

IRSTI 17.09.91, 16.31.41

**KOJIKI IN CLASSICAL JAPANESE LITERATURE
—FROM PERSPECTIVES OF TRANSLATION AND APPROACHES—**

M.M. Andassova

Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages, Almaty, Kazakhstan
andassova872@gmail.com

This article discusses the problems that arise when positioning Japanese classical literature in a global perspective on the example of the first literary monument of Japan – "*Kojiki*, records of ancient deeds". The article discusses the problem of translation, which is caused by the specific structure of sentences in old Japanese and the use of words that have no analogues in European languages. The article also discusses the peculiarities of the methodology of literature research due to the difference in the scientific approach of the Japanese and European scientific worlds.

Keywords: classical Japanese Literature, *Kojiki*, honorific expressions, translation, literary genres and approaches.

Introduction

What challenges do studies on classical Japanese literature from an international perspective raise? The primary set of challenges may be about translation. This paper examines how expressions unique to Japanese text, including honorific words and undifferentiated subjects, can be communicated in other languages. For this purpose, I will take up *Kojiki* 古事記 as representative work of classical Japanese literature to compare some parts of the original texts with their English and Russian translations.

Another important set of challenges is probably about approaches. When a classical literary work is read overseas, the readers will connect the work to the history of literary studies accumulated in that cultural area and concepts used there. This paper also explores what challenges this perspective can present to research on classical Japanese literature by referring to studies in the Russian-speaking world.

I. Challenges in the translation and communication of the original - Honorific expressions

One of the characteristics of classical Japanese literary texts is the unclarified subjects of sentences. Let's consider this characteristic using some examples of English and Russian translations of sentences in *Kojiki*.

1. Honorific expressions in *Kojiki*

Here, let's take an example from the chapter of the *kotomuke* (pacification by persuasion) of Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni in *Kojiki*. Takemikazuchi is sent from Takamagahara to pacify Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni and asks Ōkuninushi, the lord of Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni, if the lord is ready to transfer his land. Then, Takeminakata, a son of Ōkuninushi, appears and challenges Takemikazuchi to a strength contest. When Takemikazuchi has his arm held by Takeminakata, the former changes his arm to a column of ice and then to a sword blade, ending up with Takeminakata retreating. Below is the original passage in Chinese characters from *Kojiki* followed by its Japanese rendering in parentheses.

如此白之間、其建御名方神、千引石撃a.手末而來、言、誰來我國而、忍々如此物言。然、欲為力競。1) 故、我、先欲取其b.御手。2) 故、令取其c.御手者、即取成立氷、亦、取成劍刃、故爾、懼而退居。(如此白す間に、其の建御名方神、千引の石を手末に撃げて来て、言ひしく、「誰ぞ我が国に来て、忍ぶ忍ぶ如此物言ふ。然らば、力競べをせむと欲ふ。故、我、先づ其の御手を取らむと欲ふ」といひき。故、其の御手を取らしむれば、即ち立氷に取り成し、亦、劍の刃に取り成しき。故爾くして、懼りて退き居りき。) [1; 107-108]

At points (b) and (c) in this passage, the honorific term “御手” is used to indicate an arm of Takemikazuchi,

an *amatsukami* (*kami* of heaven) sent as a messenger from Takamagahara. Meanwhile, at point (a), the non-honoric term “手” is used to denote a hand of Takeminakata, who is a *kunitukami* (native *kami*).

The subject of sentence 1) “故、我、先欲取其b.御手” is “我” (the first person “I” indicating Takeminakata). Takeminakata says that he wants to hold an arm of Takemikazuchi first. In the next sentence 2) “故、令取其c.御手者、即取成立氷、亦、取成劍刃,” no personal pronoun or name is used, so the subject of the sentence is not clarified. However, the honorific term “御手” suggests that the subject of the action is Takemikazuchi. The verb “令取” is the causative form of “hold,” indicating that Takemikazuchi is the subject of the action of having his arm held.

The subjects of sentences 1) “故、我、先欲取其b.御手” and 2) “故、令取其c.御手者” are different. Nevertheless, the subject of sentence 2) is not clarified, and instead the honorific term for an arm “御手” is used to explicitly indicate whose arm it is and imply who holds the arm and who has his arm held. The use of an honorific expression in this passage plays a role in clarifying the subject. [2; 85]

Next, let’s look at how this passage is translated into English and Russian.

Translation example 1: English (Philippi 1968)

As he was saying this, this same Take-mi-na-kata-no-kami came bearing a tremendous boulder on his finger-tips, and said: “Who is it who has come to our land and is talking so furtively? Come, let us test our strength; 1) I will first take your arm.”

2) When he allowed him to take his arm, he changed it into a column of ice, then again changed it into a sword blade. At this he was afraid and drew back. [3; 133]

Sentence 1) “故、我先欲取其御手。” is translated as 1) “I will first take your arm.” Speaking to Takemikazuchi, Takeminakata declares his intention to take Takemikazuchi’s arm using the term “your arm.” In this sentence, the subject and the object of the action are clear. By contrast, in the next sentence 2) “When he allowed him to take his arm, he changed it into a column of ice,” it is unclear who “allowed him to take his arm” and who “changed it into a column of ice.” Therefore, the translator added a note to this sentence.

To clarify the subject, the translator’s note added to sentence 2) says: “Take-mi-na-kata grasped the arm of Take-mika-duti, who changed his arm magically into an icicle and sword-blade.” In addition, the translator also added the note to the sentence “At this he was afraid and drew back” to explain that the subject of the sentence is “Take-mi-na-kata.” The original sentence omits the subject by using no personal pronoun, and instead it uses an honorific expression to imply the omitted subject.

Translation example 2: English (Heldt 2014)

As he was saying this, the spirit Brave Southward Smelter came by, carting by his fingertips a boulder that it would take a thousand men to pull, and spoke saying: “Who is it who comes to our land and speaks so secretly and slyly? I challenge you to a contest of strength! I will grab your mighty arm first.”

1) He then offered Brave Southward Smelter his mighty arm, but straight-away it changed into an icicle and then into a sword blade. This Brave Southward Smelter, growing fearful, withdrew and sat down. [4; 46]

Unlike Philippi’s translation, Heldt’s translation: 1) “He then offered Brave Southward Smelter his mighty arm” clearly indicates that it is Takeminakata (Brave Southward Smelter) that was offered the mighty arm. In addition, Heldt also clarifies that it is also Takeminakata (Brave Southward Smelter) that withdrew. Another difference from Philippi’s translation is Heldt’s use of the term “mighty arm” as a translation of “御手,” which seems to imply the relationship between the *amatsukami* (*kami* of heaven) and the *kunitukami* (native *kami*). In the context of English translation, however, it sounds strange that the challenger to a strength contest praises the opponent’s arm.

Translation example 3: Russian

Пока [он] так говорил, тот бог Такэминаката-но kami явился, подняв на кончиках пальцев скалу, что только тысяча человек притащить бы могли, и сказал: “Кто это в нашу страну пришел, и так шепотком-тишком разговаривает? А ну-ка, померяемся силой! Вот, я первый возьму тебя за руку”.

Потому 1) [бог Такэмикадзути] дал [ему] взять себя за руку, и тут же [свою руку] превратил в ледяную сосульку, а еще в лезвие меча ее превратил. И вот, 2) [бог Такэминаката] испугался и отступил. [5; 42]

Since Russian does not use personal pronouns, this translation indicates the subjects of the relevant actions in parentheses in the sentences as 1) [бог Такэмикадзути (deity Takemikazuchi)] and 2) [бог Такэминаката (deity Takeminakata)]. The translation does not use any honorific expressions.

The above analysis suggests that, while the Japanese original implies the subject of the action in question using an honorific expression instead of clearly indicating it using a personal pronoun or name, English and Russian translations of the same sentence always clarify the subject using a personal pronoun, as seen in Philippi’s translation, or inserting a personal name or the like in the sentence. In both cases, the original Japanese sentence is not literally translated, and the subject of the action in question is clarified and explained in the sentence or a note.

It can be understood that a factor behind such issues is the difference between the linguistic structures of the languages. Translating Japanese text in English and Russian requires clarifying the subjects of actions. However, the unique Japanese style of implying the subject using an honorific expression is not translated into English or Russian but replaced with use of a personal pronoun or the like. While this way of translation clarifies the omitted subject to communicate the meaning of the sentence, some cases of use of honorific expressions are related to cultural phenomena beyond the scope of communication of the meanings of sentences and linguistic codes. Let’s consider this issue by analyzing the following examples.

2. Self-honorific expressions in *Kojiki*

Takemikazuchi is sent from Takamagahara to Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni and asks Ōkuninushi, the lord of Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni, if the lord is ready to transfer his land. In Takemikazuchi’s statement, a word of Amaterasu (Takaki-no-kami) is included. The original passage in *Kojiki* reads as follows:

是以、此二神、降到出雲国伊那佐之小浜而、拔十掬劍、逆刺立于浪穂、跌坐其劍前、問其大国主神言、1)天照大御神、高木神之命以、問使之。2)汝之宇志波祁流葦原中国者、a.我御子之所知国、b.言依賜。故、汝心奈何。(是を以て、此の二はしらの神、(中略)其の大国主の神を問ひて言ひしく、「天照大御神・高木の神の命以て、問ひに使はせり。汝がうしはける葦原中国は、我が御子の知らさむ国と言依し賜ひき。故、汝が心は、如何に。[6; 108]

In the sentence “a.我御子之所知国、b.言依賜” included in Takemikazuchi’s statement, the term “我御子” (the honorific term for “my child”) denotes a child of Amaterasu, instead of a child of Takemikazuchi. Amaterasu appears in the statement of Takemikazuchi and uses the honorific term “御子” to denote her own child. Moreover, in “b.言依+賜,” she adds the honorific auxiliary verb “賜” to the verb “言依” (“entrust”), using a self-honorific expression for her own action. Sentence 2) as a whole means “Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni, which belongs to you, is entrusted [honorific] (by us) to the rule of my child [honorific].”

Since self-honorific expressions are used by deities to talk about themselves [7; 95], the use of honorific expressions here indicates that Amaterasu, the main deity of Takamagahara, herself talks. In the transition from sentence 1) “天照大御神、高木神之命以問使之” to sentence 2) “汝之宇志波祁流葦原中国者、a.我御子之所知国、b.言依賜,” the subject shifts from Takemikazuchi to Amaterasu. The transition of subjects and undifferentiated subjects can be recognized as implying divine possession [8; 68]. Here, it can be thought that Amaterasu possesses Takemikazuchi to talk directly to Ōkuninushi through Takemikazuchi’s mouth [9; 7]. Let’s look at how

such sentences including self-honorific expressions and unclarified subjects are translated into English and Russian.

Translation example 1: English (Philippi 1968)

[. . .] then, sitting cross-legged atop the point of the sword, they inquired of the deity Opo-kuni-nushi-no-kami, saying: 1) “We have been dispatched by the command of Ama-terasu-opo-mi-kami and Taka-ki-no-kami to inquire: 2) “the Central Land of the Reed Plains, over which you hold sway, is a land entrusted to the rule of my offspring; what is your intention with regard to this?”” [10; 129-130]

Sentence 1) “We have been dispatched . . .” is Takemikazuchi’s statement, and sentence 2) and subsequent clauses are what Amaterasu and Takaki-no-kami say. The subject in this English translation is Amaterasu just as in the Japanese original sentence, which is not in direct speech, though.

Translation example 2: English (Heldt 2014)

Unsheathing sword ten hand spans long, they stood them upside down on the crest of the waves, sat cross-legged on their points, and questioned the spirit Great Master, saying: 1) “We have been sent at the mighty command of the great and mighty spirit Heaven Shining and the spirit Lofty Tree to ask you this: 2) “The central realm of reed plains you now rule is a land entrusted to our heir. What will you do?”” [11; 46]

Sentence 1) “We have been sent . . .” is what Takemikazuchi says, and sentence 2) and the subsequent sentence are what Amaterasu and Takaki-no-kami state. Just as in the Japanese original sentence, the subject is Amaterasu in this English translation too, although the Japanese original is not in direct speech. Both Philippi’s and Heldt’s translations use colons and quotation marks to indicate Amaterasu’s words in Takemikazuchi’s statement. In addition, Heldt’s translation inserts “this” after “ask you” for an explanation purpose. Moreover, both English translations do not translate the self-honorific expressions.

The original Japanese passage suggests not only that Amaterasu is the subject of sentence 2) but also that Amaterasu possesses Takemikazuchi, and the voices of both deities are described. The style of the Japanese original implies that a phenomenon of divine possession occurs here. In the English translations, the statement of Amaterasu is in direct speech, which merely reports other people’s statements as they are. The style of direct speech, therefore, does not work well to describe the phenomenon of divine possession, which can be understood from the original Japanese text. In this sentence, Takemikazuchi serves as a divine medium to convey Amaterasu’s message, and the voices of Amaterasu and Takemikazuchi overlap with each other. Seeking solutions to the question how this style of representing such phenomena can be translated into English or Russian is a challenge I would offer to subsequent attempts to translate *Kojiki*.

II. Issue of literary genres and approaches—Focusing on the Russian-speaking world

In the Russian-speaking world, there is a strong tendency to treat literary works as representing the characteristics of each era from the perspective of developmental stages. The ancient period is seen as the time of oral literature and folklore, and the medieval era is viewed as the time when religion exercised great influence, while the modern and contemporary times are treated as the time of modernism. Each literary genre established in Europe is positioned in one of such developmental stages. In this way of thinking, it is believed to be difficult to apply a methodology effective for studying the literature of an era to the literature of another era. Therefore, the effective approach toward traditional literature (folklore and oral literature) is recognized as different from the effective approach toward modern literature.

1. Studies on *Kojiki* and argument as a literary work

In the 1980s, Kōnoshi Takamitsu advocated the position that *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 should be argued as separate literary works, and he positioned these two books, which had so far been treated collectively as “*kiki*-mythology,” as works containing different cosmologies [12; 58]. Despite the major impacts that his argument had on the relevant academic circles, Kōnoshi Takamitsu was criticized for his application of literary criticism

targeting each work as an approach toward modern literature [13; 76] to the purpose of understanding the ancient books [14; 12]. A factor behind the criticisms against Kōnoshi's argument is probably the recognition that *Kojiki* is a book that reveals the thought and magical world view of ancient people.

This recognition is in common with the way *Kojiki* is treated in the Russian-speaking world. Russian scholars recognize *Kojiki* as a book that shows the tradition of ancient oral literature [15; 65], and they believe that it is inappropriate to use an effective approach toward modern literature to study *Kojiki*, recognized as a work of traditional literature.

2. Mitani Kuniaki and <polyphony>

Although Mitani Kuniaki applies the concept of polyphony, which Mikhail Bakhtin advocated, Bakhtin himself maintained that only Dostoevsky's works could be called polyphonic novels [16; 49-64]. Bakhtin viewed <voices> as values, ideas and the internal world view of each individual. He also argued that conflict between plural voices, or values, had occurred only in modern and subsequent literature because authoritarian values alone were powerful in premodern times. For example, in epic literature, most descriptions are written to praise the king, lord or hero, and sentences do not include plural different values that challenge each other. Bakhtin argued that only in the literature of modern society, where multiple social classes conflicted with each other and individuals' internal spiritual worlds were valued, polyphonic novels could exist as an arena for multiple diverse values.

Despite such limitations imposed by Bakhtin on the concept, Mitani Kuniaki applies Bakhtin's argument of <polyphony> to discussion on the <identification> between the storyteller, characters and the reader [17; 35-38].

Many methodological approaches have been used as universal concepts regardless of the times, culture and the academic discipline. However, it is probably important to correctly recognize in what historical, philosophical and cultural contexts those methodological approaches originated and how effective they were for having the condition of studies widely understood.

These issues are also faced in the attempts to introduce Japanese literary works to readers abroad. When works of classical Japanese literature are introduced to Russian-speaking readers, already established European literary genres are applied to such classical Japanese works, or already established concepts are used to explain such classical Japanese works. For example, *zuihitsu* 随筆 are treated as “Эссе” in Russian and “essays” in English, *Genji Monogatari* is classified as “роман” in Russian and a “novel” in English, while *waka* 和歌 and *kanshi* 漢詩 are dealt with as “поэзия” in Russian and “poetry” in English. I believe, nevertheless, that, when introducing classical Japanese literature to overseas readers and studying it abroad, we have to place importance on the context unique to Japan or East Asia and the background for each work's creation.

Conclusion

The academic world in Japan is fractionalized, so neighboring disciplines cannot share discussions from each other's perspective. By contrast, Japanese studies in the English-speaking and Russian-speaking world are conducted from a boarder perspective.

I believe that Japanese scholars should be aware of the necessity of sharing discussions with neighboring disciplines in the Japanese academic world. I also believe that the Japanese academic world would pose questions and conduct research from broader perspectives.

References

1. 神野志隆光 Kōnoshi Takamitsu ed. and annot. *Kojiki: Shinpen Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū* 古事記 新編日本古典文学全集, Shogakukan, 2017 [first edition: 1997], p. 107-108
2. Tetsuno Masahiro 鉄野昌弘 “‘Shinwa’ o Megutte” 『神語』をめぐって, *Man'yōshū Kenkyū* 万葉集研究, vol. 26, 2004, p. 85
3. Donald L. Philippi, trans. *Kojiki*. University of Tokyo Press, 1968, p. 133
4. Gustav Heldt, trans. *The Kojiki. An account of ancient matters*. Columbia University Press, 2014, p. 46.

5. Pinus E.M. *Kojiki*, Volume 1, Moscow, 1973, p. 42
6. 神野志隆光 Kōnoshi Takamitsu ed. and annot. *Kojiki: Shinpen Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū* 古事記 新編日本古典文学全集, Shogakukan, 2017 [first edition: 1997], p. 108
7. Miura Sukeyuki 三浦佑之 *Kodai Joji Denshō no Kenkyū* 古代叙事伝承の研究, [Bensei Publishing](#), 1992, p. 95
8. Fujii Sadakazu 藤井貞和 *Konihon-bungaku Haseiron* 古日本文学発生論, Shichosha, 1978, p. 68
9. Andassova Maral アンダソヴァ マラル “Kojiki to ‘Shamanism’—Ashihara-no-Nakatsukuni to Meimei suru koto ni tsuite” 古事記と『シャーマニズム』—葦原中国と命名することについて. *Nihon Bungaku* 日本文学, vol. 64: issue 5, May 2015, p. 7
10. Donald L. Philippi, trans. *Kojiki*. University of Tokyo Press, 1968, p. 129–130
11. Gustav Heldt, trans. *The Kojiki. An account of ancient matters*. Columbia University Press, 2014, p. 46
12. Kōnoshi Takamitsu 神野志隆光 *Kojiki no Sekaikan* 古事記の世界観, Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1986, p. 58
13. Miyoshi Yukio 三好行雄 *Sakuhinron no Kokoromi* 作品論の試み, Shibundo, 1967, p. 76
14. Furuhashi Nobuyoshi 古橋信孝 “Kodai-Bungaku Kenkyū no <Hōhō>: Bungakushi e” 古代文学研究の<方法> : 文学史へ. *Nihon Bungaku* 日本文学, vol. 59: issue 5, May 2010, p. 12
15. Konrad N. I. *Japanese Literature: Examples and Commentaries*, Leningrad, 1927, p. 65
16. Mikhail Bakhtin “Проблемы творчества Достоевского” (Japanese translation by Kuwano Takashi 桑野隆) *Dostoevsky no Sōsaku no Mondai* ドストエフスキーの創作の問題, Heibonsha, 2013, p. 49-64
17. Mitani Kuniaki 三谷邦明 *Genji Monogatari no Gensetsu* 源氏物語の言説, Kanrin Shobo, 2002, p. 35-38

«Кодзики» в классической японской литературе - с точки зрения перевода и методологии исследований

М.М. Андасова

Казахский университет международных отношений и мировых языков имени Абылай хана,
г. Алматы, Казахстан
andassova872@gmail.com

В данной статье рассматриваются проблемы, возникающие при позиционировании японской классической литературы в глобальном аспекте на примере первого литературного памятника Японии – «Кодзики, записи о деяниях древности». В статье обсуждается проблематика перевода, которая обусловлена специфическим построением предложений в старо-японском языке и использованием слов, аналогов которым нет в европейских языках. Также рассматриваются особенности методологии исследования литературы, обусловленные различием в научном подходе японского и европейского научных миров.

Ключевые слова: классическая японская литература, Кодзики, почетные выражения, перевод, литературные жанры и подходы.

Классикалық жапон әдебиетіндегі «Кодзики» — аударма және зерттеу әдіснамасы тұрғысынан

М.М. Андасова

Абылай хан атындағы Қазақ халықаралық қатынастар және әлем тілдері университеті, Алматы қ., Қазақстан
andassova872@gmail.com

Бұл мақалада жапондық классикалық әдебиеттің жаһандық аспектіде алатын орнын Жапонияның «Кодзики, ежелгі іс-әрекеттер туралы жазбалар» атты тұңғыш әдеби ескерткіші үлгісінде зерттеу барысында туындайтын мәселелер қарастырылады. Мақалада Ескі-жапон тіліндегі сөйлемдердің спецификалық құрылуымен және еуропа тілдерінде баламасы жоқ сөздерді пайдаланумен байланысты аударма мәселесі талқыланады. Сонымен қатар, жапондық және еуропалық ғылыми әлемдеріндегі ғылыми тәсілдердің айырмашылықтарына негізделген әдебиеттерді зерттеу әдіснамасының ерекшеліктері қарастырылады.

Түйін сөздер: классикалық жапон әдебиеті, Кодзики, құрмет өрнектері, аударма, әдеби жанрлар мен тәсілдер.

Received on February 4, 2020