

Kayoko Takeda and Jesús Baigorri-Jalón (Eds.). *New insights in the history of interpreting.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2016. 278 pp. ISBN 978 90 272 5867 0 [Benjamins Translation Library 122].

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Takeda's and Baigorri-Jalón's *New Insights* comprises selected papers from the *First International Symposium on the History of Interpreting*, held at Rikkyo University, Tokyo, in May 2014, as well as two complementary submissions. Their compilation seeks to contribute to historical knowledge and research in the field of interpreting studies and beyond. It is the editors' belief that no discipline can do without a past if it is to have a future, as attested by fields such as Law and Medicine. Takeda and Baigorri-Jalón also stress that historical research – which has traditionally occupied a subordinate position in interpreting studies – helps to situate the professional identity of the interpreter as well as to develop deeper understanding with regard to many related questions. They are convinced of the great importance played by interdisciplinary approaches – inter alia, the inclusion of historians – because, in this way, events such as the Nuremberg trials can be considered from several perspectives. Likewise, an international dialogue on the history of interpreting ensures a better understanding of shared research interests.

In this volume, interpreters themselves are made the focus of attention and given a voice. Their work, their skills and abilities, their assignments, their understanding of their professional role, and the networks of power in which they function are taken into consideration. Hence, the volume takes into account not only the interpreter's functional knowledge of the relevant languages, but also the role of norms, habitus, ethics and social identity. The volume revolves around the following questions: What is the history of interpreting all about? What are its methodological approaches? How can interdisciplinarity be achieved? What does the history of interpreting reveal about the profession as it stands today? What relevance does such knowledge currently have? There is no uniform approach underlying the ten chapters in the book. Instead, many different approaches, time periods, events, sources, methods and questions are dealt with, in the hope that the book will stimulate further research, conferences and publications.

The first chapter, by **Rachel Lung**, focuses on 'Sillan interpreters' in Imperial China in the second half of the first millennium. The term 'Sillan interpreter' emphasized the interpreters' role as mediators, not their ethnicity or their identification with a specific vernacular. What, then, does the designation refer to? Why was

it used? Lung uses quantitative and qualitative approaches in her textual analysis, focusing on questions of identity, duty, and the role of the 'Sillan interpreters' as described in a 9th century travel diary by a monk called Ennin. Following an introduction to the historical background of Silla (a region in the southeastern part of the Korean peninsula, between Japan and China, which at the time played a pivotal role in maritime transport and commerce in East Asia), the author turns her attention to Ennin's account of his journey through seven provinces of China in the years 838 to 847. The document was first found in 1883, in the library of a Kyoto monastery. It was published in 1907 in Japan, and then again in China in 1936. The text contains 38 references to 'Sillan interpreters', and outlines their work. It deals with four interpreters whose ethnicities remain unclear, but whose duties are described in great detail: they were not employed as interpreters per se, but were responsible for liaising and networking among the regional Chinese authorities and the Sillan migrant enclaves. They were also in charge of logistic arrangements and marine travel consultancy, and acted as trading brokers. Lung sees the inaccuracy of the designation 'Sillan interpreters' as problematic, especially during archival searches, as it is obvious that their business was hardly what we would today call interpreting. (Lung nevertheless suggests that they were similar to the interpreters of the Roman Empire, though available sources suggest that these were a specific professional group within the Empire's administration.) While the article presents a detailed and painstakingly researched analysis of Ennin's travelogue, it is based on only a single primary source, leaving a great deal of room for 'interpretation' and speculation. Nonetheless, Lung provides new insight into a region and a time that remain virtually unknown today.

In Chapter 2, **Icía** **Alonso-Araguás** discusses the evolution of interpreting practices during the age of explorers and conquerors in Spanish America. She investigates the 'linguistic strategies' used during the first stages of the Spanish expeditions to the Caribbean and to the territories that now make up modern-day Mexico, and compares them to those that emerged when a colonial administration and institutionalized contacts were established in 'New Spain'. The chapter begins with a highly informative overview of traditional interpreting practices during the first voyages of discovery, particularly the use of captives, servants or slaves as interpreters, who were physically appropriated by the colonizers. This raises questions about the role of this type of interpreter, their loyalty and their impartiality. Alonso-Araguás then examines the situation of interpreters following the establishment of colonial administration in sectors such as law and justice. Her sources demonstrate how interpreting became professionalized over time. Individuals with good language skills could greatly improve their social status, in some cases becoming staff interpreters in the *Audiencias* (responsible for the administration of justice in colonial Spanish territories) and obtaining official positions as language

intermediaries. They were subject to legal regulations with regard to their rights and duties, qualifications, working conditions, and in matters related to the abuse of power or bribery. The existence of these legal regulations demonstrates that language was seen as an important instrument of power, both by the conqueror and by the conquered. But they also show an early consideration of the ethical and moral issues of interpreting, and the recognition that the role of interpreters in conflict situations will always raise questions of this type. The chapter reflects extensive scholarship and careful analysis of the sources used, adding greatly to previous historical research on interpreters in the New World during its colonization.

In Chapter 3, **Marcos Sarmiento-Pérez** focuses on interpreters and interpretation under the Spanish Inquisition (1478–1834), a tribunal office established by papal bull to combat heresy in Spain (the initial concern being more particularly with Judaism and Islam, after which heresy was identified more loosely with charges as different in nature as bigamy, usury, sodomy, idolatry and, above all, sorcery and witchcraft). The chapter begins with a depiction of the Spanish Inquisition's structure and methods, as well as of the persecuted groups: Jews, *Moriscos* (Moors forcibly converted to Christianity), Basques, New World Indians, and African slaves. Protestants were especially targeted, in order to limit the spread of their doctrines to Spanish territory. The Inquisition required interpreters for communication and deployed them in large numbers. Sarmiento-Pérez describes in detail the various events and activities in which interpreters played a role. They included: district visits by the Inquisitor to obtain information and denunciations (all Catholics were required to denounce suspected heretics); testimonies and self-denunciations; inspection of vessels (as trade could be a vehicle for the spread of Protestant ideas); the interrogation of ships' captains and officers; spontaneous conversions (heretics could convert to Catholicism); and trials (the accused/denounced were required to prove their innocence). The status, prerequisites, appointments, and categories of interpreters are addressed as well. The author has done excellent archival research and provides thorough information, which is both a strength of this chapter and a source of difficulty: the reader can get lost in the details of individual events. A narrower focus (on the persecution of the *Moriscos*, for example) would have provided the opportunity for more depth. In fairness, Sarmiento-Pérez modestly describes his work as preliminary: as such, the wealth of information it provides is useful and the overview invites further research.

Kumiko Torikai focuses on descriptions of the pre-modern Japanese interpreters known as Nagasaki *tsūji*, in historical novels by Yoshimura Akira. The objective of her contribution is to show the research value of investigating historical novels, as well as looking more generally at interpreters in literature and the cinema. Even though historical novels differ from historical documents due to the inclusion of fictional elements, they reflect social and psychological dimensions of the life and

work of interpreters within the author's literary framework, and thus remain a valuable alternative source for researching the history of interpreting. After a brief general introduction, Torikai provides an overview of recent studies on the history of the *tsūji*. There is a continuing lack of comprehensive information about the life and work of these interpreters, despite research into (auto-)biographies, diaries, letters, and biographical interviews. Most of the chapter consists in summaries of four novels by Yoshimura Akira: *Hawks in Winter* (mostly concerned with written translation), *The Daughter of Von Siebold*, *Festival of the Seas*, and *The Black Ships*. These depictions show: (a) the role the *tsūji* played in the particular mode of foreign language acquisition obtained in the period concerned, when no grammar books or dictionaries existed; (b) their contribution to the spread of western medicine in Japan; and (c) the challenges they faced with regard to power and ethics in politics, and the thin line they had to walk between conflicting interests. As a preface to the summary of each novel, the author's motivations and research methods are explained. The summaries focus on why, and to what extent, the stories relay information about the life and work of the *tsūji*. Very well organized and clearly written, the chapter is a valuable addition to the history of interpreting.

In his contribution on the US Department of State's Corps of Student Interpreters, **David B. Sawyer** examines a training programme for interpreters (with a focus on China, Japan, and Turkey) from a historical and professional perspective. He describes the genesis, development, success, and end of the student interpreter corps as well as successive programmes, typical career paths, and the status and personal perspectives of the students. The article is based partly on the memoirs of former members of the corps (such as Esson M. Gale and Edwin F. Stanton), and partly on historical and historiographical sources. The programme developed out of a real need for employees with language skills at embassies and consulates in the aforementioned countries. Its main goal was to train multilingual diplomats; there was less focus on interpreting in the modern sense of the word. Interpreters' duties were often restricted to language mediation – on day trips, for example. This programme cannot, therefore, be considered a predecessor to today's Office of Language Services. It was not until after the Second World War that the training programmes for career diplomats and high-level conference interpreters for the U.S. government were clearly separated. Sawyer's chapter, based on comprehensive study of original sources (some of which are also made available in appendices), ends with a call for research on the history of interpreter training for government positions in other countries during this time period (from the late 19th to the mid-20th century).

Sergei Chernov is concerned with the invention of simultaneous interpreting (SI) in the USSR in the 1920s. Until now, the development of SI in the West has been attributed to Edward Filene, who, as a delegate to the League of Nations and

the International Labour Organization, recognized that consecutive interpreting (CI) slowed proceedings down. It is known that SI was used at the 6th Congress of the Comintern (1928) in Moscow but, so far, the only proof has been a short description by a Soviet interpreter and veteran of the Nuremberg Trials named Gofman, which was published in a 1963 article. Sergei Chernov combed through the archives of the Comintern (Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History) in Moscow, in order to answer the following questions: Which system was used back then, and who designed and built it? Was the Soviet system adopted by the West? Who were these first conference interpreters, and how were they trained? Chernov's archival research identified an unsigned and undated document, offering very useful insight into points such as the time saved by use of SI, Western experiences and the accuracy of SI vs. CI, as well as a cost/benefit analysis of the new system, texts describing its installation, and photographs. The parts about the "first conference interpreters in the USSR" and "interpreter training and working conditions" could perhaps have been left out, since they are based on sources from later congresses. Otherwise, this article is a fascinating and valuable addition to our knowledge of this subject – particularly for its descriptions of initial technical considerations, Dr. Epshtein's three-interpreter method, and Isaac Goron's refinement of this method – and fills a gap in the history of SI.

Jesús Baigorri-Jalón presents a case study on the early days of SI at the United Nations, focusing on photographs as a resource for historical research in the field of interpreting studies. With this comparatively new method, his objective is to provide a different perspective on – and approach to – the dynamics of complex historical events. His example is the introduction of SI at the UN in the late 1940s – a topic he has already researched extensively. Drawing on the historical context, he analyses eight relatively early photographs from the UN archives, taken between 1946 and 1948 (the organization was founded in 1945). The photographs, originally commissioned by the UN Department of Public Information, were a conscious addition to the collective memory of the UN. The author subdivides his analysis into three sections, according to the photographs selected: (1) the equipment used for SI (the technical revolution); (2) the interpreters themselves; and (3) the users and audience of the interpreting services (the public or other language service providers). Among other things, the photographs provide insight into how SI developed hand in hand with advances in technology. Baigorri-Jalón shows that photographs are invaluable primary sources when it comes to accessing the past, even if "historians are aware that they do not contain sufficient information to fully rebuild historical events" (p. 168): a detailed exploration of the context in which they were produced is important, because the meaning of the photograph depends on the context. As a result, the interpretation of images depends in part

on educated guesswork, based on a combination of denotation (what we see) and connotation (what the image implies).

In Chapter 8, **Shi-chi Mike Lan** addresses the question of why, after World War II, Taiwanese “interpreters” who had served in the Japanese army were indicted as war criminals and sentenced to death. He discusses what exactly they did, and why and when they were thought to have been responsible for the ill-treatment or killing of local civilians. The chapter draws on material from the archives of the military courts, the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Health, as a basis for an in-depth investigation of a topic that has previously received very little attention from researchers. Lan demonstrates that, by virtue of their language proficiency, not only the interpreters officially recognized as such (*tsuyaku* in Japanese) but also those interpreting on an informal or *ad hoc* basis enjoyed greater power than most of the civilian population during the Japanese wartime occupation. After the war, language proficiency became a burden for these wartime Taiwanese interpreters when they were indicted and, in some cases, convicted and punished. Drawing on archival material, the author maps out in detail how Taiwanese interpreters got into these interpreting situations, and shows that they were mostly brought to justice in connection with their part in such activities as interrogations of local residents. They were often forced into such work against their will. Due to their proficiency in Chinese (and its dialects), they were required to interpret between the Japanese military authorities and Chinese POWs. Lan comes to the conclusion that these Taiwanese interpreters were at the bottom of the Japanese military hierarchy, were required to follow orders and did not have any freedom of action. The paper gives short shrift to the ethical debate – still relevant today – regarding interpreting and power and, with it, the individual responsibility of the interpreter. Are wartime interpreting and any resulting involvement in war crimes a matter of fate? Were the verdicts justified? What about interpreting and resistance? Even if the author does not address these questions, the paper is nevertheless a valuable contribution to historical research on interpreters in wartime and highlights a dilemma that continues to be of interest in the study of interpreting.

Kayoko Takeda’s chapter on “Guilt, survival, opportunities, and stigma” deals with Japanese interpreters and the role of interpreting in occupied post-war Japan (1945–1952), which involved both extreme adversity and unique opportunities. On the basis of archival sources, personal reports and existing literature, she examines, on the one hand, the involvement of interpreters in the context of war crimes trials – be it in their capacity as court interpreters, as witnesses or even as defendants (charged, for example, with having tortured POWs); on the other hand, she analyses the recruitment and education of the interpreters who worked for the occupying US forces, with an emphasis on women. The analysis provides a basis for observations regarding the perception of interpreters, in times of conflict

or in post-war situations, by the main actors concerned (employers, fellow citizens and the interpreters themselves), as well as the related psychological difficulties. These reflections are then used to discuss the unique problems of interpreters in wartime and post-war situations. Over the course of this discussion, the author also highlights the relevance of the findings for interpreters who are currently in conflict and crisis zones and makes suggestions for future research. The questions are formulated precisely and are on the whole answered convincingly. My only critical comment would be that, although the analysis of post-war interpreters includes specific comments on women, they are not brought into the author's general discussion. In the same vein, the relevance of this research to present-day scenarios in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan and the states that formerly made up Yugoslavia is only touched upon. All things considered, however, this is a very worthwhile and highly informative contribution.

In the final chapter, on "Risk analysis as a heuristic tool in the historiography of interpreters", **Anthony Pym** hypothesizes that the difference between interpreting and translating lies not only in the contrast between spoken vs. written and synchronous vs. asynchronous, but also in the "mutual presence" of the participants and thus in the immediate, not necessarily verbalized reaction in the context of the communicative situation. Pym goes on to argue that translation and interpreting are fundamentally inseparable, historically speaking as well as in their current practical manifestation (although conference interpreters have developed a distinct professional identity through professionalization and lobbying activities). In his view, a history of interpreting should therefore consider translation as a whole and include all interpreting settings, particularly bearing in mind that *best practices* and ethical standards are not comparable across the board. Integration of community interpreters and crisis interpreters into a single group, he argues, will also lead to their professionalization, with the accompanying establishment of training and standards. These may have a positive effect on the conduct of the interpreters, leading them to act more ethically in accordance with a professional code, and not with a view to self-preservation or self-interest. According to Pym, this would increase confidence and, with it, status. Taken individually, many of Pym's statements come across as convincing enough, even though many are not new. The problem, however, lies in his overall reasoning, which is often difficult to follow, because the connections are in many cases only made very indirectly. The author vacillates between anecdotal, analytical and descriptive comments, in which settings and modes are discussed without an accompanying superstructure and, as a result, appear to be intermingled at random, without explicitly defining and explaining their relationship to each other and to the topic of the study. This paper repeatedly presents conclusions without explaining how they were derived

and without documenting them. Many assertions have their merits and should be expanded on elsewhere, but this paper asks too much of its readers.

In my view, the editors' hope that the book will lead to subsequent conferences and publications as well as to a heightening of international dialogue on the topics at hand is justified. The greatest strength of this volume is that it will provide everyone who is interested in historical research on translating and interpreting with a wealth of invaluable new information on topics that have so far been relatively little studied. Readers will also acquire insight into various methodological procedures, and find a range of stimulating ideas for further research in this domain.

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