ROUTLEDGE

ENCYCLOPEDIA

OF TRANSLATION

STUDIES

Edited by Mona Baker

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TRANSLATION STUDIES

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Introduction

In May 1991, I received a phone call from Simon Bell, former Language Reference Editor at Routledge, who wanted to know if I had any suggestions for a reference work on translation studies, possibly a dictionary. Simon, among many others, had begun to see translation studies as an exciting new discipline, perhaps *the* discipline of the 1990s. And indeed translation studies has not only fulfilled our expectations but greatly exceeded them. We need only think of one area in which translation studies has flourished beyond anyone's expectations, namely the academicization of translator and interpreter training, to appreciate the phenomenal speed with which the discipline as a whole has established itself in the 1990s. The entry on Translator-training institutions by Caminade and Pym (this volume) documents the dramatic rise in the number of university-level institutions which offer degrees in translation and/or interpreting: 'From 49 in 1960 then 108 in 1980, the global number had risen to at least 250 in 1994'.

New disciplines, disciplines 'in the making' as it were, are particularly exciting for the rich research potential they hold and the sheer intellectual energy they are capable of generating. This intellectual energy can attract – as it has done in the case of translation studies – the interest of scholars working within more traditional disciplines, because it can revitalize a staid framework with new challenges, new avenues of enquiry, and new perspectives on pursuing such enquiry. Hence the current interest in translation across a variety of disciplines, from linguistics to ethnography and from cultural studies to psychology, to name only a few.

The vivacity and diversity that we find so attractive in new disciplines are a consequence of the fact that their potential is as yet unrealized, or is in the process of being realized. And this is precisely why the 'state of the art' of an emerging discipline such as translation studies is notoriously difficult to capture in a work of reference. All encyclopedias, this one included, are inevitably out of date before they hit the press – such is the nature and speed of intellectual progress in any field of study. A pioneering work of reference which sets out to chart a territory that has hitherto not been charted, to capture the core concerns of a discipline in a state of flux, cannot hope to be totally comprehensive. But it can and should aim to offer a balanced, non-partisan view of the discipline.

Translation studies is at a stage of its development when the plurality of approaches that inform it or are capable of informing it can be overwhelming, and the temptation for many has been to promote one approach with which they feel particularly comfortable and dismiss the rest. Throughout the editing of this *Encyclopedia*, I have tried to keep an open mind on what constitutes a viable perspective on the study of translation and what might legitimately be seen as a relevant area of concern or method of research in translation studies. An encyclopedia of a scholarly subject has a duty to open up rather than unduly restrict the scope of the discipline it sets out to describe. Thus, in addition to traditional issues such as EQUIVALENCE, SHIFTS OF TRANSLATION and TRANSLATABILITY, the reader will also find substantial entries which discuss less traditional but increasingly popular issues, including translation as a metaphor for

relations which exist between objects outside language (METAPHOR OF TRANSLATION), the metaphorics of gender and sexuality in discussions of translation (GENDER METAPHORICS IN TRANSLATION), the application of model theory to the study of translation (MODELS OF TRANSLATION), the process by which books are chosen to be translated and published in other languages (PUBLISHING STRATEGIES), and the use of computerized corpora in studying universals of translation (CORPORA IN TRANSLATION STUDIES).

So much for Part I. Part II of this *Encyclopedia* offers a very brief overview of national histories of translation and interpreting in some thirty linguistic and cultural communities. These entries are inevitably restricted in terms of space and can only offer a glimpse of what a full-scale history of each tradition might have to offer. When the plan for the *Encyclopedia* was first drawn in 1991, no significant initiatives had been announced in terms of a general history of translation; nothing had then appeared on the FIT History of Translation (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995) nor on the forthcoming de Gruyter Encyclopedia, and I was not aware at that stage that these projects were being planned. The rationale for including a historical section and for covering as many traditions as possible, albeit very briefly, was to stimulate interest in what I then felt was a seriously neglected area of translation studies. Inevitably for a relatively short section of this type, not all traditions could be represented, and the divisions in terms of linguistic and/or geographical communities are inherently arbitrary to a large extent. Irrespective of possible methodological weaknesses and unavoidable brevity of treatment, a reading of these histories can lead to interesting insights on such issues as the overall profile of translators and interpreters during different historical periods, the role of the translator and/or interpreter as it has been conceived by different communities, the range of incentives that have led to periods of intensive translation activity across the ages, the amazing variety of activities that have been subsumed at different times under the general heading of 'translation', and the kinds of contexts in which translators and interpreters have sometimes had to operate. These 'global' insights would be difficult if

not impossible to draw from a small number of more detailed histories. A brief outline of a number of these global patterns may be useful at this point.

Profile of translators and interpreters

One of the most interesting and potentially productive areas of research to emerge from the historical section of this encyclopedia concerns the kind of social or ethnic groups that translators and interpreters have typically belonged to during various periods.

Translators and interpreters, on the whole, seem to have historically belonged to minority groups of one type or another. For example, many interpreters in the New World, during the early expeditions, were native indians, often servants and the like: a minority group not in terms of numbers at this stage but in terms of political and economic power. In fact, the first generation of interpreters in the New World were largely natives who were captured and trained as interpreters by explorers such as Jacques Cartier in Canada and Christopher Columbus in Latin America. In the United States, Squanto – a prominent indian interpreter – was initially captured by an English captain and taken to England. A similar pattern exists outside the New World, in both European and non-European countries. In Turkey during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, translators and interpreters were chosen from Greek, Italian, German, Hungarian and Polish converts to Islam. In Egypt in the early nineteenth century, the best-known literary translators were Christians, of one denomination or another (Protestant, Orthodox, Maronite), and often of Lebanese or Syrian origin. In the 1940s and 1950s in Czechoslovakia, simultaneous interpreting was provided by wartime émigrés (in the case of English), by Jewish survivors of concentration camps (in the case of German), and by second-generation Russian émigrés (in the case of Russian). These are all minority groups and migrants. It is quite possible that a similar profile exists for community and court interpreters today in countries such as Britain, Sweden, the US and Australia: the majority may well prove to be second-generation immigrants belonging to ethnic minority groups.

The pattern is not totally consistent of course, but then patterns never are. In Africa, for instance, in very early times, interpreting was a hereditary and highly revered profession, performed by 'wise men' born to other 'wise men'. In China, the most active and prominent translators in early times were mainly Buddhist monks. These groups cannot be thought of as minorities in the political or economic sense, nor in terms of power. And of course being members of minority groups does not necessarily mean that translators and interpreters did not achieve a high status. In Turkey, for instance, 'dragomans' were held in high esteem and earned very high incomes between the fifteenth and nineteeth centuries; there was even a Translators' Mosque built in Istanbul in the sixteenth century, which is surely a sign of respect for the profession. Also, translators and interpreters who belonged to religious minorities enjoyed great privileges: they were exempt from the capitation tax levied on non-Muslims in the Islamic world in general and were allowed a wide range of privileges that could normally only be enjoyed by Muslims; for example a non-Muslim translator was allowed to grow a beard and ride a horse.

There are also patterns within patterns. As far as interpreters in the colonial context are concerned for instance, the profile is mixed: there are essentially two groups. One group consists of native interpreters and another consists of members of the colonial culture – in Latin America, Canada and the United States, both are prominent. The role of native interpreters is of course socially and psychologically more complex and many were often branded as traitors by their people. *Malinchista* is a term of abuse in Mexico and among the Chicano community in America: it is used to refer to someone who sells out or betrays a cause, because Malinche (Doña Marina), who interpreted for Hernán Cortés in the early sixteenth century, was heavily implicated in his colonial schemes, acting as his informant and warning him of ambushes by her people. The status of native interpreters in these contexts was not particularly high, unlike their colonial counterparts, and we see in Africa for instance a distinct deterioration in status with the arrival of colonialism.

Women, an important minority group, were often not allowed to work as translators; for example, the profession of sworn translator in Brazil was regulated by Royal Decree in 1851, and women were explicitly barred from the profession.

Role and status of translators and interpreters

In the colonial context, we find translators and interpreters, but particularly interpreters, taking on an amazing range of responsibilities which go far beyond linguistic mediation. Interpreters in the colonial context acted as guides, explorers, brokers, diplomats, ambassadors and advisers on indian or local affairs; that is why they were sometimes branded as traitors, because they were indispensable to the colonial authorities. In other contexts, too, translators and interpreters were expected to perform a wide variety of tasks. Translators, or more specifically interpreters, in oral traditions such as the African tradition were expected to act as spokesmen for their communities, not just as linguistic mediators. In the eighteenth century in Turkey, the duty of the Naval Dragoman included the supervision of the collection of taxes from non-Muslim subjects, though later on the 1839 Tanzimat limited his responsibility to interpreting again, i.e. strictly linguistic mediation.

In terms of status, the highest status attained by translators and interpreters seems to have been linked to the profession being hereditary, as in the case of the 'wise men' in the oral tradition of Africa, who passed on their skills to their sons. Other examples include the *tsujiis* in Japan, who exercised family monopolies on interpreting in this area from the seventeenth century until the end of Japan's isolation in the second half of the nineteenth century. There are also the Greek Phanariots in Turkey in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who similarly had sole control of the profession. All these groups were highly regarded by their communities and earned a very respectable living.

Working contexts

Another interesting area worth investigating

concerns the use of interpreters in contexts where we very rarely see them used today. The role of interpreters in educational contexts is of particular interest here. This seems to have been fairly common at various periods, though it is hardly ever discussed in the literature, except perhaps with reference to sign language interpreting for deaf children.

In the early Byzantine period the Greek *antikinsores* (professors of law) used to make Latin texts accessible to their students in class by first providing a detailed introduction in Greek to the particular Latin section of a given law. This was not a word-for-word translation but a general explanation of the law. Then the students would be asked to attempt a translation of the Latin text, and if they ran into difficulty the *antikinsores* would provide them with the translations of particular terms. This was known as interpreting *kata poda* (lit. 'on foot').

In China in the early centuries AD, interpreters played an important role in Buddhist translation forums, which were both intensive seminars on Buddhist sutras and also meant to produce Buddhist texts in Chinese translation. Interpreters acted as intermediaries between a 'Chief Translator', who often knew no Chinese but who was a Buddhist monk and provided explanations of the Buddhist texts, and a Chinese 'Recorder', who was the person responsible for producing a translation on the basis of the monk's explanation.

In Turkey, dragomans were used in institutions such as the School of Military Engineering in the eighteenth century to interpret for foreign instructors who did not speak Turkish. And the same happened in Egypt around the mid-nineteenth century, when the various schools set up by Muhammed Ali relied on foreign instructors who had to have interpreters in the classroom to communicate with their students.

Incentives for translation activity

The incentives which gave rise to periods of intensive translation activity in different parts of the world have varied a great deal over the centuries. One such incentive was the spread of Buddhism in China; the need to translate Buddhist sutras into Chinese, starting around the mid-second century, supported a massive translation movement, often sponsored by the government, lasting for some nine centuries. Other incentives include the massive campaigns to translate the Bible in most of Europe, as well as Greek classics and learning in general in the Islamic World and later in Europe. The Qur'ān, unlike the Bible, has never supported a serious translation movement anywhere in the world, because of the belief in its untranslatability (see QUR'ĀN (KORAN) TRANSLATION), but it has supported a tradition of commentary, which very often included long stretches of word-for-word translation.

Most of us tend to take such incentives for granted, because they are often too close to home for us to realize that they are culture- and period-specific. So we might not think that there is anything special about saying that the Bible has provided the main impetus for translation activity in much of Europe since the birth of Christianity. It is only by comparison with what was happening in other parts of the world, and at different periods of time, that we can see what is specific about this pattern. For instance, when we come to look at the history of translation in Greece, we find that there is an almost total lack of interest in translation from the early days until fairly recent times, and this is precisely because the two main incentives to early thinking about translation in other countries – namely, the translation of ancient Greek texts and of the New Testament – were not present in Greece, since the original texts remained relatively accessible to Greek readers for a long time.

Another major incentive for massive translation activity, more typical of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is the establishment of official bilingualism in countries such as Canada, Finland and Belgium, which tends to support large-scale programmes of administrative and legal translation (rather than translation of religious or academic texts), and of course simultaneous interpreting in such contexts as parliamentary sessions. And linked to this type of incentive is the official recognition of the rights of linguistic and ethnic minorities to be provided with interpreters in courts and similar situations, as well as official documents in their own languages. Today, it would seem, the main impetus for translation is no longer specific religious movements or

interest in the classics but rather official policies which recognize and support linguistic heterogeneity, including official bilingualism, recognition of minority rights, the establishment of political and economic unions (such as the EU), and so on. Again, this kind of statement seems rather banal until one places it against the backdrop of other incentives during different historical periods.

Types of translation/interpreting

One of the most fascinating things about exploring the history of translation is that it reveals how narrow and restrictive we have been in defining our object of study, even with the most flexible of definitions. When we read about how African interpreters regularly translated African drum language into actual words, for instance, we begin to realize that the current literature on translation has hardly started to scratch the surface of this multi-faceted and all-pervasive phenomenon. Similarly, intralingual translation is not such a minor issue as the existing literature on translation might suggest. Intralingual translation figures far more prominently in the Greek tradition than interlingual translation: the major preoccupation in Greece has been with translating ancient Greek texts into the modern idiom. I know of no research that looks specifically at the phenomena of intralingual or intersemiotic translation. We do have classifications such as Jakobson's, which alert us to the possibility of such things as intersemiotic and intralingual translation, but we do not make any genuine use of such classifications in our research.

An ingenious annotation system was used in Japan around the ninth century; this was known as *kambun kundoku*, or interpretive reading of Chinese. The system was used to enable the Japanese to read Chinese texts without 'translation'. Special marks were placed alongside the characters of Chinese texts to indicate how they can be read in accordance with Japanese word order, and a system of grammatical indicators was used to show inflections. This directly converted the Chinese texts into understandable, if unnatural, Japanese. But was it translation? It seems to be something in between intralingual and inter-

lingual translation, and I do not believe we have any theories that can account for this type of practice either.

What the historical research done for the *Encyclopedia* seems to suggest is that we still know very little about the history of our own profession, that what we know of it indicates that its profile has varied tremendously from one era to another, and – equally important – that the activities of translation and interpreting have taken such a wide variety of forms and have occurred in such a multitude of contexts over the years that we are obliged to look at the historical facts before we can even begin to develop theoretical accounts for this complex phenomenon.

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