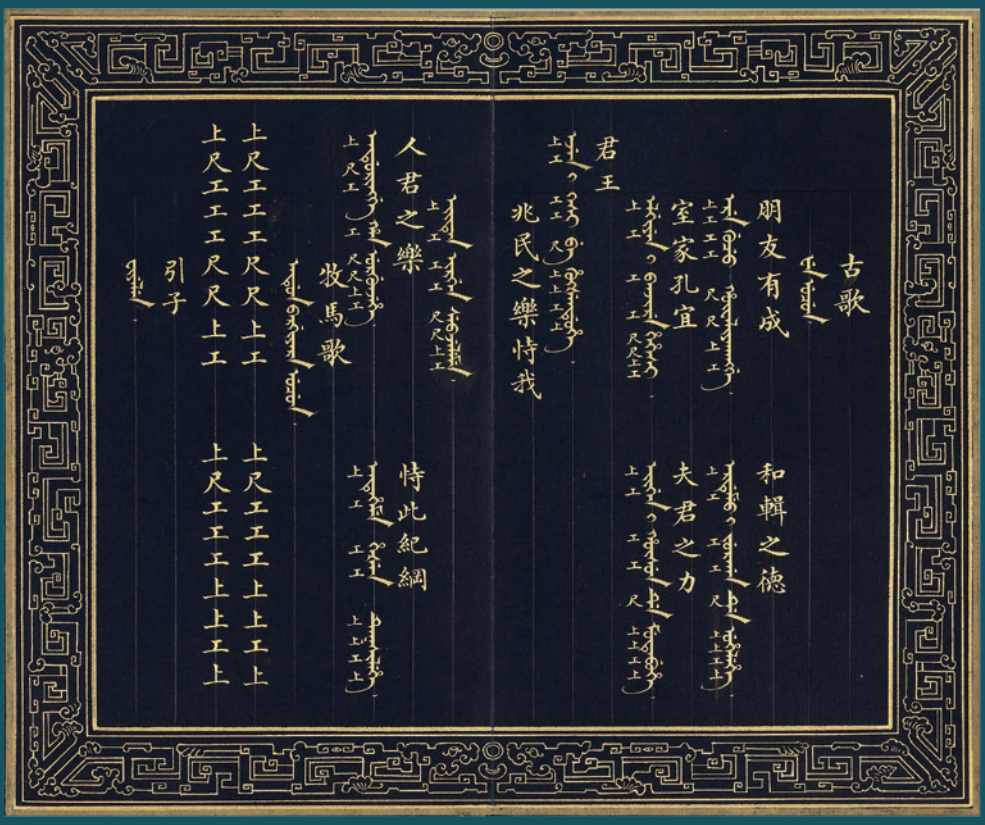
Ecologies of Translation in East and South East Asia, 1600-1900



Edited by Li Guo, Patricia Sieber, and Peter Kornicki

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Introduction

Scriptworlds, Vernacularization, and Shifting Translation Norms

Peter Kornicki, Patricia Sieber, and Li Guo

Introduction

In this volume we have brought together essays that examine various aspects of interlingual transactions within East Asia. Some of the essays stretch the meaning of the notion of 'translation' in interesting and challenging ways and suggest that Roman Jakobson's tripartite distinction between intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic translation may need to be rethought.[1] Part of the challenge resides in the fact that, contrary to the nationalistically inflected binaries of 'script' vs. 'orality' or 'domestic' vs. 'foreign' advanced in twentieth-century political and scholarly discourses, such categories prove to be remarkably porous and permeable within the early modern language ecologies of East Asia. Thus, this volume is part of a broader conversation that seeks to dismantle certain ready-made assumptions about the nature of the Chinese language, the Chinese literary corpus, and the cultural engagement of countries within the Sinographic sphere.

The need for a new mapping of the web of translational interactions becomes particularly acute as we take stock of the fact that early modern China's literary culture operated in a plurality of linguistic forms. Moreover, these varieties of written Chinese exceeded the reformist May Fourth divisions between languages that were reputedly 'outmoded' or 'new', 'dead' or 'alive'. As Chinese intellectuals sought to fashion a new written medium that could accommodate modern content and be readily learned by a mass public, they divided written Chinese into so-called 'literary' (*wenyan* 文言) Chinese and 'vernacular' (*baihua* 白話) Chinese, while revamping the entire literary canon to align with these new linguistic divisions. 'Literary

1 Jakobson, 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation'.

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Chinese' was reputedly divorced from any spoken forms, encompassed the bulk of the Confucian classics and the much-maligned examination essays, and as such was thought to represent a 'dead language' that impeded modernization. The 'vernacular' allegedly hewed closely to a spoken idiom, was newly aligned with the ostensibly 'popular' forms of traditional fiction, drama, songs, and some poetry, and represented the foundation upon which a new written standard could be established.

However, as more recent scholarship has shown, this opposition between 'literary' and 'vernacular' Chinese is profoundly misleading because historically, the so-called 'vernacular' was neither the proximate counterpart to any spoken form of Chinese nor was it an exclusively popular form of writing. On the contrary, what distinguished this form of writing – which has alternatively been called 'vernacular', 'plain Chinese', or 'mixed-register literature'[2] – was its encyclopedic capacity to blend registers drawn from different strata within literary Chinese.[3] At the same time, it also admixed syntactic and semantic elements from different waves of vernacularized language innovation instigated by the interlingual creation of a Chinese Buddhist canon (Six Dynasties, Tang dynasty), the intersemiotic impact of performance culture (Song, Jin, and Yuan dynasties), and the intralingual fashioning of simplified administrative and narrative prose (Yuan and Ming dynasties). Perhaps it is not so surprising that this flexible literary medium, which defied socio-literary alignments of 'high' and 'low', 'vulgar' and 'refined' in its native Chinese context, would profoundly alter translational norms in East Asia as iconic works written in this form began to circulate outside of China proper.

Within the Sinographic sphere – that is, the vast area in East and South East Asia where so-called Chinese characters were used – different cultures engaged with the Chinese writing system, the written corpus written in multiple forms of Chinese, and with spoken Chinese at a number of different levels. Arguably, such engagement in other societies, such as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, cannot be subsumed under standard notions of 'interlingual translation'. For one, as Peter Kornicki has argued elsewhere, literary Chinese, or what we will call Sinitic, was first and foremost a writing technology.[4] In

2 Until recently, 'the vernacular' was the standard term. In a direct critique of the misleading implications of the Eurocentric term 'vernacular', Shang proposed 'plain Chinese writing' in his 'Writing and Speech: Rethinking the Issue of Vernaculars in Early Modern China', pp. 254-301. More recently, Sieber termed this form of literary language 'mixed-register writing' in her 'A Flavor all Its Own: Some Theoretical Considerations on *Sanqu* Songs as Mixed-Register Literature', pp. 203-235.

3 On the encyclopedic nature of such texts, see Shang, *'Jin Ping Mei* and Late Ming Print Culture', pp. 187-238.

4 Kornicki, *Languages, Scripts, and Chinese Texts in East Asia*.

contrast to other transregional or cosmopolitan languages such as Latin or Sanskrit, it did not also constitute a means of oral communication in China or abroad, although it could be realized orally when necessary, particularly for teaching purposes. Among China's neighbors, Sinitic was almost always filtered through the regional vernaculars in reading, writing, and spoken practices. This interface between a transregional writing technology and regional vernacularization constitutes an important dimension of the 'ecologies of translation' examined in this volume.

For another, scholars have also begun to attend to the literary aspects of inter-Asian translation in the early modern era with a view toward delineating the circulation of particular texts, while seeking to identify underlying translation norms. For a long time, Claudine Salmon's 1987 edited volume *Literary Migrations: Traditional Chinese Fiction in Asia (17th to 20th Century)* was the only work in the field that drew attention to the translational afterlives of Chinese narrative writing not only within China (Manchu, Mongolian) but also within the Sinographic sphere (Japan, Korea, Vietnam) and in other Asian script traditions (Cambodian, Indonesian, Malay, Thai). In the last decade, however, more studies have followed. Eva Tsoi Hung and Judy Wakabayashi's edited volume *Asian Translation Traditions* (2014) has offered an overview of translation traditions in the East Asian cultural sphere, with a view toward illustrating how 'different historical factors and different epistemologies underlie the practice and norms of translation' in non-Western cultures and regions from ancient times to the early twentieth century.[5] Similarly, the volume edited by Lawrence Wang-chi Wong entitled *Towards a History of Translating* (2013) also featured a number of case studies of inter-Asian translation in Sino-Japanese contexts. Rebekah Clements's *A Cultural History of Translation in Early Modern Japan* (2015) provided a much-needed overview of translation practices in the Tokugawa period (1600-1868) and proposed a contextualized redefinition of 'translation' in premodern Japanese as 'a scholarly tool for mining a foreign text in order to write a new work'.[6] In a similar vein, in *The Japanese Discovery of Chinese Fiction: The Water Margin and the Making of A National Canon* (2019), William C. Hedberg, a contributor to this volume, argued that the Japanese reception of Chinese fictional classics led to a significant 'reappraisal of the relationship between language, literature, and cultural identity'.[7] In *The Korean Vernacular Story: Telling Tales of Contemporary*

5 Hung and Wakabayashi, 'Introduction', p. 1.
6 Clements, *Cultural History of Translation in Early Modern Japan*, p. 11.
7 Hedberg, *The Japanese Discovery of Chinese Fiction*, p. 17.

Chosŏn in Sinographic Writing (2020), Si Nae Park, another contributor to this volume, examined the formative role that the collection *Repeatedly Recited Stories of the East* (*Tongp'ae naksong*) played in shaping an important Korean vernacular genre (*yadam*). Rather than writing in cosmopolitan Sinitic, the collection's compiler, No Myŏnghŭm 盧命欽 (1713-1775), developed a new linguistic medium in which Literary Sinitic was hybridized with the vernacular realities of Chosŏn society and elements of plain Chinese. Within the literary sphere of China proper, Carla Nappi argued that during the early and mid-Qing – with its bilingual Chinese-Manchu bureaucracy and the creation of new literatures in Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan – translation became a means of refashioning the empire. While attending to the fact that 'early modern China was not just written, spoken, and translated in Chinese', Nappi calls for further work that 'incorporates China into a more multi-sited and globally informed history of translation'.[8]

This edited volume seeks to build on these studies and articulate new conceptual tools while offering richly documented alternatives to received modern narratives of language formation. First, in engaging with translation theory, the contributors hope to expand the theoretical categories available to conceptualize translation practices in East Asia. In doing so, they show that the questions 'what is translation' and 'what does it do' differ from Latin or Sanskrit-centered models of translation studies and as such expand the theoretical repertoire of translation studies. Second, in attending to the materiality of early modern translations, some chapters also seek to open a dialogue between the history of translation, the history of the book, and media studies. Rather than looking at texts as abstract entities unmoored from the materiality of their circulation, these discussions also analyze the meanings of their material manifestations. Finally, in examining key texts within East Asian traditions of vernacularized reading, writing, and translation practices, this volume addresses issues of transregional canon formation and linguistic innovation in the context of 'world literature'.[9] Taken together, the chapters offer a powerful corrective to the ubiquitous linguistic nationalism of modern nation-states as they delineate the 'polylingual, polyphonic, and polyperspectival'[10] as well as the polyscriptic nature of early modern translation practices in East and South East Asia.[11]

8 Nappi, 'Full. Empty. Stop. Go.: Translating Miscellany in Early Modern China', p. 220.

9 Damrosch, *What is World Literature?*

10 Lartey, *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World,* p. 124.

11 On the importance of script as a significant variable within the Sinographic sphere, see Reynolds et al., 'Prismatic Translation', pp. 139-143.

The complexity of the language situation in East and South East Asia

Given the pan-Asian scope of 'Sinitic', the language situation in premodern East Asia calls into question the applicability of Jakobson's neat division between 'intralingual' and 'interlingual' translation. Moreover, the very notion of what constitutes translation, or what we can call 'translation norms', may not align either. In short, both parts of this term pose difficult questions in the context of East Asia.

First, when we are talking about translations from the written language known in English as literary Chinese (Sinitic) but as *wenyan* in Chinese, *kanbun* in Japanese, *hanmun* in Korean, and *Hán văn* in Vietnamese, the notion of 'interlingual' translation may miss the mark. This is because to many people in premodern East Asia, Sinitic was not perceived as some written form of 'Chinese' but rather as something akin to a universal language, or at any rate as the common written language of East Asia. Thus in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, the educated resorted to this language for the purposes of intellectual discourse, poetry, official records, and government business without having any knowledge whatsoever of any spoken form of Chinese. In the nineteenth century, even ardent nationalists used it without any sense that they were using a 'foreign' language. At the same time, when written by Japanese, Koreans, or Vietnamese, this language acquired new inflections that reflected not only local geography and nomenclature but also grammatical patterns and usages. Of course, some of the most educated could write Sinitic text that passed muster everywhere and did not have its origins imprinted in it. But that was not true of all, and it is an inescapable fact that some Sinitic written outside China was difficult for people from other parts of East Asia to read. Consequently, if, for example, a work written in Sinitic by a Korean scholar was translated into vernacular Korean, it is difficult to call it an 'interlingual translation' without some sense of unease. At the same time, even a regionally inflected form of Sinitic was, of course, different enough from vernacular Korean in script, syntax, and semantics that we would be equally uncomfortable in labeling it an 'intralingual translation'.

Second, in the Sinographic sphere, 'translation' as a term to denote interlingual transactions has to cover an unusually broad range of possible transactions, some of them involving oral forms of vocalization. At one extreme is the practice of reading Sinitic texts aloud in the order in which they were written but using local vernacular pronunciation of the characters. The resulting performance, most commonly but not exclusively of Buddhist scriptures, was necessarily incomprehensible to speakers of other East Asian

languages, but also incomprehensible to speakers of the same vernacular who were not familiar with the text. But it was comprehensible to those who knew the text. Is this a translation? In other circumstances, an educated person might read aloud, or sotto voce, a Sinitic text using vernacular pronunciation but also transposing the characters and adding a few grammatical pointers. The resulting performance was only comprehensible to those who spoke the same vernacular and also were familiar with the conventions for generating this type of performance. For example, in the case of Japanese and Korean, the performance did not include the markers for tense or the honorifics that are a normal part of those languages. Is this a translation? Again, in other circumstances a scholar might add glosses to a Sinitic text which enables a reader familiar with the glossing conventions to produce the same kind of oral performance as in the previous case. Does the act of adding the glosses constitute a translation? These are by no means easy questions to answer.

Third, the differentiation between 'interlingual' and 'intralingual' translation becomes even more complicated if we examine the dynastic Chinese literary language alternately referred to as the 'vernacular', 'plain Chinese writing', or 'mixed-register writing'.[12] Borrowing from Sinitic as well as from vernacularized varieties of Chinese and from certain topolects, this written medium evolved out of major waves of literary innovation spawned by the need to accommodate oral dimensions of cultural production in China. In medieval China, the centuries-long process of translating and pseudo-translating Buddhist texts from a variety of South and Central Asian languages led to the development of newly vernacularized forms of Chinese,[13] as the translators mediated between the text-centered language ideology of the Confucian classics and the oral-centered language philosophy of Buddhism. Chapter 5 offers a sense of the complexity of written and oral interactions in Buddhist translational contexts in early modern and modern Vietnam. Meanwhile, with the establishment of a civil service examination system in Tang China, the capital Chang'an (modern Xi'an) and other urban centers became home to a flourishing entertainment culture that began to favor performative intelligibility over literary allusiveness. Over the next several centuries, the emergence of performance-related genres culminated in the formation of a full-blown, literati-authored, and textually documented culture of songs (*ci* 詞 and *sanqu* 散曲) and musical theater that catered

12 Shang, 'Writing and Speech: Rethinking the Issue of Vernaculars in Early Modern China', 254-301.

13 Mair, 'Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia: The Making of National Languages', 707-751 and Salguero, *Translating Buddhist Medicine in Medieval China*.

to common and elite audiences alike.[14] The love comedy *The Story of the Western Wing* (*Xixiang ji* 西廂記), touched upon in Chapter 1 and the main text treated in Chapters 6 and 8, was one of the key texts to arise out of this context. Meanwhile, the urban centers also spurred the emergence of oral storytelling, but it was elites associated with the Ming court that facilitated the initial printing of the iconic works of the long narrative tradition, *The Romance of The Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo zhi yanyi*), discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, and *The Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan*), which is analyzed in Chapter 7.[15] Finally, as these texts circulated through the early modern Chinese print sphere, they were embedded in appreciative commentaries. Couched in many inventive guises, such commentary expanded the cultural space around the text and in some cases became as important as the original work itself.[16]

In the view of China's neighbors, such mixed-register vernacular forms of writing were deemed to be a 'Chinese' language to a greater degree than Sinitic, owing to their relative distance from the canonical writings of the Confucian, Neo-Confucian, and Buddhist ancients and to their greater proximity to spoken forms of Chinese. In treating the Chinese circulation of *The Romance of the Flowery Notepaper* (*Huajian ji* 花箋記), a mixed-register song text that eventually traveled to Vietnam, Chapter 1 outlines some of the complexities that would-be translators of such literary texts had to contend with. First, such texts typically did not circulate in a single version; instead, different intermediaries – scholar-officials, literati, publishers, the court, and others – shaped them to their and their intended audiences' liking. Second, while these texts used Sinitic as their primary writing technology, some versions made abundant use of non-standard characters to aid less-educated audiences in the reading of the text. Third, such texts made considerable demands on what we might describe as an eclectic knowledge base. On the one hand, it helped for the reader to be conversant with the canonical Confucian tradition, because classical turns of phraseology often served as a source of humor in mixed-register writing; alternatively, classical forms of writing also offered a basis for idiosyncratic literary virtuosity such as the

14 On song culture and its diverse audiences in Yuan and Ming contexts, see the essays gathered in the special issue on 'The Protean World of *Sanqu* Songs', *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture* 8, no. 1 (2021); on the theatrical and dramatic culture of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing periods, see Sieber and Llamas, ed., *How To Read Chinese Drama: A Guided Anthology*.

15 On Ming court involvement with these novels, see Gregory, '"The Wuding Editions": Printing, Power, and Vernacular Fiction in the Ming Dynasty', pp. 1-29.

16 For an overview of early modern fiction commentary, see Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing Between the Lines*.

playful examination essays discussed in Chapter 1. On the other hand, the performance-connected texts often sedimented language use connected with locally or temporally specific colloquial registers. However, such oral elements were not necessarily treated as a residue, but as the chapter shows, they could also be self-consciously deployed as a hallmark of a particular elite aesthetic. In short, in their prodigious capacity to traverse generic and linguistic boundaries, mixed-register writings opened up polyvalent spaces for linguistic, literary, and even social experimentation.

Accordingly, translation norms and technologies adopted in the case of such texts were necessarily different from those current in the case of Sinitic (e.g., Sinitic text with vernacular glosses),[17] not to mention modern translational multilingualism. As a result, translation from vernacular mixed-register writing played an important role within the Sinographic sphere in the transition from the dominance of Sinitic to the creation and adoption of modern standard vernaculars as the primary form of written communication.

Polyscriptic translation within the Sinographic sphere

Almost all the chapters in this book focus on interlingual transactions that are dependent upon the flow of texts between societies in East Asia. This flow is often taken for granted, but it is important to remember that the flow was not uniform, was often imbalanced, and was at times subject to interruptions. The most important consideration, perhaps, is that very few vernacular works travelled outside the societies in which they were created, with the obvious exception of Chinese vernacular fiction and some drama, which was read, adapted, and translated in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. An obvious impediment to the circulation of non-Sinitic vernacular texts was the differentiation of scripts: vernacular works written or printed in Japanese *kana*, Korean *han'gŭl*, or Vietnamese *nôm* were literally illegible to those who did not know the script. There were precious few opportunities to learn foreign scripts in premodern East Asia, and even the trade between Japan and Korea conducted over the Tsushima Strait failed to result in more than a handful of people with a reading knowledge of the other language. As a result, there were no translations from Japanese, Korean, or Vietnamese vernacular writings into other vernaculars until the late nineteenth century at the earliest. However, as Chapter 9 shows, at the dawn of the

17 Denecke et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Classical Chinese Literature (1000 BCE-900 CE)*.

twentieth century, relay translation from Japanese into Chinese assumed great importance in reinventing the Chinese written standard language.

Another imbalance was the centrifugal pattern of book movement from China outwards to surrounding societies. This is not to say that no books journeyed in the other direction, but the scale was much smaller. What is more, although books transmitted from China often had a profound impact upon other societies, the opposite was rarely true. To be sure, a few works by Yamanoi Konron 山井崑崙 (d. 1728) and Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728) from Japan, and from Korea the compendium of medicine, *Tong'ŭi bogam*, compiled by Hŏ Chun (1546-1615), not only reached China but were also reprinted there, and some of the works of Korean and Vietnamese poets were included in Chinese anthologies. All these books and poems, however, were written in Sinitic. Some works written in Sinitic in Korea were reprinted in Japan, but there are far fewer examples of movement in the opposite direction, and there is no sign of such works travelling between Japan or Korea and Vietnam.

The one essay in this volume whose topic is not dependent upon the travel of a particular text between two or more societies in East Asia is Chapter 3 by William Hedberg. He examines the very rare but fascinating case of an attempt to translate a Japanese classic, the *Taiheiki*, both into more contemporary Japanese (one of a number of such intralingual translations found in Japan) and into the form of plain Chinese found in Ming and Qing-dynasty fiction. This was not, it is important to note, a case of an attempt to 'transmit' a Japanese work to contemporary China. What this essay reminds us forcefully is that in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, there were no attempts to translate their vernacular works into Sinitic so that they could circulate widely, as sometimes happened in Europe when vernacular works were translated into Latin in order to share them across the 'Republic of Letters'. In that sense, the vernacular worlds of those three societies in East Asia remained self-contained.

What, then, it is appropriate to ask, was driving interlingual transactions and translations in premodern East Asia? Here we need to pay heed to the phenomenon of vernacularization, which has had an impact on East Asia no less than it has had on other areas of the globe. Vernacularization has been extensively examined by Sheldon Pollock, and his work is taken as a point of reference in several of the essays. However, Pollock's focus is exclusively on written texts, and that seems inadequate to encompass all the ways in which Sinitic texts were vernacularized in East Asia. Since Sinitic never fulfilled the role of a spoken lingua franca and since extremely few individuals in Japan, Korea, or Vietnam became fluent speakers of

any form of Chinese, simply reading texts in Sinitic involved at the very least vernacularization on the level of phonological articulation. Thus sutra chanting, a common practice in Buddhism, was customarily carried out according to the phonology of the local vernacular, as it still is today. Chanting, of course, is a rather different use of a text from silent reading, and reading could only be practiced, before the invention of scripts in which to inscribe the vernacular, on texts in Sinitic.

In Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, techniques were developed for reading Sinitic texts in the vernacular. Similar techniques probably developed in other East Asian societies, too, but at present little or nothing is known about them. These techniques, called *kundoku* 訓讀 in Japanese and *hundok* in Korean, involved not only the vernacular pronunciation of Chinese words but also the rearrangement of the text to suit Japanese and Korean word order (subject-object-verb) and the addition of some grammatical elements in order to generate vernacular sentences. This kind of vernacular reading resulted in oral vernacular translations, but generally these translations were closely bound to the original in vocabulary and lacked some of the normal features of the vernacular language, such as verbal tenses. Reflecting on scholarly debate regarding whether vernacular reading could be considered translation, Peter Kornicki proposed that the outcome of the process of vernacular reading could be considered a 'bound translation', that is 'a translation that is bound by the vocabulary of the original text'.[18] This practice, however, is largely 'foreignizing', for it 'retains all the vocabulary of the original, bar grammatical particles' but does not give an explanation of the sense. Hence readers without specialist knowledge in sinology would have to consult commentaries or exegetical works. In addition to this 'foreignizing' translation, Kornicki discussed written vernacular translations which 'replaced the Sinitic originals and found equivalents for difficult vocabulary'.[19]

The development of vernacular scripts – Japanese *kana*, Korean *han'gŭl*, and Vietnamese *nôm* – made it possible not only to inscribe new vernacular texts but also to record vernacular readings of Chinese texts generated as described above. As Ruth Dunnell has eloquently put it,

> Invention of a script was an act of state creation as well as a creation of the state. It was a politically charged event that asserted cultural claims, met strategic needs, and advanced dynastic legitimacy.[20]

18 Ibid., 166.
19 Ibid., p. 187.
20 Dunnell, *The Great State of White and High*, p. 37.

Scripts made written translation possible, but the act of translation was not politically innocent. Rather, it put the stamp of an alien polity on an imported text through the use of vernacular script. In Korea and Vietnam, it was common for translations of imported Sinitic texts to be accompanied by the original, but not so in Japan. In all cases, however, the translation was visually, linguistically, and culturally a vernacular text, thus empowering and validating vernacular scripts. Moreover, even in cases where Sinitic was the main language of translation, regional vernaculars could be mobilized within the cultural space of the translation, as shown in Chapters 7 and 8. However, there was much variation in the extent to which the target texts sought to highlight their status as translations and in the ways in which they positioned themselves relative to the source text.

Prismatic modes of translation

Matthew Reynolds has suggested that there are two major approaches to writing about translation. On the one hand, dominated by theories of equivalence and concerns over fidelity, there are the critics who conceive of translation as a 'channel' that carries meaning across languages. On the other hand, inspired by theories of purpose (*Skopos*) and translation shifts, there are writers who acknowledge change as an inevitable byproduct of translation, but rather than lamenting such transformations, they herald such 'prismatic' refractions as part of a creative process of discovering new dimensions of the source text as it moves through multiple cultural contexts. Major variables that might determine which of these modes may be more dominant depends on the relative standardization of the languages involved, the material medium in which such work appear (manuscript, print, digital media, etc.), and the conventions of language use. As Reynolds puts it, what divergent translations of a text over time and in different places show is that 'language is always embedded in contexts and communities: to translate is to remake, not only in a new language with its different nuances and ways of putting words together, but in a new culture where readers are likely to be attracted to different themes'.[21] In the Sinographic sphere, translators from Sinitic and from plain Chinese vernacular experimented with a range of domesticating and foreignizing approaches, but from our contemporary vantage point, we can also understand these processes as part of an unleashing of the literary potential – or in Pierre Bourdieu's words, the 'co-possibles' – of Chinese texts in world literary contexts.

21 Reynolds et al., 'Prismatic Translation', p. 136.

As the broader story of the diffusion of Chinese fiction in Asia as well as Europe and the US shows, one of the persistent challenges for translators was the particular genre configuration of early modern Chinese fiction. In keeping with their diverse ambitions, early modern Chinese fiction writers and critics had fashioned a polyphonic narrative medium that had no ready-made analogue in other literary cultures. In particular, such narratives did not present a single omniscient narrator but instead refracted the story through numerous forms of diegetic and extradiegetic commentary (e.g., storyteller's manner, poetry, interlinear commentary, eyebrow commentary, etc.). Hence, translators were confronted with a dilemma: to subsume the translation under existing narrative models or to let the translation drive the invention of new narrative forms. Interestingly, however, as the different chapters in this volume show, even domesticating approaches could contribute to literary innovation in the target culture.

For one, vernacularization could take yet another step and domesticate imported texts by changing names, geographies, and cultural references, as was common in Vietnam and Japan. Take Chapter 5 by Nguyễn Tô Lan, which focuses on the 'translation' of a miracle tale from Sinitic into a thoroughly localized and comic Buddhist play written in Vietnamese. A similar case is the Vietnamese classic, *The Tale of Kieu* (*Kim Vân Kiều*), which is in verse and was based on the Chinese novel *The Story of Jin Yunqiao* (*Jin Yunqiao zhuan* 金雲翹傳): here, a prose work was recreated as a Vietnamese verse epic, telling the same story but in accordance with Vietnamese cultural norms and with Vietnamese geographical and proper names.[22] In the Japanese context, such transactions have often been termed 'adaptations' (*hon'an* 翻案), and in the writings of Ueda Akinari 上田秋成 (1734-1809) and Kyokutei Bakin 曲亭馬琴 (1767-1848) many parallel examples can be found.[23] Cases such as these exemplify the choice to veer decisively away from foreignizing translations in favor of recreating the original in the target language.

Domestication, however, need not go so far as to remake the text in a local guise. As Chapter 2 by Matthew Fraleigh shows, the first complete translation of the Chinese novel *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (1689-1691) makes no attempt to retell the saga of one of the most storied periods of Chinese history in a Japanese context but instead uses a range of other domesticating strategies in terms of genre adjustment (omission

22 Isobe, 'Saishi kajin shōsetsu no higashi Ajia shokoku e no eikyō – *Jin yunqiao zhuan* to *Yujiaoli* o rei ni'.

23 Hartman, 'From Translation to Adaptation: Chinese Language Texts and Early Modern Japanese Literature'.

of commentary and storyteller's manner), mixed translation strategies (vernacular translation and *kundoku* glosses), script choices (mixed Kanji/katakana vs. fully sound-glossed text with hiragana), and visual media. As Fraleigh notes, the first *Three Kingdoms* translation opted for the former, but did so in a lively form of Sinified classical Japanese. At the same time, the translator retained the practice of *kundoku* glosses for the original quotations in Sinitic. Yet, as Fraleigh argues, the resulting translation is not the sum of these parts but rather a text that eschews mediation through a *kundoku*-style prose for the main text by ways of incorporating Japanese tense and aspect markers, native vocabulary, and honorifics. Inspired by the resounding success of the initial publication, the translation was expanded through a lavishly illustrated version (1836-1841) that indicated pronunciations for all Sinographs, substituted some Chinese characters with Japanese hiragana, and reordered the passages in Sinitic in Japanese syntactical order in order to make it accessible to a broader audience.

For another, scholars in the Sinographic sphere also sought to find ways to render the foreignness of a text. Chapter 4 by Yuan Ye offers a discussion of the 'Translation Studies' (*yakugaku* 譯學) undertaken by the well-known Japanese Confucian scholar Ogyū Sorai. Sorai explored a direct translation method that did not conceal the gap of meaning and other differences between everyday Japanese and the Chinese classics. Unlike the *kundoku* method, in which the Sinitic text was given without Chinese sounds and read out in a special form of Japanese, Sorai's direct translation, as Yuan elucidates, endeavors to achieve a more organic effect of translation by 'treating Sinitic writing in Chinese classics as written Chinese based in its own sounds, which should be translated into spoken Japanese'. In seeking to supersede the practice of *kundoku* reading, Sorai's method of direct translation attempted to bridge the gap between Sinitic and everyday Japanese speech through the reconstruction of colloquial expressions in a more intrinsically 'Chinese' voice. Given that Chinese fiction in plain Chinese was understood to be related to colloquial registers of the language, such an insistence on 'Chinese sound' laid the foundation for the full-blown translations of Chinese works of fiction in eighteenth-century Japan.

Alternatively, such vernacular translation could also run the gamut from 'word-for-word glosses' to 'original interpretation' within the bounds of a single work. While engaging discussions of Sinitic as an elevated literary medium, Chapter 7 by Si Nae Park on fiction glossaries in late Chosŏn Korea indicates that such glossaries could amplify 'the expressive capacity of the written by accommodating colloquialisms'. In doing so, they carved out a space for 'vernacular eloquence'. Korean glosses in fiction glossaries

showcase translation as an act of interpretation by synthesizing interpretive activities with 'word-for-word annotation at one end and exuberant free translation at the other'. And such endeavors also led to creations of new ideas in Korean glosses that did not exist in the original text. Park also illustrates that Korean glosses in fictional glossaries could adopt performative means to process the sensory features of original-language expressions and grant Chosŏn readers new localized affective experiences. Hence, the chapter highlights the creative negotiations between start text and its prismatic translation in a particular regional context.[24]

Vernacularization, translation, and affect

In a broader context, vernacularization is characterized by generating 'literary production in a regional language invested with idioms and representations of power'.[25] Vernacularization itself is 'a kind of indigenizing of a broad range of discursive mediums across a semiotic landscape that includes literature, arts, architecture, politics'.[26] Building on Miriam Hansen's well-known discussion of vernacular modernism, Zhang Zhen argues that the vernacular is often 'reconfigured as a cultural (linguistic, visual, sensory, and material) "processor" that blends foreign and local, premodern and modern, high and low, cinematic and other cultural ingredients to create a domestic product with cosmopolitan appeal'.[27] Vernacularization is an affective experience conditioned by everyday life experiences and needs. In this light, vernacularization transcends the limit of textual translations, bridging the dichotomous divide between word and context, language and culture. Vernacularization releases spaces for expressions of heterogeneous voices in public arenas. Translation theory and practices, in this regard, could be reconceived through the lens of vernacularization.

On the one hand, the process of vernacularization expedites the dissemination of canonical texts, knowledge, and rituals and makes them accessible for the understanding of popular readers, and conversely impacts and inspires common readers through these culturally shared systems of values, traditions, and norms. As Karen Ruffle observes, vernacularization

24 On the notion of 'prismatic translation', see Reynolds et al., 'Prismatic Translation', pp. 131-139.

25 Novetzke, *The Quotidian Revolution*, p. 5.

26 Ibid., p. 6.

27 Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen*, p. 30; Hansen, 'The Mass Production of the Senses'.

could encompass a broad dimension of 'cultural translation' allowing the conveyance of texts, norms, and rituals into distinctively native linguistic, cultural, and socio-historical contexts, and often also including various engagements with and reforms of written textual traditions as well as oral performances.[28] On the other hand, vernacularization need not be tied to the broadening of audiences, but in China and elsewhere in East Asia, the eclectic nature of mixed-register vernacular writings can also become a platform for elites to distinguish themselves from run-of the-mill 'village pedants'.[29]

The theoretical lens of vernacularization can also lead to new understandings of translation as an affective practice. Translation, August Schlegel observes, allows readers to 'enter fully into the space of another', learn otherness, and return safely to one's autonomous subjectivity: 'The ability to recognize oneself in the image of a foreigner is only truly praiseworthy when one has autonomy to retain in the process, and does in fact retain it.'[30] Translation amplifies and transforms subjective experiences of reflectivity and empathy, and simultaneously empowers the translators and readers by engaging them in critical inquiries and interpretations about the aesthetic, political, and ideological foundations of texts.

Several studies in this volume call attention to new understandings of translation and affect in pre-1900 Asian contexts and invite further investigation of 'the translatability of affective states' and the intersection between translation theory and affect theory.[31] Shankar evokes Raymond Williams's seminal interpretation of affect as conveying 'structures of feeling' and argues that translation studies could be expanded by considering the translatability of the codes and aspects of human affective and cognitive experiences. Defining translation as 'an act of interpretation' represented by a 'careful provisionality', Shankar calls attention to the '"formal rendition of affect" … in terms, texts, genres, and narratives'.[32] Comparative affect studies in translation endeavors might 'interpret differences as well as similarities in the codes of affect across cultures'.[33] Translation can in this sense be understood as a method of inquiry that aims not only to transfer meaning across language boundaries but also to reconnoiter possibilities of new affective meanings that are generated at concrete moments of intercultural or even intracultural encounters.

28 Ruffle, 'A Bride of One Night', pp. 121-44.
29 Ding, *Obscene Objects*.
30 Cited in Robinson, *Western Translation Theory*, p. 218.
31 Shankar, 'Languages of Love', p. 65.
32 Ibid., p. 71.
33 Ibid., p. 71.

A salient example of the productive intersection of translation and affect studies is found in Chapter 8 by Xiaoqiao Ling and Young Kyun Oh on Mun Hanmyŏng's approach to Sinitic Literacy in his *Master Hut'an's Collated and Annotated Edition of the Western Wing* 後歎先生訂正註解西廂記 (preface 1886). Ling and Oh argue that Mun, in his 'Chipchu' glosses, strives to open up 'an affective dimension of reading' by 'reorganizing the linguistic realities'. Specifically, the parallel narratives that Mun provides after his 'Chipchu' glossing transform the cognitive parameters of the text in order to 'prescribe a reading that enacts the anticipated emotional experience as a regulatory means of self-cultivation'. Mun evokes 'historical knowledge and shared public sentiments to Mun and his own community' in his explanation of the dramatic moments in the play. Similarly, Patricia Sieber's chapter on the *Huajian ji* 花箋記, an early modern Cantonese-inflected songbook, argues that the deployment of Cantonese linguistic elements in the text and in the paratextual examination essays envisioned a new poetics of sentiment that translated freely across Sinitic, topolect, and mixed-register writings in an effort to invent a new heterosocial, sentimentally authentic writing life within a community of discerning and appreciative readers. Hence, in their expansive linguistic and imaginative reach, such mixed-register texts could refract familiar and new affective experiences enmeshed in manifold linguistic, cultural, and historical modalities.

Manifestations of a polycentric aesthetics

Translation practices in this volume manifest a translation aesthetics marked by polycentric negotiations of identity, canon, and the state. A 'polycentric aesthetics', Ella Shohat and Robert Stam propose, transcends culturally embodied perspectives and accommodates reciprocity, relativization, and even the reversal of perspectives. In this light, a polycentric translation aesthetics incorporates innovative practices that take place 'on the borders of cultures, communities, and disciplines' and encompass multiple sites and processes of regional and transregional meaning-making and identity formation. In addition, a polycentric translation aesthetics also takes into consideration the polytemporal relations and experiences in the process of translation.

An example of a polycentric approach to translation is Hedberg's chapter on Okajima Kanzan's *Chinese Explication of 'The Annals of Pacification'* discussed above. Kanzan reversed the direction of translation and the rhetoric of accessibility, and instead presented a two-tiered translation of

the original classical Japanese text that included a plain Chinese-language 'explication' and a Japanese-language 'popularization'. By transposing a Chinese narratological template onto a familiar narrative and combining intralingual and interlingual translation, Kanzan's work presents and synthesizes polyperspectival and polycentric negotiations of style, genre, and literary historiography.

Another example of such a polycentric perspective is Chapter 6 by Ross King. The author argues that a situated study of '*The Western Wing* Glossarial Complex' and literary vernacularization challenge the modernist narrative of the triumph of *han'gŭl* over sinography, proposing a 'cosmopolitan' mode that transcends the teleological discourses of the modern nation-state in its place. As Homi Bhabha notes, 'To write the story of the nation demands that we articulate that archaic ambivalence that informs the time of modernity.'[34]

Chapter 9 by Xiaolu Ma also shows how the emergence of the modern Japanese and Chinese written standards were refracted through polycentric translation practices. In her examination of two pioneers of modern language reform movements – Futabatei Shimei in Japan and Wu Tao in China – she foregrounds the role of polydirectional translation practice in the fashioning of a new written standard for both Japanese and Chinese that more closely mirrored a spoken standard language. In particular, her chapter deals with the Russian-language translations of these men. While Futabatei translated directly from Russian, a language whose written and oral registers evinced closer proximity than Japanese did at the turn of the nineteenth century, Wu Tao made a relay translation based on Futabatei's attempts to transpose the language of everyday conversation into the mainframe of literary narration. Futabatei introduced Western-style punctuation marks, Japanese-style past tense, and new rhythmical syntax into his prose translation, which met with enthusiastic acclaim among the younger generation of writers. Wu Tao similarly sought to capture the Japanese-mediated Russian text in a newly conceived Chinese vernacular idiom in contrast to the standard practice of adopting Sinitic to render foreign literature. However, in Ma's telling, Wu Tao's relay translation also indexes the success of Futabatei's rendition of a short story by Maxim Gorky through Wu's struggles to adequately capture the most colloquial aspects of Futabatei's version. In doing so, her chapter illustrates how a simple binary notion of 'interlingual' translation may not adequately capture the plurality of prose styles available in Japan prior to the full-fledged adoption of a national standard in the twentieth century.

34 Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 204.

An ecological view of difference

As Lawrence Venuti argues, the efficacy of translation depends on the cultivation of discursive heterogeneity. Discursive heterogeneity, for Venuti, allows a translator to choose texts to 'redress patterns of unequal cultural exchange', to minoritize dominant cultural forms, and to challenge the function of translation as assimilation. Instead, translation ethics 'aims to signify the autonomous existence of that text behind (yet by means of) the assimilative process of the translation'.[35] The chapters by Fraleigh, Hedberg, and Yuan illustrate how discursive heterogeneity in translation contests assimilationist ethics and opens up new spaces for diverse linguistic, narratological, and aesthetic choices and experiments. Fraleigh's chapter demonstrates how the translation of *Tsūzoku sangokushi* both shifts focus from the linguistic and formal features to the narrated historical content and prioritizes the source text's 'internal hybridity'. The translation revives a discursive heterogeneity by resorting to a variety of features in Japanese such as the system of honorifics, while forgoing the effort of introducing the stylistic features of Chinese vernacular narratives.

Discursive heterogeneity, for Hedberg, allows the translator to construct an imagined readership, experiment with the untranslatable, and explore the rich apertures between genre expectations and literary historiography and between narrative appeal and historical veracity. Okajima Kanzan's translation of *Taiheiki engi* into Chinese vernacular fiction engages a heterogenous discursive stance by presenting 'the gap between Chinese *engi* and Japanese *tsūzoku*, modern "fiction" and eighteenth-century "explication" that is of most value to the modern reader of *Taiheiki engi*'. In Yuan's chapter, Ogyū Sorai's 'Translation Study' (*yakugaku*) departs from the *kun* gloss, exploring the discursive heterogeneity between everyday Japanese language and the Chinese classics in various translation methods; his promotion of *tōwa* study brings a keen awareness of the heterogeneous Chinese topolects. Sorai's translation methods recall Venuti's observation that translation 'should seek to invent a minor language that cuts across cultural divisions and hierarchies'.[36] These three chapters elucidate how translators have explored a translation ethics that prioritizes linguistic and cultural differences and relies on discursive heterogeneity as a means to counterbalance the assimilative process of translation.

35 Venuti, 'Translation, Heterogeneity, Linguistics', p. 94.
36 Ibid., p. 95.

Korean translations of classical Chinese drama and fiction, as shown by the chapters by King, Park, and Ling and Oh, contribute to understandings of an alternative modernity, which is different from the notion of modernity envisioned by the nation-state discourse. As Arif Dirlik argues, 'adding the adjective "alternative" to modernity has important counter-hegemonic cultural implications'.[37] Alternative modernity encourages a re-articulation of issues of cultural difference, problematizes the fetishization of difference, and contests any 'hegemonic spatial, temporal and developmentalist limits of the modernity'.[38] The shared interest of the three chapters is the process of vernacularization and translation in Chosŏn Korea. Each study explores how translations in Chosŏn Korea contested and resituated canonical Sinitic texts and traditions and allowed the Chosŏn audience – elite or popular – to gain a dynamic and conversant experience in reading and interpretation. Ross King's examination of the *Xixiang ji* Glossarial Complex recalls Venuti's aforementioned discussion of 'minoritizing translation', which is '"never to acquire the majority", never to erect a new standard or to establish a new canon, but rather to promote cultural innovation' by promoting the variables within the target language.[39] King's study of the marginalized position of traditional *xiaoshuo* foregrounds a theoretical stance in exploring the margins of the page, including Chosŏn readers' practice of 'paratextual and often partial' translation activities – that is, glossing, lexical annotation, and commentary, which gesture towards an early modern Sinographic cosmopolitan culture. For King, such practices address marginal and underexplored spaces in the history of Korean vernacularization, which could not be easily assimilated in the narrative of *han'gŭl*'s triumph over sinography in the discourse of the modern nation.

Park and Ling and Oh show, like King, that early modern Korean annotations, glossing, and fictional glossaries for late Ming and early Qing literature elude and problematize nation-state paradigms underlying literary historiography. Instead of cultivating a new national canon in Chosŏn Korea, such practices call for a transnational consideration of the potential of literary Chinese and of the possibility of 'rendering it into a vocalizable language'. For Ling and Oh, Mun Hanmyŏng's presentation of orality and performativity in his rendering of *The Western Wing* unsettles graphocentrism by connecting Sinitic with spoken Korean and reconfigures the sutures of the two new spaces of creative interpretation. Park argues

37 Dirlik, 'Thinking Modernity Historically', p. 6.
38 Ibid.
39 Venuti, 'Translation, Heterogeneity, Linguistics', p. 93.

that vernacular Korean glosses in fictional glossaries induce a form of vernacular eloquence by using 'written mimetic speech elements to make the language more expressive'. The contrast between the inarticulacy of Sinitic and the eloquence of vernacular Korean resists the homogenizing discourse of 'the modern nation-centered literary project' that advocates the unification of writing and speech.

While the above chapters could be considered in two clusters based upon translation-related practices in Korea and Japan respectively, the chapters problematize teleological and geocentric discourses of national identity and modernism. As Michael Cronin observes, 'the single nation-language-culture of national literary ecologies produces strange pathologies of definition and confinement'.[40] Cronin argues that whereas national languages and cultures are often instrumentalized for political homogenization, translation practices contest various forms of national language ecologies, and instead envision an ecological dwelling that embraces linguistic and cultural plurality and diversity. Cronin's ecological notion of difference in translation studies is productive in the current discussion, as it emphasizes the translator's self-reflexivity about their relatedness. In other words, an ecological vision allows the translator to shift from the ethnocentric or geocentric paradigms to a form of ecological vision that prioritizes situated knowledges, intersubjective connections, and the shared realm of compassion and feelings. The above chapters are meaningful in introducing an ecological notion of difference, which deconstructs logocentric and graphocentric understandings of languages and histories while promoting the value of discursive heterogeneity, alterity, and transnationalism.

Conclusion

In sum, these chapters do much to elucidate the many variables that go into the making of translation and the formation of translation ecologies in the early modern Sinographic sphere. As the chapters show, plain Chinese narrative played a crucial role in diversifying translation repertoires in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. The fact that plain Chinese was a mixed-register literary medium challenged existing translation modalities built around Sinitic both through its diversified language use and its particular genre characteristics. While we do not advocate a teleological outcome for such translation endeavors, it is nevertheless evident that such a broadening of translation norms – or

40 Cronin, 'Translation Studies and the Common Cause', p. 4.

to put it another way, the refinement and pluralization of vernacularization strategies – over the course of the early modern period formed an important repertoire of modalities that modern reformers could draw upon and define themselves against. In other words, perhaps precisely because translation from Sinitic and the mixed-register vernacular had played such an important role in literary innovation over the centuries, we can see resonances between early modern uses of translation and modern linguistic experiments. Moreover, even as dynastic China had translated very little from the vernacular cultures of its neighbors, their facility with such translational vernacularization processes would end up facilitating China's own adoption of a modern written vernacular. Of course, modern reformers often railed against the constraints of traditional language practices. But in light of recent scholarship that revisits the legacy of the strategically antagonistic rhetoric of early twentieth-century reformers, we can perhaps now reconsider in a more historically nuanced fashion how polycentric and polytemporal translation processes in the early modern Sinographic sphere interfaced with the discursive constructions of language, nation, and modernity in a polyphone world.

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