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122

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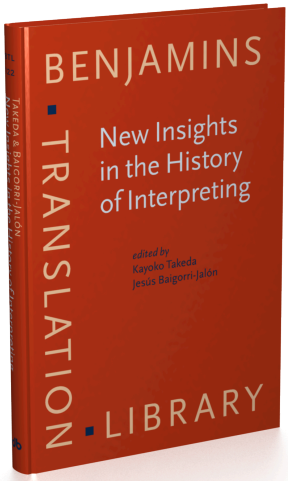

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CHAPTER 4

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.

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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'emon 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 Tatsuosuke'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 Katsunori[4] (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

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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 Kōgyu 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 Kōgyu, 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 Siebold*[8] *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 Phillipp 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

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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 City[10] 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.

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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 *tsūji*s 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.

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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 is 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 heart-warming, 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

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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 Tatsuosuke 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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