Speaking foreign languages in pre-modern Japan

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Opportunities for oral communication between members of different language communities in East Asia were very limited. Just how limited were they, and why did so few people take advantage of them? Who did take the trouble to learn vernaculars other than their own and why did they do so? What explains the low levels of expertise in foreign languages and the almost universal reliance on literary Chinese for communication as well as for the transfer of knowledge?

Well before any attempts were made to organise training in foreign languages, interpreters fulfilled the essential, but often unrecorded, role of mediators between speakers of two mutually unintelligible spoken languages. In China interpreters were needed when China expanded westwards in the Han dynasty and they were conscripted to manage encounters between Chinese and Uyghur speakers. Most of these interpreters were probably bilingual individuals, like An Lushan, the instigator of a major rebellion in 755, whose mother was of Turkic origin and whose father may have been a Sogdian. The interactions of China with neighbouring states where quite different languages were spoken continued to necessitate a corps of individuals who had this rare skill, and in later centuries interpreters were in action on diplomatic missions to the Jurchens and to the Silk Road town of Turfan during the Song dynasty.

In 1407 the Ming state created a College of foreign languages (Siyiguan, literally 'College of the barbarians of the four directions'), which was the earliest institution dedicated to providing instruction in foreign languages in China. The purpose of the College was to train translators to assist with the reception of diplomatic missions from abroad. A number of foreign languages were taught, including Burmese, Japanese, Jurchen, Korean, Malay, Mongolian, Persian, Siamese, Tibetan, Turkic, Vietnamese, and even Ryūkyūan; in the surviving wordlists produced by the College the pronunciation of the words in foreign languages is provided using Chinese characters phonographically, which was not, alas, a good guide to the phonologies of other languages. Under the Qing dynasty the name of this institution was changed to 'College of the translators of the four directions' (still Siyiguan but with the character 'barbarian' replaced by that for 'translate'), but the work of training interpreters continued as before.

On the whole, interpreters enjoyed low status in China, except under the so-called 'alien' dynasties of the Yuan (Mongols) and the Qing (Manchus), when Mongolian and Manchu enjoyed privileged status as the languages of the conquerors. Even then, however, their primary role was to facilitate diplomatic exchanges and sometimes trade, and there is little sign in

premodern China of individuals learning foreign languages for intellectual purposes. It is true that some information about the Japanese language, including words and phrases, the writing system and poetry, was included in ethnographical studies of Japan in the late Ming, but these lacked any account of syntax and were inadequate for study of the language. Needless to say, at schools in China pupils encountered no foreign languages, either written or spoken, while their counterparts in Japan, Korea, Vietnam and elsewhere had to wrestle with literary Chinese. Attitudes towards language learning and interpreting outside China varied according to time and to place. In the Ryūkyū kingdom a great deal of attention was paid to training in oral Chinese as spoken in Fukien particularly from the 17th century onwards, with the goal both of training interpreters and of ensuring that government students were linguistically equipped to pursue their studies in China. In both Korea and Japan, on the other hand, scholarship did not require a knowledge of spoken Chinese and in most cases the spoken languages of other language communities were learnt solely for practical purposes: Chinese, Japanese, Mongolian and Manchu were learnt in Korea, while in Japan it was Chinese, Korean or Dutch. Largely because a knowledge of any form of spoken Chinese had no obvious intellectual benefit for scholars who grappled with literary Chinese texts and were unlikely to travel overseas, most shunned the spoken language and few made any effort to learn to speak it. As Sakaki Atsuko put it, 'The flip side of the "universality" of literary Chinese is the sheer incapability of East Asian intellectuals to communicate orally in each other's languages'. [*1] This is not quite the whole story, however, and there were significant exceptions. In the pages that follow, I shall focus on Japan and the Ryūkyū kingdom (now Okinawa Prefecture).

The earliest mention of an 'interpreter' (*osa*) in ancient Japan appears in a part of the *Nihon shoki* (*Chronicles of Japan*) referring to the year 607: a man named Kuratsukuri no Fukuri was appointed interpreter on an official mission to China, and the following year he was again appointed as an interpreter, this time to accompany a returning Chinese envoy. [*2] In that same year, 608, a man named Nara no osa Emyō was named as one of a group of five students being despatched to China: the first part of his name means 'Interpreter from Nara' and this indicates that he was from a family that specialised in interpreting; he was probably being sent to China to acquire knowledge of contemporary spoken Chinese, but whether that supposition is correct or not, his names testifies to the existence of recognised interpreters in Japan even before 607. [*3]

There are no further records of interpreters until 730, when the University argued that, 'In the various foreign countries and the different regions the customs are not the same [as in Japan], so if there are no interpreters it will be difficult to communicate'. As a result, Awata no Umakai and four others were ordered to take two pupils each and teach them spoken Chinese. [*4] How the teachers acquired their knowledge of Chinese is unknown: unlike later interpreters, they all have Japanese names and were presumably native speakers of Japanese. But it appears that the need for interpreters was taken seriously: according to the *Engishiki*

(*Proceedings of the Engi era*), official missions sent to China in the 8th and 9th centuries included interpreters not only for Chinese but also for the langauge of the kingdom of Silla in Korea and the language of the Amami islands, presumably for use if the ships failed to reach the right destination and were blown ashore elsewhere. *5 The interpreters do not seem to have been available to those who were not members of official embassies, and the potential difficulties of travelling to China without either knowledge of the spoken language or an interpreter in tow seem to have become well known. For example, when Saichō (767-822), the founder of the Tendai school of Buddhism in Japan, was on his way to China in 803, he requested that he be accompanied by a monk named Gishin, on the grounds that he could not speak Chinese whereas Gishin had studied not only Chinese pronunciation but also spoken Chinese. *6 He was fortunate to have his request granted, for subsequent travellers often arrived without interpreters.

By the 9th century there was an official corps of interpreters based in Dazaifu, the settlement in northern Kyushu which served as the first reception point for arriving diplomatic missions, and they are mentioned in records up to the 13th century. In 864, for example, a request was made for a stand-in to be appointed after the official interpreter had failed to return from an overseas trip, but both of them had Chinese names and the stand-in was said to be a Chinese monk, who presumably had been resident in Japan for some time and thus had acquired a knowledge of Japanese. *7 It is clear from several examples, however, that these interpreters were still not available to accompany Japanese travelling to China. When the monk Jōjin (1011-1081) went to China in 1072, he had to make his own arrangements for hiring an interpreter on arrival; he chose a man named Chen Yong who had already been to Japan five times as a merchant and apparently knew Japanese well. *8 In 1168, the Zen monk Eisai (1141-1215), who was determined to set out on his first trip to China, went to Dazaifu in Kyushu and there met an interpreter who told him about the growth of Chan (Zen) Buddhism in Song China. *9 This man, too, had a Chinese name, and it seems clear, then, that for centuries it was Chinese who fulfilled the role of interpreters of Chinese in Japan in spite of the fact that some Japanese had lived for years or even decades in China.

In Japan there never was a state institution for training interpreters along the lines of the government institutions established in China and Korea. This may be because brush conversation sufficed at the level of diplomacy and scholarship, while for mundane manners there were sufficient numbers of Chinese who were competent to act as interpreters, but another factor was surely the relatively low priority given in Japan to maintaining formal diplomatic relations. Nevertheless, some importance was definitely attached to spoken languages and there were also times when training was officially provided. The earliest record is that of five Japanese who, as mentioned above, were assigned in 730 to teach spoken Chinese: at least some of them seem to have either visited China or to have been the children of immigrant Chinese. *10 These Chinese speakers were presumably available to

deal with incoming missions from China, for missions from China were never accompanied by Japanese-speaking interpreters: the studied lack of interpreters accompanying Chinese missions to neighbouring societies was normal, and it has been described as a form of 'language imperialism'. *[11]

There seems to have been much more of an effort in the 8th century to train Japanese to speak the language of the Korean kingdom of Silla: in 761 twenty youths each from the provinces of Mino and Musashi were ordered to learn Sillan as part of preparations for a planned attack on Silla which never took place; later, in the 9th century, there is evidence of interpreters speaking the language of Silla on the island of Tsushima, which lies between Korea and Japan. *[12] Finally, there is a single mention in Japanese historical sources of an attempt to learn the language of the kingdom of Parhae in Manchuria, which had close relations with Japan. In 810 an emissary from Parhae abandoned his mission and decided to seek asylum in Japan: he was allowed to settle in the province of Etchū with board and lodging provided and a number of students were assigned to him to learn the language of Parhae. *[13] Of these students and their progress nothing more is known.

On the role and training of interpreters in Japan from the 10th to the 16th centuries very little is known. However, from the 15th century, when a number of Japanese trading stations were established in various Korean ports and even in the Korean capital, there must have been some Japanese who acquired a facility with Korean. According to some Korean captives who returned to Korea in 1600 following the end of the Japanese invasion of Korea, even before the invasion the authorities on Tsushima had been selecting bright young boys and teaching them spoken and written Korean and as a result some men on Tsushima could speak Korean. *[14] It is not surprising, then, that there was a body of Japanese merchants with some grasp of the language and some knowledge of Korea who could be enlisted to help Hideyoshi's armies. When Hideyoshi launched his ultimately unsuccessful invasion of Korea in 1592, as many as 56 interpreters travelled with his armies along with five Koreans resident in Tsushima who spoke Japanese. *[15] A Japanese manuscript written in the early 17th century gives some indication of the knowledge of the Japanese interpreters for it contains some Korean words and phrases written in the katakana syllabary: these clearly derived from the interpreters active in the Korean campaign in the last decade of the 16th century. *[16]

From this point onwards the need for Korean interpreters was met by the island of Tsushima and it appears that Tsushima could field 47 interpreters when needed in the 18th century, at least from 1719 onwards. Many of these came from merchant backgrounds and were connected with the Sixty, a group of Tsushima merchants permitted to trade with Korea, and documents from 1709 show that knowledge of Korean was one of the conditions for a merchant to join the privileged Sixty. *[17] The relationship with Korea was diplomatically important for Japan on account of the legitimacy it conferred on the Tokugawa regime in the 17th century but it was also practically important in terms of the trade in books and pharmaceuticals: it was through

Tsushima that Korean medical texts written in literary Chinese were transmitted to Japan and that ginseng plants were smuggled out to Japan and eventually cultivated there. [*18]

In 1720, Amenomori Hōshū (1668-1755), who had in 1689 become an official Confucian teacher in the Tsushima domain, proposed the establishment of a Korean school in Tsushima, largely to deal with the problem of a shortage of competent interpreters able to handle diplomatic or trade negotiations. Amenomori had in 1692 studied Chinese pronunciation in Nagasaki but he had also visited Korea five times, staying at the 'Japan house' (K. Waegwan, J. Wakan), the Tsushima trading outpost in Pusan; the longest of these sojourns was for the purpose of studying Korean and he had stayed for over a year. He was, in fact, the only Japanese intellectual in the Edo period to have such extensive experience of life outside Japan. His proposal in 1720, therefore, was based on his own understanding of the importance of a good command of Korean for anybody having dealings with Korea, and he recommended a curriculum covering both spoken and written Korean, for he had noticed that many of the interpreters were unable to read Korean. [*19] Amenomori's proposal was accepted by the Tsushima domain and the school was opened in 1727 and lasted until the late 19th century. Unlike other educational institutions in the Edo period, evaluation was based upon regular attendance and examinations rather than the status of the examinee, and the curriculum included Korean conversation, reading and writing. Amenomori wrote several textbooks for learning Korean: none of them was never printed in the Edo period but they circulated in the form of manuscripts. The most well-known is *Kōrin suchi* (*Essential knowledge for intercourse with our neighbours*), but he also wrote a set of four graded guides to reading and pronouncing Korean, of which the only volume to survive is the third, in which he provides parallel Japanese and Korean translations of some Chinese moral tales of the late Ming dynasty: to transcribe the Korean he used katakana with diacritics to indicate the sounds of Korean along with han'gŭl glosses. [*20] Korean was also taught at the 'Japan house', and the manual used there has also survived. Some of those who went to Pusan to study there were as young as 12 or 13, as in the case of Oda Ikugorō (1754-1831), who later wrote extensively on Korea and corresponded with Koreans. [*21]

Interpreters were essential for the diplomatic and trading links with Korea managed by Tsushima, but they were also needed to deal with the incessant flow of Koreans who reached Japan involuntarily in ships blown ashore or wrecked off the coast of Japan. [*22] In most cases the castaways were transported to Nagasaki, where Tsushima maintained an office, and there they were required to provide some information about their voyages. This was easy if there was one person on board who knew literary Chinese for example, when a ship from eastern Korea which had set out with a cargo of dried sardines was blown ashore in 1819, there was nobody on the Japanese side who knew a word of Korean but the leader of the party of 12 Koreans was an educated man and could communicate with a brush. [*23]

In most cases, however, the Koreans blown ashore lacked the skills that made brush

conversation possible. Although their unintended destinations ranged from what is now Hokkaido in the north down to the southern tip of Kyushu, most of the castaways ended up either in Kyushu or the southern tip of Honshu. At first there were Korean captives settled in Japan to speak to them, but when that generation died out in the second half of the 17th century efforts were made to hire interpreters, especially in Satsuma and Chōshū. In Satsuma there was a family of hereditary interpreters and in addition the domain authorities ordered some samurai to learn Korean: amongst the textbooks used were several Korean works of fiction in addition to some books containing Korean dialogues. [*24]

In addition to the need for speakers of Korean, there was throughout the Edo period an acknowledged need for Dutch and Chinese interpreters in Nagasaki, in order to deal with the Dutch East India Company, which was from 1641 onwards permitted to maintain an outpost in Nagasaki on the artificial island of Deshima, and to deal with the much larger community of Chinese merchants who also resided in Nagasaki and provided the only trading link with China. As the only mainland port permitted to conduct foreign trade, Nagasaki came under the direct control of the Tokugawa Bakufu government and it was therefore the Nagasaki magistrate (Nagasaki-bugyō) who exercised control over the two corps of Dutch and Chinese interpreters.

In the 16th century there had been various communities of Chinese traders in Kyushu, but in the early 17th century they were all forced to congregate in Nagasaki so that they could be under closer surveillance and control. [*25] Official interpreters were appointed to deal both with the substantial Chinese community and with incoming trading ships from China: brush conversation in Sinitic was not a practical proposition if the Chinese traders were insufficiently educated. By the end of the 17th century there was an official body of 'China interpreters' (*tōtsūji*), consisting of up to 11 individuals of various ranks. Like most official positions in the Edo period, the office of interpreter was hereditary, but because linguistic competence was at issue, the positions were filled from the ranks of just over seventy Nagasaki families, which were descended from Chinese migrants who had reached Japan earlier that century. One of the most prominent families was the Hayashi, who were descended from Lin Gongyan (1598-1683): he reached Japan in 1623, married the daughter of a samurai and worked for the Nagasaki interpreters' office. [*26] Since the Chinese character used for his family name Lin was also a common surname in Japan, albeit read Hayashi, his descendants took the surname Hayashi. His son, Hayashi Dōei (1640-1708), became a leading interpreter and was also something of a scholar. The family continued to provide interpreters down to the time of Hayashi Michisaburō (d. 1873), but Michisaburō, like a few of his colleagues, responded to the changing circumstances of the late 19th century by learning English as well as Chinese. [*27] As the example of Hayashi Dōei shows, Nagasaki interpreters were expected to acquire the skills they required in their families and no official training was provided. The language skills were either the spoken language of Nanjing or the southern variety of Mandarin. [*28] The interpreters were

expected to undertake much more than interpreting duties. They made use of their linguistic skills to gain information and maintained a permanent office which also undertook policing functions. In 1669, for example, the chief interpreter was ordered to prepare a report on the products of foreign countries and the maritime routes they used, while in 1689 the office diary noted that a number of Nagasaki courtesans had gone on a sightseeing tour around the China-town. [*29]

There was also a corps of Chinese interpreters retained in Satsuma to deal with Chinese ships that had been blown off course on their way to Nagasaki. [*30] The daimyo of Satsuma, Shimazu Shigehide (1745-1833), who was a speaker of Dutch, was able to converse in Chinese as well, and he inspired the compilation of a dictionary of colloquial Chinese. The dictionary is organised by topics and provides for each word in Chinese the meaning and the pronunciation; the supplement gives long conversational sentences, transcribed and translated in the same way. However, since tones are not provided and the transcription uses the Japanese syllabary, albeit with some variations in an attempt to represent unfamiliar sounds, self-study would have been a challenge. [*31] In the early 17th century Portuguese had been the lingua franca in Japanese ports frequented by European ships and in 1616 a Portuguese interpreter was appointed, but once the Portuguese had been expelled and the English had given up in 1623, the employees of the Dutch East India Company were the only Europeans left. Japanese interpreters with a command of Dutch were in action by the 1630s, working either for the Company or for the Nagasaki magistrates, but later they all became official employees of the Nagasaki magistrate, much to the dissatisfaction of the Dutch who no longer trusted them. [*32] Like the China interpreters, they also had to check incoming ships and their cargoes, write reports on current news and conduct trade negotiations as well as interpret. Their language skills were mostly acquired within their families but the Dutch also provided some instruction and conducted examinations on behalf of the magistrates. [*33] From the mid 17th century onwards, Dutch books began to reach Japan. They were mostly books on medicine and materia medica and the interpreters began to take up the challenge of reading them. In the 18th century this gave rise to a school of 'Dutch studies' (Rangaku) and many of the leading exponents acquired their knowledge directly from the interpreters in Nagasaki. In this way knowledge of Dutch spread beyond the community of interpreters and, as is well known, the translations of Dutch medical and other books had considerable impact on Japanese medicine, science and art. [*34] Dutch was thus one language that intellectuals were willing to apply themselves to.

In addition to the Chinese, Dutch and Korean interpreters in Nagasaki and Tsushima, there were some other languages covered, at least to some extent. The official Nagasaki interpreters included a few who were appointed to cover Siamese (i.e., Thai), Luzonese (i.e., the language of Luzon in the Philippines), Tonkinese (i.e, the language of northern Vietnam) and even 'Mogul', which seems to have been a mixture of Persian and Hindi. [*35] Engelbert Kaempfer, a German

visitor who saw much of Japan in the 1690s, reported on the existence of interpreters in these languages, but stated that their knowledge was not good. *[36] Be that as it may, some words from these languages as well as from Portuguese and Annamese (i.e., the language of southern Vietnam) are included in a manual for interpreters written in 1796 by Gi Gozaemon, who was a descendant of a Vietnamese immigrant and served as a Tonkinese interpreter from 1781 to 1843. *[37] Although the founders of some of these lineages of interpreters were immigrants who transmitted their knowledge to their descendants up to the end of the 17th century, this was not true of all of them. They owed their positions to a perceived need for interpreters in these languages, but the only speakers of those languages who visited Japan were crewmembers of Dutch or Chinese ships or of other ships blown off course, and the need for interpreters must surely have been minimal. In 1688, when two men, who had presumably been shipwrecked, were sent to Nagasaki from Satsuma, all the interpreters were summoned but none of them were able to communicate with them: this was not surprising, for it turned out that they had come from Taiwan. *[38] The posts of interpreters in these languages continued right to the end of the Edo period but by then they were sinecures and the holders of these posts were expected to acquire other language expertise to make themselves useful. *[39]

The collapse of the Ming dynasty in the mid 17th century resulted in the arrival of a number of refugees in Japan who spoke no Japanese. Amongst them were Yinyuan Longqi (J. Ingen Ryūki), who arrived in 1654 with thirty disciples and established the Ōbaku branch of Zen Buddhism in Japan, Zhu Shunshui (J. Shu Shunsui), who settled in Japan in 1661 and was hired by Tokugawa Mitsukuni, daimyo of Mito, as a scholar, and Yi Ran (Itsu Zen), one of many Chinese artists & calligraphers to reach Japan at this time. *[40] The presence of these individuals, all of whom enjoyed respect in Japan for their expertise and knowledge, certainly had a tangible impact on Japanese intellectual life but there were inevitably linguistic difficulties, even when it came to writing. On the one hand the immigrant monks were sometimes unimpressed by the literary Chinese writings of Japanese monks, while the Japanese were unable to understand Ming colloquial expressions which littered the writings of the immigrants. *[41] Furthermore, a work published in 1700 was highly critical of the dialect spoken by the immigrant monks and criticised them for their ignorance of Japanese. *[42]

Nevertheless, Chinese-Japanese bilingualism was common in the Manpukuji temple in Kyoto and in other Ōbaku Zen temples, so some degree of linguistic accommodation was clearly reached. *[43] In fact, the arrival of these Chinese intellectuals seems to have stimulated more interest in vernacular Chinese than the presence in Nagasaki of a substantial Chinese community, presumably because there was more knowledge to gain from them, and there can be no doubt that there was in the late 17th and 18th centuries a heightened awareness of spoken forms of Chinese. The growth of interest in vernacular Chinese was stimulated by the personal involvement of Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu (1658- 1714), a senior councillor who enjoyed the favour of shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi. Yanagisawa was a student of Zen Buddhism

and conversed with Ōbaku Zen monks on many occasions, initially relying on interpreters. Although he is commonly thought to have had a sufficient command of spoken Chinese to be able to understand a lecture given by Yuefeng Daozhang in the shogunal castle in 1708, this seems unlikely; at any rate, he was still using 'brush conversation' in literary Chinese with Ōbaku monks in that year. Nevertheless, Chinese was spoken in Yanagisawa's household by some of his retainers, who even gave lectures in Chinese in front of the shogun when he visited Yanagisawa's Rikugien estate. [*44]

In 1696 the celebrated scholar Ogyū Sorai entered Yoshiyasu's service and took lessons in spoken Chinese from Kuraoka Sozan and Okajima Kanzan, both of whom had grown up in Nagasaki and had learnt to speak Chinese when young. [*45] Sorai's interest stemmed from his conviction that, as a foreign language, Sinitic was best learnt and read as a variety of written Chinese rather than as a language to read as Japanese by means of vernacular reading. In 1711, therefore, Sorai founded a Translation Society in which members were encouraged to speak Chinese. By this time there were a number of individuals other than interpreters who had a good command of spoken Chinese. Amongst them were Amenomori Hōshū, who is more well known for his command of Korean, Fukami Gentai, who grew up in a family of Nagasaki Chinese interpreters and served the Bakufu government for more than a decade, and Okajima Kanzan, who was the principal teacher of spoken Chinese to members of both Ogyū Sorai's circle and that of Itō Tōgai (son of the Confucian teacher Itō Jinsai). [*46] It was Kanzan who compiled the first Japanese dictionary of vernacular Chinese, *Tōwa san'yō* (*Digest of spoken Chinese*).

The interest in spoken Chinese developed in two directions, but neither had much to do with communicating with native speakers of Chinese. The first of these was reading Chinese classical texts using Chinese rather than Japanese pronunciations. This was not a new development in the Edo period, but it was advocated by Amenomori Hōshū, Ogyū Sorai and particularly fervently by Dazai Shundai (1680-1747). A knowledge of Chinese sounds for this purpose meant no more than the ability to read a literary Chinese text aloud using some form of spoken Chinese pronunciation. This did not imply or involve any knowledge of spoken Chinese and was by no means a precursor of oral fluency. [*47] What is more, as they were of course well aware, the 'Chinese sounds' they sought to use were those of contemporary China rather than ancient China: the objective was not to try to read Chinese texts with some sort of reconstructed pronunciation but simply to avoid the pitfalls which in their view inevitably resulted from reading the texts in the usual Japanese way by means of vernacular reading.

The second development was growing interest in vernacular Chinese texts, particular vernacular fiction, for which a knowledge of literary Chinese was insufficient. [*48] Okajima Kanzan in particular began publishing Japanese translations of vernacular Chinese stories in 1702 and the 1718 edition of his Tōwa san'yō included two such stories in their original form for students to read. [*49]

Leaving Chinese and Korean aside, the only other East Asian language studied in Japan was Manchu, but this was the written rather than the spoken form of the language. Ogyū Sorai and others took an interest in Manchu books in the 18th century, but they seem to have had a poor understanding of the language. *[50] When the Russian envoy Nikolai Rezanov reached Japan in 1804 he brought letters in Russian, Manchu and Japanese, but the Japanese letter, written in a form of the language learnt from shipwrecked fishermen, was too colloquial to be of use, so Japanese negotiators were forced to turn to the Russian and Manchu: the official astronomer Takahashi Kageyasu (1785-1829) set about learning Manchu, and later in the 1850s some of the Nagasaki interpreters also learnt some Manchu, largely in the mistaken belief that this was still the dominant language of Qing China. *[51]

Until the end of the Edo period, there were no official interpreters for any European languages apart from Dutch. The need was first recognised officially in 1808 shortly after the British frigate H.M.S. Phaeton entered Nagasaki harbour flying a Dutch flag. The Bakufu promptly issued the following orders: 'Since there is nobody who knows the script or language of Manchuria, Russia or England, the Chinese interpreters should study Manchu and the Dutch interpreters Russian'. *[52] The following year Motoki Shōzaemon (1767-1822) and other Dutch interpreters were summoned and ordered to study the language and script of Russian and English; it is clear that some study of English began at this time for in 1814 Motoki and his colleagues completed an English-Japanese dictionary, but it was not until the 1850s that study in earnest began. *[53]

In 1850, the Nagasaki interpreters of Dutch and Chinese were ordered to learn other foreign languages in response to the growing numbers of European and American ships reaching Japanese waters. *[54] Some of the Nagasaki Chinese interpreters turned to English in the closing years of the Edo period, such as Ga Noriyuki (1840-1923) and Hayashi Michisaburō, who later participated in the compilation of the first English-Japanese dictionary (published in 1873) and served as Japan's first consul in Hong Kong. *[55] Interpreters were undoubtedly regarded as indispensible in Japan from the early 17th century onwards, both for the purposes of diplomacy and trade. This did not, however, lead to the creation of a state-sponsored institution as in China and Korea: rather the acquisition of skills was left to families with a hereditary role as interpreters who were guaranteed employment. The only language-teaching institution was the school for Korean on the island of Tsushima. Apart from Dutch, knowledge of foreign languages was rarely used for anything other than practical purposes. It was different, to be sure, for Yanagisawa Yoshisawa, Ogyū Sorai and Amenomori Hōshū, but Amenomori was the only one of them to live outside Japan and what they gained intellectually from their use of foreign languages is now hard to trace.

Although Okinawa is now part of Japan, Ryūkyū maintained an active diplomacy with China throughout the Ming dynasty, despatching 171 missions to the Ming capital and also sending more than two dozen missions to Korea between 1389 and 1500 alone. *[56] In the 15th

and 16th centuries Ryūkyū was even sending missions to Ayutthaya (a kingdom in what is now Thailand), Malacca and Java. *[57] The Ryūkyū kingdom enjoyed a tributary relationship with Qing China up to the end of the 19th century and maintained an outpost in the Chinese coastal city of Fuzhou from the 1470s onwards. This outpost provided accommodation and offices for the members of diplomatic missions travelling to or from the Chinese capital, but it also functioned as a trading facility, with accredited merchants and interpreters. *[58] Consequently, the need for spoken Chinese was taken much more seriously in Ryūkyū than in Japan, and it was facilitated by the presence from the 14th century onwards of a Chinese community settled in Kume village, near Naha, the capital of the Ryūkyū kingdom. By the 17th century this community was in decline, but efforts were made to revive it as a centre for colloquial Chinese studies. *[59]

From 1392 up to 1868 Ryūkyū regularly sent government students to Nanjing or Beijing to study at the National Academies (Guozijian) for four or five years, and in addition some Ryūkyūans travelled to China at their own expense to study the Chinese Classics, medicine, or technical subjects such as sugar manufacture. *[60] For all of these individuals a knowledge of spoken Chinese was indispensable and training in spoken Chinese was provided either at Kume village or at the Meirindō, the Ryūkyū government academy, both for scholarly and for practical diplomatic purposes. A number of the manuals used for the study of spoken Chinese have survived and these show that correct pronunciation and articulation of the tones was emphasized: the stress was on speaking for the purpose of communicating with native speakers. Some of these manuals take the form of dialogues between Ryūkyūans and Chinese officials in Fuzhou covering such situations as asking a teacher for instruction, changing money and shopping, while others offer guidance on reading texts aloud and instruct the student how to converse with a Chinese friend over a meal. *[61] Nothing survives to indicate how successful the training was, but for Ryūkyūans heading off for an extended period in China the linguistic preparation must have been indispensible.

Although the focus in Naha was on providing training in Chinese so that young Ryūkyūans could make good use of their time studying in China, there was nevertheless a need for interpreters, particularly on the islands that were closest to China, in order to deal with the problem of Chinese castaways. On Ishigakijima opportunities to learn Chinese were non-existent but one resident learnt some when he was shipwrecked on the Chinese coast and his son learnt more from Chinese castaways and from some Ryūkyūan students who had returned from China; since castaways were a perpetual problem, the son and two other people were in 1773 given appointments as official interpreters. *[62] Similarly, a vocabulary compiled on Kumejima suggests that there were interpreters there too, for it includes references to interpreters of both Beijing and Fukien Chinese, and in the 18th century there were some individuals with a limited knowledge of Korean to deal with castaways. *[63]

It is clear that Ryūkyūans reached levels of proficiency in spoken Chinese greater than

did Japanese, but we know little of the uses to which it was put. Some at least of the long-term students must have used their knowledge in China to exchange ideas and deepen their knowledge, but they have left no records. In Japan, on the other hand, it is clear that very few acquired any spoken knowledge of any foreign language until the 19th century. The exceptions were interpreters, Tsushima people involved with Korea, some Rangaku enthusiasts and Sorai's circle in Edo. Of those exceptions, an even smaller number had any opportunities to converse with native speakers of those languages. The significance of this is that it throws the spotlight on the primary importance of written texts for the transfer of knowledge to Japan up to the 19th century. The ability to read texts in literary Chinese was not dependent on knowledge of any form of spoken Chinese, and the same was true of texts in Dutch.

＊1 Atsuko Sakaki 2006. *Obsessions with the Sino-Japanese polarity in Japanese literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), p. 67.

＊2 *Nihon shoki*, Suiko 15[607].7.3, 16[608].9.5 (*Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei* 2: 189, 192-3).

＊3 *Nihon shoki*, Suiko 15[607].7.3, 16[608].9.5 (2: 189, 192-3).

＊4 *Nihon shoki*, Suiko 16[608].9.5 (2: 192-3).

＊5 *Engi shiki* (*in Shintō taikei* 神道大系 , *kotenhen* vols 11-12 [Shintō Taikei Hensankai, 1991-93]), 12: 324.

＊6 *Kenkairon engi* (in *Dengyō daishi zenshū*, vol. 2 [Tendaishū Shūten Kankōkai, 1912]), 653.

＊7 *Nihon sandai jitsuroku* (*Kokushi taikei*, vol. 4 [1952]), Jōgan 6[864].8.13, 140.

＊8 *San Tendai Godai san ki* (in *Dainihon bukkyō zensho*, *Yūhōdensōsho* vol. 3 [Bussho Kankōkai, 1917], p. 6 (Enkyū 4[1072].4.19).

＊9 Pierre Marsone, *Aux origines du Zen: édition bilingue, commentée et annotée du* Kōzen gokoku ron *de Eisai* (*1143-1215*) (Paris: Éditions You-Feng, 2002), pp. 148-9.

＊10 Mizuguchi Motoki, *Kodai Nihon to Chūgoku bunka: juyō to sentaku* (Hanawa Shobō, 2014), p. 284; *Shoku nihongi* (*Shin Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei*, vols. 12-16 [Iwanami Shoten, 1989-1998]), Tenpyō 2[730].3.27 (13: 232-3).

＊11 Tōyama Mitsuo, 'Nihon kodai no yakugo to tsūji', *Rekishi hyōron* 574 (1998): 58-65.

＊12 *Shoku nihongi*, Tenpyō hōji 5[761].1.9 (14: 370-1); *Nihon kōki* (in *Kokushi Taikei* vol. 3 [Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1929]), Kōnin 6[815].1.30 (131).

＊13 *Nihon kiryaku* (in *Kokushi Taikei* vols. 10-11 [Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1929]) , Daidō 5[810].5.27 (10: 292).

＊14 *Nanjung chamnok* (Minjok Munhwa Ch'ujinhoe, 1977), 1600.5, pp. 147-8 (4: 11b, 13a-b).

＊15 Nakamura Hidetaka, *Nissen kankeishi no kenkyū*, 3 vols (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1965-69), 2: 140-4.

＊16 Yi Kimun, '*Ŭmdŏkki* ŭi Koryŏ sajisa e taehayŏ', *Kugŏhak* 17 (1988): 3-32.

＊17 Tashiro Kazui, 'Tsushima-han no chōsengo tsūji', *Shigaku* 60 (1991): pp. 63-7.

＊18 Ronald Toby, *State and diplomacy in early modern Japan; Asia in the development of the Tokugawa Bakufu* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Tashiro Kazui, *Edo jidai Chōsen yakuzai chōsa no kenkyū* (Keiō Gijuku Daigaku Shuppankai, 1999).

＊19 Tashiro 1991, p. 68, n. 24; Yasuda Akira, *Zen'ichi Dōjin no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Kyōto Daigaku Kokubungakkai, 1964), p. 78; Izumi Chōichi, (*Tsushima-han hanju*) *Amenomori Hōshū no kisoteki kenkyū* (Suita: Kansai Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1997), pp. 195-216, 439-40, 585-6.

* 20 Tashiro 1991, pp. 68-76. On Amenomori's textbooks see Kamigaito Ken'ichi, *Amenomori Hōshū: Genroku Kyōhō no kokusaijin* (Chūō Kōronsha, 1989), pp. 89-99, and Chŏng Sŏnhŭi, '18 segi Chosŏn mun'indŭl ŭi chungguk sosŏl toksŏ silt'ae wa toksŏ tamnon yŏn'gu', in Hong Sŏnp'yo *et al*., eds, 17-18 *segi Chosŏn ŭi oeguk sŏjŏk suyong kwa toksŏ munhwa* (Hyean, 2006), pp. 51-92.
* 21 Tagawa Kōzō, 'Tsushima tsūji Oda Ikugorō to sono chosho', *Shomotsu dōkōkai sasshi* 11 (1940): 1-12; facsimile in *Shomotsu dōkōkai kaihō* (Ryūkei Shosha, 1978).
* 22 See the appendices in Ikeuchi Satoshi, *Kinsei Nihon to Chōsen hyōryūmin* (Kyoto: Rinsen Shoten, 1998) for details of the many groups of Korean castaways.
* 23 For the letter of appreciation he wrote to the domain authorities and portraits of the castaways see Ikeuchi Satoshi 1998, frontispiece and pp. 198-204.
* 24 Ikeuchi Satoshi 1998, pp. 69-73.
* 25 Yamawaki Teijirō, *Nagasaki no tōjin bōeki* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1964) and Li Xianzhang, *Nagasaki tōjin no kenkyū* (Sasebo: Shinwa Ginkō, 1991).
* 26 On Lin Gongyan and his descendants, see Hayashi Rokurō, *Nagasaki tōtsūji: daitsūji Hayashi Dōei to sono shūhen* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2000), pp. 10-36 and passim.
* 27 Hayashi Rokurō 2000, pp. 253-5, 262 n.78, 267-8, 280.
* 28 Nakajima Motoki, 'Tōtsūji no ninatta shoki Chūgokugo kyōiku: Nankin kan'wa kara Pekin kan'wa e', in *Tōkyō Gaikokugo Daigaku shi* (Tōkyō Gaikokugo Daigaku, 1999), pp. 875-9.
* 29 *Tōtsūji kaisho nichiroku*, 7 vols (Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1955-1968), Kanbun 9[1669].1.29, Genroku 12[1689].2.17 (1: 54, 231).
* 30 Tokunaga Kazunobu, *Satsuma-han taigai kōshōshi no kenkyū* (Fukuoka: Kyūshū Daigaku Shuppankai, 2005), pp. 411-45, and Mutō Chōhei, 'Chinzei no shinagogaku kenkyū' 鎮西の支那語學研究 , in *Seinan bun'un shiron* (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1978; facsimile of 1926 edition), pp. 56-9.
* 31 Kanbashi Norimasa, *Shimazu Shigehide* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1980), pp. 108-15, 145-58.
* 32 Katagiri Kazuo, *Oranda tsūji no kenkyū* 阿蘭陀通詞の研究 (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1985), pp. 7, 9-14, 21.
* 33 *Ibid*., pp. 49-54.
* 34 *Ibid*., pp. 355-410, 445-557. Many of the imported Dutch books were in fact Dutch translations of books in other European languages.
* 35 Appointments were made in the 17th century and continued thereafter. See also Nagashima Hiromu, '*Yakushi chōtanwa* no mourugo ni tsuite – kinsei Nihon ni okeru Indo ninshiki no issokumen', *Nagasaki kenritsu kokusai keizai daigaku ronshū* 19.4 (1986): 133-68. Nagashima examines the 'Mogul' words; as he notes, it is unclear where the 'Mogul'intepreters got their knowledge of Persian and Hindi from.
* 36 Beatrice Bodart-Bailey, *Kaempfer's Japan: Tokugawa culture observed* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), pp. 153, 193-4.
* 37 Mutō Chōhei 1978, pp. 46-7. On the manual see Takayama Yuriko, 'Gi Ryūzan *Yakushi chōtanwa*: honkoku to kaidai', *Edo jidai bungakushi* 4 (1985): 134-75, and 'Tonkin tsūji Gi Ryūzan Yakushi chōtanwa seiritsu no haikei', *Chikushi Jogakuen Daigaku Tankidaigakubu kiyō* 8 (2013): 227-39. In Takayama Yuriko 1985 there is a partial facsimile and reprint of the first volume of the manual, which is entitled *Yakushi chōtanwa*. Gi Gozaemon's skills probably came in useful when five Vietnamese were blown ashore in Japan in 1815: Nguyễn Thị Oanh, 'Etsunichi gaikō kankei o koshoseki ni saguru', in Liu Jianhui, ed., *Nichietsu kōryū ni okeru rekishi, shakai, bunka no shokadai* (Kyoto: Kokusai Nihon Bunka Kenkyū Sentā, 2015), p. 43.
* 38 *Tōtsūji kaisho nichiroku*, Genroku 1[1688].8.2 (1: 194-195).
* 39 On the fate of the Siamese, Tonkinese, Luzonese and 'Mogul' interpreters, see Wada Masahiko, 'Nagasaki tōtsūjichū no ikoku tsūji ni tsuite: tonkin tsūji o chūshin to shite', *Tōnan Ajia rekishi to bunka* 9 (1980): 24-50.
* 40 Joshua Fogel, *Articulating the Sinosphere* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 32-45; on

Yinyuan Longqi see Wu Jiang, *Leaving for the Rising Sun: Chinese Zen master Yinyuan and the authenticity crisis in early modern East Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), and 'The Taikun's Zen Master from China: Yinyuan, the Tokugawa Bakufu, and the founding of Manpukuji in 1661', *East Asian History* 38 (2014): 75-95.

＊41 Helen Baroni, *Obaku Zen: the emergence of the third sect of Zen in Tokugawa Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), p. 142.

＊42 Baroni 2000, pp. 134-47, esp. p. 143.

＊43 Baroni 2000, pp. 99, 155, notes that Yinyuan Longqi could speak Japanese while Japanese monks were required to chant sū tras in Fukien Chinese.

＊44 Rebekah Clements, 'Speaking in tongues? Daimyo, Zen Buddhism, and spoken Chinese in Japan, 1661-1711', *Journal of Asian Studies*, forthcoming.

＊45 Ishizaki Matazō, *Kinsei Nihon ni okeru Shina zokugo bungakushi* (Shimizu Kōbundō Shobō, 1967), pp. 55-6 and passim; Ishizaki's book was first published in 1940 and is not fully referenced so the sources used are often unclear. On Sorai and spoken Chinese, see also Clements, forthcoming.

＊46 Ishizaki 1967, pp. 69-94.

＊47 Yuzawa Tadayuki, *Kinsei jugaku ingaku to tōin: kundoku no naka no tōin chokudoku no kiseki* (Bensei Shuppan, 2014).

＊48 On the concept of 'vernacular' in China, see Shang Wei, 'Writing and speech', in Benjamin A. Elman, ed., *Rethinking East Asian languages, vernaculars, and literacies, 1000-1919* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 254-301.

＊49 Emanuel Pastreich 'An alien vernacular: Okajima Kanzan's popularization of the Chinese vernacular novel in eighteenth-century Japan', *Sino-Japanese studies* 11.2 (1999): 45; Ishizaki 1967, pp. 73-94.

＊50 Katō Naoto, 'Edo jidai ni okeru Manshūgo kenkyū to Roshia gaikō shisetsu', *Jinbun kagaku kenkyūsho kiyō* 71 (2006): 71-4; Mårten Söderblom Saarela, 'The Manchu script and information management: some aspects of Qing China's encounter with alphabetic literacy', in Benjamin A. Elman, ed., *Rethinking East Asian languages, vernaculars, and literacies, 1000-1919* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 169-97.

＊51 Uehara Hisashi, *Takahashi Kageyasu no kenkyū* (Kōdansha, 1977), pp. 895-1149; Katō Naoto 2006.

＊52 *Zoku Nagasaki jitsuroku taisei* (in *Nagasaki bunken sōsho*, 1st series, vol. 4 [Nagasaki: Nagasaki Bunkensha, 1974]), p. 434. On the Chinese interpreters in the 1850s and 1860s see Xu Haihua, 'Bakumatsu ni okeru Nagasaki tōtsūji no taisei', *Higashi ajia bunka kōshō kenkyū* 5 (2012): 267-80. Both Morishima Chūryō and Hirata Atsutane had an interest in Russian.

＊53 *Zoku Nagasaki jitsuroku taisei*, pp. 436-8, 449.

＊54 Wada 1980, p. 35. On French see Tomita Hitoshi, *Furansugaku no akebono: futsugaku kotohajime to sono haikei* (Karuchā Shuppansha, 1975).

＊55 Hayashi Rokurō 2000, pp. 253-5, 262 n.78, 267-8, 280. On Ga Noriyuki see Tokunaga 2005, pp. 465-8. Nakajima Jihei (1823-?) started life as a Korean interpreter but switched to English in 1857 and in 1860 demonstrated a steam engine in front of the daimyo: Ogawa Ayako, 'Chō shū -han no Chō sen tsū ji to Nakajima Jihei', *Rekishi techō* 22.4 (1994): 18-24. On the rise of English studies see Toyoda Minoru, *Nihon eigakushi no kenkyū* (Iwanami Shoten, 1995).

＊56 Akiyama Kenzō, *Nisshi kōshōshi kenkyū* (Iwanami Shoten, 1939), p. 552; *Chūzan shibunshū* (facsimile of 1725 Fuzhou edition contained in Uezato Ken'ichi, ed., *Kōteibon Chūzan shibunshū* (Fukuoka: Kyūshū Daigaku Shuppankai, 1998), pp. 267-75.

＊57 Ishii Yoneo, 'The Ryukyu in Southeast Asian trade in the 15th and 16th centuries', in K. M. de Silva, Sirima Kiribamuna & C. R. de Silva, eds, *Asian panorama: essays in Asian history, past and present* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1990), p. 356.

＊58 Nishizato Kikō, 'Chūkyū kōshōshi ni okeru Fukushū Ryūkyūkan no shosō', *Ryūkyū Daigaku Kyōikugakubu kiyō* 68 (2006): 309-21.

＊59 Gregory Smits, V*isions of Ryukyu: identity and ideology in early-modern thought and politics* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), p. 40.

＊60 Yang Zhongbo, 'Gu Liuqiu xue zhi yu Kong Meng si xiang', in *Disanjie Zhong Liu lishi guanxi guoji xueshu huiyi lun wenji* (Taibei: Zhong Liu Wenhua Jingji Xiehui Chuban, 1991), pp. 601-15; Nishizato 2006, Ishii 1990.

＊61 Mutō Chōhei, 'Ryūkyū hōshoshi' , *Rekishi chiri* 29.3 (1917): 62.

＊62 Takara Kurayoshi, 'Kinsei Yaeyama no tō tsū ji ni kansuru jirei', in *Diqijie Zhong Liu Lishi Guanxi Guoji Xueshu Huiyi: Zhong Liu Lishi Guanxi Lunwenji* (Taibei: Zhong Liu Wenhua Jingji Xiehui, 1999), pp. 334-48.

＊63 Yokoyama Toshio, 'Uezuke no Goishū: Kumejima shomotsu bunka no ichidanshō', in Yokoyama, ed., *Zenkindai Kumejima bunka no fukugen: mikōkai no iebunshogun no gakusaiteki jitchi kenshō o fumaeta kaidoku ni yoru* (np), p. 102; Ikeuchi Satoshi 1998, pp. 75-8. Koreans cast ashore on Ryūkyū in the 15th century reported when they got home that there were interpreters there: *Chosŏn Wangjo Sillok*, Sŏngjong 10[1479].6.10.