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## Does the East Asian - European Interliterary Communication in the Late Qing - Late Meiji Periods Offer a Model For a Globalized Literature?

It has been pointed out more than once during the conference that the concept of globalization from its very origin has been a coin for economic organization, for an ideology about uniform market access conditions proclaimed by those more powerful with regard to those less powerful. It has also been observed that literature and cultural production in general may take a course which is not necessarily conforming with the economic development. Nevertheless, ever since the US-presidency of Bill Clinton, the concept of globalization has been publicized to such an extent that many scholars of literature, and among them namely those of comparative literature, have started to associate globalization with the promise of the final advent of world literature. As is well known, this concept is much older than Bill Clinton and had gained its still influential shape (transforming it into a loan word in a number of European languages) by Goethe. Therefore, a quick glance at some of the formula by Goethe might be useful. The concept of world literature was, to be sure, developed in close touch with Chinese literature, namely a translation of the anonymous novel *tiaoqiu zhuan* ("The Fortunate Union," 17<sup>th</sup> c.), retranslated from the 1761 English into many other European languages. The classic locus for "Weltliteratur," in one of Goethe's conversations with Eckermann in 1827, reads as follows: "But, really, we Germans are very likely to fall too easily into this pedantic conceit, when we do not look beyond the narrow circle that surrounds us. [...] National literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of World-literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach" (Goethe 165-66). An earlier wording of the concept of world

literature, coined five years after the French revolution, specified it as "anything that is purely human and above any impact of time" (Goethe).

1.

From these few hints, it is becoming sufficiently clear that (1) "world literature" is an offspring of German idealism; (2) it is prior to any discourse about "globalization"; (3) also prior to "globalization" is the Silk Road as the most important channel of intercultural contact between Western Europe and the Mediterranean area on one side, and East Asia on the other, though respective conceptualizations of the Silk Road are much later than its flourishing period. It deserves some emphasis that what became conceptualized as Silk Road was, as is "globalization," a genuinely economic phenomenon at its very origin.

My point of departure is that Literature, among its other qualities, is also good with a number of socio-economical implications. Prominent among these implications are language skills. The basic skill is, beyond doubt, a manageable and efficient writing system. This is why, in a study inspired by Durisin's theory of the interliterary process, Marian Galik has drafted the concept of an East Asian interliterary community, marked by the usage of Chinese characters ever since the times of the Tang dynasty (618-907)— incidentally also the period when the Silk Road reached a peak of its history. The development of Korean and Japanese writing systems, in part derived from Chinese characters and used parallel to them, and also the substitution of Chinese characters by a Latin transliteration in Viet Nam may well be summarized as attempts at constructing an identity, despite and beyond the many linguistic motivations. No doubt this process is intimately connected to power relations, even though it took some 800 years.

This area of East Asia was, for centuries, roughly congruent with the core area of what has been called the community of *Huawen wenzue* ("literature in Chinese") (see Du Guoqing 2001). This was, in fact, "globalization" as well, with the sole difference that the globe, the world was seen as *tianxia*.

For organizing another important set of language skills, after the Opium Wars of the 19th c., imperial China established the Common Language Institute (*Tongwenguan*) (Ma Zuyi, 224-34; Chen Yugang, 30-31), whereas the Japanese Meiji government created the Office of Barbarian Studies (*Bansho shirabesho*) in 1869. Both institutions were specifically designed to provide diplomats, businessmen and others with knowledge in European languages, in order to ease their

partially forced contacts with non-Asian countries. These measures also mark the beginning of a prolific linguistic transfer by translation that has ever since increased of which also the present conference is an outcome.

No matter by whom and from which sources and for which purposes translations are prepared, they constitute an essential and initial element of what may be legitimately seen as a "globalization" process. The lexical segment of loan words and to a lesser extent of loan translations from English that may be observed in languages all over the present world is just a phenomenon of surface, and of no significance in quality, nor in quantity, when seen in historical perspective.

As well known, studies of individual translations are numerous in comparative literature and also linguistics, namely in the case of the Bible where translations are particularly abundant. And I share their frequent interest in intellectual history. My suggestion is to introduce the following parameters to assess the manifold appearances of translation, to achieve well-founded judgment about the possible meaning of "globalization" in literature:

- (1) The number of translated works into a language has to be put into relation to the total (literary) book production in the respective language.
- (2) The increase or decrease in the share of translations in the total book production in a given language over a given period deserves particular attention.

The picture in the above-mentioned East Asian literary community is roughly as follows: in the early period of the existence of the language training institutions both in China and Japan, know-how was chiefly invested into interpretation and translation of single documents. For Japan, reorganization of the whole educational system soon resulted in textbook production, technical dictionaries, and the whole social transformation that found its focus in the new Constitution promulgated in 1889. For China, technical manuals and textbooks in the sciences were still a relatively isolated phenomenon that made up far below 1% of the total book production until the early 1890s when first bunches of Chinese students went to Japan. The daily press in Shanghai from the mid-1890s became an important catalyzer for opening new avenues for distribution of printed matters, but also for the spread of translations (see Hu Daojing 279-99).

A sharp increase in translation activities took place towards the end of the 19th century. The development of the Chinese language exile press in Japan was highly significant for this period. Two paradigms may be identified here: On one hand the efforts of Liang Qichao (1873-1929) after

the failure of the so-called 100-Days-Reforms of 1898. His writing of the late 19th century were, in their majority, adaptations from the Japanese. On the other hand, we find Lin Shu (1852-1924) who in less than three decades created Chinese versions of more than 200 literary works from more than 20 literatures (see the still incomplete list in Zhang Juncai).

As linguistically systematized by Lydia Liu, much of the new vocabulary that would form an important segment of Modern Chinese was coined during that last decade of the 19th century. By 1915, approximately 15% of the total book production were translations, and by 1925, some 30%, with a proportion of still some 2/3 in secondary translations. The proportion of secondary translation, first from Japanese, then from English, only began to decrease by the 1930s, thanks to the wider spread of more solid language training, but with a still increasing proportion of translations reaching up to 35%. As for the relative proportion, this was well 30 times as much as 40 years earlier, and of course even more in absolute numbers.

In this field we may possibly find an answer to what it means producing an apparently successful and aesthetically balanced Sinicization of a non-Chinese text. For Wang Guowei (1877-1927), to give an example, it was in fact merging traditional concepts and wording with previously Nipponicized formulations.

But who is reading those books that total not even 1,500 volumes in 1910 and reach far beyond 9,000 volumes in 1935 (cf. Drege, 32 & 100)? I do not share the optimistic estimates by Evelyn Rawski, who in her landmark study assumed a functional literacy up to ten percent in some areas (see also von Mende, esp. 55-58).

2.

In such a context of secondary and in many cases also tertiary translation, a concept like "cultural distance" is becoming opaque. Yet to assess in a qualifying way the few data I have assembled above, the distribution and accessibility of linguistic skills seems a fair mode to get an appropriate picture of objective difficulties that have actually been overcome by a great number of individual translators.

When the Common Language Institute was founded, it had some dozen students. Even among them, those would meet present-day high UNESCO standards for literacy, they presented just an extremely small minority. In this respect, a first shift occurred again in the early 1890s with Chinese students abroad in Japan.

Not only Japanese language training was a prerequisite for entering into any institution of higher learning — that is for most of the Chinese

students who reached a number of almost 10,000 by 1907. Also knowledge of a third language was necessary for certain branches: English for engineering and German for a number of sciences, most prominently for medicine. Until at least 1918, part of the textbooks used in Japanese medical schools was still in German. If we think of Guo Moruo (1892-1978, Japan 1914-23), Yu Dafu (1896-1945, Japan 1914-22), Lu Xun (1881-1936, Japan 1902-09), Tao Jingsun (1897-1952, Japan 1906-27) and many other future writers and translators who underwent medical training, a prominent exposure to German language sources may be assumed. As studies have shown, the largest corpus of foreign literatures available at the time was in German translations. However, figures might look in detail, it can be considered as established that Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany (reg. 1888-1918), did "look beyond the narrow circle that surrounds" it, as Goethe had put it. And these materials were, as number of sources testify, easily accessible in Japan at the time.

An additional criteria for functional diglossia in the same generation of translator-authors might be introduced. As all had undergone a traditional literary training that made it anything but natural to write in a vernacular register, and far from being settled. I should just like to remind that one of the most important translations prepared by Guo Moruo were not just *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* from German to modern Chinese, but from one language register to another, such as in the case of the *Shijing* (Book of Poetry; 10th c. BCE) transposed into the vernacular as *juanerji* (1923). A still more accentuated diglossia may be identified when Japanese are writing traditional Chinese poetry, as it was the case in the environment of the imperial court of the last dynasty, when Manchu and Chinese were used alongside one another.

A less dominant, but still important role for diglossia in China played the linguistic training in missionary schools, particularly when other state-run and private institutions with language training were not established yet. I just remind of the prominent example of the writer and linguist Lin Yutang (1895-1976) (see Erbes 15-20).

Much of the substance of the many heated translation debates during the 1920s and 1930s originated in more privileged access to language training, in contrast to less privileged access. When Hu Shi ventured a translation of a Goethe quatrain and earned criticism from Xu Zhimo and others, most of the cases in point were due to the fact that Hu Shi had used Thomas Carlyle's translation. And in a famous attack on Lu Xun's translation activities, frequently based upon secondary sources, Liang Shiqiu (1903-1987) had insisted to translate from the original language-which

certainly contributed to make his own Complete Works of Shakespeare take 40 years until they could be published.

3.

In the late 20th century, the share of translations into Chinese in the total book production on all relevant book-markets, i.e. mainly the PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong, has not much changed since the rate reached in the mid-1930s, that is 25% to 35%. The various translations prepared from Dante's *Divina Commedia* are highly significant for the shift in secondary source languages: A first partial translation in 1924 was done from Japanese, a second one in 1934 from English. Despite systematic foreign language training set up in the 1950s, the first complete version in Chinese, started in 1939, was based upon a French translation and reprinted several times since 1954, with another competing translation in English (1962), whereas the first translation from the Italian is still incomplete (1990 ff). However, when the first complete version was reprinted, the publishing house felt compelled to emphasize what is evidently not true and thus offers a glimpse at the consensus reached about translation sources: "This translation is based on the Italian original, yet also the French, German and English translations have been consulted" (Dante 1).

Thus, up to the 1970s, the creation of a canon labeled as World Literature, in the PRC as well as on Taiwan and in Hong Kong, was largely based on the recycling of existing translations from the 1930s, and on new secondary translations.

4.

If we accept as a working hypothesis the assumption that identity may be considered as dominantly linguistic, thus shaped in a community that uses the same language and has access to roughly the same corpus of tradition—such as expressed in the coining of Huawen wenxue or the Commonwealth of Chinese Literatures—, it is not much of a surprise to find a number of local varieties. Such varieties, as a consequence, are also tangible in content and subject related matter, and usually the outcome of differing political systems in the communities where Chinese plays a key-role. A fine example in this field is the publishing business: The still existing and often used way of escaping centralized State control of printed matters and censorship on the Chinese mainland by having books published on Taiwan no doubt contributes to shaping identities on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, by the very difference in handling printed matters. On the

other hand, this transfer is, evidently, just possible thanks to the roughly similar linguistic code.

This step requires some tolerance towards deviations from the linguistic norm. In the case of the worldwide community of English speakers—with most among them practicing a functional diglossia, well comparable to the status of Chinese in areas at the periphery of the Huawen world—the issue has already been raised repeatedly in the past (Martin 1989, 1996 and many others). It has resulted in the striking phenomenon that linguists, and namely historians of the language, might have become, simply for methodological reasons, much less intolerant towards deviation than critics and scholars of literature usually tend to be.

Under this perspective, attempts at establishing new subnorms of Chinese characters in order to reflect a variety, as it is happening with Taiyu Hilf (Taiwanese) at the moment with the proposal of creating new characters (see e.g. Yang Qingchu), might result in an inflicted Huawen literacy, potentially even more incisive than character simplifications promulgated in the 1950s and 1960s in the PRC.

5.

Not only in view of a still possible further split of the Huawen community, but also in order to bridge many other gaps, something like World Literature may only arise by being "resolutely plurigloss," such as postulated by Milan V. Dimic. I would just like to recall the line of argument in the reaction from the PRC government when the Nobel prize was conferred to Gao Xingjian: It first declared itself uninvolved, saying that Gao Xingjian is not a Chinese. Technically speaking and in terms of citizenship, this is of course true, but the genuine skandalon is probably his writing also in French.

Using different languages, i.e. being "resolutely plurigloss" also in literacy, is nothing new either. In the crucial period of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the diplomat Chen Jitong ("Tchen-Ki-Tung," 1851-1907) wrote a number of monographs introducing Chinese life and customs to a French readership. As well known, a number of scholarly writings by Hu Shi are written in English. The author Sheng Cheng (1899-1998) started his literary career with a memoir that was a great success all over Europe in the late 1920s—and can by the way be considered the pioneering work of the genre made popular again by Zhang Rong's ("Chang Jung") *Wild Swans* (1991). As many of his contemporaries, Zhou Zuoren (1885-1967) occasionally wrote essays in Japanese, whereas the philosophers Gu

Hongming (1857-1928) and Zhang Junmai ("Carsun Chang," 1887-1969) published several of their writings in German. Another type of diglossia was enforced on Taiwan towards the end of the colonial rule by Japan when public usage of the Chinese language was banned in 1937, and a number of authors such as Lai He (1894-1943) were compelled to write in Japanese, they wished to be published.

Of course, the processes that took place between 1897 and 1937, between the year of publication of the first among the influential translations prepared by Lin Shu and the year when Japan invaded China's heartland, may not be invoked as a model directly. By the end of that period of four decades, secondary translation of belles-lettres from Japanese had become unacceptable for most of the Chinese intelligentsia, if not considered a form of collaborationism by parts of it. As greater parts of the older established canon had meanwhile become available in versions mostly prepared from first-hand sources, although not always superior in quality, secondary translation is increasingly obsolete anyway.

Even less are these four prolific decades of any practical value in knotting a net that draws literatures more tightly together than any PR department of a powerful internationally active publishing conglomerate—with the result that a pirated Chinese internet version of Hali Pote was available even before German, French and Italian versions flooded the European markets.

Yet the efforts made in Japan and then in China during these periods tightly interconnecting, not least in translation, but also in acquiring knowledge about foreign literatures, may still serve as a moral incentive. It is true that—as goes for most interliterary exchanges nowadays, as well—original interest was first induced by the experience of outside military and commercial power, by both countries. Still, the effort undertaken and its actual outcome, under conditions incomparably less favorable than those met by any linguistic and literary transfer in the present day, still deserves admiration. The gradual shaping of mutual images, across misconceptions towards self-corrections, brilliantly apologized by Qian Zhongshu (1964) for early Chinese translations and traced in detail by Dimic (1998) for narrative accounts about China in Western Europe, has after all presented a relatively more important step in quality and quantity than large-scale curricular operations against the canon of "white, male, and dead" may ever initiate.

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