

The Emergence of Translation Studies in Japan in the 1970s

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Abstract

It is a widely held view amongst both Japanese and Western scholars that translation studies (TS) emerged as an academic field of study in Japan just after the turn of the millennium. However, the recently re-discovered journal 『季刊翻訳』 *Kikan hon'yaku* [*Quarterly Translation*] (1973–5) reveals that there was already a clear interest in establishing translation as a ‘science’ in the 1970s. Previously, I have argued that *Kikan hon'yaku* represents the beginning of TS in Japan (Sato-Rossberg 2014), but this raises two questions: Why have TS scholars not recognized this fact, and why has the academic study of translation in Japan failed to develop as widely as in other countries?

In this paper, I analyse two journals that were published in Japan during the 1970s–1980s in order to explore the early history of Japanese translation studies. This analysis reveals how the conflict that emerged between the development of translation theory on the one hand and the increasing emphasis on efforts to simply identify ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ translations on the other reflects the relationship between the two journals and professional translation schools. This research also sheds light on the tension that existed between academics and practitioners, and on the early struggle between different views regarding the introduction of Western translation theories.

1. Introduction

Compared with China (especially Hong Kong) and South Korea, where several universities have departments dedicated to translation studies, Japan still appears

reluctant to wholly accept and foster the study of translation as an academic field. Despite this, there are a number of translation studies (TS) scholars in Japan, and some Japanese Studies academics have become interested in using concepts from TS in their works (Leung 2017; Tamada 2018). However, such adoption is often only partial. Authors might use certain terminology, such as foreignization and domestication, but often fail to deepen and develop these concepts within the Japanese context. Until recently, it was a common belief amongst TS scholars both in Japan and the West that Japanese translation studies only began to emerge in the twenty-first century (Takeda 2012). However, Japan is well-known as ‘a culture of translation’ and has a rich tradition of research on translation. This includes research on the reception of translations of foreign literature within *kokugo* [the study of the national language], and descriptive or document-based research related to translation that does not make use of any particular translation theory. Translation research has also been carried out in Japan using post-colonial and post-modern translation theories, especially in the field of comparative literature. Despite the lack of a substantive theoretical framework for much of this traditional research, it should not be ignored when examining the development of TS in Japan.

As Wakabayashi (2012) points out, translation theories of Western origin are not always adequate in the Japanese context. Establishing TS in Japan is not simply a matter of adopting Western-oriented TS theories, due to the nature of the Japanese language, society and history and how the Japanese conceptualization of translation differs from the West. Even the status of translators is different in Japan, as documented in other contributions to this volume (see Thomas Kabara and Akiko Uchiyama); hence some concepts, such as Venuti’s (1995) invisibility of translators, do not always apply. In order to create an approach to TS that is genuinely applicable and relevant for Japan, I believe

it is important to merge traditional translation research and the more recent field of TS, and to establish translation theories that is grounded in Japanese translation practice and philosophy.

As mentioned previously, TS is generally thought to have emerged in Japan just after the turn of the millennium. However, the recently discovered journal *Kikan hon'yaku* [*Quarterly Translation*] (1973–5) reveals a clear interest in establishing translation as a ‘science’ in the 1970s, and, in my earlier work, I have argued that its publication marks the beginning of TS in Japan (Sato-Rossberg 2014).

Takeda (2012: 16), one of the first scholars to analyse how TS gradually became institutionalized in Japan, states that: ‘The emergence of any new field of study may be signalled by the formation of an academic organization, conferences, publication outlets or university departments, and programmes dedicated to the discipline. This is exactly what has happened over the past several years’. In this paper, I contend that TS had already taken on the form of an academic field of study in the 1970s. To substantiate this claim, I will consider all four of Takeda’s (*ibid.*) criteria: (1) academic organizations; (2) academic conferences; (3) publication outlets; and (4) university departments and programmes dedicated to the discipline. In section 2, I will briefly discuss the influence of Nida’s (1972) translation theory and that of his colleague, Noah Brannen, who acted as a bridge between Nida and Japan. This discussion is important because of the extent of Nida’s influence on many translation scholars and translators at that time. It is also vital for understanding the role played by two translation journals published in Japan in the 1970s: 『季刊翻訳』 *Kikan hon'yaku* [*Quarterly translation*] and 『翻訳の世界』 *Hon'yaku no sekai* [*The World of Translation*]. In section 3, I will examine these two journals and consider what aspects of translation they emphasized. In section 4, I will

discuss the scope of the Japanese concept of *hon'yaku ron* [translation theory or discourse] based on these two journals, noting its potential for future development. Finally, I will discuss the reasons for the lack of progress of TS in Japan, despite its promising start in the 1970s.

My motivation for undertaking this study is similar to that of Tsuji (1993) and her work on French translation history — to question the unproven myths surrounding the history of academic discourse on translation. Tsuji (1993: 219) explains:¹

I am inspired by the attitude of “amateurs” who confront problems with their bare hands during the early stages of a process. Once an organization has been established and begins to function, it is difficult to perceive the living breath and the thoughts of the individuals involved. But if you trace back to its origins, you can often find the passion and enthusiasm of certain individuals in crystallized form there.

The two journals that are the focus of my attention make it clear that Japan was no exception and that there were people passionate about translation and open to discussing it from various perspectives in these early years.

2. The Institutionalization of Translation Studies in Japan

¹ Translations of Japanese references are my own unless otherwise stated.

In this section, I will build on Takeda's (2012) description of the emergence of the new academic field of TS in Japan and ask if this could already be seen in the 1970s. This discussion is based on the journal *Kikan hon'yaku* and its successor *Hon'yaku no sekai*.

2.1 *The aims of Kikan hon'yaku and Hon'yaku no sekai*

It is somewhat surprising that *Kikan hon'yaku* is rarely mentioned in recent literature on TS in Japan. The journal was published by the Nihon Hon'yaku Kenkyūkai [Japan Translation Research Group], which appears to have been a loose association of researchers rather than an established academic society. The group no longer exists and its work has not been well researched, but it appears that the main contributors to *Kikan hon'yaku* were its members. It is interesting to note that the editors' statement of the purpose of the journal and their concept of translation research are not dissimilar to those of Japanese TS scholars today:

1. This magazine will consider a broad notion of translation and cover various kinds of research and information.
2. Although translation plays an important role in the process of constructing Japanese modern culture, there has been little discussion that tackles the subject of translation head on. We invite the wider opinions of all those interested in translation.

3. We anticipate an audience not only from the field of literature studies but also from the social and natural sciences — from all those who relate to the field of translation.
4. Through translation, we aim to establish a shared platform to think about our literature and culture, and also about politics, economics and society. (*Kikan hon'yaku* 1993)

These statements point to several interesting issues: the need for an inclusive vision of translation; the status and legitimacy of translation; and the need to think beyond literary translation and establish a platform whereby people can discuss all genres of translation. In any discussion of Japanese TS, it is important to recognize that an awareness of such issues surrounding the understanding and status of translation already existed in Japan in the 1970s.

Articles submitted to *Kikan hon'yaku* were not peer reviewed so, by today's standards, it might not be considered an academic journal. However, peer review was not as common in the 1970s as it is today, and, by Western standards, there are not many refereed academic journals in Japan even now. Those in print are often attached to specific academic associations, and to submit an article one needs to be a member of that association. To my knowledge, there are currently no academic journals on TS in Japan that are open to general submission. Considering these factors, I believe it is fair to say that *Kikan hon'yaku* was as academic as one could expect a journal to be at that time. Interestingly, several authors mention in their articles in the journal that the editorial

board had asked for the inclusion of more works dealing with translation theory. I will return to this point in section 4.

2.2 Translation courses at universities

Concerning the question of whether courses on translation existed at the university level in 1970s Japan, the first issue of *Kikan hon'yaku* notes that the number of university courses on translation theory was increasing. Ikegami (1973a: 140) from *Kikan hon'yaku* asks: 'Why do they offer this subject? Can translation theory be established as an academic discipline?'. In response to these questions, Ikegami visited the International Christian University (ICU). There, she first interviewed Prof. Noah S. Brannen, who co-authored with Eugene Nida and Charles R. Taber the Japanese edition of *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (1973) and, as a member of the translation committee of the Japan Bible Society, had learned translation theory from Nida. In this interview, Brannen explains that he had been giving translation theory classes at ICU since 1968 and stresses that 'our translation theory derives from the linguistic perspective' and that 'our purpose is to research translation scientifically' (in Ikegami 1973a: 142). It is noteworthy that Ikegami published this interview with Brannen in the first issue of *Kikan hon'yaku*, as if to point to the future direction of TS. Ikegami also interviewed students at ICU. Apparently, they had no specific intention of becoming translators; their interest lay rather in researching translation theory from the standpoint of linguistics (*ibid.*: 143). The attitude of these students demonstrates that in 1970s Japan it was already possible to study translation theory for purely academic purposes. In later editions, *Kikan hon'yaku* introduces translation theory courses at other universities, such as at Sophia University,

where they were part of the English literature programme. When Ikegami visited Sophia University, she found that about ninety mainly third-year students were attending this course. The lecturer was Bekku Sadanori, who later became known for his critique of the debate about ‘right and wrong translation’ and whose publication *Kekkan hon’yaku jihyō* [*Comments on Faulty Translation*] was subsequently serialized in *Hon’yaku no sekai*. Bekku valued practical translation as a means of teaching English. In his interview with Ikegami (1973b: 138-9), he states:

I am not a linguist and have no intention of researching translation linguistically. Explaining translation theoretically does not mean you can do better translations. We speak Japanese fluently, but it is different question as to whether we speak grammatically correctly or not — this is the same thing. Even if we know the grammar, it doesn’t mean that we can write good novels or poems.

Ikegami (*ibid.* 139) adds a comment: ‘This is how Bekku values translation theory, so his lectures place emphasis on practical application as well’.

These interviews with Brannen and Bekku reveal clear differences in attitudes towards translation theory and the understanding of its importance. Brannen was more theory-oriented and believed that theory could improve practice, whereas Bekku did not appear to hold translation theory in much regard.

In summary, there was no formal translation programme in Japan in the 1970s, but translation theory courses had started to emerge.

2.3 Conferences

From 15 August to 2 September 1966, an international translation seminar organized by the Japan Bible Society was held in Hachioji, Japan. The aim was to bring together a broad interdenominational team to produce a new Bible translation (*Seisho shin kyōdō-yaku ni tsuite* 1966: 11). In this meeting of Bible scholars and university teachers, twenty-six out of the forty-five participants were university scholars. The report of this seminar states:

In this way, the seed of a joint translation was planted. To grow that seed, just water the soil and God will take care of it. We took this opportunity in a three-week international translation seminar, which was ecumenical. This was the first seminar of this type. It was held in Hachioji, a suburb of Tokyo, from 15 August to 2 September 1966, and was facilitated and hosted by the Japan Bible Society, supported by the United Bible Societies. The seminar was led and chaired by Dr Nida, with fifty-five people from eleven countries participating, of which thirty were Japanese. Most Japanese participants later joined a collaborative translation of the Bible. (Takahashi, in *Nihon Seisho Kyōkai* 1987: 11–12)

Takahashi (*ibid.*: 5) recalls that they first tried to produce a popular translation based on Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence: 'However, in order to make an acceptable translation for "people inside the church", we ended up using plenty of honorific language. And for the transliteration of proper nouns, we decided to use the spellings that had often been used before'. As a result, the new translation, which was published in 1978, still used a formal style of Japanese. Similar seminars on Bible translation were also held in other parts of Asia, such as the Philippines and Taiwan, and it would be interesting to

compare their impact in these various countries and regions. As described in the report above, the seminar in Japan was led by Nida, and one of the participating translators, Hotta, later contributed a paper on translation theory to *Hon'yaku no sekai*, which I will discuss in section 4.

In conclusion of this section, we have seen how three of the criteria listed by Takeda (2012) as indicators of the birth of a new academic field (academic organizations, conferences and departments) have been satisfied in Japan in the 1970s, albeit on a much smaller scale than today. The fourth, publication outlets, will be discussed below.

These developments were part of the global emergence of TS. In 1972, just one year before the launch of *Kikan hon'yaku*, James Holmes is said to have coined the term 'Translation Studies' at a conference in Copenhagen (Munday 2012). Thus, we can observe that rather than following Western developments, Japan was resonating with the same global trend and was an active participant in the emergence of this new field of study.

3. Nida's Influence in Japan in the 1960s and 1970s

The American linguist Eugene Nida was one of the leading figures in the development of TS. In this section, I will explore how Nida's theories influenced Japanese scholars and translators, and how they were received in Japan shortly after their publication.

3.1 Eigo seinen [The English Generation]

According to Sato (2015), the subject of translation was already being discussed from the academic perspective of English literature in the journal *Eigo seinen* [*The English Generation*] starting around 1960. The journal was first launched in 1898 with the title *Seinen* [*The Rising Generation*] and, according to Sato (*ibid.*: 24), during the 1960s a discourse targeting the audience's perspective emerged in *Eigo seinen* that can be linked to Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence. She writes that *Eigo seinen* valued translation theories that theorized about the practice of language transfer from the linguistic perspective. Nida's (1964) *Toward a Science of Translating* and Nida and Taber's (1969) *The Theory and Practice of Translation* were introduced by the journal as helpful for thinking about translation as an academic discipline. Sato (2015: 26) describes how Nida's influence continued to grow among Japanese translation scholars in the early 1970s and notes that, because of the launch of the new translation journal *Kikan hon'yaku*, English literature academics concluded that translation would become increasingly popularized. Hence the discussion of translation began to disappear from the pages of *Eigo seinen*, as popular subjects were not deemed suitable for the attention of serious academics.

3.2 *The theory and practice of translation — Brannen and Nida*

In order to understand Nida's influence in Japan, it is important to appreciate the role of Noah Brannen, who first came to Japan in 1951 as a missionary and began teaching at the International Christian University in 1967. From the following year, he began teaching translation theory. He was one of the contributors to the new collaborative translation (*kyōdō-yaku*) of the Bible (see Section 2.3) and is said to have learned translation theory

from Nida (*Kikan hon'yaku* 1973). Although Nida and Taber published *The Theory and Practice of Translation* in 1969, it was not until 1973 that the Japanese version appeared, with Brannen's name on the cover as one of the authors. Brannen (in Nida *et al.* 1973) added an interesting introduction for the Japanese audience, in which he explains that Nida's approach to translation theory is to adopt the position of the recipient. He writes that the book tries to apply Nida's ideas to issues of English-Japanese translation and explains that the book was rewritten for a Japanese audience with Nida's consent, so that it could more easily be used by Brannen in his Japanese university courses (*ibid.*: viii). For example, Brannen (*ibid.*: 6) added various examples from the Japanese language:

Not many words describing wind can be found in the English language. However, in Japanese, we differentiate depending on the time of day: 'asa-kaze (morning wind)', 'yū-kaze (afternoon wind)', 'yo-kaze (night wind)' [...]. Among others, there are many specific names for fish and tea in Japanese. English has verbs that differentiate ways to cook, e.g., to bake, to fry [...] we can see that language and culture are deeply connected.

Sawanobori and Masukawa (*ibid.*: vii), the translators of the book with Brannen's reworkings, recall the situation of translation in Japan at that time in their preface: 'How much effort translators made at that time to convey the meaning and the style of the original faithfully is beyond our imagination'. They also comment that translation depends on the skills and techniques of the translator (they use the Japanese word for 'art'), and that these make the difference between good and bad translations. Sawanobori and Masukawa (*ibid.*) point out that Nida's book, while accepting translation as an art, also proposes 'scientific' methods, such as thinking about the perspective of the readers

and concentrating on the target audience and culture when translating. In this way, Nida's theories extended beyond the bounds of Bible translators in Japan and influenced translators and scholars across a broad field. Arguably his most famous book, *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964), was translated into Japanese by the well-known translator Naruse Takeshi and published as *Hon'yakugaku josetsu* in Japan in 1972. Why did Naruse translate Nida's book? In his postscript, he describes how he had attended Nida's lectures while studying in the US: 'If I recall well, in 1963, while giving his lectures with much humour, Nida must have been writing this book, which is the first to use the term "science (gaku)" in relation to translation theory' (Naruse 1972). The translation was thus inspired by Naruse's personal encounters with Nida and his lectures, and Naruse clearly attributes his interest in TS, to use the current term, to Nida's influence in the US.

From this section, I believe it is clear that Nida's influence cannot be underestimated and should be studied more thoroughly in the Japanese context.

4. Translation Journals

In this section, I will look more closely at *Hon'yaku no sekai* to understand how translation scholars and translators in Japan understood translation theory.

4.1 Hon'yaku no sekai

Hon'yaku no sekai was first published in 1976 as a successor to *Kikan hon'yaku*, which had been discontinued in 1975. It was published by Yoshida Yoshiaki and its editor was

Yuasa Miyoko. Yoshida was the founder and president of the *Daigaku hon'yaku sentā* [Centre for University Translation], and Yuasa is the founder and chairman of the Japan Translation Training Centre and the current chancellor of the Babel University Professional School of Translation. She also founded the Japan Translation Association in 1985.

Takahashi Kenji, the president of the Japan Association of Translators, Sato Ryoichi, the vice-president of the Japan Society of Translators (JST, 1953–present) and various others contributed their ideas to the journal. Sato (1976: 53) appears to have been impressed by a meeting of the International Federation of Translators (FIT), in which he participated in 1973, commenting: 'I understand how the field of translation in every country aims to respond to the developments and needs of current society. In addition, I was reminded of the value of translators who command multiple languages'. It is evident that Sato was inspired by taking part in the conference and witnessing activities to improve the status of translators in the West. He also notes the increasing number of translation classes at Japanese universities, and continues: 'The interest in translation is growing along with demand in our country. At this time, when many researchers strive to become translators, the appearance of this journal *Hon'yaku no sekai* will support many people who aim to become translators' (*ibid.*: 52).

Sato's comments document the keen interest in translation in Japan, not only from a practical viewpoint but also from an academic one. He calls for an increase in translation classes in higher education, noting the interest in translation amongst researchers (*ibid.*). Because of the link between FIT and JST, *Hon'yaku no sekai* appears to have been interested in improving the status of translators and featured a special report by Zuratoko Golian, the vice-president of FIT, titled 'Recommendations for the legal protection of

translators and translations and practical means to improve the status of translators'. Taketomi Norio also contributed an essay on 'Advancing the status of translators'. It is important to note this link with developments in the West and the influence of FIT in Japan in the 1970s, as it most likely contributed to the establishment of the journal *Hon'yaku no sekai*.

We can see from the contents of the journal and the postscript by the editor, which was published with each volume, that *Hon'yaku no sekai* differed from its predecessor *Kikan hon'yaku* in its attempt to promote business translation.

It is likely that, when people hear translation, many imagine academic material, especially literary translation. This is the same for prospective translators. However, there is also a need for business translators who can work with government offices and private companies. There is a need for people who are knowledgeable about business and at the same time good at language. Understanding this and having established a business translation section, we are eager to work on business translation. We also intend to look at issues of mistranslation. In any case, we want to produce a journal that is enjoyed by our readers. (Yuasa 1976: 90)

The statement by the editors of *Kikan hon'yaku* that 'we anticipate an audience not only from the field of literature studies but also from the social and natural sciences — from all those who relate to the field of translation', clearly indicates that there was a tendency at the time to automatically link 'translation' with literary studies and fail to recognize other genres. In the postscript by Yuasa, we can see her additional aims for the direction of *Hon'yaku no sekai* compared with those of *Kikan hon'yaku*: to promote business translation and to point out mistranslations. In accordance with these aims, volume two

onwards of *Hon'yaku no sekai* features a section called 'Practical translation lessons', which taught various topics such as 'patents', 'electronics', 'medicine' and 'literature'. Apart from 'literature', all these subjects related to business translation. This increasing interest in business translation reflects Japan's period of rapid economic growth, which started in the 1960s and peaked in 1990. In addition, the journal also aimed to emphasize that language ability alone was not sufficient for producing good translations and that it was important to understand the cultural context. Nakamura Yasuo (1997: 7), a translator and a regular contributor to *Hon'yaku no sekai*, writes:

Kikan hon'yaku suddenly disappeared from print and then, just like a replacement, *Hon'yaku no sekai* began to be published. What I noticed from the first volume was that this journal does not view translation simply as a skill but tries to consider it from a wider perspective. Of course, the basis of translation is a language and reading ability. But if you do not understand the cultural, historical and ethical inevitability of why this text had to be written, you cannot translate it properly, even if you possess very good language skills.

Both journals wrote not only about language but also incorporated the cultural anthropologist's perspective to try and broaden people's view of translation.

4.2 Cultural translations

Several cultural anthropologists contributed articles about the translation of cultures to both *Kikan hon'yaku* and *Hon'yaku no sekai*. Konno Tetsuo (n.d.), editor of *Hon'yaku no sekai* in the 1980s, recalled in an interview that 'cultural anthropology was very

influential in the 1970s. That is possibly the reason for the strong perspective on comparative culture' (Konnno). In volume two of *Hon'yaku no sekai*, Sobue Takao (1997: 10) contributed an essay on 'Proposals for Selecting Standard Translations', in which he writes about conflicts that emerged in interpreting between 'American Indians' and 'white settlers':²

For example, when the border fences between white settlers and Indians were broken, there were several expressions in the Navajo language to describe this, such as 'broken by animals' and 'intentionally broken by humans'. The expression differs depending on how it was broken. However, English has only one expression which is 'broken'. When interpreters translated into Navajo, they had to use their judgement as to the correct translation. If they judged wrongly, it could result in disaster.

Aoki Tamotsu points out similar issues in his essay 'The role of translation machines from the perspective of anthropology'. In Japanese, *midori* is generally accepted as the equivalent word for 'green' in English. However, the range of colour that is described as 'green' in English is different from that of *midori* in Japan:

People in the field of cultural anthropology understand that green is not the exact equivalent of *midori*. Depending on the culture, it does not look like green, it cannot be recognized as green. They emphasize or point out, using many examples, that there is a difference between the thing which is expressed by a word and reality. (Aoki 1977: 31)

² These terms are direct translations of the Japanese words 'Amerika Indian' and 'hakujin kaitakusha'. They reflect the attitudes of the time and are not in common use today.

I believe that the appearance of articles about translating cultures in *Hon'yaku no sekai* reflects not only the popularity of cultural anthropology at that time, but also demonstrates a clear intention by the journal to broaden translation research beyond the literary translation that had occupied the mainstream until the 1960s.

In volume three of *Hon'yaku no sekai*, one of the editors, Sugiura Yōichi (1978: 134), writes that ‘we want to cover not only literature but also natural sciences and social sciences; by covering issues across a broad spectrum of categories of translation, we want to prepare the ground for translation theory’. This is similar to the statement of purpose in *Kikan hon'yaku* and expresses his eagerness for the development of translation theory. Thus, we can see that, despite certain differences in emphasis, there was no drastic change in purpose between the two journals and both sought to broaden their focus beyond the traditional field of literary translation.

4.3 *Hon'yaku ron* [translation theory]

The term *riron* as a translation of the English word ‘theory’ appears to have been first coined during the Meiji period (1868–1912). Notably, the word *rironteki* [theoretically] was used for the first time in Natsume Sōseki’s famous novel *Kokoro*, which was published in 1914 (Kabashima 1984).

Several contributors to *Kikan hon'yaku* mention that the editorial board asked them to include more *hon'yaku ron*, which can be translated as ‘translation theory’ or ‘translation discourse’. Interestingly, the contributors interpreted this term in various

ways. Some understood it in the sense of ‘theory’ and wrote accordingly, while others just expressed their personal opinions and preferences. Such flexibility in the use of terminology is typical of Japan, and the interpretation of *hon’yaku ron* in *Kikan hon’yaku* is no exception. This point is important to note when we think about the concept of theory. When we communicate in language, it may appear that we are using the same words for the same concepts. Yet, it is most likely that the concepts that different people draw on are actually different. This is why the development of area-based TS is important. It contributes to making TS richer and more open to perspectives from all over the world. A good example of this can be found in the first volume of *Kikan hon’yaku*, which contains the transcript of a discussion on ‘the limitations and possibilities of translation’. All five participants in this discussion were (male) translators. Topics they addressed included ‘loyalty in translation’, ‘translation and cultural difference’, ‘authors and translators who like translation’, ‘transparent translation and translation in colours’, and ‘the discourse on the limitations of translation’. In a section on ‘barriers between languages and cultures’, Yamashita Yuichi remarks:

Now you mentioned the barrier of language, but I think it is more like the barrier of culture. I believe translators should not go beyond this cultural barrier. Going back to the example that we discussed, of course Americans do not know about *hamachi* [yellowtail] or *wasabi*. But I don’t think that we should skip over them in order to conform to American culture. This is my personal *hon’yaku ron*. (*Kikan hon’yaku* 1973: 43)

So here Yamashita is talking about his personal approach and ethics as a translator and refers to this as *hon’yaku ron*. But obviously he is not talking about translation theory.

In my previous work I have described how the term *hon'yaku ron* was often used strategically in *Kikan hon'yaku* (Sato-Rossberg 2014). However, as explained in the previous section, the concept of *hon'yaku ron* was not well defined and contributors to the journal interpreted the word in different ways. Article titles related to *hon'yaku ron* include 'Practical *Hon'yaku Ron*' (vol. 1), '*Hon'yaku Ron* Notes' (vol. 2), 'Current *Hon'yaku Ron* and Its Problems' (vol. 3), and 'Introduction to *Hon'yaku Ron*' (vols 5–7). Throughout the period of its publication, articles on *hon'yaku ron* appeared in almost every volume. The same is true for *Hon'yaku no sekai* during the 1970s, which included a series on '*Hon'yaku* Principles' from February 1978 until March 1979.

As a further example of how *hon'yaku ron* was understood in Japan, let me have a closer look at a series in volume one titled *Bible Translation*, written by Hotta Yasuo (1977). The first article in this feature is 'New Directions in Japanese Bible Translation — Collaborative Translations'. In this article, Hotta suggests a so-called 'translation cooking *ron*', which includes aspects of Skopos theory. He writes that his 'cooking *ron* consists of roughly three levels. After washing the ingredients, you cut them into bite-sized pieces or smaller, apply heat to convert them from their raw state to make them edible and then add some flavours to bring the original taste to life' (*ibid.*: 16). In a similar way in translation, it is necessary to understand the background of the original text, analyse it to grasp the semantics correctly and then 'transfer to Japanese, a different language. In addition, it is important to "re-structure" to adjust to the Japanese writing system'. Hotta (*ibid.*) writes that 'even if you use the same materials, the cooking depends a lot on your preparation and how you add flavour; translation is the same, so there can be a number of different Bible translations'. In other words, depending on the aim and purpose of the translation and the target audience, translations can vary: 'In the past,

translators emphasized attention to the original, but today they tend to focus more on ‘Japaneseness’ in writing and vocabulary in their translations’ (*ibid.*).

Hotta (*ibid.*: 18) notes that there is greater interest in translations that sound more Japanese and that consider the perspective of the target audience rather than making strict faithfulness to the original text their central concern, arguing that:

It must be noted that collaborative translation is based on a translation theory with academic credentials. This theory is about dynamic equivalence, which is promoted by the American structural linguist Eugene Nida and has received attention amongst both practical translators and translation scholars.

In the context of Bible translation, emphasis on readability in the target text serves to encourage more people to read the Bible. However, it is important to note that Hotta claims that even practical translators and scholars (i.e. those not involved in Bible translation nor associated with the church) have shown interest in Nida’s theory of dynamic equivalence. This again illustrates the extent of Nida’s influence in Japan in the 1970s.

The question that remains is why this widespread interest in *hon’yaku ron* did not result in the development of a flourishing and thriving field of TS in Japan.

5. Relationship between Translation Schools and Translation Journals

Advertisements in library archives of newspapers published in the 1970s reveal that several specialized translation schools were established at that time, including schools for interpreters and for scientific and technical translation. In order to understand the history of TS in Japan, it is vital to consider the role of professional translation schools. In this section, I will briefly explain and discuss the links between schools and journals. The chapter by Thomas Kabara in this volume, discussing professional schools for subtitling, is also relevant in this regard.

Kikan hon'yaku was published with the aim of creating a research journal that bridges practice and theory.

One of these schools, the Japan Professional Translation School, was featured in *Kikan hon'yaku* volume 4 (1974). As I mentioned in section 2.2, as part of a series in *Kikan hon'yaku* the interviewer Ikegami (1973) visited universities and schools where translation was taught. In the first three volumes of the journal, her visits were restricted to universities, but in volume 4 she visited the Japan Professional Translation School. According to Ikegami, this was the first translation school in Japan. She explains: 'This is the only translation school in our country. It was opened in April last year. Previously, the world of translation was closed to newcomers; this school was established with the aim of opening it up' (1974: 138).

She lists the names of the teachers, which include Ōkubo Yasutaka, mentioned above, and several others who also turn out to be regular contributors to *Kikan hon'yaku*. There were two courses taught at the school: one on literary translation (mainly the translation of novels) and one on general English literature (non-fiction and critical writing). Both

courses lasted six months (*ibid.*). Interestingly, Ikegami (*ibid.*: 140) notes after observing a class: ‘Taketomi Norio also teaches practical translation’.

Careful examination reveals even closer links between *Kikan hon'yaku* and the Japan Professional Translation School. *Kikan hon'yaku* often included advertisements, and one of these was for the Japan Professional Translation School and displayed the slogan: ‘The only professional translator-training organization in Japan’. The address given for the school is exactly the same as that of the publisher of *Kikan hon'yaku*, and Kobayashi Mitsutoshi is listed as both the president of the school and the publisher of the journal.

It is also interesting to note that the school does not appear in the guidebook *Vocational Schools in Japan*, which was first published by the National Association of Vocational Schools in Japan in 1977. The most likely reason is that the school had closed down before the guide was published. As *Kikan hon'yaku* also ceased publication in 1975, it is reasonable to conclude that the demise of the journal was linked to the closure of the school.

As mentioned previously in section 4.1, Yuasa Miyoko played an important role in developing the journal *Hon'yaku no sekai*. Babel started offering distance learning courses to train translators in 1974. An advertisement by Babel on their website (Sato-Rossberg: 2015) stated: ‘It goes without saying that translation skills require a well-trained linguistic ability [...] The course aims to teach English thoroughly, not just cheap skills’ (*ibid.*). Because of a shortage of professional translators, there were many amateur translators in the marketplace at this time, and Yuasa writes that ‘the establishment of translation as a vocation is a very real and urgent matter’. *Hon'yaku no sekai* played an important role as a public-relations magazine for this course. An editor of the journal,

Konno Tetsuo (n.d.: online) notes that, while ‘there was an aspect of a public-relations magazine for distance learning, it was not only that’ and continues, ‘if we look at the contributors [to the journal], there are not only practical translators but also authors, poets and scholars writing articles. These formed the core and, on top of this, there was discussion of translation skills and distance education’. The journal has sold 10,000 copies according to Konno.

In this section I have examined the relationship between two translation journals and translation schools and distance learning courses in the 1970s. The journals played a part in establishing and supporting these schools, but had academic ambitions of their own. This synergy could be seen as a Japanese characteristic, unless it turns out to be a pattern also found in other parts of the world. The green shoots of the development of TS as a new academic field can clearly be seen in the two journals; in order to understand the subsequent stunted growth of TS in the academic world in Japan, it is vital to explore further the links between the translation industry and professional translation schools. It would also be useful to carry out a comparative study, covering other non-Western countries that have a strong emphasis on practical translation over theory.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have seen that there are clear indications of interest in establishing translation studies in Japan in the 1970s. This movement was not isolated but linked directly to developments in the West. Nida’s theory of dynamic equivalence was well received, and a new collaborative translation of the Bible into Japanese was attracting the

attention of non-Christian translators and scholars. We looked closely at the two translation journals *Kikan hon'yaku* and *Hon'yaku no sekai* and found that both were keen on disseminating and discussing translation theories. Despite the emphasis placed by *Hon'yaku no sekai* on practical translation, I found no signs of a chasm between theory and practice. It was interesting to discover that both journals were closely affiliated with professional translation schools. These schools focused on teaching practical translation skills, whereas the journals tended to be more academic. It is possible that this situation was unique to Japan, although a comparison with other East Asian countries might reveal similar stories. It is clear that the shoots of translation studies emerged in Japan in the 1970s in tandem with developments in the West. Why did they subsequently fail to flourish? Why did the initial enthusiasm not lead to sustained growth? Providing answers to these questions will be a subject for future work.

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