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Thoughts on the future of the history of translation

The history of translation is growing, blossoming and flourishing. The fact that four books series on the history of translation were established in 2019 is both a product and a factor of this dynamic development. Of course, the existence of a book series is only the beginning. Basically the same applies to them as to our journal *Chronotopos*: they are as good as the authors make them. With clear translation-historical concerns, the following projects are now being launched:

- Christopher Rundle, Pekka Kujamäki, Michaela Wolf are launching an English-language series at *Routledge* entitled “Research on Translation and Interpreting History”, which is dedicated to the interdisciplinary dialogue between history and translation studies and considers translation (practice) as social and historical events. The series maintains a critical perspective on theoretical and methodological developments and innovations and aims to provide space for a wide range of cultural and geographical contexts.
- At *Palgrave Macmillan*, the series “Translation History” has been created, edited by Andrea Rizzi, Anthony Pym, Birgit Lang, Belén Bistué, Esmail Haddadian-Moghaddam and Kayoko Takeda. “Translation History” is presented as the first series to take a global and interdisciplinary view of translation and translators across time, space and cultures. It explicitly mentions the as yet untapped potential of collaboration between translation studies and comparative literature, art history, the history of printing and books.
- The Viennese publisher *new academic press* houses the series “Translationen” by Larisa Schippel and Julia Richter. The multilingual series (Deutsch, English, Français, Русский, ...) characterizes the history of translation as an independent sub-discipline of translation studies, which also includes source and neighbouring disciplines. In addition to case studies that promise insights into epochs, actors, motives, effects, etc. of translation, there is also room for commentary by translators on their translations, which can be important for the development of theory.
- The bilingual series founded by Andreas Gipper, Lavinia Heller and Robert Lukenda at *Franz Steiner Verlag* under the name “Studien zur Übersetzungsgeschichte” or “Studies on the History of Translation” sees the history of translation as a dynamic field of research that extends the boundaries of the discipline. The series offers a forum for all historical sciences moved by the translational turn. (Also) translations of translation history texts that are not yet available in German or English are welcome.

In its current disciplinary approach, the history of translation is predominantly English-speaking, which contrasts sharply with the history of translation, where at different times in different regions different languages were important as

source or target languages. If the thesis is correct that the present time is already transculturally shaped and that this process will continue and intensify, how can it be that the majority of academic texts are only available in English? – This is a question that we as editors of *Chronotopos* must also ask ourselves again and again. Of course, there is a limit, which results from the language skills and thus from the possibilities of the editors to decide responsibly about the publication of a text in a foreign language. But the expectation that authors express their thoughts in a language that is not their primary (academic) working language creates a pressure that adds to the already existing pressure to publish. All of us who use languages other than our first language know how much easier it is to understand a foreign-language text than to produce one. Isn't it then more promising to use the modern possibilities of machine translation on the receptive side? At present, this too is not possible without restrictions. The (no longer entirely new) translation software *DeepL*, for example, offers easily accessible translations in eight languages in convincing quality. This means that no author needs to be forced into a language corset for the reception of specialist texts in these languages. At the same time, such communication could also bring older texts from pre-digital times back into the knowledge cycle. Perhaps this is also a form of Digital Humanities ... Because, as is well known, progress also depends on not forgetting what we already knew.

The same is true of the knowledge that actors in the translation process have accumulated over thousands of years. Often there are complaints about the fact that the history of translation is so difficult to pursue because it lacks documents, because these documents did not end up in archives, because much of what has been created around translation was not considered worth preserving or even worth writing down. It seemed important to us, therefore, to 1. attempt to help shape the foundations for future translation history, and 2. to offer a place in *Chronotopos* for the texts that can be described as documents of translation history.

It is the task of all translation historians to encourage a change of thinking in the institutions that provide the foundations for translation history to be written at all. However, the capacities in archives and libraries are limited. Only the inclusion of titles of works in library catalogues, the cataloguing, must be strictly regulated. In German-speaking countries, for example, this has been the case since the Prussian Instructions (1899) and the first international regulation can be found in the Paris Principles (1961). Until a few months ago, translators were not a “core area” in cataloguing, which is an area so elementary for the work of translation history, but joined a colorful group of secondary actors under the category of “contributors”, all of whom could potentially be involved in the creation of a work: “A contributor is a person who is related to an expression (e.g. editor, translator, illustrator, interpreter, music arranger, performer, director, etc.). Contributors are usually optional (not a core element).”¹

In November 2019 this was changed and a more detailed description of these “contributors” was laid down for the international RDA standard (Resource Description and Access).² The translator can now be explicitly specified in a sub-

¹ http://www.initiativefortbildung.de/pdf/2011/Wiesenmueller_RDA2011_RDA_Titelaufnahme.pdf

² To use the RDA toolkit, an annual fee of 90 EUR is charged for the German language version. https://www.informationsverbund.ch/fileadmin/shared/RDA/RDA_Toolkit_KonsortialV.pdf. The

category.³ While illustrators have moved up from the ranks of “contributors” to the ranks of “intellectual creators”, those who are responsible for the text in question in the case of translations continue to be listed under “contributors”. It remains a hope that this innovation will allow searches in catalogues for translators and translations. We as the editorial team of *Chronotopos* are grateful for all suggestions, tips and information on improvements in securing and preserving translation historical sources. A transnational overview of the developments in this field could be useful for everyone in order to bundle corresponding initiatives.

UNESCO's *Index Translationum*, an important work in the history of translation, which has recorded translations from all over the world since 1932, has not been continued for ten years now. Even though it would certainly be possible to formulate shortcomings – the fact that the figures were based on reports from publishers meant that no completeness could be expected, and the format and reusability of the data made the work more difficult – the loss is great. Sometimes database projects are launched through the initiative of individuals. Erich Prunč launched *Tradok*, a database for recording translations, a good ten years ago. It emerged from a project on German-Slovenian/Croatian translations 1848–1918 and therefore contains many entries on this language pair. It is, of course, internationally oriented and designed primarily from a translation studies perspective, but unfortunately the entry of new data is stagnating. Also worth mentioning is the project that Herbert van Uffelen, a Dutch scholar at the University of Vienna, initiated: the *Digital Library and Bibliography of Literature in Translation* (DLBT). We are grateful for all information on other similar national and international projects, in regards to creating synergy effects and networking.

At best, translation history and translation historians succeed in helping to shape decisions about which sources and information are available to them and their colleagues and in what form. In this way, the future of the history of translation can be influenced. But translation historians also have innovative tasks to perform with regard to the past. It is important to recognize the sources and materials that are potentially available for translation history as such and to use them from new perspectives to gain new insights. Both require a high degree of creativity. We would therefore like to invite our authors and readers to contribute to these processes by sending us “Documents of Translation History”. A restriction in the form of a precise definition of what we mean by this should deliberately not be made, so as not to limit the diversity of your ideas.

The section begins in this issue of *Chronotopos* with the preface of a Shakespeare translation that appeared in Italy in 1924. It is intended to illustrate the Chronotopos of translation and the idea of the task of translation within it. This document appears in *Chronotopos* thanks to the initiative and work of Angela Tiziana Tarantini & Christian Griffiths.

translation rights to RDA are also sold and there is a *translation policy*:

<https://www.rdatoolkit.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/Translation%20Policy-RDA.pdf>

³ Example catalogue entries can be found here:

https://www.borromaeusverein.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Buechereiarbeit/Anleitungen/RDA_BibliothecaPlus_Bespielkatalogisate.pdf.

We hope you enjoy reading this text as well as all the other contributions,
your *Chronotopos* editors

This text was translated from German into English through machine translation
and post-edited by the editorial team.