

The Problems of the Receiving of Japanese Literature in Thailand

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1. Introduction

It is widely accepted with substantial evidence that the present civilization in Thailand concerning almost in every aspect of our daily lives is under the Japanese influence in some way or other. Some bodies even go so far that without Japanese influence in the material, we would probably become quite nude or primitive. Nonetheless, in terms of literature, it has paid no role at all in the evolution of Thai literature. Worse still Japanese literature which has been regarded as an indispensable part of Japanese culture has been so far unfortunately ignored and its literary value overlooked by most Thai people. This may due to the fact that the receiving Japanese culture in Thailand has been quite partial, mostly confined in material only. Anyhow, the event in 1968 that Kawabata Yasunari got the Nobel Prize in literature and Mishima Yukio, a famous Japanese author committed suicide in late 1970 became the great news throughout the free world. In certain degree, these 2 events helped the Japanese literature become famous abroad. Thanks to these, some foreigners became interested in Japanese literature. In Thailand, similar phenomenon occurred. When talking about Japanese literature,

some Thai people associate it with these events immediately. Their curiosity is stimulated and some become interested in Japanese literature so far ignorant accordingly.

This small event quoted above, in certain sense, help we Thai readers justify ourselves that the ignorance of Japanese literature is due to the lack of information rather than the lack of interest.

This article is written with an attempt to provide some informations about the historical process of introducing Japanese literature to Thailand and also to analyze the problems of receiving Japanese literature. Also to point out the reasons Japanese literature is not fully appreciated.

2. The process of introducing Japanese literature to Thailand

Talking about introducing Japanese literature to Thailand, some journalists and professional translators had contributed a great deal by translating some famous Japanese novels or short stories from the English versions under some (Japanese) friends' advice. ' Namiko ' (Hototogisu written by Tokutomi Roka (Kenjiro) in 1898 - 9) trans-

lated in 1954 by Amarawari was probably the first Japanese long novel translated into Thai language. It is the pioneered work translated from an English and published serially in the magazine called 'Narinat' and later in book form.

This novel when first serially published in the magazine, was somewhat estimated but not widely appreciated even though the theme shares some similar characteristics with some traditional Thai family, dealing about the tragedy between the mother in-law and daughter in-law. The novel was published and republished into a book form easily availed even now, but unfortunately ignored and almost no literary critic pays any attention to it at all. It will probably be doomed to disappear without being noticed in the near future. Anyhow, in terms of introducing Japanese literature to Thai readers, it should be recognized as a pioneered work and a well translated one.

Later on, some other Japanese novels and short stories were translated and most of them met quite the same fate as that of 'Namiko', that is, failed to appeal the Thai readers in general. However, on the process of translation, there is an exception that is the translation of 'Rashomon'. This 'Rashomon' is the movie produced by combining 'Rashomon' and 'In the Grove' originally written by Akutagawa Ryunosuke together. The movie was a great success and became internationally well-known. Kukrit Pramoj, a well established Thai writer, translated this famous 'Rashomon' into Thai language. And due to Kukrit's unshakable position in the literary world, Thai version 'Rashomon' became well-known among Thai intellectuals immediately. It is really a special case. But it was not widely read, It has been referred to like a legend in the process of translation. This phenomenon can be explained with the phrase that 'the famous person will make the work well-known even though not widely read and really appreciated'.

As for the direct translation from the original Japanese literary works, it began only about ten years ago, mostly done by Japanese language teachers who used to study in Japan or the translation by the Japanese language students under those teachers' supervision.

'Kappa' written by Akutagawa Ryunosuke and the first collection of Japanese short stories published by the Department of Japanese, University of Chulalongkorn in 1978 and 1977 were probably the very first direct translation.

So far about 20 novels and almost hundreds of short stories as roughly listed below have been translated. Most of them are the literary works of Japanese modern literature. And some of them are the dramas of premodern period.

List of Translated Japanese Literary Works

1. Novels :	translated in
1. Kappa by Akutagawa Ryunosuke	1978
2. Hototogisu by Tokutomi Roka	1954
3. Botchan by Natsume Soseki	1983
4. Kanikosen by Kobayashi Takiji	1978
5. The Sound of Waves by Mishima Yukio	1974
6. The Burmese Harp by Takeyama Michio	? and 1988
7. The sound of Mountain by Kawabata Yasunari	?
8. The Snow Country by Kawabata Yasunari	1972 and 1985
9. The Thousand Cranes by Kawabata Yasunari	?
10. The Sleeping Beauty by Kawabata Yasunari	1987
11. The Old City by Kawabata Yasunari	1988

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| | translated in | The second volume; | published in 1979 |
| 12. The Wild Geese | 1985 | 10. Inbaifu | by Hayama Yoshiki |
| by Mori Ogai | | 11. Fukin to Uo no Machi | by Hayashi Fumiko |
| 13. The Broken Commandment | 1985 | 12. Rubensu no Giga | by Horii Tatsuo |
| by Shimazaki Toson | | | |
| 14. Gogo no Eiko | 1977 | The third volume; | published in 1979 |
| by Mishima Yukio | | | |
| 15. A personal Matter (Kojintaiken) | 1982 | 1. Nobishitaku | by Shimazaki Toson |
| by Oe Kenzaburo | | 2. Spein-Inu no Ie | by Sato Haruo |
| 16. Black Rain (Kuroi Ame) | unclear | 3. Shoten | by Uchida Hyakken |
| by Ibuse Masuji | | 4. Yanagi no Ito | by Tsuboi Sakae |
| 17. Doctor's Wife | 1986 | 5. Yane no Ue no Sawan | by Ibuse Masuji |
| by Ariyoshi Sawako | | 6. Osan | by Dazai Osamu |
| 18. The Setting Sun (Shayo) | unclear | 7. Yume Juya | by Natsume Soseki |
| by Dazai Osamu | | 8. Panic | by Kaiko Takeshi |
| etc. | | 9. Suzuki to Okose | by Agawa Hiroyuki |
| | | 10. Iyagarase Nenrei | by Niwa Fumio |

2. Short Stories;

The first volume; published in 1977

1. Haru no Tori by Kunikida Doppo
2. Takasebune by Mori Ogai
3. Seigiha by Shiga Naoya
4. Kozo no Kamisama by Shiga Naoya
5. Daruma by Mushanokoji Saneatsu
6. Irefuda by Kikuchi Hiroshi
7. Mikkan by Akutagawa Ryunosuke
8. Toshishun by Akutagawa Ryunosuke
9. Izu no Odoriko by Kawabata Yasunari
10. Sanshouo by Ibuse Masuji
11. Kyarameru Koba Kara by Sata Ineko
12. Hashire Merosu by Dazai Osamu

The second volume; published in 1979

1. Sanshodayu by Mori Ogai
2. Hitofusa no Budo by Arishima Takeo
3. Boku no Boshi by Arishima Takeo
4. Kaji no Pochi by Arishima Takeo
5. Aki by Akutagawa Ryunosuke
6. Kashoku no Hi by Ozaki Kazuo
7. Suigetsu by Kawabata Yasunari
8. Hae by Yokomitsu Riichi
9. Akagaeru by Shimaki Kensaku

The above 3 volumes were translated by the students of Japanese Department Chulalongkorn University under the supervision of Asst Prof. Piyachit Tadang, and some were her own translations.

The fourth volume; published in 1980

1. Patriotism by Mishima Yukio
2. Swaddling Clothes by Mishima Yukio
3. Waterfall by Kawabata Yasunari
4. Hydrangea by Nagai Kafu
5. In a Small Art Gallery by Nagai Tatsuo
6. Down Town by Hayashi Fumiko
7. The Camella by Satomi Ton
8. The Hateful Age by Niwa Fumio

The fifth volume; published in 1979

1. The Izu Dancer by Kawabata Yasunari
2. In the Grove by Akutagawa Ryunosuke
3. The Death Mask by Kawabata Yasunari
4. Three Million Yen by Mishima Yukio
5. The Pearl by Mishima Yukio
6. Seibei's Gourds by Shiga Naoya
7. The Thief by Tanizaki Jan's ichiro

The sixth volume; published in 1971

1. Rashomon by Akutagawa Ryunosuke
2. Yabu no Naka by Akutagawa Ryunosuke
3. Geisha and Morito by Akutagawa Ryunosuke
4. Hokyoni no Shi by Akutagawa Ryunosuke
etc.

3. Drama or Play:

1. The Love Suicides at Sonezaki
2. The Battle of Coxinga
3. The Uproot Pine
4. Love Suicides at Amijima
5. The Bunraku Handbook
6. The Madman on the Roof
7. Chichi Kaeru (Father comes back)
etc.

4. Others:

1. Contemporary Haiku
2. Kojiki (translated from a simplified one)
3. Hojoki
4. Home Coming (not published in book)
5. Semento no Naka no Tegami
6. Japanese Folk stories (about 80)
7. I am a cat (first chapter)
8. Rakuyotei
9. Isumin
etc.

Thanks to the above mentioned translated works, most Thai readers who do not have Japanese language ability to enable them to read the original works, or lack the chance to read the English translated version, can acquire their knowledge about Japanese literature fragmentarily, though most of the works listed above are not translated by the person specialized in the field.

3. *Subjects on Japanese literature offered in universities in Thailand.*

Besides translated works, Subjects on Japanese literature offered in the universities is another channel through which Japanese literature

is introduced to the students of the institutes. This is the most systematical way of introduction, though it is only limited to a few students registered in the subjects. Some courses are taught by using original texts with the purpose to enable students majoring in Japanese language to understand and appreciate the literary value from the texts. And for the purpose of reference, the subjects are listed up as below:

Subjects on Japanese Literature Offered in University level in Thailand

At the present time there are almost 30 courses in Japanese literature included in the curriculums of the universities in Thailand. Some are offered as a full course concerning about Japanese literature in certain aspects, and some are being taught as a part of other subjects such as part of Oriental culture and civilization and so on.

There are about 10 courses included in the curriculum of Japanese Department Chulalongkorn University.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. 124-331 Japanese Modern Poem | 1 |
| 2. 124-332 Japanese Modern Poem | 2 |
| 3. 124-361 History of Japanese Literature | 1 |
| 4. 124-362 History of Japanese Literature | 2 |
| 5. 124-421 Modern Novel | 1 |
| 6. 124-422 Modern Novel | 2 |
| 7. 124-441 Japanese Drama | 1 |
| 8. 124-442 Japanese Drama | 2 |
| etc. | |

One subject on Japanese literature is being offered in the curriculum of the Faculty of Political Science Chulalongkorn University.

1. 110-161 Evolution of Oriental Literature.

9 subjects on Japanese literature included in the curriculums of the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University, most of them are being taught as a part of other subjects.

1. TU 115 Man and Literature
2. TU 117 Eastern Civilization
3. JP 256/266 History of Japanese Literature
4. JP 366 Japanese Classics
5. JP 466 Modern Japanese Literary Works
6. LT 208 The Literature of Asia From Beginning to A.D.900
7. LT 209 The Literature of Asia From A.D.900 to the Present
8. LT 376 Contemporary Asian Authors
9. LT 407 Masterpieces of Asian Literature

Note; JP 256/266, JP 366 and JP 466 belong to the Department of Japanese.

4 subjects are included in the Japanese Department of Kasetsart University

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. 411 History of Japanese Literature | 1 |
| 2. 412 History of Japanese Literature | 2 |
| 3. 413 Literature in Meiji and Taisho Periods | |
| 4. 414 Literature in Showa Period | |

One subject in Silapakorn University

1. 499-251 Oriental Masterpieces

One subject in the Japanese Literature is being offered in the Japanese Section Changmai University.

1. JA 250 Japanese Literature.

Note: Japanese Section in Changmai had been established as a major course recently, more subjects in this field will be added soon.

And 3 subjects in Japanese literature are included in the private universities.

1. Japanese 11 Japanese Literature (Kirk University)
2. AR 443/4 Japanese Religion Literature 1 and 2 (Payap University)

4. Academic Writings and translations on Japanese literature

When talking about the introduction of foreign Literature, only the translation and subjects taught in the universities are not enough to entitle us to say that we have covered all the aspects concerning the introduction of those literature into our country. One thing that can not be lacking is the academic writing. In comparison, it is very few in number and occurred much later than translation which can be roughly listed as below;

Academic Writings and Translations on Japanese Literature

1. Evolution of Postwar Japanese Literature (published in 1985)
2. Japanese in Thai Literature (article, 1973)
3. Japanese Society and Literature (article, 1983)
4. An Introduction to Japanese Literature (article, 1983)
5. Japanese Modern Novels (article, 1983)
6. Kobo Abe: Japanese author with a hope to get the Nobel Prize (short article, 1977)
7. Mishima: Samurai in 1970 (short article, 1971)
8. Natsume Soseki: an author who wrote ' San-shiro ' (article, 1977)
9. Japanese Authors Who committed Suicide (article, 1974)
10. The Succession of Actors in the Kabuki World (article, 1973)
11. Ishikawa Tatsuzo and ' The Wall ' (article, 1978)
12. The Contemporary Novels of Japanese: Works of Kawabata and Mishima (article)
13. Noh: The Classical Play of Japan (article, 1974)

14. The Broken Commandment: The Fate of a Burakumin calling for the Social Justice (article, 1978)
 15. The Literature of ' Burakumin ' in Japan (article, 1978)
 16. Literature of ' A - Bomb ' (article, 1979)
 17. Brief History of Japanese Literature (article, 1979)
 18. Ibuse Masuji and the Novel called ' Black Rain ' (article, 1978)
 19. ' Book World ' (Thai Literary Journal) Look from the Side of Japanese (article, 1979) (translated from an article written by Mr Hino Noriyuki)
 20. Japanese Proletarian Literature (article, 1978)
 21. Japanese Folktales (article, 1979)
 22. An Introduction to Noh (article, 1980)
 23. Saikaku and His Contributions (short research, 1980)
 24. Soseki Natsume: Founder of Japanese Modern Literature (article, 1982)
 25. The Tragedy of the Author: In Case of Akutagawa Ryunosuke (article, 1977?)
 26. Society and the Author (article, 1975)
 27. Introduction to Japanese Proletarin Literture (article, 1983)
 28. Criticism on ' In the Grove ' (article, 1983)
 29. A Short Survey on Japanese Literature in Thailand (presentation in the seminar, 1984)
 30. Noh: Immortal Drama of Japan (article, 1981)
 31. Dazai Osamu: Life and Works (article, 1984)
 32. History of Literature (part of a text book, 1979)
 33. Criticism on ' Evolution of Postwar Japanese Literature ' (book review, 1985)
 34. Noh of Japan not of Western (article, 1985)
 35. Inhuman Human Being (article, 1985)
 36. Talk with Ooe Kenzaburo (article, 1985)
 37. Sakura in the Land of Rising Sun 1 (article, 1985)
 38. Sakura in the Land of Rising Sun 2 (article, 1985)
 39. The Wheel of Present Human Life (article, 1985)
 40. My Individualism (article, 1985)
 41. Sorry for being Born as a Human Being (article, 1985)
 42. Rashomon (article, 1985)
 43. The Identity of Human Being (article, 1985)
 - *34 - 43 are compiled in the book called ' Look at the Land of Sakura ' written by the same person, Dr. Preya Inkapirom
 44. Evolution and some Characters of Japanese Literature (article, 1986)
 45. Kyogen (article, 1987)
 46. Noh and Kyogen (article, 1988)
etc.
- Translated Academic Articles**
47. Japanese Literature (translated from the article written by Prof. Dr. Donald Keene, Thai version published in 1986)
 48. Ukigumo: The First Modern Novel in Japan (presentation of Prof. Kensuke Tamai published in Thai-Japanese Studies Journal Jan-Apr 1979)
 49. Giri of Japanese (translated from the lecture note of Prof. Kensuke Tamai, published in ' Research Papers by Thai Japanese Alumni, 1979)
 50. Mishima Yukio: Hero in the Novels or Patriot?? (translated from the lecture note of Prof. Kensuke Tamai, published in ' The Journal of Faculty of Liberal Arts ' 1976)
 51. 2 Great Authors in Heian: Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shonagon (translated from the article written by Edwar G. Seidensticker, published in Thai - Japanese Studies Journal, August 1982).
 52. Sugawara no Michisane: Enshrined God of Knowledge (translated from the article written by Ms. Kazuko Hoshino, published

in Thai-Japanese Studies Journal, August 1982)

53. Zeami and the Training for the Noh Drama in Various Age (translated from a part of Fushikaden, published in Thai-Japanese Studies Journal, August 1982)
etc.,

5. The evaluation and appreciation of Thai translated Japanese literature

As shown in the list, quite a few representative literary works in Modern Japanese literature have been translated into Thai language. Some are easily available. But with very few exception like ' Madogiwa no Tottochn ' and ' Shogun ' (both of them are not appeared in the list as they are not regarded as literary works) the latter was written by James Clavell, a foreigner, most of those translations are not widely read, not to mention the study and appreciation. This may be due to 3 big factors.

1. The works are not well-translated, the translator failed to convey the essence and value of those literary works.
2. Thai readers lack the background of Japanese culture quite unique and different from that of Thai.
3. The attitude of Thai readers' reading habits paying too much attention to excitement of the stories.

At present, many Thai children and adults as well having chance to watch cartoon movies shown on T.V. or to read translated Japanese cartoon books flooding in the book stands, can obtain certain knowledge about Japan, Japanese people and their philosophical thinking expressed through these cartoons. Together with the entertainment, things about Japanese are absorbed and highly appreciated by Thai readers. On the contrary, Japanese literature with literary value does not meet the similar acclaim. This can probably reflect some things about the receiving Japanese literature in Thailand, that is the tran-

slation is done in small scale in comparison with cartoon books, and most Thai reader prefer reading for pleasure and entertainment rather than searching some knowledge through serious reading.

' Namiko ' (Hototogisu) is a popular novel in the later part of Meiji period dealing with the family tragedy with the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 as the background. The novel was reprinted 190 times during its first appearance in the literary world in 1898 to 1927. It was the debut work of the author, and the readers accepted it with great acclaim throughout the later part of Meiji period. Some female readers read the novel in tears out of the sympathy because of the fate of Namiko, the heroine who was deprived of her beloved husband when he was absent from home fighting in the war occurred in Korea against the soldiers of Ching Dynasty. She caught an incurable T.B. and was forced to divorce by her mother-in-law during her husband absence. With the great sorrow from the shock, she died lonely afterwards while crying for her husband and screaming painfully that ' ...It was a mistake to be born a woman ' before taking the last breath. Takeo her husband learned about her death with a great shock as he loved her heartily. But his unshakable love toward her could help nothing to save her from the tragedy. He had tried but failed in vain because of the human fate and the power of the traditional family still remained in the Meiji period in spite of the modernization.

Masaoka Shiki (1867 - 1902), a famous reformer on Japanese poem also shed tears while reading this novel and wrote a haiku describing his feeling at the moment.

' Beside the stove
Reading Hototogisu
Hot tears running down '

At present, this novel becomes quite outdated, seldom read and criticized, remains only as a part of the past of Japanese literary event in the Meiji period. This may be due to the fact that such

a tragedy can be hardly found in the present society in Japan. Big family still exists in certain farming area, but mother - in - law are not so powerful and barbarious as before, and the disease leading to the heroine's tragedy is no longer incurable.

Judging from the story of ' Namiko ', such a theme is quite appealing to Thai readers as it is still a favorite theme that many Thai authors like to write about, I am quite sure that if ' Namiko ' had been promoted by some literary critic, its value would have been realized and would have been a little more popular than it was.

On the contrary, some Japanese literature when translated or even before being translated are over estimated without any critical analysis, which can hardly be said a correct way of appreciating the literary works. ' Rashomon ' is one of such examples, besides, ' Kanikosen ' (Factory Ship) written by Kobayashi Takiji, a famous proletarian author in 1929 during the peak of proletarian movement and translated to Thai in 1978 is a typical case. It has been over estimated by those who are fond of this kind of proletarian

works both in Japan and abroad. ' Factory Ship ' is one of a very few proletarian literary works that can be regarded as a successful novel with literary value. It reflects the exploitation of capitalism in 1920s in Japan. Kobayashi Takiji, the author, was arrested and tortured to death in 1933 by the police of Facism at that time. The novel was once referred to as a tool for stimulating the anti-government movement in Japan by leftists. When translated into Thai language, it received a big acclaim from Thai activists. In Japan it is still regarded as a classic of 1920s but not so highly estimated any longer.

To ignore or to over estimate certain foreign literary works will only estrange ourselves from their real value. It should be considered as a misleading way of receiving the foreign literature. To be too much preoccupied with certain concept and lack the chance to read more for comparison will make it difficult to develop an unbiased reading habit: necessary means to help us deepen and widen the knowledge about the foreign people through their literature.



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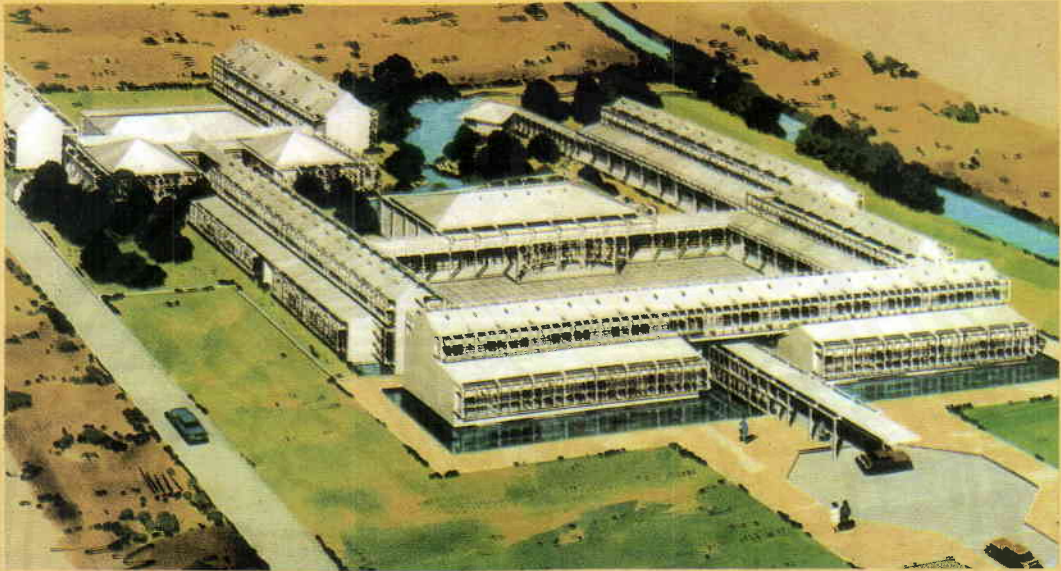
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