries or even the ecclesiastic courts. Their salaries, duties and rights were stipulated in specific legislation (Giambruno 2008).

Some of the laws and regulations from medieval Castile, as well as some administrative and legal institutions that emerged during the Spanish *Reconquista*, were adapted to the needs of New Spain's early colonial society. Thus, in addition to the Laws of Burgos (1512) and the collection of ordinances and royal decrees enacted by Queen Isabella of Castile and King Ferdinand of Aragon (the Catholic Monarchs) regulating the administration of the Indies, a new legal system developed out of the legal dispositions promulgated by Emperor Charles V (the New Laws, *Leyes Nuevas*, in 1542) and by King Philip II, in 1585. In the following decades, successive laws and ordinances on the newly discovered territories were added, so that legal regulations required continuous compilations and updates (Francis 2006), mainly in 1681 and 1776, under the title of *Recopilación de Leyes de los Reynos de Indias* (Compilation of Laws of the Indies). They comprised four volumes arranged into several books and titles. This legal corpus was meant to cover every administrative and legal matter in colonial America, including governance and judicial processes.

The *Audiencia* was the specific institution charged with the administration of justice in colonial Spanish territories, as was the case in late medieval Castile. Between 1523 and 1587 the *Audiencias* were also concerned with administration, and their presidents held simultaneously the post of governor or viceroy. The first *Audiencia* in the Indies was established during Diego Colón's mandate in 1511 in Santo Domingo (temporarily abolished and reestablished again in 1526), followed by the one in Mexico in 1527. Similar institutions were established in Panama (1538), Guatemala and Lima (both in 1543), as well as in South American territories through the second half of the 16th century and during the 17th century (Polanco 1992; Schäfer 2003; Francis 2006).

Amongst the issues dealt with in the *Compilation of Laws of the Indies* were those concerning interpreting practices in official settings, in Book II, title 29, *Sobre los intérpretes* (*On interpreters*), which includes fourteen specific ordinances enacted over a long period of time, from 1529 to 1630. They laid the foundations for the provision of an interpreting services system, establishing the qualifications and working conditions for the interpreters at the *Audiencias*, including penalties for the breach of their duties, that is, a professional code (Alonso and Payàs 2008; Giambruno 2008).

Within the timeframe of this research, I will focus on two laws enacted by Emperor Charles V.¹¹ The earliest one is Law XIV, dated 1529, which focused on ethical issues related to interpreters (or *lenguas*) assisting the native population in the provinces or in towns outside the headquarters of the *Audiencia*:

Law XIV (1529):¹² Interpreters shall not request or receive anything from the Indians, nor Indians give more than required to their *encomenderos*.

(Translated by Giambruno 2008: 47)

This law originated in the reiterated complaints by the local people about frequent cases of arbitrariness by some of the interpreters of the *Audiencias*, who used the power derived from their administrative position to extort jewelry, clothes, women or food from the Indians (see Ayala 1946, vol. I: 409). As in many other daily dealings, language skills were used in the courts as a means to negotiate social relations by taking advantage of their perceived proximity to the colonial administration.

In order to prevent unfair practices such as blackmail, bribes or abuses of power by the interpreters, this law bans their acceptance of any kind of items from the Indians and establishes the following penalties: banishment and loss of assets. After this first regulation, at least five of the ordinances included in Book II, title 29, of this *Compilation of Laws of the Indies* refer with special emphasis to interpreters' salaries (Laws I, IX, X, XI), to the prohibition of accepting any amount of money or gifts (Law III), and to the obligation on interpreters to remain at the *Audiencia's* headquarters (Laws VI and VIII).

In 1530, just one year after the enactment of this law, Emperor Charles V explicitly confirmed the on-going suspicions of translation mistakes or intentional manipulation of messages by interpreters in the justice administration. The emperor's instructions to the New Spain *Audiencia* to get a tighter grip on those interpreters' frauds proposed the presence at court of two interpreters, who would act separately and whose versions could eventually be compared in order to ensure their accuracy with the original.¹³ Those instructions were almost entirely incor-

11. These fourteen ordinances are not presented in the *Compilation* in strict chronological order; the two earliest laws are placed at the very end of the Title. Giambruno (2008: 37–47) provides extensive comments accompanying the whole series of laws in Spanish and English.

12. [Spanish original]: “Que los Interpretes no pidan, ni reciban cosa alguna de los Indios, ni los Indios den mas de lo que deben á sus Encomenderos.” (*Recopilación de Leyes...*, Libro II, título 29, Ley XIV: 275).

13. See *Instrucciones al Presidente y Oidores de la Audiencia de la Nueva España, Madrid* (July 12, 1530): “Acá se ha hecho relacion que en la interpretacion de las lenguas de los naturales de aquellas Provincias há habido algunos fraudes por culpa de los interpretes de ella, y que seria

porated in the second law of the series, Law XII, dated 1537. Thus the ordinance openly allowed the use of a second interpreter (*ladino christiano*), a friend or relative of the Indian who was giving testimony, as a way to monitor the accuracy and good faith of the main interpreter when judicial and extrajudicial proceedings were taking place:

Law XII (1537):¹⁴ Any Indian who is required to give testimony is allowed to bring a person who speaks Castilian and knows the customs of the Spanish to be present at the hearing. (Transl. by Giambruno 2008: 45)

Thus, the Spanish authorities tried to ensure not only the right of the native population to be given linguistic assistance in legal procedures but also certain checks and balances as to professional quality and ethical conduct. Beyond the translation's quality and accuracy issue, the ordinance invites us to reflect on the role trust and loyalty would play in the appointment of interpreters. The ordinance in its original Castilian version refers to the option of using a second interpreter saying that he would be *un ladino christiano, un christiano amigo*, that is, someone who would not only be familiar with the language of procedure but who also shared the religion, an important collateral for those who administered justice. Once again, loyalty and mutual trust may be considered more crucial than impartiality or professional qualifications when it comes to asymmetric relations of colonial domination.

3.1.1 Nahuatlantos and general interpreters

Official interpreters assigned to assist colonial authorities in the period covered in this chapter were often recruited among the children of local indigenous or *mestizo* nobility or from the selected circles of the Franciscans (mainly at the Tlatelolco College, in Mexico City). They were often highly educated people and some of them showed literary abilities in different languages. Due to their knowledge of two or more languages, they also had more chances of achieving a higher social status in the new colonial order. As members of the indigenous nobility, they had

remedio para escusar los inconvenientes que en ello ha habido que quando se hubiese de hacer alguna interpretacion de lenguas, fuese por dos interpretes, y estos no concurriesen juntos á la declaracion del Yndio, sino que cada uno por su parte declarase lo que dijese; y que de esta manera los interpretes no tendrán lugar de trocar las palabras, sino que cada uno declarase lo que digese; y otros son de parecer que mas verdad se podrá saver estando presentes ambos: Vezlo allá vosotros, y proveer en ello lo que mas convenga, como personas que teneis las cosas delante.” (Ayala 1946, I:406–407).

14. [Spanish original]: “Que el Indio que huviere de declarar, pueda llevar otro ladino Christiano, que esté presente.” (*Recopilación de Leyes...*, *Idem*).

an outstanding knowledge of local cultures and societies, particularly compared with the average Spaniard settled in New Spain. Promotion of these indigenous or *mestizo* individuals was a measure that allowed Spanish administrators to co-opt local rulers to the low ranks of imperial bureaucracy. Bestowing some official authority to the people who occupied those positions as intermediaries was a way to guarantee a smooth political transition that would facilitate the social control of native people.

This early institutionalization of interpreting tasks in legal, political and administrative settings led to the creation of other official positions, such as that of *escribano* (a municipal scribe in charge of correspondence who sometimes performed interpreter's functions), *nahuatlato* (originally meaning the speaker or interpreter of the Nahuatl language, and later identified as an official interpreter in the *Audiencia*), the *intérprete general del Juzgado de Indios* (general interpreter at the Indian Court) and the *intérprete general* (a general interpreter working in the provinces and mostly appointed by indigenous *cabildos*). At the beginning, the position of *nahuatlato* was usually held by Spaniards, a means to ensure loyalty and trust towards the elite of the colonial rulers.¹⁵

From then on, successive appointments of interpreters in the *Audiencias* were somehow linked with the provisions of the Laws of the Indies, specifically the legal dispositions on interpreters, which added new requirements and shaped a singular legal corpus concerning every detail related to interpreters' practice. Administrative positions like those of *nahuatlato* or general interpreter could eventually be assimilated to those of staff interpreters in institutionalized settings.

Over time, as we have shown elsewhere (Alonso, Baigorri and Payàs 2008; Alonso-Araguás 2015), well-known figures from local indigenous – and also *mestizo* – societies, like Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl and Hernando Alvarado Tezozómoc would become *nahuatlatos*. Chronicler and historian Hernando de Alvarado (ca. 1525–ca. 1560) was a former student with friar Bernardino de Sahagún at Tlatelolco College and a member of a former Mexican ruling family. The same applies several decades later to the Mayan nobleman Gaspar Chi (ca. 1539–ca. 1610).

The Mexican General Archive of the Nation (AGN, in Mexico City) and the General Archive of the Indies (AGI, in Seville, Spain) contain documents which

15. The General Archive of the Indies provides us with valuable information about several interpreters from the first *Audiencia* of Mexico. See, for instance, Patronato, 60, N.4, R.1 (“Méritos y servicios: Alvaro de Zamora: Nueva España.” 21.01.1555), México, 203, N.9 (“Informaciones: García del Pilar”) and México, 204, N.36 (Informaciones: Juan Gallego”). Before being appointed as official interpreters at the *Audiencia*, the three of them accompanied Hernán Cortés in his military campaigns.

allow us to keep track of many appointments, transfers and successions of this category of interpreter posts. Moreover, some archival records show us that their positions were included in the series of appointments which could be sold (AGI, México, 205, N.33), auctioned, or inherited (AGN, Indios, vol. 39, N.66, fol. 116) with a tendency to see the same families – frequently representatives of the indigenous nobility – holding such positions for several generations while combining the post with other administrative tasks in the Indies, such as mayor, scribe or bailiff (Alonso-Araguás 2015: 309–310).

All these circumstances point to the fact that language was perceived as a powerful tool both by indigenous or *mestizo* communities and by Spanish members of the colonial society. Mastering the two languages could open the way towards a new social oligarchy of local nobilities trying to ensure a privileged position in the extremely asymmetrical societies of New Spain (Nansen-Díaz 2003).

3.2 Interpreters of ecclesiastical courts in sixteenth-century colonial New Spain

Crown and Church shared many interests in the New World colonies – although discrepancies could arise, one example being the case of friar Bartolomé de Las Casas, bitterly critical with the administration – and that would yield a specific type of institution where oral exchanges and interpreters were necessary too: the Inquisition and other ecclesiastical tribunals (see also Sarmiento-Pérez (Chapter 3) in this volume).

Although the Inquisition in the Americas was not officially established until 1569 by King Philip II, from 1511 onward, bishops in the New World were expected to act as ordinary inquisitors in order to prevent heresy and to persecute Protestants and fraudulent *conversos* (converted) Jews or Muslims who fled Spain or other countries in Europe to the Americas. Prosecution cases against heathens, whether Indian or *mestizos*, were typically related to suspected practices involving witchcraft, magic or idolatry.¹⁶ Therefore, the ordinary work of the ecclesiastical Inquisition, whose competences fell under a government department, also required qualified interpreters in European and local languages in order to provide the compulsory linguistic assistance in ecclesiastical trials between a Castilian-speaking court and speakers of foreign languages.

16. Using records from the Holy Office in the Viceroyalty of New Spain, Schwaller (2012) analyzes two witchcraft cases from the second half of the 16th century and sheds light on the role of individuals of mixed ancestry operating between Spanish and native cultures during the trial. See also the inquisitorial process (1544–1546) against the *cacique* of Yanhuitlán, denounced for idolatry, in León-Zavala (1996).

The Holy Office case against the *cacique* of Texcoco, Don Carlos, in 1539, chaired by friar Juan de Zumárraga, the first bishop of New Spain, was one of the most famous of that period. Don Carlos, accused of heresy and apostasy, was tried and sentenced in the church of Tlatelolco and finally executed in the main square of Mexico-Tenochtitlan on November 30, 1539. This trial, whose full transcript was published in 1910 (González-Obregón 2009 [1910]), is an outstanding example of interpreting practices in American ecclesiastical courts. The oral hearings provide evidence of the fact that different categories of interpreters, *lenguas* or *nahuatlaltos* (ibid.:98), were used to interpret a myriad of Indians' testimonies in the proceedings: (1) Spanish priests and monks, namely Franciscan friars; (2) language scholars – mainly Spaniards –, and (3) native servants. Three famous Franciscan friars, who assisted with interpreting throughout the first stage of the trial, were also present at the concluding statement made by the *cacique* at the end of the trial: friar Antonio de Ciudad Rodrigo, one of the famous Twelve Franciscans who arrived in Mexico in 1524; friar Bernardino de Sahagún, a widely respected scholar who arrived in 1529; and friar Alonso de Molina, the Spanish child (known as “Alonsito” or “young Alonso”), educated by Franciscans in Mexican settlements, who became a prominent expert in Nahuatl language and a teacher at the Imperial College of Tlatelolco (established in 1536). Alonso Matheus, one of the Inquisition official interpreters, worked at least once during the trial, sight translating the statement made by an Indian (ibid.: 96), and Alvaro de Zamora, an official interpreter in the *Audiencia* of Mexico, was assigned to interpret witnesses' statements (ibid.:93). Besides, various native servants, who enjoyed the trust of ecclesiastical and colonial authorities, were also assigned as interpreters during the trial: Pedro, an Indian interpreter who was Bishop Juan de Zumárraga's servant (ibid.: 60), and a certain Diego (ibid.:95), whose data are omitted in the transcript. All of them also acted as notaries public, swearing to be truthful and signing witnesses' statements. Those legal cases confirm that ecclesiastical courts required higher qualifications from their interpreters, who were asked to perform oral and sight translation (Lopes 2008; González-Obregón 2009).¹⁷

Since its official establishment in the colonies, one of the Inquisition's major tasks was to deal with heretics, either Spaniards who were suspected of following Jewish or Protestant beliefs, or foreigners who had fled to the Spanish empire (from France, Central Europe and Britain, among other countries). Therefore, interpretation between Spanish and other European languages was required, as was the case in the Canary Islands, a testing ground for practice in the Americas (Sarmiento-Pérez 2011).

17. For more details about interpreting techniques at this trial, see Alonso-Araguás (2012:53–58).

4. Concluding remarks: Interpreters as critical links

This analysis of the evolution of interpreting practices in the early colonial administration of New Spain points to some key issues for discussion in our globalized world, where multilingual exchanges and multicultural coexistence are major challenges not always resolved in a satisfactory way.

The gradual institutionalization of linguistic and cultural mediation practices and the professional regulation of the interpreter's trade achieved in the early stages of Spanish colonial rule in the New World can be seen as a pioneering endeavor. This professional regulation was applied for several centuries throughout the vast territories of the empire: from the Viceroyalty of New Spain in the North, to the most remote colonial territories and boundaries of South America, promoting the emergence of profiles adapted to the circumstances and particular needs of every society, as described by recent research by Roulet (2009) and by Payàs, Zavala and Samaniego (2012) regarding the Araucanian border in Argentina and Chile respectively.

The materialization in laws of this system of appointments, access control, requirements and supervision shows the will of the colonial authorities to ensure legal and official procedures for non-Spanish speakers, even in a context of acutely asymmetrical power relations. That practice represents an obvious recognition of social and cultural diversity and a certain acknowledgement of the local population's linguistic rights after the sudden loss of status experienced by native tongues in the new colonial state. We may regard this initiative as a significant precedent of present-day public service interpreting, in particular in the field of court interpreting.

Further research is necessary to better identify the role(s) played by bilingual intermediaries as the "critical link" in the voyages of Discovery and in early New Spain, using, among others, these historiographical approaches: (1) microhistory case studies in different microspaces where interpreters' roles can be highlighted; (2) long-term sociological studies of intermediary agents, comparing the evolution of interpreters' profiles and practices through longitudinal historical periods; (3) case studies by areas of specialization: religious missions, military conflicts, administration and legal fields, among others; and (4) case studies of specific professional codes and the ethical challenges which interpreted interactions often entailed.

Historical research always approaches the past from the present, but as has been made clear in various parts of this chapter, concepts, values and feelings vary hugely across cultures and across historical periods. The language mirror may distort concepts such as loyalty, particularly when applied to a profession (or trade) of blurred contours, like that of cultural and linguistic intermediaries, where issues of

forced recruitment, acculturation through imposed submission, risk assessment of cooperation vs. resistance, etc. make it very difficult to figure out clear-cut identities and allegiances. It seems that the role(s) of interpreters in conflict situations always raise ethical questions, and this case study is no exception. The complexity of the communication between Spanish colonial authorities and their subjects in territories that were many times larger than the metropolis through a period of over five centuries is challenging enough to require further research by zones and periods. This chapter has tried to point at some potential lines of work in that field.

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CHAPTER 3

Interpreting for the Inquisition

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One of the singularities of the Spanish Inquisition was its multilingualism. This chapter looks at mediation in this institution, which carried out its activities throughout practically the whole of the Spanish Empire over three and a half centuries (1478–1834). After the initial delimitation of the historical, geographical and social areas in which it was active, the most common situations in which interpreters were needed are presented, together with the most relevant aspects of their work, including references to the regulations that governed their interventions. Although this is a first approach to this area of the history of linguistic mediation, we can conclude that the Inquisition involved a considerable amount of interpreting, most of which was of a legal nature.

Keywords: Spanish Inquisition, multilingualism, appointment of interpreters, court interpreting

1. Introduction

The Spanish Inquisition, fostered by the Catholic Monarchs (Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon), was established in 1478 by a Papal Bull issued by Pope Sixtus V and was abolished in 1834 by Decree of the Spanish Regent María Cristina de Borbón. During its three and a half centuries' existence, it carried out a significant amount of inter-linguistic activity in which, although translation and *calificación* – here understood as the drafting of a report in Spanish based on the contents of an original text written in a different language – were frequent, interpreting was the most common mode.¹

Although many of the Inquisition's trials were brought against Spanish speakers (for example, both San Juan de la Cruz and Santa Teresa de Jesús), in our

1. In essence, the *calificación* consisted of examining statements made by the accused and suspicious written texts, and issuing a judgment on them as to whether or not they contained heretic propositions. The *calificadores* had to be theologians (cf. López Vela 1989).

opinion, as we shall see shortly, multilingualism was one of the defining characteristics of the Inquisition's activities and the work of interpreters was crucial. However, and despite the fact that, as we shall see, every word in the Inquisition had to be rendered in Castilian, the language of the Empire (cf. Pym 2000: 134–142), the presence of interpreters barely warrants a mention in the major works written on the history of the Inquisition. We could cite three examples to illustrate this fact: (1) Juan Antonio Llorente – who, as secretary to the tribunal of Madrid between 1789 and 1791, in his own words, “had an in-depth knowledge of the Inquisition system” – uses the word interpreter seven times in his *Historia Crítica de la Inquisición en España* (1835–1836, 3: 62; 4: 271, 298, 310; 5: 163; 6: 109, 134), always alluding to someone who explained the meaning of the Holy Scriptures; (2) Henry Charles Lea, in his *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, includes “interpreter” once to refer to the case of an accused in the tribunal of Granada, Jaques Curtancion, in which the *Suprema* (the Inquisition) had detected in 1559 “that the ratification of the confession of the accused had been made in the presence of only one interpreter, when the rules required two” (1906–1907, 2: 182); and (3) Henry Kamen, in *The Spanish Inquisition* (1968: 28), refers to the Jewish interpreter (in allusion to Luis de Torres, who spoke Spanish, Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic) who accompanied Columbus on his first voyage to America.

Neither have interpreting history scholars, with a few exceptions (cf. Alonso 2012: 54–58), given this subject the attention it deserves. Hence, the main objective of this chapter is to offer a first approach, in the form of a succinct overview, to the role of interpreters in the Inquisition's activities. We will start by delineating the spheres in which interpreters were necessary and the situations in which they most commonly intervened, including references to the regulations that governed their interventions. We will then analyze their status within the official hierarchy of the Inquisition and, finally, propose a classification of interpreters therein. For the benefit of readers who are not familiar with this subject matter, we will start by offering a brief explanation of the composition of the Spanish Inquisition and the crimes it pursued. As Llorente (1835–1836, 1: 4) points out, this institution “was not a new creation of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, but rather a reformed, extended version of the pre-existing Inquisition, that had operated since the 13th century” and gradually adapted many of the old customs to its needs (cf. Kamen 1968: 140).

The Supreme and General Inquisition, the *Suprema*, was headed by the Council, presided over by the Inquisitor General and it constituted one of the 15 Councils of Spanish central administration in the 16th century. Together with the Councils of State and War, the *Suprema's* jurisdiction stretched throughout the Monarchy (Escudero 1995: 730–741). Below it in the hierarchy lay the local or district tribunals, which numbered 21 at the height of the Inquisition: Seville, Cordoba, Cuenca, Granada, Llerena, the Canary Islands (Canaries), Murcia,

Toledo, Valladolid, Santiago and Madrid (also known as the Corte tribunal), administered by the Secretariat of Castile; and Barcelona, Saragossa, Logroño, Valencia, Majorca, Sicily, Sardinia, Mexico, Lima and Cartagena de Indias, administered by the Secretariat of Aragon (cf. Lea 1906–1907, 1: 541). Two of these tribunals were created in the 17th century: Cartagena de Indias, in 1610, and Madrid, hitherto under the auspices of the tribunal of Toledo. Philip II's attempts to introduce such tribunals in Milan, Naples and Flanders failed due to the opposition of their respective populations.

The tribunals, made up of one, two or even three Inquisitors (cf. Galván Rodríguez 2010: 1031), also had at their service *fiscales* (prosecutors), notaries, secretaries, commissioners, familiars (lay servants of the Holy Office) and some twenty other officials (cf. Lea 1906–1907, 2: 233–272; Kamen 1968: 137–161). In towns and villages that lay distant from the seat of the tribunal, and with the assistance of the notaries, who recorded the minutes of the proceedings, the commissioners carried out spontaneous conversions, visited ships, if they lived in sea-ports, dealt with examinations into *limpieza* or purity of blood (*vide infra*), executed the tribunal's orders and commissions, received information regarding matters of faith and forwarded it to the relevant tribunal (Castañeda Delgado and Hernández Aparicio 1989: 50–52).

Initially, the Inquisition basically persecuted heresy, i.e. errors in matters of faith. But by the early 16th century, based on the premise that any erroneous idea in religion was tantamount to heresy, the Inquisition had managed to obtain jurisdiction in almost all crimes. So in addition to the initial errors of Judaism and Mohammedanism, bigamy, blasphemy, usury, sodomy, mysticism, solicitation in the confessional, witchcraft, sorcery, magic, superstition and idolatry, among others, which naturally included Protestantism, were also considered. The long lists of facts, rites and ceremonies that identified the different heresies for which people could be denounced were stipulated in the edicts (cf. Llorente 1835–1836, 1: 240–249; 2: 250–255; 3: 46–52, 112–115; Lea 1906–1907, 3: 231–476; 4: 1–335; Kamen 1968: 197–213). We should mention that the Inquisition only pursued Christians, as heresy could only be committed by those who had been duly christened. Consequently, only those Jews, Moors, Indian² or African slaves who had converted to Christianity were pursued. Protestants (such as Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, Huguenots and Anabaptists) were assumed to have been baptized.

As this work is a first approach to this subject, secondary sources have been given more weight than primary ones (archives). Said secondary sources include

2. The term “Indian,” used in this chapter, is taken directly from the sources. It applies to various native peoples in the Spanish colonial Empire who were identified by the first explorers as people from India, the intended destination of the early voyages.

of Milan were subsequently added) and the Crown of Castile (comprising the remaining mainland territories except Portugal and the Kingdom of Granada, in Muslim hands until 1492, and the Canaries, finally conquered in 1496). Thus, the Christian, Jewish and Muslim cultures and religions lived alongside one another on the Iberian Peninsula, and Castilian, Arabic, Catalan, Basque (*Euskera*) and Galician were spoken. Outside the Iberian Peninsula, Italian was spoken to the east, and the original indigenous Canary Island languages, Arabic and Berber, were spoken in the mid-Atlantic. In short, there was a difficult scenario to control without the use of integrating elements, the Catholic faith and the Castilian language, and an institution with the necessary power and jurisdiction – the Inquisition. Shortly afterwards, the picture became even more complex: the conquest of the New World introduced the cultures and languages of the indigenous Americans and the slaves traded from Africa; in Europe, under Charles I (Charles V when he became Emperor), the Flemish culture and language were incorporated (1520), and in the Pacific, under Philip II (1571), those of the Philippines. Finally, when the ideas of the Lutheran Reformation started to constitute a threat to the Catholic faith, the Inquisition had to communicate, throughout the Spanish territory, with speakers of almost all the European languages.

2.1 Jews

When the peaceful co-existence of Christians, Moors and Jews of Medieval Spain started to break down towards the end of the *Reconquista* (i.e. when Christians recovered the territory that had initially been invaded by Muslims in 711, culminating in the fall of Granada in 1492), the Jews were the first to suffer persecution and were forced to convert to Catholicism. However, most of them continued to observe their Jewish rites in secret and it was to test if they had really converted to Christianity that the Inquisition was set up (cf. Kamen 1968: 2–22). Although the Catholic Monarchs expelled them from Spain in 1492, Jewish practices were pursued by the Inquisition right up until its abolition and throughout the Spanish colonial Empire. For our purposes, however, the Jews, as Spanish speakers, are not relevant. In the 124 trials of Jews between 1483 and 1527 transcribed and edited by Haim Beinart in *Records of the Spanish Inquisition in Ciudad Real* (1974–1985) not once was an interpreter needed. (Further information on Jews and the Inquisition in Lea 1906–1907, 3).

2.2 *Moriscos*

However, interpreters were needed by the other persecuted group: the *Moriscos*. When the *Reconquista* came to an end with the fall of Granada, Isabella and Ferdinand had undertaken to treat the Moors as free subjects and started to evangelize them. The process, however, was so slow that in 1499 it became mandatory for them to convert to Christianity. The subsequent persecution of the *Moriscos* finally led to their expulsion, decreed in 1609. In the area governed by the Crown of Castile, these impositions gave rise to rebellions, particularly in 1501 and 1568 in Alpujarras (Granada), after which the *Moriscos* dispersed throughout the lands of Castile. In 1526, Charles V banned the use of Arabic, Moorish names and clothing, a ban that Philip II reiterated in 1567. Nevertheless, they reached a *Concordia* (agreement) in the Crown of Aragon, under which they were given 40 years to receive instruction in the Catholic faith (Kamen 1968: 118–123).

But the *Moriscos* did not give up their customs, religion or language: a century after the end of the *Reconquista*, many still did not speak Castilian. The *Morisco* Jesuit Ignacio de las Casas, who acted as an Arabic interpreter in the Valencia tribunal between March 1602 and December 1603, divided them into four groups, depending on their level of cultural integration: those from Castile were more hispanicized and had barely retained their knowledge of Arabic; those from Aragon, who had also lost their command of Arabic but were less integrated than their counterparts in Castile; and those from Granada and Valencia, who were most closely linked to Muslim civilization. Those from Valencia understood neither Castilian nor Valencian (El Alaoui 1998: 11).

A study of the *Moriscos* tried in the tribunal of Valencia between 1565 and 1609 (i.e. in the period between the end of the above-mentioned *Concordia* and their expulsion) reveals that interpreters participated in 46 Inquisition trials, namely: Jerónimo de Mur (in 9 trials); Joan Baptista Cabreizo (2); Ignacio de las Casas (10); Jaime Prats (5); Sebastián Camacho (10); Miguel Joan Baneros (3); Francisco Rivas (6); and Nofre Cosme Auginat (1) (Labarta 1982: 102–114).

Records show that some 900 trials against *Moriscos* from Aragon were held in the tribunal of Saragossa – the capital of the Kingdom of Aragon – from 1568 to 1609 (García-Arenal 2010: 58), and it can reasonably be assumed that interpreters participated in many of them. In any case, 409 of those brought to trial were accused of owning books in Arabic, and since translations or textual *calificaciones* of these books were always required during the trial, as occurred in Valencia (Labarta 1982), there was clearly a great deal of translation-related activity to be done. We will focus later on the tribunal of Granada, of which only *relaciones de causas* (summaries of the trials that the local tribunals sent to the *Suprema* every year) rather than full records of trials against *Moriscos* have survived.

As we have mentioned, *Moriscos* were also tried in the Canary Islands, the conquest of which had started in 1402 but was at its height from 1478 to 1496 (cf. Sarmiento-Pérez 2008, 2011), although most of them originated from the capture of slaves along the neighboring Barbary Coast. Apart from suffering the prohibitions passed by Charles V and Philip II for those living on the Spanish mainland, neither could they travel freely to Africa: fleeing to the Barbary Coast was the main charge in 150 of the 253 trials for Mohammedanism recorded for the Canary Islands (Fajardo Spínola 2003a: 91, 94). As far as the need for linguistic mediation is concerned, Ronquillo Rubio (1991: 105), referring to the first 20 years of the Inquisition (1505–1526), states that “the presence of interpreters, on two occasions, can be explained by the number of *Moriscos* on the islands.” (For more information on the *Moriscos*, see Lea 1906–1907, 3: 317–410; Kamen 1968: 104–116).

2.3 Speakers of other languages in the Iberian Peninsula and Sicily

Before we cross the Atlantic, let us look at the use of other languages that had some kind of repercussion on the activity of the Inquisition, although to a lesser extent. In the Basque Provinces and Navarre, particularly in isolated mountainous regions where only *Euskera* (Basque) was spoken, and where cases of witchcraft, superstition and sorcery were commonplace, inquisitors needed interpreters to communicate with the witches brought to trial. In 1531, the Council of the Inquisition recommended that the inquisitors of Calahorra use people who spoke *Euskera* in witchcraft cases, giving rise to the custom of appointing interpreters for the interrogations (Reguera Acedo 1989: 164–165, 2012: 244). In a different context and one century later, during the processing of the genealogical information of Tristán de Ziriza, a candidate (*pretendiente*) for the post of Secretary to the Council, in the Navarre town of Burguete in 1613, the *alguacil* (constable) and familiar of the Holy Office Pedro de Vergara interpreted for two non-Castilian speaking witnesses who used Larrondo (a dialect of *Euskera*) (AHN, Inquisición, leg. 1363).

As far as Catalan is concerned, we know that problems arose, at least during the mandate of Inquisitor General Diego de Espinosa (1567–1571). As the annual correspondence between the tribunals of the jurisdiction of Aragon and the *Suprema* shows, the tribunal of Barcelona was reprimanded in 1568 for not holding trials in Castilian and was ordered in the future not to hold them in Latin or in Catalan. Some years later, in 1574, the same tribunal sent a statement about a witch in Catalan, and the *Suprema* demanded a translation. And when it sent more proceedings in Catalan the following year, they were returned unread (Monter 1992: 91).

On the other northern corner of the Iberian Peninsula, the accused tended to make their depositions in Galician, although their statements were subsequently recorded in Castilian Spanish. The transfer from vernacular to official language and back again was, thus, constant. This probably explains why, when the tribunal of Galicia was given a seat in 1574, it was decided to appoint someone who knew the area and its people well (Contreras 1982: 62, 579).

In general, the *Suprema* demanded that reports and testimonies be sent in Castilian. Thus, in 1577, it complained that the annual report of trials held in Palermo, the seat of the Sicilian tribunal, included some statements “in Sicilian language,” and sent them back (Monter 1992: 91). This fact is corroborated in the copy of the trial in Palermo in 1616–1617 against Sebastian Chine, a German accused of Lutheran heresy, as we will see below, sent to the *Suprema* in 1618: “This copy has been taken and translated from the Italian language into Spanish in the original trial that has taken place in the Holy Office of the Inquisition of the Kingdom of Sicily . . .” (AHN, Inquisición, leg. 1747, exp. 7, fol. 70r).

To date, we have no proof of the use of Portuguese (Portugal and Spain shared the same kings from 1580 to 1640, but they had separate Inquisition jurisdictions). As far as Latin is concerned, it was of course the language of the Church (and of educated people, inside and outside Spain). We have already seen that the tribunal of Catalonia also held trials in Latin. In addition, Latin had to be used once in the tribunal of Lima, in 1717–1721, in the hearings against French sailor Francisco Petrel, because no one understood what he was saying in his own language (Medina 1887, 2: 239–240). On other occasions, written records were also often submitted to the tribunals in Latin: for example, in the trial held between 1524 and 1531 in the Canaries and Seville against the German-Flemish Jácome de Monteverde, seven of the documents presented by his wife in his defense were in Latin (Sarmiento-Pérez 2015: 40–42).

2.4 Indigenous populations

As it moved across the Atlantic, the first place in which the Inquisition came across indigenous people who ignored Spanish was in the Canaries, where there were still some 6,000 (approximately a quarter of the total population) at the beginning of the 16th century. Inquisitors treated them benignly and flexibly, and generally just reprimanded them, ordering them to learn in the following three months the mandatory prayers they had not yet learnt (Lobo Cabrera 1983: 67–70). In any case, we have not found any mention of interpreters intervening in any of the Inquisition’s interrogations of Canary islanders.

When the Inquisition arrived in the New World, it first encountered the indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica. Before Philip II established a formal tribunal in the city of Mexico in 1571 – with jurisdiction over New Spain, i.e. from California to Central America and the Philippines – and forbade the Inquisition from trying Indians, Franciscans and Dominicans carried out Inquisition functions from the end of the Conquest in 1521.⁴ Just as in the case of the Jews and the Moors, the massive conversions of the Indians turned out to be quite inconsistent: the initial fascination with Christianity that led thousands of Indians to request baptism, gave rise to disappointment among the newly-converted when they realized that the members of the religious orders did not practice what they preached. The priests of their original religions seized this opportunity to return to their deities, that is, idolatry and sorcery in the eyes of the Catholic establishment, with priests and followers consequently suffering the rigors of the Inquisition (González Obregón 1910: VI–VII).

Thus, the first bishop of the city of Mexico, friar Juan de Zumárraga, appointed Apostolic Inquisitor of New Spain in 1535, tried 23 Indians between 1536 and 1543, almost all of whom belonged to the pre-Hispanic elites, including the renowned *cacique* don Carlos Chichimecatecotl. Most were accused of idolatry and sorcery and they all needed interpreters. The 23 trials studied by Buelna Serrano (2009) and the 13 of those trials we have analyzed – transcribed and edited by González Obregón (1912) – show that apart from the four interpreters Zumárraga used on a regular basis during the period studied (Agustín de Rodas and Pedro de Vargas, in 1536; Alonso Mateos, in 1537–1540 and Juan González, in 1539), some thirty interpreters, including Spaniards and Indians, were needed.⁵

Despite the fact that between three and seven interpreters mediated in the trials, in those we have analyzed the only case in which we can confirm relay interpreting was used is the one for idolatry against the Indians Tacatetl and Tanixtetl in 1536: the testimonies of two witnesses in Otomí were first interpreted into

4. The Philippines were conquered between 1565 and 1571, and Philip II assigned them to the tribunal of Mexico, which was then the usual route of communication with that part of the world. In 1583 the first commissioner for Manila was appointed and he sent his cases to Mexico (Medina 1899b: 12–15).

5. Father Diego Díaz, friar Bernardino de Sahagún, friar Antonio de Ciudad Rodrigo, friar Alonso de Molina, father Juan González, father Alonso González, friar Alonso de Santiago, friar Francisco Jiménez, friar Francisco de Lintorne, Álvaro de Zamora, Tomás de Rigoles, Alonso Mateos, Agustín de Rodas, Pedro, Álvaro, friar Pedro, Pedro de Molina, Luis Jiménez, Francisco López, Diego, Luis de León, Antonio Ortiz, Juan – and three Otomí Indians – Miguel, Marcos and Diego.

Nahuatl by the *naguatato* Miguel and then into Castilian by father Diego Díaz, “interpreter and *naguatato*.”⁶ A total of seven interpreters participated: four from Nahuatl and three from Otomí (González Obregón 1912:7–9). In all likelihood, that was a frequent occurrence in many other trials.

Besides, apart from the fact that not everybody intervened in the same stages of the trial, the high number of interpreters was probably due to other reasons, such as the lack of full command of the other language or the use of different codes for the same concept: for example, the snake was the personification of the devil for Spaniards, while local peoples from New Spain considered it as one of the strongest fertility symbols (cf. Buelna Serrano 2009:24).

The death at the stake of *cacique* Don Carlos in 1539 led Emperor Charles V to ban the application of the death penalty to Indians for questions relating to the Christian faith, and in 1571, Philip II also banned the Inquisition from bringing them to trial. Since these dictates did not prevent natives from participating in the activities of the Inquisition as witnesses, denouncers, informers, etc., interpreters were still needed. An illustrative example is father Diego Díaz, who interpreted in a trial in 1536, as we have seen. A few years later, between 1542 and 1547, this perverse cleric was tried for concubinage with various local women, sexual intercourse with his own daughter and killing an Indian. In the witnesses’ depositions recorded in the village of Ocoytuco in February 1542, eighteen Indian women testified through father González (González Obregón 1912:237–238).

However, the ban on trying natives did not include *mestizos* (offspring of a Spaniard-American and an American Indian). In the tribunal of Lima, as late as 1773, in the trial against the *mestiza* Lorenza Vilches “for ... formal idolatry with an express pact with the devil,” the four witnesses who testified against her in the village of Santísima Trinidad de Guancayo needed an interpreter for Aymara. And then the accused herself testified through father Baltasar López, in all nine hearings, in the abjuration, in the final warnings and in the imprisonment notice (AHN, Inquisición, lib. 1656, exp. 4, fols. 1r–4v, 12r).

Although we have no direct evidence regarding the Philippines, we do have indications that interpreters of the Tagalog language participated in trials for solicitation in the confessional, such as the one held in 1613 against father Francisco Sánchez de Santa María for solicitation with 23 Tagalog-speaking native women, who in all likelihood denounced and testified during the trial in their mother tongue (cf. Medina 1899b:42–43).

6. From *nahuatlato*, *naguatlato*, literally a speaker of Nahuatl, the main language spoken in the Aztec region. The term was coined by Spaniards to refer to the interpreter (*lengua*) of that language in the Indian courts (*Audiencias Indianas*) (cf. Alonso and Payàs 2008).

2.5 African slaves

Unlike the Indians, African slaves remained under the jurisdiction of the Inquisition, as it was understood that they should have assimilated the Catholic doctrine sufficiently from their masters (Millar Carvacho 1998, 3: 285; Splendiani et al. 1997, 1: 220–221). From the 16th century on, Spain exported slaves who already lived in Spain to America but a number of circumstances, including the reduction of the indigenous population at the beginning of the 17th century as a result of the smallpox epidemic, led to slaves being shipped directly from Africa. The port of Cartagena de Indias, thanks to its favorable location, played a predominant role as the place in which slaves were received and distributed, destined mainly for agricultural, husbandry and mining work, domestic service and other similar tasks (Navarrete 1995: 75).

A study covering the first fifty years (1610–1660) of the Cartagena de Indias tribunal, based on the *relaciones de causas* – as the full documentation pertaining to that tribunal has been lost – reveals that the accused included some 70 African slaves.⁷ Although some of them were originally from Spain or Portugal, and others had been born on the American continent, at least seven required interpretation from an African language (Caravali, Folupo, Arara, Biafara, Mandinga or Cacheo). The most common crimes were sorcery and witchcraft and, related to the latter, even anthropophagy; this custom, however, was not imported from Africa but rather stemmed from Caribbean tribes (Splendiani et al. 1997, 1: 140, 221).

The slaves who arrived in Cartagena spoke more than seventy languages, given that they came from many different places and tribal groups in Africa. Depending on their command of Spanish, they were classified into three groups: *bozales*, with no knowledge of Spanish at all; *medias lenguas*, who spoke it fairly well, and *ladinos*, who spoke it well. Jesuits Pedro Claver and, above all, Alonso de Sandoval – who dedicated much of their lives to the training and catechesis of the unfortunate slaves – developed a strategy to provide them with interpreters in order to facilitate their communication in so many languages. To start with, many of the African slaves, although from different castes, belonged to the “evil sect of Mohammed” and they understood one another in Arabic. At the same time, some *ladinos* spoke several languages, as did some *bozales* who, although they did not speak Spanish, spoke several African languages, so communication was possible as long as the right combinations were used (Sandoval 1987: 136–137, 273, 373).

7. Its jurisdiction covered the territories of the Viceroyalty of New Granada, the Windward Islands and the provinces dependent on the court of Santo Domingo (with the dioceses of Santo Domingo, Santafé, Cartagena, Panamá, Santa Marta, Puerto Rico, Popayán, Caracas and Santiago de Cuba) (Splendiani et al. 1997: 1, 112).

Moreover, Claver also spoke several African languages and trained interpreters in the Jesuit school. These were the interpreters, almost always together with father Claver himself, who mediated in the Inquisition's activities: for example, in the trial against María Cacheo in 1628, who "with plants had killed and eaten her daughter Elenilla and eaten another son called Juanillo," or in the trial against Antón Carabalí, who "gave [out] powder and plants and cast or advised on many superstitious spells that led men to love and take women dishonestly" (Splendiani et al. 1997, 2:281–284). African slaves were also tried in other tribunals (cf. Medina 1887, 2).

2.6 Protestants

Now we turn to the Inquisition's activity that required the largest number of interpreters, involving many European languages: Protestantism. When in 1520 Pope Leo X condemned as heretical many of the propositions made by Luther and other Protestant reformers, the Inquisitor General took it on himself to prevent the new doctrine from spreading into the Spanish territory. To this end, he ordered that those who tried to introduce it, by bringing in books, speaking, writing or preaching in accordance with the Reformation and its Church, should be severely punished. Catalogues of banned books soon started to appear and were periodically updated, and around 1571 the prohibition was extended to include paintings (pictures, stamps, medals and similar objects) that might go against the Catholic faith (cf. Llorente 1835–1836, 3:1–45; Lea 1906–1907, 3:411–548; Kamen 1968:209–213).

Although the study of relations between Spain and the countries where the Protestant Reformation took hold exceeds the scope of this study, it is worth noting that colonies of European traders had grown up in Spanish port cities since the early 15th century. Examples include Flemings in the Mediterranean ports trading in wheat, salt, wine, oils and alum, and, at the end of the century, Flemings and Germans in the Canaries, drawn by the sugar trade (Lobo Cabrera 1995:26–27). Subsequently, relations with England were very intense, particularly due to the wine trade. Ports along Spain's northern coast, not far from the border with France, experienced a similar situation. According to Splendiani et al. (1997, 1:152), around 1650 there were between 12,000 and 15,000 foreigners residing in Spanish ports, including merchants, factors, sales agents and the like. Many Europeans lived also in inland areas, as attested, for instance, by the frequent spontaneous conversions in the tribunal of Madrid, which we will see below. Generally speaking, the situation was very similar in the Spanish colonies in America and the Philippines.

According to Lea (1906–1907, 3:421), the first foreigner to be tried in Spain was the German Blay Esteve in the tribunal of Valencia in 1524. In the Canaries, the Germans Hans Parfat and the above-mentioned Jácome de Monteverde were tried in 1525 (Fajardo Spínola 2003a: 121–124). From then on, an immense amount of interpreter-mediated inquisitorial activity against Protestants took place.

3. Common situations in which interpreters intervened

Given the special jurisdiction of the Inquisition to investigate the facts denounced, prove the charges brought against the accused and deal out the punishments, its main activity was that of conducting trials (cf. Betancor Pérez 2011, 2:551). However, as we shall see, the Inquisition also carried out a considerable number of other activities requiring interpreters. We shall now outline the most common among them: district, ship and jail visits and spontaneous conversions.

3.1 District visits

Inquisitors' visits to different places within their districts to receive information and denunciations constituted one of the pillars of inquisitorial activity. Originally, these visits took place three times a year, but this was later reduced to one four-month long visit each year. The first step was the proclamation that the edict would be read in the villages and hamlets close to the place the Inquisitor was going to visit, so that the inhabitants would attend the reading and proceed to denounce themselves or other people. Initially, they were called Edicts of Grace, as heretics were invited to repent and to request absolution with no public penitence. From 1500 onwards, they were called Edicts of Faith (in the Kingdom of Aragon, Edicts of Grace survived longer, given the more benevolent treatment of the *Moriscos*), as they imposed the precept of denunciation in a period of six days of those people known to have said or done something against the Catholic faith or the Inquisition (cf. Llorente 1835–1836, 1:41–42; Lea 1906–1907, 2:91–101, 457–464). All Catholics were under the obligation to denounce and there was no valid excuse for non-compliance: it was the case even if the denunciation entailed the risk of death; and it extended to children denouncing their parents, and husbands and wives denouncing their spouses (Gacto 2005, 1:429).

In accordance with the information we have compiled thus far, we will focus on the visits to places with a large population of *Moriscos*, where interpreters normally intervened at least in the reading of the edict and the subsequent testimonies of those who either denounced other people or practiced self-denunciations. In

the tribunal of Granada, the edict was first read in the local church or cathedral on a Sunday for Spanish speakers and the following day in Arabic, through an interpreter, for the *Moriscos*. The interpreter also intervened in the numerous testimonies in Arabic, as attested by a remark made by an Inquisitor to the *Suprema* in 1561, reporting that, in order to be able to hold two hearings, two interpreters were needed. García Chacón and Sebastián Merino interpreted in those visits; evidence of the former's intervention exists for visits in 1561, 1573, 1581 and 1585 (García Fuentes 2006: 15, 16, 122, 273).

A well documented example from the Valencia tribunal is the 1574 inquisitorial visit to Carlet, where, once the Edict of Grace had been read, 47 *Morisco* women testified between June 16 and 19, all through Noffre Ervas, “an interpreter ... designated and chosen by the Inquisitor ... as these new Christians did not speak or understand *Aljamía* [the language of the Christians] and because he understood and spoke Arabic very well” (AHN, Inquisición, leg. 556/22, fols. 1251r–1292v).

Interpreters also took part in *Moriscos*' testimonies in the Canaries, in significantly fewer cases: for instance, when the Inquisition visited Lanzarote in 1510, Juana, who had been baptized 20 years earlier, declared through her daughter because she still did not speak Castilian (AMC, Inquisición, CXVII-8).

3.2 Ship visits

The main way in which the ideas of the Protestant Reformation were introduced into Spain was by sea, given the trade relations with European nations and the countless pirates and privateers that stalked the coasts of the Spanish Empire. So the Inquisition was ordered to monitor and control ships, and orders were given to visit foreign and Spanish vessels, and to examine people and goods in them (BL, Ms, Egerton 458, 550r–550v).

The task was undertaken by the commissioners, who had to be accompanied by an interpreter, when necessary. Thus, ordinances for Andalusian ports in 1590 stipulated “that to make a visit, the commissioner, the *alguacil*, the notary, the familiar, interpreter and guard must all necessarily be present” (AHN, Inquisición, leg. 3646, nº 8). And an instruction sent to the commissioners at the ports along the Spanish northern coast in 1634 established that “if the ship were from a foreign country whose language is not understood, they are to take a reliable interpreter” (in Guiard y Larrauri 1972, 1: 290). Instructions to commissioners were sent even to the Philippines in 1583 (Medina 1899: 170–186).

The procedure started with the interrogation of the captain and officers, following a pre-established questionnaire: if heretics, or suspected heretics, were found, they were to be arrested. The vessel was then searched and if any banned or dubious books were found, they were confiscated (cf. Fajardo Spínola 2003b: 92).

Interpreters' tasks were not limited to linguistic mediation and the examination of foreign books. Records from the tribunal of Seville reveal that as soon as any ship docked in the bay of Cadiz, "the Holy Office's guard alerted the interpreter on duty so that he could prepare the wherewithal to visit it" (BN, Ms 718, fol. 50r).

Some information from the tribunal of the Canaries illustrates the interpreters' activity: for the 1570–1798 period, some 110 visits have been recorded, in which 55 interpreters took part, some of them on as many as 18 occasions. These figures would, however, be lower than the real numbers, as many of the minutes of ship visits have disappeared (Fajardo Spínola 2003b: 28, 2004).

In the context of the Inquisition's visits, it is worth adding that Inquisitors also visited secret jails (in which prisoners were kept in solitary confinement) every fortnight to see how the prisoners were treated. Examples of mediation during those visits are found in the tribunal of the Canaries, where Flemish trader Lorenzo Quesquier interpreted several times in 1596–1597 (AMC, Col. Bute, vol. X, 1ª serie, fols. 115r, 119r, 123v).

Finally, Inquisition visits also included those in which an Inquisitor inspected district tribunals, as in royal justice courts (*Audiencias Reales*) (cf. Álamo Martell 2011). Although interpreters were not used in those visits, sometimes related issues arose: for example, in the report of a 1650 visit to the tribunal of Mexico, it was recorded that an interpreter had been appointed without following the proper procedures (AHN, Inquisición, leg. 1736, nº 5, fol. 305r).

3.3 Spontaneous conversions

To enable foreigners to change their heretic status and integrate in mainstream Spanish society, the Inquisition introduced at the beginning of the 17th century the "spontaneous conversion" process, also called *reducción*, by means of which a heretic – normally a Protestant – converted to Catholicism, by "spontaneously" addressing the commissioner or Inquisitor, either in writing or in person, and declaring his or her desire to repent. Except for those cases that took place at the seat of the tribunal, where the Inquisitor took charge, *reducciones* were carried out by commissioners, almost always with an interpreter:

Should the person who appears to be reconciled not speak the Spanish language, the commissioner must choose a subject of sufficient probity, intelligence and reliability who understands his/her language to serve as an interpreter in this act; in the first place, this person's appointment, acceptance thereof, undertaking to perform the job well and swearing to secrecy will be recorded in writing.

(AHN, Inquisición, leg. 3592, nº 25, 29)

The procedure was simple and the relevant files consisted of two or three folios. In the main hearing, an interpreter was designated where necessary and the person who had spontaneously converted to Catholicism answered the set interrogation. Converts would then ratify their deposition, usually absolved *ad cautelam* (provisionally, until the procedure was officially completed) and entrusted to a priest for instruction, sacramental confession and to be given the Eucharist (Fajardo Spínola 1996: 180–181). If s/he was under the age of 25, a *curador* (guardian) was named to advise her/him, and the interpreter mediated in the designation of the *curador* and in the young person's ratification. In large places, the *curador* tended to be a minister or collaborator of the Holy Office who was familiar with the language of the person testifying, but in small ones, it tended to be the interpreter who had mediated in the testimony: for example, the Irish Catholic merchant Juan Mead, who interpreted for Gerónimo Grayling, an Englishman, in the Canaries in 1741, was subsequently responsible for instructing him (AMC, Inquisición, CXXXVII-23).

Although *reducciones* were carried out throughout the Empire, including the Philippines (cf. Medina 1899b: 49–52), those “reduced” tended to vary: in coastal areas they were mainly sailors, traders or merchants, and generally English; but, for example, in the tribunal of Madrid they were diplomats or members of the army, and tended to be German speakers. Some figures give us an idea of the number of *reducciones* and, consequently, of the interpreters who took part in these hearings: of the 617 brought to trial in Madrid, most of the 597 Lutherans absolved had been “reduced” (Carrasco Pérez de Abreu 2008: 95), while in the Canaries, some 330 foreigners were “reduced” in the 17th and 18th centuries (Fajardo Spínola 1996: 289–298).

Occasionally, the interpreter took part in the *reducción* of someone who was dying or had been sentenced to death. And, as dictated by the Church for such occasions, if the confessor did not understand the language of the dying person, mediation in the sacramental confession was possible (Echarri 1799: 290). This happened in Tenerife in 1811, when the Irish trader Patricio Forstall, who had interpreted in the *reducción* of two North American prisoners who had killed a member of a religious order and the execution of whose death sentence was imminent, also did so for their confession (AMC, Inquisición, LXXXVIII-24).

3.4 Trials

Many of the Inquisition's trials started with denunciations during district or ship visits. Although the intricate details of the Inquisition procedure exceed the scope of this chapter, it is worth mentioning that it included elements from Canon and Roman law and was governed by the principle that the accused had to prove

their innocence and purge themselves of guilt by recanting. Before testifying, the accused had to swear to tell the truth (Seifert 1999: 21, 27–29). A trial started with the denunciation of an individual, either through self-denunciation or through the accusation presented by the prosecutor. It consisted briefly of the following stages: denunciation, summons or calling and interrogation of witnesses, *calificación*, prison order and seizure of property, hearings with the accused, charges, torture (where appropriate), accusation, defense, oral and written proposals, publication of evidence, the accused's response to publication, votes, and proclamation, notification and execution of sentence (cf. Llorente 1835, 2: 89–127; Betancor Pérez 2011, 2: 551–558).

The interpreter could be needed at practically all the stages, as not only the accused but also the denouncers or witnesses might not be familiar with Spanish. There had to be a minimum of three “admonishing hearings” with the accused present, but there were normally significantly more. Witnesses included those that testified against the accused and those that did so in his/her favor. The prosecutor's accusation was read out to the accused, who had to plead to each of the charges presented.

At the same time, the accused had to communicate with his/her defense lawyer, who had to present the defense's case; likewise, all testimonies, carefully transcribed, were read to both the denouncer and each of the witnesses and also to the accused so that they could ratify, or not, the contents of their statements. Finally, the interpreter could also be needed when the sentence was read to the accused and s/he was given the final warnings, particularly the one which bound her/him to secrecy regarding everything s/he had seen and heard from the moment they were arrested by the Holy Office.

To illustrate these points, we will give brief examples of the intervention of interpreters in three trials held in different places and for different types of charges: one against *Morisco* Maria Aldamis, for Mohammedanism, held in Valencia in 1602–1604; another one against the *cacique* of Tetzoco, Don Carlos, for idolatry and dogmatic heresy in Mexico in 1539, and the last one against the German Sebastian Chine, for Lutheran heresy in Sicily in 1616–1617.

3.4.1 *The Morisco Maria Aldamis*

The trial (AHN, Inquisición, leg. 550, exp. 11) originated in the report presented (in Valencian) by an *alguacil*, who, when seizing goods in the *Morisco* woman's house, found a copy of the Koran. The prosecutor presented the relevant accusation, based on that report. Two interpreters took part in the seven hearings with the accused, who spoke only Arabic. Joan Baptista Cabrerizo participated in the 1st and 3rd, and Jesuit Ignacio de las Casas, in the 4th, 5th and 6th. No mention of the interpreter is made in the 2nd and 7th hearings. A sentence of torture was

dictated in the 5th hearing, in order for the prisoner to confess “fully the truth of all that has been testified to ... through Father Ignácio de las Casas, the interpreter.” Once the torture session was over, and despite the fact that the accused had not confessed that she was guilty, she was condemned to attend an *auto de fe* as a penitent, abjure *de vehementi* (because of a graver crime); and receive one hundred lashings the next day in the city’s streets.

3.4.2 *The Mexican cacique of Tetzoco*

Unlike the trial we have just described, the one held against the *cacique* of Tetzoco (in González Obregón 2009) started with a denunciation presented by an Indian through three interpreters: Friar Antonio de Ciudad Rodrigo, friar Alonso de Molina and friar Bernardino [de Sahagún]. Subsequently, in 20 of the interrogations of 23 witnesses who testified against the accused, father Juan González interpreted 17 times, friar Antonio de Ciudad Rodrigo once and the Indian Pedro, twice. Father Juan González also mediated during the seizing of Don Carlos’s property, in the act during which said property was handed over to the Governor and, subsequently, in the first hearing with the accused, during which friars Antonio de Ciudad Rodrigo and Bernardino also interpreted. Álvaro de Zamora and Alonso Mateos mediated during the ratification of the witnesses’ statements. And once the sentence had been handed down, father Juan González, acting as interpreter, proclaimed throughout the city that the next day everyone was to attend the public *auto de fe* in the Plaza de México. And he interpreted once again when the sentence was read to Don Carlos, who responded, also through interpreters, that he accepted it in penance for his sins (González Obregón 2009: 102–103). He died at the stake.

As far as proclaiming news is concerned, it is worth mentioning that proclamations and edicts were also interpreted in indigenous languages in the royal justice system in the *Juicios de residencia* (investigation and report on the conduct of all royal officials when their period of service in the place where they had “resided” had come to an end) (cf. Sarmiento-Pérez 2008: 126–127, 251).

3.4.3 *The German Sebastian Chine*

Finally, in the case of Sebastian Chine (AHN, Inquisición, leg. 1747, exp. 7), denounced by his mother-in law for not allowing his wife to go to mass, forcing her to work on Holy Days of Obligation and saying that the saints were not venerated in his homeland, no interpreter was needed for the denunciation or for the witnesses’ depositions (they were Italian). But interpreters were present at all the 19 hearings in the presence of the accused, except for one, the 16th, although no reason was given for the absence of an interpreter. Initially, the German Bernardo Longo was the interpreter chosen, but as of the 13th hearing, given the complex

nature of the trial at that stage, another interpreter – Adolfo Ray Ligno, a German soldier in the Viceroy's guard – was sent for and the confessions and corresponding replies were read through both interpreters. The two of them participated in eight of the remaining hearings. The prosecutor presented 23 charges. Things became particularly tense when the German contradicted his earlier testimony (that he was a Catholic and a good Christian, etc.) “with supreme arrogance and lack of composure,” and went so far as to claim that Christ was a beast and that he had slept with more than twelve whores (AHN, Inquisición, leg. 1747, exp. 7, fols. 68r–68v). We should remember here that the Inquisition required declarations to be recorded “in the same tone and the very same words, no matter how indecent or improper they might be, and without altering them in any way” (AHN, Inquisición, leg. 3592, n° 25,5). Given the intransigence of the accused, three theologians, together with the interpreters, tried to “reduce” him. But it proved to be impossible and the German was sentenced to go to an *auto de fe* wearing the *sambenito* (emblem) of relaxation and was subsequently handed over to secular justice to be burnt at the stake.

3.4.4 *More than one interpreter at a time*

It is worth pointing out that the general recommendation of the Inquisition was that, where possible, two interpreters should be present when the accused and witnesses were questioned to avoid uncertainties that might arise and to ensure the best possible guarantee of justice (BL, Ms, Egerton 457, fol. 284v). We have already seen that in 1559, the *Suprema* required the presence of two interpreters in the Granada tribunal for the ratification of an accused's confession. However, apart from cases in the tribunal of Mexico dealing with trials against Indians, and Cartagena de Indias against Africans, the trials we have consulted show that this recommendation was not followed in most cases, and that only one interpreter took part. With the exception of particularly complex cases, such as that of the tribunal of Sicily, where several interpreters took part in the same trial, that was due to the fact that each interpreter participated at a different stage of the trial.

In other procedures, such as ship visits or *reducciones*, only one interpreter took part. In some cases, the Inquisition expressly rejected the intervention of two, as occurred in the Canaries in 1715: for the *reducción* of Catalina Crosse, the commissioner designated Bernardo Valois and Diego Roche as interpreters; after the initial formalities had been completed, and once notified by the prosecutor, the Inquisitor let it be known that no more than one interpreter should be appointed in either this or other affairs (AMC, Inquisición, CVIII-19, fols. 4r, 7r, 8r).

Finally, under the jurisdiction of the *Leyes de Indias* (Laws of the Indies), it was established as of 1537 that if an Indian had to appear before one of the royal courts, two interpreters could be present: one appointed by the tribunal

and another that the Indian could bring with him/her, “because this will make it possible to discover the truth about everything” (*Recopilación de Leyes*, volume I, book II, title 29, law XII, folio 275). Likewise, the *Reglamentos* (Regulations) of Lima and Charcas stipulated that two interpreters participate in Indians’ statements during *Juicios de residencia* to avoid any distortions in the declarations (cf. Sarmiento-Pérez 2008: 126–127).

4. Status, requisites, categories and appointment of interpreters

4.1 Status and requisites

While Buelna Serrano (2009: 242–243) includes four interpreters as regular officials for the Apostolic Inquisition in Mexico, Ronquillo Rubio (1991: 105), referring to the Inquisition in the Canaries, states that “some people gave their services to the tribunal although they were not officials, ... according to their trades and aptitudes, as in the case of doctors and interpreters.” Labarta (1982: 102) comes closer to the truth on this question when, referring to the tribunal de Valencia, she states that:

the Arabic translator and interpreter did not appear in the official hierarchy of the Holy Office, because the composition of its staff, determined in advance and similar for all districts, did not take into account the specific requirements of the different tribunals.

Indeed, although regulations stipulated that when the accused or witness was not familiar with the Spanish language, an interpreter was to be present, none were included in the official staff of the Holy Office. So on those occasions where an interpreter was needed, attempts were made to ensure that the person chosen was acceptable to all parties concerned (BL, Ms, Egerton 457, fols. 134r, 517r). The interpreter’s status was thus that of an ancillary collaborator rather than an official member of the Inquisition’s staff.

As for the requisites for acting as an interpreter, in any trial, once it had been proved that the accused or witness did not understand Spanish, the Secretary had to record this fact and the interpreter then had to swear that he/she would tell the truth and was sworn to secrecy (BL, Ms, Egerton 457, fols. 134r, 160v). It is also worth underlining the fact that secrecy was one of the most important ways in which the Inquisition achieved its goals, so witnesses, the Inquisitors themselves, victims returning to their everyday lives and even people from outside the tribunal were all bound to secrecy and to not asking any questions about what happened within the Inquisition (Galván Rodríguez 2001: 9–10).

4.2 Categories and appointment

As a result of our perusal of the documentation to date, we would suggest that interpreters working in the Inquisition be classified in three different categories:

1. Occasional interpreters, who were appointed for a specific situation. The only requisite they needed was that of commanding the two languages in question. The countless examples we could cite include the illustrious painter *El Greco*, appointed in 1582 for the trial against his fellow countryman: “In the morning hearing of the Inquisition of Toledo ... before the Inquisitors ..., Dominico Teotocópoli, from the city of Candía, a painter, entered the tribunal ..., who promised to interpret well and faithfully” (in Andrés 1988: 180).
2. Regular interpreters, who worked with the tribunals over a period of time. Depending on where they worked, they were members of religious orders, traders (generally foreigners), consuls, book-sellers, indigenous people, African slaves, or others. We have already referred to some of them in relation to the tribunals of Valencia, the Canaries, Mexico or Cartagena de Indias.
3. Official interpreters. District tribunals could also use the services of official interpreters, for whom specific requisites were laid down and who were expressly appointed. It was the candidate (*pretendiente*) who began the process by submitting an application. Apart from an understanding of and experience in languages, they had to prove the purity of their blood (*limpieza de sangre*): that they were Old Christians and, therefore, not descendants from Jews or Muslims; they were not in any way influenced by Luther’s “sect” or followers; they had never been sentenced by the Holy Office; they lived an honest life; and they even had to demonstrate that their parents had never worked in any trade that was considered to be low.⁸ Moreover, candidates should be comfortably well-off, as they had to finance the processing of their genealogical information. If the district’s Inquisitor accepted the genealogy provided, a number of witnesses (between eight and twelve, although there could be more) had to be interrogated in the town of the candidate’s origin to prove that it was correct. Once the questionnaire was returned to the tribunal, and the Inquisitor was satisfied, the procedural costs were settled and the genealogical information was sent to the *Suprema* for final approval.

8. In the Canaries, Franciscan friar Miguel Pérez y Fonte was turned down for an official post as an English interpreter in 1788 because his father had been a cobbler (AMC, Inquisición, leg. CXVII-24).

Let us look at two examples. In 1699, in Lima, Jesuit Juan de Figueredo Buendía, who came from the Peruvian village of Guancablica [Huancavelica], applied to be appointed interpreter of Quechua (AHN, Inquisición, leg. 1249, exp. 4). As his maternal grandparents were Spanish (his grandfather was from Almodóvar del Campo and his grandmother from Almadén del Azogue [Ciudad Real]), sixteen witnesses were examined in the first village and fifteen in the second to check his family history and purity of blood. The expenses came to 880 *reales* and 17 *maravedis* of old silver.

At the end of 1756, in the Canaries, Roberto de la Hanty, who came from Carrick-on-Suir in County Tipperary, Ireland, but who had lived for twenty-eight years in Puerto de Santa Cruz (Tenerife), where he was a Lieutenant Colonel in the militia, applied to be appointed as an interpreter of English and Irish (AMC, Inquisición, leg. LXXXVII-1). In this case, it was not necessary to go to Ireland because there were enough Irish – old and renowned Christians – who confirmed his family history in Puerto de Santa Cruz or the neighboring villages. The cost came to 1,104 *reales de vellon*.

We have not yet been able to draw any accurate conclusions regarding the consideration received by interpreters. However, although they were unpaid collaborators, at least official interpreters enjoyed a number of privileges and exemptions, as we can deduce from German engineer and printer Enrico Martínez's application in 1598 to be appointed as a German and Flemish interpreter in Mexico (González Obregón 1914: 531).

5. Provisional conclusions

During the period in which the Inquisition was in place, interpreters were called upon to offer their services throughout the Spanish Empire as, although the trials were held in the district tribunal seats, certain activities were carried out by the commissioners outside their headquarters. From the research carried out to date, we can conclude that there were several thousand interpreters from all different walks of life: from respectable members of religious orders to Indian or African slaves, including traders, sailors, artists, consuls and even children who helped their parents. Among the members of religious orders, many interpreters were Jesuits as their special vote of obedience to the Pope meant that they could be transferred to wherever the Church needed them, including other countries, which gave them the chance to learn foreign languages (Carrasco Pérez de Abreu 2008: 69).

Although attempts were made to ensure that interpreters for *reducciones* were members of religious orders or Catholics of good standing, this was not the case

for trials, ship visits, district visits or other procedures. There is little we can say regarding the quality of the interpreting provided, which must have been variable, because reporters tended in their records to unify the language used by participants, reformulating the depositions in their own homogeneous style (cf. Fajardo Spínola 1996: 133; Splendiani et al. 1997, 2: 216).

To date we have only found records of intentional, systematic training of interpreters in Cartagena de Indias, among Africans, and, to a degree, in Mexico with the indigenous population: Indian interpreters for the Apostolic Inquisition must have learnt their Spanish from the first missionaries to arrive in Mexico during the Conquest, as in the case of friar Alonso de Molina, or a few years later, as in that of friars Bernardino de Sahagún, Antonio de Ciudad Rodrigo, and others (cf. Pym 2000: 142–163). Foreign traders who acted as interpreters included those who had come to Spain in their youth expressly to learn Castilian, together with the secrets of the profession, as was the case of the Fleming Lorenzo Quesquier, who did so at his uncle's house in Gran Canaria (Lobo Cabrera 1995: 51).

The activities of the Inquisition were, by their very nature, trial-related, so most of the interpreters' work could be considered as court interpreting. In this sense, apart from the strict imposition of secrecy by the Inquisition, their work was similar to that of interpreters working in court cases and other civil law procedures within the Spanish administration. Regulations governing their activity, like those governing the Inquisition's activities in general, were scattered in various pieces of legislation rather than compiled in systematic documents (cf. Galván Rodríguez 2001: 23–24).

As we pointed out at the beginning, this chapter is intended to provide a preliminary approach and a succinct overview; hence many of the gaps. Some of the omissions correspond to a conscious intention to avoid an excess of cross references in order to comply with the length of this text. Moreover, our reflections on the Inquisition may well be somewhat biased, given our focus on interpreters and their work. We hope to remedy at least some of the deficiencies in an upcoming monographic volume. In any case, we hope this chapter makes a small contribution to the research on the history of interpreting, particularly to the one focused on Antiquity and the *Ancien Régime* (1469–1812) (Thieme, Hermann and Glässer 1956; Pöchhacker 2000: 10–11; 2004: 9–10, 159–160; Hermann 2002; Baigorri and Alonso 2002, 2007; Sarmiento-Pérez 2008, 2011; Payàs and Alonso 2009; Payàs 2010; Alonso, Baigorri and Fernández 2012; Payàs and Zavala 2012; Pohling 2013). Besides we have wished to pay tribute to the countless interpreters of an institution that, as Lea says (1906–1907, 1:v), “exercised no small influence on the fate of Spain and even indirectly on the civilized world.”

Translated from Spanish by Heather Adams

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CHAPTER 4

Nagasaki *Tsūji* in historical novels by Yoshimura Akira

An alternative way of studying the history of interpreters

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This chapter attempts to illustrate the significance of studying the history of interpreting through novels, focusing on Yoshimura Akira who portrayed pre-modern interpreters within socio-political contexts of the time. Four of Yoshimura's novels will be analyzed: (1) *Fuyu no taka* (1974), describing the translation of a medical book in Dutch into Japanese; (2) *Von Siebold no musume* (1978), offering an insight into the role of interpreters; (3) *Umi no sairei* (1989) illustrating how Ranald MacDonald taught English in Japan; and (4) *Kurofune* (1978), depicting interpreters at the time when American battleships came. Yoshimura's works testify the potential of historical novels as an alternative way of studying past interpreters to help us understand how they lived and how they worked.

Keywords: Nagasaki *Tsūji*, *Oranda Tsūji*, historical novel, history and fiction

1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to illuminate the history of interpreters in Japan – specifically *tsūji* in Nagasaki during Edo Period (1603–1867) ruled by the Tokugawa Shogunate (a feudal regime known as *bakufu* in Japanese). First, the existence of interpreters called *tsūji* will be introduced, drawing on the historical study of interpreting in Japan. Secondly, an attempt will be made to locate the presence of *tsūji* depicted in historical novels by a renowned writer, Yoshimura Akira.¹

1. In Japanese, a family name comes first, then a given name. This tradition is kept throughout the chapter for Japanese names.

Klaus Kaindl notes that although “the use of translation as a topic and motif and of translators and interpreters as characters in literature and film goes far back,” for a long time, “translators and interpreters as fictional beings remained largely unnoticed by translation studies” (2014: 5) and in the field of translation studies, “the in-depth examination of the image of translators and interpreters in films and literature did not begin until the 1990s” (ibid.: 10). Dörte Andres (2014: 271–272) comments that the “number of literary works in which interpreters feature prominently has increased dramatically over time,” adding that it seems as though “the interpreter is emerging as a key figure of modern-day global society.”²

The Nagasaki interpreters Yoshimura described certainly do not belong to a global society in the present sense of the word, but it is possible to consider them as key figures in 19th-century Japan encountering the West. Yoshimura’s novels will be introduced and discussed in this chapter not so much as to contrast fictional interpreters with real ones, but to examine how interpreters are located and portrayed within a particular historical and social context, fusing fiction with reality.

It is often said that interpreting has not been paid due attention in recorded history simply because the spoken word is evanescent. Whether this applies to medieval Japanese interpreters called *tsūji* is an intriguing question. What is unique about Nagasaki *Tsūji* is that they were both interpreters and translators, with multiple tasks in trade, diplomacy, as well as academic work. They were appointed as official interpreters by the central government in Edo (presently, Tokyo). Moreover, the profession was hereditary, with over a dozen *tsūji* families handing down their expertise from father to son.³ If they didn’t have a son, or if their son was not fit to become an interpreter, they adopted one. In this sense, their presence was tangible at the time. This does not mean, however, that their work in interpreting oral exchanges was recorded in history. It was inevitably evanescent. As for written documents, what they translated as part of their routine assignments may have been recorded officially, but most of it remained anonymous, except for rare occasions when they translated some academic documents such as medical literature.

There were basically three categories of interpreters in three major languages: *Tō Tsūji*, interpreters in Chinese, was the oldest group; *Namban Tsūji*, in Portuguese, disappeared when Portuguese Catholic priests were expelled from

2. See also Baigorri (2006).

3. It will be interesting to compare this system with that of Ottoman Empire’s dragomans. See, for example, Rothman (2009, 2012).

Japan in 1587 for disseminating Christianity in the country; and *Oranda Tsūji*, in Dutch, appeared because Holland (*Oranda* in Japanese) did not try to bring in religion, thus becoming the only Western country allowed to enter Japan for trade.

2. Brief history of *tsūji*

2.1 *Tsūji* in early days

Interpreters in Japan first appear in historical documents in the beginning of the 7th century. *Nihon Shoki* (Written History of Japan) reports that in 607, Kuratsukuri-no-Fukuri accompanied Ambassador Onono Imoko as *tsūji* in the second *Kenzui-shi*, a diplomatic mission dispatched from the Japanese Imperial Court to Sui Dynasty China (Ishida 2011:217). The *Kenzui-shi* subsequently became *Kentō-shi*, delegation to Tang Dynasty, and about twenty missions were sent in the 7th to 9th centuries, contributing to trade and cultural exchanges (see Lung 2011 and Chapter 1 in this volume).

The Japanese Imperial Court acknowledged the need to train interpreters in 730, and an official act to start training, along with teaching the Chinese language, was proclaimed in 817. However, Japanese interpreters who received official training proved insufficient in oral interaction, thus leading to the end of training by early 9th century. Since then, Chinese immigrants as well as Japanese who had stayed in China for many years were appointed as interpreters (Takeda 2013: 15).

By early 16th century, historical documents show that not only people from China and the Korean Peninsula, but also Portuguese and Dutch nationals resided in Hirado, a port in Nagasaki, Kyushu, southern part of Japan. Mediators in Chinese, Portuguese and Dutch languages were initially private interpreters for trade.

2.2 Nagasaki *Tsūji* as official interpreters

From 1633 to 1639, the Tokugawa Shogunate issued a series of *Sakoku-rei*, the National Isolation Edict, prohibiting Japanese people from going abroad and barring foreign nationals from entering Japan, except those from the Netherlands and China. In 1641, the shogunate announced Nagasaki would be the only port open to foreign contact, closing all other ports in the nation. With this political decision, the Dutch government's trading post was moved to Dejima, a small man-made island in Nagasaki. It was in the same year that Dutch and Chinese *tsūji* families were appointed official interpreters employed by the central government in Edo.

Unlike *Tō Tsūji*, Chinese-Japanese interpreters, who originally came from China, *Oranda Tsūji*, Dutch-Japanese interpreters, were Japanese who learned Dutch as a foreign language. *Tō Tsūji* were well versed in Chinese classics, and *Oranda Tsūji* were experts in *Rangaku* (*Oranda-gaku*), meaning Dutch studies, which actually referred to the study of Western knowledge by reading books in Dutch language. Even though the Tokugawa Shogunate closed the country and prohibited Christianity, they encouraged Dutch studies, knowing fully well the importance of learning from the West, particularly medicine (Katagiri 1995; Hayashi 2000).

3. Historical study of *tsūji*

3.1 Recent studies

In recent years, efforts have been made to study the history of *tsūji*, shedding light on a hitherto obscure presence. For example, Hayashi Rikurō (2000) carried out a detailed historical study of Chinese *Tō Tsūji* Lin Dō-ei, while Katagiri Kazuo (1995) studied *Oranda Tsūji* Imamura Gen'emom Eisei. More recently, Egoshi Hiroto (2008) wrote about Moriyama Einosuke, focusing on his role as a diplomat, and Kimura Naoki (2012) about *Oranda Tsūji* as interpreters in English at the time of the Meiji Restoration. Hori Takahiko, a descendent of *Oranda Tsūji* Hori Tatsunosuke, published Tatsunosuke's biography, *Kaikoku to Eiwa-jisho: Hyōden* [Opening of the country and English-Japanese dictionary] in 2011, introducing him as a scholar-interpreter who compiled English-Japanese dictionaries.

Unlike *tsūji* in Japan, the presence of *tsūji* in Ryūkyū (which is now Okinawa Prefecture in Japan) is not well known. Among recent studies on the history of Ryūkyū interpreters is an article by Yamazato Katsunori⁴ (2015), who positioned them in the historical context of Okinawa vis-à-vis Japan and the United States. Interpreters depicted are Aniya Seihō and Maehira Bōshō, who translated for Basil Hall, a British who visited the islands in 1816, as well as Makishi (Itarashiki) Chōchū, an official of the Ryūkyū Kingdom when Commodore Perry came in 1854. According to Yamazato (ibid.), Makishi was by far the most important *tsūji* in 19th century Ryūkyū. He was not only one of the best English speakers those days, but he also studied in Beijing, where he learned Chinese, and he was able to negotiate with Russians and the French as well. Yamazato's study is insightful in that he portrays them as representing the relationship between Okinawa, Japan,

4. Yamazato Katsunori, a researcher in American literature and ecocriticism, is former professor at the University of the Ryukyus and now the president of Meio University in Okinawa.

and the United States, connecting the past to the present. His work convinces us that the study of history, including interpreting history, is meaningful because to study history is not simply reflecting on the past, but it enables us to examine the present and possibly foresee the future.

3.2 Findings about Nagasaki *Tsūji*

Studies conducted so far show that Nagasaki *Tsūji* was a highly organized and hereditary group of professional interpreters and translators, with systematic training and hierarchy of various ranks based on their expertise. They were government officials, serving not only as interpreters but also as translators, trade officials, diplomats, and some of them were scholars in Dutch studies (study of Western civilization). They were at the forefront of intercultural communication in Edo Period, introducing foreign civilization to Japan when it was supposedly closed to the outside world.

The introduction of Dutch medicine for one was not possible without a scholar-interpreter-translator *tsūji* master, Yoshio Kōzaemon Kōgyū, who taught Dutch to Maeno Ryōtaku, a medical doctor who translated a Dutch medical book *Tahel Anatomia* into Japanese in 1774. Maeno's name does not appear in the translated book, and instead, Sugita Gempaku is supposed to be the translator. As a matter of fact, it was Maeno who actually translated the medical book, and Sugita acted as a coordinator of the translation project. As the editor of the published book, he asked Kōgyū to contribute a foreword. The reported reason for Maeno's refusal to print his name in the translated book was that he was not satisfied with the quality of the translation and wanted to spend more time in refining it, whereas Sugita insisted on publishing it as soon as possible for obvious medical significance (Sugita 1815/2000; Yoshimura 1974; Katagiri 2000).

In spite of all the historical study conducted so far, the details and the scope of the role of *tsūji* are not fully known. Whereas oral history, based on life-story interviews, can be an effective methodology to hear inner voices of interpreters concerning their role in interpreted communication (Torikai 2009, 2013), the study of past interpreters has to rely on written documents such as (auto)biographies, diaries, travelogues, letters and memoirs. Hence, it is not easy to study interpreters in the past – who they were, how they lived, and how they felt when they worked as interpreters.

3.3 Historical novels

One alternative way to supplement this historical void is to read about interpreters in novels. It is inevitable that fictitious novels are creative work by novelists, not academic nor scientific study by historians, although “what history is” is a question in itself, particularly from postmodern perspectives. As Keith Jenkins (1991:7) contends, “the past and history are different things,” and “there are different interpretive readings over time and space.” Granting that even historians need imagination to interpret history, a historical novel is treated differently as literature and defined as:

a novel that has as its setting a period of history and that attempts to convey the spirit, manners, and social conditions of a past age with realistic detail and fidelity to historical fact. The work may deal with actual historical personages, or it may contain a mixture of fictional and historical characters. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

A historical novel, or *rekishi shōsetsu*, is defined in a Japanese dictionary *Kōjien* as “a novel which has as its setting a certain period of time in the past, in an attempt to describe conditions of the time, such as *Yoakemae* by Shimazaki Tōson” (Shinmura 1991:2720). *Rekishi shōsetsu* in Japan is a genre newly created in Meiji period (1868–1912), and it was Tsubouchi Shōyo who defined a historical novel by describing its purpose as “filling in the void in history” (Tsubouchi 1885/2014: 82). Yamazaki Kazuhide (1994) views *rekishi shōsetsu* as “a concept combining fiction and history. In historical studies, an event is studied and reconstructed gathering fragments of records. In literature, although past events are depicted based on historical facts, there is room for imagination to be added.”

Historical novels in Taisho Period (1912–1926) are represented by the work of Mori Ōgai. Mori initially emphasized the importance of staying faithful to historical facts, thus recreating history as it was, but gradually shifted towards writing with more creativity, away from historical facts. Ōoka Shōhei (1990) points out that Mori’s *Rekishi-sonomama to Rekishi-banare* (History as It was and Away from History 1915) either bound the subsequent writers, or gave writers excuses to create history arbitrarily.

Historical novels are defined by Kikuchi Masanori as “a writer’s confession of his views on history” (1979: i). As for the issue of relationship between historical facts and creativity, he poses a question: If “solemn falsehood,” as Balzac says, is the task of a writer, is “stale truth” the task of a historian? His answer to this is “solemn falsehood” and “stale truth” share the same roots, the same heart, and the same blood circulates (ibid.: 60).

Watanabe Tamotsu, a play critic, elaborates on a literary genre called historical novels as follows:

In terms of data gathering, historical novels are the same as books on history. What, then, is a historical novel? It's a novel based on history.

It is as simple as that. The difference between a historical novel and a book on history is whether fiction by the author is added or not. A book on history is written about facts. Even so, if you try to exclude the researcher's imagination altogether, the study of history would not be feasible. ... That is precisely the reason why historians, who study historical facts, are bound to suffer, and the difficulty of how to handle collected data arises. And this fact is reversely reflected in historical novels, illustrating the difficulty authors of historical novels face. That is, how much creativity, based on imagination, would be possible. ...

Here lies the difference between a book on history and a historical novel. ... Recorded facts are only fragments of history – not the whole phenomena. In order to describe the whole, you need to have imagination which surpasses fragmentary facts. This is where the attractiveness of historical novels lies. ... However, this is undoubtedly where a pitfall lies, too. On one hand, there are historical novels which are more fictional than historical, and others, suppressing imagination, let the history itself speak. The former is closer to novels than historical books, and the latter is closer to historical books, and to the historical truth.⁵

(Watanabe 2002: 311–313)

Watanabe (*ibid.*) concludes that Yoshimura's novels belong to the latter. With his thorough research and fieldwork, including 75 visits to Nagasaki, in writing his historical novels (Yoshimura 2013; Bungeishunju 2013; Sasazawa 2014), it is closer to the truth in history than fiction (Watanabe *ibid.*).

Shiba Ryōtarō, a noted writer, explains his reason for writing historical novels: “A person dies. The time passes. As more time goes by, we can view this person and his/her life from high above. This is what makes writing historical novels stimulating (Shiba 1969: 295).” At the same time, Shiba claims that “history at a time of tension is necessary” for him to write a novel, and that he enjoys putting a particular person and his/her life at a particular point of time to see what might have happened and what actually happened,” adding that if there are not enough documents, he is obliged to resort to his imagination (*ibid.*). This view could be applied to Yoshimura Akira, who placed Nagasaki interpreters at the time of historical tension, from the end of feudalism to Japanese efforts to modernize the nation, adding some creativity to his research.

If you compare Yoshimura's historical novels with history books, you will notice differences. For example, a study on Hori Tatsunosuke by his descendent Takahiko offers detailed accounts of his life corroborated with a wide

5. Here and throughout the chapter the translation of direct quotations from Japanese texts is provided by the author.

range of data gathered from field trips and archives, but Takahiko does not describe Tatsunosuke's personal emotions and feelings. It is noteworthy that when Takahiko made reference to Tatsunosuke's state of mind in his old age, he quoted what Yoshimura wrote in his postscript to the novel *Kurofune* [The black ships] depicting the old interpreter as having a "somewhat sad air" (2011:287). Also, when Takahiko proved in his research that Tatsunosuke did not receive English lessons from Ranald MacDonald, he praised Yoshimura for his "accurate accounts" (2011:34) on this point in *Umi no sairei* [Festival of the sea] and *Kurofune*, in which Yoshimura offered vivid descriptions of how Tatsunosuke felt when he found out that other interpreters learned English from a native speaker of English. As a novelist, Yoshimura dared to imagine the anxiety and frustration of Tatsunosuke at the time, and added descriptions of the interpreter's inner feelings to accounts of historical facts.

Yoshimura's works can be "located between the conflicting forces of fiction and reality. There, fictional translators are viewed as historical figures and the works of fiction serve as sources for a kind of social history of the profession" (Kaindl 2014: 14), although interpreters depicted by Yoshimura are not fictional, but real characters, with only a touch of the writer's imagination.

4. Novelist Yoshimura's interest in *Oranda Tsūji*

Yoshimura Akira was born in Tokyo in 1927, and passed away on June 31, 2006. He became a writer early, and came to be known first for his documentary writings on World War II. Sone Hiroyoshi (2004), a literary critic and professor at Nihon University, categorizes Yoshimura's historical novels into two groups: those related to modern medical history, and those on fugitives and drifters. *Oranda Tsūjis* appear in both of these categories.

4.1 *Fuyu no taka* [Hawks in winter]

Yoshimura's first attempt at writing about translation started in 1968, when he had a chance to listen to a lecture given by a professor of Juntendo University, Ogawa Teizō, then president of the Japan Society of Medical History. The topic of the talk was *Kaitai Shinsho*, the first Japanese translation of a medical book in Dutch, *Tahel Anatomia*. In the postscript to a paperback edition in 1976, Yoshimura (1976: 409) explains:

As I was listening to Professor Ogawa, I started to be absorbed in his talk, taking notes. I certainly had a certain amount of knowledge about *Kaitai Shinsho*, but I never realized the whole process of translating could be so dramatic and the

translation work so epoch-making and significant. I was particularly interested in the two main characters involved in the translation project: Maeno Ryōtaku and Sugita Gempaku, who were total opposites in many respects. Those two men who had lived two hundred years ago struck me as representing the two categories of people in modern days. By the time the lecture was over, my mind was all set to write about Maeno Ryōtaku and the translation of the medical book, against a backdrop of the history of Edo Period.

Of the two major contributors to the translated book, Sugita Gempaku is better known than Maeno Ryōtaku, who refused to put his name in the book, insisting that he was not satisfied with the quality of the product. Yoshimura is clearly attracted to Maeno, an austere scholar of Dutch studies who mostly did the translation for *Kaitai Shinsho*. As for Sugita, who acted as a coordinator and an agent of the translation project, Yoshimura depicts him as an outgoing high profile doctor in Dutch medicine, who is clever enough to publish the translation as soon as it was finished, over the protest of Maeno, and as a consequence, the success of the publication gave Sugita fame and financial reward.

Fuyu no taka was initially written as a series in *Monthly Economist*, which lasted a year and seven months, and then published as a book in 1976 by Mainichi Shimbun-sha. It is a story about translation of a Western medical book in which two interpreters appear: *Oranda Tsūji* master Nishi Zenzaburō and a scholar-interpreter-translator Yoshio Kōzaemon Kōgyū.⁶ In fact, the novel starts with a scene in springtime Edo, when Maeno ventures to visit a respected interpreter Nishi, who accompanied a Dutch *capitán*⁷ paying an annual visit to show respect to the shogun in Edo.

Maeno had just one question to ask the interpreter – he wanted to read books in Dutch and wished to know how he could learn the language. He hoped to seek advice from Nishi, who was one of the few interpreters who could read Dutch. Yoshimura (1976: 8–9) gives his account of language learning by *Oranda Tsūji* as follows:

Generally, even people who worked as *tsūji* for a long time were not necessarily highly competent in Dutch. Not many of them studied Dutch as an academic discipline, but instead mainly imitated spoken Dutch. Even after they became apprentice-interpreters, some were de facto servants for Dutch people, and never took formal lessons in Dutch. They learned the language orally one word at a time, copying Dutch speakers, eventually becoming a master of interpreting.

Furthermore, in order for them to protect themselves as professionals, they tended not to impart their knowledge to their colleagues or juniors. ... To make

6. Yoshio Kōgyū was born in Nagasaki in 1724 and died in 1800. As was customary those days, he had different names – he was called Teijirō first, then Kōzaemon, and Kōsaku, in addition to a couple of other names. He is commonly known as Kōgyū, which was his pen name.

7. The head of the Dutch Trading Post was called “capitán,” taken from a Portuguese word.

the matter worse, the Tokugawa government did not allow them to own grammar books nor dictionaries. As such, Nagasaki interpreters were obliged to learn Dutch by guessing from gestures and facial expressions, storing what they learned from ears in their heads.

From that perspective, Nishi Zenzaburō and Yoshio Kōzaemon were exceptional. Nishi believed that Dutch language had to be studied in a more systematic and academic way. Together with Yoshio and Motoki Einosuke, he filed a request to the government to grant him to buy and read foreign books. The request was granted, allowing them to be absorbed in studying Dutch books. Eventually, they edited a Dutch-Japanese dictionary.

Based on what Yoshimura conveys, we can surmise that foreign language learning in Japan, traditionally Chinese, was considered “academic” if it was studied not orally, but by way of reading literature in different academic fields. At the same time, Yoshimura’s observation that Dutch interpreters were reluctant to share what they learned with their juniors is somewhat contrary to a common view that Nagasaki interpreters formed a highly systematic training system, conveying their expertise from generation to generation. It may be that they handed down skills and knowledge solely within each *tsūji* family.

It took Yoshimura four years to gather enough data to write this novel, and his postscript in 1974 gives testimony to how much research he carried out, interviewing descendants and historians, sometimes coming across new evidence. For example, he describes how he found out the year Maeno Ryōtaku retired, which previously had not been known. Also, in the course of his research, he learned that a famous anecdote cited in Sugita Gempaku’s *Rangaku kotohajime* (Introduction to the Dutch Study) was not true. Sugita was 83 years old when he recounted, in the book, the hard work he had to tackle in translating Dutch words into Japanese, giving an example of his struggling to guess the meaning of “verheffende” as “high” in Japanese. This episode became so famous that it was quoted in elementary school textbooks. Yoshimura (1976: 412–414) states, however, that his reading of the original *Tahel Anatomia* in Dutch proved this particular word Sugita claimed he had encountered did not appear in the source text.

4.2 *Von Siebold no musume* [The daughter of Von Siebold]

Yoshimura wrote *Von Siebold⁸ no musume* (The daughter of Von Siebold) originally for weekly magazine *Sunday Mainichi* from June 29, 1975 to October 30,

8. Although Yoshimura used the name “Von Siebold” in the title of his novel, the name “Siebold” is more commonly used in Japan, such as “Siebold Jiken (crisis)” referring to the alleged wrongdoings of Von Siebold.

1977, based on more than 70 references as well as a number of fieldtrips to Nagasaki. It was later published as a book by Mainichi Shimbun-sha in 1978, and was awarded the Yoshikawa Eiji Literary Prize in 1979. It was then published as a paperback edition by Kōdansha in 1981. As the title suggests, the main character of the novel is Siebold's daughter Ine, who became the first female obstetrician in Japan. Nevertheless, interpreters in Dutch are featured throughout the book in two volumes.

The novel starts with a scene of a Dutch ship arriving in Japan in 1823. As soon as its sight was caught off Nagasaki port, officials of Nagasaki Magistrate's Office, along with *tsūji*, approached the Dutch ship to inspect their flag to make sure the ship was Dutch. Then, with the help of interpreters, the officials checked the name of the ship as well as that of the captain, along with the list of crew and passengers. One passenger on the ship was named Philipp Franz Balthazar Von Siebold,⁹ an army surgeon who claimed to be a medical doctor at the Dutch Trade Post.

Officials asked various questions to Siebold, but the *tsūji* who interpreted the exchanges found Dutch spoken by Siebold to be awkward, and suspected that he might be someone from a country other than the Netherlands. The *tsūji*'s intuition proved to be correct. Siebold was a German born in South Germany. He disguised himself as a Dutch, knowing it was the only way for him to enter Japan. He became worried to hear Japanese interpreters speak better Dutch than himself, but he knew they didn't know much about European geography, and so he quickly explained that unlike the majority of Dutch, he was from the highland in Holland, speaking a different dialect, thus succeeding in persuading the Japanese that he was really Dutch.

The Dutch Trading Post in Nagasaki always had a resident medical doctor sent from Dutch Indochina to take care of the health of their officials, and these doctors gradually started to teach Western medicine to Japanese medical doctors with the linguistic help of interpreters in Dutch. Unlike his predecessors, however, twenty-seven-year-old Siebold had a secret mission given by the Dutch government, which was to conduct scientific research and gather as much information as possible about Japan, including its political system, religion, industry, national traits, customs, language, culture, geography, animals and plants.

Nagasaki Magistrate Takahashi decided to allow medical doctors visit Siebold in Dejima, a secluded island specifically for Dutch people to live and work. When

9. Philipp Franz Balthasar Von Siebold was born on February 17, 1796, and died on October 18, 1866. He studied medicine, botany and zoology at Universität Würzburg, and became a medical doctor, earning his M.D. in 1820. He initially practiced medicine in Heidingsfeld, Germany (now part of Würzburg). He excelled in internal medicine, surgery, ophthalmology and obstetrics.

Japanese doctors paid visits to Siebold, several *tsūjis* were present, including some who were doctors themselves. Yoshio, chief editor of a Dutch-Japanese dictionary, spoke fluent Dutch, which surprised Siebold. For their part, the interpreter-scholars were puzzled by the not so fluent Dutch Siebold spoke. Nonetheless, they were eager to ask questions of all sorts, trying to understand what Siebold had to say. Mainstream medicine in Japan had long been Chinese, but in Nagasaki there were quite a few doctors interested in Dutch medicine.

Since Siebold wished to get out of Dejima to see more of Japan, he made it a point to help Japanese doctors learn about Western medicine, and he let them observe his operations and treatments. Gradually, the number of his disciples increased, and they wanted Siebold to live in the city. The Tokugawa government, aware of the importance of learning Western medicine, gave Siebold permission to work outside of Dejima. Siebold eventually treated patients and taught medicine to Japanese doctors at a school he established in Narutaki in Nagasaki. Narutaki-juku became the center of the study of Dutch medicine, attracting many doctors and scholars from all over Japan.

“Siebold Crisis”

Not realizing Siebold’s secret mission and true intentions, a number of interpreters were involved in helping him obtain confidential Japanese maps. The beginning of the crisis was in 1826, when Siebold accompanied the head of the Dutch Trade Post paying an obligatory visit to the shogun in Edo. During the long trip from Nagasaki to Edo, he collected many plants and artifacts from different regions of Japan, as part of his scientific research entrusted by the Dutch government, but what he really wanted were accurate maps of Japan, which European nations critically needed.

With the help of *Oranda Tsūjis*, Siebold negotiated with Takahashi Sakuzaemon Kageyasu, *Tenmon-kata* minister in charge of astronomical measurements and geographical surveying. Siebold offered him Western maps, as well as a book written by Russian commander Ivan Fedorovich Kruzenshter on his worldwide voyage, in return for detailed maps of Japan and the surrounding areas such as Ezo (northern part of Japan), researched by Inō Tadataka, an act strictly forbidden by the government. The shogunate had closed the country to the outside world, except the Netherlands and China, not only to avoid the spread of Christianity in the country, but out of fear of being colonized and exploited by Western countries as other Asian neighbors. To protect the country, it was crucial to keep vital information about the land secret.

Siebold tried to send the maps he received from Minister Takahashi back to the Netherlands in secret, but a typhoon hit the ship, resulting in the cargo drifting ashore, including the confidential maps of Japan. When the government found out

in 1828 that a high-ranking official had violated the law by giving forbidden maps to Siebold, they were horrified and accused him of high treason. After months of interrogation, Siebold was expelled from Japan on October 22, 1829. Takahashi and his subordinates, along with his sons, were arrested and Takahashi died in prison soon after. The owner of the inn Nagasaki-ya, where Dutch people regularly stayed during their visits to Edo, was also punished for providing a place for secret negotiations. There were over 17 people punished, including Siebold's disciples at Narutaki-juku school in Nagasaki, as well as workers who accompanied Siebold on his trip to and from Edo. One person committed suicide before being sentenced.

At the same time, ten *tsūjis* were found guilty for mediating the exchanges between Takahashi and Siebold, and for helping him obtain confidential maps of Japan. They were never again allowed to do interpreting/translation work, and three of them were sent to distant areas to be imprisoned, never to return to Nagasaki (Naikaku Bunko 1830). Yoshimura describes the plight of *Oranda Tsūji* as follows:

Baba Tamehachiro (*Ō-Tsūji*, highest rank interpreting master, aged 62): Sentenced to life imprisonment for handing a Japanese map sent from Takahashi Sakuzaemon to Siebold, knowing it was prohibited.

Inabe Ichigorō Tanemasa (*Ko-Tsūji Matsuseki*, low second rank interpreter, aged 45): Sentenced to life imprisonment for handing a Japanese map to Siebold, complying with Baba's request, as well as a map of Ryūkyū, obliging Siebold's request.

Yoshio Chūjirō (*Ko-Tsūji Jo*, second rank assistant interpreter, aged 44): Sentenced to life imprisonment for mediating negotiations between Siebold and Takahashi, as well as helping Siebold send documents to Takahashi.

The three interpreters were sent from Nagasaki to Edo to receive guilty verdicts, and then sent away to different places to be imprisoned. Baba was sent to Kameda (presently Yuri-gun), Akita, in the northeastern part of Japan. Inabe went to Tomioka, Gunma, in the Kanto region. Yoshio was sent to Yonezawa, Yamagata, in the northeast.

Baba could not tolerate cold winter in the north and died of illness at the age of 70. Inabe was not allowed to talk even with a guard, but since he had medical knowledge, sometimes he was asked to write advice for treatments. He spent 11 years in prison and died of a stroke in 1840 at the age of 55. His tomb in Kongō-ji Temple in Tomioka City¹⁰ is designated a historical site by Gunma Prefecture. Yoshio Chūjirō died three years after imprisonment, and was buried later in two different temples: Sairen-ji in Yamagata and Zenrin-ji in Nagasaki.

10. Tomioka takes pride in its silk mill, now designated as a World Heritage site. There was apparently a Japanese person who helped a French raw silk inspector Paul Brunat communicate with Japanese construction workers, from 1871 to 1875, in establishing a modern silk mill.

Other *tsūjis* received minor sentences, but were punished nonetheless. Hori Gizaemon (*Ko-Tsūji Nami*) was sentenced to 100 days of house arrest for handing Takahashi's letter to Siebold. Seven other interpreters, including *Oranda Ō-Tsūji* Suenaga Jinzaemon, were found guilty for not stopping residents in various parts of Japan from talking with Siebold and giving him gifts, some of which prohibited items. The punishment was house arrest for these minor offenders, ranging from 50 days to 100 days, but all were stripped of their positions as official *tsūji*.

The task of the interpreter

The "Siebold Crisis" is well known in Japanese history, and yet, not much attention had been paid to the interpreters involved until Yoshimura illustrated them in his novel. As a writer, Yoshimura does not express his own feelings or judgments over the crisis, let alone his evaluation of the role played by *Oranda Tsūji*. Nevertheless, reading his detailed accounts of the plight of *tsūjis* who were held responsible, one is inevitably led to think about the task and the role of the interpreter.

Viewing this tragic aftermath from the perspective of modern interpreters, now mostly freelance, the punishment of the *tsūjis* involved might seem too severe and even unfair. After all, they were lower-rank officials and they might not have been able to disobey orders from a high-ranking government official such as the minister of astronomy and geography.

Placed in a wider social context, however, it is understandable that the Tokugawa government was immensely shocked and alarmed. They kept maps of Japan confidential and did not allow them to be sent overseas, because they wanted to prevent powerful Western nations from invading Japan and making it their colony. Government officials, including *tsūjis*, must have been well aware of the government policy. Yet, Minister Takahashi knowingly violated the prohibition rule, believing it was ultimately for the benefit of Japan. He strongly felt the need for Japan to obtain world maps so that they would have sufficient knowledge of the outside world. He thought meeting Siebold was a once in a lifetime chance to realize this. Siebold likewise thought negotiating with Takahashi was vital since he was just the right person to be in a position to provide him with what he truly wanted – complete maps of Japan.

What was unfortunate was that Takahashi underestimated the government's concerns and thought he could get away by explaining his conduct as eventually beneficial to the country, not fully understanding the implications of his deed – the maps he gave Siebold might have made it easier for the Netherlands to control Japan.

Some Dutch interpreters felt uncomfortable violating the rules, but they didn't grasp the intention of the government in prohibiting the export of maps or giving them to foreign people. In addition to having been rather naive on this crucial matter, they greatly respected Siebold for his broad knowledge and his expertise

as a medical doctor, and they were busy helping him obtain what he requested, not having the slightest idea that his secret mission was to find out about Japan and send as much information as possible to the Dutch government.

Oranda Tsūjis were not supposed to be neutral in their positioning as interpreters. They were, first and foremost, government officials, and as such, were destined to be loyal to the Tokugawa government. Despite their expected work ethics, they acted as if their priority was to be disciples of Siebold, rather than acting on behalf of the government. Hence, the anger of the shogunate, leading to severe punishments.

The incident casts light on the ambivalent positioning of interpreters between two interlocutors who have different missions and intentions. It exemplifies the traps interpreters might be caught in, as they inevitably walk on a tightrope between two languages, and two sides with conflicting interests.

4.3 *Umi no sairei* [Festival of the sea]

In his 1989 novel *Umi no sairei* [Festival of the sea] Yoshimura introduced how Ranald MacDonald, a Native American, came to Japan, taught English to a group of *Oranda Tsūji*, including Moriyama Einosuke who later became a leading figure in Japan's diplomacy with the West.¹¹ In his postscript to this novel, Yoshimura (2004: 477–479) explains what motivated him to write about *Oranda Tsūji*:

I have been studying the history from mid-Edo Period to the end of Tokugawa government, and I started to embrace a wish to write a novel on how Japan opened the country after Commodore Perry's visits to Japan. Whenever I went to Nagasaki, I had drinks with Mr. Nagashima Shōichi, a historian, and we often discussed a Native American named Ranald MacDonald, which is why I became interested in this person. I started to think that the best thing for me might be to write about Perry's visit by first describing MacDonald.

He boarded an American whaling ship for Japan, and in 1848, five years prior to Perry's arrival, landed on Rishiri-tō Island off Hokkaido. Based on domestic law at that time, he was sent to Nagasaki as an illegal immigrant and was held in custody.

11. Yoshimura's account of Ranald MacDonald's life and his stay in Japan is mainly based on Lewis and Murakami (Eds.), *Japan, story of adventure of Ranald MacDonald*, translated into Japanese by Tomita Torao and published in 1979/2012 by Tōsui Shobo. At the same time, Yoshimura met Tomita, professor at Rikkyo University, learned from him about MacDonald, and made numerous visits to Rishiri, where MacDonald first landed, as well as to Nagasaki, for research.

He stayed in Japan for less than a year, and during that time, he taught English conversation to *Oranda Tsūji*, particularly Moriyama Takichirō Einosuke. When Perry came, Moriyama served as the head interpreter for the Japanese diplomatic delegation confronting Perry. MacDonald wrote a memoir about his stay in Japan and I was able to read the original, but there was not much research done about Moriyama, and I anticipated difficulty in writing the novel. ...

Despite the fact that Moriyama Einosuke was a major figure who was always involved in diplomacy at the end of Edo Period, there was no record of his private life. His father's name and the date of his birth were known, but I could not find any record about his mother or if he had a wife or children. Even after I started writing the novel, I continued my research and finally met his descendant, Mr. Nōtomi Shinkichi, who told me about Moriyama's family. At the same time, Professor Kanai of the University of Tokyo gave me a chance to read *Moriyama Takichirō (Einosuke) Nikki* (The Diary of Moriyama Takichirō Einosuke). It did not give me any clue to his private life, but I learned about a major role he played as an interpreter and a diplomat. I am satisfied that I managed to write about the background of Perry's coming to Japan and the process of the Japanese government opening the country, through describing Ranald MacDonald and Moriyama Einosuke.

Yoshimura dedicates the first part of the novel to describing the life of Ranald MacDonald and his *habitus*, to find out why he ventured to travel to a faraway country in Asia and how he encountered the "Other" or otherness (Bhabha 1994) in a small island village in the northernmost part of Japan. It is a fascinating description of intercultural contacts and the interaction between different cultures. MacDonald was then sent to Nagasaki as a foreigner who illegally entered the country. In Nagasaki, he was confined in a small room used as a tentative prison cell, where *tsūjis* on duty visited him daily, eventually starting to learn English from him, with permission from the government.

Yoshimura renders an impressive account of how professional interpreters in Dutch language learned another foreign language from a native speaker, who had no knowledge of Japanese but was eager to learn it. Yoshimura explains the history of *tsūjis*, who first learned Portuguese utilizing Chinese language they already knew, and then learned Dutch based on their knowledge of Portuguese. When they were ordered by the government to master English, it was natural for them to try to learn it by using their knowledge of Dutch. However, it was a daunting task and some gave it up, while Moriyama was by far the most promising among all the *tsūjis* assigned to study the language of England and the United States. Yoshimura maintains that although *tsūjis* were professional enough to compile an English-Japanese dictionary, their pronunciation of English was basically Dutch, because they learned basic English from Dutch people at the trading post. When,

in 1824, they interpreted for crew on a British whaling ship, they were shocked to find that the English they had learned did not work in actual communication.

It was under such circumstances that MacDonald entered Japan. Yoshimura describes Moriyama's surprise when he found out that MacDonald's pronunciation was completely different from what he was taught by Dutch people. For instance, Moriyama urged MacDonald to pronounce the word "head" and it was different from what they had previously learned as [he-e-toh]. MacDonald pronounced it almost as [hē], which shocked Moriyama immensely (Yoshimura 2004: 218). When they showed the word "hair," MacDonald pronounced it as [h-e-are], not [hē-e-ru] as they believed, and this made Moriyama become pale – he felt devastated as if his whole body was sinking to the bottom of the earth (ibid.: 219). Although he had no problem in understanding written English, he realized his pronunciation was so flawed that he had no competence in carrying out conversation (ibid.: 244). He knew well that the United States was fast becoming a strong nation, and it was imperative for Japan to have interpreters who were proficient in English. He believed it was his duty to shoulder the responsibility. He asked his superior to let him spend time studying English with MacDonald, and spent hours and days in trying to master English. Eventually, Moriyama's name became well known among foreign delegations, not only as a competent interpreter, but also as someone whose presence in diplomacy was highly appreciated (ibid.: 452).

The interaction between MacDonald and *tsūjis* is both informing and heartwarming, showing a professional way of learning a foreign language, with two sides trying to understand each other by mutually learning their languages. It is tantamount to what is known in Europe today as plurilingualism (Council of Europe, 2001)¹² – learning foreign languages for mutual understanding, with one language influencing another, thus creating a rich world of linguaculture (Díaz 2013) within oneself.

Frederick L. Schodt (2003) refers to Yoshimura several times in his book, describing *Umi no sairei* as "an historical novel that is one of the main ways ordinary people in Japan learn of MacDonald today" (ibid.: 205), and introduces many individuals who read this novel and became fascinated by MacDonald's adventure "in the context of the opening of Japan" (ibid.: 77). Schodt (ibid.) points out that when MacDonald is mentioned in Japan, he is almost always called "the

12. Plurilingualism is a special term used by the Council of Europe. While multilingualism refers to the state of many languages coexisting, plurilingualism represents a philosophy on language learning and teaching, recommending EU citizens to learn two languages, other than their first language, for mutual understanding. This notion sustains CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

first English teacher,” which is not correct, since Nagasaki interpreters studied English from Dutch residents in Dejima prior to MacDonald’s arrival. Calling him “the first native teacher of English conversation in Japan” is not quite accurate either because there might have been some Japanese who studied English from Englishmen earlier. In Schodt’s view, MacDonald’s major contribution lies in teaching English to Nagasaki interpreters. Without the skills of these *tsūjis*, Schodt (ibid.:281) argues, “it would have been difficult for Japan to preserve her independence ... and instead of experiencing a successful political, social, and technological revolution and eventually becoming a ranking world power, Japan might have been colonized or carved up by Europeans or Americans, as happened to the rest of Asia.”

Quoting Yoshimura’s description of the parting scene when MacDonald says to Moriyama, tears welling in his eyes, “I had hoped to stay in your country to teach English and become an interpreter...but that is not permitted. It saddens me greatly, as does parting with you, but I shall never forget the friendship you showed me,” Schodt (ibid.:319) comments that the scene “may not differ too much from reality.”

4.4 *Kurofune* [The black ships]

In *Kurofune* [The black ships] (1978), Yoshimura describes Dutch interpreters in detail, with a particular focus on Hori Tatsunosuke, a *tsūji* master, who was one of the interpreters when Commodore Perry came to Japan. It was Hori who called out to officers on the flagship, “I can speak Dutch.” in English.

In his postscript to *Kurofune*, Yoshimura (1991/1997: 435–437) explains how he came to write about Hori Tatsunosuke:

I decided to write this long novel because of one letter, which was delivered to my home. The person who sent the letter was Professor Hori Takahiko at Nagoya Gakuin University. The professor said he was a descendant of Hori Tatsunosuke, who appears in my novel about *tsūji* Moriyama Einosuke – *Umi no sairei*.

Tatsunosuke was the head *tsūji* when Perry’s fleet first came. His descendant Takahiko wrote in his letter if I knew anything about Tatsunosuke, because he wanted to know more about his *tsūji* ancestor. I wrote an answer, saying all I knew about Tatsunosuke was what I wrote in *Umi no sairei*, and I knew only a little about how he lived later. What I meant when I said “I only knew a little” was – Yoshida Shōin, a renowned scholar, wrote in his letter that he met Tatsunosuke in the same jail he was imprisoned in. Also, Rudolph, a German who came and stayed in Shimoda right after the government opened the country, wrote a travelogue in which he mentioned Tatsunosuke from time to time.

I received a letter again from Takahiko, and I felt his extraordinary enthusiasm. I thought, then, of introducing him to Mr. Tanizawa Shōichi, a historian with wide-ranging knowledge, based on an abundant collection of historical data. ...

A few years later, they invited me to their get-together and told me that with expert advice of Mr. Tanizawa, Takahiko dug into the family history, and they subsequently published Hori Tatsunosuke Kenkyū Note [Research Notes on Hori Tatsunosuke]. The night we met and drank together, they asked me if I would be interested in writing a novel about Tatsunosuke. They said they would provide me with all the historical documents they had.

Although I knew very little about Tatsunosuke, I felt something sad about this person, and was interested in him as a possible subject of a novel. I have always collected data myself and never written a novel based on data given by a third party, but I decided to comply with their suggestion. Judging from the exchanges between the two, I thought their way of collecting data was solid, robust and deep.

Just at that time, I had a request to write for a general magazine, *Chūo Kōron*, and I decided to write a novel about *tsūji* Tatsunosuke. ... Ever since he came in contact with American fleets headed by Commodore Perry in 1853, Tatsunosuke's life continued to be rocked by ships, even after Meiji Restoration. That is why I did not hesitate to decide the title of this novel *Kurofune* [The black ships].

Mr. Tanizawa mainly gave me historical documents, and together with him, I traveled to Nagasaki City, Shimokita Peninsula, and Hakodate City. On my own, I went to Sapporo, Aomori and Hirosaki for fieldtrips and data collection. ...

I am grateful that by writing this novel I was able to learn the moves taken by Western countries toward Japan from the end of Edo Period to Meiji.

The novel starts with a scene of four black ships approaching the coast of Japan, and Hori appears early in the novel as *tsūji*. As Yoshimura admitted in the postscript that he felt something sad about this interpreter, the writer describes an unfortunate decision Hori made on the spot, which made later negotiations difficult.

Whenever a foreign vessel came, it was a routine for government officials to visit the ship and carry out inspections as to which country the ship was from, the purpose of the visit, the number and the name of the crew and passengers. When Commodore Perry came with four warships, it was Hori who accompanied the inspection officials. When the American side refused to let them onboard, declaring they would only talk with a high-ranking official, Hori quickly decided to tell a lie and said the man on the boat was vice-governor, when in reality the officer was a *yoriki* whose rank was much lower. Believing what Hori had told them, the American side let the alleged vice-governor get on board their flagship and answered questions. However, they insisted on meeting the governor to hand a letter from the President of the United States.¹³ The problem was the

13. President Millard Fillmore, in office from 1850 to 1858.

Edo government had a rule that governors were too important to be on foreign ships, and so they had to disguise another low-rank official as the governor for negotiations, which meant that the real governor would never be able to meet the American delegation. When a junior interpreter commented on Hori's brave action of having introduced *yoriki* as vice-governor, Hori started to reflect on himself and his behavior. Yoshimura (1991/1997: 42–43) writes:

Tatsunosuke thought, this is my trait – always trying to get out of difficult situations without thinking about its consequences. Whenever there is some barrier, I quickly think of a way to get around it. You can avoid a crisis this way, but then a bigger obstacle inevitably appears. Just like this time. Lying about *yoriki* Nakajima as vice-governor started a whole series of other lies. Now, we have two governors and the real governor Toda can never appear in official negotiations. Later, when things calm down after the black ships leave, my behavior might be considered an impermissible crime. Tateishi, as a junior interpreter, probably anticipated this and became horrified. Tatsunosuke felt heavily depressed and his heart sank.

Hori was not punished for this, but he made another blunder later by not submitting a letter entrusted to him by a German merchant, which was addressed to the governor, asking Japan to open the country to Germany. He kept the letter in his desk, thinking it was not an official letter from a foreign government and not worth bothering. This was disclosed when the German protested to the governor's office for not getting a reply, and Hori was jailed. He was released some years later, to be assigned to compile an English-Japanese dictionary.

5. Conclusion

In this chapter, *Oranda Tsūji*, a group of interpreters in Dutch, were introduced as depicted in historical novels written by Yoshimura Akira, showing how the novelist tried to describe the life of Nagasaki *Tsūji* in a social context of pre-modern Japan, during later years of Edo Period.

Yoshimura's motivations to focus on interpreters in his historical novels seem to be twofold. One is his keen interest in international relations surrounding Japan during Edo Period: the foreign policy of the Tokugawa government to protect the country, its attitude toward the West and their interest in Western science, the Japanese way of managing crises and threats from foreign countries, leading to the Meiji Restoration and the new nation building.

The other is his curiosity about people who were directly involved in intercultural contacts, having an impact on Japan's transformation. Nagasaki *Tsūjis* were linguistic and cultural mediators, influencing Japanese intellectuals through

their study of Western science and medicine. Later, they became obliged to translate and interpret in English, ever since the *Phaeton*, a British military vessel disguised as Dutch, forced entry into Nagasaki port in 1808. They learned English and became experts in the study of the West, this time not in Dutch but in English. They were active as diplomats and communicators, helping Japan and its people to cope with the changing times.

Yoshimura's novels testify that literary works can be quite helpful in learning about interpreters and the role they played in intercultural communication. Novels certainly are not the same as a scientific and academic study of history. Historical characters that appear in novels are born not only based on research and fieldtrips but they are the product of each writer's imagination and creativity. Granted that, we could say that historical documents do not give fine details of psychological and social dilemmas interpreters face, while historical novels with the author's ingenuity and imagination, based on historical facts, offer us various interpretations of interpreters' activities, behaviors, norms, ethics, and beliefs.

We can position historical novels in-between fiction and the study of history. After all, history is mediated through language, it is open to interpretation, and there are always different versions and images of the past (Strümper-Krobb 2014: 258). It is possible, then, that historical novels serve as a valuable and an alternative way to study the history of interpreters, who have much to offer in our understanding of intercultural communication and linguistic mediation in different times and places.

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CHAPTER 5

The U.S. Department of State's Corps of Student Interpreters

A precursor to the diplomatic interpreting of today?*

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Following the examples of European nations, China and Japan, the United States Department of State established a Corps of Student Interpreters (1902–1924) to provide in-country language training in China, Japan, and Turkey. This chapter discusses the program's rationale, precursors and models, and factors impacting its establishment and implementation. Recruitment challenges, selection criteria, and the career progression of student interpreters are examined on the basis of program documentation. Excerpts of correspondence between senior diplomats provide insight into the program's genesis, and the memoirs of student interpreters posted to China relate personal impressions of in-country experience. A possible precursor to the diplomatic interpreting of today, the Corps is situated in a broader framework of language training for interpreters and diplomats.

Keywords: interpreter education, diplomatic interpreting, interpreter training

In the chill of an early Peking dawn, I found myself standing below the Dragon Throne. The Emperor of China was holding an audience, as customary, at daybreak. I held perfectly still, as did the other members of the American envoy's suite, military aides, and diplomatic secretaries grouped solidly behind him. Each of us civilians wore evening dress – tail coat, white shirtfront and tie – and each, feeling rather ridiculous, stiffly held a silk hat in hand. ...

The Americans and the mandarins gazed at each other with mutual curiosity. Towering-tall, United States Secretary of War Jacob McGavock Dickinson of Tennessee was reading President Howard Taft's autographed letter to the Emperor of China. In loud tones the Special Envoy pronounced the President's stereotyped

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phrases, describing the two countries' traditional cordiality and amity. His voice reverberated through the lofty green and gold ceilings of the audience hall. The era of "Dollar Diplomacy" was being ushered in. America henceforth would play a pivotal role in China's international financing.

The Emperor himself and several American Student Interpreters in the envoy's suite were the only persons of tender age in that august assembly. But even I, as one of the Student Interpreters, surpassed His Majesty by at least two decades. ...

The reading of President Taft's letter was followed by a previously prepared translation by Dr. Charles D. Tenney, the Legation interpreter; the Prince Regent's reply and its rendition in turn into English – these formalities occupied but a few moments.

Bowing intermittently, the Embassy staff, in order of rank, backed themselves slowly out from the Imperial Presence. We could view the gorgeous spectacle presented by this, one of the last Imperial audiences which successive European embassies had described. (Gale 1953: 1–2)

This description of an audience with two-year-old Aisin-Gioro Puyi, commonly known in the West as Henry Pu Yi, the last Emperor of China (1908–1912) and the twelfth and final ruler of the Qing dynasty, is an excerpt from opening passage of *Salt from the Dragon*, Esson M. Gale's personal memoir of his time in China (1908–1945). Held most likely in 1909, the event illustrates three historical factors that intersect with the establishment of the U.S. Department of State's Corps of Student Interpreters (1902–1924). First and foremost is evidence of the economic expansion and imperialism of a new superpower entering the world stage, with the mention of "Dollar Diplomacy" and the newfound role of the United States in international finance. Secondly, Gale himself is among the young student interpreters in the Corps, a program set up as Progressivism became influential in the U.S. Government in the early 20th century and anti-corruption, merit-based reforms were initiated in the U.S. Department of State's Consular and Diplomatic Services. Finally, as witnesses to this historic audience, Gale and the other student interpreters could not help but be highly impressed by the exceptional pageantry of the Imperial Court, which would seem to challenge the tendencies of U.S. cultural imperialism that were widespread among Americans at the time. While the first two factors are outlined below, an analysis of other observations of student interpreters later in this chapter will also reveal tendencies of the third.

As the United States began to emerge from the period of isolationism in the late nineteenth century, the economic and political forces at work dictated a need for professional language support in the United States Consular and Diplomatic Services. As European powers acknowledged the growing stature of the United States in the international community, the first U.S. legations were elevated to embassies and ministers to ambassadors in the 1890's, which were terms that had

traditionally been reserved for diplomatic representatives at royal courts. Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy upgraded their envoys sent to Washington in 1893, and this process was set in motion in the U.S. Diplomatic Service. To assert itself internationally, as announced in the Roosevelt Corollary of December 1904, and attain its future stature as a world power, the United States would need to exert its political and economic influence in Latin America and the Asia-Pacific, beyond the newly acquired overseas territories of Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Guam (1898) and Hawaii (1898).

Perhaps most importantly, a more pronounced international role meant that U.S. commercial and trade interests were to be pursued and defended vigorously. During the decade following the Spanish-American War (1898–1908), U.S. foreign trade grew by more than 75 percent from \$1.8 to 3.1 billion (Barnes and Morgan 1961:155). Secretary John Hay's Open Door Notes (1899–1900) to European counterparts advocated equal opportunity for European powers and the United States to pursue commercial activity and trade in China. In response to the anti-foreign Boxer Rebellion in 1900, the Open Door policy was expanded to include respect for the territorial and administrative integrity of China. The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine also laid the foundation for Dollar Diplomacy, a term coined by Roosevelt to describe the use of economic power to further foreign policy goals and national interests. While Dollar Diplomacy became a key aspect of the foreign policy of President Taft and Secretary Knox from 1909 to 1913 in East Asia, it applied especially to Latin America.

These political and economic developments led to an increased awareness of the need to professionalize the U.S. Consular and Diplomatic Services, which included consuls attaining higher levels of language proficiency allowing them to be promoted or transferred on average every two years (Werking 1977: 108). One step undertaken specifically for appointments in the Near and Far East countries was the creation of the U.S. Department of State's Corps of Student Interpreters, which was modeled after similar, long-standing programs of European and Asian countries. The Corps is sometimes mentioned as a precursor to the first university training programs in conference interpreting founded in Europe and the United States during and after World War II (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012:225). This chapter examines the program's institutional context within the Department of State, including factors impacting its origin, implementation, growth, and success. A discussion of typical career paths, associated duties, as well as the status and personal perspectives of the student interpreters clarifies the Corps' role in the history of interpreter education and illuminates its legacy as a framework for training future interpreters and consular officers, some of whom would become high-ranking diplomats.

1. Primary source materials

As a program administered through the U.S. Department of State at the direction of the White House, the Corps of Student Interpreters was established, regulated and funded through a series of government documents. The general provisions of the Consular Service, of which it was part, also governed the Corps. Key documents include Executive Orders pertaining to the Diplomatic and Consular Service and related Acts of Congress appropriating funds for the program. Its legislative basis was the Diplomatic and Consular Act of 22 March 1902, and President Theodore Roosevelt's Executive Order 469 of 27 June 1906 laid out general criteria for recruitment, selection, duties and career progression, the details of which were left to officials at the Department of State.

The U.S. Department of State also issued a series of rules and regulations governing the appointments and promotions in the Corps, beginning with a brief set of initial instructions for the student interpreters, which Secretary Jay transmitted to Minister Edwin H. Conger, head of the Legation in Peking, in 1902. By 1912, the Department had developed a series of documents containing *Information regarding appointments and promotions in the student-interpreter corps of the United States in China, Japan, and Turkey*. These sources contain information on the program's structure, examinations, performance expectations, and the remuneration of interpreters. They do not, however, include information on training practices, such as the background of instructors, training content or schedules. The most pertinent sources of such information are the impressionistic reports of program participants, which are contained in memoirs and other personal accounts.

As a form of subjective testimony, the memoirs of student interpreters provide unique personal perspectives of the language study experience, interpreting work, and expatriate life at the time. The focus of the discussion in this chapter is on China, as it was arguably the most successful part of the Corps, with a considerable number of students passing through the program and rising through the consular and diplomatic ranks. The memoirs of Esson Gale (1953) and Edwin F. Stanton (1956), who became noted China experts, have been selected for this analysis. Articles and announcements published in the popular press provide biographical information on some of the Corps' better-known participants, success rates at the admissions tests, and career prospects of program participants.

2. The need for language-proficient personnel

The rise of the United States on the world stage brought about rapid institutional growth in the Department of State. From 1898 to 1908, the decade following the Spanish-American War, the personnel more than doubled from 82 to 167 (Barnes and Morgan 1961: 155). From 1898 to the end of World War I, the number of diplomatic secretaries increased fivefold, from 24 to 122 (*ibid.*). At the time, the U.S. foreign policy apparatus was divided into the Diplomatic Service and the Consular Service, with the Consular Service being the larger of the two. The volume of business handled in the Consular Service also grew rapidly, while the number of consular agencies, which were distributed widely, were consolidated from 437 (1890) to 92 (1921), so that this work could be centralized (Barnes and Morgan 1961: 157).

By definition, the duties and responsibilities with which diplomatic and consular officers were entrusted abroad required a high degree of fluency in the local language. Since the early 19th century, the Consular Service had been dedicated primarily to the protection of American shipping and commerce and to the protection of the rights of American citizens, particularly in seaports. As U.S. commercial interests grew in the 19th century, the promotion of foreign trade was added, and this work became a major consular function after the Civil War (*ibid.*: 80). In contrast, the ministers in the Diplomatic Service carried out a wide range of representational and administrative activities, including keeping the accounts, preparing official correspondence and maintaining archives, granting passports, and forwarding information on policies of the government where the officer was accredited and on the character of the government's relations with foreign powers. Reports were forwarded to Washington on a wide range of topics, such as the government's finances, commerce, arts, and sciences, among others, that were deemed to be of interest to the United States. Diplomatic officers also had full authority to conduct any needed negotiations on behalf of the U.S. government (*ibid.*: 74–75). Most of these consular and diplomatic tasks required expert knowledge of the countries and languages in question and thus a high degree of preparation among officers who would be posted there.

Although staff translators had been working in Washington since the founding of the Department of State, and a "Translation Bureau" existed in Washington at the time, this office focused on translating incoming correspondence into English. Most interpreting requirements were at Post, and interpreter positions had existed for many years at the legations in Turkey, China, and Japan.¹ At the time, interpreters were language officers, serving in the Consular Service,

1. The legation in Turkey had 3 positions, the legation in China 5, and the legation in Japan 3. See Cline (n.d.: 26) and Barnes and Morgan (1961: 156).

who prepared written translations, handled oral communications, and sometimes handled the accounts (Cline n.d.: 23). In 1895, interpreter positions were established at the legations in Persia, Korea, and Siam (Barnes and Morgan 1961: 156). Interpreting would not be mentioned as an institutionalized service of the Washington office until the late 1920's, and interpreter positions were not created there until after World War II.

The Corps of Student Interpreters program would become a systemic undertaking in the larger effort to reorganize and professionalize the U.S. Diplomatic and Consular Services, ultimately with the aim of promoting the commercial and trade interests of the United States in the Near and Far East. One key aspect of these reforms was the desire to standardize and Americanize the service (Werking 1977: 113–114). As the United States pursued its political, commercial, and trade promotion interests, the awareness developed of a need to have interpreters who were U.S. citizens supporting these efforts. For example, in a letter advocating the adoption of a student-interpreter program,

Third Assistant Secretary Cridler informed Senator A. G. Foster about the advantages of replacing foreign interpreters with “our own citizens who would have a personal interest and pride no foreigner could be expected to feel in the performance of this important duty.” (quoted in Werking 1977: 115)

This was an issue of loyalty and trust, and U.S. citizens would require an extended period of dedicated language training if they were to serve successfully in these roles in China, Japan, or Turkey.

3. Precursors and models

The Corps of Student Interpreters followed a long tradition of providing language training to future interpreters working in diplomatic settings. The preparation of such interpreters dates back at least to the mid-16th century *giovani di lingua* trained at the Embassy of the Renaissance Venetian Republic in Constantinople (Cáceres-Würsig 2012). In this tradition, Jean-Baptiste Colbert founded the *École des jeunes de langues* in 1669 (Caminade and Pym 1998), and schools were established in Constantinople and Smyrna. In 1721, the *École spéciale des langues orientales vivantes* was established in Paris, where French-born boys studied to become interpreters for Turkish, Arabic, and Persian (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012). Further examples of language schools for diplomats who would provide interpreting and translation include the *Orientalische Akademie* in Vienna, founded by Empress Maria Theresa in 1754 (ibid.), and the *Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen* (Department of Oriental Languages) of the *Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität* in

Berlin, founded in 1887 (Wilss 1999). Roland (1999) has documented these efforts in Italy and France, as well as developments in Germany, India, China, and Japan. These programs followed apprenticeship models that would become student interpreter programs in the 19th century.

For the future student interpreter program of the U.S. Consular Service, the most influential model was that of Britain, which maintained a program, with mixed success, for student interpreters in the Levant Consular Service (Murray 2002) as well as in the British Consular Service in China and in Japan. The British program in China was explicitly referenced as a model in U.S. diplomatic correspondence leading to the establishment of the Corps. For language support in Japan, the British had relied on Japanese castaways as interpreters through the 1860's (Beasley 1991), when the Foreign Office in London decided to turn to interpreters with Dutch who were encouraged to acquire Japanese (*ibid.*: 98). Soon student interpreters also spent an initial period in China, acquiring a basic knowledge of Chinese, as the view at the time was that knowledge of Chinese ideograms in particular would facilitate the acquisition of Japanese (*ibid.*: 100–101). The most notable student interpreter to emerge from that program was no doubt Ernest Mason Satow (1843–1929), who studied Chinese in Peking after succeeding in the British student interpreter competition in 1861. He moved from China relatively quickly to Japan, where he was promoted to interpreter in 1865. He eventually represented Britain as Minister and Head of Mission in Tokyo from 1895 to 1900 and in Peking from 1900 to 1906 (Harris 2002; Delisle and Woodsworth 2012: 278), during the years when the first U.S. student interpreters were sent to China.

4. Program establishment

The need for a U.S. Corps of Student Interpreters was clearly documented in diplomatic correspondence between Secretary of State John Hay and Minister Edwin H. Conger, the head of the Legation in Peking and top-ranking American diplomat in China at the time. Conger had previously served as minister to Brazil (1890–1893) and arrived in China in the summer of 1898, when he witnessed the spread of anti-foreign sentiment leading up to the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. Figure 1 shows Minister Conger and his staff in Peking in 1901, shortly after the rebellion. The exchange of letters has been published in the *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) of December 2, 1902. Momentum to establish language training for the Consular Service had been gaining for some time. In 1900, Secretary of State John Hay submitted an initial request for the establishment of student interpreter positions. It was not approved by Congress, which objected that there “was no assurance that the students would remain in

the Government service after learning the Chinese language” (Conger to Hay, FRUS March 29, 1902:228). Salaries in the Consular Service were generally low, and officers were required to pay their own transportation to and from their posts. Government allowances to operate their offices were insufficient, and some consuls had to contribute from their own funds to hire clerks and pay office rent and supplies (Werking 1977:5).



Figure 1. U.S. Minister Edwin Hurd Conger and staff, heroes of the awful siege – in the American Legation, Peking, 1901. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

In a letter to Secretary Hay, dated March 29, 1902, Conger protests the fact that Congress had not passed legislation providing for student-interpreters, stating that a “Chinese secretary or interpreter at this legation is an absolute necessity, and without whom the business of the legation must stop” (FRUS 1902:227). The Legation had only one interpreter on whom it could rely, while “[e]veryone of the other great powers here has two or more interpreters of long experience, and from

three to twenty students being prepared at government expense for future work. We are thus placed at a very great disadvantage before the Chinese and among the other legations" (*ibid.*:228). Conger then requests that an office of assistant interpreter be created, which could also "induce some bright young man to enter the service as a career" (*ibid.*).

Secretary of State Hay's response of March 29, 1902, indicates that the Diplomatic and Consular Appropriations Act for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1903, contains a provision for ten student interpreter positions to be created at the legation in China (*ibid.*: 228–29). Any objections in Congress had been overcome through the stipulation that student interpreters sign an agreement to remain in the service as long as they were needed, up to a period of 10 years (Hay to Conger, *ibid.*: 230–31; Werking 1977: 115). The details of the program, however, remained vague.

On May 10, 1902, Minister Conger expresses to Secretary Hay concern that the "law is not very specific as to the requirements, duties, etc., but regulations by the Department can supply what is lacking" and forwards the British regulations governing "Student Interpreters for China, Japan, and Siam" for reference. Conger points out that the British government pays for the appointees passage to China, provides housing, and pays the cost of instruction, and the "United States ought to do no less" (FRUS *ibid.*:229). On July 18, 1902, Secretary Hay sends printed copies of a set of rules governing the appointment and organization of the new corps of student interpreters (*ibid.*: 230–231).

The legislative basis for the Corps of Student Interpreters had thus been established through the Diplomatic and Consular Act of 22 March 1902, and a set of "Instructions to student interpreters in China" transmitted by Acting Secretary of State Alvey A. Adee to Minister Conger on August 27, 1902 (*ibid.*:231–32) created a general framework in which the program could operate during the initial years.

Rules based upon the principles of nonpartisanship and merit-based appointments and promotions were introduced to the program, primarily through a system of examinations for the purpose of making consular appointments. The examinations fell under President Cleveland's Executive Order of 1895, which required appointees to consular positions with salaries between \$1,000 and \$2,500 to be either a qualified officer of the Department, or to pass a written examination on consular regulations and an oral examination that included demonstrating proficiency in a foreign language. These provisions were applied unevenly by Cleveland's successor, President McKinley (Barnes and Morgan 1961: 150–152). The examinations had the objective of regulating the selection of candidates for at least some consular positions, as part of the larger effort to professionalize the Consular and Diplomatic Services. The examinations were before a board appointed by the Secretary of State, and the board was required to report to the

Secretary in writing the results of the examination and ensuing recommendation for or against an appointment (*ibid.*: 231). However, detailed provisions for examinations required for appointments as student interpreters were not laid out immediately. Executive Orders issued by President Theodore Roosevelt on November 10, 1905, and June 27, 1906, instituted examinations for the lower grades of the Consular Service and for secretaries in the Diplomatic Service as well as merit promotion. These examinations were the forerunners of the Foreign Service Exam, according to the website of the U.S. State Department's Office of the Historian.

5. Program implementation

The implementation of the program began relatively quickly, although the program would not run at capacity in China during the initial years. On August 27, 1902, Acting Secretary of State Alvey A. Adee informed Conger that four student-interpreters had been selected and included a copy of the instructions that had been sent to these student interpreters destined for Peking. The first appointees were Julean H. Arnold of Sacramento, California; Thomas W. Haskins of Los Angeles, California; Frederick D. Cloud of Des Moines, Iowa; and Harry M. Robins of Grand Rapids, Michigan (FRUS 1902: 231–232).

After being in place for several years, the program was deemed successful, and it was gradually expanded to Japan and Turkey. In 1906, six student-interpreter positions were created for the Embassy at Tokyo, with a maximum tenure of five years (Barnes and Morgan 1961: 156–157). The original request to Congress included student interpreters in Korea, as documented in a letter of December 13, 1904, from the Acting Secretary of the Treasury R. B. Armstrong to the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The letter included the Secretary of State's request and an estimate of the required funds and is reproduced in Appendix 1. However, the positions in Korea were not approved. In 1909, the program was expanded to Turkey, where ten student interpreter positions were created.

The rules issued by Secretary Hay in 1902 had provided a brief set of instructions for recently appointed student interpreters, and these basic provisions remained essentially unchanged when further developed in subsequent years, to be reissued by Secretary Philander Knox on December 22, 1909, as *Regulations Governing Interpreters and Student Interpreters in China, Japan, and Turkey*. By 1912, the program documentation had become more detailed and complete, and it was republished in a compendium. These documents show that the Corps of Student Interpreters had a mature program framework detailing specific criteria for selection and advancement through the consular ranks. The 1912 compendium was published by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Appointments

under the title *Information Regarding Appointments and Promotions in the Student-Interpreter Corps of the United States in China, Japan, and Turkey*.²

The document collection was updated and further developed intermittently, and a final set was republished in the Department of State's *Register* on May 1, 1922. This version includes complete and separate sample tests for the diplomatic service and the consular service (student interpreters), as well as the topics to be included in examinations for promotion to junior interpreter and to senior interpreter (*ibid.*: 201–224).

6. Challenges with recruitment

Although ten positions had been created for the Legation in Peking in 1902, only four were filled, which was an indication of initial recruitment challenges. The program had difficulty running at capacity throughout its duration, as it was extremely challenging to find the right applicants, despite advertisements in the national press. For example, on December 21, 1908, *The San Francisco Call* reported that of “the 71 candidates designated for the examination last July, 45 presented themselves and only 19 passed. In the November examination out of 37 candidates only 23 were successful.” These difficulties pertained to appointments both as consular assistant and student interpreter, as the examination board announced to the public:

It is to be hoped that hereafter there will be a greater number of qualified applicants to enter the very important corps of student interpreters and consular assistants from which promotion to the higher grades of the service logically follow.

(The San Francisco Call 1908:3)

By the end of the Taft Administration (1909–1913), almost 500 applicants had participated in the consular service examinations under the new system, and 211 passed. Although this pass rate was not considered high, the number of eligibles exceeded the number of positions available, allowing for a narrower selection of more highly qualified individuals (Werking 1977: 164). Between 1907 and 1913, 89 applicants were approved as consuls; this number is well below the number

2. The compendium contains the following documents: *Regulations Regarding Appointments and Promotions in the Consular Service* issued by Theodore Roosevelt in 1906; *Regulations Governing Examinations Promulgated by the Board of Examiners* on December 13, 1906; *Regulations Governing Interpreters and Student Interpreters in China, Japan, and Turkey* issued by Secretary Philander C. Knox on December 22, 1909; *Information for Applicants*, with a *Classification of Consuls-General and Consuls*, including salary levels, and a *Sample Examination for Student Interpreters*.

of student interpreter positions available during that time frame (*ibid.*: 164). The fact that the Corps of Student Interpreters program never ran at full capacity was due in part to the fact that the criteria for appointment and application procedure were the same as for consular assistants, with the exception of more restrictive provisions regarding age. This effectively meant that successful candidates would be reluctant to undertake language study, if they received an appointment as consular assistant. An appointment as student interpreter would appeal most to those applicants wishing to specialize and spend most of their careers in China, Japan, or Turkey (see Davis n.d.).

Furthermore, the point in time of the appointment remained uncertain for applicants even after they had met the criteria for selection. According to paragraph 6 of the *Regulations* of 1906, successful candidates were placed on a list and remained there until they were appointed or requested that their name be withdrawn. After a period of two years, candidates had to reapply. Although it was possible to request a specific country, the appointments were made based upon the needs of the Consular Service. The examinations were not held regularly, but only when the list needed to be replenished, and they were administered only in Washington (U.S. Department of State 1912:9).

Despite the lack of good candidates for student interpreter positions, the surplus of eligibles was generally regarded as a success of the reforms. This general recruitment success was attributed in large part to Wilbur J. Carr, the head of the Consular Service and “father of the foreign service,” who conducted considerable outreach efforts to find successful candidates, who were also initially trained in the Department under his strict supervision (Werking 1977: 164). Carr also placed emphasis on the student interpreter positions, for example, in an appeal he launched in a special article for *The Harvard Crimson* on March 21, 1921. Carr wished “in particular to place stress upon the system now in force of training language students at Government expense for service in the Diplomatic and Consular branches of the Foreign Service in China and Japan,” which was aimed at having “available for its own service men trained in the knowledge of the languages, institutions and conditions of” these countries. With the potential to progress to Japanese or Chinese Secretary either in the Embassy at Tokyo or the Legation at Peking, the Department of State offered “the prospect of a definitely assured consular career” and “the opportunity to advance to the highest consular position maintained by the Government,” while being “a real influence in the tremendous new problems of contact between the civilizations of the East and West” (Carr 1921).

7. Criteria for selection

The guidelines laid out in Roosevelt's Executive Order 469 provided very general parameters for the consular examinations. The guidelines indicated only that tests were to be conducted in "one modern language other than English" and on the "natural, industrial and commercial resources and the commerce of the United States, especially with reference to the possibilities of increasing and extending the trade of the United States with foreign countries." The examination was also to include political economy and "elements of international, commercial and maritime law." The Executive Order instructed that the details of the examination were to be determined by the Board of Examiners. These general examination guidelines and other provisions were thus further developed in the *Regulations Governing Examinations Promulgated by the Board of Examiners* of December 13, 1906, and the *Information for Applicants and Sample Examination for Student Interpreters*. It was determined that student interpreters would take the same examination as applicants aspiring to positions as consular assistants and, in addition, future student interpreters were to be unmarried and to remain so until having completed four years of service, be between 18 and 26 years of age, and sign an agreement to remain in service as long as required, within a period of five years (ibid.: 4). The examination itself, which was administered over a period of two days for six hours each, was described in greater detail. Paragraph 2 of the *Regulations* of 1906 provides an extensive list of the subjects to be covered and a sense of the evaluation criteria:

The examinations will consist of an oral and a written one, the two counting equally. The object of the oral examination will be to determine the candidate's business ability, alertness, general contemporary information, and natural fitness for the service, including moral, mental, and physical qualifications, character, address, and general education and good command of English. ... The written examination will include those subjects mentioned in the Executive Order, to wit, French, German, or Spanish, or at least one modern language other than English; the natural, industrial, and commercial resources and the commerce of the United States, especially with reference to possibilities of increasing and extending the foreign trade of the United States; political economy, and the elements of international, commercial, and maritime law. It will likewise include American history, government, and institutions; political and commercial geography; arithmetic (as used in commercial statistics, tariff calculations, exchange, accounts, etc.); the modern history, since 1850, of Europe, Latin America, and the Far East, with particular attention to political, commercial, and economic tendencies. In the written examination, composition, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and writing will be given attention. (U.S. Department of State 1912: 4)

Furthermore, the *Information for Applicants* state further requirements, including U.S. citizenship and, at the time of the “mental exam,” a “rigid physical examination by a physician designated for that purpose.” There was no possibility of substituting special training or transferring from other branches of Government service without examination (ibid.:8–9). A *Sample Examination for Student Interpreters* gives a general idea of the type of material covered and the level of difficulty of the examination. It was included in the *Information Regarding Appointments and Promotions in the Student-Interpreter Corps of the United States in China, Japan, and Turkey* (U.S. Department of State 1912:12–16) and is reproduced in Appendix 2.

8. Career progression and status

The career progression followed the British model and is laid out in Table 1. The program began with a period of two years devoted to full-time language study at Post. Quarterly progress reports were submitted on each student, and there was a possibility of reassignment or dismissal at an annual review. After the initial 2 years, an oral and written examination was administered that led to a promotion to (Junior) Interpreter (at the rank of Vice Consul of Career). In the case of unsuccessful performance, a 6-month extension of the study period could be granted.

Based upon materials in the National Archives of the United States, Cline (n.d.) reports that the first annual review seems to have been basic. Sample questions from an examination administered in 1912 requires an introductory knowledge of Chinese and (sight) translation skills from Chinese into English, as well as rudimentary knowledge of Chinese history and geography. The students were expected to

- Provide oral and written translations from portions of the *Kuan Hua Chih Nan*.³
- Write 100 selected characters.
- Answer 10 general questions such as (1) name the 22 provinces of China and their capitals and naming and locating the 6 important rivers of China.
- State three important events that occurred during the rule of the T’ang dynasty.

The first full examination administered after 2 years of study, according to Cline, required writing a simple dispatch or letter in Chinese and writing 3,000 characters from an instructor’s list (n.d.:26). This progression of skill attainment shows

3. *Guide to Mandarin*, a language-learning textbook with phrases progressing from simple to complex.

Table 1. Career progression of student interpreters, according to *Regulations* of July 7, 1919, republished in the U.S. Department of State's *Register* of 1922

Title and rank	Duration	Tasks	Salary	Review
Student interpreter or Consular Assistant	2 years, with possibility of 6-month extension	Study of language and subjects of next examination, including local business methods and trade practices, typing; consular law regulations and administration after 1st year	\$1,000 (increased to \$1,500 in 1906 and provided with tuition, quarters, travel to/from post)	Quarterly and annual reviews, first oral and written examination after 2 years
(Junior) Interpreter, or Assistant Japanese or Chinese Secretary, or Assistant Assessor on the Mixed Court at Shanghai, or Assistant to the Interpreter (Turkey)	2 years, with possibility of 1-year extension	Study of language and country, and other duties in the office	\$2,500, travel to/from post, but no tuition or quarters	Second and final oral and written examination after 2 years
(Senior) Interpreter, or Japanese or Chinese Secretary, or Assessor on the Mixed Court at Shanghai	Indefinite	Written translation, oral communications, and administrative tasks	\$3,000, travel to/from post, but no tuition or quarters	Eligible for merit-based promotion to Consul of Class VI

that student interpreters were not expected to demonstrate a level of language proficiency that would be required for study in the leading postgraduate conference interpreting programs of today.

After having successfully completed the first examination, the interpreter was to continue his language study at Post but could also be called upon by his superior for “minor office work.” The number of such positions was limited to five in China, three in Japan, and two in Turkey, so it must be assumed that many student interpreters either did not pass the examination or continued their careers as Vice Consuls with primarily administrative duties. Titles and ranks of such positions included Assistant Japanese or Chinese Secretary, Assistant Assessor on the Mixed Court at Shanghai, and Assistant to the Interpreter at the Embassy in Turkey.

After this second period of 2 years, with the possibility of a 1-year extension, a second examination was administered leading to an appointment as (Senior) Interpreter (or Vice Consul with duties as Assistant Language Secretary) for an indefinite duration. There were three such positions in China, two in Japan, and

two in Turkey. The rank of these appointments was Japanese or Chinese Secretary at the diplomatic mission, with eligibility for promotion to Assessor on the Mixed Court at Shanghai (Consul of Class IV). It seems that after successful completion of training as a student interpreter within the Corps, graduates may have attained a degree of fluency in Chinese that would allow them to start conference interpreter training in some of the reputable programs now in existence.

Further promotions, based upon “efficiency,” or merit, were possible to Consul and higher ranks in the Consular and Diplomatic Services. It was indeed feasible to rise from the Corps of Student Interpreters to the highest ranks of the (future) Foreign Service, as Wilbur J. Carr had stated in *The Harvard Crimson*. Two student interpreters eventually became U.S. ambassadors to China: Nelson T. Johnson (1935–1941) and Clarence T. Gauss (1941–1944) (Fairbank and Twitchett 1983: 164). According to an article published in *The San Francisco Call* on June 20, 1906, the very first student interpreter appointed in 1902, Julean Arnold, a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley, became an Under Secretary for Minister Conger in Peking and served as Vice Consul in Shanghai (see Figure 2).

The article announced his promotion to Consul at Formosa, stating that:

A youth at the university who in other years was so fascinated with the study of Chinese that he painted big Chinese characters on the ceiling of his bedroom and then studied them as he reclined in bed, is now reaping part of the reward of his intense application to the study of the old Oriental tongue.

Arnold eventually became a Commercial Attaché in Peking. An accomplished author and frequent speaker on trade and commerce with China, he published *China: A Commercial and Industrial Handbook*, which was printed by the U.S. Department of Commerce in 1926.

9. Impressions of student-interpreters

The memoirs of two diplomats who participated in the Corps of Student Interpreters program in Beijing provide insight into the perceived status of the interpreters, the structure and content of training, and experience with actual interpreting tasks. Esson M. Gale, who arrived in China in 1908, published a colorful memoir entitled *Salt for the Dragon: A Personal History of China 1908–1945* in 1953. Edwin F. Stanton was selected for a position as student-interpreter in 1921, and his memoir, *Brief Authority: Excursions of a Common Man in an Uncommon World*, appeared in 1956.

In addition to the importance of the program shown by the attention given to it by Congress and the recruiting efforts detailed above, the status of the program



Figure 2. Photo of Julian Arnold appearing on the front page of *The San Francisco Call*, vol. 100, no. 20, 20 June 1906

participants was clearly enhanced by the fact that, for at least a period of the program's duration, the President of the United States signed the appointments. This was a point of pride for program participants, including Gale, who writes that he received the highest score (86%) of the sixty odd applicants who took the test that year. Only two were sent to Beijing as student interpreters. The others who passed received appointments as Vice Consuls and Consuls of career at other foreign posts. Gale was also duly impressed by the high-level attention given to the Corps and by his career prospects, and states that his "appointment was signed by

President Theodore Roosevelt, who it had appeared had come to repose “special trust and confidence” in the person of my name” (1953: 5).

This formulation was standard phrasing in the letters of commission for such appointments. Stanton describes in his memoir a brief interview that he was granted with Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes, who impressed upon him the importance of his responsibilities. Stanton (1956: 2) writes:

[Secretary Hughes] shook hands with me and wished me well. He was impressive and solemn as he sat working at his papers, his face marked by stern dignity. He scrutinized me intently and then called my attention to a phrase in my commission. I have never forgotten it: “Reposing special trust and confidence in your integrity, prudence and ability.” To a young man of twenty, those words were both sober and exhilarating.

Despite the harsh living conditions in Peking at the time, the student interpreters also enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle, according to Gale’s descriptions (1953: 27–33) of the rent-free living quarters and low-cost meal arrangements, which included wine and music. The student interpreters also socialized with high-level visitors from the United States, for example an unnamed “steel magnate from Pittsburgh, a former associate of Andrew Carnegie,” who dubbed the group the “Wards of Uncle Sam” (*ibid.*: 27).

Such high-level attention and the (relatively) comfortable lifestyle no doubt gave the student interpreters a sense of importance in their undertaking. Success, however, was by no means assured, and the challenge of learning Chinese became apparent immediately. Indeed, participants were selected for the program based upon their general knowledge and knowledge of a European language, rather than knowledge of Chinese, Japanese, or Turkish. Although some participants, for example Arnold, as described above, had studied Chinese previously, it must be assumed that many if not most participants had little prior knowledge of the languages upon entering the program. As a result, most of the time in the program was spent on language learning tasks. In a witty account, Gale (*ibid.*: 33) summarizes the process in his description of “An Outlandish Language”:

Life in the Student Interpreters Mess at Peking in 1908 could not be regarded as all beer and skittles. We were charged with one of the most appalling mental labors that can confront the mind of an Occidental: the task of learning to recognize and read thousands of ideographic Chinese characters and of acquiring a speaking knowledge of the monosyllabic, tone-inflected, oral language. Chinese children are set to memorizing the written character at as early an age as four or five. We student interpreters were all in our twenties when the mind has lost the greater plasticity of childhood. Our temerity in attempting this mnemonic feat was doubtless prompted by the valor of ignorance.

While noted sinologists in residence in Beijing supervised instruction and administered the board examinations (Gale *ibid.*: 10; Stanton *ibid.*: 7, 25), native Chinese tutors provided the bulk of the day-to-day instruction. In describing the beginning of his language study with his private tutor, Stanton writes that they “set to work, Tutor Chin trying to instill into me the four tones basic to the use of the spoken language, which he repeated endlessly and with infinite patience” (Stanton *ibid.*: 10). Stanton (*ibid.*) also indicates that the success rate of the student interpreters was below fifty percent, which also was a cause of anxiety:

The first few months must have been incredibly dull for him [Tutor Chin]; certainly they were frustrating for me. And my colleagues deepened my despair by telling of the horrendous mistakes made by using the wrong tone and of the staggering stiffness of the quarterly and yearly examinations, which flunked out most students.

In contrast, Gale (*ibid.*: 33), who describes similar drills and exercises to practice “with camel-hair brushes, first grotesquely and then with increasing calligraphic neatness, the numberless ideographs that make up the written language,” reports “phenomenally rapid progress, especially in the spoken language,” including bargaining with shopkeepers, as long as the conversations remained limited to basic vocabulary and numbers. Gale (*ibid.*) even boasts of his rapidly acquired language skills:

Fellow voyagers across the Pacific, who turned up in Peking a month or so after our arrival, were amazed at our linguistic prowess as we chatted with shopkeepers, and with gate-men as we took our friends on the round of the city's sights. A few words will go a very long way with the attentive and quickly responsive Peking shop-keeper or palace guide.

While Stanton (*ibid.*: 10) indicates that after “six months, the tones were no longer impossible and the written characters became fascinating. Tutor Chin also brightened up”, Gale (*ibid.*: 33–34) notes that after that initial period a saturation point was reached, which made further progress with the language extremely difficult:

Soon the freshness and novelty wore off; the mind became saturated and refused to absorb more. Discouragement set in. More and more frequently the *hsien-sheng* [tutor] upon his morning arrival for the day's lesson, was addressed with the stereotyped formula, *Ch'ing hsien-sheng ming-t'ien-lai* – “Teacher is respectfully invited to come tomorrow.”

Similarly, Stanton relates in a humorous anecdote that after a period of initial success with using Chinese in the city, it quickly became apparent that the language immersion experience was far from complete, as the dialect spoken in the countryside was very different:

Those first six months were crowded with work, interest, and new impressions. At the end of that time, I timidly tried out my Chinese on a farmer outside the city. En route to the lovely purple Western Hills, studded with interesting old temples, I stopped by the roadside to chat with a Chinese farmer who was resting from his labors, leaning on his long-handled hoe. In my best Chinese, paying particular attention to my tones, I asked about his crops. He listened politely, looked puzzled, and finally replied in Chinese that he did not speak English.

(Stanton *ibid.*: 12)

Continued forays and excursions beyond Peking helped Stanton make considerable progress toward passing his exams. Similarly, after some initial success in learning the language, Gale also indicates how difficult the language was to acquire for him and other student interpreters, some of whom were not up to the task. He reports that students who did not progress were transferred to other positions where Chinese was not required:

Ours was the monstrous intellectual task, a veritable labor of Hercules, to be accomplished if the “due trust and confidence” reposed in the Student Interpreters by the President of the United States was to be vindicated. Paradoxically enough, the linguistic talent in Western Languages possessed by certain of the students seemed of little avail in the mastery of Chinese. One facile bi-lingual youngster of French-American origin failed to make any progress whatever with the language. He was ultimately transferred from the China Consular area via an appointment to Saigon in Indo-China. This post was usually the way out for those possessing no capacity for Chinese.

(Gale *ibid.*: 37)

In terms of program content, however, language learning was not the sole task of the student interpreters sent to Beijing, although it was their primary one. Students were expected to receive some initial training from the outset in consular and diplomatic affairs, which is the subject of one of Gale’s descriptions as well:

We youngsters of the Student Interpreters corps spent one day a week at the Legation office, “the chancellery.” This was to familiarize us with the applied art of diplomacy in general, and in particular with [sic] the usually drab business of the consular offices throughout China. Questions of protection of missionaries living in the interior, disputes relating to land holdings by American citizens, native officials’ attempts at illegal and extra-treaty taxation, all appeared in the Legation’s correspondence. We were enabled too at times to have a look into the intrigues in connection with international finance.

(*ibid.*: 121)

The results of two years of language study were predictably inadequate. Both Gale and Stanton provide prosaic descriptions assessing their language proficiency. Gale writes that after two years of intensive study and a half year of service in the Chinese Secretariat of the Legation, he was successful at the exams but realized the limited nature of his abilities:

My special board of examiners, a formidable trio of “sinologues,” Drs. Tenney, Gattrel, and Princeton’s Robert Gayley of the Peking Y.M.C.A., expressed their satisfaction at what they were pleased to regard as my phenomenal accomplishments with the recalcitrant language. Inwardly I realized how little I really knew of it, despite the four thousand characters, on which I had prepared myself for the final written examination, which successfully passed had entitled me to my promotion. (ibid.: 59)

Actual interpreting tasks are not described as part of the instruction in these memoirs, although the use of the *Kuan Hua Chih Nan* (Guide to Mandarin) is an indication that grammar translation was practiced in the classroom. It seems likely that the first authentic interpreting tasks were encountered in the field, during excursions, and Stanton writes of the importance of the continued language immersion experience in the countryside surrounding Peking. Stanton attributes this applied use of the language to his ultimate success in acquiring a basic knowledge of the language. The examinations are described as a grueling experience:

The finals were very stiff, particularly the oral part, which involved interpreting for Mr. Peck, reading and translating at sight difficult Chinese official papers and despatches [sic]. Our revered Mr. Peck bore down hard at this time but my trips into the country, added to the patient efforts of my tutor, stood me in good stead. (Stanton ibid.: 19)

Shortly after the exams, Stanton received word that he would receive an appointment as a language officer in the Consular Service. The position was under Consul General Gauss at Mukden, “the very center of Marshal Chang Tso-lin’s Manchurian empire” (ibid.: 20–21). At this point in time he was entrusted with his first actual interpreting task in the field, albeit a simulated sight translation exercise. The American Minister, Dr. Jacob Gould Schuman, informed Stanton of his appointment, after indicating that Stanton had performed creditably in his examinations. Schuman also appears to have wanted to test the limits of Stanton’s skills in Chinese – and perhaps his composure as well – by subjecting him to the task of translating the Chinese inscriptions on tombstones. Stanton (ibid.: 20) describes the trepidation he experienced during these episodes:

On several occasions he [Schuman] had visited such historic spots as the mausoleums of the Ming and Ching emperors, where he had called upon me to translate the long inscriptions on the stone monuments set among beautiful old pine trees. Trembling in my shoes, because I recognized only one character in ten of the archaic Chinese hieroglyphics, I rattled off translations that, as Mr. Schuman was perfectly aware, I invented for the most part. His only comment at the time was, “Extraordinary, extraordinary.”

Linguistic difficulties persisted during actual linguistic work, as Gale relates in describing his assignment as “United States Deputy Consul General and Interpreter”

at the International Settlement in Shanghai. He received this appointment in 1911, a mere three years after arriving in China (Gale *ibid.*:73–74) and was soon serving on the bench as “Acting Junior American Assessor” (*ibid.*:82) at the Mixed Court. In an article reporting on “The International Mixed Court of Shanghai,” Meighen (1926:529–30) describes the practice of working with interpreters in court sessions:

Suppose the Chinese magistrate and an American assessor are the sitting judges; suppose further that the lawyers are English and the clients Chinese. The lawyer puts his question in English. The interpreter by his side changes it into the Shanghai dialect of Chinese and when the witness answers in one tongue, interprets his words into the other. The advocate will address the two judges upon the bench in English for a few sentences, then the interpreter will translate, followed by more words in English. Fancy a heated state’s attorney having to linger upon the hyphen while a yellowish interpreter turned his graphic South Dakota into Shanghai Chinese. At one end of the reporters’ table a native in skirts and a skull-cap brushes mysterious characters upon thin sheets of paper while at the other end is an English reporter using pen and ink.

These procedures appear representative of interpreting processes in the courtroom. However, Gale (*ibid.*: 83) notes that “[d]ifficulties incident to language often arose”. In one instance, Gale was apparently serving as the Assessor without another interpreter working in the court, and he describes the confusion surrounding the length and type of penalty handed down to a driver who was a repeat offender and charged yet again with violating traffic regulations.

“*Chia* three days” directed the Magistrate. *Chia* I took in one of its senses, “to add to,” thus inflecting an additional three days imprisonment. This would, I felt, keep the man too long, i.e., six days, from his means of livelihood and his horses. After some heated argument, Magistrate The and I discovered how far apart our proposals were. “*Chia*” means “to add to,” but means also the *cangue*, the wooden collar fastened around the neck of a petty criminal and upon which his crime was written in bold characters. He was then exposed for the prescribed period of his sentence at the scene of his offence. It was a humiliating punishment, and “repeaters” were subjected to it customarily. When we had straightened out our linguistic misunderstanding (which was made the more readily as both words are pronounced with the same *tone*), I reluctantly agreed to follow precedent and have the man exposed for three days. (*ibid.*:83–84)

These personal impressions conveyed by Gale and Stanton indicate that the language acquisition process was arduous and far from complete even after several years of study in country. The primary activity of student interpreters was language learning, as to be expected, and any translation and interpreting tasks were used, initially at least, primarily to support the language learning process.

10. Program dissolution

The program remained in place through World War I and came to an abrupt end as the continued need to professionalize the Diplomatic and Consular Corps led to comprehensive reforms. They were implemented through the Foreign Service Act of 1924, commonly referred to as the Rogers Act, after Representative John Jacob Rogers (1881–1925) of Massachusetts. The goal of the Rogers Act was to fully implement a system of competitive examinations and merit promotion in order to attract the most qualified applicants. The Consular and Diplomatic Services were merged into the new Foreign Service, and a retirement system established. In *A Short History of the Department of State*, the Office of the Historian quotes Rogers, who stated his objective in 1923:

Let us strive for a foreign service which will be flexible and democratic; which will attract and retain the best men we have; which will offer reasonable pay, reasonable prospects for promotion, [and] reasonable provision against want when old age comes to a faithful servant.

The Rogers Act eliminated the Corps of Student Interpreters by discontinuing the annual appropriations for the salaries of student-interpreters and interpreters, and the officers in this branch of the Consular Service were moved to the unclassified group of Foreign Service Officers (Barnes and Morgan 1961:211). The *Regulations Governing Interpreters and Student Interpreters in China, Japan and Turkey* were thus rendered obsolete (ibid.:212). Furthermore, after recognition of the need for centralized preparatory training for new diplomats and experience with short-duration programs (Werking 1977:107), a new Foreign Service School was created in 1925, which provided specialized training in languages and other areas and would eventually become the Foreign Service Institute.

Although the Corps of Student Interpreters was eliminated, Secretary Frank Billings Kellogg did continue the policy of having language training in the Far East by issuing a set of *Regulations Governing Foreign Service Officers Assigned to Language Study in China and Japan* on May 26, 1926 (Barnes and Morgan 1961:212), thus completing the transition and unambiguously situating the successor program of the Corps of Student-Interpreters in a framework of language training for diplomats. In 1928, a young George Kennan would undertake three years of Russian language training in Estonia and eventually serve as *Chargé d'Affaires* in Moscow, where he sent the famous “long telegram” that provided the framework for the policy of containment vis-à-vis the Soviet Union (Roland 1999:160).

11. Mixed success

The Corps of Student Interpreters program had difficulty operating at full capacity, as evidenced by recruiting challenges and the fact that student interpreter positions remained unfilled. The level of success also varied by country, with the most problematic case, as documented by Davis (n.d.: 16), being perhaps the program in Turkey, where student interpreters were expected to assume a considerable administrative workload from the start of their studies and were never afforded the opportunity to devote themselves fulltime to language study. However, the correspondence between Minister Conger and Secretary of State Hay, the initial rules and instructions, and the information regarding consular appointments issued by President Roosevelt and the subsequent regulations governing the program issued by Secretary Knox illustrate the importance given to the student interpreter program by the highest levels of the U.S. Government. The program was promoted by top officials in the Department of State and seen as key to the development of Americans who could become much-needed specialists in their languages and countries of study. From 1902 to 1926, a total of 53 student interpreters served in China and 27 in Japan. There were a smaller number in Turkey. In 1926, there were still 27 officers who had studied Chinese and 14 who had studied Japanese in the service (Barnes and Morgan 1961:212).

12. Evolution of the Translation Bureau in Washington

There is little evidence of interaction between the Translation Bureau in Washington and the Corps of Student Interpreters. They seem to have been on two separate tracks, with the Corps having at times a higher priority. Harry Obst, a former Director of the Office of Language Services (LS), the Translation Bureau's modern-day successor institution, compiled with Ruth Cline, an LS staff member, a Summary History of Language Services in the Department of State dating from August 2, 1984. They indicate that the duties of the Translation Bureau were laid out in 1905 as follows:

This Bureau translates official communications to the Department in foreign languages, and letters and documents in foreign languages received at the White House. The Bureau also does translations for several Executive Departments, the District of Columbia, and Congress, upon official requests.

(Obst and Cline 1984:unpaged)

It was perhaps ironic that Secretary Philander C. Knox, who had issued the updated *Regulations Governing Interpreters and Student Interpreters in China, Japan, and Turkey* on December 22, 1909, demoted the Translation Bureau to an

“Office of the Translator” that same year to make way for a new “Bureau of Trade Relations.” Obst and Cline (*ibid.*) indicate that the new “Office” was placed “under the Chief Clerk and appears on a 1910 organization chart at the very bottom, next to ‘Stables’, ‘Carpenter’, ‘Mail Room.’” When the Corps of Student Interpreters was growing in size, the ‘Office of the Translator’ suffered another blow when a further demotion abolished the office status in 1921. A “Translators Section” then appeared in the organizational hierarchy under the Chief Clerk.

It was not until 1928, four years after the passage of the Foreign Service Act of 1924 (Rogers Act), that the “Translation Bureau” was reestablished. Additional duties were added that heralded the transition to the entity that would become the Office of Language Services in its current form: language services at international conferences and treaty comparison. In the early 1950s, the name of the Bureau would be changed to “Language Services Division,” and separate Interpreting and Translating Branches established when the volume of interpreting approached that of translation.

13. Legacy – Preparing interpreters to become diplomats

In creating the Corps of Student Interpreters, its founders were following the British model and thus situating the program in the long, primarily European tradition of educating interpreters and future diplomats through a structured language immersion experience. When compared to other initiatives, the Corps of Student Interpreters was founded very late, at a time when the British model had already been in existence for decades.

At its inception, the Corps of Student Interpreters program was seen as a path to language-support positions, either as Interpreters or Vice Consuls with language-related duties. While the original rules of 1902, issued by Secretary Hay, stated that the program was established with a view to “supplying interpreters to the legation and consulates in China,” who would be detailed as “interpreters or assistants,” the final set of *Regulations* of 1919 describes the objectives of the mature program, which clearly emphasize the career path with promotion potential to the higher ranks of the Consular Service:

The office of student interpreters was created for the purpose of facilitating the training of personnel for the consular service in China, Japan, and Turkey, where an essential part of the equipment of officers is a knowledge of the Chinese, Japanese, or Turkish language. Consistently with that purpose, student interpreters are required to study . . . the languages and subjects . . . with a view to supplying interpreters and vice consuls to the embassies, legations, and consulates in China, Japan, and Turkey, and eventually diplomatic and consular officers able to speak, read, and write the language of those countries. (*Regulations* of 1919: 221)

Given the stated purpose and career paths of the mature program and the separate development of the (then) Translation Bureau (and later Division of Language Services), the Corps of Student Interpreters should probably not be seen as a direct precursor to the diplomatic interpreting services provided by today's Office of Language Services.

Furthermore, it is highly debatable whether the Corps of Student Interpreter program can be considered "interpreter training" in the modern sense. The primary purpose of the program was the acquisition of a foreign language and the knowledge and skills required for consular duties. The acquisition of interpreting skills seems to have been left to the trials of an unstructured on-the-job apprenticeship. Given the limited number of interpreter positions, the prevailing trend would have been to promote student interpreters to Vice Consul positions, with ancillary translation and interpreting duties. This path led more directly to the higher ranks and pay grades of the Consular Service.

An interesting question is whether these observations regarding the instructional content and objectives of the U.S. Corps of Student Interpreters would also apply to the student interpreter programs of other countries and earlier forms of interpreting training for the purposes of diplomacy. It is hoped that the discussion in this chapter will stimulate further historical research in this area.

Rather than interpreter education in the modern sense, the core legacy of the Corps may lie with the fact that the program was "the first significant measures taken to provide the Diplomatic and Consular Services with language skills, and the application of the merit principle to the positions represented a further commitment to the idea of a nonpartisan service" (Barnes and Morgan 1961: 157). When the program was discontinued in 1924, a centuries-old tradition of seeing 'interpreter training' as a form of preparation for a career as a diplomat was coming to an end, at least in the United States. Perhaps the shift in perspective was being completed in other Western countries as well; for example, the British practice of appointing student interpreters to the Levant Consular Service was discontinued in 1916 (Morrison 2002).

At this juncture, at least in the U.S. tradition, the training of interpreters began to separate from the training of diplomats, even those destined to be regional or country experts. The creation of positions for professional interpreters who were based in Washington and would provide ongoing support to the highest levels of the U.S. Government was not initiated until after World War II, when diplomatic interpreter positions in the Civil Service would become an integral part of the Office of Language Services, usually distinct from typical Foreign Service career paths.

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Appendix 1

Letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting a copy of a communication from the Secretary of State submitting an estimate of appropriation for a corps of student interpreters in Japan and Korea. United States. Congress. House. Committee on Appropriations. Washington: [s.n.], 1904.

58TH CONGRESS, } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. } DOCUMENT
3d Session. } } No. 116.

STUDENT INTERPRETERS IN JAPAN AND KOREA.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

TRANSMITTING

A COPY OF A COMMUNICATION FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE
SUBMITTING AN ESTIMATE OF APPROPRIATION FOR A CORPS
OF STUDENT INTERPRETERS IN JAPAN AND KOREA.

DECEMBER 15, 1904.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to
be printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, December 13, 1904.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith for the consideration of
Congress copy of a communication from the Secretary of State of
the 10th instant, submitting an estimate of appropriation for inclusion
in the diplomatic and consular bill for the fiscal year 1906 for the
establishment of a corps of student interpreters in Japan and Korea,
as follows:

For five student interpreters at the legation to Japan, who shall be citizens of the
United States of America and whose duty it shall be to study the Japanese language
with a view of supplying interpreters to the legation and consulates in Japan; at one
thousand dollars each, five thousand dollars. For three student interpreters at the
legation to Korea, who shall be citizens of the United States of America and whose
duty it shall be to study the Korean language with a view of supplying interpreters
at the legation and consulates in Korea, at one thousand dollars each, three thousand
dollars: *Provided*, That said student interpreters in Japan and Korea shall be chosen
in such manner as will make the selections nonpartisan as far as may be consistent
with aptness and fitness for the intended work: *And provided further*, That upon
receiving such appointment each student interpreter shall sign an agreement to con-
tinue in the service as interpreter to the legation and consulates in Japan and Korea
so long as his said service may be required within a period of ten years.

Respectfully,

R. B. ARMSTRONG,
Acting Secretary.

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

STUDENT INTERPRETERS IN JAPAN AND KOREA.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, December 10, 1904.

SIR: I have the honor to request that the following recommendations for the establishment of a corps of student interpreters in Japan and Korea be laid before Congress:

The wisdom of the establishment of a class of student interpreters in China has already been fully proved. Several of these officers have acquired a working knowledge of the Chinese language and are now doing excellent work as interpreters in the legation at Peking and at some of the consulates. The students at present receive \$1,000 annually each, and in the estimates of appropriations it has been recommended that sufficient increase be made in the allowance for interpreters in China, Japan, and Korea to enable the student interpreters to be promoted to full interpreterships at not less than \$1,200 each, upon proof of sufficient familiarity with the Chinese language to render that course justifiable. The vacancies thus resulting in the student class would be available for the appointment of new men to begin the study of the language.

The practical value of the corps of student interpreters in China has been so well demonstrated during the past year that the establishment of another corps for Japan and Korea appears to be important. The conditions in those countries are similar to those in China. It is only by chance that an American can be found who is competent and available to act as an interpreter in our legations or consulates. Our interests in Japan and Korea have become so important that we can no longer afford to intrust the duties of interpreters to natives or resident Americans or Europeans, as the case may be. I therefore recommend that the following clause be inserted in the diplomatic and consular appropriation bill:

For five student interpreters at the legation to Japan, who shall be citizens of the United States of America, and whose duty it shall be to study the Japanese language with a view of supplying interpreters to the legation and consulates of Japan, at one thousand dollars each, five thousand dollars. For three student interpreters at the legation to Korea, who shall be citizens of the United States of America, and whose duty it shall be to study the Korean language with a view of supplying interpreters at the legation and consulates in Korea, at one thousand dollars each, three thousand dollars: *Provided*, That said student interpreters in Japan and Korea shall be chosen in such manner as will make the selections nonpartisan as far as may be consistent with aptness and fitness for the intended work: *And provided further*, That upon receiving such appointment each student interpreter shall sign an agreement to continue in the service as interpreter to the legations and consulates in Japan and Korea so long as his said service may be required within a period of ten years.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant.

JOHN HAY.

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY.



Appendix 2

Sample Examination for Student Interpreters from Information Regarding Appointments and Promotions in the Student-Interpreter Corps of the United States in China, Japan, and Turkey (U.S. Department of State 1912: 12-16).

SAMPLE EXAMINATION FOR STUDENT INTERPRETERS.

The following questions are furnished as suggestive of the character of those comprised in the examination, for the taking of which two days of six hours each are allowed:

SUBJECT—MODERN LANGUAGES.

Make a close translation of one (and only one) of the following into idiomatic English:

(a) Le bonhomme fut enfin, à l'âge de quatre-vingt-deux ans, pris par une paralysie qui fit de rapides progrès. Son avarice le soutenait instinctivement, aussi la mort de cet homme ne contrasta-t-elle pas avec sa vie. Dès le matin il se faisait rouler entre la cheminée de sa chambre et la porte de son cabinet, sans doute plein d'or. Il restait là sans mouvement, mais il regardait tour à tour avec anxiété ceux qui venaient le voir et la porte doublée de fer. Il se faisait rendre compte des moindres bruits qu'il entendait; et, au grand étonnement du notaire, il entendait le bâillement de son chien dans la cour. Il se réveillait de sa stupeur apparente au jour et à l'heure où il fallait recevoir des fermages, faire des comptes avec des closiers, ou donner des quittances. Il s'agitait alors dans son fauteuil à roulettes, jusqu'à ce qu'il se trouvât en face de la porte de son cabinet. Enfin arrivèrent les jours d'agonie, pendant lesquels la forte charpente du bonhomme fut aux prises avec la destruction.

(b) Vor vielen Jahren, als im Spessart die Wege noch schlecht und nicht so häufig als jetzt befahren waren, zogen zwei junge Bursche durch diesen Wald. Der eine mochte achtzehn Jahre alt sein und war ein Zirkelschmied, der andere, ein Goldarbeiter, konnte nach seinem Aussehen kaum sechzehn Jahre haben und machte wohl jetzt eben seine erste Reise in die Welt. Der Abend war schon heraufgekommen, und die Schatten der riesengrossen Fichten und Buchen verfinsterten den schmalen Weg, auf dem die beiden wanderten. Der Zirkelschmied schritt wacker vorwärts und piff ein Lied, schwatzte auch zuweilen mit Munter, seinem Hund, und schien sich nicht viel darum zu kümmern, dass die Nacht nicht mehr fern, desto ferner aber die nächste Herberge sei. Aber Felix, der Goldarbeiter, sah sich oft ängstlich um. Wenn der Wind durch die Bäume rauschte, so war es ihm, als höre er Tritte hinter sich. Wenn das Gesträuch am Wege hin und her wankte und sich teilte, glaubte er Gesichte hinter den Büschen lauern zu sehen.

(c) Hace muchos años que en la isla de Sto. Domingo vivia una familia rica, poseedora de una finca con muchos esclavos y tierras, y vivia feliz porque era humana con sus negros, hospitalaria con los extrangeros y caritativa con los pobres. Tenian los dueños de aquella finca un hijo á quien amaban como á primogénito y único, sucesor de su nombre y heredero algun dia de los caudales que habian allegado con el trabajo de sus negros. Contaba el niño muy pocos años cuando una desgracia visitó por primera vez á aquella familia, privándola de la cariñosa madre. Esta, en sus últimos momentos, recomendó muy especialmente el hijo que dejaba, á una negra ya anciana, que habia pertenecido á sus padres, asistido á su madre en sus últimos catorce años de completa ceguera, y á quien todos respetaban, porque jamas hubo sierva mas fiel á todos sus deberes. Tenia ella dos hijos; pero desde el momento que en el lecho de la moribunda, ofreció atender al hijo de su ama mas que á los suyos propios, se consagró exclusivamente al cuidado del pobre huerfanito.

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Make an idiomatic translation of the following into the language chosen by you above:

Canada was invaded by the English army in June, 1759. The invaders had everything in their favor—numbers, resources, the good will among the colonies which were freely administering their own affairs, and the government of the mother country, which was sending soldiers and vessels to them in abundance. Our Canadians, forsaken by the French Government, and supported solely by an excellent military chief, Montcalm, and by a handful of brave soldiers who had made up their minds to die with them, were devoured by the unworthy civil administrators, who, up to the last, enriched themselves on the public ruin. Their allies, the redskins, foreseeing the inevitable catastrophe, had almost all abandoned them.

SUBJECT—NATURAL, INDUSTRIAL, AND COMMERCIAL RESOURCES AND COMMERCE OF THE UNITED STATES.

Question 1. Name the three principal metals mined in the United States and give the three States which lead in the production of each.

Question 2. What foreign countries are our principal competitors in the production of meat? wool? cotton? wheat? sugar?

Question 3. What countries take the larger part of our exported canned beef? bacon? mineral illuminating oil (coal oil)? tobacco? lumber?

Question 4. Discuss the commercial relations of the United States with the Far East, mentioning the principal articles of commerce with each country.

SUBJECT—POLITICAL ECONOMY.

Question 1. Distinguish between monopoly and competition. What is meant by barter?

Question 2. Give an economic definition of supply, demand, value, and price.

Question 3. Distinguish between a *direct* and an *indirect* tax, giving an example of each.

Question 4. Discuss fully mechanical improvements in relation to their effect on production and on the wage-earner.

Question 5. (a) Why does a nation engage in foreign trade?

(b) What is meant by "the balance of trade"?

SUBJECT—INTERNATIONAL, MARITIME, AND COMMERCIAL LAW.

Question 1. (a) Define international law.

(b) Distinguish between public and private international law.

Question 2. Distinguish between a state and a government.

Question 3. What is meant by extradition? What rights has the person extradited?

Question 4. Discuss "contraband of war", and the determination of the contraband character of goods.

Question 5. What was the cause of the Spanish-American war, and upon what principle of international law was the action of the United States in declaring war based?

Question 6. Distinguish between a *de facto* and a *de jure* government.

Question 7. What were the causes which led to the Geneva Arbitration? How was the tribunal composed and what was the award?

Question 8. What is a treaty? piracy? privateering? effective blockade?

Question 9. Name the essential elements of a contract.

Question 10. Name the essential elements of negotiable paper. Name three kinds of negotiable paper, and give two kinds of indorsements for transfer.

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SUBJECT—AMERICAN HISTORY, GOVERNMENT, AND INSTITUTIONS.

- Question 1. What effects did the discovery of America have on Europe in regard to geographical knowledge, commercial enterprise, and colonization?
- Question 2. (a) Briefly define the term *Monroe Doctrine*.
 (b) State two causes of our war with Great Britain (1812–1815).
 (c) How did the United States acquire Tutuila?
- Question 3. (a) State the constitutional qualifications for the Presidency of the United States.
 (b) What is the name of the highest court of the United States?
 (c) Where do bills for Federal revenue originate?
- Question 4. (a) State *three* purposes, given in the preamble, for which the Constitution of the United States was framed.
 (b) To what class of persons do the immigration laws and regulations extend?
 (c) What is meant by the term *impeachment*?
- Question 5. Name the executive department of the Federal Government which exercises supervision over each of the following:
 (a) Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization.
 (b) Bureau of Insular Affairs.
 (c) Forestry Service.
 (d) General Land Office.
 (e) Revenue-Cutter Service.

SUBJECT—POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL GEOGRAPHY.

- Question 1. (a) What two countries border on Spain?
 (b) What large island is situated off the southeast coast of Africa?
 (c) Name two seas which border on the Chinese Empire.
- Question 2. Name the two countries which produce the largest supply of raw silk. What three countries produce the most pig iron?
- Question 3. For what manufactured or other product is each of the following countries chiefly noted: France, Switzerland, Mexico, Ceylon?
- Question 4. What are the products of which Brazil is the largest world-producer? What country has the best shipping facilities in the world?
- Question 5. Name the four principal bodies of water (larger than a strait) through which a ship would pass on the shortest all-water route from Bombay, India, to Tokyo, Japan.

SUBJECT—ARITHMETIC.

Question 1. The following is the value of the articles named, which were brought to the United States from Porto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1905. Find the total value of each article and the grand total for all the articles:

Articles.	Porto Rico.	Hawaii.	Philippines.	Total.
Coffee	\$201,642	\$173,617	\$876
Cotton, raw and manufactured.....	105,870	9,510	465
Fruit and nuts.....	250,847	193,373	6,229
Straw and palm leaf, manufactured.....	89,155	747	167
Sugar and molasses.....	176,861	113,409	498,399
Tobacco and cigars.....	577,182	7,084	3,445
Grand total.....

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Question 2. Give an account of either (a) the form of the government of the German Empire, or (b) the separation of Norway and Sweden (1905).

Question 3. Briefly describe the Venezuelan dispute (1895-1897) between Great Britain and the United States and its settlement.

Question 4. (a) Give a brief account of the revolution of 1889 in Brazil.

(b) Give a brief account of our trouble with Chile (1891-92).

Question 5. Briefly describe the causes and results of (a) the war between China and Japan (1894-95), and (b) the Russo-Japanese War.

EXECUTIVE ORDER.

No officer or employee of the Government shall, directly or indirectly, instruct or be concerned in any manner in the instruction of any person or classes of persons, with a view to their special preparation for the examinations of the Boards of Examiners for the diplomatic and consular services.

The fact that any officer or employee is found so engaged shall be considered sufficient cause for his removal from the service.

WM. H. TAFT.

THE WHITE HOUSE,
December 23, 1910.

CHAPTER 6

At the dawn of simultaneous interpreting in the USSR

Filling some gaps in history*

Sergei Chernov

In loving memory of my father

This chapter provides new evidence on the invention of simultaneous interpreting (SI) in the 1920s using records from Russian archives discovered by this author. SI was first implemented in the USSR in 1928, which coincided with the first full-scale use of SI at the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Geneva. Language problems of the era associated with the declining use of French and waste of time due to consecutive interpreting (CI) required a new solution, which was SI, proposed by E. Filene in the West and Dr. Epshtein in the USSR. Epshtein's three-interpreter method was perfected by engineer Goron and implemented at the 6th Comintern Congress in 1928. Finally, interpreters'/ translators' profiles and working conditions in the 1930s are described briefly.

Keywords: Comintern, Filene-Finlay system, telephonization of interpreting, three-interpreter method, simultaneous interpreting

1. In lieu of introduction

The invention of simultaneous interpreting (SI) in the West is attributed to Edward Filene, a Boston businessman, who first came up with the idea in 1925, after he witnessed how consecutive interpreting (CI) was slowing down the debates in the League of Nations (LON) and the International Labor Organization (ILO), where he attended meetings as a delegate. His proposals were accepted by the ILO, and after initial trials in 1927, the first full-scale use of SI took place at the ILO 11th Labor Conference in Geneva, starting on June 8, 1928 (Baigorri-Jalón 2014: 145–146).

* The author wishes to thank his sister, Elena Chernova, of Moscow, for being the author's eyes in the Comintern archives, as well as Jesús Baigorri-Jalón and Robin Setton for their extremely valuable comments on several iterations of this chapter.

Less than two months after the opening of the 11th Labor Conference in Geneva, SI was used in the USSR, at the 6th Congress of the Communist International (Comintern), which opened on July 17, 1928 in Moscow. Until recently, researchers interested in the history of SI in the USSR had to rely only on a very brief description of this episode in a 1963 article written by E. Gofman, a Soviet interpreter and veteran of the Nuremberg Trials:

For the first time simultaneous interpreting was employed in 1928 in the USSR at the 6th Congress of the Communist International. A same-year issue of the *Krasnaya Niva* magazine published pictures of interpreters seated in armchairs in front of the rostrum. On their necks they are wearing a bulky contraption that supports a microphone. There are no headphones, and they listen to the sound coming from the rostrum directly. (Gofman 1963:20)¹

Figure 1 is a copy of the relevant page from the *Krasnaya Niva*, showing photos from the 6th Comintern Congress accompanied by the following caption and story, courtesy of the Russian State Library (formerly, the Lenin Library) in Moscow.



Figure 1. Top photo – participants listening; bottom left – interpreter (*Krasnaya Niva*, No. 32, August 5, 1928. Emphasis in italics has been added by the present author)

Translation:

Technology at the Service of the Communist Revolution

The VIth Comintern Congress is marked by the use of a new technical device.

Under the previous arrangement, at the end of every speech each group of delegates sharing a common language would listen to their interpreter. Now, *for the first time in the world*, a system of transmitting interpretation simultaneously with the speech has been introduced.

1. Here and throughout this chapter all quotes from original Russian language sources have been translated into English by the author.

Instead of addressing the delegates, the speaker addresses the five interpreters – Russian, German, French, English, and Chinese. Each sentence uttered by the speaker is repeated by the interpreter in a low voice into the microphone affixed on the interpreter's chest. The interpreter's voice is transmitted by wire through a radio-amplification unit, to the delegates' seats. Each delegate seat is equipped with five pairs of jacks. The delegates can plug in their listening receivers into any one of the five jacks and listen to the speaker in a desired language.

What system was used in the USSR? How was it designed and built, and by whom? Was it a home-grown invention, or a “reverse engineered” Western system? What SI method was used? Who were those first interpreters, and how were they trained? We decided to look for answers to these and possibly other questions in the archives of the Comintern, stored in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) in Moscow and now available to the public.

2. Language practices and language problems of early 20th-century international conferences

Two years after the October Revolution of 1917 and only a few months before the official end of World War I (WWI) and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles (June 28, 1919), the First Comintern Congress was held in March 1919 in Moscow. The Comintern was to become a unique militant international organization, combining features of a global communist party, an international workers' forum, and a very sophisticated intelligence gathering and covert operations headquarters. It would soon come to rely on heavy bureaucratic machinery to support its various operations, including a cadre of professional translators and interpreters.

The Comintern soon started encountering the same language problems as the other major international organization set up after WWI – the League of Nations (LON), that saw the transformation of post-WWI international relations – namely, the decline of the use of French as the language of diplomacy and the introduction of new languages as a result of democratization of international relations (Baigorri-Jalón 2014: 14–22). At the ILO, access to international gatherings was no longer reserved exclusively for diplomats from aristocratic families who spoke fluent French, as many delegates came from national labor unions or workers' organizations and needed to resort to interpreters. In fact, “until then workers did not have linguistic means of communication that allowed them to feel comfortable in international gatherings” (Baigorri-Jalón 2006: 102). Just as English was becoming the new lingua franca in the West, Russian was to become the language of the international communist movement.

The First Comintern Congress was attended by delegates from 21 countries. The working languages were German and Russian, with the majority of speeches

delivered in German and occasional interpreting provided from French, English, and Chinese. For example, the speech by the French delegate Henri Guilbeaux was summarized in the third person by the multilingual Russian communist leader Alexandra Kollontai (First Comintern Congress Proceedings 1933: 167).

The need for professional language support at the Comintern was obviously recognized very soon, as the Translation Bureau was set up approximately three months after the First Congress (Box 1).

Box 1. History of the Comintern's Translation Bureau

The Comintern Translation Bureau was created by the decision of the Comintern Executive Committee (ECCI) of July 4, 1919 (RGASPI, 495-1-1-34, 44). A Publications division co-existed with the Translation Bureau, with partly overlapping functions. Its functions also overlapped with the Information Division, and after the 1921 reorganization it was transformed into a de facto translation division, with four sections – Russian, German, English, and French. Until 1923 the division was headed by M. Kreps, and in 1923 he was appointed head of the Publications Division, which – following yet another reorganization – incorporated most of the Press Unit staff who by then were actively involved in translation work. In fact, that unit was unofficially referred to as the Translation Division. Between the 5th and 6th Congresses (1925–28), the Publications Division comprised several translation bureaus – based in Moscow and in Comintern publishing houses in Germany, France, Britain, and the US. The division was headed by M. Kreps, and his deputy was G. Gerish. The Publications Division was supervised by the Editorial Commission, which in 1926 comprised, among others, M. Kreps and O. Pyatnitsky (head of the International Liaison Division, which was responsible, inter alia, for undercover operations). General logistical and technical oversight was the function of the ECCI Secretariat Bureau, headed by M. Heimo. On September 28, 1928, G. Gerish was appointed chief of the translation division by the Political Secretariat (RGASPI 495-3-81-125), soon to be replaced by A. Brigadier. The ECCI Secretariat Bureau eventually set up a Translation Bureau headed by M. Levin, and since 1938 – by Shvetsov (see Adibekov et al. 1997).

Yet, the Tower of Babel effect was even more pronounced at the 2nd Congress in 1920, where the first half of the sessions were conducted mainly in French, which led to multiple complaints from the English speakers. For example, John Reed, who represented the Communist Labor Party of America, took the floor requesting that English be made an official language of the Congress on account that more delegates were English speakers than French speakers, and many spoke no French (Second Comintern Congress Proceedings 1934: 80). His request was echoed by the British delegate Murphy, who said that “delegates who are most interested in the important topics of the Congress are unable to follow the discussion as English is not recognized as an official language” (ibid.: 148). Halfway into the Congress, the chairman suddenly suggested switching the language of discussion from French to English, as “six or seven new comrades have joined us who do not

understand French. Half of the Congress was conducted in French. We now need to save time, and since we are to discuss mainly matters pertaining to trade unions and parliamentarism we will speak English”(ibid.:284).² Although the language barrier was mostly bridged by distributing the main talking points translated into four languages (Russian, French, German, and English), at least part of the time there was interpretation. Speeches were interpreted in summary form, leading an Irish delegate to make this remark: “What Radek talked about for two hours was interpreted for us in 20 minutes. It seems strange that people here are so much into time savings, although it is not noticeable that people in Russia particularly value their time” (ibid.:362). Delegate Pestaña of Spain made a point of order protesting that nothing was being interpreted into French and even refused to take part in a vote on the item of trade unions (ibid.:365). At the end of the Congress, the frustrated Pestaña introduced a motion on Esperanto:³

Given that interpretation into several languages of all speeches made at international congresses similar to ours complicates the work of the congress, I move that in the future each speaker use the language easiest for him to converse in, and that each speech be translated only into an auxiliary language – Esperanto. This language is easy to learn and it is very useful for business. If used as a language of translation, it would save much time and effort. (ibid.:452)

With this, the USSR was effectively joining the Cosmopolitan Conversation, an international debate about the preferred language regime in international conferences described in the book of the same title (Shenton 1933).

In the USSR, Esperanto, or its more advanced form, Ido, was persistently offered as an alternative to using interpreters at international proletarian gatherings. One of the numerous letters to the 2nd Congress of the Comintern (1920), sent by M. Albov from the small Russian town of Totma on behalf of Soviet Esperantists, appealed to the Congress to use Esperanto as a language of communication between the delegates. He wrote: “Sessions of this multinational congress will inevitably involve interpreters, who, no matter how precise their interpretation may be, inevitably distort and muddy up the meaning of speeches, which will take up even more time” (RGASPI 495-99-66-013). This negative assessment of the role of interpreters was typical of advocates of an “international

2. It would seem that the switch of the floor language to English for the discussion of these agenda items was dictated by pure pragmatism, as at least half of the delegates who signed up to talk on these items were English speakers (ibid.:363).

3. An attempt to introduce Esperanto as an auxiliary language was also made at the LON (Baigorri-Jalón 2014:69–71).

auxiliary language” in general (see, for example, Shenton 1933:224,239, 274; Dubin 1944: 31, 53, 55, 63–67). The Russian Esperantists, especially, were in favor of introducing an artificial auxiliary language for communication between “workers of the world,” citing such arguments that it was time for the proletariat to break the monopoly on international communication held by “polyglot intellectuals” (RGASPI 495-99-66-029) and that Esperanto was easier to learn by workers who were not able to devote several years of their life to studying a foreign language (RGASPI 495-99-76-003/004).⁴

By the mid 1920s, it was becoming increasingly evident, both in the West and the USSR, that consecutive interpreting (CI) in multilingual conferences was a hindrance to the effectiveness of proceedings, especially when more than two languages were involved. Shenton (1933) provides a detailed account of language problems encountered at multiple conferences held since the end of WWI and where the problems of multilingualism were dealt with – in his view, in a less than satisfactory way – by choosing only one working language (increasingly, English was chosen over French), two official languages with no interpreting between them, CI into one or more languages, or even the use of “telephonic interpretation.” According to Shenton (1933:469), the best solution was to use a “neutral, synthetic, international auxiliary language.”

The problem was evident, and it required a lasting and workable solution. In 1921 the Comintern set up an Advisory Commission for the Introduction of an International Auxiliary Language to study the possibility of using Esperanto as a language of communication at Comintern congresses (RGASPI 495-99-067-022), but after some deliberations the commission advised against it, and the matter was never included in the agenda of the next (3rd) Congress (RGASPI 495-99-067-060).

A very different approach was soon to be found, and it involved making use of modern technology of the time, the telephone. The second industrial revolution was well underway, offering increasingly sophisticated solutions to various technological problems. Delivering interpretation simultaneously with the speech was viewed as a technology problem, and technology was placed at the service of the Revolution. The New Soviet Man was expected to fulfill his role of a cog in the wheel and live up to the fast pace of technological progress (see, *inter alia*, Heller 1988).

4. Ironically, Esperanto was invented by a Jewish-Russian intellectual, Dr. Ludwig Lazarus Zamenhof, an ophthalmologist from Bialystok, a multilingual and multiethnic town in Russia, presently northeast Poland (Matthias 2002:23).

3. Doctor V.Z. Epshtein, inventor of “an apparatus for translation from all languages” in the USSR

Although documents pertaining to interpreting or translation found in the Comintern archive are rather scattered, they allow to draw the conclusion that the idea of providing conference interpreting simultaneously with the original speech was conceived in the USSR and in the West approximately at the same time, in April 1925, and that these inventions may well be classified as independent and concurrent. History knows many other inventions that were made concurrently and independently, sometimes in different parts of the world, such as the invention of the radio (Marconi-Popov), the telephone (Bell-Gray), or the phonograph (Edison-Cros).

In April of 1925, approximately a week after Edward Filene sent his letter to Sir Eric Drummond, Secretary-General of the LON, containing a description of a possible prototype SI system and method for the League (Baigorri-Jalón 2014: 135), a Russian medical doctor, V.Z. Epshtein, sent his proposal to the Comintern describing “an apparatus for translation from all languages” which was to be designed as follows:

Congress participants of different nationalities use felt earmuffs to listen to proceedings (said earmuffs are described separately) covering their ears such that listeners cannot hear the original speaker of the meeting directly; the earmuffs conceal small telephones which enable the listeners to hear the translation of the original speech in their native language. So, how is such translation achieved?

For this purpose, three interpreters (for each language) sit in the adjacent room; each is wearing a headset similar to the listeners in the meeting hall where the speech is delivered, but the interpreters' telephones are not covered with felt earmuffs. Each interpreter sits inside a sound-proof booth and, over a wire run to his location from the meeting hall, listens to the original speaker who uses a microphone placed in front of him. This microphone is connected to the headphones of all three interpreters, who can thus all hear the speaker at the same time. (RGASPI 493-1-7-062)

Dr. V.Z. Epshtein offered a truly revolutionary approach to dealing with the problem of concurrent speaking and listening. Baigorri-Jalón (*ibid.*) notes that at that time it was not even imaginable that the interpreter could listen and speak at the same time. Incidentally, the debate on whether SI is really simultaneous or whether it is achieved through contraction of the message or a faster rate of the interpreter's speech compared with the original, or if the interpreter takes advantage of natural pauses in the original speaker's discourse continued well into the 1970s (Setton 1999: 27; Chernov 2004: 11).

According to Epshtein's method, interpreter #1 listens to the speaker's first sentence, following which he immediately switches off the audio signal from his headphones and presses a button activating a light (electric bulb) or sound (electric bell) signaling interpreter #2 in the adjacent booth to start listening from that point forward. Having done that, interpreter #1 "quickly and concisely translates the sentence he just heard, speaking his translation into the microphone placed in front of him." At this time, interpreter #2, prompted by the light bulb or bell signal, begins to listen to the second sentence, while interpreter #1 – who has disconnected the "current" [audio signal] from his earphones and can no longer hear the original speaker – directs his undivided attention to providing a (consecutive) interpretation of the sentence he just heard. Having finished the interpretation of his speech segment, interpreter #1 again switches on his headphones and continues to follow the original speaker's discourse, thus obtaining at least some context for the speech as a whole. In the meantime, interpreter #2 listens to the second sentence (or two sentences, if they are short) and passes on the torch to the third colleague. As he finishes listening to his segment, interpreter #2 disconnects his sound and concentrates on rendering his part. Interpreter #3, prompted by interpreter #2, begins listening to his sentence or segment from the place marked by the signal, and as soon as he finishes rendering it, he again passes on the turn to interpreter #1, who by this time has already finished rendering his first segment, has re-activated "the current" and is ready to focus on the next sentence or segment as soon as he receives a prompt from interpreter #3 (RGASPI 493-1-7-062-063).

Dr. Epshtein wrote that "thanks to the presence of three interpreters each is able to complete his translation in time, there is no break in the translation flow, and each rendered sentence is sent to the ears of the listeners only with a slight delay after it is pronounced by the original speaker; this delay is equal to the time required by a qualified and intelligent interpreter to concisely render a segment of the original speech" (*ibid.*).

Recognizing that the difference in interpreters' voices may be a problem for participants, he suggested that the voices of selected interpreters should be as much as possible of the same pitch so that listeners did not notice a substantial difference between them. He stated, however, that "this difference would be largely unnoticeable [by delegates] listening to interpretation through headphones" (*ibid.*).

With this arrangement, interpreting was to become a three-person job, each interpreter working in very small segments, taking turns almost after every sentence, and having enough time to render his segment in a mode somewhere between consecutive and simultaneous. From the interpreter's point of view, the system allowed him to concentrate on rendering the segment without being distracted by continuous flow of original speech and provided control to determine

the size of the segment he would be comfortable interpreting. The downside of focusing on individual segments without hearing the entire discourse was a severe lack of context that would unavoidably have an adverse effect on interpreting quality. From the point of view of the audience, it would seem that despite the fact that rather poor-quality microphones of the time largely concealed the variations in the pitch of interpreters' voices, having to listen to three different people speaking one sentence at a time (and possibly using different renderings of the same concept) must have been quite a distraction.

Although Dr. Epshtein provided a rather detailed description of how interpreters would hand off the role of listening to the source language (SL), the second aspect, i.e. ensuring a smooth flow of target language (TL) speech despite breaking it up into extremely short segments between three interpreters, is not explained in sufficient detail in his proposal. Figure 2 shows some potential problems this method could cause:

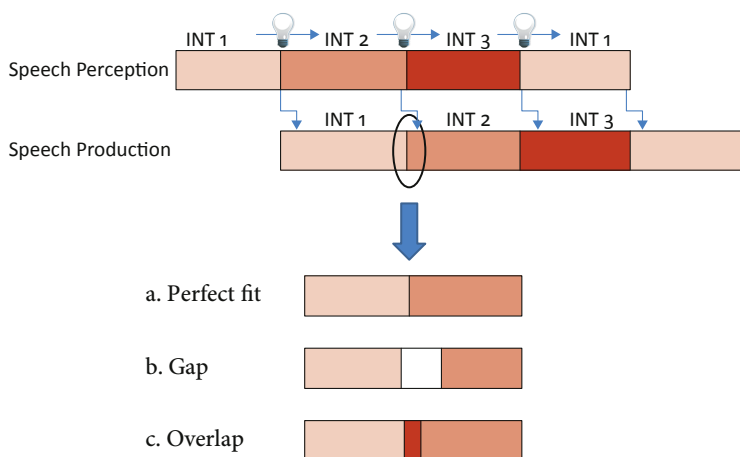


Figure 2. Analysis of Dr. V.Z. Epshtein's 1925 three-interpreter method of SI

Whereas the light bulb would probably provide a clear visual signal to the interpreter in the adjacent booth to start listening to the next segment, there seems to have been no corresponding signal to indicate that the previous interpreter has completed rendering his piece and the microphone was ready to be released to the next interpreter. Although scenario (a) is theoretically possible (see Figure 2) and would ensure a smooth transition between two interpreters, in practice TL segments produced by each interpreter would never be of exactly the same duration, leading to possible scenarios (b) or (c). Scenario (b), i.e. a gap between the two segments, would be realized if interpreter #1 is able to fit his rendering in less time than interpreter #2 takes to listen to his segment, while scenario (c) – which

is much worse – would cause an overlap between the two interpreters, if interpreter #1 takes more time to render his piece than it takes interpreter #2 to listen to his segment. The fact that interpreters were free to choose the length of the segments they were comfortable interpreting (one sentence, if it was particularly long, or two or more short sentences) would only increase the likelihood of gaps or overlaps in their speech, thus preventing a smooth and uninterrupted flow of TL.

Epshtein also suggested an alternative interpreting method – instead of switching off the audio from the original speaker only for the time it took to render one’s segment, each interpreter, upon hearing his segment, would hand over “the current to his neighbor” and stop hearing the speaker until the audio signal came back to him and he again began to hear the floor (RGASPI 493-1-7-063). Dr. Epshtein described his understanding of the pros and cons involved in each of the two methods:

Using this option, each interpreter hears only the sentences he needs to translate, whereas in the first option he continues listening to the original speech in the minutes he is free from working. The advantage of the first option is that the interpreter hears a significant portion of the speech (approximately two out of three sentences) and thus, being to a certain extent aware of the speech content, is able to provide a more sensible translation. On the other hand, this makes the interpreter more fatigued. (ibid.)

Epshtein proposed both methods as alternate options, to be used depending on the specific circumstances in a given conference.

Although no documents are available in the consulted archives on possible prior experiments, it seems plausible that the choice of such a complex method involving three interpreters for each language taking turns after each sentence was based on the outcome of some prior tests on the basis of which this proposal was put together. Indeed, why would one choose to use a team of three interpreters instead of one, unless other possibilities had been exhausted? Our hypothesis would be that such initial experiments could have involved professional (“qualified and intelligent”) interpreters accustomed to working in the consecutive mode who were probably unable to cope with SI without prior training. Not seeing a practical solution to simultaneous listening and speaking, Dr. Epshtein recognized the limitations of his method, stating that the interpreters could provide a “more sensible translation” if they were more aware of the overall context of the speech (ibid.).

Three years would pass from the time this initial proposal was made by V.Z. Epshtein to the Comintern in Moscow before the system and interpreting method was perfected to the point where it was ready for full-scale trials in an actual conference setting.

What allows us to state that it was Epshtein's system, and not something else, that was used at the 6th Comintern Congress in 1928?

We know that Epshtein was credited with the invention of the system in 1928. The archive contains a letter from the Comintern requesting payment to Dr. Epshtein "for his invention," as well as minutes of the 6th Comintern Congress technical organizing committee that state that it was decided to "test the system proposed by Comrade Epshtein" (RGASPI 493-1-6-003/004).

The letter that requested payment to Dr. Epshtein stated: "Dr. Epshtein submitted a prototype design of this invention to ECCI back in 1925. At that time, the design was rather cumbersome. It was substantially perfected in the course of technical design work conducted mainly by engineer Garon [*sic.* = Goron, see Box 2]. However, the idea proposed by Dr. Epshtein was mostly kept intact. At this time the Congress is successfully using this interpretation system" (RGASPI 493-1-393-031).

Box 2. Isaac Goron

Isaac Goron (1902–1982), doctor of sciences, professor, was the founder of wired radio in the USSR, a nationwide one-channel station which was essentially a public address system that reached every Soviet home and broadcast over large pole-mounted outdoor loudspeakers transmitting official news and propaganda. He also founded, and for many years managed, the Moscow Radio Center, a state-of-the-art sound recording studio that is still used to tape chamber music and small symphony orchestras. In the 1930s–60s, Goron devoted himself to audio recording and became famous for restoring and producing remastered audio records of Lenin's speeches. Goron founded and for many years chaired the Department of Radio Broadcasting and Acoustics at the Moscow Electrotechnical Institute, where he was a long-standing professor. (Mishenkov 2003: 43; <http://www.nec.m-necropol.ru/goron-ie.html>)

In 1928, a 25-year old Isaac Goron, a young engineer at the Moscow long-distance telephone exchange, was put in charge of setting up the first SI system in the USSR.

(http://rujen.ru/index.php/Горон_исаак_евсеевич)

The invention of SI in the Soviet Union by Dr. Epshtein was confirmed to us by Dr. Sergei Mishenkov, professor of the Moscow Electrotechnical Institute, who had once been Prof. Isaac Goron's graduate student. In a telephone interview we conducted with him on April 18, 2014 from Washington, he recalled the words of Isaac Goron that simultaneous interpreting was invented by a physician by the name of Epshtein. Our intent in contacting Dr. Mishenkov was to learn more "oral history" about Isaac Goron, and his mentioning of doctor Epshtein as a medical doctor was a serendipitous detail.

Our efforts to research the identity and background of Dr. Epshtein have so far yielded only limited results. We can reasonably assume that V.Z. Epshtein was a medical doctor, both from Dr. Mishenkov's recollections and from the fact that the academic title of "doctor of sciences" was introduced in the USSR only in

1934. Comintern archives contain no reference to any staff member by the name of Epshtein with matching initials, and no personnel file could be traced. Epshtein is referred to as “Doc. Epshtein” in the letter from the Comintern to the Central Trade Unions Council asking for advice as to the amount of remuneration due to him for “his invention” (RGASPI 493-1-393-031). The initials “V.Z.” appear on Dr. Epshtein’s original typewritten proposal dated April 8, 1925, which bear his legible wet signature (RGASPI 493-1-7-064).

A photo in the Comintern archives possibly demonstrates Epshtein’s active involvement in the implementation of the system for the 6th Congress in 1928 (Figure 3).



Figure 3. RGASPI 493-1-677-098

So far, we have been able to identify two people in the photo in Figure 3: Isaac Goron is on the left (positively identified by Dr. Mishenkov who knew him personally as well as by comparing this image with his later photos, including one found in an internet article on Isaac Goron (<http://www.nec.m-necropol.ru/goron-ie.html>)); the man wearing headphones and dressed in uniform is Mauno Heimo, Head of the Comintern’s Executive Committee (ECCI) Bureau, who was in charge of organizing “telephonization of interpreting” at the Congress (we have identified him based on the photos in his personnel file, and his photo also appears in Gildi (2010: 570). This leaves the man in the middle. Our speculation is that it could be Dr. Epshtein. The official caption on the back of the photo erroneously reads: “13788. Russ_photo. VI Comintern Congress. *Inventor* of translation transmission apparatus *engineer HEIMO* listening to translation.”⁵ Since there are three people in this photo, the person who typed up the caption may have fused the three individuals together – the inventor, the engineer, and Mr. Heimo. We also know that in 1938, Dr. V.Z. Epshtein wrote to the People’s Commissariat (Ministry) of Health suggesting the need for further research into chemo-therapy (GARF R8009-2-195-13-5/26), so his interests were multi-faceted. Further research may render new results about Dr. Epshtein’s life story.

5. Italics added for emphasis by the author.

Box 3. Mauno Heimo

Heimo, Mauno (1894–1938), Finnish. Born in Tammerfors (Tampere), Finland, took part in the Finnish revolution of 1918, joined the Communist Party of Finland, in 1919 became secretary of the Comintern’s Scandinavian bureau, where he rose through the ranks to become head of the ECCI Secretariat Bureau. Spoke Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, German, and Russian, some French and English. Enrolled in university but never graduated. In 1928, he was in charge of coordinating all logistics for the 6th Comintern Congress, including overall supervision of “telephonic” interpreting. Later in his career he was given various secret assignments, including traveling to Germany, Austria, Scandinavia, and France under assumed identity and false Swedish and other passports. Arrested by NKVD in 1937, executed in 1938. Rehabilitated posthumously in 1960.

(RGASPI 495-269-1086-002-004/014/045/047/056; Gildi 2010: 570)

4. Simultaneous interpreting at the 6th Comintern Congress, 1928

After Dr. Epshtein made his proposals to the Comintern in 1925, his original “rather cumbersome system” was improved by engineer Isaac Goron (RGASPI 493-1-393-031), and the 6th Comintern Congress used a new interpreting method – albeit with interpreters working not in booths but rather sitting in arm-chairs in front of the rostrum and speaking their translations in a low voice into neck-worn microphones hanging on leather straps.

It turned out to be almost exactly the same method as the one used at the 11th ILO Conference in 1928, but until just a few weeks before the 6th Comintern Congress was set to open, the plan looked very differently – and it involved placing interpreters in sound-proof booths. As we will see below, the organizers had to drop this idea at the last moment as for political reasons the Congress was suddenly moved out of the Kremlin and very little time remained to make alternative arrangements.

The idea to “telephonize” interpreting at the 6th Comintern Congress was brought up in a meeting of the Technical Organizing Commission, established to coordinate all logistics in preparation for the 6th Congress. Minutes #2 of the Commission’s meeting that took place on April 25, 1928 (two months before the Congress was scheduled to open) contain an entry of a discussion on the topic of “telephonization” of the Congress meeting halls (*Telefonisierung* – like many of the Comintern working documents, the minutes were drafted in German). It was decided to “test the system proposed by Comrade Epshtein, said test to be conducted on a small scale in the Red Hall. To fund this, up to 1,000 rubles shall be allocated from the Congress budget. The use of this system at the Congress will depend on the results of this test” (RGASPI 493-1-6-003/004). Mauno Heimo, the Commission’s chairman, was made responsible “for the preparation and design of

telephonization (mechanization) of interpreting during the Congress, for organizing a team of interpreters, and general supervision over them during the Congress” (RGASPI 493-1-7-001 and 023).

On May 10, 1928, Heimo reported to the meeting of the Technical Organizing Commission that “the test to telephonize interpreting yielded positive results: (a) it was proven that it is possible to equip the Congress with “telephonization”; (b) that interpreters capable of working with this system have been selected; and (c) that from the financial point of view the system is definitely cost-effective” (RGASPI 493-1-7-029). In view of the above, the Commission introduced a formal motion to the Comintern’s Political Secretariat to approve this system of interpreting for the Congress and begin preparation for its installation in the Kremlin.

It is noteworthy that it took only 16 days from the time it was decided to test the system until it was reported that the system and interpreters were ready for the Congress. This could not have given enough time to train interpreters, so it is likely that they were selected based on their natural aptitude for SI. The organizers probably had trouble securing the required full team, because on June 9 the Organizing Commission was still discussing the need to complete the interpreter selection process, test them in an equipped conference room, and negotiate their remuneration (RGASPI 493-1-7-033). The “test” in May 1928 was probably a limited-scale demonstration of the proof of concept to a high-level audience (the ECCI Presidium, at whose session the test was conducted, was one of the Comintern’s governing bodies which included such high-ranking members as Stalin and Bukharin). The VIPs must have been satisfied with what they heard, because on the following day, May 11, the Political Secretariat considered the following draft resolution, cited here in its “original” translation from German, made by the Comintern in 1928:⁶

TELEPHONISATION OF ORAL TRANSLATION AT THE WORLD CONGRESS

To enable the delegates to the Congress to understand the speakers at the Plenary Sessions by means of a simultaneous translation which will give them an opportunity to participate more intensively in the work of the Congress, a scheme has been drawn up for the telephonisation of translations. The technical arrangements required for this method of translation have been tried on a small scale; the enunciation technique for the translators has also undergone a test. Without going into the details of the technical arrangements and of the question of translators, one can safely say after these experiments that this method of translation can be very well applied to the World Congress.

6. The original document was drafted in German and translated at least into Russian and English. The archives contain the Russian and the English versions, both identified as translations from German.

Therefore, the organisational-technical commission proposes to the Polit-Secretariat to make the following decision:

The Polit-Secretariat declares that the experiment made at the last Session of the Presidium⁷ to carry out the oral translation through a telephonic arrangement has proved successful. It therefore resolves to instruct the Org. Commission for the preparation of the World Congress to organise in this manner the translations at the World Congress; the means required for this are to be placed at the disposal of the Commission. The Secretariat of the VTZIK⁸ is requested to give immediately permission for the erection of the technical apparatus for the Andreev Hall in the Kremlin. (RGASPI 493-1-7-031)

According to this document, as late as May 11 it was still being planned to hold the Congress in the Kremlin, but on July 17, 1928 the 6th Congress of the Comintern was inaugurated in the Pillar Hall of the House of the Unions (*Krasnaya Niva* No. 31, July 29, 1928). The Andreev Hall of the Kremlin, where the previous (5th) Congress was held in 1924, suddenly became unavailable, and the decision to move its venue was made somewhere between May 11 and the opening day, July 17. Leon Trotsky, who by then had already been exiled from Moscow to Alma-Ata in Kazakhstan, wrote that “the eviction of the Sixth Comintern Congress from the Kremlin to the Pillar Hall was ‘symbolic’” (Felshtinsky 2002:61). In Trotsky’s opinion, this “eviction” could be explained by Stalin’s preparation to sign the Kellogg-Briand Pact (which renounced war as an instrument of national policy) and the desire of the Soviet authorities to place some distance between themselves and the Comintern, which was viewed as an entity that could compromise the Soviet intentions. As is known, the Comintern advocated armed workers’ uprisings in capitalist countries. It can also be explained by the power struggle between Stalin and Bukharin, which by then reached a critical stage.

And yet, the question about the venue of the 6th Congress remained open as late as June 29, when M. Heimo suggested several options, including the House of the Unions and the Moscow Conservatory. The House of the Unions was to be freed up from the Shakhtinsky trial⁹ around July 5 or later, and if that venue was to be selected, no “telephonization” of translation was going to be possible – there

7. ECCI Presidium was a governing body of the Comintern. In 1929 its membership included, among others, Joseph Stalin.

8. VTZIK – The All-Russian Executive Committee, the top legislative and administrative body in Soviet Russia. It existed from 1917 to 1937.

9. The Shakhtinsky trial was the harbinger of the famous Moscow Trials of the 1930s. A group of mining engineers in the Shakhtinsky district in the Donetsk coal basin was tried in the House of the Unions in 1928. Five men were sentenced to death and the rest to various terms of imprisonment on trumped up charges of counter-revolutionary activity and sabotage.

was not enough time to install the system. The Conservatory was considered a more suitable venue for “telephonization,” and in the view of engineer Goron, the SI system installation could be completed within two weeks if allowed to be placed in the orchestra rows (RGASPI 493-1-7-073).

In the end, a political decision prevailed over technical recommendations, and the Conservatory was ruled out for political reasons. The Shakhtinsky trial hearings continued in the House of the Unions until July 6, leaving only eleven days to equip the Pillar Hall for what was to become the first international gathering in the USSR where SI was used on a full scale.

With such a short time remaining to complete all preparations, sacrifices had to be made and corners had to be cut. Let us examine what it meant for the arrangements to provide SI.

We can draw some conclusions on what was being planned for the Kremlin based on an unsigned and undated document found in the Comintern archives (RGASPI 493-1-7-068/071).¹⁰ This document can be viewed as a proof-of-concept paper for the SI proposed for the Congress and presents technical, linguistic, and financial arguments in favor of this approach. Let us analyze its main points:

1. *Discussion of time savings and interpreting quality*

At all Comintern Congresses and Plenums, nearly half the time is consumed by translations. Moreover, the quality of translations usually suffers because the interpreter, somehow having noted down the original speech /most of them are not stenographers/, usually uses his own words to reproduce the speech, which inevitably leads to certain elements of fantasy and invention.

(RGASPI 493-1-7-068)

As explained in the *Krasnaya Niva* article quoted in the beginning of the chapter, before the introduction of SI the common method of providing multilingual interpreting in the Soviet Union involved delivering parallel consecutive interpretations, so that “at the end of every speech each group of delegates sharing a common language would listen to their interpreter” (*Krasnaya Niva*, No. 32, August 5, 1928). This interpreting method closely resembled Gaiba’s definition of “simultaneous successive interpretation” where “the interpretations were simultaneous with each other but not with the original speech” (Gaiba 1998: 31), but it was achieved without SI equipment. The anonymous author of this proof-of-concept document expresses a generally low opinion of the poor quality of CI,

10. It is addressed to the Organizational Commission for the 6th Comintern Congress and must have been drafted between mid-May and end of June 1928. We can be certain of this date range because it quotes a news story from the newspaper *Vechernyaya Moskva* of May 5, 1928, and still proceeds from the assumption that “translations simultaneously with the speech” would be organized in the Andreev Hall of the Kremlin.

recognizes the time losses suffered when recurring to consecutive, and gives the main reason why, in his mind, interpreters tended to take too many liberties in their renderings – because they did not use stenography as a note-taking technique to recall the content of the speech. This comment probably also reflected the Comintern’s institutional concern with finding a more efficient way of keeping permanent records of the proceedings, in particular by using telephonographs or similar devices to record the original speeches (RGASPI 493-1-7-069/070). The value of such assessment of interpreting quality is questionable as we do not have sufficient information on the identity of the author of this document. It could have been written by Isaac Goron, the engineer, Mauno Heimo (who was fluent in several languages but was not an interpreter himself), or by another Comintern official who was a user of interpreting services.

2. *Mention of Western experience*

To improve this situation, one can make use of the experience already available in other countries when organizing meetings with the participation of speakers of different languages. (See, for example, the news report in the *Vechernaya Moskva* of May 5, 1928, No. 103, about the League of Nations, which says that “an interpreter will speak simultaneously with the original speaker at the sessions of the League of Nations and other international conferences in Geneva. He will speak softly into the microphone and it will be possible to listen to him using headphones.”) (RGASPI 493-1-7-068)

This reference to the Western experience is important. The target audience of this document needed to be convinced that such an approach to organizing interpreting was already used (or would soon be used) in the West, and that the USSR was perfectly capable of handling this task. It could also mean that the Soviets were aware of the Filene-Finlay experiments in Geneva (see Baigorri-Jalón 2014) and were following those developments with a degree of interest.¹¹ As they were preparing to host a major international conference in Moscow, it was important for the Soviets to showcase the success story of the new regime, that they had all the same attributes of the modern world as the West, and their technology was placed “at the service of the communist revolution.” It was under that headline that the *Krasnaya Niva* magazine proudly announced that “now, for the first time in the world, a system of transmitting interpretation simultaneously with the speech has been introduced” (*Krasnaya Niva*, No. 32, August 5, 1928).

11. Note that Filene was not aware of the existence of Soviet competitors, although he learned about a competing SI system produced by Siemens & Halske in Germany when filing for international patents for the Filene-Finlay Translator in Europe in 1930 (CUNA 402299 AR 10 23 06 f0909w)wtZx: 4).

3. *Opinion on accuracy of SI vs. CI*

Clearly, the translation quality with this approach will be much better, and the translation immediately with the speaker will be significantly more accurate than the one performed afterwards – based on the interpreter’s memory and his notes.

(RGASPI 493-1-7-069)

It is interesting to note the author’s firm conviction that SI would be more accurate than consecutive. Debates regarding interpreting quality at that time were also going on in Geneva, where consecutive interpreters expressed opposition to the introduction of the simultaneous method based on the argument that the quality of SI was inferior, while some of their clients saw its advantages (Baigorri-Jalón *ibid.*: 156–157).

4. *Cost/benefit analysis of using the new system*

The cost of equipment, especially in our Andreev Hall, will be nominal. It will amount to the cost of wire, installation of 4–5 main bypasses, and the wiring of participants’ desks. The already existing radio equipment will require only 4 additional microphones and approximately 500 (one per delegate) ordinary [telephone] receivers. In my opinion, all this can be easily obtained for the Congress in the Low Voltage Trust, and nothing is going to happen to the [telephone] receivers if they are used for 2–3 weeks at the Congress. Savings resulting from this work will be enormous. On average, it will result in saving the Congress at least 2–3 weeks of proceedings, i.e. shorten it by approximately 20 days. If we multiply 20 days by the cost of daily subsistence for delegates, it is clear that it will save tens of thousands of rubles. Not to mention the time savings for important political persons.

(RGASPI 493-1-7-069)

The “Low Voltage Trust” was the nationalized Siemens telephone equipment factory in Moscow, but it was not the only place where the Comintern was looking to obtain equipment. At approximately the same time, on June 12, 1928, an unsigned letter addressed to H. (probably, Heimo) is received by the Executive Committee of the Comintern, possibly from a Comintern agent in Germany, where he reported on the results of his work to select “chest-worn telephone-microphones, such as those worn by girls at the telephone exchange, or by pilots,” and suggested purchasing 12 of them from Siemens (RGASPI 493-1-7-072).

Of note is also the comment about “time savings for important political persons.” As M. Heimo wrote on August 15, 1928, when the time came to remunerate Dr. Epshtein for his invention, “whereas it is difficult or nearly impossible to calculate the savings generated by the application of this system, in any case we can state that the time savings are at least 50 percent. Converting this, even approximately, into monetary units, we obtain savings of about 40,000 rubles” (RGASPI 493-1-393-031). Nevertheless, the financial aspect did not seem to be the decisive

factor here. Heimo emphasized the reputational gains for the country: “We stress again that the monetary savings here are rather modest, but this should in no way belittle the political and practical importance of this invention” (ibid.).

5. *Description of system installation*

The proof-of-concept document goes on to provide a technical outline of the proposed SI system that was to be installed in the Andreev Hall of the Kremlin. What remained of Dr. Epshtein’s original idea were the interpreting booths, and it was recommended to install them inside the meeting hall in direct view of the speaker, so that the interpreters could clearly see the auditorium from the end of the hall or from the space in front of the rostrum usually reserved for VIP boxes (loges).

From the microphone installed in front of the speaker on the rostrum, along with the wiring leading to the loudspeakers, bypass wiring should be made to the interpreters, say, into German, English, French, and Russian.¹² The interpreters should be placed either in adjacent rooms or, what would be preferable, in the hall itself in booths made to be similar to telephone booths (but somewhat larger), so that the interpreters could observe through the glass in the booth what is happening in the meeting hall, but so that, at the same time, their voices are not heard in the hall (the booths could be installed either at the end of the Andreev Hall or, conversely, instead of loges under the rostrum, using the space below the podium). The interpreters will listen to the speaker using ordinary receivers placed over their ears, and will be making their translation immediately following the words of the speaker into the microphone placed in front of them.

The microphones placed in front of the interpreters should be wired to the delegates’ desks, as follows: the German interpreter is to be connected to the group of German speaking participants, the English interpreter to the English speaking delegates, etc. The main lead going from the interpreters to all delegates should have simple extension wires terminated with ordinary telephone receivers.

Thus, any delegate who does not understand the language of the speaker can immediately follow the delegate by listening to the interpretation.

(RGASPI 493-1-7-068)

Booth design is described in detail for the first time – they were to be made “similar to telephone booths but somewhat larger” and equipped with glass panes to enable the interpreters to observe the meeting room while remaining soundproof. The interpreters were to be supplied with headphones to listen to the speaker and with microphones to transmit their voices to the participants. The interpretation was to be distributed around the room by sectors, to groups of seats reserved for participants following the proceedings in a particular language.

12. The 6th Comintern Congress used five working languages – Russian, German, French, English, and Chinese. (*Krasnaya Niva*, No. 32, August 5, 1928).

Epshtein's original 1925 proposal actually included this option as a cheaper alternative, whereby "the listeners are confined to their reserved seats but less wire is needed" (RGASPI 493-1-7-064).

The schematic diagram in Figure 4 shows the signal flow from the speaker on the podium to the interpreters' booths (one booth per language), and from the interpreters to the delegates whose seats are divided into sections based on the language they understand. Booths are drawn as cubes and interpreters are identified by the headphones symbol.

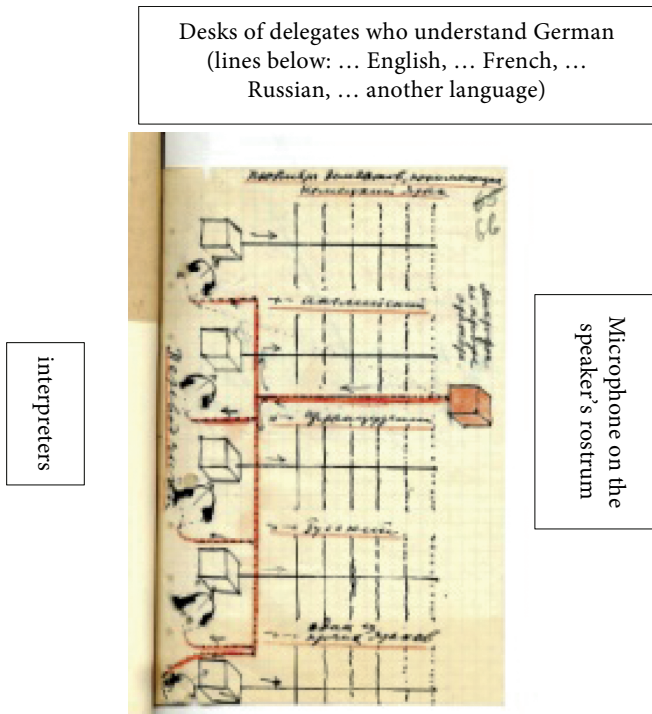


Figure 4. RGASPI 493-1-7-066

With the available records we can conclude that the most notable improvement over Epshtein's original concept of three years before was that the three-interpreter method was abandoned and interpreters were expected to provide full-text simultaneous interpreting, instead of relieving each other after each sentence. We draw this conclusion on the basis of several pieces of evidence. Interpreters' photos from the Congress (see Figures 7, 8, 9) are not consistent with the three-interpreter method – they show interpreters working independently; the comment that Epshtein's cumbersome method was significantly perfected by 1928 (RGASPI

493-1-393-031); the overall description of the SI process in the proof-of-concept document (“the interpreters ... will be making their translation immediately following the words of the speaker” (RGASPI 493-1-7-068)); and the schematic diagram in Figure 4 which shows one booth per language.

6. *Relay interpreting*

It is noteworthy that this document also contains a description of what would be referred to as relay interpreting in modern terminology:

In the event that the speaker were to speak, for example, a language understood by only one of the interpreters, and not understood by the rest of the interpreters (for example, the speaker is speaking Chinese and only one English interpreter understands him), it would be necessary to make a bypass connection from the English interpreter’s microphone to the other interpreters who understand English and translate into German, French, and Russian languages. The latter interpreters, having switched their microphone [*channel*] from the speaker at the rostrum [*floor channel*] to the interpreter making a translation into English [*pivot, or relay provider*], will immediately provide their respective interpretations into the other languages following the speaker and the speaker’s first interpreter.

(RGASPI 493-1-7-069)

Note that the pivot language was assumed to be English, not Russian. It could have been just an example with an arbitrary choice of languages, but it could also mean that the team of interpreters was international, or at least with language skills strong enough to work directly between languages other than Russian. This is indirectly supported by later requests from the Comintern Headquarters to the French communist party to send typists from France (RGASPI 495-18-879-9) and to procure abroad German-English, German-French and other dictionaries not involving Russian (RGASPI 495-18-879-9; RGAPSI 495-7-23-107). It could also mean a fundamental lack of understanding of how interpreting quality could suffer if interpreters were to work between their “B” or “C” languages. Incidentally, this method of providing SI at multilingual conferences would become standard years later in the USSR, but with Russian as the pivot language. As the Soviet Union became more and more isolated from the rest of the world, this approach was understandable: with a nearly total absence of interpreters whose language combinations did not include Russian (for example, English-French or Spanish-German), SI at multilingual conferences always assumed that Russian was the pivot language for the other languages: for example, English-into-French interpretation would be provided in two steps: the Russian/English booth would interpret from English into Russian, and the Russian/French booth would take relay from Russian into French (see Minyar-Beloruhev 1994: 105).

As the Congress had to change its venue on short notice, and not everything that was planned for the Kremlin ended up being implemented in the House of the Unions, what exactly did the organizers of SI have to sacrifice?

The way SI was actually organized can be pieced together from the above-quoted report in the *Krasnaya Niva* magazine (*Krasnaya Niva*, No. 32, August 5, 1928) and several photos preserved in the RGASPI archive.

The delegates' seats were not wired by language sectors, as was proposed in the proof-of-concept paper to save on telephone wire – each delegate's desk was equipped with five pairs of jacks, corresponding to the five Congress languages, and the delegates could select their desired language by plugging their headphones in to the respective jack (see photo in Figure 5).



Figure 5. RGASPI 493-1-677-091



Figure 6. RGASPI 493-1-677-092

The photos in Figures 5 and 6 show delegate desks (similar to student desks of the period) revealing hastily strung wires terminating in a plate with plug-in connection jacks, each labeled with the name of the language (Russian, German, French, English, or Chinese). The headphones are not connected, leaving it up to the delegate to connect to the language of their choice.

No interpreting booths were installed, and interpreters were not provided with headphones to listen to the speakers. They were seated in ordinary theater armchairs in the front rows close to the rostrum, listened to the speaker with no sound reinforcement, and spoke in low voices to minimize interference with each other. They used no sound-dampening devices similar to the Hush-a-Phones employed in the Filene-Finlay system (Chernov 2013:72). The interpreters had neck-worn telephone exchange operators' microphones that were, most likely, purchased for them in Germany, as described above.



Figure 7. RGASPI 493-1-677-096



Figure 8. RGASPI 493-1-677-105

The photos in Figures 7 and 8 show interpreters at work, seated in armchairs. One of the men is smoking, and the female interpreter is holding a water flask. Their names are not identified. Note that both men and women served as interpreters: as interpreting was a rare skill, there was no discrimination based on gender, and,

according to Comintern personnel records, many interpreters were Jewish and not members of the Party (this would change later in Soviet history).

The interpreting mode was, most likely, spontaneous simultaneous, at least part of the time. We base this conclusion on the following note that was distributed to the delegates several days into the work of the Congress, on July 25, 1928:

TO THE DELEGATES OF THE VIth CONGRESS

To simplify the work of the interpreters and possibly improve the interpretation quality, we ask all speakers who have drafted their speeches in advance, to provide 3–4 copies of their speech to the Secretariat before delivering it. In cases when there is no written speech, it would be good to provide a summary of talking points to the interpreters in advance. (RGASPI 493-1-393-005)



Figure 9. RGASPI 493-1-677-095

With no booths or sound-dampening microphone attachments, the interpreters had to improvise makeshift sound insulation techniques. Figure 9 shows how interpreters have commandeered a prompter's box. The interpreter on the left is covering his mouth with a sheet of paper to help isolate his voice. He is looking over the prompter's box to try and see the speaker whom he is interpreting. The second interpreter is either doing sight translation (or SI with text), or perhaps preparing a speech. The pocket watch placed on the desk between them may indicate that the interpreters could have been using it to monitor the duration of their turns at the microphone.

In Figure 10, interpreters are either on a break or studying documents to prepare for the next session. They seem to be highly popular, being surrounded by curious delegates. A photographer is seen pointing the camera at them. One of the interpreters is rubbing his temples, attempting to concentrate. The bald-headed interpreter in the deep corner has been identified as “interpreter Kobyliansky.” Efforts were made to identify other interpreters from the 6th Congress, but so far the archives have yielded no information enabling us to positively identify any other interpreters on these photos.



Figure 10. RGASPI 493-1-677-103



Figure 11. RGASPI 493-3-58-058

The archive file caption for Figure 11 identifies this individual as “interpreter Kobyliansky.” This is the same photo as was published in the *Krasnaya Niva* (No. 32, August 5, 1928) as shown above in this chapter. Our research of interpreter Kobyliansky has revealed details of his incredible life story and professional career (see Box 4).

5. First conference interpreters in the USSR

The Comintern archives are largely silent on the personalities of that first generation of conference interpreters. As seen above, the only interpreter from the 6th Congress identified by name is Kazimir Kobyliansky. Yet we were able to find some information about interpreters and translators recruited for the 6th Congress of the KIM (Communist International of the Youth) held in 1935 (RGASPI 533-1-316-10/11). Interpreters were recruited from various Comintern-family organizations,

Box 4. Kazimir Kobyliansky

Kazimir Kobyliansky (aka Casimiro Kobylianskij, aka Roberto Bertoli), 1904–??, was born in Paris into the family of an exiled Russian-Polish revolutionary. When Kazimir was one year old, the family moved to Italy, where he was raised and lived until 1923. Having participated in Socialist youth rallies, he was arrested by Italian police and exiled from Italy. He made his way to Soviet Russia and, as a native speaker of Russian and Italian with working knowledge of French (he acquired Spanish later), he became an interpreter/translator/analyst for the Comintern, KIM, and Profintern. He worked as an interpreter at the 5th, 6th, and 7th Comintern Congresses. In 1936–38, during the Civil War in Spain, he served as an interpreter in the Spanish Republican Air Force and upon return to the USSR was awarded a Red Star for his service. In Spain he was known as Roberto Bertoli. Upon return from Spain, he worked for the TASS news agency, several publishing houses, and after World War II began teaching Italian language and history, first at the Diplomatic Academy and then the Maurice Thorez Institute of Foreign Languages in Moscow. He published a book of memoirs in Italy in 1988.

(Kobylianskij 1988; MSIFL Archives)

in addition to the KIM itself: Comintern, Profintern (Red International of Labor Unions), ILS (International Lenin School, which provided ideological training for foreign communist students), MOPR (International Red Aid), as well as the Central Union of Electrical Engineering, the Union of Agricultural Workers, and even NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, precursor of the KGB). They were recruited based on their language combinations and directions.

For example, while most interpreters worked in language pairs involving Russian (English-Russian, German-Russian, bidirectional or unidirectional), there were some multilingual interpreters capable of bypassing Russian and working in such language combinations as German-English, French-English-German, English-French-German-Spanish, French-Norwegian, English-Norwegian, German-Norwegian, and even an interpreter who could work “from all Scandinavian languages.” One interpreter was classified as “capable of working in committees only,” which attests to the differentiation between different classes of interpreters based on their skills. There was also a category of escort interpreters who were to “accompany delegates in their factory tours and excursions” (RGASPI 493-1-7-033).

All together the provisional team of the Congress comprised 26 interpreters, working in over 20 language combinations. As far as we can judge, the team was international and included non-Russian native speakers capable of working between English, German, French, Spanish, and Norwegian directly, without going through Russian. Some interpreters with Russian as their “A” language are listed only as working into a foreign language. This is, possibly, a reflection of what would become a hallmark of the Soviet interpreting school – focus on interpreting into one’s “B” language (Minyar-Beloruhev 1994: 105).

6. Interpreter training and working conditions

Analyzing professional backgrounds of interpreters from the 1935 KIM Congress, we can begin to paint a typical interpreter profile of the era. Early Soviet interpreters were either Russian-born people who studied foreign languages or, in more rare cases, bilinguals or those who acquired foreign languages by spending time abroad. While the latter ones were mobilized for translation and interpreting work because of their existing language skills, the former category received language training. The majority of interpreters were not members of the Party, and they were often Jews and many were women.

Most interpreters in the consulted archives did not have university degrees. Prior to 1930, the institution offering language training was the Higher Foreign Language Courses attached to the Library of Foreign Literature in Moscow. These courses became very popular and in 1930 they were transformed into the Institute of New Languages, precursor of the Maurice Thorez Institute of Foreign Languages, the first institution to offer tertiary education degrees in languages.¹³ Between 1930 and 1933, the Institute had two branches – Translation and Teacher Training, each subdivided into English, French, and German sections. The Translation Branch seems to have offered rudimentary training (its objective was to train interpreter-guides) and was shut down in 1933, when the country began to close its doors to foreigners. Some of the initial trainers were foreigners who were not professional language instructors but whose main value was being native speakers. It was reopened in 1942 as the Department of Translation with the growth of demand for military interpreters and translators (Nikolsky 2001a: 5, 2001b: 6).

Regarding the interpreters' working conditions, we know that interpreters at the 6th Comintern Congress in 1928 were going to be paid the equivalent of the "party maximum,"¹⁴ provided with free meals and granted an extended leave of up to one month (RGASPI 493-1-7-033). At the 6th KIM Congress in 1935, when

13. The Institute of Foreign Languages was the leading institution of higher learning in the USSR that offered professional language degrees, with two main tracks, pedagogical (trained foreign language teachers) and translation (trained translators and interpreters). In 1990, it was transformed into the Moscow State Linguistic University.

14. "Party maximum" (partmaximum) was a wage ceiling imposed on Soviet communist party members, introduced in 1920. The highest salary of a party official under this principle was not to exceed the salary of a skilled worker. On May 7, 1928, the party maximum was fixed at 2,700 rubles per year (225 rubles per month). The party maximum was *de facto* abolished at the end of 1929, and officially cancelled by secret decree of the Politburo of February 8, 1932 (Felshtinsky 2002: 112).

the “party maximum” was no longer applied, they were paid a very generous rate of 55 rubles per day (the average wage of a Russian worker in 1935 was 170 rubles a month) (Wollenberg 1936: 70–72).

Translation and interpreting work seems to have been mostly interchangeable, and translators were recruited to work as interpreters whenever circumstances called for it. In fact, as the Russian term “перевод” applies both to translation and interpreting, and the term “переводчик” to translator/interpreter, it is often not easy to distinguish which type of work is referred to in Russian documents, unless the term “устный перевод” (“oral translation” = interpreting) is used. Nevertheless, it is our general conclusion from analyzing the primary sources that the Comintern Translation Bureau employed full-time translators, and whenever interpreters were needed for congresses, ad hoc teams would be put together from translators and other staff from various organizations in Moscow who were deemed up to the task. Freelance interpreters did not seem to exist as a category, but interpreters/translators who held full-time jobs with one organization were allowed to moonlight for other organizations or would be temporarily seconded to them.

Some information could be found about the status of translators. For example, on September 11, 1931, the Political Secretariat adopted procedures for hiring and dismissal of ECCI staff members. It established three categories of employees: executive staff (high-ranking officials), political officers (professional staff), and technical staff. Translators were placed in the category of political officers appointed by the Political Secretariat (unlike technical staff, who were appointed by the Personnel unit) (Adibekov et al. 1997: 38). This demonstrates that translators (and interpreters) were valued for their rare skills and expertise.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of the initial SI system and method proposed by Dr. Epshtein in 1925 reveals its multiple deficiencies, but it was nevertheless a fascinating attempt to accomplish a task that seemed impossible at the time – interpreting speeches into multiple languages at the same time and simultaneously with the original speaker. The technical design and process improvement performed in the three years leading up to the 1928 Comintern Congress offered incredible progress, producing a very sophisticated system very closely resembling a modern SI arrangement as we know it today. The system was tested, interpreters were selected, and a decision was made to install it in the Kremlin. For political reasons, the Congress was moved to a different venue shortly before opening day, and several fundamental aspects of planned SI arrangements had to be sacrificed. The original proposal involved the use of SI booths with direct view of the speakers, sound reinforcement for

interpreters, and relay interpreting; and it outlined the advantages of using SI over CI, such as better quality, time savings for VIPs, substantial monetary savings, and reputational gains. The actual setup, as implemented, was substantially pared down: no SI booths were built, and there was no sound reinforcement for interpreters. Based on archival evidence, at least part of the time the interpreting mode was spontaneous SI.

Multiple file photos are available in the archives, but no names could be attached to most interpreters in the photos. On the other hand, an interpreting team roster from a congress in 1935 was located, which allowed us to glimpse into early interpreters' typical profiles and professional backgrounds.

Some of the interpreting problems highlighted in the early years of SI were still debated decades later (such as simultaneous listening and speaking), and others are still relevant today (relative quality of SI vs. CI, pros and cons of working into one's "A" or one's "B" language, interpreter fatigue, etc.). More research could be done in this field, including re-creating Epshtein's three-interpreter environment in a historical experiment or reenactment using a slightly modified modern SI system. The identity of Dr. Epshtein still remains largely a mystery, as well as the evolution of the originally proposed SI system and method between 1925 and 1928. Finally, more research is needed to bring out the identities of Russia's first conference interpreters, to find out more information about their training and working conditions. We have just scratched the surface.

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CHAPTER 7

The use of photographs as historical sources, a case study

Early simultaneous interpreting at the United Nations

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This chapter presents a case study of how photographs can offer different angles of the dynamics involved in a complex observable event or series of events. As shown in previous research, photographs can only be valid historical sources if we are able to interpret them, and that requires the observer's active participation and the use of additional sources, such as written or oral records. I analyze eight United Nations (UN) official photographs as part of the founding narrative of simultaneous interpreting (SI) history. After introducing the theoretical and methodological background, I present the historical context of SI at the UN. The analysis of the photographs focuses on (1) the SI equipment, (2) the interpreters, and (3) the users of their services.

Keywords: photographs as historical sources, simultaneous interpreting, United Nations interpreters

1. Theoretical and methodological approach

Photographs are objects that can perform many functions, from pieces of art to marketing tools, from private family mementos to public forensic records, from illustrations in popular magazines to evidences in scientific work, to name but a few. The aim of this chapter is to provide a practical example of how photographs can be used as primary historical sources, in this case to document the initial stages of SI at the UN, through images of: (1) those who performed the interpreting work, (2) the technical equipment, and (3) the users of the interpreting services, either the public in general or other language experts.

As pointed out by various authors (Brothers 1997; Díaz-Barrado 2012; De las Heras 2012; Kossoy 2014), photographs are valid historical records. However, although photos are one of the most precious primary sources to know the

past, they have been only timidly used in historical research, probably due to an entrenched historical tradition that considered written documents as the only reliable sources to rebuild history. As Tagg (1993:65) would say, photos “are never ‘evidence’ of history; they are themselves the historical.” The photos analyzed in this chapter help, in my view, to better explain and understand a specific episode in the history of the interpreting profession, and also to bring to life the memory of its practitioners, their fingerprints so to say. This line of research, which has interpreting as its object of analysis, stems from a previous article on iconography of interpreters in colonial times (Alonso-Araguás and Baigorri-Jalón 2004) and is inspired by a recent book edited by Fernández-Ocampo and Wolf (2014) and by comments I made on a UN photo (Baigorri-Jalón 2015: 21–22).

Photographs do not necessarily represent a univocal collective consciousness (Brothers 1997:30). They should rather be taken as “a source of multiple collective memories and therefore components of history as a creative process,” serving “the imagination of historians” and feeding “their creative instincts” (Brenne and Hardt 1999:7). In that context, the idea that “[m]emory works radially, that is to say with an enormous number of associations all leading to the same event” (Berger 1980:60) should be taken into consideration.

As sites of memory, photographic images (whether digital or analogue) offer not a view on history but, as mnemonic devices, are perceptual phenomena upon which a historical representation may be constructed. Social memory is interfered with by photography precisely because of its affective and subjective status.

(Bate 2010: 255–256)

No matter how stimulating photographs may be for viewers, historians are aware that they do not contain sufficient information to fully rebuild historical events. Although it seems difficult to refute the condition of a photograph as “a reliable trace of the visible and the ‘real,’” “an image on its own is not automatically proof of anything” (Ritchin 2013: 8, 48). So the question of whether or not truth is embedded in each image complicates its use as a historical source. It is widely assumed that photographs are mere representations of objects or people, but although “we *know* that the photograph is a construction ... we persist in *believing* that it is a truth” (Laxton 2008:97).

Interpreting photographs is, thus, a complex process that depends largely on knowing the context they depict (Sekula 2003:445). Even if “in semiotic terms, we can easily read the basic denotations of old photographs, without any historical knowledge we are deprived of their historical ‘connotations’” (Bate 2004: 11). That is one reason why captions are an “essential component of photographs” (Benjamin 1980/1931:215), although a caption cannot “resolve all its potential meanings” (Ritchin 2013:50). The meaning of any photograph depends on the

context in which the photograph was taken, but also on the place and moment in which it was or is observed by a given viewer. Photographic images should not then be seen here as objects of a passive but an active “consumption,” which requires an exercise of guessing and “filling in” (Laxton 2008:95–96). Photographs would indeed have forensic value, but a combination of denotation (what we see) and connotation (what that implies for the viewer) allows to dispel the idea of apparent denotative “purity” of images (Faulkner 2008: 104).

Coming to the issue of source criticism, the remark made by Di Bello (2008: 143) that “[h]istory, like photography, is never a neutral or unproblematic representation of the past” seems quite appropriate. Researchers should, in my view, approach photographic sources with “the same methodological rigour” we apply to “other historical artefacts” (Brothers 1997: 16). Curiously enough, “this type of critical analysis is rarely done on photographic documents” (Parinet 1996: 485).

The series of photographs in this study can be seen as a dynamic sequence (Burke 2001: 187–188), which may be articulated in a coherent narrative, with “an unavoidable discursivity” (Baker 2005: 125), even if “there is the problem of representing a dynamic sequence in the form of a static scene, in other words of using space to replace time” (Burke 2001: 143). Photographs “are *texts* inscribed in terms of what we may call ‘photographic discourse,’ but this discourse, like any other, engages discourses beyond itself: the ‘photographic text’ is thus the site of a complex ‘intertextuality’” (Burgin 1982: 144). The fact that an organization such as the UN has kept in its archives, among many other records, the iconographic heritage of its interpreters would be a proof of their social recognition. As pointed out by Hall (2001: 89), the constitution of an archive implies the presence of self-consciousness and self-reflexivity, where the whole apparatus of history – periods, key figures and works, tendencies, shifts, breaks, ruptures – slips silently into place. That whole “apparatus of history” emerges from the photographs presented in this case study and from others on interpreters that can be found at the UN archives. Researching the whole collection would allow to build an iconographic biography of UN interpreters. I argue that the photographs specifically analyzed here contribute to map a phenomenon which meant a shift or even a rupture, led by some key figures, in the historical evolution – or sociogenesis – of the interpreting profession. The newly established UN was a test bed for SI as a permanent interpreting mode.

The sequence followed in the chapter will start by briefly putting SI in context before turning to the photographs’ analysis in the following order: (1) the technical revolution (wiring, microphones and booths); (2) the interpreters; and (3) the consequences SI had for other language services. A few discussion points will be offered as concluding remarks.

2. Simultaneous interpreting at the United Nations: The context

Simultaneous interpreting had been used since the late 1920s at the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Geneva (Baigorri-Jalón 2014/2000), but the immediate inspiration for using that interpreting mode at the UN came directly from the experience at the Nuremberg main trial (1945–1946), and in fact it was the same person, Léon Dostert, who introduced the SI system both at Nuremberg and at the United Nations, as a result of a technological invention originally patented as the Filene-Finlay system (Baigorri-Jalón 2004: 57–60). The UN Charter established five official languages (Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish) – Arabic would be added much later – so permanent translation and interpretation services among those languages had to be provided, although at the initial stages of the Organization, and according to the rules of procedure of various bodies, the target languages were only English and French, the two working languages. After a series of tests that began in 1946, SI was adopted as the standard interpreting mode at the end of the 1947 General Assembly session, as a method that, compared with consecutive interpreting, would save the Organization a lot of time.

Under the system of consecutive interpretation, we are taking three speeches per meeting. All these speeches are, of course, prepared. It would considerably facilitate operations, if we could have simultaneous interpretation at the very earliest possible time, so as to prevent this general debate from running on for another two weeks.

(UN File S-0922, Box 2, file 2, *unpublished sources item 1*, 2 October 1947)

The instruction from the UN Secretary-General came soon:

...the Secretary-General now wants arrangements made for the installation of simultaneous interpretation equipment at Flushing Meadow to cover all five official languages. I have today given the necessary instructions to proceed on this installation...

(UN File S-0922, Box 2, file 2, *unpublished sources item 2*, 30 September 1947)

The tests were successful in the eyes of a specific committee charged with the task of undertaking the UN decision-making process on that matter. In the assessment of the initial experiments, the fact that the time needed for interpretation was reduced considerably was an essential factor for the decision-makers – ultimately Member States –, who based their judgment more on financial considerations than on perceived interpretation quality. However, consecutive interpreting did not disappear officially from meeting rooms until 1971. Until that date, delegates attending the Security Council were entitled to ask for consecutive interpretation after listening to the simultaneous – with the need to assign double teams –, but delegates never used that right throughout those years.

...all requests for an extension of the [SI] system have been put forward on the grounds of saving time, and not of convenience. In fact, objections have been made on the grounds of inconvenience in debate and inevitable lowering of standards of quality of the translations.

(UN File S-0922, Box 2, file 2, *unpublished sources item 3*, undated (originally underlined))

One may wonder on what grounds the UN management would base that idea of identifying SI with a loss of quality, but a plausible hypothesis would be that innovation was seen with suspicion by managers, users and consecutive interpreters alike. Be it as it may, the consequences of the decision were huge, and not just for the daily procedure of the UN meetings and the delegates' mindset, but also for the adoption of new and increasingly sophisticated technology and, in turn, for a decisive shift in the interpreting profession's profile and working conditions. In that context, the UN would become an institution of crucial importance in the field of interpreting as a center of dominant discourse formation and power (Harvey 2001: 195). Its influence would be felt well beyond the Organization even though the total number of staff interpreters around 1950 was only over 60, including the consecutive and the simultaneous teams. The proportion of female interpreters was still 22%, much higher than at the League of Nations but still below the figures reached in future decades (UN doc. ST/AFS/0S8:70–71).

3. Looking past the photographs

I will analyze briefly a series of eight United Nations official photographs dated between 1946 and 1948, the initial years of the UN (founded at the San Francisco Conference in 1945), which provide early images related to SI. By choosing these photos – only a small fraction of the photos devoted to interpreting and interpreters kept at the UN archive –, I am taking position on a particular view of how an event or a succession of them is represented in photographs, as artifacts which often reproduce other artifacts. The black and white photos were commissioned by the UN Department of Public Information, possibly to disseminate the Organization's wide range of activities and to keep a record of its institutional memory, that is, with the eyes put in the future. They are thus part of an "institutional" photographic archive (Parinet 1996: 482). Institutional photographs are taken by photographers from different backgrounds, "whose work is most often done anonymously" (Parinet 1996: 483), so the photographer's mark is usually absent from the majority of the photographs presented here. Photos are identified with a symbol, usually a number, although occasionally we can find in the caption

a name or initials, attributable to the photographer or to personnel in the photographic unit. That anonymity in authorship also applied and applies to the work of UN translators and interpreters.

I am using here only a very limited amount of photos dealing with the topic at hand, while being aware of the triple selection involved: (1) the UN photographic archive, as any other archive, selects what its managers consider worth preserving, and includes a number of negatives and paper copies which exceeds by far the some 130 digitized photos of various dates and contents related to interpreters contained in the UN Multimedia photo gallery page (http://www.unmultimedia.org/photo/gallery.jsp?query=legacy%3Ay&startat=0&sf=arrival_date), (2) among all the photographic holdings, I have been able to see only a limited number of photographs, and (3) only a small fraction of those are used in this chapter. None of them seem to have been the object of intentionally subversive technical manipulation.

Photos 1 to 6 have been digitized at a professional printer's from the paper copies supplied by the UN Photo Unit (now UN Multimedia), Department of Public Information, in New York, from original negatives (Photo 4 is now available in digital format at <http://www.unmultimedia.org/photo/gallery.jsp?query=interpreter>), and Photos 7 and 8 have been taken directly from the digital database. These photographs come with different types of captions: from a simple numeric symbol to a more detailed explanation of the photo's subject. Even if the photographs do not belong to a specific series, taken together, in chronological order, they can be seen as signposts to map the path of early SI. The various instances or events reflected on them can be seen, in my view, as a theme, a sort of documentary series, which allows for a more coherent narrative than an isolated image. In the selection of the photographs I have tried to include those with interpreters, equipment and users of interpreting services. My additional comments on the photos, of variable length depending on each instance, intend to help understand them in their context and also to suggest further related research.

Most of the photographs in this chapter touch, directly or indirectly, upon the technical aspects of the SI revolution. In that context, a certain parallelism can be established between photography as "a product and witness of industrial revolution whose consequences have marked the social and political struggles of the twentieth century" (Brenne and Hardt 1999: 2) and the technological advances brought about by the installation of this innovative interpreting equipment in the 1940s. If an instantaneous photograph does not exist, as all "are time exposures, of shorter or longer duration" (Szarkowski 2003: 101), the same would apply to SI, since there is always a time-lag between the original speaker's utterance and that of the interpreter, putting into question the idea of true simultaneity.

From the historical perspective, these UN photographs are reliable primary sources, duly stored and cataloged. The main general criticism that can be made about them refers to their lack of spontaneity, which results in a static visual narrative. Most of them were taken by photographers while people on the picture knew the photo was being shot, so when interpreters are the subject, they appear posing rather than at work. The photographic medium, as I have said, is as artificial as any other record, so criticism could be based on the photographer's composition, even though photographers do not have full control over the resulting image. Interpreting and interpreters were the targets of UN photographers because they were newsworthy: they were associated with a technical innovation which prompted reactions of awe and marvel when interpreters' photos and biographical sketches reached the public through the press. In turn, the feeling of being a *rara avis* (their critics called them *parrots*), as echoed by newspapers, nurtured in some of those characters a narcissistic ego.

3.1 The simultaneous revolution: Equipment

The changes in equipment will be articulated along two major elements: the sound transmission system from the original speaker to the interpreters' headsets and then, once translated into the respective target languages – sometimes through the use of relay –, to the users' headsets; and the booths as the physical space where interpreters carry out the language transfer process.

3.1.1 “Wireless wiring”: *The instant communication symbol*

Benedikt's following quotation on cyberspace can be also applied to the revolutionary changes brought about by the SI mode as implemented in the UN's early days:

...the major step being taken here, technologically, is the transition, wherever advantageous, from information transported physically, and thus against inertia and friction, to information transported electrically along wires, and thus effectively without resistance or delay. Add to this the ability to store information electromagnetically ... and we see yet another significant and evolutionary step in dematerializing the medium and conquering – as they say – space and time.

(Benedikt 1991:9)

A similar figure of speech on the conquest of space and time was used by Baigorri-Jalón (1999) in his description of the revolutionary changes entailed by *in situ* and remote simultaneous modes as the two ends of a process that had begun in the 1920s and is still on-going. SI helps overcome the time – and to a certain extent also the space – factor, thanks to the use of electrical wiring that connects the various actors involved in the interpreted event, via microphones and headsets.

Following Benedikt's comments, one may add that in the SI system friction and inertia are transferred to the interpreters' brains and their synapses, where resistance, delays and other shortcomings may occur while processing the apparently smooth flow of speech through wireless signals. Friction between input in one language and immediate output into another is indeed the crux of the balance that simultaneous interpreters had – and have – to find in their performance (see Gile 2009: 157–190).



Photo 1. Mr. E. P. Cisneros of Cuba; Mr. Wu Teh-Yuh, China. Economic and Employment Commission, 22 January 1947. UN Official Photo 3687

Photo 1 can be seen as an audio-portrait – its legend could be “individuals wearing headphones” (Gill 2004, referring to photographs of the 1980s). The two diplomats on the picture, from Cuba and China, are interacting – presumably in English, which was displacing French as leading language of diplomacy – not about issues pertaining to the commission whose meeting they were attending, but rather about how to operate the SI receiver, perhaps wondering if their maneuvers with the knobs in the contraption would really produce a message in all UN languages. It seems that the Cuban delegate was much more actively interested, or less conversant than his Chinese counterpart, in the functioning of the sound apparatus. The photographer (anonymous) caught the two characters in a quite spontaneous situation, although we cannot say for sure that they were unaware of being photographed.

The headphones were only receivers and came from the United States Transmission Corps, and the wireless transmission signal for SI used radio frequency bands the US Navy was not using, thus showing that military technology often precedes other civil uses. Headphones were hung around users' necks – the strap contained the aerial – and they weighed just over a pound. Thanks to the wireless sound transmission, delegates could continue listening to the proceedings of the meeting even if they had to leave briefly the conference room. At the moment when the photo was taken, the meeting had not started, so no sound could actually be heard through any of the channels. It is interesting to note that the two delegates seem to be wearing the headphones in a very natural manner. One of the claims made around that time by consecutive interpreters to oppose the simultaneous mode was that diplomats would refuse to wear headphones to avoid looking as participants in a telephone operators' conference (Baigorri-Jalón 2004: 55, 71). This photograph seems to prove those interpreters wrong.



Photo 2. UN 6618. Visitors to the United Nations interim headquarters at Lake Success follow discussion in the Economic and Social Council Chamber with the aid of portable wireless simultaneous interpretation sets. Each set consists of a pair of earphones and a miniature radio receiver, with a dial, which makes it possible to select any of the five official languages. Lake Success, New York, 31 July 1947

The anonymous photographer took a general view of a group of visitors properly attired for the occasion. They appear listening to the speaker or the interpreter

who was on air at that moment through headphones whose functioning surely required some basic operation instructions given by sound technicians at the entrance of the conference room (Baigorri-Jalón 2015:21–22). Their attentive look could be an instinctive response to pose for the photograph. Present-day viewers may wonder if they were more interested in following the proceedings of an economic and social body during their brief visit or simply in the unique opportunity to test the innovative devices that allowed them to hear the same speech in different languages. Their reaction after experiencing the interpreting system would possibly be one of admiration, as if they had witnessed a marvel produced by unseen anonymous people, the interpreters, almost identifiable with machines. The press referred to interpreters as “mental wizards and linguistic virtuosos” (Iglauer *Harper’s Magazine*, April 1947:296), or “real word wizards” (*The New York Times*, October 3, 1948:10). Consecutive interpreters saw in anonymity, seclusion in booths and assimilation to machines their strongest arguments to oppose the simultaneous mode.

Photograph 3 was taken in Paris, venue of the 3rd General Assembly session (1948), where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. The photographer would carry his duty of reducing a three-dimensional object to a two-dimensional one, and of providing an aseptic forensic image for the record that would prove the interpreting apparatus existed and was ready to be installed at the *Palais de Chaillot* in Paris. In fact, there are photos of the same device from other angles – UN official photos numbers 11635, 11636, and 11637 – which, combined, would add that third dimension. The photographer would be seen here as a notary public who conveys what is registered by the camera (Gómez-Isla 2006:104).

Meetings outside the UN headquarters entailed in those days the need to transport the technical equipment as well as the interpreters and other staff. The apparatus used on that occasion in Paris had to be “shipped by boat leaving New York by 17 August 1948,” after removing it “from both Council Chambers by 9 August,” so “simultaneous interpretation will not be available in either Council Chamber as from that date.” However, the usual “facilities will of course be provided for consecutive interpretation” (UN File S-0922, Box 3, file 11, *unpublished sources item 1*, 27 July 1948). This record shows the shortage of technical equipment in the early days of SI at the UN, as well as the Organization’s readiness to replace the recently approved simultaneous mode with well-entrenched consecutive interpreting. Regarding the interpreters who worked at the General Assembly session in Paris, Geneva was a convenient source of human resources: “If ECE holds two meetings daily during the Assembly we will take five of the Geneva interpreters to Paris” (UN File S-0922, Box 3, file 11, *unpublished sources item 2*, 30 June 1948).

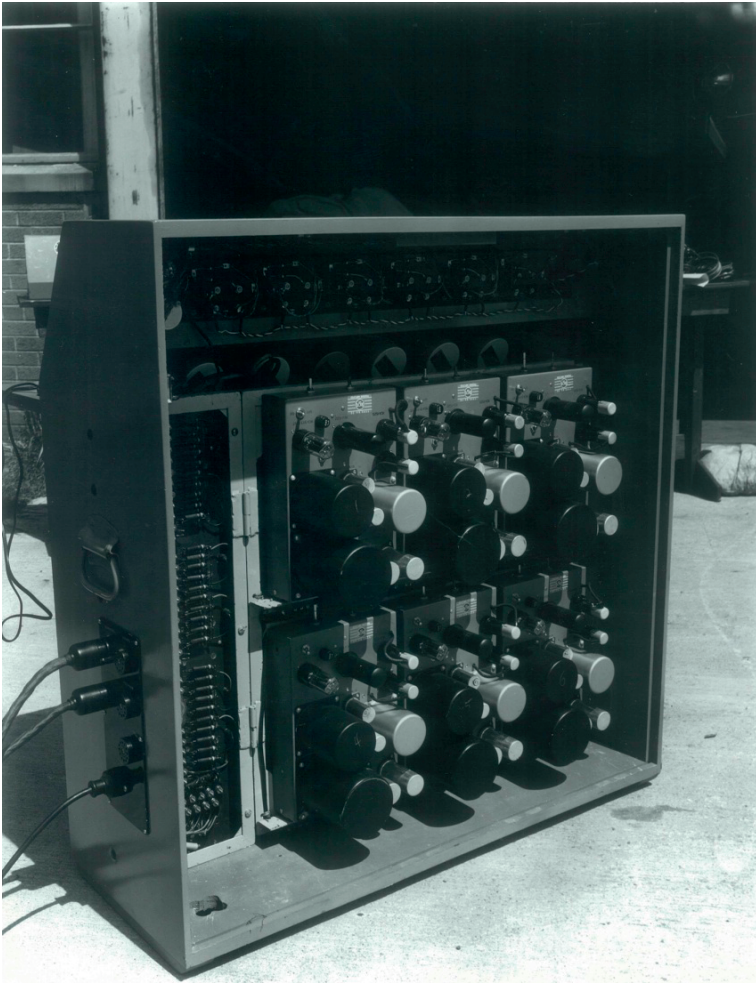


Photo 3. U.N. moves to Paris its simultaneous interpretation equipment. UN 11638. Rear view of portable control console, with amplifier mounting frame closed. Official United Nations Photo. Department of Public Information. (Undated 1948)

This – at first sight – unattractive image can be approached from the perspective that in photography what is left outside the frame can be considered as non-existent (Díaz-Barrado 2012: 146), and that photographs can be attributed a dual function: “first, to reinforce what is present in the photographs as images and second to refer beyond the object and the image in a mutually reinforcing sign system” (Edwards 2002: 72). In that context, the lifeless and dull object in this “industrial” photograph – not exempt of a picturesque touch – represents the actual “black box” of polyphonic communication. But it can also be looked at,

with an imaginative, almost ethnographic perspective, not just as the ignition mechanism that allowed the flow of polyglot speeches to happen, but also as an allegory where the physical cables and circuits would symbolize the interpreters' neuronal synapses needed to perform the multilingual connections. In Latour's social terms, the black box would be the *intermediary*, that is, "what transports meaning without transformation," whereas interpreters would be the *mediators*, who "transform, translate, distort and modify the meaning of the elements they are supposed to carry" so that material objects would also be *participants* in the course of action (Latour 2005: 39, 71). If a photo can be seen as a ventriloquist that speaks in a different way depending on the viewer (Debray 1992: 58), one can imagine the diverse or even opposed views different people concerned with the device could have of such an image. The photo would thus constitute a site of intellectual dispute (Harvey and Knox 2014: 4), where the material mirror requires the "mediating agency of human consciousness" (Joyce and Bennett 2010: 5).

Colonel Dostert, the organizer of the SI experiment at Nuremberg and then at the UN, could see this photo with the eyes of a visionary. His romantic view of technology, inspired by a sort of scientific Utopia, would lead him to see in that device the embryo of a machine that would replace the human brain. By the time this photograph was taken in Paris, Dostert was halfway between the UN and Georgetown University, where in the following years, at the height of the Cold War, he would pursue research on machine translation through a series of algorithms that enabled simple translations from Russian into English. SI would redefine for him the dimensions of time and, to a lesser extent, of space. However, when it came to the necessary participation of pioneer interpreters in the early SI tests, Dostert's advice, as referred by one of them, was:

Don't be afraid. Keep calm. Remember, you have to tell the story; your client is supposed not to have heard or understood the original delivery. Say what you have understood. Don't panic; just do your job. (Pervushin 1989: 69)

Those are instructions that no machine would be able to process.

In the context of the second industrial revolution – the environment where the technical advances visible in the picture fit –, the electrical engineers' challenge would be that of providing sound lines, wiring, frequency ranges, etc. to all the posts in the conference room. It seems clear that industry had an influence in scientific research – IBM registered the Filene-Finlay SI system patent in 1931 –, but inventions were demand-driven: in this case by the UN, and previously by the ILO, the League of Nations and the Nuremberg main trial.

The typical consecutive interpreter would associate this device with "apocalypse now" or in the very near future. Their initial corporate reaction was to despise the "machine," short of destroying it, as Luddites would have done. Consecutive interpreters probably thought simultaneous interpreters were betraying their past,

contributing to the commodification of their tasks, and recklessly destroying the profession as they knew it. They would identify the new system with a loss of quality in interpreting, due *inter alia* to technical problems, as those experienced at the Paris General Assembly.

For the second time a meeting of the First Committee has had to be suspended because of the defective performance of the wireless head sets (*sic*) used for simultaneous interpretation. At this morning's meeting of the First Committee Channel #2, conducting the translation into English, was out of order and the Chairman was obliged to suspend the meeting for ten minutes.

Through the kindness of the Chinese delegation, the interpretation into Chinese was discontinued and the interpretation into English was placed on Channel #6. No further translation into Chinese was possible by reason of this change of Channels, for the rest of the morning meeting.

(UN File S-0922, Box 3, File 11, *unpublished sources item 3*, 1 October 1948)

But quite likely the consecutive interpreters' true fear was that they would lose the upper hand and that eventually, unable to absorb innovation, their professional career would be at stake. That is why a real "guerrilla warfare" broke out between the two groups of interpreters (consecutive and simultaneous) (Iglauer 1947:298). A non-equilibrium state ensued and they were either eliminated or in most cases assimilated by the simultaneous mode. Consecutive interpreters claimed that SI deprived delegates of the "time to think" they enjoyed with "their" consecutive mode, although they soon abandoned this argument. One may wonder whether they were moved mainly by corporate interest or also by their sincere evaluation of simultaneous speed as a sort of anesthesia that invited oblivion while the slowness of consecutive allowed for memory. Or whether their arguments could be taken as a theoretical position in favor of the "sense-for-sense" they associated with consecutive *versus* the "word-for-word," or "parrot-like" as they would say, outcome they attributed to the simultaneous mode. The reality was that once the new technology became entrenched, it showed "absolute advantage over their earlier competitors" (Maynard 1997:76). As I have said, this did not mean the complete replacement or the end of the consecutive mode.

The newly arrived simultaneous interpreters would see in this machine and in the techniques it involved – acquired through hands-on experience – an opportunity to pioneer an experiment that was in the vanguard of progress and would lead to a promising professional career, at a time when post-WWII uncertainties were looming. They were adapting to a new environment, which in itself was an adaptation to the new needs: considerably shorter time for the same number of speeches. Probably only in retrospect can the SI revolution be seen as a breakthrough, whereas at the time when it was being tested or in its first stages it was seen with doubts as to its potential success.



Photo 4. United Nations Simultaneous Interpretation. Susanna Wieniawa of the Interpretation Division, Department of Conference and General Services, who interprets from French and Spanish into English. 29 March 1948, United Nations (Lake Success), New York. United Nations Photo #189118

The three previous photos in this chapter can be characterized by the absence – or the elliptical presence – of interpreters. Here, for the first time, a person, Ms. Wieniawa Dlugoszowska, is identified in the caption as an English booth interpreter, thus recognizing and naming a typified profession. She emerges in a medium close-up chiaroscuro, posing for the photographer – possibly one of the persons behind the initials KB/dmw, which appear in the caption of the printed copy –, simulating the act of interpreting. The frame chosen by the photographer offers only a partial view of one interpreting booth, omitting the other colleague(s) in the booth or those from the other four official languages. The photo can be seen as a classic bust portrait, with the additional element of the audio gear “worn” by the interpreter: headphones with an aerial for wireless connection and a conspicuous bulky microphone hanging from her neck. Definitely, a soundless audio-portrait, where the interpreter’s hairdo could be the *punctum*, in Barthes’s wording. From an interpreter’s professional perspective, the photo can be seen, first of all, as an evidence of the interpreter’s visibility, and secondly as an image of “a booth of one’s own,” to echo the Woolfian metaphor which represents the process of feminization that began with the wider use of the simultaneous mode and would continue for many years to come (Baigorri-Jalón 2003).

All sources, including photos, invite researchers to further explore their field of interest. “Part of the image is the history of the image itself” (Boulding 1961: 6). In the case of this photograph, the huge time gap between the only official image

available of the interpreter as a young woman and the moment when the photograph is being analyzed encouraged me to imagine beyond the photo and to try and fill that gap. Barthes (1980: 23, 30) speaks of *le retour du mort* (the return of the dead) in all photographs, where the subject becomes an object. Ms. Wieniawa's (Mrs. Vernon after marriage) obituary¹ led me to explore and contact various sources, including the UN archives in New York and Geneva, and the Human Resources Office at the UN Office in Geneva, via e-mail between July 31, 2014 and August 13, 2014. The most fruitful results came from my contact with the interpreter's son, Dr. Gervase Vernon, who has published a book on his grandmother where references to his mother are frequent (Vernon 2013).²

3.1.2 Booths: *The vanishing point and the punctum*

Photograph 5 shows interpreters' booths, as "fish tanks" with various members in them, posing for the occasion and focusing their gaze on the photographer. They do not appear actually interpreting, but ready to perform in one of the meetings where SI was being used as a novelty. The picture was taken in November 1946. The major Nuremberg trial had finished a few weeks earlier. The composition of the photograph shows a series of lines – the ones on the ceiling and those marked by the furniture, particularly the edge of the table on the foreground – that converge, in a one-line perspective, on a vanishing point that coincides with the second lady in the Russian booth. The man standing at the far right of the photo, outside the booths, is Léon Dostert. In Barthes's terms he would be the *punctum* in the picture (Barthes 1980: 49), capturing the attention of the viewer as a distracting, eccentric element which attracts our gaze in the otherwise orderly arrangement of interpreters in their respective booths. He can also be seen as the commissioner of a "nativity," that of the SI mode, as in old oil paintings. Dostert, as has been said, was the leader of the then revolutionary experiment in Nuremberg and at the UN and he acted as spokesperson on behalf of the SI team.

Some other points can be highlighted here. Booths are far from being sound-proof, although some technical effort on that score is shown by the fact that, unlike those used in Nuremberg, they have roofs and they are covered with insulating tiles at the back. They are separated from the audience by glass panes, but the divisions

1. Sussana VERNON obituary in *The Times* (August 8, 2011). <http://announcements.thetimes.co.uk/obituaries/timesonline-uk/obituary-preview.aspx?n=susanna-vernon&pid=153001738&referrer=2282> [accessed July 28, 2014].

2. Mr. Vernon also provided me with a UN document (*Attestation*, see unpublished sources), which explains in detail Mrs. Vernon's language combination, her modalities of work (both consecutive and simultaneous) and her years of service at the UN (1946–1952).



Photo 5. Simultaneous interpretation at United Nations – United Nations interpreters in conference room equipped with simultaneous interpretation system which permits any one of the five official languages to be translated instantaneously and concurrently into the other four at meetings of commissions and committees held at United Nations Headquarters, Lake Success, New York, 18 November 1946. United Nations, UN 2995

among them are made with glass at the front and a curtain at the back. Since the series of booths could only be accessed from the conference room or the corridor through the English cubicle, interpreters had to cross their colleagues' booths to get to their posts or to leave them. From the whole interpreting team in that meeting, about one quarter are women, a confirmation of an earlier comment on the increasing feminization of the profession. Finally, it is worth reiterating that most of those interpreters had had only the short in-house training in SI immediately before they assumed their duties at the beginning of the General Assembly session in September that year. The woman over whom the vanishing point converges is Mrs. Mary Jaquith (Harin), one of the most senior members of the early UN interpreters' team (Baigorri Jalón 2004: 67–68).³

3. A photo of her from 1927 can be found at the Library of Congress online catalog (<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ggb2005018755/> [accessed August 22, 2014]).

3.2 The simultaneous revolution: Grey cells at work in fish tanks

Reference has already been made to various interpreters in the previous photographs. In this anonymous – the photographer’s name is possibly behind the initials FCS that appear in the caption – and undated Photo 6 (ca. 1947), which looks like a close-up of the previous one, the Spanish booth in full is shown. Technical details of the booth can be seen here more neatly: the insulation tiles and a direct access to the booth through a door at the back, showing a design improvement towards an increasingly ergonomic working environment. The caption omits the names of the interpreters, inviting the viewer to imagine their biographies. The photographer, in an anthropologist’s role, shows us the interpreters’ physiognomy: their faces, whose gaze does not meet that of the spectator; the way they dress; their attention as an expression of their inner selves. Other sources inform us about the sociological origins of the interpreters on the initial UN simultaneous teams. Most of them were very young. They were not trained as interpreters. They



Photo 6. Now Hear This – In five languages. Highly-skilled United Nations interpreters instantaneously render a speech from English, French or Russian into Spanish. Other simultaneous interpreters in similar booths in U.N. meeting rooms, meanwhile, interpret the same speech into English, French, Chinese or Russian. Participants in the meetings are equipped with individual headsets and can listen in any of U.N. five official languages. FCS. UN official photo 7917

arrived at the job by happenstance: they happened to know the right languages and were able to cope with the unnatural exercise of listening and speaking at the same time. They had very little in-house training before their actual performance. And they did not necessarily consider interpreting as a stable profession, but rather as a temporary stage in their career. From the early teams, some interpreters ended up in UN management, others left the profession temporarily or for good due to various reasons, some others were transferred to other UN duty stations (Baigorri-Jalón 2004: 87–115).

A typical association is made of SI with the time constraint between input speech in one language and output speech in another. As can be seen in this photograph, also space and air were limited, stirring up a feeling of claustrophobia rather than a desire to be inside the booth. The three interpreters emerge in a crowded cubicle, where they would be as unobtrusive and unnoticeable as possible for the users and the public in general. Their attire aims at going unnoticed among delegates also in the corridors. The photographer has framed the Spanish booth. The next booth to the right appears empty, perhaps because its service was not required in that particular meeting. But there are signs such as documents and water distributed to the booth that indicate a meeting is going on and we can assume that the interpreter on the left, Juan Rodríguez, a Puerto Rican veteran from WWII US army, is working. Next, from left to right, is Oscar Faura, a Peruvian who stayed in the interpretation section only for a short period and later became a delegate for his country. The third is Guido Gómez de Silva, a Mexican linguist who was a UN interpreter for seven years and later became chief of the terminology section – with one transfer to the UN Office in Nairobi – and then an interpreters' trainer and a free-lance interpreter for many years. None of them had previous interpreting training when they arrived in the UN. Working conditions would evolve with the increasing professionalization of SI. Interpreting shifts were determined on the basis of the first SI tests in the 1928 course at the ILO, where a 30-minute period appeared to be the threshold beyond which the quality of interpretation deteriorated dramatically. The development of other professional regulations, such as the number of meetings per week, working hours and shifts, resting time between meetings, etc., was an on-going process that lasted several decades, with some interesting events, like the 1974 “strike” by UN interpreters in New York, as accelerating factors (Baigorri-Jalón 2004: 87–115).

3.3 The consequences of the simultaneous revolution for other language services: The magnetic polarity of the recorded voices

Recording of speeches existed before the simultaneous mode was introduced, but simultaneity brought about enormous opportunities not only for the member states' delegates, who could follow the debates in their languages "live," but also for the press correspondents and for the language services personnel in charge of drafting the summary and the verbatim minutes. Among other UN bodies, the General Assembly and the Security Council were entitled to verbatim records, and the latter's rules of procedure provided that the record had to be available in paper the next morning after the meeting had taken place, even if it finished at midnight.

The existence of those recordings with the interpreters' voices would put into question the typical differentiation made between translators and interpreters on the basis of the nature of their final product – respectively written and oral (see also Pym, Chapter 10 in this volume). The interpreters' words, when recorded, would not vanish in the ether – *verba volant* – but would remain accessible for consultation and, duly revised, would end up printed in the documents – *scripta manent*. This would lead to an issue which would have great repercussions for interpreters' professional conduct: they would need to be more conscious that their words could be heard later on by supervisors and by colleagues from other sections (for instance, translators and verbatim reporters), who would often use them as raw material for their written texts.

A certain parallelism can be established between the *photograph* that retains an ephemeral moment and the *photographed*, an anonymous operator who supervises an apparatus that records a fleeting speech in a disc, achieving the reification of transient words. The photographer here has privileged the object over the person who operates it. Original speeches and their translated versions were recorded in sound archives that facilitated the drafting of the verbatim transcripts, the factual diplomatic reference for further discussions. For historical research, the moment in which interpreters' renditions are recorded for the first time in history is, strictly speaking, when researchers have a key primary source that allows them to compare the original and the interpreted speeches in various languages. That would equate textual material in Translation Studies, that is, a reliable objective source, whose accuracy would corroborate or question opinions expressed by the interpreters themselves or by administrators or users regarding quality issues. Sound archives recorded in magnetic format deteriorate with the passing of time and their preservation and custody poses a serious challenge for archivists. The exploitation for historical research of the old recordings of interpreted speeches held by the UN in its archives is still pending to the best of my knowledge.

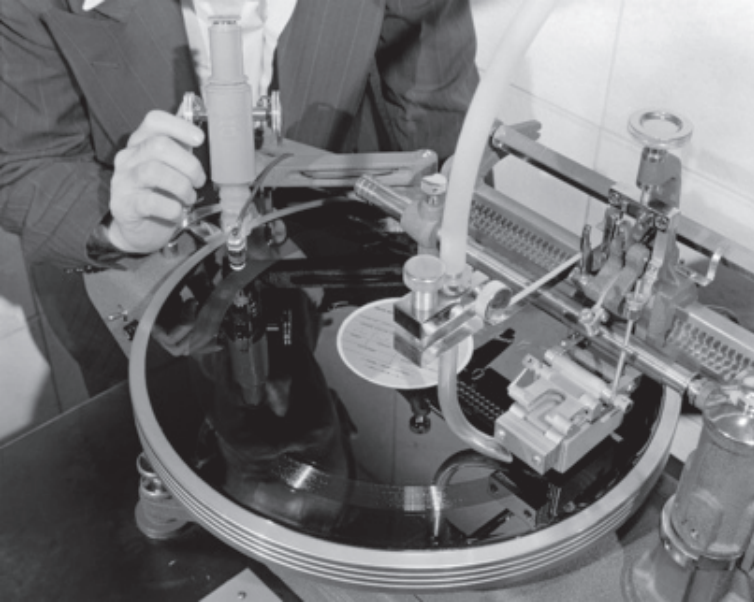


Photo 7. Birth of a United Nations Document. Precision, speed and accuracy are the hall-mark of the astounding mechanism, developed by the United Nations to record its multilingual proceedings. These behind-the-scene pictures show the life story of an official record, from the spoken word to the printed document. Although the note-takers must be able to pass the 200-words-a-minute test, human beings are only human – a man may be suddenly taken ill for instance, or simply miss a word in the heat of the debate. This is where the machine comes in. The automatic sound recording captures even the fastest spoken words, and the sound track may be referred to, if necessary, for checking purposes. 01 January 1948. United Nations, New York. Photo #111294

Verbatim reporters are the clearest symbol of the transfer between spoken and written word either directly or via the headphones – their linguistic “umbilical cord.” When magnetic recordings were made available thanks to technological advances, verbatim reporters were able to check the words said by the original speaker and by the interpreter in order to complete their draft texts. Verbatim records were drafted by shorthand reporters or stenographers who took directly from speakers when they spoke their respective language or from simultaneous interpreters when the speaker used a language they did not know. Photo 8 focuses on the most visible part of the stenographers’ action, their hands, either operating a machine or writing in shorthand on a notepad, so they are kept unidentified.

It is interesting to note that the initial SI tests in the 1920s were conceived as a two-stage process: a stenographer would take notes in the original language and the interpreter would sight translate in whispers into a microphone – a *hushaphone* – those



Photo 8. Birth of a United Nations Document. (...) ... skilled fingers race silently over the keys of stenotype machines or the stenographers' pads. Every word is taken down on paper, both the original speech and its interpretation. The men and women who do it are members of the most highly qualified corps of verbatim reporters, with many years of experience of international conferences, often with a League of Nations background. 01 January 1948. United Nations, New York. United Nations Photo #111293

notes. The assumption then was that interpreters would not be capable of translating directly from the oral speech but able to read stenographic notes (Baigorri-Jalón 2014/2000: 135–138). At the time of this photograph, it was stenographers who needed to listen to the interpreters to take the notes of speeches delivered in languages foreign to them as the basis of their written records.

4. Concluding remarks

As researchers in the history of interpreting, we observe photos from the past like astronomers look in the sky and see events that happened a long time ago, but whose consequences are still felt. Irrespective of the original target audience of the pictures, these photos allow us to trace a particular event, the introduction of the SI mode at the UN, a quite sudden process that occurred some seventy years ago and brought about a new working environment and new professional regulations which are largely still valid today. A technical revolution always gives rise

to resistance from the previously established professionals, and the simultaneous mode was no exception, as has been suggested in consecutive interpreters' views about changing working conditions and their real or perceived status.

By studying photos of simultaneous interpreters and their working environment in the early years of the UN, this chapter has shown how photographs have an impact on the way in which we approach the history of interpreting. It has also shown that photographic images – contrary to popular belief – do not speak for themselves. As material objects, they need to be situated in time and space through a detailed exploration of the context in which they were produced, that is, the complex relations among the photographer, the photographed and the audience, as well as the person or institution that commissioned the work. It is the historical researcher, with the historian's tools, who can carry out that task.

The particular event of the SI introduction at the UN points at an interesting field of research where the technologies involved in photography, simultaneous equipment and recording devices provide an excellent material and industrial iconography, which can only be enriched by further research projects. These should include as their object of analysis not only photographs from public archives but also those stored in private collections still unexplored.

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CHAPTER 8

“Crime” of interpreting

Taiwanese interpreters as war criminals of World War II

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After WWII, 173 Taiwanese who had served in the Japanese army were convicted as war criminals. Among the 21 executed Taiwanese, at least 13 were convicted for crimes committed while working as interpreters, formal or informal, during the war. In addition, a handful of Taiwanese interpreters were sentenced to various prison terms. In the Australian, British, Chinese, Dutch, and US courts established in Asian regions, most of those Taiwanese interpreters were prosecuted for crimes against local civilians and prisoners of war. Some were originally recruited as laborers, but they were assigned to *ad hoc* interpreting duty because of their unique language proficiency and forced into situations where war crimes occurred. They took the responsibility of the Japanese military and suffered the consequences.

Keywords: Taiwanese, World War II, war crimes trials, *ad hoc* interpreter, Chinese language

1. Introduction

After World War II ended in 1945, the Allied countries conducted extensive war crimes trials against Germany and Japan. While the postwar trials of Class A¹ war criminals, namely the Nuremberg Trial and the Tokyo Trial, continue to attract a good deal of scholarly attention more than half a century after the trials,² the

1. War crimes were categorized as Class A (crimes against peace), Class B (war crimes), and Class C (crimes against humanity).

2. For example, see works on the Nuremberg Trial by Davidson (1997), Gaiba (1998), Harris (1999), Mettraux (2008), and Baigorri-Jalón (2014/2000). For the Tokyo Trial, see Maga (2001), Totani (2009), and Takeda (2010). Interest in the Tokyo Trial is further extended by accounts of persons involved in the trial; see for example Sprecher (1999), Ehrenfreund (2007), and Fischel (2009).

trials of Class BC war criminals have been relatively understudied.³ In spite of their much larger number – more than 4,400 people were convicted (Hōmu-daijin kanbō shihō hōsei chōsa-bu (1973:266–269), Class BC war criminals have received disproportionately little attention in the academia.

Among the Japanese Class BC war criminals, it is particularly worth noting – though often neglected – that there were a significant number of former colonial subjects, namely Taiwanese (Formosans) and Koreans who served in the Japanese military during the war. According to existing documents, 173 Taiwanese were convicted in war crimes trials after the war. Among these Taiwanese war criminals (TWCs), 26 were sentenced to death and 21 were consequently executed.⁴ In comparison, the “Name List of Korean- and Taiwanese-native War Criminals,” a record compiled by the Bureau of Repatriation and Emergency Aid of Japan’s Ministry of Health and Welfare (Kōsei-shō) in 1955 (hereafter, MHW Name List), indicates that there were a total of 148 Korean war criminals, among them 23 were sentenced to death (Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku 1955:4).⁵

It was reported that during the war more than 80,000 Taiwanese were recruited or mobilized by the Japanese colonial and military authorities to serve as soldiers, and more than 126,000 Taiwanese served as “military servants” and “civilian military personnel.” Among them, there were more than 30,000 casualties (Cai 2006:121). It would be fair to conclude that by the end of the war, more than 200,000 Taiwanese had fought – as “Japanese” – for the Empire and the Emperor of Japan in World War II. The Japanese wartime mobilization of the

3. A few exceptions include works by Piccigallo (1979) and Lyon (2000).

4. The number of TWCs sentenced to death is given as 26 in most accounts; see Zhong (2001:262) and Li (2005:4–6). However, it should be noted that the Japanese source quoted by Zhong further explains that five of the 26 TWCs recorded as “dead” were those who died of illness or suicide during imprisonment. See Tokyo Saiban Handbook Editorial Board (1989:225). This account is confirmed by the MHW Name List (Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku 1955), in which two under the Australian jurisdiction were listed as “death from accident,” one under the Australian jurisdiction was listed as “death from illness,” one under the Australian jurisdiction was listed as “death from suicide” and one under the Chinese jurisdiction was listed as “death from illness” (36–38). Thereby, this study confirms that 26 TWCs were recorded as “dead,” and among them 21 were actually executed. It should be further noted that, as this chapter will further explain in the later section on the Australian trials, five TWCs who were sentenced to death were commuted to life imprisonment in 1947, and thereby spared of death. With the other 21 TWCs who were executed, this study confirms that the total number of TWCs *sentenced to death* is 26.

5. The number is identical to the number given in other scholarly works; see Utsumi (1982:ii) and Tokyo Saiban Handbook Editorial Board (1989:225).

Taiwanese certainly constituted part of what Fujitani (2011) has called “politics of disavowal.” In comparison to their Japanese and Korean counterparts, the history of Taiwanese mobilized by the Japanese is rather understudied, if not ignored,⁶ and Taiwanese who had served in the Japanese military remain, to paraphrase from Bayly and Harper (2005), the “forgotten armies” of the War. Yet, it was among these Taiwanese that more than 170 were put on trial and subsequently convicted as war criminals after the conflict.

Not surprisingly, the history of TWCs has drawn very little attention so far.⁷ Based on the records available today, TWCs were prosecuted at military tribunals by five Allied countries: Australia, the Republic of China (ROC), the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Among them, Australia convicted the largest number of Taiwanese war criminals (95), followed by the ROC (41), the United Kingdom (26), the Netherlands (7), and the US/the Philippines (4) (*Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku* 1955:4).

Earlier studies have pointed out that most of the TWCs had worked as camp guards of the Allied prisoners of war (POWs) in Southeast Asia during the wartime (Zhong 2001: 262; Li 2005: 6–7). And it has been further pointed out that eight of these Taiwanese camp guards who were tried as war criminals were sentenced to death.⁸ The MHW Name List also confirms that the majority of Taiwanese (and Korean) war criminals had served as POW camp guards (*Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku* 1955:2), followed by “interpreters” working for the *Kempeitai* (Japanese military police), and then “civilians.”

However, a closer look at the MHW Name List shows a rather unusual situation: in terms of the wartime job designation and profile of those TWCs who were sentenced to death, the group of “interpreters” is the most significant: a total of eleven Taiwanese who were formally designated as “interpreters” were sentenced to death and consequently executed. In comparison, five other executed TWCs

6. Most studies are oral history published in Chinese in the 1990s; see Zheng (1995), Chou (1997), Pan (1997), Ts'ai (Cai) (1997), and Tang and Chen (2001). In addition, a handful of scholarly works have studied this topic; see Chou (2002) and Cai (2006). And only a few works are available for the English-speaking readers; see Chen (2003) and Huang (2001). For studies of this “ignorance” in historiography and its significance in postwar Taiwan, see Lan (2013).

7. Zhong Shumin has written several works on this topic; see Zhong (2001) and Zhong (2009). In addition, Li Zhanping has conducted extensive interview with former Taiwanese who served in the Japanese military, and published two books based on oral history; see Li (2005) and Li (2007).

8. The number is eight from a chart compiled by Zhong Shumin, based on 3 different works of war crime documents compiled by Japanese scholar Yoshio Chaen; see Zhong (2001: 280–281).

were POW camp guards, three were civilian military personnel who worked at a military depot, two were police officers, and one was a businessman.⁹

While existing scholarship and oral history have provided a better understanding of Taiwanese who had served as POW camp guards,¹⁰ very few scholarly works have examined the Taiwanese “interpreters” in military service.¹¹ Furthermore, so far no work on war crimes has studied or provided any explanation to the high number of former “interpreters” convicted as war criminals. While the killing and/or ill-treatment of the Allied POWs has been identified as the major reason behind the death sentence handed down to most Taiwanese camp guards,¹² no reason has been clearly identified to explain the death sentence handed down to Taiwanese “interpreters.” Zhong Shumin (2009) points out, in her most recent work on POW camps and Taiwanese camp guards, that many Taiwanese interpreters were prosecuted and later received severe sentences in war crimes trials in China, Indonesia (Dutch courts), and Malaya (British courts). Zhong (*ibid.*: 5–7) further identifies that the charges against these interpreters were often recorded in the available fragmented court records simply as “ill-treatment” or “killing” of local residents. But what exactly did these “interpreters” do during the war to be indicted as war criminals and sentenced to death in some cases? Why and in what context did these “interpreters” change their job responsibilities from undertaking the task of interpreting, supposedly between the Japanese forces and local residents, to committing “ill-treatment” or “killing” of local civilians? This chapter will utilize archival materials to further study Taiwanese wartime interpreters and their activities.

9. The number of executed former POW camp guards adds up to five (one by the United States, and eight sentenced to death by Australia but only four were executed); see *Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku* (1955: 4, 36–38).

10. For works in Chinese, see Zhong (2001), Li (2005), and Zhong (2009). In comparison, there are many more Japanese works on the topic of Koreans serving as POW camp guards during the war; see note 5.

11. A few exceptions include Xu (2006), which studies the general condition of Taiwanese serving as interpreters during the Japanese colonial period, and Chen (2013), which studies the identity struggle of several Taiwanese wartime interpreters.

12. See personal accounts and recollections by former TWCs in Li (2005). Scholars also made the same conclusion based on court records and archival materials; see Li (2005), Zhong (2001) and Zhong (2009).

2. Taiwanese interpreters as war criminals

As a land of many waves of immigrants and foreign rulers, Taiwan has been a crossroads of cultural and language interactions since the ancient times. With its aboriginal population of Austronesian origin (consisting of more than a dozen major tribes, each with its own distinct language), the Chinese migrants (consisting of many distinct “dialect” groups from various parts of southern China) from the 16th to the 19th century, the Dutch, the Spaniards, the Japanese, and the second major wave of Chinese migrants after 1945, the “language-*scape*” of Taiwan has been highly diversified and evolving over time. Expectedly, there has been a constant need for, and thereby a great deal of stories about, interpreting in Taiwanese history. But so far, little has been written about interpreters in Taiwan, not to mention Taiwanese who performed interpreting in military operation during wartime.

Interpreters in history have been attracting some scholarly attention. Many – if not most – interpreters who were recognized and studied by scholars, were individuals who interpreted for “great men,” such as the interpreters of Napoleon, George Washington, and Woodrow Wilson (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995: 267, 270). Some were themselves close to become “great men” as they also served as diplomats (*ibid.*: 269–272) since “[i]nterpreting and diplomacy have tended to overlap” (*ibid.*: 274). However, interpreters have been present and needed in many other occasions through history. In times of war, for example, interpreters were deployed long before diplomatic efforts were made to settle conflicts, and long after military conflicts were ceased. They were indispensable in the occupation of a foreign land (and its people), in interrogation of enemy soldiers, and in intelligence activity, just to name a few examples. These unique features have recently led to scholarly interest in studying wartime interpreters – particularly in relation to politics of language, identity, and justice – in the contexts of Asia, Europe, and elsewhere.¹³ But similar to the “unknown soldiers,” wartime interpreters were often forgotten and became unknown once the war ended, and thereby hardly recorded, recognized, or studied.

13. See recent studies by Salama-Carr (2007) and Footitt and Kelly (2012), particularly Part IV. Alice Kaplan has produced two fascinating accounts of military interpreters in France in World War II; see Kaplan (2005) and Guilloux (Kaplan, trans.) (2003). For studies of wartime interpreters in the Asian context of wars, see Ahn (2002), Kim and Kim Nelson (2008), and Takeda (2010).

2.1 Overview of Taiwanese wartime interpreters and war crimes trials

In light of the issue of military and language, this study will discuss two groups of Taiwanese wartime interpreters who were convicted as war criminals after the war. Group 1 consists of Taiwanese who had formal interpreter status during the war. They were officially designated as “interpreters” (*tsuyaku* in Japanese) in Japanese official documents.¹⁴ This group was mainly made up of those Taiwanese who served as interpreters under the *Kempeitai*. After the war, many were prosecuted in British, Dutch, and Chinese courts; some were sentenced to death and executed, and others were sentenced to various prison terms. Group 2 consists of Taiwanese who had informal or *ad hoc* interpreting duty during the war. They were Taiwanese originally recruited and designated not as formal “interpreters” in military service, but reassigned – because of their language proficiency – to perform interpreting under the contingency in battlefields. Similar to Group 1, those in Group 2 were prosecuted in war crimes trials after the war, and several were sentenced to death and executed.

As mentioned earlier, 11 out of the 21 executed TWCs had the job classification of “interpreters”; among them, six were convicted and executed by the United Kingdom, three by the ROC, and two by the Netherlands (Kōsei-shō hikiage engokyoku 1955; Kōsei-shō engo-kyoku 1968). In the British trials, in addition to the six Taiwanese interpreters convicted and executed between 1946 and 1948, there were three more Taiwanese interpreters sentenced to imprisonment of six months, three years, and eight years respectively. In the ROC trials a total of five TWCs were convicted and executed, three of them interpreters. In the Dutch trials a total of two TWCs were convicted and executed, and both of them were interpreters. These numbers show that the conviction rate with death sentence was very high among Group 1 (Taiwanese with formal interpreter status).

In terms of specific deployment of the six executed Taiwanese interpreters in the British trials, three had served with the Penang *Kempeitai*; one had served with the Kuala Lumpur *Kempeitai*; one had served in the military forces in Car Nicobar Island; and the last one had served with the police force in Kuala Besut, Malaya (Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku 1955; Kōsei-shō engo-kyoku 1968). The other three interpreters sentenced to various terms of imprisonment in the British trials had served respectively with the *Kempeitai* in Penang, Borneo, and Singapore (Chaen 1989: 117, 133, 164). Conspicuously, Taiwanese who served as formal wartime interpreters were closely associated with the *Kempeitai*.

14. This study uses the term *tsuyaku*, instead of *tsuyakusha*, which is more widely used today, to refer to interpreters because these Taiwanese were listed as 通訳 (*tsuyaku*) in relevant archival documents.

It is well recognized that during World War II the *Kempeitai* was widely deployed in the Japanese-occupied areas and in charge of maintaining “social order,” more often than not through means of terror against local residents. According to the rather limited records of the British trials available today, the alleged crimes of TWCs were mostly ill-treatment and torture of local civilian residents. Among the six interpreters executed by the British, those three with the Penang *Kempeitai* were accused of “torturing, interrogating, and causing death of local residents” in Penang and “interrogating and causing death of civilians” in Taiping (Chaen 1988: 112–113); the one with the Kuala Lumpur *Kempeitai* was accused of “interrogating local residents” (Chaen 1988: 121); the one with the military forces in Car Nicobar Island was accused of “torturing, interrogating, and causing death of local residents” (Chaen 1989: 159–160); and the one with the police force in Malaya was accused of “torturing and causing death of local residents” (Chaen 1988: 123). As for the other three interpreters sentenced to various terms of imprisonment: the one with the Penang *Kempeitai* was accused of “torturing local residents” (Chaen 1988: 117); the one with the Borneo *Kempeitai* was accused of “torturing Chinese” (Chaen 1988: 133); and while the alleged crime of the one with the Singapore *Kempeitai* was not specified in the available records (Chaen 1989: 164), it is reasonable to assume, based on the typical activities of the *Kempeitai*, that the alleged crime also concerned local residents.

The cases of Taiwanese interpreters convicted as war criminals in the British trials clearly show that the job as interpreters brought these Taiwanese into close contact with local residents during the war, and their alleged crimes – and the consequence of conviction (and in some cases, execution) – mostly resulted from their involvement with local residents. The same was also found in the Dutch and ROC trials. One of the two Taiwanese interpreters executed by the Dutch was convicted in a Batavia trial for crimes committed in “organized terror in interrogation of civilians” and “interrogating and supervising civilians” using “inhumane means” while he was serving with the *Kempeitai* (Chaen 1992: 93; Sugamo hōmu iinkai 1981: 100). The other was convicted in a Medan trial for crimes committed in the “mistreatment of suspects, organized terror” against, most likely, local residents, while he was with the *Kempeitai* (Sugamo hōmu iinkai 1981: 118). In the ROC trials, one of the three Taiwanese interpreters executed had served with the Guangdong Navy *Kempeitai*, and was convicted with “illegal arrest, confinement, torturing, and causing death of local residents” (Chaen 1984: 175); and another one had served with the South China Army *Kempeitai* (Chaen 1984: 179).

2.2 Training and activities of interpreters

Further archival research on the British, Dutch, and Chinese trial records is needed to examine more details and provide a fuller picture of each of those Taiwanese interpreters. At the moment, this study relies on secondary sources to study individual cases. One of the better-studied TWCs/interpreters is Muneharu Yasuda.¹⁵ Yasuda was recruited into the Japanese military in November 1941, specifically as an “interpreter of Annanese (Vietnamese)” with the rank of *gun-zoku* (military auxiliary personnel; civilian personnel employed in the military) (Kimura 2010: 39, 43). He was first deployed in Malaya, then in Sumatra, and was stationed in Car Nicobar Island, an island of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Indian Ocean toward the end of the war (ibid.: 15–17, 44–45). After Japan surrendered, Yasuda was arrested for alleged war crimes and sent to Singapore for trial. He was convicted by the British court there and sentenced to death in March 1946; he was executed in May 1946 (ibid.: 16–17).

Thanks to earlier research done by Japanese scholar Kōichirō Kimura, we are able to get a glimpse of the training before deployment and the actual activities and experiences of a Taiwanese military interpreter in the battlefields through Yasuda’s case, particularly based on the trial records held at the Public Record Office in London. Records retrieved by Kimura show that Yasuda was born in a village near Taipei in 1907, given the Chinese name of Lai Enqin. In 1941, at the Southern Association in Taiwan, Yasuda attended elementary-level Annanese classes in March and completed the classes in July; then he moved on to enroll in middle-level Annanese classes and Malay language classes in August, before being recruited as an “interpreter of Annanese (Vietnamese)” by the Japanese military in November (ibid.: 38–39). His experiences before deployment show that in addition to the native language of Taiwanese (Chinese dialects of Minnan/Hokkien or Hakka) and the schooling language of Japanese (as Taiwan was under Japan’s colonial rule at the time), Taiwanese interpreters such as Lai/Yasuda were trained and then assigned to interpret non-native languages as well. The inclusion of non-native languages, such as Annanese and Malay, in training clearly indicates Japan’s effort to utilize Taiwanese in fulfilling the language needs of its “advancement into the South (*nanshin*)” and Southeast Asia. What is more significant is the timing of Yasuda’s training, which started at the height of Japan’s military invasion of French Indochina (from September 1940 to July 1941) and just nine months before Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor. Clearly, the training of Taiwanese

15. Unless noted otherwise, information about Yasuda is quoted from the Chinese edition of Kimura (translated by Pengren Chen) (2010). For Japanese original, see Kimura (2001).

interpreters was conducted in preparation for Japan's larger military operation throughout the Asia-Pacific.

Trial records further shed light on Yasuda's wartime activities as an interpreter in Car Nicobar Island. Most notably, Yasuda was assigned to take part in the interrogations – and consequently accused of committing war crime of “ill-treatment” – of local “civilian residents” who were suspected of espionage in July and August 1945 (*ibid.*: 136, 146). According to the testimony by an accused Japanese sergeant in the postwar trial in Singapore, Yasuda was the only interpreter who was present at all three rounds of interrogations in which the alleged “ill-treatment” occurred (*ibid.*: 151–152).¹⁶

As Delisle and Woodsworth (1995: 273) point out in the case of German interpreter Eugen Dollmann, who served as interpreter between Hitler and Mussolini in World War II, Dollmann “took pains to point out that he was made a member of the SS without having being consulted.” In his own words, Dollmann recalled, “I woke up one morning... to find myself in the SS” (*ibid.*). In many cases, interpreters may be forced into a situation beyond their control or without their consent. In his own testimony, Yasuda admitted his involvement in the interrogations of civilian residents (Kimura *ibid.*: 209–211); and he was convicted of murder (*ibid.*: 229). Whether or not a war criminal like Yasuda was given a fair trial is not the major concern of this chapter. What this study intends to show, based on the case of Yasuda and other Taiwanese interpreters convicted of war crimes, is how interpreters may be forced into a situation where they have very little control over their action, especially in the context of wars. While the status or job designation as an interpreter alone did not lead to the conviction or execution of any TWCs, it was nevertheless a critical factor that led and forced many Taiwanese interpreters such as Yasuda into a situation in which they were in close contact with local residents in Southeast Asia under Japan's military occupation and, subsequently (if not consequently), into situations in which the (alleged) war crimes were committed against local civilians. Thereby, the status or job designation as interpreters was, at least partially, connected to the conviction and execution of some TWCs.

16. It should be noted that the testimony by one witness indicates Yasuda conducted interrogations in English; see Kimura (*ibid.*: 147). If this was true, it demonstrates a rather unique situation of a Taiwanese interpreter, who was not specifically trained to interpret a given language (in Yasuda's case, English) but was nevertheless trusted with the task of interpreting this given language under the contingency in the battlefields. This kind of *ad hoc* task of interpreting assigned to the Taiwanese will be further discussed in a later section of this chapter.

2.3 Returning colonial powers and war crimes trials

Cases of interpreters on trial in Southeast Asia, such as Yasuda's, can also be examined in a larger context: the postwar return of former colonial powers and the rise of anti-colonial voices. During the war, Japan's conquest of Western colonies in Southeast Asia – or in the eyes of the colonized people, the sudden surrender and collapse of Western powers – made many realize how fragile colonial powers were and how little they could do when the colonies and the colonized people were under threat. It would be fair to argue that the anti-colonial sentiment rose along with Japan's military expansion across Southeast Asia. Thereby, for the Western colonial powers returning to regain control of their colonies in Southeast Asia after the war, one of the top priorities was to reestablish and assert their legitimacy and authority as rulers.

Under these circumstances, conducting war crimes trials in which the victims were exclusively and explicitly the colonized people became a rather public and immediate means for the returning colonial powers to re-claim and prove their legitimacy in ruling their former colonies. On the one hand, the returning authorities were acting to punish the Japanese aggressors who had invaded the colonies, as a way of reestablishing and exercising their sovereignty over the former colonies. On the other hand, they were acting and pursuing justice on behalf of the colonized. This is particularly critical in view of their humiliating defeat at the hands of the Japanese less than four years earlier and the rising anti-colonial sentiment and action throughout Southeast Asia at that time. The collapse of empires was well underway even before the war ended; due to this crisis, colonial governments returning to Southeast Asia were eager to adopt any means to hold on to their powers immediately after the war. Therefore, postwar trials for war crimes committed against “local residents” or “native population” became one of the most immediate and effective ways for the returning powers to reestablish their ruling legitimacy in colonies throughout Southeast Asia.

Equally important was the location of these trials. By conducting them in the colonies, instead of extraditing the accused Class BC war criminals to an imperial capital such as London, or to an international military tribunal like the one against Class A war criminals in Tokyo, the colonial authorities intentionally kept these trials physically close (and thereby relevant) to the colonized subjects. In doing so, they became one of the most visible ways (or “rituals”) – in the eyes of both the colonial governments and the colonized – of demonstrating the legitimacy and authority of the returning Western colonial powers.

In the immediate postwar Southeast Asia, the most common practice of identifying war criminals was to conduct a “survey” and hold a “parade” of Japanese suspects, in which local residents were asked to identify those who had committed

any alleged crime against them during the war. In such procedures, wartime interpreters, who often had the most direct and frequent contact with the local residents, became the most identifiable targets. Under these circumstances, the Taiwanese who served as interpreters between the Japanese military authorities and the local residents soon became one of the most conspicuous targets for prosecution.

Furthermore, in comparison to their Japanese counterparts, Taiwanese interpreters were at a higher risk of being identified by the local residents, especially the Chinese Overseas in Southeast Asia. Not only did the Taiwanese speak the language of these local residents, they also shared common cultural heritage. Most Chinese Overseas in Southeast Asia could trace their origin back to provinces in southeastern China, and so did the Taiwanese. During the war, having been ordered to serve as interpreters, the Taiwanese were able to communicate with Chinese Overseas in Southeast Asia because of such common ground. But when local residents came out to identify war criminals after the war, the Taiwanese became an obvious target for the local Chinese for two specific reasons. First, they were much more recognizable than the Japanese to the Chinese Overseas because of their shared backgrounds. And secondly, since the Taiwanese were working for the Japanese occupation against local Chinese during the war, they were often seen as “traitors” and worse than the Japanese. Therefore, in the process of identifying war crime suspects, the Taiwanese became a major target of local Chinese seeking revenge. It should be noted that trials of “traitors” or for “treason” were common in China, the United States, and France after World War II,¹⁷ and the postwar Chinese authorities also dealt with the trials of Taiwanese as “traitors” (Lo 2001). But in these cases, the alleged “traitors” were put on trial by the government of their own country. The case of the Taiwanese discussed here is more complicated and rather unique, as they were seen as “traitors” by the Chinese Overseas but were put on trial – under the colonial context in Southeast Asia – by a third party, the returning Western colonial authorities.

2.4 Special “connection” with local Chinese

The special “connection” between the Chinese Overseas and the Taiwanese was particularly relevant to one TWC mentioned earlier in the British trials, as he was convicted specifically for the crime of “interrogation of mostly Chinese” (Chaen 1988: 133). But the same could be said about several other TWCs convicted in the

17. For studies of Chinese traitors, often known as *Hanjian* (traitors to the Han (Chinese) people), who collaborated with the Japanese during the war, see Wakeman (2000) and Brook (2005). In the US, the trial of John Provoost was the best example; see Kushner (2010). For the trial of Vichy personnel, see Conan and Rousso (N. Bracher, trans.) (1998).

British courts in Penang and Kuala Lumpur, who had their names recorded in court documents in their original Chinese forms, as pronounced and spelled phonetically in southern Fujian dialect (also known as Minnan or Hokkien), instead of in their adopted Japanese names.

A brief explanation on the significance of Taiwanese names under the Japanese colonial rule, and particularly during the wartime, is needed here. As militarism intensified in Japan in the 1930s, total mobilization of the population was expanded from the mainland to the colonies of Taiwan and Korea. To mobilize the colonized people for Japan's war efforts, a policy called "*kōminka*," intended to make the colonial subjects into imperial subjects, was widely implemented and forced upon people of the colonies. One of the key points of *kōminka* was "*kaiseimei*" (name-changing) – demanding colonial subjects in Taiwan and Korea to adopt Japanese names. While the Japanese colonial policy of *kaiseimei* encountered a certain degree of resistance from the public and was not thoroughly implemented in the colonies, it was common for colonial subjects who were mobilized to work in the Japanese military to adopt Japanese names. In Taiwan, *kaiseimei* was done only "by application." Initially, permission for name changes was granted only to Taiwanese who met certain qualifications specified by the colonial authorities. However, toward the end of the war, the qualifications – particularly for those Taiwanese serving in the military – were practically removed and permission would be granted upon application.¹⁸ Therefore it would be fair to argue that it was the colonial government that encouraged Taiwanese to adopt Japanese names.

From the Japanese government's point of view, apart from the ideological reason of forging allegiance to the Japanese Empire, demanding colonial subjects such as the Taiwanese to change their names to Japanese also had a practical side for military operation.¹⁹ Chinese names, while written in characters that are comprehensible in reading to the Japanese, are pronounced completely different in their original Chinese language from the way pronounced in Japanese. The same characters as pronounced in Chinese would be difficult, if not impossible, for Japanese to understand and pronounce; likewise, for Chinese the Japanese pronunciation of Chinese characters would be impossible to understand and pronounce. Thereby, for those Taiwanese serving in various capacities in the Japanese military, it was common to adopt Japanese names. For example, TWCs convicted in the Australian trials, as this chapter will discuss later, universally used adopted Japanese names.

18. The policy of *kaiseimei* started in Taiwan in February 1940. But by the end of 1943, only 126,000 Taiwanese, or 2% of the population, changed their names to Japanese. See Cai (2006: 53–54).

19. I would like to thank Professor Hsiang-jung Chin for this point.

In comparison, in at least three cases in the British trials in Penang and another three cases in Kuala Lumpur, the accused TWCs – all had served as formal interpreters for the *Kempeitai* – were identified and recorded in court documents with their original Chinese names as pronounced and spelled phonetically in southern Fujian dialect and not with their Japanese names. In the Penang trials, the names of three TWCs who were convicted and executed appear in the Japanese records only in *kanji* (Chinese characters) of their original Chinese names (as 郭張興, 楊樹木, 許祺禪 respectively); and no Japanese names were given (Chaen 1988: 112–113). In British records, their names were recorded respectively as Kwek Tiong Hin, Yeow Chew Bok, and Khor Kee Sian; each of them consisted of exactly the three characters of the original Chinese name as pronounced and spelled phonetically in southern Fujian dialect.²⁰ In the Kuala Lumpur trials, one TWC/interpreter was convicted and executed; in the Japanese record, his name was recorded only in *kanji* of his original Chinese name (鄭錦樹) (Chaen 1988: 121). In the British records, his name was recorded as Ten Ten Chuan, which was fairly close to the three characters of his original Chinese name as pronounced and spelled phonetically in southern Fujian dialect.²¹ In addition, in the Kuala Lumpur trials, two other TWCs/interpreters were recorded with names that could only be pronounced and spelled phonetically in southern Fujian dialect.²²

It may be possible that the aforementioned six TWCs in the British trials simply did not have Japanese names (i.e. they had never applied for *kaiseimei*), thereby could only have their names recorded in their original Chinese forms. But for the ideological and practical reasons discussed above, it is highly unlikely that these TWCs did not have Japanese names. If so, the reason for having their names recorded in trial documents as spelled phonetically in southern Fujian dialect could be that their accusers identified them in that dialect. According to the Japanese records, all the TWCs discussed in this section had served with the *Kempeitai* and were accused of crime against “local residents.” Since the local Chinese were the only persons who would and could identify the TWCs in their

20. The National Archives (the United Kingdom), Reference: WO 235/931 (Description: Defendant: Kwek Tiong Hin Place of Trial: Penang); Reference: WO 235/931 (Description: Defendant: Yeow Chew Bok Place of Trial: Penang); Reference: WO 235/931 (Description: Defendant: Khor Kee Sian Place of Trial: Penang).

21. The National Archives (the United Kingdom), Reference: WO 235/949 (Description: Defendant: Ten Ten Chuan Place of Trial: Kuala Lumpur).

22. The National Archives (the United Kingdom), Reference: WO 235/1059 (Description: Defendant: Cheah Kam-Sang Place of Trial: Kuala Lumpur); Reference: WO 235/1026 (Description: Defendant: Ee-Fook-Seong Place of Trial: Kuala Lumpur; Date: 1947 Aug. 19–Oct. 26).

original Chinese names as pronounced and spelled phonetically in southern Fujian dialect, it would be fair to assume that in these cases “local residents” – who were victims in the alleged crime and subsequently became accusers of the TWCs in the trials – were Chinese Overseas. Therefore, for a fuller understanding of “Group 1” TWCs/interpreters, either in their wartime activities or in post-war trials, it is important to recognize this context involving Chinese Overseas in Southeast Asia and their special “connection” with the Taiwanese.

2.5 *Ad hoc* interpreters

While Group 1 consists of Taiwanese who had formal interpreter status during the war, Group 2 represents Taiwanese who had informal or *ad hoc* interpreting duty during the war. They were originally recruited and designated not as interpreters, but were assigned – because of their unique language proficiency – to perform interpreting under the contingency of war. As we explore further into archival documents related to the 21 executed TWCs, it becomes apparent that several of them not listed as “interpreters” in official court records were actually performing the role of interpreters during the war and, subsequently, were prosecuted and punished after the war for what they had done as informal or *ad hoc* interpreters.

More specifically, Group 2 includes several TWCs who originally served as laborers or POW camp guards during the war and subsequently sentenced to death in the Australian courts. As trial records indicate, they did interpret during the war, and most importantly, they did so while engaging in the alleged war crimes.²³ One of the most notable examples of Group 2 Taiwanese wartime interpreters is found in the trial of “Chinese POW killing,” which was conducted by the Australian court in Rabaul in 1946.²⁴ The alleged war crime in this trial was

23. It is worth pointing out that based on the available records, Australia is the most significant country in the trials of Taiwanese war criminals. In terms of the sheer number, Australian courts convicted the highest number of TWCs among all the Allied countries, a total of 95; among them seven were sentenced to death and executed (which is also the highest among all Allied nations). See *Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku* (1955). The number adds up to 109, according to Chaen (1990) and Chaen (1991).

24. *Gaimu-shō tōan, kōwa jōyaku hakko-go: Shamen kankoku kankei, Australia-no Bu* [Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive (JMFA): After the Peace Treaty became effective, on the issue of pardon and appeal: Australia], D-1-3-0-3-9-2a: 376–438. According to this record, in the trial one Japanese Sergeant, one Japanese Corporal, two members of the Taiwanese Volunteer Corps were sentenced to death by hanging and executed on July 17, 1946; five other members of the Taiwanese Volunteer Corps were sentenced to death by hanging but commuted to life imprisonment on July 4, 1947.

the killing in 1943 of Chinese POWs from the 88th Division, the 3rd Army, of the Chinese National Army. They were captured by the Japanese forces in China in July 1942,²⁵ and subsequently sent to Rabaul in January 1943.²⁶ Afterwards, in two separate occasions around March 3 and 11, 1943, a number of Chinese POWs (reportedly 24 in the first occasion, and six in the second) were shot and killed, allegedly by Japanese soldiers and Taiwanese guards. In this trial, two Japanese soldiers and seven Taiwanese guards were charged for the killing and all the accused were sentenced to “death by hanging” on April 16, 1946.²⁷

The seven convicted TWCs were²⁸: Hajime Hayashi (AWC 2683); Takeo Kiohara (*sic*, Kiyohara) (AWC 2913); Eikyu Okabayashi (AWC 2685); Uetane Yanagawa (AWC 2914); Yuzo Shimura (AWC 2911); Eisuke Furuya (AWC 2912); and Tsuruichi Takabayashi (*sic*, Takebayashi) (AWC 2684).

After the trial Hajime Hayashi and Takeo Kiohara, together with the two convicted Japanese soldiers, were hanged on July 17, 1946. As for Okabayashi, Yanagawa, Shimura, Furuya, and Takabayashi, their lives were spared as they were required to serve as witnesses in other war crime trials. Their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment on June 27, 1947.²⁹

From the trial records, we can learn more about these TWCs’ work as well as the crimes they were accused of committing. One of the defense witnesses, Major Lee Wai Sing of the Chinese Nationalist Army, testified, “Each of the seven Formosans accused used either rifles or revolvers and shot into the pit” in which a group of sick Chinese POWs was ordered to go into on March 3, 1943; he added that the accused Taiwanese did the same thing again on March 11, 1943.³⁰ Another defense witness, Lieutenant Wong Yu Shing, testified that from the time of the arrival of Chinese POWs in Rabaul in January 1943 to the time of the killing in March 1943, “the people who controlled [the Chinese POWs] all the time were

25. Court testimony by Captain Liu Wei Pao, 10th April, 1946, in Proceedings of Military Tribunal, Sgt. Matsushima, Tozaburo and others, Department of the Army, A471.80915, Australian National Archive.

26. Court testimony by Major Lee Wai Sing, 11th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

27. Record of Military Court, Court, Place, Date and Formation: Rabaul, 10–16 Apr (19)46, 8 MD, in A471.80915.

28. Memorandum for Judge Advocate General, 14 May, 1947, in A471.80915. AWC was the identification number given to each war criminal by the Australian authorities.

29. Record of Military Court, Court, Place, Date and Formation: Rabaul, 10–16 Apr (19)46, 8 MD, in A471.80915; the “commuted sentences (were) promulgated to (the) accused (on) 12 July 1947.”

30. Court testimony by Major Lee Wai Sing, 11th April, 1946, in A471.80915

the accused.”³¹ From these testimonies it is clear that the accused TWCs were assigned to be in charge of overseeing Chinese POWs and subsequently involved in the killing of some of them.

But during the trial, several Chinese officers also testified as witnesses that the Taiwanese were usually unarmed. When asked “[h]ow many Formosans brought weapons with them to the camp” on the first occasion of the killing, defense witness Captain Liu Wei Pao testified, “As far as I remember the Formosans were not carrying arms when they entered our camp”; and the answer was the same when Captain Liu was asked about the second occasion of killing.³² Major Lee Wai Sing also testified that with the exception of one Formosan, “the only time the [other Formosans] were armed was during the shooting.”³³ A Japanese witness, Paymaster Major Masaomi Shimazaki, who was “in charge of general affairs” of the 26th Supply Depot, further testified in court that “[Formosans] were not given any military training, they were used wholly as labourers” and the use of firearm was never explained to the Formosans.³⁴

The above testimonies show that the Taiwanese were originally deployed as laborers; they were not given combatant training or duties; and they were originally not deployed for any assignment related to Chinese POWs. Their job designations, as recorded in Japanese government sources such as the MHW Name List, were members of the Taiwanese Special Labor Volunteer Corps.³⁵ Attached to the 26th Depot in Rabaul (Kōsei-shō hikiage engo-kyoku 1955; Kōsei-shō engo-kyoku 1968), these Taiwanese laborers were engaged in the unloading, transporting and collecting of military supplies. So, why did these Taiwanese laborers end up being assigned to “control” and supervise other laborers such as the Chinese POWs in Rabaul? The answer, as shown in the trial records, was their language proficiency.

2.6 “Chinese” proficiency

In the Australian trial records, language proficiency was repeatedly identified by the accused TWCs as a critical factor leading to their involvement with the Chinese POWs and in the alleged war crimes. The first Taiwanese on the list of the

31. Court testimony by Lt. Wong Yu Shing, 11th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

32. Court testimony by Captain Liu Wei Pao, 10th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

33. Court testimony by Major Lee Wai Sing, 11th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

34. Court testimony by Paymaster Major Shimizaki Masaomi, 15th April, 1946, in A471.80915. His name was mis-spelled in the record; it should be ‘Shimazaki’, as it was recorded in another court document in its original Japanese kanji as 島崎.

35. For further information, see Kondo (1995:216–217).

accused was Hajime Hayashi, who appeared in court on April 12, 1946. He testified that he belonged to the 26th Supply Depot, and his duty at the Chinese POW camp was making “[d]aily report concerning Chinese laborers” to Lieutenant Amada, who was the officer in charge of the Chinese POWs. When asked about the killing of Chinese, Hayashi stated, “I am a Formosan and was never allowed to be present at the scene of any killing. The reason I knew about the death of Chinese was that I held the nominal roll and checked the personnel daily”; and he added, “At the time, I had been working almost every day in the orderly room, and sometimes I will be at the scene of working as an [*sic*] Chinese interpreter.”³⁶ In addition, in an earlier interrogation report, Hayashi stated, “I was appointed to work in the Chinese labourers compound near Tobio in Jan[uary] 1943. I was there as an interpreter as I spoke a little Chinese. My duties were to allot labourers as requested by various units.”³⁷ It should be noted that Hayashi was considered the leading interpreter dealing with Chinese POWs, as he was the only one, among the seven accused Taiwanese, identified as “Chinese interpreter” by two fellow Taiwanese witnesses at the trial.³⁸

Another accused Taiwanese, Eikyu Okabayashi, was called to the court on April 13, 1946. He stated that he arrived in Rabaul in November 1942 and was attached to the 26th Supply Depot. He testified that his duties at the “Chinese camp” were “to work along the Chinese labour [*sic*]”; and in a written statement he added that “From Jan[uary] to Sept[ember] [19]43 I was employed as civilian interpreter... and was out daily with Chinese labourers.”³⁹ Similar to Hayashi, Okabayashi also stated in an interrogation report, “In Jan[uary] to Sept[ember] 1943 I was employed as civilian interpreter... and was out daily with Chinese labourers.”⁴⁰

The above testimonies and statements by two TWCs similarly and conspicuously pointed out that language proficiency – and the consequent interpreting duty – was the critical factor that led to their assignment to “control” Chinese POWs in Rabaul. Language proficiency was mentioned again in other documents related to this “Chinese POW killing” as a deciding factor in the accused TWCs’ job assignment in the war theater. In 1954, while serving time in Sugamo Prison in Japan, the aforementioned five TWCs who were commuted to life imprisonment after the “Chinese POW killing” trial filed application for clemency. In a

36. Court testimony by Accused Hayashi, 12th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

37. Hayasi (*sic*, Hayashi) (Civilian), 1 Feb (February), 1946, in A471.80915.

38. Statement by Tanioka Kunihiro, a Formosan, 15th April, 1946; and statement by Toyoda Toshio, a Formosan civilian, 15th April, 1946, both in A471.80915.

39. Court testimony by Okabayashi Eikyu, 13th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

40. Okabayashi, 1 Feb (February), 1946, in A471.80915.

document compiled for the application, the National Offenders Prevention and Rehabilitation Commission, the Japanese authority in charge of war criminals' affairs, explained the role of Taiwanese at the Chinese POW camp in Rabaul. It was specifically stated that several Japanese "superior class privates" were in charge of "guarding and maintenance as well as employment" of the Chinese laborers. However, this document also stressed the following:

[A]s these superior class privates did not understand Chinese, 20 odd Formosans who were comparatively proficient in language and clerical work had been selected from members of the said Volunteer's Corp [*sic*] and temporarily assigned to the said Company as assistants and... employed for superintending and leading the said Chinese laborers in operations, and, at the same time, some of the capable Formosans were employed for clerical work.⁴¹

These documents show that their proficiency in "Chinese" led these Taiwanese laborers in Rabaul to take up an additional role as informal interpreter for the communication between the Japanese superiors and the Chinese POWs. The language issue in the interpreting process deserves further examination since "Chinese" is not a homogeneous language. While written Chinese more or less follows a unified system, spoken Chinese consists of hundreds of dialects. DeFrancis (1984) points out that there is no single spoken Chinese language; instead, Chinese language consists of a group of dialects or "regionalects," and many are mutually incomprehensible. So, in the Rabaul case, exactly what was the "Chinese" spoken between these Taiwanese interpreters and the Chinese POWs?

While the Australian trial records simply state that some of the Taiwanese were assigned as "Chinese interpreters" to deal with the Chinese laborers, the issue of the "Chinese" language they used is far more complicated. On the Taiwanese side, while most of them should be able to write some Chinese characters, the "Chinese" language they typically spoke was the Chinese dialects of Minnan/Hokkien or Hakka. Then, what was the language spoken by the Chinese POWs? The answer can be found in a recent report published by the ROC's Ministry of Defense (Guofang bu 2009).⁴² In 2008, the Ministry of Defense set up a special

41. Application for Clemency, 27 February, 1954, Document 3, Summary of the Case in which Chinese laborers were killed at Rabaul, page 5, in Gaimu-sho, *Kowa Joyaku Hakko-go: Shamen Kankoku Kankei, Australia-no Bu* [Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive: After the Peace Treaty became effective, on the issue of pardon and appeal: Australia], D-1-3-0-3-9-2 (Ministry of Justice: Confidential Special No.1066, 29, May 1954), 377-379.

42. After the initial stage of this investigation, the Ministry of Defense sent another mission to Papua New Guinea in February 2009. The mission identified and restored several gravesites of Chinese soldiers, and conducted a memorial service at the site. The mission returned to Taiwan in March, carrying with it the tablet of "spirit of the ROC soldiers who died in Papua New

taskforce to investigate the history of ROC soldiers in Rabaul (ibid.: 9); and it eventually identified that those Chinese laborers sent to Rabaul consisted of three groups (ibid.: 12–13, 29–42): (1) Surviving soldiers from the forces defending Si Hang Depot in Shanghai in 1937, captured by the Japanese in December 1941; (2) Surviving soldiers from the forces defending Quzhou Airport in Zhejiang province, captured in June 1942; and (3) Surviving members of the Loyal Righteous National Defense Army [Zhongyi jiuguo jun], a guerrilla force directed by Dai Li, then the head of intelligence activity of the Chinese government, and active in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces. It was further reported that more than 1,500 Chinese POWs were sent to Rabaul as laborers: among them, more than 1,000 were from the Nanjing POW camp, and more than 500 were from the Shanghai POW camp (ibid.: 42–43). Based on the places of origin of these Chinese POWs, the language they spoke should be the dialects of Shanghai, Jiangsu and/or Zhejiang. It should be further noted that even within Jiangsu province, there are several distinct dialects. For example, people in Shanghai speak a language that is categorically different from the language spoken in the neighboring northern Jiangsu [*subei*] area. It should also be noted that Chinese POWs who had taken formal school training might be able to communicate in Mandarin, the “national language” promoted by the Chinese Nationalist government since the 1910s.

Based on the information presented above, it would be fair to argue that the dialects spoken by the Chinese laborers/POWs were incomprehensible to the Taiwanese speakers of Minnan/Hokkien or Hakka dialects. Likewise, the Taiwanese assigned as “Chinese interpreters” actually spoke “Chinese” dialects that were incomprehensible to the Chinese POWs in Rabaul, unless they had taken special language training or obtained rare opportunities to learn to speak the dialects of Shanghai/Jiangsu/Zhejiang and/or Mandarin. There has been no evidence, however, to indicate that these Taiwanese were given special language training before or after their deployment in the fields. There is a possibility that Taiwanese and Chinese POWs in Rabaul communicated through “brushtalk”⁴³ because written Chinese is rather unified. However, the situations in which the said interpreting took place – i.e. in the battlefields and the work site – make it unlikely, if not impossible, to allow “brushtalk” as a means of communication.

So, how did the Taiwanese assigned as “Chinese interpreters” fulfill their interpreting duty? And exactly what “Chinese” did they speak to the Chinese laborers? The Australian and Japanese trial records do not contain any documentation to

Guinea.” The Ministry of Defense subsequently conducted a formal state ceremony to receive the tablet and to enshrine the spirit at Martyr Shrine; see Guofang bu (2009: 137–149).

43. For further discussion of “brushtalk,” a practice in which Chinese intellectuals communicated with their Japanese counterparts through writing Chinese characters, see Howland (1996).

answer these questions. The only and most useful clue available today comes from the recollections by surviving Chinese POWs. For instance, one surviving Chinese officer stated:

We were not under the direct supervision of Japanese officers; instead, Taiwanese-native military employees served as guards. When [we] want to communicate with the Japanese, we had to first ask the Fujian-native members of our team, who could speak Minnan, to explain to the [Taiwanese] guards; and then they would relay [the message] to the Japanese; and vice versa for the returning communication [from the Japanese]. It showed how difficult it was to communicate with the Japanese.⁴⁴

From the evidence presented above, it would be fair to argue that while language proficiency was a critical factor in the assignment of Taiwanese as “Chinese interpreters” to deal with the Chinese laborers/POWs in Rabaul, the language that really mattered in the interpreting duty was their native Minnan dialect. It became the key language that enabled communication between the Chinese side and the Japanese side. As the only speakers of Japanese and Minnan dialect, these Taiwanese were assigned as informal interpreters as well as guards supervising Chinese laborers. As pointed out in court testimonies, they were originally deployed as laborers. It was under the contingency in the war – the arrival of Chinese POWs in Rabaul – that they were reassigned to serve as interpreters because of their unique language capability. And more importantly, it is solely due to this reassignment that these Taiwanese became involved in the alleged war crimes.

It should be noted that language proficiency – or more precisely the denial of it – was also used in the defense of several TWCs in the Australian court. In the same trial, unlike Hayashi and Okabayashi who admitted to serving as interpreters, three other Taiwanese defendants (Kiohara, Furuya, and Yanagawa) all testified that they either had “forgotten Chinese”⁴⁵ or did “not understand the Chinese language.”⁴⁶ These testimonies clearly point to a strategy adopted by the defense to deny any involvement of the accused with Chinese POWs and thereby with the “Chinese POW killing.” Another Taiwanese in the same trial, Shimura, simply denied having any contact with Chinese laborers at the time of the killing in March 1943.⁴⁷

44. Interview record of Mr. Li Weixun; see Guofang bu (2009: 189).

45. Court testimony by Kiohara Takeo, 13th April, 1946; and court testimony by Furuya Eisuke, 13th April, 1946, both in A471.80915.

46. Court testimony by Yanagawa Uetane, 15th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

47. Court testimony by Shimura Yuzo, 13th and 15th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

2.7 Taiwanese interpreters and Chinese POWs

The work situation of Hayashi, who was the leading interpreter dealing with Chinese POWs and became one of the two TWCs executed as a result of the trial, may further illustrate how language proficiency and interpreting duty brought or forced Taiwanese serving in the Japanese military into a difficult position during the war. In a signed document presented during the trial in April 1946, Suehiro Hagihara, who identified himself as Hayashi's superior in Rabaul since November 1942, recalled an earlier discussion he had had with Hayashi concerning the latter's work situation:

During wartime it seemed that the Chinese disliked Hayashi and after Armistice it was not infrequent that he was on the verge of being assaulted. Therefore it was towards the end of September 1945 that I asked him if there was any reason for this and his reply was as follows: During the time I was working at [*sic*] the Chinese labour party[,] I was very fluent in Chinese and in view of orders from superiors, I conveyed these orders to the Chinese and warned them from time to time. Then the stealing of military provisions by the Chinese at the scene of labour was frequent and on one occasion I said [,“]During your work you men are stealing tinned goods and eating them[.] This is just like a stray dog. If you carry on such acts, you will be punished[”]. And on another occasion the Chinese at their quarters were saying bad things about me, and then I said [,“]you were now saying bad things about me. If I reported this to the superior you will be punished[,] but if you will apologize to me now, I will overlook the matter[”]. Then they apologized. I think it is due to such incidents that I am disliked. I keenly felt that people who are in charge of persons are in a hatred [*sic*, hated] position.⁴⁸

Clearly, it was Hayashi's language proficiency in Chinese that led to his assignment as an interpreter. And subsequently, this work as an interpreter brought and forced Hayashi into a delicate and difficult situation between his Japanese superiors and the Chinese POWs. And worse, he was placed in “a hated position,” facing the Chinese laborers who were then abused, assaulted, and even killed in the hands of the Japanese military.

Hayashi's situation as an informal interpreter is not an isolated case. Tsuruichi Takebayashi, another TWC sentenced to death in the same trial but later commuted to life imprisonment, was also brought into a similar situation facing Chinese POWs. Takebayashi's superior, Yasushi Sato, made the following statement in a signed document presented during the trial in April 1946, concerning Takebayashi's character and work situation:

48. Statement by Hagihara Suehiro, a civilian, 15th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

Takebayashi had been gentle and had never quarreled with other Formosans or others but was so conceited that he interrupted sometimes my [*sic*] and other Japanese talking, therefore I think he was very conceited to Chinese, and he had been a Chinese interpreter for about one year[,], as a result he was much disliked by the Chinese. Around the middle of October last year after the Armistice, the accused was beaten severely by many Chinese while walking... and wounded severely and took [*sic*] to bed for about 10 days so I went and saw him. He had wounds in his face and eyes.⁴⁹

Evidences analyzed above show that being an interpreter, even an informal one, put these Taiwanese into an unexpected, unusual, and unwilling position which led to accusation of their involvement in the alleged war crimes.

2.8 Sequence of events: *Ad hoc* interpreters and war crimes

In addition to the aforementioned case, the Australian court in Rabaul conducted another trial in connection with the “Chinese POW killing,” in which Susumu Yoneda, a Taiwanese, was charged with the “[m]urder of 4 Chinese PW at Talili about 29 April [19]43,” and brought to court in April 1946. Yoneda was convicted and sentenced to death by hanging on April 23; he was executed on June 11, 1946.⁵⁰ According to Japanese records, the job designation of Yoneda was “*gun-zoku* (civilian military personnel) of Rabaul Depot” (Kōsei-shō hikiage engokyoku (1955: 36)).⁵¹ However, in Australian court records, Yoneda was listed as “a civilian Formosan interpreter.”⁵² These records together indicate that Yoneda was another case of Group 2; i.e. Taiwanese who were originally recruited and designated not as interpreters, but were assigned to perform *ad hoc* interpreting duty in the fields.

Yoneda’s role at the alleged crime scene was further clarified by one of the prosecutor witnesses, Lo Mei Ling, a “Lt. [lieutenant] in the Chinese National Army” of the ROC government. Lo, himself a former POW in Talili, testified that whenever he spoke to the supervising Japanese officer named Tajima, it was

49. Statement by Sato Yasushi, a civilian, 15th April, 1946, in A471.80915.

50. Warrant of Execution, in Proceedings of Military Tribunal, Tasaka, Mitsuo and Others, Department of the Army, A471.80978.

51. Yoneda’s Chinese name was given as 潘進添 Pan Jintian, and Japanese name as 米田進 Yoneda Susumu. In Australian trial documents, his name is misspelled as “Susume.” It should be “Susumu,” as spelled in his own petition in A471.80978.

52. Précis of Evidence, A471.80978.

“through interpreter Yoneda.”⁵³ Another witness, Yang Bing, a “2nd Lt. in the Chinese National Army,” also stated that “Yoneda was interpreting for Tajima.”⁵⁴ Yoneda, in his own testimony in court, also testified that he was assigned to interpret conversations between Tajima and Lo.⁵⁵ Based on these records, Yoneda’s role in the alleged crime could be confirmed as an interpreter between the Japanese military and the Chinese POWs.

In this case, the victims were identified as four “sick PW” (prisoners of war), who were former members of the Chinese Army.⁵⁶ Looking at this case, a question arises again: why did a Taiwanese (interpreter) end up allegedly killing these sick Chinese POWs? Both Lo and Yang, in their respective testimony, elaborated on the situation in which Yoneda, a non-combatant Taiwanese, got involved in the killing. They both confirmed that Yoneda brought the weapon (a rifle) to the crime scene under the instruction of Tajima.⁵⁷ Clearly, from the perspective of Chinese POWs, i.e. the victims of the alleged crime, Yoneda was merely serving as an assistant to Tajima.

Yoneda’s own testimony in court further elaborated on his involvement in the killing. While the testimony may seem lengthy and rather fragmented, it is worth quoting it in detail to understand the sequence of events leading to the war crime:⁵⁸

Question (by the Prosecutor). When did you first know that the Chinese were going to be killed.

Answer (by Yoneda). I first found out when I went to the place of execution, together with Tajima.

Q. Did you go to the sick men’s quarters before the sick men were taken to the mountain.⁵⁹

A. Yes I did go.

Q. Was Tajima with you in the sick men’s quarters.

A. Yes.

...

Q. Did you go with the sick men from their quarters to the mountain.

A. Yes I followed behind them.

53. Court testimony by Lo Mei Ling, A471.80978

54. Court testimony by Yang Bing, A471.80978.

55. Court testimony by Yoneda Susume [*sic*], A471.80978.

56. Record of Military Court, A471.80978.

57. Court testimony by Lo Mei Ling, and court testimony by Yang Bing, A471.80978.

58. Court testimony by Yoneda Susume [*sic*], A471.80978.

59. The “mountain” refers to where the shooting/execution took place.

- Q. Was Sgt [*sic*, Sgt. or Sergeant] Awano with you then.
A. Yes Sgt Awano was there, but he was ahead of us leading us.
Q. Did he join you at the sick quarters.
A. I met him at the entrance to the labour camp.
Q. Was that after you had started with the sick men from their quarters.
A. Yes.
Q. When did you first know that the Chinese were going to be taken to the mountain.
A. When Sgt Awano told us to follow behind.
Q. Before you left with the sick men did you at any time during that morning interpret any conversations between Tajima and Lt. Lo.
A. Yes I did interpret it.
Q. Where did the conversation take place.
A. At Lt. Lo's quarters.
...
Q. Did you think it odd that you a civilian was ordered to shoot Chinese when there were Japanese close handy.
A. I did not have an opportunity [to] think it odd as I was not given a chance because it was at the pit right before the shooting.
Q. Why did you protest when given the order by Sgt. Awano.
A. I thought it was not my duty to kill the Chinese as I was only a Formosan Labourer.
Q. What happened when you refused to carry out the order.
A. When I objected to that Awano came very close to me and told me that I was to do exactly the same as Tajima did or otherwise he would kill me.
Q. When Awano said that to you did you think he would actually carry out the threat.
A. Yes I thought he would carry out the threat.

In addition, there is a statement signed by Yoneda in another court document:⁶⁰

I was a Chinese interpreter attached to the Talili Branch of the 26 Field Supply Depot. I think the incident occurred about the 20th of April 1943. That day I interpreted and took Chinese to the place where they were to be shot. Being ordered by Sgt. AWANO, I shot two Chinese and First c____⁶¹ private TAJIMA shot the other two.

The above testimony by Yoneda better delineates the sequence of events that led to his involvement – as well as that of other convicted TWCs who had served as *ad hoc* interpreters such as Hayashi – in the killing of Chinese POWs. According to the records, the following would be a sequential summary of what happened:

60. "Yoneda, Susumu states," A471.80978.

61. The word is illegible in the document, but should be "class."

1. Assignment of *ad hoc* interpreter

Due to the language barrier, communication was difficult if not entirely impossible between the Japanese military and the Chinese POWs. Under the circumstances, interpreters were needed. In Rabaul, the only persons capable of this task were Taiwanese who could speak both Japanese and Chinese (dialects). Therefore, in addition to the original job such as laborers of the Taiwanese Special Labor Volunteer Corps, Taiwanese who were able to speak and communicate in multiple languages were given additional assignment as *ad hoc* “Chinese interpreters.”

2. Interpreting duty and more

Whenever any Japanese – whether it was an officer or soldier – needed to talk to or convey a message to Chinese POWs, a Taiwanese would be required to be present as interpreter to enable communication between the Japanese and the Chinese. Because of their language ability, Taiwanese would always be needed and present in any matters that dealt with Chinese POWs. For the sake of convenience, the duty of supervising Chinese POWs was also given to the Taiwanese.

3. Participation in the killing of Chinese

At the killing of Chinese POWs, Taiwanese were needed as interpreters. These Taiwanese were initially present simply to perform the duty as interpreters. They were first at the living quarters of Chinese POWs, conveying messages from the Japanese officers to the Chinese. Then, when the Japanese officers told those sick Chinese POWs to step out and walk to the location where they would eventually be killed, the Taiwanese interpreters were present all the time, again, to convey messages from the Japanese officers to the Chinese. As the Taiwanese were at the bottom of the Japanese military rank, they were subject to orders given by other Japanese soldiers and had no autonomy in terms of job assignment. In the case of Yoneda, he was initially told to be present to perform interpreting, but was given an additional duty by Tajima, who was a First Class Private, to carry weapons and follow Chinese POWs to the pit, where the killing would take place. Japanese officers gave order to the soldiers to kill the sick Chinese POWs at the pit. The Taiwanese present at the pit were also ordered by Japanese soldiers to take weapons and shoot the Chinese. The Taiwanese could only follow the order, as they did not have any power to refuse or act against Japanese officers or soldiers. Thus, the Taiwanese who served as *ad hoc* interpreters participated in the killing of Chinese POWs.

As illustrated above in the cases of Yoneda and Hayashi, among others, language proficiency led civilian Taiwanese to perform interpreting duty between the Japanese military and the Chinese POWs. As a result, these *ad hoc* interpreters were brought or rather forced into a situation in which they became involved in

the alleged war crime. In other words, based on analysis of trials records from the Australian courts, informal interpreting duty was partially connected to the conviction and death sentence of several TWCs, such as Hayashi, Okabayashi, Takebayashi, and Yoneda in the two Chinese POW killing trials.

3. Conclusion

While the formal job assignment as interpreters or the occasional assignment of informal interpreting duty alone did not lead to the trials of these Taiwanese wartime interpreters as war criminals and none of the TWCs was convicted solely because of their interpreting, the assignment as interpreters did play a significant role in bringing or forcing a good number of civilian Taiwanese into their involvement in the alleged war crimes. And in the cases of Muneharu Yasuda, Hajime Hayashi, and Susumu Yoneda, their interpreting work partially but directly led them to a postwar situation in which they were convicted with war crimes and paid the ultimate price.

In discussing the relationship between interpreting and power (and its consequences), Delisle and Woodsworth (1995: 274) point out that “[i]n the German army, interpreters held the rank of officers. This was not necessarily an advantage if the interpreter became a prisoner of war.” The cases of Taiwanese wartime interpreters as analyzed above show that during the war language proficiency and interpreting duty brought a number of Taiwanese to a status with which they were seemingly given higher “power” vis-à-vis the local civilian residents under the terror of the *Kempeitai*, or the Chinese POWs under their supervision. The Taiwanese – as Japan’s colonial subjects – were made to be interpreters under a rather peculiar colonial and wartime context. Taiwanese interpreters had unique language proficiency of their native Chinese dialects and the Japanese (i.e. the language of the colonial ruler and their acquired “national language”), which re-defined the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The history of Taiwanese wartime interpreters certainly adds a new dimension to the discussion of politics of language (*kokugo* or “national language”) and Japanese colonialism.⁶²

Language proficiency, unfortunately, became a burden on these Taiwanese wartime interpreters after the war, as they were identified as war crime suspects, sent to the courtrooms, and eventually convicted and punished. As Takeda points out (in this volume: 241), wartime interpreters became “targets of condemnation, attacks and prosecutions as war crimes suspects as they can be viewed as a

62. See further discussion in Lee (Maki Hirano Hubbard, trans.) (2010), or the Japanese original in I (1996).

proxy of the enemy, traitors and accessories to unlawful acts.” In fulfilling their interpreting duty, willingly or unwillingly, Taiwanese took the responsibilities of the Japanese military’s crime and suffered the consequences. In the battlefields, they served as messengers between two warring parties; but in the postwar war crime trials, their role as messengers led to punishment and even death for them.

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CHAPTER 9

Guilt, survival, opportunities, and stigma

Japanese interpreters in the postwar occupation period (1945–1952)

Kayoko Takeda

Following the end of World War II, Japanese interpreters faced unique and complex opportunities and hardships. In occupied Japan, thousands of local interpreters (and translators) were recruited to assist in a variety of occupation operations led by the US forces. In war crimes trials, Japanese linguists played an important role as interpreters in court proceedings against their former superiors and compatriots. At the same time, some interpreters who had served in the Japanese Army were prosecuted as war criminals. Wartime interpreters were also tapped as witnesses to testify for the prosecution during trials. These diverse experiences of Japanese interpreters during the occupation period shine light on some issues and risks faced by wartime interpreters and local interpreters serving foreign military occupiers.

Keywords: court interpreting, war crimes, postwar occupation, Japanese women, social stigma

1. Introduction

In the aftermath of World War II, Japanese interpreters in the Asia-Pacific faced unprecedented consequences, choices, and opportunities. A number of wartime interpreters in the Imperial Japanese Army were prosecuted and convicted in war crimes trials in and outside Japan. There were also former Japanese military personnel who started working for the Allied powers as interpreters immediately after Japan's surrender. In occupied Japan (1945–1952), thousands of Japanese were hired as interpreters (and translators) to assist in a wide range of occupation operations led by the US military. The present chapter investigates the role of Japanese interpreters in this period to highlight issues and risks faced by interpreters in conflict zones and local interpreters serving foreign military forces in postwar occupations.

Drawing on archival records, personal accounts and scholarly works related to Allied operations after World War II, this chapter first examines how Japanese interpreters were involved in trials against Japanese war crimes suspects as court interpreters, defendants, and witnesses. Next, it investigates the ways local interpreters were recruited and trained during the military occupation of Japan and possible psychological effects of working for the occupiers. In particular, it looks into how Japanese women approached this opportunity to work as interpreters (and translators) in the midst of postwar chaos and hardships. Based on the examination above, this chapter discusses some of the complications of interpreting in war and postwar occupations, such as being prosecuted for war crimes and facing social stigma while serving foreign military occupiers. Special attention is paid to the relevance of these issues to current discussions of interpreters in conflict zones (e.g. Baker 2010; Inghilleri 2012). The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

2. Interpreters and war crimes trials

Following the end of World War II, Japanese war crimes suspects were prosecuted in international and local military tribunals. The most prominent was the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (more commonly known as the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal or the Tokyo Trial), which took place from May 1946 to November 1948, with 25 military and political leaders of wartime Japan as the accused. Operated by the US forces, this international court drew judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, and witnesses from more than a dozen countries. Besides the Tokyo Trial, separate military trials were held by Australia, China, France, the Netherlands, the Philippines, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States against Japanese war crimes suspects in 49 Asian-Pacific locations. They are generally called minor war crimes trials or Class BC trials, as opposed to the Tokyo Trial that handled Class A war crimes.¹ Excluding those held by the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, a total of 2,235 minor trials took place against over 5,700 defendants from 1945 to 1951. Japanese interpreters were involved in these postwar major and minor trials as court interpreters, defendants and witnesses.

1. War crimes were categorized as Class A (crimes against peace), Class B (war crimes) and Class C (crimes against humanity).

2.1 Interpreting the trial proceedings

At the Tokyo Trial, interpreting between English and Japanese was provided throughout the proceedings, and Chinese, French, Russian, Dutch, German, and Mongolian interpreting was also offered as needed. Despite the tribunal's preference of using American personnel, it relied on Japanese nationals as court interpreters due to the unavailability of competent American linguists.² Interpreters were mostly drawn from the Japanese foreign ministry, but also from former soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army. These interpreters had the task of working in a trial against their former superiors and leaders. One foreign ministry interpreter even worked in a trial where his father, after being held as a war crimes suspect, testified as a witness for the defense. Concerned about interpreter neutrality and appearing in control of the proceedings, the tribunal set up a system in which *Nisei* (second-generation Japanese Americans) checked the accuracy of interpretation as monitors and the Language Arbitration Board led by a Caucasian officer of the US military reviewed and ruled over disputed interpretations (and translations).³

Unlike some of the interpreters at the Nuremberg Trial who continued to interpret professionally for the United Nations and in other international settings (Gaiba 1998; Baigorri-Jalón 2004), the interpreters at the Tokyo Trial did not pursue career interpreting after the trial. They rarely even discussed their trial experiences in public, which is understandable given the possible stigma associated with facilitating this controversial trial.⁴ Close readings of trial transcripts and interviews with interpreters indicate that although the interpreters tried in their capacity to ensure Japanese defendants received a fair trial, they were aware of their position in the tribunal hierarchy and hesitated to expose the incompetence of the *Nisei* and other American linguists (Takeda 2010).

While this error correction system indicates a commitment to accurate interpretation at the Tokyo Trial, trial documents and personal accounts suggest that the interpreting arrangements in some minor trials were lacking. Reports speak of the absence of interpreters or the poor performance of court-appointed interpreters, which made the accused feel left out of the court proceedings. For instance, a court document of a Hong Kong trial held by the British refers to the interpreter's performance being "so bad as to be unintelligible" (Trial of Naomasa Sakonju and Haruo

2. The term "linguists" here refers to personnel who engaged in language-related functions in accordance with its usage in relevant archival documents.

3. See Takeda (2010) for details.

4. See Totani (2009) for an overview of how the Tokyo Trial has been viewed in Japan.

Mayazumi quoted in Zahar 2013:54). Okada (2009) points to language issues throughout the Australian trials. One of the accused in the Rabaul court describes the difficulty he faced during the trial as interpreting was provided only when he was examined but not for the rest of the proceedings (Imamura 1976/2010).

Available records indicate that minor war crimes trials initially tried to use their own personnel, local bilinguals, or even members of the demobilized Japanese Army as interpreters. During the trial of General Tomoyuki Yamashita (October-December 1945) in the Philippines, the US military commission wanted to use their own linguists (initially Caucasian officers, then *Nisei* linguists), but due to their refusal of service and poor performance, respectively, the court had to rely on Yamashita's personal interpreter. This Japanese interpreter performed whisper interpreting of the proceedings from English into Japanese for Yamashita, but, as a prisoner of war, was not allowed to interpret Yamashita's testimony into English. The best available *Nisei* linguist interpreted as Yamashita testified slowly and clearly to help the *Nisei* understand him correctly. Another example is Masakazu Shimada, one of the Japanese interpreters at the Tokyo Trial, who also worked in an Australian military court. After the demobilization of his army unit in Indonesia upon Japan's surrender, Shimada joined the Allied Translator and Interpreter Service in Australia and served as an interpreter in the Ambon Trial against 91 Japanese defendants in December 1945. Shimada returned to Japan with the Australian occupation army in 1946.⁵

The poor performance of court-appointed interpreters was a source of great concern from the initial stage of the minor war crimes trials. An internal document of the Central Liaison Office (an affiliated agency of the Japanese foreign ministry), dated December 11, 1945, indicates that Japanese officials were concerned about the accuracy of interpretation in the US-operated Yokohama court. The Liaison Office was planning to propose to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) that the defendant be allowed to choose his own interpreter; and that if the court-appointed official interpreter (a *Nisei* linguist) objected to any rendition by the defendant's interpreter, the defense would defer to the official interpreter. In response, presumably, the procedural rules and regulations established by the US Eighth Army in February 1946 for trials in Yokohama included references to interpreting. They are summarized as follows:

The regulations barred any criticism of an interpreter, direct or implied, in open court, until the chief interpreter had investigated the matter and had advised upon the correctness of the translation. If the chief interpreter could not convince both the prosecution and the defense, the complaining party could request

5. See Takeda (2010) for details on the Yamashita Trial and Shimada.

an off-record conference. In addition to the court interpreters, the accused were furnished with interpreters who sat with them throughout the trial.

(Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. General Headquarters 1990: 81)

It is not clear how effective this system was or if it was implemented in other courts administered by US and other Allied military commissions. Archival documents indicate, however, that there was great difficulty in securing competent interpreters for courts outside Japan.

In March 1946, the Liaison Office requested permission from SCAP to dispatch Japanese lawyers and interpreters to the trial locations. This request was initially rejected but eventually granted first for the Guam court in May 1946 and subsequently for all other trial locations, except those in China. A total of 144 interpreters were sent from Japan to various Asia-Pacific locations through July 1951 (*Kōseisho Hikiage-engo-kyoku Hōmu-chōsa-shitsu* 1954). They were usually selected by the Liaison Office, approved by SCAP, and then assigned to the offices handling war crimes trials (*Hōcho-shōmu-han* 1947). The Japanese government's archival records indicate that the number of qualified interpreters was limited and language issues remained throughout in some courts. For instance, in a letter to SCAP, dated February 1947, a former commander of the Imperial Japanese Navy reported the disadvantage Japanese defendants suffered in Singaporean courts because Chinese and Indian locals with poor Japanese interpreted in their interrogations (*Moto Nihon kaigun nantō hōmen kantai shireichōkan hatsu MacArthur gensui ate* 1947). An internal document of the Japanese government, dated August 1947, shows evidence of frustration at being unable to secure enough interpreters who could pass the language test given by the British military and its intent to negotiate with SCAP if less-qualified interpreters could be sent for interpreting in matters outside the courtroom, if not for court proceedings (*Nanpō haken-gun ni kansuru renraku jikō* 1947). Another document (*Senpan jimushitsu* 1947) refers to the fact that the British army's language test for Japanese interpreters was very demanding and required a screening process by the Japanese government in advance. Dispatched interpreters were mostly graduates of prominent universities and included former journalists, diplomats, professors, military interpreters, and employees of trading companies. Their contracts were usually for six months, but archival documents indicate that they were sometimes extended with pay raises (*Kōseishō Hikiage-engo-kyoku Hōmu-chōsa-shitsu ibid.*).

2.2 Interpreters as war criminals

While there were Japanese who worked as interpreters in trials for Japanese war crimes, there were also wartime interpreters prosecuted as war crimes suspects. Although it is difficult to locate full lists of defendants with their job descriptions

in every minor trial, available records indicate that a number of interpreters were convicted as war criminals and some were executed. Table 1 shows the numbers of convicted interpreters in the six trial venues that had the most documented interpreters found guilty. (This table was compiled based on trial summaries contained in Chaen 1985, 1987, 1989, 1992a, 1992b.) The numbers represent defendants explicitly designated as “interpreter.” There were other defendants who served as interpreters but had different designations such as their army rank or just “civilian.” For instance, Hisao Kimura is presented as private first class in Singaporean court documents, but his main duty was interpreting in interrogations of prisoners of war (POWs) (Kimura 2001).⁶

Table 1. Interpreters convicted in war crimes trials

Trial venue (presiding country)	Total number of convicted	Interpreters convicted (<i>Kempeitai</i> interpreters)	Interpreters sentenced to death	Notes
Yokohama (US)	830	10	1	
Singapore (UK)	397	9 (4)	2	Included one Taiwanese.
Beijing (Republic of China)	75	6 (5)	4	Included three Koreans and one Taiwanese; all executed.
Hong Kong (UK)	107	6 (2)	1	Interpreter with death sentence was later exonerated.
Manila (Philippines)	132	6 (6)	0	
Batavia (The Netherlands)	314	4 (4)	1	Included one Taiwanese who was executed.

The convicted interpreters included those conscripted from Korea and Taiwan under Japanese colonial rule,⁷ those locally hired in Japanese-occupied regions, and those *Nisei* originally from the United States and Canada but stranded in Japan during the war. No longer Japanese nationals after the war, the Koreans and Taiwanese who served terms in prison faced extreme difficulty once out of prison since they received little support from the Japanese government (e.g. Utsumi 1982; Wada 2003). Some Chinese interpreters locally hired by the Japanese faced *hanjian* (traitor to China) trials as well (Wada *ibid.*; Hayashi 2005). In addition, there were

6. Kimura, a former philosophy student, scribbled agonizing notes on pages of his books during the trial that became a well-known part of the collections of farewell notes by students enlisted and killed in the war (Kako 2014).

7. See Lan (Chapter 8) in this volume for details on Taiwanese interpreters as war criminals.

Nisei interpreters prosecuted and convicted of treason by their countries of origin: Kanao Inouye by Canada and Tomoya Kawakita by the United States.

These interpreters were not charged in war crimes trials for interpreting for the Imperial Japanese Army, but rather for allegedly ill-treating, torturing, assaulting, and/or killing POWs and local civilians in Japanese-occupied regions. For instance, several civilian interpreters at the Yokohama trials were charged with “willfully and unlawfully commit[ting] cruel, brutal, and inhumane atrocities and other offence against certain POWs” (e.g. case numbers 40, 47, 60, 78, 107 (Hōmushō n.d.)). It is no surprise that many of the convicted interpreters had worked for the *Kempeitai*, a Gestapo-like military police that notoriously terrorized POWs and locals with harsh interrogations and torture. Besides these cases involving physical assaults, there is an interesting case at Yokohama in which a civilian interpreter was prosecuted because he refused to interpret for POWs when they wanted to complain about the camp conditions. The defense argued the interpreter was just observing the superior order that no POWs talk to Japanese civilians (case number 22 (Hōmushō n.d.)). Since the prosecutions in minor war crimes trials were mostly based on statements taken from POWs and locals who were victimized by Japanese, many of the accused were those in close contact with them, such as guards, interpreters and medics, rather than high-ranking commanders (Hayashi *ibid.*).

While in their own defense some interpreters invoked “superior orders” or protested they had not themselves committed any physical offense, in some cases they were still prosecuted for being associated with the war crimes committed by their units. (See discussions on being “concerned in” ill-treatment as opposed to “did ill-treat” in Hong Kong trials (Jørgensen 2013)). Jørgensen (*ibid.*: 146–157) examines cases in Hong Kong in which the prosecution argued the full responsibility of all members of a unit for actions taken jointly. In cases like these, an interpreter’s argument of “I was just interpreting” or “I was just following orders from my superior” could not prevail. Jia (2013: 187) refers to a Hong Kong case against Kanao Inouye, a Canadian-born interpreter, who pleaded superior orders. Although he argued that disobedience would have been suicide, implying his ill-treatment of POWs was a result of duress, Inouye was found guilty of all charges and sentenced to death.⁸

8. As a Canadian subject, Inouye was eventually transferred to a Canadian court, found guilty of treason and executed.

2.3 Interpreters as witnesses

Although small in number, cases can be found in which wartime interpreters testified as witnesses in war crimes trials. In a Rangoon trial held by the British, a Burmese interpreter who had been employed by the Japanese army testified against the defendants, his former superiors, who were accused of having killed British POWs. The defense challenged the truthfulness of his testimony to no avail (Ōkami 1947). Linton (2013: 125) refers to a Hong Kong trial in which an interpreter testified as an eyewitness to the torture the defendant (a *Kempeitai* colonel) allegedly administered. Similarly, Totani (2013: 119) discusses Jerome Edward Law's testimony about how the *Kempeitai* tortured the victims in the same trial in Hong Kong. Law was a Japanese-speaking businessman forced to work as an interpreter in interrogations by the *Kempeitai*. In a Yokohama trial, an interpreter testified against the defendant, a military lawyer. He testified that the defendant had inserted words into the reports on interrogations of fallen British fliers and instructed him to falsify its contents when interpreting back for the fliers before they signed their statements (Headquarters Eighth Army 1948). There was also a case in which a local interpreter testified as an eyewitness for the defendant, a police officer in a Japanese-occupied region in Singapore (Trial of Akimori Nishiuchi cited in U. C. Berkeley War Crimes Studies Center (n.d.)). Interpreters were presumably effective witnesses because they could offer their first-hand accounts as evidence in English without the assistance of an interpreter. There was no regard for the confidentiality generally expected of interpreters under normal circumstances.

3. Interpreters serving foreign military occupiers

The occupation of Japan by the Allied forces started on August 28, 1945, led by SCAP. For SCAP, finding locals to interpret and translate between Japanese and English was an urgent and critical prerequisite to implementing its occupation policies. The US Army dispatched more than 5,000 *Nisei* to Japan as language personnel to bridge the occupation forces with Japanese officials and civilians. However, the sheer volume and complexity of some of the work were more than *Nisei* linguists could handle (Takeda 2010). The Japanese proficiency required for certain tasks, such as court interpreting, was beyond the level of most *Nisei* linguists who had received only six months of intensive training at the US Army's Japanese language school. Thus, the Allied occupiers came to rely greatly on local Japanese interpreters (and translators), not only for their language abilities, but also for their ability to serve as cultural informants, messengers, and exemplars for other locals.

3.1 Recruitment and training

Securing the needed interpreters swiftly for the Allied occupiers was a mandate for the government of defeated Japan. On August 26, 1945 – eleven days after Japan’s surrender and two days before the official arrival of the occupation forces – the *Asahi Shimbun*, a national newspaper in Japan, carried an article urging Japanese men to apply for interpreter positions with the occupation forces. The Central Liaison Office was established to undertake negotiations and administrative coordination between the occupation forces and the Japanese government. One of its major responsibilities was to procure interpreters for SCAP. The Liaison Office’s first ad for interpreters appeared in the September 2, 1945, issue of the *Nippon Times*, an English language newspaper. On September 5, 1945, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department announced that they were urgently seeking 200 interpreters to work for the occupation personnel. For the first few years of the postwar era, the *Nippon Times* carried SCAP’s “help wanted” ads for interpreters and translators almost daily. “High-pay” was a phrase frequently used in the ads to entice applicants with the monetary benefit of working for the occupiers.

Although English was considered “the enemy’s language” and English education was greatly cut back during the war (Erikawa 2008), it became the language of opportunity in postwar Japan. “[K]nowledge of even a little English became a very useful asset” (McClain 2013: 213) and English proficiency was “the supreme weapon for survival”⁹ (Harada 1994: 48). The English “boom” among Japanese citizens right after the war is evidenced by the fact that *Nichibei Kaiwa Techo* [Japan-US Conversation Handbook] (Kagaku Kyozaisha), published on September 15, 1945, sold 3.6 million copies in a few months and became the all-time bestselling book in Japan until 1981 (Dower 1999: 187–188). An educational radio show called *Eigo Kaiwa* [English conversation] started in 1946 and became extremely popular, garnering over one million listeners and 1,000 fan clubs all over Japan (Takemae 1992/2002). The *Nippon Times* also benefited from the rise of English. Its circulation dramatically increased from 8,244 in August to 46,552 in October 1945 (Matsunaga 2013). As of 1948 it had a circulation of 50,000 copies, of which 30,000 were for the occupation forces, 17,000 were sold on streets in Tokyo and 3,000 were for home delivery (ibid.). It was a valuable resource for aspiring Japanese interpreters wanting to learn contemporary English usage (Harada 1994).

In response to SCAP’s demand to increase the number of interpreters, the Japanese foreign ministry and the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department established the Interpreter Training School (ITS) in August 1946. The school was

9. Here and throughout the chapter the translation of direct quotations from Japanese texts is provided by the author.

operated by the foreign ministry, with a church minister and his American wife as the main teachers. This teacher couple authored five volumes of textbooks for the school, titled *Nichibei Kaiwa Kōza* [Japan-US conversation reader] (Gaimusho shusen renraku chūo jimukyoku 1946–1948). The ITS provided an intensive three-month training for general interpreters and a six-month training for police interpreters. The entrance exams for general interpreters were highly competitive, and hundreds of people, including former military interpreters and soldiers, applied for a class of 20 students each term. The applicants had to be English-major college graduates or those with equivalent qualifications. Upon completion of the program, the foreign ministry recommended these interpreters to the SCAP headquarters, which was considered the most esteemed workplace for interpreters (Harada *ibid.*). The training course for police became a separate program as the Police Interpreter Training (PIT) School in August 1948. Graduates of the PIT program worked at police stations or were sent to US bases to accompany the military police in their jeeps for patrolling the city. Although the ITS and PIT were meant to train interpreters, the focus of their instruction was placed on improving students' English skills in general rather than teaching interpreting skills (*ibid.*). The textbooks (*Nichibei Kaiwa Kōza*) mostly offered sample dialogues in American English in various settings where Japanese would interact with occupying forces, and did not deal with “how to interpret.” The interpreters (and translators) who worked for the occupation forces were typically highly educated, and some of them later achieved successful careers in government, academia, and business (Kudo 2004), including Kiichi Miyazawa, a former prime minister, Den Fujita, a former president of Japan McDonald's, and Mayumi Moriyama, a former justice minister.

3.2 Japanese women and interpreting

During the first several months of the occupation, the “help wanted” ads for interpreters posted by the Japanese and occupation authorities specifically looked for men only. The exclusion of women is understandable, given that their wartime military leaders had told them to kill themselves to evade rape when Allied forces landed (Cook and Cook 2000). This desire to shield local women was also apparent at the beginning of the occupation in the Japanese government's establishment of prostitution facilities (Recreation and Amusement Association, RAA), which would allow “ordinary” Japanese women to be spared the sexual advances of foreign military personnel. Also motivating the exclusion of women was the view of women as unworthy of “serious” work such as court interpreting (see Sohma's interview in Torikai 2009). After a while, however, the criteria for recruiting language personnel expanded to include Japanese women, presumably due

to the serious shortages of interpreters and translators. The women hired were mostly young and educated, often as English majors. The above-mentioned ITS and PIT programs also accepted female applicants, including policewomen newly hired after the war. Based on interviews and surveys with Japanese women who worked for the occupation forces, Sakai (1994) concludes that these women typically came from high social strata; were well-educated and equipped with the ability to understand and accept different cultures; and needed to work for economic reasons. Although it was the Japanese government who financed the costs of the occupation, the salaries of Japanese workers were based on the pay scale of the US military. Some personal accounts indicate that these Japanese female linguists were earning more money than their fathers, husbands and brothers, and that those still in school were able to pay their own college tuitions (e.g. Yokoyama 1997; Nishimura 2002).

The use of Japanese women in professional positions such as interpreting for occupation operations aligned with SCAP initiatives to advance the status of women in democratized Japan, such as enfranchising women and granting equal rights to women and men in the new constitution. The occupiers perceived Japanese women who worked with them as “most appropriate to represent their nation for rehabilitation, willing and eager democratic subjects... the ‘best hope’ of Japan after the treachery of Japanese men” (Kelsky 2001: 36). SCAP even produced movies on women’s issues to raise the economic, political, and social standing of Japanese women (Ikegawa 2013). Carmen Johnson, an American occupation officer who worked on the advancement of Japanese women, always requested a woman to be her interpreter since she “felt strongly that an American woman should use a Japanese woman to speak for her” (1996: 65). In return, having female supervisors and being treated equally with men in the workplace seems to have inspired Japanese women to be more conscious about their professional careers (Sakai *ibid.*). In fact, *Nisei* women dispatched to supervise Japanese linguists were called “Mannequins of Democracy” and expected to demonstrate what women could accomplish in democratic society (Moore 2003: 125).

In a short time after the end of the fierce, all-out war, these Japanese women ventured to work for the former enemy to survive and make a living. At the same time, following the oppression and austerity of war, it may have been liberating for some young Japanese women to leave home and earn money by making use of their language skills. Sakai (*ibid.*) suggests that Japanese women were probably less uncomfortable with working for the former enemy than men since men were directly responsible for having driven the war effort, while women were excluded from the wartime leadership. Although Dower (1999: 87–120) discusses *kyodatsu* (exhaustion and despair) as the psychological state of Japanese after the war, Kelsky (2001: 56) points to Japanese historians’ view of “*kyodatsu* as a specifically

male postwar experience and a sense of *kaihō* (liberation) as a characteristically female one.” By serving as interpreters for the foreign occupiers, these Japanese women emerged from traditional positions to assume new roles.

3.3 Censoring Japanese

Japanese interpreters (and translators) played a vital role in what a US Army historian has called “unprecedented cooperation between once bitter enemies” (McNaughton 2006: 415), performing significant work for the occupation forces, such as interpreting at the Tokyo Trial. Accompanying occupying forces as interpreters, however, attracted attention from Japanese locals. Some interpreters were self-conscious about the jealous, curious, scornful, or resentful look locals cast at them (Harada *ibid.*; Sakai *ibid.*). Yukie Kiriyama’s story (Nishimura *ibid.*) may illustrate how knowing English was both a liability and an asset in wartime and postwar Japan. After graduating from a Japanese girls’ school at the top of her class, Kiriyama went to the University of Washington in the United States to study sociology at the age of 18. When she returned, Japan was at war and she was condemned and scorned for her experience in the US and called a spy. The situation reversed completely when Japan surrendered. She was hired as an interpreter at the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department, and then recruited by the military police of the occupation forces. Disenchanted by the rough environment of the workplace, she took the exam to become a translator for the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD) under SCAP, which censored Japanese civilian communications (publications, radio, film, mail, etc.) from 1945 to 1951. The CCD may have been the largest employer of Japanese linguists during that time. At their peak, the censorship operations employed more than 8,000 Japanese examiners and translators (Yamamoto 2013). Due to the amount of work and the level of Japanese proficiency required, CCD had no choice but to rely on Japanese nationals, which meant that it was Japanese who were censoring fellow Japanese.

4. Discussion

This examination of Japanese interpreters in the postwar occupation period has raised some of the issues and risks interpreters faced after serving in war and while working for foreign military occupiers. The following discussion delves deeper into these issues, such as the risk of interpreters being prosecuted as war crimes suspects, interpreters’ motivations to work for foreign occupiers, and psychological difficulties these interpreters may face. Special attention is paid to the relevance of these issues to interpreters in current conflict zones.

4.1 Fate of wartime interpreters

An inquiry into Japanese interpreters involved in war crimes trials points to their diverse experiences under chaotic and strenuous circumstances during the postwar period. It shows that the ability to mediate communication across languages between opposing parties can be a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, knowledge of the languages of both parties allows interpreters to ally with the side that controls their wellbeing and survival. This advantage is dramatized in a scene from the 2013 film, *The Railway Man*, based on British POW Eric Lomax's autobiography (1995/2012).¹⁰ In the scene, the Allies have taken over a Japanese POW camp following Japan's surrender. An Allied officer lines up the members of the Japanese unit to inform them of forthcoming war crimes investigations. The only bilingual among both parties, however, is the *Kempeitai* interpreter Takashi Nagase, who seizes the opportunity to deny his affiliation with the *Kempeitai* without being detected as a traitor or contradicted by the members of his unit.

Officer: *Kempeitai*?

Nagase: No, sir. Translator.

Officer: Did you work for the *Kempeitai*? Torture? Beatings?

Nagase: Only translation.

Nagase is subsequently exonerated and recruited to assist the Allies in searching for dead POWs. It is possible that a similar scene played out when English-speaking personnel in the Imperial Japanese Army started working as interpreters for Allied forces immediately after the war; and when some of them became involved in war crimes trials against their former superiors and comrades as interpreters and eyewitnesses. They were able to maintain physical and economic security because of their ability to interpret for either side of the opposing parties.

On the other hand, an investigation of interpreters as war criminals indicates that interpreters can be prosecuted and convicted – when they go beyond interpreting and engage in unlawful acts, naturally, but also when they are “concerned in” war crimes as part of the group that jointly commits the crimes. Like other defendants, interpreters used “superior orders” as a defense during their trials; but it was only a mitigating factor for sentencing and did not work as an absolute defense (Piccigallo 1979). Another ineffectual defense on record is that of an interpreter who claimed he protected POWs by slapping them so that he could prevent much harsher assaults by guards (Headquarters Eighth Army 1946). The

10. Although Nagase's memoir (Nagase 2010) does not corroborate this particular incident, it does refer to how he kept working for the war grave search team without being accused of war crimes by withholding information about the extent of his involvement in the work of the *Kempeitai*.

argument of collective responsibility allows for an interpreter to be found guilty even when he himself did not physically harm POWs so long as he participated in his capacity as an interpreter while his unit acted unlawfully. This judgment poses an important question relevant to interpreters in current conflict zones: In high-pressure, strenuous, and chaotic situations, under the military code of absolute obedience to superior orders, can interpreters refuse to be part of unlawful acts such as torturing a POW to obtain information? Legal debate over superior orders and personal responsibility in war crimes is beyond the scope of the present chapter, but issues of obedience to superior orders and interpreters' ethical conduct must be addressed in the current discussion of protecting interpreters and defining their role in conflict zones.¹¹

It should be noted that interpreters, along with prison guards and medics, were prosecuted partly because they were identified as war crimes suspects more easily than others by former POWs and locals who had close contact with them (Hayashi, *ibid.*). Since interpreters functioned as messengers of the occupier and delivered orders to POWs and locals, they may have given more lasting impressions on the occupied and victims. Eric Lomax (*ibid.*), a former British POW who survived severe torture by the Japanese, shares a telling admission in his memoir: he hated the interpreter more than the *Kempeitai* officer who actually tortured him because "it was his voice that grated on and that would give me no rest" (144). The interpreter is "the centre-stage" (236) of his memories and "represented all of [the torturers]" (*ibid.*).¹² As Pratt (2009: 1529) correctly states, "language is torture's constant companion." To a victim of torture, an interpreter can easily be seen as the frontman of the oppressor rather than a neutral messenger.

Another important aspect of interpreters as war criminals is the fact that they included those recruited locally in China and Pacific islands, and Koreans and Taiwanese drafted as Imperial subjects. Some Chinese interpreters were also prosecuted in *hanjian* (traitor) trials (Wada *ibid.*; Hayashi *ibid.*). There were Korean and Taiwanese convicts who were sent to Sugamo prison in Tokyo from their trial locations. For some of these convicts, it was their first time actually landing in Japan. Although they had worked for the Imperial Japanese Army, the Japanese government provided little support or compensation when they left the prison (e.g. Nakamura 2007). The hardship of these interpreters can be compared to that of interpreters locally hired in the recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, who have been seeking assistance from the governments they served (e.g. Coghlan 2013; Anderson 2014).

11. See the guidelines presented by RedT, for instance.

12. Over fifty years later, Lomax reconciled with the interpreter, Takashi Nagase, who dedicated his later life to atoning for the Japanese army's ill-treatment of POWs (Nagase *ibid.*).

4.2 Motivations for serving the occupier

Local interpreters' motives for working for foreign military occupiers may vary from economic or practical gains to a desire to participate in the occupier's cause. Interpreters locally hired in Japanese-occupied regions such as China and islands of the South Pacific during the war may have been induced to work for the Imperial Japanese Army by pragmatic incentives, such as accessing new opportunities or just staying alive. In postwar Japan, in the midst of devastation, hunger, and unemployment, locals with English skills went to work for the former enemy as interpreters and translators for their own survival and the survival of their families. Asked if he was working for peace building in postwar Japan, a Navy-elite-turned-SCAP linguist responded, "No time to even think about such a thing in the midst of the postwar chaos. We were on the edge of starvation." (Nishimura *ibid.*: 31). References to "hunger" and "survival" are made repeatedly in memoirs and interviews of Japanese interpreters and translators who worked for the occupation forces (e.g. Sakai 1994; Kai 1995; Yokoyama *ibid.*). Aiding the victors gave them easier access to food and commodities than most Japanese, who suffered from severe supply shortages (Kai *ibid.*).

Local interpreters may also work for the foreign occupier in hopes of controlling the flow of information to protect their own people, which may be close to what Davies (2004) terms "tactical collaboration." Reported instances of tactical acts by local linguists in occupied Japan include the interpreter who toned down the emperor-worshiping slogan of a high school for a visiting occupation officer (Seiseikō hyakunen-shi henshū iinkai 1982), and the censor translator who let some personal letters that would likely be confiscated go uninspected (Kai *ibid.*). In a similar vein, a former police interpreter tells in his memoir that one of the reasons he wanted to work for the US military police was to function as a "cushion" and give the US forces a favorable impression of the Japanese police through his work since SCAP was trying to weaken the Japanese police (Harada *ibid.*).

Lastly, some interpreters may have assisted the occupation forces out of sympathy for their cause or interest in their presence. Some memoirs and interviews of Japanese linguists reveal traces of their curiosity and excitement about being in contact with American personnel, culture, and customs. For instance, Kiriya was very pleased with her job at SCAP since she was able to make use of her study in the United States (Nishimura *ibid.*). Harada (*ibid.*) longed to ride a jeep around Tokyo with American military police, and Sakai's interviewees (*ibid.*) expressed their happiness about the end of the war and high hopes for the new Japan under occupation. After all, they had studied English presumably because of their interest, in part at least, in English-speaking societies and cultures. The acute interest

in learning spoken English and American culture in occupied Japan discussed above may explain in part why these locals chose to work for the US occupiers as interpreters and translators.

4.3 Personal dilemmas and social stigma

Interpreting for military occupiers is a complex matter and does not necessarily mean that the interpreters fully embrace the ideology and policy of the occupation. Personal accounts of occupation interpreters and translators in postwar Japan are rather limited, which indicates a hesitance to share their experiences with the public (Akasaka 2004). In fact, their memoirs and interviews, though sparse, do provide a hint of the psychological struggles caused by assisting the former enemy. Most of them worked for the US occupiers to survive, or as part of their professional duties in the case of the foreign ministry officials who interpreted at the Tokyo Trial. Some do not deny the excitement they felt about working and learning in the new environment, but at the same time they were distressed by how other Japanese perceived them. For instance, Harada (*ibid.*), a former police interpreter in occupied Japan, talks about being treated as an outcast and looked at coldly by other police officers. There was still anti-US sentiment within the police department, which is only natural because the police had played a key role in cracking down pro-American Japanese during the war. They thought Harada had been brainwashed by the Americans. Yokoyama (1993, quoted in Yamamoto *ibid.*), a former CCD translator, reveals that she was told by her then supervisor not to tell anyone about her work as people would view her as a traitor. According to Yamamoto (*ibid.*), linguists who worked in the CCD felt a sense of guilt and shame about having examined fellow Japanese citizens' private mail secretly and translated it for the occupier. These interpreters and translators, particularly those who became prominent figures in government, academia, and business, seem to want to keep their experience of working for the US occupiers quiet, fearing condemnation for "selling-out."

Thus, working for the once hated enemy created a social stigma for Japanese interpreters and translators. They may have felt they were "just interpreting" but in the context of occupation, interpreters could be seen as representing and thereby siding with the ruler, betraying their countrymen. The occupation of Japan after World War II has been regarded as a remarkably successful case of military occupation as evidenced by the fact that there was not a single incident of Japanese terror against the occupation forces (Dower 2012). Sodei (2001) offers an extremely positive view of the occupation in his book on half a million letters people in occupied Japan wrote to General Douglas MacArthur, going so far as to

say that the occupiers were identified as liberators for Japanese who had suffered under the militarism. Dower (1999: 226–233) also discusses Japanese adulation of MacArthur by referring to spontaneous efforts to write to the Commander. Nonetheless, those who interpreted and translated for the occupation forces had personal dilemmas and fears of social stigma as discussed above. Understanding this complex psychology of local Japanese interpreters even in a peaceful occupation leads to a realization of the magnitude of difficulty interpreters face in more hostile foreign military occupations, such as in Afghanistan and Iraq.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has examined a range of Japanese interpreters' experiences in the postwar occupation period. Due to the unavailability of competent Allied interpreters, Japanese interpreters were recruited to interpret the proceedings of the Tokyo Trial and other war crimes trials against their former superiors and compatriots. Some wartime interpreters, including those drafted from Korea and Taiwan, were prosecuted and convicted as war criminals for committing unlawful acts of violence, being part of unlawful acts committed by their units, and refusing to interpret for POWs. "Superior orders" never prevailed as a defense. Because of their proximity to the victims, interpreters were more easily identified as war crimes suspects. Wartime interpreters were also tapped as eyewitnesses to testify their first-hand accounts in trial proceedings.

In occupied Japan, local interpreters were indispensable for SCAP in implementing its occupation policies. Thousands of Japanese worked for the occupation forces as interpreters to survive and make a living in war-ravaged Japan, though these were not their sole motivations. Some interpreters were motivated to make use of their English skills and learn from interacting with the occupiers. In particular, some women may have found it liberating to work in a "democratic" environment and earn high salaries as interpreters. Nonetheless, working for the former enemy resulted in internal moral conflicts and stigmatized some linguists because they felt guilty and ashamed and feared being viewed as traitors by other Japanese.

These experiences of Japanese interpreters point to potential issues and risks faced by wartime interpreters (and translators) and interpreters serving foreign occupation forces in other settings. The ability to mediate communication between the opposing parties can provide interpreters physical and economic security and perceived or real power in conflict zones as they can work for either side. However, they can also become targets of condemnation, attacks, and prosecutions as war crimes suspects as they can be viewed as a proxy of the enemy, traitors, and accessories to unlawful acts. Interpreters in conflicts and occupations

are in a vulnerable position owing to the nature of their work. They may be “just interpreting” as neutral machines delivering the victor’s message, but because interpreters talk directly to the subaltern, they may be viewed as representatives of the new order. Also, the issue of superior orders and personal responsibility is critical for interpreters. In war crimes trials, “I was just interpreting” or “I was following an order” cannot be the absolute defense. Interpreters can be prosecuted for not refusing to interpret in unlawful acts.

All of these are complex and difficult matters relevant to the current discussion on the role of military linguists and protection of locally hired interpreters in conflict zones.¹³ Although this chapter did not examine the issue of trust in detail, references are often made in prior literature to interpreters’ divided loyalties and interpreters as a “security risk” in adversarial settings as well (e.g. Pratt *ibid.*). In discussing whether interpreters can keep their “neutrality” in warring situations, it may be useful to investigate how interpreters were treated as defendants and witnesses in war crimes trials in the past. Closer readings of trial documents and keen attention to the affairs of interpreters in current conflict zones should be pursued to contribute to the discussion of ethical codes and guidelines for interpreters and users of interpreting services in military settings.

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13. See Pym (Chapter 10) in this volume.

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Risk analysis as a heuristic tool in the historiography of interpreters

For an understanding of worst practices

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The specificities of the interpreter's work can be considered in terms of the way people interact in spoken encounters. Underlying the competing interests and implicit search for cooperation, there is always the relative proximity of alternative non-linguistic action. This gives mediated encounters an element of potential danger, at the same time as it makes them particularly suitable for risk analysis. Study of an extreme example of proximate alternative action, a mediated military encounter in Afghanistan, shows that an interpreter's failure to render significant material may be considered rational in terms of his possible distribution of risk priorities. Indeed, risk analysis can enable us to understand multiple cases of what would otherwise appear to be unethical or non-standard practices.

Keywords: interpreting, spokenness, risk management, proximate action, conflict situations

1. Introduction

If I were to rewrite my book *Method in Translation History* (1998) I would insist, first, that the concept of “translation” should explicitly accord wider scope to its spoken modes, and second, that more serious methodological attention should be paid to the complex plays of interests in the mediated encounter, particularly as they relate to non-linguistic action. These points follow from recent work on the role of translators and interpreters in conflict situations (as in Salama-Carr 2007), particularly in wars (as in Footitt and Kelly 2012), just as they follow growing attention to context-dependent aspects of interpreting, addressing issues such as political settings (Cronin 2002), motivated shifts of footing (Diriker 2004), judicious omissions (Viaggio 2002; Gumul and Lyda 2007), and surveys of different

performance expectations (for example; Kurz 1993; Moser 1996; Pöchhacker 2002; Zwischenberger and Pöchhacker 2010). Such studies, in turn, have followed the general movement of linguistics away from text and towards language in situation. My concerns here, however, are more formal than descriptive. I would like to bind my two desiderata into a simple hypothesis, open to testing: *the more spoken the situation, the greater the risk of alternative non-linguistic action*. If it is true that interpreters tend to work in risk-laden situations, then that is what might give them a special history, different from the history of written translation in terms of degree, not nature.

In the next few pages I will try to unpack that hypothesis and illustrate it with an extended example.

2. The importance of speaking, as opposed to writing

So you want to separate the history of interpreting from that of written translation? Do you really think your fundamental questions, your research methodologies, your intellectual audiences, are all that different? A survey of 374 AIIC members (Brown 2002) found that just under 70 per cent of them also produced written translations professionally, so one could scarcely argue that interpreters, even conference interpreters, are a breed apart – sociologically, if not always financially, that ground for separation will always be quicksand. Let us posit, nevertheless, that there *are* differences and that they can be significant. Where should we seek them?

Interpreting is usually defined by its spokenness: interpreters speak, translators write, we are told. That difference is now enshrined in a ruling by the US Supreme Court (2012) – which incidentally enabled a company to get out of paying interpreters – yet that scarcely makes it intellectually satisfying. Don't interpreters write, for example when they take notes? Don't they use the written medium when available, sometimes performing sight translation (sight interpreting?) or working from a simultaneously written transcript (as Kayoko Takeda tells me can happen when interpreters work at depositions)? And beyond those mixed technologies, there can be, after all, writtenness in language that is spoken, as for example when a judge reads out a densely constructed ruling, just as there can be spokenness in language that is written, as in a film script or transcript of an interview (on both these possibilities in relation to the interpreter's task, see Shlesinger 1989 and Pym 2007). The simple fact of speaking or writing is not really what is at stake. So what might the difference be?

Conference interpreters tell us the difference lies in the simultaneity of their delivery, and thus the impossibility of correcting: we don't have time, they say, whereas translators who write apparently have all the time in the world to correct

everything they do (cf. Gile 1995). So here's the news: eye-tracking indicates that touch-typing translators can read while they write (so there is a degree of simultaneity in written translation); industrial deadlines in localization projects mean that speed is often more important than quality (so there is little time for correction, and in some translation-memory systems there is no *possibility* for the translator to correct); and then conference interpreters do in fact correct (or make "repairs"), dialogue interpreters are negotiating corrections all the time, and for that matter the same interpreters can merrily go off and do consecutive interpreting, which apparently still counts as interpreting, so all the arguments about simultaneity and non-corrections logically fly out the window. Now, what differences are left?

One significant difference, I propose, can be found by considering the relative *mutual presence* of the communication participants. When the message is spoken, the participants are assumed to share the same time frame, if not be within physical earshot of some kind (remote interpreting still has the shared time frame). And when the message is written, it is precisely so that those proximities can be stretched – I mostly write for someone who does not share my here-and-now. This difference can be transformed by technologies yet remains a point of departure: it theoretically enables the direct involvement of the participants in the spoken situation, with feedback and dialogic corrections becoming easier to enact than in written communication. And that possibility in turn allows for different intensities of interaction and different probabilities of recourse to non-linguistic action, which is the thing I want to get to. But first let me make this notion of "relative mutual presence" a little more precise.

As mentioned, in some modes of cross-cultural communication the main participants share the same time frame; in others, they do not. Spatial presence can be important, but the key shared dimension these days is *time*, and all the more so now that electronic technologies enable our words to be shared simultaneously even when we are physically at different ends of the world. That is what I minimally mean by "presence": sharing the same time frame. True, there are degrees of iconic clarity, noise in transmission, and slight delays all over the place, but presence, together, and in time, remains key.

Why should that kind of presence be important? Just a few further false leads have to be dispensed with before we can proceed.

First, let us admit, all presence is partly illusory to the extent that the people in front of each other are rarely deciding for themselves: they mostly represent absent parties and interests, and their interactions are in any case conditioned by the nature of language, the task of which is to move concepts from situation to situation (language is based on recycling parts of utterances). As any basic deconstruction will tell you, there is no pure presence. The illusion of presence can nevertheless remain important and influential in itself.

Second, as is more rarely admitted, a similar illusory quality enshrouds the dialogic principle whereby all participants construct meaning together. In idealist theory, in situations of presence, if you don't understand what someone has said, you can ask for some kind of remedy, perhaps an explanation or reformulation. That is, there is the possibility of feedback, and thus of communicative adjustment. Of course, the possibility of feedback by no means coincides with spokenness alone: it can happen with entirely written communication (I propose an article to a journal, I get reviewed, I change the article, or not), just as it can be difficult with spoken interpreting (at a large conference, for example). There is, however, a rough correlation, close enough to make the matter interesting.

I suspect that the possibility of feedback does have consequences for the mediated encounter, even when there is no actual feedback manifested linguistically. Visual presence, body language, and awareness of multiple addressees all play parts in the creation of meaning. One might further suppose that visual identity and the possibility of feedback allow for greater individuation of the participants ("the" interpreter becomes *this* particular interpreter), greater scrutiny of signals of trustworthiness, greater attention to the specific interests of each party, and perhaps greater communicative leeway (and less linguistic exactitude) so that those specific interests can be coordinated to a successful outcome.

To appreciate the importance of all of that, however, we need to ask why anyone should engage in dialogical feedback in the first place. Why should they care? It is there, I propose, that analysis of a rather extreme interaction will lead us to a deeper analysis of why spoken encounters can be special.

3. Best and worst practices in an Afghanistan encounter

It is easy to find examples of what interpreters should *not* do. One example I use in class is the video report *Lost in Translation – Afghanistan* (2008), which follows a US patrol into a remote Afghan village.

The report is easily watched online (it is only eight minutes long) but here is the story for those unable to locate it: The US base has been receiving bombs from the vicinity of the village; the patrol has come to the village to find out where the bombs are coming from. When they arrive, no one is around – no one to speak with. Eventually a village elder comes along, and an enraged US sergeant asks him about the Taliban (the ACM – Anti Coalition Militia) and the bombs. The old man replies in Pashto at length, telling a parable about ants eating some of the village's wheat, which I think basically means that the village does not like the Taliban but they have to live with them. The interpreter, however, does not render the parable at all, and instead tells the sergeant that the Taliban are somewhere "behind the



Figure 1.

mountain.” This is the apparently scandalous part: a complex narrative is simply omitted, as the interpreter replaces it with words of his own invention. Later the interpreter gives the sergeant further insight into the interaction: “I hate these people, sir! When I ask him something else, they give me wrong answer.” The report closes with the sergeant accusing the village elder of being “full of shit,” and he, the sergeant, wanting to “clean the town out.”

The standard lesson in deontology is easy: the interpreter should have rendered the parable, which is what was there to be translated; he did not do his job; so he is acting unethically, or at least he is on the wrong side of best practices. One might hope the parable could have enlightened the sergeant, explaining the long-term vision of the villagers who have to survive there *after* the conflict, and thus perhaps initiating a to-and-fro discussion: the sergeant could even come to trust and appreciate the old man, and he would then not want to kill everyone in a more humanized village. That would be the ideal scenario, a cross-cultural dialogue, mutual understanding, a best practice, a sweetheart story of the kind found in textbooks and military manuals.

The hard part, though, is to understand *why* that particular best practice did not happen. That is, we have to understand why there was history here, rather than textbook deontology.

When I use the example in class, I get my students to imagine the position of each communication participant in turn. I then ask them to do a very simple kind of risk analysis, based on identifying the communicative risks pertinent to each participant (for an analysis of the different kinds of risks in translation, see Pym 2015). We assume that each participant has a very basic goal: to enhance their chances of survival (other goals can be built on top of that one, depending on how much time is available in class). We then fill in a grid where risks can not only be of

high or low frequency but also have high or low impact (which is actually the same grid I get them to use when analyzing localization projects). The basic options, for any decision, then look like this:

	High impact	Low impact
High frequency	Do something!	Think about it.
Low frequency	Think about it.	Do nothing (omit?).

That is, if a risk is frequent and has a high impact (for example, regular incoming bombs), then action must be taken. If the risk is frequent but of low impact (perhaps ants eating your stock of wheat), then you might want to think about how to live with it, or you can invest time in discovering how to modify your behavior in order to avoid the risk (mix a low-level pesticide with the wheat – and don't tell the consumers too much about it). Similarly, if the risk is low-frequency and of high impact (just a one-off random bomb, perhaps), you might want to think about changing your own behavior (move further away), but there is no urgency. And finally, if a risk is low-frequency and low-impact (very occasional ants), then you might want to use an easy avoidance strategy (put the wheat elsewhere), or learn to live with it. This is all very basic stuff.

For the US sergeant, the analysis might look something like this:

	High impact	Low impact
High frequency	Armed attacks	Cultural alterity
Low frequency	Bombs	Interpreter error

The sergeant's main problem is actually the frequency of armed attacks on his men, but the bombs are becoming more frequent and he has to act before they are his main problem too. So his mission for the moment is to gather information, not to wipe out the village. He is constantly facing communication problems with the Afghans; he is aware of this; he tends to solve issues of cultural alterity by not believing what Afghans *say* but looking at what they *do*, thus considering their position in purely strategic terms. He logically seems not to care much about what the interpreter says or does not say. In fact, he has developed a robust hermeneutic model of what is going on, which seems unlikely to be altered by anything that is said: "They're afraid of the ACM." We might thus assume he is more or less aware that the interpreter is not conveying much information. After all, when 111 Pashto words are rendered by 32 English words, anyone who can count must know something is missing! Yet the sergeant is prepared to live with the problem, just as the villagers are prepared to live with the ACM (ants eat our wheat, but not too much; interpreters make words disappear, but within an acceptable leeway). Assumed

interpreter errors would be frequent but of reduced importance. Seen in terms of this risk distribution, the sergeant is probably behaving quite rationally when he bases no action on an unreliable rendition from the interpreter (and the television report is probably overstating the case when they use the title “Lost in Translation,” as if what is lost would really have made a great difference).

What about the risks confronting the villagers? Now the grid might look something like this:

	High impact	Low impact
High frequency	Attacks by ACM	Contacts with ACM
Low frequency	Attacks by US	Contacts with US

The difference here is not just the frequency but also the probable extension over time: in a few years, the Taliban (the ACM) will still be there, but the US won't, so risk of attacks from the Taliban is more serious than the risk of attacks by the US. Contacts with US forces are not problematic in themselves if and when they prevent attacks by those same forces, but they could become extremely problematic if and when the Taliban perceive the contacts as collaboration or cooperation with the US. This is thus a risk matrix where there is remarkably little to be gained from communication with the US sergeant, and much to be feared from such communication being picked up by the other side. In short, the villagers have no rational interest in the encounter, and they logically disappear – when the US patrol enters, the people have run away (thus solving a low-frequency low-impact problem). Like a jilted lover, the sergeant really has no hope of entering into meaningful conversation. He has to learn to accept that communication is really no longer possible, and that the village elder that eventually appears is really no more than a token.

Now, what about the village elder? Why does he tell his long ant-and-wheat parable? It is actually a story about risk management, of course: he is metaphorically explaining that the Taliban are indeed present, that they do take some resources, but at the end of the day they are high-frequency and low-impact – the villagers have learned to live with them.

With respect to his possible communicative actions, the old man's risk distribution might then look something like the following (in this case we are also categorizing possible actions rather than threats, since this subject has selected one action from among several):

	High impact	Low impact
High frequency	Tell the Taliban the truth	Be mistrusted by the Taliban
Low frequency	Tell the US the truth	Be mistrusted by the US

The elder cannot tell the Taliban that he has a rational interest in cooperating with the US, just as he cannot tell the US that he has a rational interest in cooperating with the Taliban, but the former risk is greater than the latter. His only interest in talking to the sergeant is that it might prevent an attack from the US. At the same time, he knows he cannot cooperate with the sergeant in any more open way, and yet he cannot tell him directly *why* he cannot cooperate. Somehow he has to convey a message without actually saying it. The parable, in this case, is a highly efficient and even astute communicative solution, over and above any quaint status as folklore. The only problem with that solution is that it is of no rational interest to the interpreter.

Now for the interpreter's risks. They could look like this (here we are categorizing possible outcomes, rather than individual actions):

	High impact	Low impact
High frequency	Lose trust of US	Lose trust of other ethnic groups in Afghanistan
Low frequency	Be seen as a traitor by the Afghans	Be translated by foreign reporters

Since the interpreter has chosen sides in a war zone, risks abound: he works for the US, so much of the Afghan population will inevitably see him as a traitor. That, however, is a risk he is prepared to take, since to lose the trust of the US, to lose his source of income and chances of future mobility, would be an even greater risk. A lesser risk is then the possible loss of trust when he deals with ethnic groups other than his own, and in this encounter we assume that he is not of the same group as the people in the village (at the beginning he says "I can only speak Pashto"). He is obviously prepared to live with that particular risk: the villagers have no alternative interpreter to turn to, apparently no way of checking on what he is saying in English, and very probably no relation with this particular interpreter after the US troops leave. Whereas all the villagers' calculations are based on the long term, the interpreter's interests are dominated by the short term. So why should he care about the villagers? In this situation, the interpreter's rational course of action is to do everything possible to maintain the trust of the US. Hence, logically, his decision to omit the parable (which does not serve him at all, and is likely to confuse the issue), to invent a piece of ostensibly useful information (the Taliban are "over that hill"), and to stress to his employer that he has nothing at all to do with the people in the village ("I hate these people, sir!"). One would like to imagine that his astute misrepresentation of unimportant players has since earned him a passage out of the country, but perhaps not.

Of course, there was one small risk that the interpreter forgot about, probably because it was highly infrequent, almost certainly because he thought the impact would never touch him. A film crew was present and they were going to have the Pashto dialogue translated into English. The interpreter clearly did not count on that; he did not imagine that there would effectively be a second translator somewhere, and that the second translator would be trusted more than he would be (but why should we trust the second translator, who *writes*, perhaps from a safe office in a safe country? – a point I will return to). In this particular case, the interpreter's risk management might have cost him dearly. Then again, the film crew took the messages away from the initial spoken time frame; the second interpreter was rigorously not present; in the here-and-now where the encounter took place, the interpreter certainly survived.

There is much to discuss in this kind of analysis. The basic point is that some communicative situations are structured in such a way that the motivation for cooperation (Grice's "cooperative principle") is very low. This is an encounter that had to happen, since the sergeant needed to seek information and the villagers did not want to be attacked by him, but neither side had very much to gain from it. In such a situation, extreme and asymmetric on many levels, interpreters can scarcely be blamed for pursuing their own interests, no matter how unprofessional or unethical they may seem. "Best practices," here, are a sad illusion.

So, too, is the principle of dialogism, in this case. All parties were affirming and deploying their images of the other, but no one was interested (or able) to check that any understanding had been attained. Indeed, one might surmise that all actors left the encounter with precisely the same understandings of the other that they had when they arrived. Like a minor rite, this was communication that had to be performed in order to confirm positions.

As such, it is a long way from the glorious and intimate dangers that one would like to identify like potholes along the history of interpreting. Yet there is still danger, and that is enough.

4. Presence as proximate alternative action

I return to my original problem. What was the role of relative presence in this particular example? The principle of dialogism, of mutual checking through feedback, seems not to be very telling in this case, as indeed it is not entirely felicitous in numerous large-scale encounters. Would the Afghanistan exchange be different if it were in writing, conducted across an ocean, perhaps from some kind of policymaking desk at the Pentagon?

There *is* a difference, I suggest, and that difference is not particularly dialogic in itself, although it certainly underlies why people might engage in dialogue. Surely, even witnessing the encounter from the outside, one senses the risk, the imminent possibility that the failing dialogue may lead to another kind of action, to more outright threats, to shots being fired. This proximity of alternative action – to give an everyday thing a technical name – is surely something that is not so characteristic of written communication, of exchanges across time. Why this is so is not hard to fathom: in the situation of relative presence, there is greater visual awareness of all actors and their possible interactions. When people are in front of each other, they are concerned not just with what is said or not said, but also with what can be *done*, physically.

The Swiss linguist Charles Bally made an intriguing if unwitting contribution to performative linguistics when he proposed that a series of utterances and actions can be functionally equivalent to each other, and that their underlying function can be rooted in action. Here is my English translation of his well-known example (1932/1965: 41):

1. I want you to leave.
2. I order you to leave.
3. You have to leave.
4. You must leave.
5. Leave the room!
6. Get out!
7. Out!
8. [Gesture toward the door and facial expression indicating irritation.]
9. [Throwing the person out.]

Bally observes that the series moves from the explicit to the implicit, and this is certainly something that would generally characterize a shift from the written to the spoken: distance from the situation requires greater linguistic explicitness, particularly of the linguistic persons and their interrelations. What is more engaging, however, is the way in which Bally sees non-linguistic action (at levels 8 and 9 in the example) as being functionally equivalent to the increasingly “oral” utterances. The further we are from that kind of alternative non-linguistic action, the more “written” the language. Indeed, the written language might be produced in order to *prevent* movements towards the alternative action.

Could that proximity to alternative action, the imbrication in an event marked by presence, possibly be what characterizes orally mediated encounters?

In the case we are studying, this is not an uninteresting question to ask.

5. Best practices for US counterinsurgency?

These particular encounters are covered by a well-developed communication policy, available online in the US Army's booklet *Counterinsurgency* (2006). This document outlines the way the US aimed to "win hearts and minds" in Afghanistan, and how interpreters ("linguists") were supposed to help them do it. This is a fascinating text, where some gifted policymakers learn a little from both Paul of Tarsus and Mao Zedong, do some sophisticated theorizing about cultural alterity, and then get it all wrong because they basically forget about language.

The key element in the counterinsurgency strategy is to communicate with the people on the ground – this is what the US strategists learned from Mao, the great theorist of insurgency. That does not mean that villagers should actually *like* US soldiers, we are told: "*Calculated self-interest, not emotion, is what counts*. Over time, successful trusted networks grow like roots into the populace. They displace enemy networks [...]" (2006: A5, italics in the text). If you present the facts, give the numbers, the people will understand. This presentation of facts occasionally assumes Star Wars proportions, as in the admonition to convince locals "that the force can protect them and that resisting it is pointless" (2006: A5). Yes, it is easy to make fun of the ideology, yet other parts of the same document are extremely apposite, and interestingly contradict the assumption that pure force will be enough. For example:

Cultural knowledge is essential to waging a successful counterinsurgency. American ideas of what is "normal" or "rational" are not universal. To the contrary, members of other societies often have *different notions of rationality*, appropriate behavior, level of religious devotion, and norms concerning gender. Thus, what may appear abnormal or strange to an external observer may appear as self-evidently normal to a group member. For this reason, counterinsurgents – especially commanders, planners, and small-unit leaders – should strive to avoid imposing their ideals of normalcy on a foreign cultural problem.

(2006: 1–80; italics in the text)

Other sections highlight the key role of women in "traditional societies," identifying ways in which women-to-women encounters might bring about change (and further contradicting the notion that a show of force will be enough):

In traditional societies, women are hugely influential in forming the social networks that insurgents use for support. When women support COIN [counterinsurgency] efforts, families support COIN efforts. Getting the support of families is a big step toward mobilizing the local populace against the insurgency. Co-opting neutral or friendly women through targeted social and economic programs builds networks of enlightened self-interest that eventually undermine insurgents. Female counterinsurgents, including interagency people, are required to do this effectively.

(A-35)

This is great theory. Of course, it is destined to flounder as soon as you consider what language the woman-to-woman discussion is going to take place in, and who the interpreters are likely to be (the sex of interpreters is strangely absent from the theory – the available reports mention a “chronic shortage” of women interpreters¹). For that matter, the recommendation that men such as our sergeant in the village “should strive to avoid imposing their ideals of normalcy on a foreign cultural problem” similarly shrivels as soon as you consider the linguistic mediation required in order to understand the problem in the first place. If you can’t trust your interpreters, you are not going to win many hearts and minds, no matter how sophisticated your cultural theory.

So what does the document say about interpreters? Rather little. In fact, it seems to admit that the US will suffer a perpetual handicap: “insurgents hold a distinct advantage in their level of local knowledge. They speak the language, move easily within the society, and are more likely to understand the population’s interests” (1–125). The one effective recommendation is “patience and tolerance when dealing with language and translation barriers” (5–86). And why should patience and tolerance be required? Because, the document tells us, there are three kinds of linguists:

Category I linguists usually are hired locally and require vetting. They do not have a security clearance. They are the most abundant resource pool; however, their skill level is limited.

Category II linguists are U.S. citizens with a secret clearance. Often they possess good oral and written communication skills. They should be managed carefully due to limited availability. Category II linguists interpret for battalion and higher.

Category III linguists are U.S. citizens with a top secret clearance. They are a scarce commodity and often retained at division and higher levels of command. They have excellent oral and written communications skills. (C 2–4)

The interpreter on the ground, the one we have witnessed here, is Category I, recognized as requiring vetting (of what kind? how?) and as having “limited skills.”

1. There have been women interpreters in Afghanistan, but I have been unable to find out how many. The shortage was so great that Heela Nasser, the US military interpreter who previously managed a Victoria’s Secret store in Los Angeles, is reported as having changed jobs for considerable money: “Nasser’s yearlong contract pays her six figures” (*Stars and Stripes*, January 28, 2011: <http://www.stripes.com/news/american-interpreter-takes-a-stand-in-afghanistan-1.133124>. Accessed June 2, 2014). This would surely make her one of the best-paid interpreters in history – someone was prepared to pay handsomely to demonstrate that a naïve policy could really be applied and a million-dollar photo could be produced for the historians (actually photo 18 in the exhibition *The Interpreter’s One Hundred Years of Solitude: Between History and Memory*, University of Salamanca / Rikkyo University, May 24–25, 2014).

In short, the policy document does not presuppose any particular trust in this intermediary. Trustworthiness increases as one moves up the hierarchy, away from the battlefield, and implicitly from spoken to written mediation (“written skills” are only mentioned for Category II and Category III). Indeed, this structural mistrust of the interpreter becomes even clearer in the 2009 document *Tactics in Counterinsurgency*, where leaders are now advised to use more than one source of information: “Know your linguist; use more than one to double-check the integrity and accuracy of information and reliability of linguist” (2009: 5–119). In our example encounter, of course, the nature of the interpreting is revealed by a second translator, albeit not one in the employ of the beleaguered sergeant. A similar kind of checking process is implicit in the way two interpreters are recommended when preparing for a meeting: “One actively interprets while the other observes body language and listens to side conversations in the audience” (2009: 7–69). Body language and side conversations, the stuff of oral encounter, are perhaps important because what is interpreted up-front is not going to be trusted in itself.

Monacelli and Punzo (2001), commenting on the use of interpreters in the Italian military, note that trustworthiness increases as one goes up the chain of command. “Equivalence,” they note, is not authorized by the interpreter on the field but by a superior working at a desk. That is, paradoxically, the further the translation moves from the scene of the encounter, the more “equivalent” (and the more written) it becomes, contrary to what one might expect (in the ideology of television journalism, the person closest to the situation should ideally have the most information about the situation). That kind of paradox is not out of place in the US hierarchy of linguists, where the entire counterinsurgency strategy depends on trusting interpreters on the ground, but the hierarchical structure implicitly does not trust those same interpreters. Thanks to this simple paradox of language and trust, the strategy was destined to fail: not many hearts and minds were likely to be won.

6. Proximate action and where history lies

Some years ago, in Prague, I gave a lecture on what I thought was a suitably intellectual topic, and a mildly heated discussion ensued. Then, as we sensed the exchanges were drawing to an appropriate close, an interpreter suddenly burst from a forgotten booth, stormed up the stairs, and shouted, looking back at me: “You are 200% abstract!,” or words to that effect.

I take the point. I apologize for abstraction. I beg forgiveness for not having spoken in a way accessible to interpreters. I am truly sorry we were carried away by the debate. I have tried to be careful about such matters ever since.

Then again, isn't debate precisely the kind of thing one goes to conferences for? If it were a question of consuming rational, linear texts, we could all have stayed at home. And wasn't the interpreter's reaction, rash and physical and overheated, also part of that same event? One senses her frustration had been building over time, as she struggled with unprepared terms, changes of speakers, mixes of bad English, people interrupting each other. All the features that created the event also built up that tension, which was released in the outburst.

The interpreter's complaint, I suggest, is a further example of how proximate action informs the event. Such things rarely happen, but they *could* always happen, the pressure is always there, and much is (or should be) done in the interpreted encounter in order to prevent them. If the outburst, the physical action, were not possible, the exchanges would be otherwise. This effect of the proximate action can only be seen in the situations where the physical action occurs or is felt to be close. That is a reason for analyzing high-risk cases.

In the extreme cases, but not only there, we see why there can be a history of interpreting.

History might be no more than the acting out of the huge forces that shape our thoughts and actions: the configuration of capital, the imbalances of military forces, the advances and deployments of technologies, the imposition of old and new forms of domination, the creation and undermining of cultural prestige. History is all that, and those things do indeed inform the frame in which mediated encounters take place. Our historiographers might then do little more than perpetually confirm the narratives of such large-scale forces, as if they were all we needed to know.

And yet, what happens in the interpreted encounter, thanks to the tensions of proximate action, can lead to *unpredicted* outcomes, and thus to a different kind of history. No one really knew how the mediated Afghanistan encounter was going to end – if one did, there would be no need for risk analysis. This concerns the truth of the event rather than of representation (Badiou 1988), of action within the immediacy of situation (Varela 1999). In that very unpredictability one senses an experiential reality that cannot be reduced to laws or norms, and yet a mode of history that might not entirely escape comprehension in terms of multiple risks. Events enact history, and can change course.

7. Postscript: So why a history of interpreters?

I find an odd note in an ambitiously announced "Prolegomena for the Establishment of a General Theory of Translation," which never got beyond the stage of a prelude, perhaps because of the tragic death of the author Edmond Cary in 1966:

The distinction established today between “translating” (written texts) and “interpreting” (oral) is recent. It was the Renaissance which enthroned the book in our civilization. So much so that the written word has supplanted the spoken word and “translation” has come to be considered as a higher species and “interpreting” as an inferior activity. (Cary 1962: 104)

The note now sounds strange because, at least in most of our current training institutions, “interpreting” tends to be associated with “conference interpreting” and is systematically regarded as a *superior* activity. After all, it commonly has higher entrance qualifications, more rigorous exams, a far more effective system for signaling professional status (there is nothing like the AIIC for translators of the written word), significantly higher pay per hour, and appeals to a heroic age where prodigious interpreters (including Edmond Cary) performed magical linguistic feats in the name of various illusory shades of global justice. The chip on the shoulder that conference interpreters might once have had is no longer in evidence. Indeed, Cary himself added a footnote where he wondered, in 1962, whether the rise of audiovisual media was announcing a second Renaissance, this time of the spoken word.

These various claims remind us, first, that the very constitution of our central concepts is profoundly historical: the “interpreter” has emerged from a very particular part of history, and continues to take shape as an independent figure that can aspire to a more wholly professional status. The second message is that the emergence itself is enmeshed in power relationships, ideologies, and struggles that cannot be understood without co-reference to the written word: a history of interpreters that excludes written translation constantly risks hypostatizing its object at the same time as it misunderstands its own historicity. To separate interpreters from wider translation history might be tantamount to self-delusion, of at least a precarious assumption that the road to professional independence has somehow been reached, best practices reign, and there is no more history to tell. We are not yet there.

For all that, the more problematic scission would now appear to run not between the written and the spoken, but between conference interpreting and the array of apparently lesser activities variously known as “public service interpreting,” “community interpreting,” “dialogue interpreting,” and probably more. Attempts to push all modalities of spoken mediation into the one professional space sometimes reveal more disparities than common ground. For example, a North American survey by Kelly et al. (2010) presents myriad graphs and tables of a unified profession that brings together both conference interpreters and public-service interpreters, but when you look closely at the salary distributions (2010: 35,43), there are two humps, for two different salary ranges, and few can pretend that conference interpreters are really in the same boat as the others (in

this case mostly medical interpreters). The report never really draws out the reasons behind the disparity in salaries; it thus tends to miss the power dynamics that are operating within its only apparently singular object of knowledge. The unified report, written for interpreters as just one professional group, risks imposing the illusion of common best practices.

Similar sleight of hand operates in the opposite direction in Jean Delisle's editing of Ruth Roland's *Translating World Affairs* (1982), originally written "as a tribute to both translators and interpreters" (1982: vi; italics in the text). Delisle re-baptized the text as *Interpreters as Diplomats. A Diplomatic History of the Role of Interpreters in World Politics* (1999), adding a preface that talks about interpreters only and thereby flies in the face of the evidence clearly inscribed in the book: well into the nineteenth century, most diplomatic corps made no distinction between translators and interpreters (1999: 36) – and for that matter, the US military's use of the term "linguist" in our example above similarly combats the oral/written distinction to which others seem inexplicably attached. We risk imposing our present academic silo mentality on a past (and part of a present) that is far more mixed.

In our histories, our attempts at empowerment too easily blend the powerful and the powerless, attempting to impose the same standards on all and sometimes precariously drawing out shared lessons on agency. There is historicity even within the idea of such an attempt. And that historicity cannot be grasped unless we tell stories of more than the spoken, preferably of *all* the ways in which the problems of cross-cultural communication have been addressed. When we talk about interpreters, I think we are doing *translation* history. And when we study interpreters, I think we are doing *Translation Studies*. That is not to impose the written on the spoken: I use "translation" as a superordinate, as it has been for many centuries ("mediation" would be more exact, but it is a harder sell), and I am not overly disposed to the couplet "Translation and Interpreting Studies" – one would also have to add "localization" and "audiovisual translation," at least, in a perverse construal of unity by extendible list. The need to consider all media together can also be seen in our Afghanistan example above: for as long as you and I cannot independently follow the Pashto, the oral rendition in English is assumed to be inferior to the version by the written "linguist," the latter being further reinforced by the audiovisual format (the film-maker's subtitles). If you refuse to look at all the media, you risk not seeing those dynamics.

Across numerous case studies and willful misrepresentations, however, there does seem to be at least this one constant: *interpreters have historically moved towards greater professional identity*, in the sense of reducing the extent to which their tasks are combined with other forms of mediation between cultures. That identity may in some cases be no more than an aspiration; in others it could be an

attribute imposed from outside the profession, often as partial recognition of guilt or innocence. Through all the variants, there is still this constant, I suggest. Even if no more than one instance of the historical division of labor, a logical consequence of increasing social complexity, the tendency is long-term and worth reflecting on.

The rise in professional independence, with controlled signals of status, could constitute a historical solution to the kind of perverse risk management we have seen in our example here. Any sociology of professions will tell you that the emergence of a new profession requires something like collective identity (Houle 1980; Tseng 1992) or a culture or formal network of practitioners (Witter-Merithew and Johnson 2004). Often these things are tied to the development of a code of ethics, of the kind that is rarely applied in practice. Yet the development of a distinct “identity” or “culture” also requires substance in time, a sense of continuity, a history.

Why do the history of interpreters? Only part of the answer can be to document and describe the rise of a profession. The other part, perhaps more honest, must recognize that the writing of the history itself is one way of actually *constituting* the identity and culture necessary for the profession. In that sense, historiography is a performative act, as we all like to say these days: it does not just describe professional status as its object, it helps enact it. And I think that can be a very good thing.

Why should professional status be desirable? Just consider the Afghan interpreter. Imagine how different the situation would be if he had substantial training, a serious rank, a pay grade, established credibility on both sides (as much as possible). All those factors would distribute and thus mitigate the personal risks; they would reduce the interpreter’s need to act on the basis of his personal interests; they would also logically increase the value of what would be lost should he be discovered to be betraying trust. Professional status, credibility, significantly reconfigures risk distribution; it is the basis of anything like a best practice. In that imaged best-practice scenario, the US sergeant might even have heard the story about wheat and ants. He could even have made sense of it. And some degree of cross-cultural understanding might have been achieved.

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Appendix

The following transcript of *Lost in Translation – Afghanistan* has been taken from <http://goo.gl/yHXOi6> (accessed January 12, 2015).

VOICEOVER: This is what happens in a rocket attack. We're all in the command center. Charlie Company has been hit by nearly 200 Taliban rockets over the past 12 months.

SOLDIER: You got a problem with that.

SOLDIER: Once we are in the zone we will cover all three grids.

SOLDIER: Gunline! Cancel. Do not load.

VOICEOVER: The Americans are hitting back.

SOLDIER: Platoon! Cancel. Do not load.

VOICEOVER: This is where they think those rockets are coming from. This is ["MANG-grow-tay"], a small Afghan frontier village just a couple of miles from Pakistan. Taliban fighters sneak across the border and launch their attacks from here. The Americans are edgy as they approach; they've been ambushed here in the past. And the people who live here? They're powerless and terrified, caught between America and her enemies. That's why they've disappeared.

SGT. ADAMS: This is like every other town. Everybody disappeared.

VOICEOVER: The soldiers ask to speak to the village elders, but everything gets lost in translation.

SGT. ADAMS: They're in their house? Where?

TRANSLATOR: Yeah, the elders...

SGT. ADAMS: Where?

TRANSLATOR: In the house.

SGT. ADAMS: They're sick? Is that what he said? What did you say?

TRANSLATOR: No, no. They are not sick. They are in the house.

SGT. ADAMS: Okay. Ask him to go get them. We want to talk to him.

VOICEOVER: As quickly as he appeared, the man is gone. He never returns. Sergeant Adams is desperate to speak to someone, anyone.

SGT. ADAMS: So that guy, when he told me to get the elders, walked that way, and that kid walked that way. What's the kid doing? He's full of shit, that's what it is. Pretty much just out of respect for the uh, Muslim faith, we're not supposed to go into mosques, unless they're shooting from us, at us from. Then we'd go in. I don't care how many come. I just want one that's got some sense about him. Ah! That's him. Yeah.

VOICEOVER: Finally, an elder appears in the distance.

SGT. ADAMS: Fat guy with the red beard, that's him. Alright. Come over here. Have him sit down. Relax.

VOICEOVER: Again, everything here hinges on the translation, the subtleties of Pashtun English.

TRANSLATOR (SUBTITLED TRANSLATION): [Come over here and sit with us on this log.]

SGT. ADAMS: Yeah. Take a load off.

VOICEOVER: The translators have become unexpected power-brokers in all this, and sometimes they just don't translate everything they hear.

SGT. ADAMS: Tell him: how has things been here?

VILLAGE ELDER (SUBTITLED TRANSLATION): [I can only speak Pashto.]

TRANSLATOR (SUBTITLED TRANSLATION): [That is ok. How is the security here?]

VILLAGE ELDER: [There is no security.]

TRANSLATOR (SUBTITLED TRANSLATION): [No – what I mean is how's the security situation here?]

VILLAGE ELDER: [I just told you! There is no security here. We've yet to see any security around here.]

TRANSLATOR (ENGLISH): We are fine. They have no problems here.

VOICEOVER: Is it any wonder that the Americans feel battled in these situations and the ordinary Afghans feel ignored?

VILLAGE ELDER: [I agree with you on the cooperation; the Taliban are over there – not far away. I would like to tell them a story. In our country, we grow wheat and we have ants. There is no way we can stop the little ants from stealing the wheat. There are so many little ants it is almost impossible to stop them. I've told this story to help the Americans understand the situation in Afghanistan. Yes, the Americans built this road and they would do more to help us if we cooperate with them. Of course we know that! And we would like to cooperate with them. It's just that we can't!]

TRANSLATOR (ENGLISH): Okay. He's giving many examples. The main point is that, he said, if you want to get every ACMs [anti-coalition militia], they are behind this road pardon me, sir, behind this mountain.

VOICEOVER: Adams wants to know when the village elder last saw the Taliban. He doesn't receive the answer he's looking for.

SGT. ADAMS: When was the last time they saw them?

TRANSLATOR (ENGLISH): I ask him. He says one year ago.

SGT. ADAMS: One, year? Oh, for fuck's sake. Are you kidding me? Hey, hey, tell him he's full of shit, first of all. One week ago, we took four rockets from a hilltop 800 meters from here. They didn't see that? Didn't hear it?

TRANSLATOR (ENGLISH): One week ago, sir?

SGT. ADAMS: Yeah. It was a week ago, right? What'd he say? What'd he say?

TRANSLATOR (ENGLISH): They are afraid. Two months ago they [the Taliban] came to our village and took all the young guys and started beating them.

SGT. ADAMS: Ask him if he's got any guns here. I don't want to take them; I just want to know why he didn't shoot them in the fucking face.

~~~~

SGT. ADAMS: Like shit. It's the same thing again. You know, they're afraid of the ACM, and no matter how many times you tell them or how you tell them, they don't seem to want to understand that until they put their... I mean, they're allowed to have an AK per household. If they put an AK in dude's face and shot him, knowing he's a bad guy, Taliban an ACM, whatever you want to call it, they will stop coming here. And he won't understand that. So they basically support the ACM by not supporting anyone.

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SGT. ADAMS: What's he saying?

TRANSLATOR (ENGLISH): I hate these people, sir! When I ask him something else, they give me wrong answer.

SGT. ADAMS: I fucking hate this town.

~~~~

TEXT ON SCREEN: One week later

SOLDIER: The rocket hit the wire. Is it still standing?

SOLDIER: Oh, we just took two rockets that came up from the eastern ridge towards the Pak border.

SGT. ADAMS: About no more than what? Eight hundred meters away from ["MANG-grow-tay"], the village we were at with the big, fat, red-haired, bearded guy. The guy's full of shit. I feel like basically cleaning the town out. I don't know.



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Who mediated intercultural exchanges in 9th-century East Asia or in early voyages to the Americas? Did the Soviets or the Americans invent simultaneous interpreting equipment? How did the US government train its first Chinese interpreters? Why is it that Taiwanese interpreters were executed for Japanese war crimes? Bringing together papers from an international symposium held at Rikkyo University in 2014 along with two select pieces, this volume pursues such questions in an eclectic exploration of the practice of interpreting, the recruitment of interpreters, and the challenges interpreters have faced in diplomacy, colonization, religion, war, and occupation. It also introduces innovative use of photography, artifacts, personal journals, and fiction as tools for the historical study of interpreters and interpreting. Targeted at practitioners, scholars, and students of interpreting, translation, and history, the new insights presented in the ten original articles aim to spark discussion and research on the vital roles interpreters have played in intercultural communication through history.

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