

Call for Papers

“Translation: East Asia and the West”
An International Conference for Junior Scholars
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Academia Sinica

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After his return from his pilgrimage to India, the Tang monk Yijing 義淨 (635-713) wrote a primer of Sanskrit and declared that whoever studied it well would be able to translate Sanskrit texts into Chinese in one year. In the late Qing, Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929), on the boat trip back from Japan, wrote an introduction to the Japanese language, declaring that anyone who carefully read it would be able to put Japanese texts into Chinese in merely ten days. Sanskrit and Japanese are relatively similar in syntax, but both of them are quite different from Chinese. Is translation that simple? Yijing’s and Liang’s stories may sound legendary today, but they are worthy of our attention since they touch the very core of translation history and theory and put into relief the problematics of translation. In addition, they may offer some answers to the continuing question of the essence of translation.

In Chinese history, the first recorded activity of translation took place in the Zhou Dynasty. There are three main phases in the long history of translation in China: (1) the period of translating Sanskrit texts into Chinese since the late Eastern Han, (2) the period of absorbing Western learning since the late Ming, and (3) the great and numerous efforts to translate texts from Japan and the West since the late Qing. The translation of Sanskrit texts, lasting for more than one thousand years until the Northern Song, was the longest. Then came the transmission of European texts, which began in the late Ming and continued to the heyday of the Qing, altogether about two hundred years. The [series of](#) defeat [beginning with the opium war](#) in 1842 alerted the Chinese to the superiority of Japan and the West and led to the most rigorous period of translation in Chinese history, lasting from the late Qing to the present. Some translation projects were accomplished as quickly as Yijing had predicted, but others required a lifetime’s work. In either case, we are only certain of our limited knowledge of the development of translation in China. For instance, we do not know

exactly how the Indian monks worked with their Chinese collaborators, or how translated Buddhist texts were disseminated in traditional China. We also lack an overall picture of the exact contents and nature of those translated volumes. To unravel the veil of translation history in China from antiquity to the present day, this conference welcomes papers in this *terra incognita* and those on linguistic exchanges in East Asia as a whole.

In terms of translation theories, the aforementioned Yijing and Liang Qichao had every right to their opinions, but thorough research by experts in Sanskrit and Japanese is needed to validate their assertions. This call for papers, prefaced by their stories, hopes to inspire deeper penetration into translation theories of East Asia, a region which has produced many texts that have yet to be carefully studied. Take China again as an example. In the three thousand years of its recorded history, there have been countless individual translation undertakings, which, more or less, have presented themselves in the form of methodologies and theories. The exchanges between literary Chinese and other languages, including Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese, have had a long history, with Confucian scholars such as Ogyu Sorai 荻生徂徠(1666-1728) of Japan developing their own translation theories. The linguistic encounters of China with such surrounding tribes or nations as the Manchu, the Muslim, the Tibetan, the Liao, the Jin, and the Xixia were documented by different dynasties in written records known as *Siyi guanzhi* 四夷館志. Relevant research still leaves much to be desired. Although the examples above are taken from traditional China, we also welcome papers written from modern or post-modern perspectives that critique or re-interpret translation theories, Eastern or Western.

Those who have developed their own views in this respect are our potential candidates. Discussions of topics such as Derrida's idea about the Chinese script or Kristeva's view that Mao Zedong, equipped with the translated texts of Marx, understood more about communism than Marx himself will open up new perspectives to our understanding of translation. The circulation of material objects, symbols, and visual culture along with the transformation of meanings also justifies the use of "reworking" as "translation" nowadays. Therefore, does "translation" remain "translation" in the traditional sense, or has it undergone an essential change in the post-modern era? Papers that try to answer such questions are particularly welcome.

Junior scholars (Ph. D. candidates and assistant professors) from around the world are welcome to submit their abstracts and papers. The official languages of the conference will be Mandarin Chinese and English. Please send your abstract in either

language, before November 20, 2006, to:

Modern Chinese Literature Research Unit
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Taipei, Taiwan

Or, email it to mclrunit@gate.sinica.edu.tw. We will inform you whether your ABSTRACT is accepted at the end of December. If your abstract is accepted, please send us your completed paper before August 1, 2007. We will inform you whether your PAPER is accepted at the end of August. The conference will be held on December 3rd and 4th, 2007 at the conference hall on the fifth floor of Bo'ai Hall, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan. All papers presenters will be provided with round-trip economy-class airfare, meals [during the conference, and lodging for three nights from](#) December 2 [to](#) December 5, 2007.

Organizing Committee:

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