

## Japanese translation of Mongolian literature

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### Abstract

For centuries, Mongolians have been translating literature, history, philosophy, and religious writings from Uyghur, Persian, and Arabic into Mongolian. Literature translation is the same as translating foreign language's history, culture, and morals. Thus, in this article, the manner of Japanese translation of Mongolian literature and its characteristics will be examined.

### Keywords

Written translation, the tradition of translation, literary translation, Japanese translation, Mongolian literature

### 1. Introduction

In 1265 The Mongolian Emperor Kublai first sent ambassadors named Hei Di and Ying Hong to Japan. From that time on Japanese people started to mention the Mongolian nation in their history and scriptures. Yet, the Japanese were studying and recording about Mongolia mainly through Chinese sources at this time.

Although the relationship between Japan and Mongolia dates back several centuries, the study of writing and translation between the two languages has a history of hundreds of years. Specifically, in 1907, Naka Michiyo translated "The Secret History of the Mongols" from Chinese into Japanese and published a book called "Genghis Khan's True Records", which had a significant impact on the establishment of Mongolian studies in Japan.

D. Dashdavaa states in his work entitled "The Role of Translation in the Formation of the National Literary Language" that "Literary translation enriches and enlightens people's culture and develops the national literary language. In the process of translation, new words, idioms, and aphorisms are introduced."

### 2. Japanese translation of "The Secret History of the Mongols"

The Secret History of the Mongols has been translated into the Japanese language many times. In 1907, Naka Michiyo translated "The Secret History of the Mongols" from Chinese first. After that, Shiro Hattori and Huasai Dugarjav published their translation work named "Mongolian Secret

Story of the Mongolian Alphabet” in 1939. Further, Kobayashi Takashiro published a simplified version of the Japanese translation called “The Secret History of the Mongols” in 1941.

Gradually, Shiratori Kurakichi, Osamu Yamaguchi, Murakami Masatsugu, Ozawa Shigeo, Okada Hidehiro, and Hasumi Haruo translated and published “The Secret History of the Mongols” (1942), “The Chronicles of Chinggis Khan” (1968), “The Secret History of the Mongols - Chinggis Khan Tsadig” (1970), “Complete Description of The Secret History of the Mongols” vol. III (1984-1986), “Chinggis Khan” (1994), “The Secret History of the Mongols’ Oral Literature Study” (1999) respectively.

The above-mentioned researchers and translators have not only translated the Secret History of the Mongols but also studied it and published countless research works related to it.

### 3. Synopsis of Mongolian literature translated into Japanese

Mongolian literature has been translated into Japanese starting from the 1960s. It is said that Japanese people of that time first got to know Mongolian literature through Russian and Chinese translations. Mongolian literary studies and the number of Japanese people learning Mongolian language increased following the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1972.

While Mongolian literature expanded in Japan, it began to be studied at a professional level, which attracted the attention of not only Japanese but also other foreign scholars and researchers who knew and studied Japanese.

#### 3.1 The beginning of the translation of Mongolian literature into Japanese

Japanese researchers and translators who studied and researched Mongolian include Hasumi Haro, Arai Shinchiro, Ozawa Shigeo, Matsuda Tadanori, Inoue Masashi, Kaiko Takeshi, Shiba Ryutaro, Okada Kazuyuki, Kamimura Akira, Mikio Umino, and others. They studied the Mongolian language, and literature deeply, and translated many historical texts that are representative of Mongolian literature into Japanese.

In the early 1970s, Mongolian researcher Matsuda Tadanori put out a special editorial called “Modern Asian Literature” which includes Mongolian poems and stories, in the “Asian Review” magazine published by the Asahi newspaper when he was a student at the Tokyo University of Foreign Students.<sup>1</sup>

#### 3.2 Mongolian literary periods

A work entitled “モンゴル文学を味わう” by Okada Kazuyuki, Kamimura Akira, and Umino Mikio was published in 1999, in which they divided Mongolian literature into five periods and presented the main writers’ biography and representative works of Mongolian literature. The five periods are:

1. The period of ancient literature (up to the XII century)
2. The medieval period of literature (from XIII to XVI centuries)
3. The period of religious literature (from XVII to XVIII centuries)
4. The period of civil literature (from XIX to XX centuries)
5. Modern literature (after the 1920s)

### 4. Japanese translation of Mongolian literature from 1960 to 1980s

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<sup>1</sup> S. Demberel, “Ypon dahi mongoliin utga zohioliin orchuulga, sudlal shuumjle!”. Yponii utga zohioliin symposium. Ulaanbaatar, 2004. 68 page.

When Mongolian literature began to be translated into Japanese, it was mainly related to the Secret History of the Mongols and some Mongolian folktales.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the Japanese translation of Mongolian literature began in the 1960s but at the beginning, the types and numbers of translations were very few. In 1963, 1970, and 1972 “The Secret History of the Mongols - The Story of Genghis Khan” (モンゴル秘史—チンギス・カン物語 1) was translated by Iwamura Shinobu and Murakami Masatsugu.

On top of that, Matsuda Tadanori published a collection of poems entitled “Plain and Flame - The Best Poetry of Mongolia” (草南と炎 - モンゴル詩人選集) in 1974. In this collection of poems, M. Tsendendorj, Ch. Lkhamsuren, D. Senge, D. Purevdorj, Ts. Tsendenjav, B. Baast, D. Gombojav, D. Natsagdorj, and B. Yavuukhulan’s poems were included.

#### 4.1 Japanese translation of Mongolian literature from 1980 to 1990

In 1984, Arai Shinichi, Haruo Hasumi, and Matsuda Tadanori translated a collection of best stories called “The Wolf with the Hat” (Малгайтай чоно). In this collection of short stories D. Namdag - “俣は間違はなく来る”, Ch. Lodoidamba - “帽子をかぶった狼”, E. Oyun - “郵便配達ツェルマー”, S. Erdene - “ホランとわたし”, Ch. Lkhamsuren - “花を持った女”, S. Udval - “モンゴルのカチューシャ”, Ch. Oidov - “幽霊の棲む家の跡”, S. Lochin - “私”, L. Tudev - “ハコヤナギの木”, D. Natsagdorj - “ラマの涙”, D. Tsevegmid - “牧童ナイダン”, Ts. Damdinsuren - “トランクを開ければ”, L. Chojilsuren - “秋夜” are included.

Also,

- In 1988, Matsuda Tadanori translated “Mongolian Tales” (ハイリブの石～モンゴル民話集)
- In 1989, Ozawa Shigeo translated “Complete Description of The Secret History of the Mongols” into Japanese.

Matsuda Tadanori said in the introduction of his work “Mongolian Tales”, “Mongolians love fairy tales and epic poems, especially have a lot of fond in epic poems. Epic poetry is usually long, it lasts a month or two and does not finish in one night. Erstwhile the majority of the herders could not read or write but can sing long epics like a professional. The secret is in the rhythm of Mongolian poetry. The main feature of the rhythm that makes it easy is the connection of the heads, and every line starts with the same vowel letter. This time, I couldn’t present you with more than eleven long and short stories. In truth, the treasure trove of tales of the Mongolians is as rich as the stars in the night sky. In the future, if there is an opportunity, I would like to introduce more Mongolian stories to Japanese children.”<sup>3</sup>

#### 4.2 Japanese translation of Mongolian literature since 1990

Since 1990, the work of translating Mongolian literature into Japanese and the types of translations have increased.

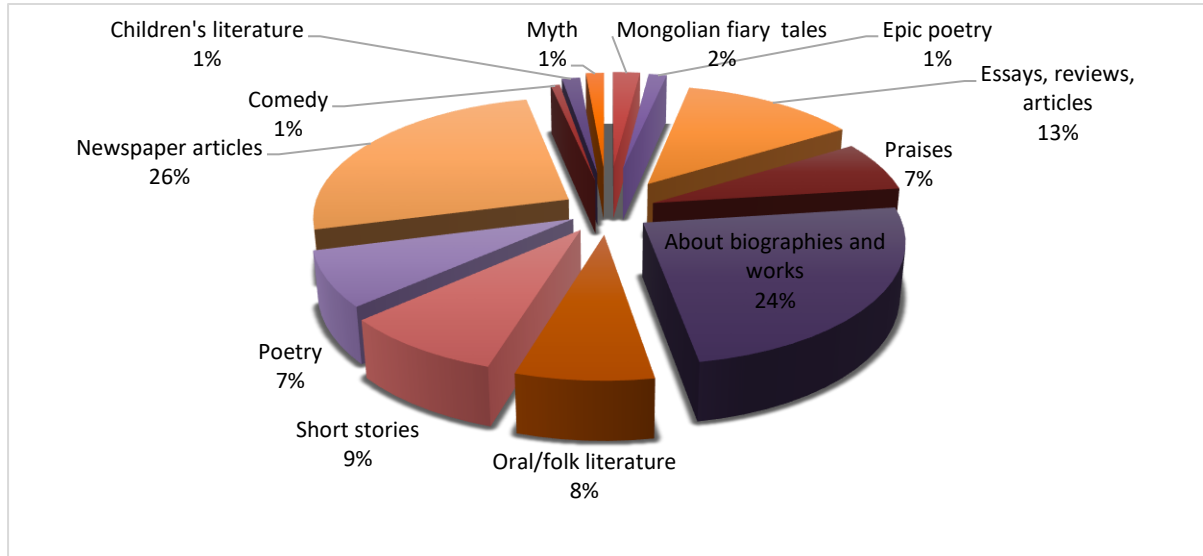
From that time on, biographies and works of more than 30 Mongolian writers have been translated into Japanese.<sup>4</sup> In this period of time, Mongolian researchers from Japan were translating the biographies and works of modern Mongolian writers and poets, so the study and criticism of Mongolian literature began to develop. For example, in 1995, the Japan - Mongolian Literary Association (日本モンゴル文学会) was established in Japan, studying Mongolian literature at a professional level,

<sup>2</sup> Translation summary was taken from the work D. Mandakh, “Yponii uran zohioliig mongol helnee orchuulsan turshlaga, zarim shineleg asuudal”.

<sup>3</sup> S. Demberel, “Ypon dahi mongoliin utga zohioliin orchuulga, sudlal shuumjlel”. Yponii utga zohioliin symposium. Ulaanbaatar, 2004. 69 page.

<sup>4</sup> Translation summary was taken from the work D. Mandakh, “Yponii uran zohioliig mongol helnee orchuulsan turshlaga, zarim shineleg asuudal”.

writing research and articles, along with introducing Mongolian literature to Japanese people. Also, since the 1990s, most of the Mongolian literature translated into Japanese has been translated by members of the Japan - Mongolian Literary Association.



Among the magnificent translation works of this period,

- Altan Tobchi
- Geser
- Epic of Jangar
- Research and articles about Mongolian literature and authors
- D. Natsagdorj, S. Buyannemekh, B. Yavuukhulan, Ch. Chimid, B. Rinchen, Ts. Damdinsuren, S. Erdene, E. Oyun, Ch. Oidov, Ch. Lodoidamba, Ts. Gaitav, S. Udwal, S. Dulam, L. Tudev, D. Senge, D. Namdag, B. Dogmid, D. Norov, P. Bayarsaikhan, G. Nyamaa, B. Galsansukh, O. Dashbalbar's biography, and works were included.

Then, translators such as Okada Kazuyuki, Shibayama Yutaka, Matsuda Tadanori, Abiru Miho, Kamimura Akira, Umino Mikio, Masaru Hashimoto, Uchida Toshiyuki made valuable contributions to the Japanese translation of Mongolian literature.

In 2003, Shibayama Yutaka and Okada Kazuyuki translated and published a work entitled “モンゴル文学への誘い” (An Invitation to Mongolian Literature). The opening part of the first chapter of the book - Attraction to Modern Mongolian Poetry includes Japanese translations of poems such as Ch. Chimid - “私はモンゴル人” (I Am a Mongol), B. Yavuukhulan - “私はどこに生まれたのか” (Where Was I Born), D. Purevdorj - “チンギス” (Genghis), R. Choinom - “自分で自分に読むための詩” (A Poem for Myself), O. Dashbalbar - “ダリガンガに捧げる詩” (A Poem Dedicated to Dariganga), B. Lkhagvasuren - “私” (Me), Ts. Khulan - “初秋の宵” (Autumn Night), B. Galsansukh - “ポップー人間研究” (Human Research). The late part of the first chapter - Attraction to the Mongolian Children's Literature includes J. Dashdondog - “七コブのラクダ” (Seven-Cob Camel), D. Garma - “愉快なお話” (Fun Poetries). In the third part - Attraction to The Modern Mongolian Comedy, B. Tsenddoo's “オニゴ” (Onigoo) is included. Lastly, the fourth part is modern Mongolian short stories. This part contains D. Turbat - “蛇の法会”, P. Bayarsaikhan - “フフ・トーリの平原”, Shag. Tsend-

Ayush - “困ったやつ”, Ch. Lodoidamba - “私の栗毛馬-元軍人の話” (The Story of a Former Soldier),  
Ts. Damdinsuren - “種牛ゴンボ”, D. Natsagdorj - “黒い岩”, Vanchinbalyn Injinash - “一層楼”.

The second chapter of the book - The Study of Mongolian Literature in Japan includes several research works by Japanese researchers about Mongolian literature and authors. The third chapter of the book contains a detailed chronology and bibliography related to Mongolian literature, and the bibliographies connected to Mongolian literature are all sources in the Japanese language.

Most of the translators and researchers who translated and published the above book are members of the Japan - Mongolian Literary Association. The association organizes academic meetings twice a year to share their opinions and research results with other researchers.

Since Japanese researchers who study and research Mongolian literature in Japan are working hard to introduce and spread Mongolian literature to Japan and the world, it is appropriate for Mongolians to pay attention to the translation of Mongolian literary works and creations into foreign languages.

There is also a work called “Japanese Translation of Mongolian Literature” (モンゴル文学翻訳 1) published in 2012. In that work:

- G. Ayurzana - 初恋の秋 (trans. Abiru Miho)
- L. Ulziitugs - 盲, 身籠もる女, 無題 (trans. Abiru Miho)
- Ch. Lodoidamba - 私たちの学校 (trans. Tanihiro Yuki) are included.

## 5. Conclusion

Both Japan and Mongolia have been communicating through writing for several centuries. In the last fifty years translation, criticism, and studies of the literature of the two countries have developed rapidly, and many Mongolian literary works have been translated into Japanese. Prior to the 1960's, the Japanese translation of Mongolian literature was limited in numbers and types, but with the passage of time, the genres continue to grow. In order to promote the continuation of translation of Mongolian literature into Japanese, increased support must be given to these young translators and researchers who have a strong desire to learn the Mongolian language and to introduce more Mongolian literature to Japan.

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