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Introduction

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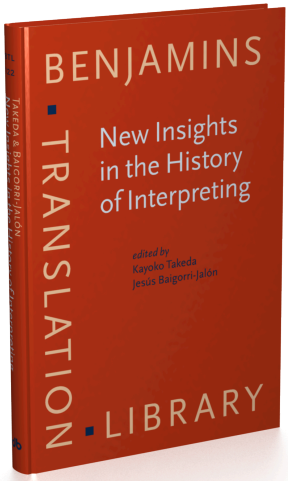

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Introduction

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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.

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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 Pöchhacker (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.

Icíar 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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