

29 Internationalization of the Japanese Language in Interwar Period Japan (1920–1940) by Foreign Missionaries and Writers¹

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Introduction

The years following the end of the First World War saw an explosion in the number of foreign residents living in Japan. The numbers speak for themselves: in 1920, the foreign resident population sat at 78,061. This rose to 477,980 in 1930, and had reached 1,304,286 by 1940.² In other words, in the span of just two decades, the number of foreign residents in Japan increased sixteen-fold. During World War II, the foreign population decreased, and by 1950, five years after the end of the war, the population had dipped to 528,048, close to the level of 1930. The so-called “foreigners” included Chinese, Thais, English, French, and Germans, among others, as well as the “colonized people” of Korea, Taiwan, Sakhalin and Micronesia.³

It is easy to imagine that to these foreign residents, the Japanese language was a common language that provided a bridge between them and the Japanese people or other foreigners. The large number of people who use the Japanese as their second or third language have in fact “internationalized” the Japanese language because the language is no longer used only by its native speakers, but also by people who come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In the Japanese colonized territories like Taiwan and Korea, the colonized people were forced to use the Japanese language. Therefore the so-called “internationalization” is also colored by Japanese imperialism. Here, I shall only take into account the foreign people who willingly learned the Japanese language and managed to use it to create literary art.

The reason that I chose the “interwar period” as the time frame for my discussion of the foreign users of the Japanese language is because first and foremost it was a relatively peaceful time in Japan itself, and the number of foreign residents had peaked before the Pacific War commenced. Second, the volume of published works written in Japanese by foreign hands

1 Part of this paper was delivered at the “Modern Japanese History Workshop 2014,” at the University of Pennsylvania, 18 October, 2014.

2 「戦前の民籍または国籍別の在留外地人数と外国人人数」総務省統計局監修『国勢調査集大成 果人口統計総覧』東洋経済新報社、1985, p. 47.

3 Also see 磯田則彦「日本における外国人人口の分布とその変化」『福岡大学人文学論叢』Vol. 37, No. 3, 2005, pp. 845–860.

was at its largest before the end of World War II. It is one of the peaks of the waves of internationalized Japanese language.

In 1940, the percentage of foreign residents (1,304,286) in relation to the Japanese population (71,933,000) was 1.81%; in 2015 the percentage of registered foreign residents (2,232,189) in the overall population (127,110,047) was 1.82%,⁴ which shows surprisingly little increase over the last seven decades.

Among the large foreign population in interwar Japan, some communicated through not only spoken Japanese, but also the written language, and it is this subgroup that I will focus on here, while first looking at how the early missionaries set the stage.

Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), one of the early European missionaries to arrive in Japan in the 16th century, observed that the Japanese language had a richer vocabulary and could express thoughts better than the Latin language. But he also believed that Japanese was hard to master because of the immense gap between speaking and writing. He wrote that no matter how hard “we foreigners” try, we would always be at a child’s level.⁵ However, contrary to Valignano’s assessment of the difficulty of mastering the Japanese language, a number of extant documents show that the missionaries’ understanding of Japanese rivaled that of native speakers in some cases.⁶

In the 1860s, following the establishment of Western treaty ports, foreign missionaries and educators came to live and teach in Japan, and many of them mastered the Japanese language. In order to better get their message across to the Japanese people, the missionaries printed their evangelical works in Japanese.

However, it was from the 1920s onwards that books written by foreigners gained prominence and came to be read by the Japanese masses. This paper will discuss several works written by foreign residents to see what kind of message they wanted to convey and how they were received by the Japanese society. My goal is to reveal the nature of the Japanese language in communication between Japan and the rest of the world in interwar Japan.

4 According to 法務省「平成27年末現在における在留外国人人数について（確定値）」and 総務省統計局「人口推計」.

5 Alessandro Valignano, *Sumario de las cosas del Japón* (1583) *Adiciones del Sumario de Japón* (1592) Editados por José Luis Alvarez-Taladriz, Tokyo: Sophia University, 1954; 松田毅一他訳『日本巡察記』平凡社、1973, pp. 26, 85. Also see 村田昌巳「アレッサンドロ・ヴァリニャーノとヴィンチェンツォ・チマッティ (III) ヴァリニャーノと日本語」『サレジオ工業高等学校研究紀要』No. 40, 2013, pp. 17–24. エンゲルベルト・ヨリッセン「16・17世紀におけるヨーロッパ人と日本語」『ピブリア』No. 102, 1994, pp. 157–180.

6 杉本つとむ『杉本つとむ著作選集——西洋人の日本語研究』八坂書房、1998, pp. 61–62.

1. Missionary Texts

Christians had long been persecuted in Japan and the ban on Christianity lasted even after the Meiji Restoration. Baptist missionary Jonathan Goble (1827–1896) arrived in Japan in 1860, where he stayed at Jōbutsuji Temple in Yokohama and studied the Japanese language. In 1867, he moved to the Tosa domain and started to translate the Bible into Japanese while teaching English. In 1871, he published the Gospel of Matthew, but it was confiscated by the government.⁷

After the Meiji government lifted its ban on Christianity in 1873, missionary work and the publication of Christian texts was once again allowed. Catholic missionary Marc-Maria de Rotz (1840–1914), who arrived in Nagasaki in 1868, was active in printing books in *kana*, a simplified form that came to be called “De Rotz print.” De Rotz believed that it was better to abandon using *kanji* in order to make the ideas of Christianity available to everyone, from farmers to fishermen, and to help Japan’s cultural enlightenment and development. He mostly used *kana* in his own writings.⁸

Of all the missionary texts written in Japanese, those by four members of the Roman Catholic missionary organization Societe des Missions Étrangères de Paris (Society of Foreign Missions of Paris) seem to be most prominent. The high Japanese language proficiency of Aimé Villion (1843–1932), François-Alfred-Désiré Ligneul (1847–1922), Lucien Drouart de Lezey (1849–1930), and Emile Raguét (1854–1929) was attested to by many people who attended their Masses or language classes. However, most of their books were “narrated” by themselves and “written,” “recorded,” “translated,” or “edited” by their Japanese assistants. “Penning” by themselves seems to have been a rather uncommon practice. Despite this fact, these books would not have been written without their initiation.⁹

Aimé Villion’s influential book *Yamato hijiri chishio no kakioki* (Notes on the bloodied Japanese saints, 1887), mainly based on *Histoire de la religion chrétienne au Japon* (1870) by Léon Pagès (1814–1886), dealt with the martyrdom of Japanese Christians from the 16th

7 小林功芳「横浜のパプテスト宣教師」『英学史研究』Vol. 1988 (1987), No. 20, pp. 159–170.

8 「カトリック出版物」上智学院編『New Catholic Encyclopedia 新カトリック大事典』研究社, 1996, p. 1137.

9 山梨淳「パリ外国宣教会の出版物と近代日本の文学者」『キリスト教文壇研究所トマス・アキナス研究所紀要』Vol. 25, No. 1, 2010, p. 82.

century to the 18th century. Seven editions of Villion's book were published up until 1931.¹⁰ It was praised by intellectuals, including Yamaji Aizan (1864–1917), Tokutomi Sohō (1863–1957), Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927), Ōkawa Shūmei (1886–1957), Kinoshita Mokutarō (1885–1945), and Yoshino Sakuzō (1878–1933), among others. Uchida Roan (1868–1929)'s introduction to the book was responsible for making it widely known to the general public.¹¹

According to Matsuzaki Minoru's *Kirishitan chishio no kakioki* (Notes on the bloodied Christians, 1925), Villion's book was edited by Kako Giichi, who recorded Villion's homilies given in Kyoto from 1884 onwards.¹² Matsuzaki wrote that the first edition of Villion's book was written in "awkward oral Japanese" employing "childish vocabulary and rhetoric."¹³ But by the book's sixth revision in 1926 it had been "completely changed."¹⁴ The written style was praised by linguist Shinmura Izuru (1876–1967) as "common and plain" (通俗平明), and easy to understand.¹⁵ It seems that the first edition adhered closely to Villion's narrative style, but later editions were more refined by Kako's "writing" and "editing."¹⁶ Later, Villion and Kako collaborated on more books, including *Baramonkyō ron: Bukkyō kigen* (On Brahmanism: the origins of Buddhism, 1889),¹⁷ *Yamaguchi kōkyōshi* (A history of the Catholic church in Yamaguchi, 1897),¹⁸ and *Nagato kōkyōshi* (A history of the Catholic church in Nagato, 1918).¹⁹

There have been a number of books and articles on Villion's life in Japan, and many have mentioned his fluency in spoken Japanese.²⁰ However, little is mentioned about how he "authored" his books. The preface of *Baramonkyō ron: Bukkyō kigen* mentions the efforts he

10 ヴィリヨン閔、加古義一編『日本聖人鮮血遺書』京都：村上勘兵衛、1887；京都：加古義一、1888；訂正増補第6版、聖若瑟教育院、1911；日本カトリック刊行会、1926（There is a photo image of the Introduction hand-written by Villion in French, along with its Japanese translation, the book title and the writer's name）；7th version, 西宮：日本殉教者宣伝会、1931.

11 山梨淳「パリ外国宣教会の出版物と近代日本の文学者」pp. 92–98.

12 松崎実「自序」『考注切支丹鮮血遺書』改造社、1926, p. 10.

13 Ibid. pp. 6, 11「外人が不自由な日本語で」、「用語や修辭の稚拙」

14 Ibid. pp. 7, 12「六版に至つて殆んど面目が一新されたと云へる程増補改訂されてゐる」、「用語や修辭が異なり」

15 新村出「改版序文」松崎実『考注切支丹鮮血遺書』改造社、1926, p. 3.

16 山梨淳「パリ外国宣教会の出版物と近代日本の文学者」p. 93.

17 ヴィリヨン閔、加古義一編『婆羅門教論：仏教起原』京都：清水久次郎、1889.

18 ヴィリヨン閔、加古義一著『山口公教史』京都：加古義一、1897.

19 ヴィリヨン閔、加古義一編『長門公教史』京都：加古義一、1918.

20 See, for instance, 狩谷平司『ヴィリヨン神父の生涯』大阪：稲畑香料店、1938；萩原新生「ピリヨン神父のこと」萩原『青春の夢』高松書房、1943；鮎川義介「ヴィリヨン神父の思い出」友田寿一郎『鮎川義介縦横談』創元社、1953；山崎忠雄『偉大なるヴィリヨン神父——ヴィリヨン神父にまねびて』東京：山崎忠雄、1965.

made in studying Buddhism for three intensive years at various temples in Kyoto from 1880.²¹ There he gained an advanced knowledge of Japanese, and his literacy in *kanbun* (Chinese writing) was essential to his understanding of Buddhism and in his communication with other monks.

Villion's Japanese writing skills can be seen in *Kirishitan daimyōshi* (1929), his Japanese translation of *The Christian Daimyos* (1903), written in English first by Michael Steichen (1857–1929).²² The revised version in French (1904) was translated by Yoshida Kogorō and was published in 1930.²³ The preface of Villion's translation starts with the sentence, "This is an unskillful translation of the late Fr. Steichen's book."²⁴ The expression 拙き筆を以て翻訳 (lit. "translated by an unskillful pen") indicates that the translation was probably written by Villion himself.

Let us compare Villion's translation of the first sentences of the original English version to Yoshida's translation of the same section from the French version:

Villion: 西曆一五四九年（天文十八年）八月十五日、フランシスコ、ザヴェリヨはキリスト教を日本に布教する目的を以て九州鹿児島に渡来したのであるが、此日こそは日本に於ける宗教史並に政治史中に永く記念せらるべき日である。即ち当時欧米諸外国から全然孤立してゐた特殊の事情の下にある日本国民が、フランシスコ、ザヴェリヨの渡来した事によつて此等キリスト教諸外国と国際上の友交關係を開始するの機会が与へられたのである。²⁵

Yoshida: フランシスコ・ザベリヨが鹿児島に到着した日、一五四九年八月十五日（天文十八年七月十二日）は、日本の政治史・宗教史の上に、永く記憶されるであらう。実に、この日こそ、当時まで深い淵を以て隔てられてゐた、この不思議な国民を、基督教徒の大家族に引入れようとする計画の樹てられた最初の日なのである。²⁶

21 ヴィリヨン「婆羅門教序」ヴィリヨン閱，加古義一編『婆羅門教論——仏教起原』京都：清水久次郎，1889，pp. 1–19。「附録ビリオン師の回顧感想談」長富雅二編『ザベリヨと山口』山口フランシスコ会，1923，pp. 115–126。

22 スタイシェン著，ビリヨン訳『切支丹大名史』三才社，1929。

23 シュタイシェン著，吉田小五郎訳『切支丹大名史』大岡山書店，1930。

24 「序言」スタイシェン著，ビリヨン訳『切支丹大名史』：「茲に拙き筆を以て翻訳出版したるは悼むべき故スタイシェン師の遺書である。」

25 Ibid, pp. 1–2.

26 シュタイシェン著，吉田小五郎訳『切支丹大名史』，p. 1.

It is immediately obvious that Villion uses the old formal *bungo* style, while Yoshida adopts a more colloquial tone. The latter is easier to read,²⁷ but the former contains more information about the purpose of Xavier's arrival in Kagoshima, Japan's isolation in relation to the rest of the world, and the opportunity for Japan to establish diplomatic relations with other Christian countries. Villion's translation is more faithful to the original text, and it shows that his writing skills were at a high enough level for him to work on his own. Villion was probably too busy with other tasks to pen all of his books by himself. Nevertheless he always proof-read (閲) all the books "recorded," "written," "translated," or "edited" by Kako. From these efforts, we can sense his strong determination to communicate with the Japanese masses through "written" evangelical works.

This same determination can be seen in the approximately 70 books by François-Alfred-Désiré Ligneul published between 1886 and 1923, the more than 20 books by Lucien Drouart de Lezey published between 1897 and 1930, and Emile Raguet's translation of the Bible and other books published between 1890 and 1931. Most of their books are either "narrated" (述) by themselves and "written" (記) by their Japanese assistants, or "authored" (著) by themselves and "translated" (訳) by others.

Japanese people had shown interest in biographies of Christian saints since the early 1900s.²⁸ Another envoy to Japan from the Societe des Missions Étrangères de Paris, M. Julien Sylvain Bousquet (1877–1943), translated Thérèse de Lisieux's (1873–1897) autobiography *L'histoire d'une ame* (The story of a soul) and published it in 1911 under the title *Chiisaki hana* (The little flower). In the explanatory notes (*banrei*) of the translation, Bousquet wrote, "I am deeply ashamed of the inconsistency, repetition, inexperienced writing, lack of polish, and rough proofreading that has rendered many parts of this book hard to understand."²⁹ This statement, with a tad too much humility, proves that this translation was "written down" by Bousquet himself. The translation went through 15 editions by 1930.³⁰ In the 12th edition, the apologetic introduction had disappeared, and many parts of the book had been

27 The smooth flow of the sentences (文章の流麗なる点) was praised in a book review. See 今宮新「切支丹大名記、シュタイシエン著、吉田小五郎訳、大岡山書店発行」『史学』Vol. 9, No. 4, 1930, p. 165.

28 山梨淳「バリ外国宣教会の出版物と近代日本の文学者」『キリスト教文壇研究所トマス・アキナス研究所紀要』Vol. 25, No. 1, 2010, p. 98.

29 シルベン、ブスケ訳『小さき花——乙女テレジア之自叙伝』聖若瑟教育院，三才社，1911，p. 7。「凡例」：「前後不揃や重複になつた箇所もあり且つ文筆に慣れざる者の筆記と、推敲の余日なさと、校正の粗漏とにより渋晦の跡多きは、訳者の深く慚る所である」。

30 シルベン・ブスケ訳『幼な子に倣ひて——聖女小さきテレジアの践まれし愛の道』光明社，1930，「広告」。

revised and polished.³¹ St. Thérèse's contemplation of her spiritual growth attracted many in Japan, and influenced writers such as Miyazawa Kenji (1896–1933),³² Miki Rofū (1889–1964),³³ and Inoue Yōji (1927–2014),³⁴ among others. During WWII, Bousquet was tortured to death by Japanese military police in 1943.

“Writing” is an act of communication with a much stronger desire than to merely make an oral statement or have a conversation. Publications that circulate can reach a wide readership, and the interwar period provided a favorable climate for the mass production of cultural commodities in Japan. As only a very limited number of people were able to read European languages, missionaries found it necessary to convey Christian messages directly to the Japanese masses by writing in Japanese.

Learning the Japanese language as an adult is not easy. The desire to communicate with the masses led foreigners to write in Japanese, regardless of their religious affiliation. They made errors in writing, a characteristic inherent in second language acquisition, but even so-called native speakers do this too. Therefore, we can say that foreigners writing in Japanese were engaged in a meaningful task, given that the majority of Japanese people did not even write for the public.

2. Two Russian Writers

Vasili Eroshenko (1890–1952) was born in southern Russia and went blind due to a case of measles when he was four. He graduated from a school for the blind at the age of eighteen, and in 1910, he studied Esperanto. He traveled to Japan in 1914 and entered Tokyo Mōgakkō (Tokyo School for the Blind) in May 1915, and by all assumptions, he quickly mastered the Japanese language through listening and speaking. In November 1915, he wrote an essay titled *Ame ga furu* (It is raining), in which he described Miyazaki Tōten's (1870–1922) teaching on religion.³⁵ As he usually wrote using a Braille writer, his essays were published with the help of editors who transcribed them into *kana* and *kanji*. The following year, he gave a speech in Japanese on Russian education for the blind, the transcript of which was published

31 シルベン, ブスケ訳『小さき花——聖女小さきテレジア之自叙伝』12版, 福音社書店, 三才社, 1925.

32 板谷栄城「賢治と『小さき花』」『宮沢賢治研究』No. 7, 1997, pp. 401–405.

33 大谷恒彦「ブスケ神父と三木露風」『姫路人間学研究』Vol. 2, No. 1, 1999, pp. 67–68; 近藤健史「三木露風と聖女テレジア賛歌」『研究紀要』(日本大学通信教育部) No. 20, 2007, pp. 21–38.

34 井上洋治「リジューのテレーズをめぐって」井上, 山根道公『風のなかの想い』日本基督教団出版局, 1989.

35 エロシェンコ「雨が降る」『早稲田文学』No. 123, 1916.

in the school magazine.³⁶ Soon after, he published a commentary on several contemporary Russian works of dramatic literature in another magazine.³⁷ He was also active in promoting Esperanto in Japan, and he befriended intellectuals, such as writer Akita Ujaku (1883–1962), activist Kamichika Ichiko (1888–1981), Russian literature scholar Katagami Noburu (1884–1928), the owner of the Western restaurant Nakamura, Sōma Aizō (1870–1954) and his wife Kokkō (1876–1955), and anarchist activist Ōsugi Sakae (1885–1923), to name but a few.

Eroshenko often gave speeches in public. Eguchi Kan (1887–1875) described his speech in April 1921, titled “The Cup of Disaster” (*Wazawai no sakazuki*), as “musical” and “poetic,” and said that it “captivated the audience from start to finish.”³⁸ In this speech, Eroshenko criticized Japan’s colonial policies, which had given rise to anti-Japan movements in China, Siberia, and Korea. The draft of this speech was not published in Japan, but was instead taken to China, translated into Chinese and was published there in May.³⁹ Soon after, in early June, he was deported from Japan under suspicion of associating Japan with socialist countries through his promotion of Esperanto.⁴⁰

Instead of writing in his first language Russian and waiting for someone to translate it into Japanese, or never to be translated at all, Eroshenko wrote in Japanese in order to communicate his message to Japanese readers directly. Soon after his expulsion from Japan, his two anthologies *Yoake mae no uta* (Songs of dawn, 1921) and *Saigo no tameiki* (The last sigh, 1921), both written in Japanese, were published. His third anthology, *Jinrui no tameni* (For human beings), was written in Esperanto and was translated into Japanese and published in 1924.

Esperanto was created in 1887; it is said to be easy to learn because there are no grammatical exceptions, and there is a rich vocabulary useful for writing fiction and poetry.⁴¹

36 エロシェンコ「私立露国モスコウ盲学校状況」『内外盲人教育』Vol. 5, Spring Issue, 1916, p. 23.

37 エロシェンコ「露西亞文学に現はれたる女性」『層雲』Vol. 6, No. 7, 1916.

38 江口渙「エロシェンコ・ワシリー君を憶ふ——序に代へて」エロシェンコ著, 秋田雨雀編『最後の溜息』叢文閣, December 1921, p. 8:「その時の彼の演説は実際一つの音楽であつた。詩であつた。歐洲人らしいアクセントをもつた日本語と、歐洲人らしい言ひ廻しとは更に彼の心の底から溢れ出る熱情と美しく響く声の調子とに助けられて、聴衆を飽くまで引きつけずに置かなかつた。」. This article was originally published in 『読売新聞』, 17–21 June, 1921.

39 It was published in a Chinese newspaper 『民国日報』副刊「覚悟」26 May, see 藤井省三『エロシェンコの都市物語——1920年代東京・上海・北京』みすず書房, 1989, p. 32.

40 藤井省三『エロシェンコの都市物語』, p. 49.

41 安藤裕介「国際語としてのエスペラントの可能性(1)」『久留米大学外国語教育研究所紀要』No. 2, 1995, pp. 81–93.

However, the number of members of the Japan Esperanto Institute, established in 1917, was about 2,000 in 1922.⁴² Obviously, Eroshenko's writing would have had limited influence if he wrote only in Esperanto and waited for it to be translated into Japanese. Writing in Japanese enabled Eroshenko to transmit his message quickly to a broad audience. His voice in Japanese was directly accessible. His play *Momoiro no kumo* (Pink-colored clouds) provides a good example of his colloquial Japanese.⁴³

The essence of Eroshenko's work is the close connection of the imagined world and actual society through satire. For instance, the story *Semai ori* (Narrow cages) in *Yoake mae no uta* shows how the main character, an Indian tiger, discovers that all creatures (a sheep, a bird, a goldfish, and a young wife) live without freedom. They are either used to "the cage," or are afraid of being given freedom.

It is interesting that he wrote in the preface for his first anthology, *Yoake mae no uta*, "I did not intend to publish these stories in Japan. I planned to take them as a gift from this foreign country to the new Russia."⁴⁴ He continued on to say that he only wrote stories, gave public speeches, and acted in plays on social issues to achieve his mission, which was to make his life an "art" (*geijutsu*).⁴⁵ His cosmopolitan lifestyle of wandering around the world did not bother him much even though he was unsure of his next destination after leaving Japan. Writing in Japanese seems to have been a temporary means of communication for him, and he certainly wanted his messages to go beyond Japan.

In fact, his writings in Japanese and Esperanto were translated into Chinese, mainly by Lu Xun (1881–1936) and his brother Zhou Zuoren (1885–1967). Because of the political situation, his satire could only be printed in Japan and China in the 1920s and 1930s, with a certain degree of freedom, but not in Russia. His final literary work, "A Red Flower," was narrated in Japanese and recorded by a 16-year-old student, Karl Yoneda, in Beijing at Lu Xun's home in March 1923. It was translated into Chinese by Lu Xun, but was not published in Japan until Fujii Shōzō translated it back into Japanese from the Chinese version in

42 川原次吉郎『エスペラント概論』エスペラント同人社、1923, pp. 53–55.

43 秋田雨雀「童話劇「桃色の雲」を読んで」エロシェンコ著、秋田雨雀編『最後の溜息』, p.11:「言葉のひどく可笑しいのは、書き直して、立派な日本語にしたと思はれるところも二三あつた。その他は全部君の唇から自然に溢れ出たもので、この美しい一篇の童話を読んでみると、君の容貌や、声音や口癖なぞまで、はつきり思ひ出されて、何とも云へない懐しさを感じる」。

44 エロシェンコ、秋田雨雀編『夜明け前の歌——エロシェンコの創作集』叢文閣、1921, p. 5「自序」:「私はこの話を日本で発表するつもりではなかつた。この話を、私は新しいロシアに外国の土産として持つて行かうと思つた。」。

45 Ibid.「自序」:「私にとつては、私の生命、私のいのちそのものが芸術にならねばならなかつた。その生命は私の第一の芸術。話を書くこと、演説に出ること、社会の芝居に出ること、それらは皆生命といふ大なる芸術の飾りに過ぎない。」。

1989.⁴⁶ After returning to Russia, Eroshenko did not write much, and died in 1952 without any public recognition. Meanwhile, several stories from the above mentioned anthologies were included in a series of children's literature published in Japan.⁴⁷

Serge Grigorievich Elisséeff (1889–1975) was born in Saint Petersburg, and was studying at the University of Berlin when he met Shinmura Izuru, the future Japanese linguist. With the help of Shinmura and his friends, Elisséeff entered the Imperial University of Tokyo in 1908, and studied Japanese language and literature from the ancient period until the Edo period. He quickly mastered the Japanese language, frequently went to *kabuki* and *rakugo* performances, and learned *nagauta* and Japanese dance. He was the only foreigner among the protégés of Natsume Sōseki's Mokuyōkai gathering. Sōseki valued Elisséeff's critical prowess and asked him to contribute essays on Russian literature to *Asahi Shinbun's* literature column (*bungeiran*), of which Sōseki was the editor.⁴⁸

Elisséeff's Japanese skills were often on show when he used puns (*dajare*), and this ability impressed the Japanese people who met him.⁴⁹ Elisséeff was asked to write the preface in May 1910, two years after his arrival in Japan, for an anthology of six Russian works translated by Nobori Shomu. This indicates that not only Elisséeff's knowledge of Russian literature and critical ability were recognized, but also that his Japanese writing skills were highly regarded. In the preface, he praised Nobori's Japanese translation as "close to the original texts with no common errors, and perfectly conveying the taste of the original texts."⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Elisséeff admitted that it was difficult to read Kōda Rohan's (1867–1947) story *Futsuka monogatari* (A story of two days) because of the numerous Buddhist terms.⁵¹

Elisséeff graduated from the Tokyo Imperial University in 1912, and in 1914 returned to Russia. The Russian Revolution, which he had previously supported, was a source of constant fear to him. He was arrested for ten days in May 1919, and was kept as a "hostage" awaiting execution. After his release from prison, he and his family escaped to Finland in

46 藤井省三『エロシェンコの都市物語』, pp. 204–212.

47 For instance, 『日本児童文学全集 第12巻 少年少女小説篇2』(河出書房, 1953) includes Eroshenko's 「二つの小さな死」, 「狭い籠」 and 『少年少女日本文学全集7 小泉八雲・秋田雨雀・山村暮鳥集』(講談社, 1977) includes Eroshenko's 「海の女王と漁師」, 「鶯の心」, 「せまい檻」 and 「一本のなしの木」.

48 倉田保雄「解説——エリセーエフ小伝」エリセーエフ『赤露の人質日記』中央公論社, 1976, revised 1986, pp. 151–182.

49 エリセエフ, 安倍能成, 中村吉右衛門 and 小宮豊隆「エリセエフを囲んで」『図書』No. 43, 1953, p. 17.

50 エリセーエフ「序」昇曙夢訳『六人集』易風社, 1910; 再版は『六人集と毒の園』昇先生還暦記念刊行会, 1939, pp. 19–28.

51 川口久雄「芍薬の花——『エリセーエフ聞書』序書」『季刊芸術』Vol. 11, No. 2, 1977, p. 100.

1920, and then went to Paris, where he met Machida Shirō, an *Asahi Shinbun* correspondent, who asked him to write about his experience in Russia.⁵²

Several months later, Machida received Elisséeff's draft and was surprised by the "excellent writing and powers of observation."⁵³ The draft was titled *Sekiro no hitojichi nikki* (Diary of a hostage in red Russia) and was serialized in *Asahi Shinbun* from July until October of 1921; it was soon reprinted in book form in October 1921, and was widely hailed. There exists a photocopy of the first page of his draft that shows his skill in written Japanese.⁵⁴ This photocopy also proves that his written Japanese required minimal editing.

In *Sekiro no hitojichi nikki*, except for a few parts that may seem unclear because of the influence of other languages on the writer, the writing itself, with no excessive emotion and sentiment, draws the reader in with its clear descriptions of the changes in Russian society. The diary begins in November 1917 and goes through until September 1920. According to the book, the Bolshevik government executed 1000 "hostages" whenever one government member was assassinated. The "hostages," mostly intellectuals, capitalists, and officials from the previous government, were rounded up and arrested. Elisséeff's brother-in-law was murdered in retaliation for the assassination of a member of the government. Elisséeff was arrested as a "hostage," but was released because Saint Petersburg State University and the Academy of Sciences he was working for rescued him.⁵⁵ When Elisséeff successfully escaped to Finland with his wife and two young children, the reader of his tale no doubt breathed a deep sigh of relief. The narrative is spellbinding.

This book was praised by *Asahi Shinbun* (November 12, 1921, evening issue) as "better than what Japanese people could write" and was recommended to be read alongside *Sekishoku Rokoku no ichinen* (One year in red Russia), written by an Asahi correspondent Nakahira Aki-ira and also published in 1921. The details of starvation and political terror in Elisséeff's book offer first-hand information and experience from an intellectual's perspective. It is a book that could only be published outside of Russia.

In 1934, Elisséeff became the first head of the Department of Far Eastern Languages at Harvard University, where Tsurumi Shunsuke (1922–2015) met him and ranked his language proficiency in Russian as best, followed by French, German, Japanese and English.⁵⁶

There is a draft written in Russian, with the same content and actual names of the peo-

52 倉田保雄「解説——エリセーエフ小伝」エリセーエフ『赤露の人質日記』pp. 151–182.

53 Ibid.

54 エリセーエフ『赤露の人質日記』朝日新聞社, 1921.

55 エリセーエフ『赤露の人質日記』中央公論社, 1976, revised 1986.

56 鶴見俊輔「エリセエフ先生の思い出——東と西の出会い」『図書』No. 612, 2000, pp. 2–6.

ple mentioned in the Japanese version.⁵⁷ He sent this draft to his friend Nikolai Nevsky (1892–1937), who was teaching in Japan, probably to warn him of the danger of returning to Russia. Eventually Nevsky returned with his wife to Russia to teach at the same university and the couple was executed in 1937 for being “spies for Japan.”⁵⁸ That same year Elisséeff returned to Japan, but was under constant surveillance by the military police. He did not return to Japan until 1952.⁵⁹

Conclusion

From the above survey of foreigners who wrote in Japanese during the interwar period in Japan, we can glean several important points: (1) Their strong desire to communicate with the Japanese people led them to write or narrate in Japanese; (2) Books written in Japanese provided readers with direct, quick and effective access to the thoughts of the writers, which otherwise would have had to wait to be translated; (3) The difficulty of learning the Japanese language as an adult cannot be underestimated, but can be overcome; (4) The Japanese language was effectively used to convey religious messages, cosmopolitan sentiments, and accounts of anti-despotism; (5) Writing by foreigners in Japanese helped to make Japanese an “international language” during the interwar period, if we also consider the fact that the language was used in East Asia by colonized people from Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria and China in their anti-colonization activities.⁶⁰

Today there are about 2 million non-native speakers who are able to understand written texts in Japanese.⁶¹ During the last two decades, a phenomenon — that is, the fact that quite a number of non-native Japanese speakers have written novels, short stories, poems (including *haiku* and *tanka*), and essays in Japanese — has attracted the attention of readers and scholars. Many of these writers, such as Hideo Levy, Alex Kerr, David Zoppetti, Arthur Binard, Tian Yuan, Shirin Nezamafi, and Yang Yi, have been awarded literary prizes and have become the focus of academic research.⁶² There are even more foreigners writing scholarly books today. But as I have shown here, this phenomenon did not start a mere two de-

57 日野貴夫, 河合忠信「エリセーエフ「赤露の人質日記」露文草稿(1)」『ビブリア』No. 100, 1993, p. 345.

58 檜山真一「エリセーエフとネフスキイ」『立命館経済学』Vol. 46, No. 6, 1998, p. 17.

59 エリセエフ, 安倍能成, 中村吉右衛門 and 小宮豊隆「エリセエフを囲んで」『図書』No. 43, 1953, p. 18.

60 柳書琴「台湾作家呉坤煌の日本語文学——日本語創作の国際的ストラテジー」郭南燕編『バイリンガルな日本語文学——多言語多文化のあいだ』三元社, 2013, pp. 226–245.

61 郭南燕「序章 バイリンガルな文学とは？」郭編『バイリンガルな日本語文学』p. 12.

62 郭南燕「日本語文学のバイリンガル性」郭編『バイリンガルな日本語文学』pp. 421–436.

ades ago; rather, it has its roots in writing by foreigners centuries ago, in the late 16th century, the so-called Kirishitan Century.

Since the 1860s, the practice of foreigners writing in Japanese has continually evolved, with the interwar period seeming to be one of the most active periods of this phenomenon in modern times. In this respect, we can say that the Japanese language has, in fact, a history in which it has been loosened from the narrow confines of the notion of “nationhood.”