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Ruiz Rosendo, L.; Baigorri-Jalón, J. (eds.) (2023). *Towards an Atlas of the History of Interpreting: Voices from Around the World*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 318 pages. ISBN 978-9-027-21344-0.

Being one of the most spoken languages worldwide, Spanish has influenced the way people connect and communicate in society over the course of history. *Towards an Atlas of the History of Interpreting: Voices from Around the World* is originated from a collective project funded by the prestigious Fonds National Suisse (FNS) symposium “Research on the History of Interpreting: Voices from around the World” held in Geneva in October 2020. It is intended for a wide spectrum of audiences in linguistic history, applied linguistics, socio-linguistics, translation and interpreting studies, and beyond.

The volume takes readers on a wonderful tour from the perspective of a ‘dragoman’ - a language interpreter in ancient times. As an ancient human practice, the profession of language interpreting has appeared in a few historical records (Pöchhacker, 2022: 28; Herren, Rüesch & Sibille, 2012: 51). As dragomen, our primary role is to engage in interlingual transfers and bridge across meaning-making systems during interlingual and inter-semiotic oral-gestural exchanges as ‘go-between’ between the present and the past (Hartog, 2014: 206). However, the historical evolution of the ancient profession has long escaped the public eye, partly owing to the invisibility of language translators and interpreters (Venuti, 2008). With a sense of mission to unveil the hidden history of ancient human activities in this profession, the edited volume collects historical records, personal accounts, stories, and narratives from various geographical locations in various social traditions and cultural contexts.

The book has a clear five-part structure, each dealing with a specific geographical region. These regions are the Americas, Africa, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. It consists of twelve finely crafted chapters authored by thirteen contributors from a rich diversity of research backgrounds, such as history, sociology, cultural studies, anthropology, psychology, and geography. Each chapter unveils context-specific records in a certain historical period for a given purpose in a particular language. Historical records and accounts covered in these chapters include indigenous language interpreters during the Portuguese expansion through Africa from 1415 to 1600, Maya interpreters on trial in the seventeenth-century Spanish Empire, Muslim interpreters in Colonial Senegal from 1850 to 1920, Mapudungun and the Chilean State interpreters during 1890 to 1930, interpreters for in uniform during the Pacific War and occupation of Japan, Taiwanese language interpreters in the war criminal proceedings, indigenous interpreters across Australia and the Pacific. The themes explored in the book involve linguistic change, social adaptation, role ethics, cultural mediation, language empowerment, identities, affects, expansion, and colonisation. All chapters link up to a more grounded historical mapping of the profession of interpreting.

With a specific focus on the historical practice of interpreting in the Americas, Chapters 1 and 2 touch on different contexts of interpreting in the colonial period. Chapter 1 examines the nuanced concept of trust and ethics embedded in the interpreting process of a trial in the colonial justice system. Drawing on a thorough analysis of the positionality of the Maya interpreter in the historical records, Cunill underscores the complex issue of loyalty and trust, shedding light on the bureaucratic and political dimensions of the interpreting profession in a sensitive historical period marked by the expansion of Spanish Empire through indigenous territories. Chapter 2 shifts our attention to the consolidation of the Chilean State over the Araucania. Resorting to official reports, documentary sources, and personal accounts of scientists and visitors, Payàs and Ulloa unveil the political and ideological utility of the profession as a strategic tool to control any resistance from various parties during the interactions with the military, the administrative judiciary, the scientific and the educational-missionary. The issue of empowerment brought by the knowledge of the language, needs, and professional status in society is critically reflected.

Then Chapters 3 and 4 move on to the historical interpreting activities in Africa. In Chapter 3, drawing on historical records and chronicles as well as missionary literature, Sarmiento anatomises the concept of mediation and interpreter’s agency perceived by interpreting service users in the intercultural and interlingual transfer during the Portuguese expedition era. The analyses indicated that the user’s perceptions of the trustworthiness of the interpreted utterances fluctuated as the interpreter’s positionality shifted. In Chapter 4, differentiating from the European-centred narratives, M’Bayo dissects the records and narratives of indigenous African voices in history. These records and narratives point to the power asymmetry between the French colonisers and

the colonised Africans and the empowering role the language interpreter plays in his or her positionality and agency, which serve to reshape the power dynamics through construed identities.

Chapters 4 and 5 concentrate on the role of interpreters in Asia during the Pacific War. In Chapter 4, drawing on documents and writings by Christian linguists and missionaries, Takeda explores the multi-faceted roles the Christian missionaries and their children served as language translators and interpreters, informants, English instructors, and interpreter trainers. In Chapter 5, based on archives and literature related to the military operations in the occupied Chinese territories during the war, the author examines the role of Taiwanese language interpreters played in shaping the linguistic identity during postwar trials.

Chapters 6 and 7 focus on the history of the interpreting profession in Australia and the South Pacific. In Chapter 6, Rademaker delves into the role of interpreters in the histories of missionaries and identifies common traits and differences between interpreters in Australia and counterparts in the South Pacific through the lens of the interpreter's autonomy in the process of cultural engagement. Drawing on case studies of three Aboriginal interpreters, the author concludes that the interpreters are expected to serve as essential intermediaries, yet interpreters in the South Pacific play a more visible role than in Australia.

Chapters 8 and 9 shift our attention to Europe. In Chapter 8, Rothman analyses two cases of language interpreters in the Venetian diplomatic residency and explores the intricacies of loyalty and habitus shaped through the interpreter's subjective perspectives and emergent technologies. In Chapter 9, Wolf conducts in-depth analyses of memoirs to map out the history of the interpreting profession through the lens of interpreters as the anti-hero. The notion of the anti-hero is defined as 'a person acting in inhuman circumstances in contexts of power and conflict, often connected with situations of violence' (p.239). Drawing on Smith and Watson's (2010) and Guzman's (2013) theoretical framework of the translator's archive, the author examines the interpreter's agency and social situatedness in politically engaged interpreting activities. In Chapter 10, Footitt analyses the role of language interpreters, professional associations, national press media, and the judiciary in conflict and post-conflict scenarios in Afghanistan and emphasises the importance of instituting a Europe-wide system for the protection of local interpreters in war-afflicted regions, which has further implications for immigration and asylum seeking. The concluding chapter summarises key findings and offers critical reflections on the interpreting profession and the role of language interpreters in time and space.

The interdisciplinary book draws on numerous historical records and narratives and elucidates the ethical dilemmas in historical events across different geographical locations. The intellectual inquiries fall into several categories: (1) the roles and duties of interpreters in peaceful exchanges, trade, and diplomacy, (2) the complex issue of agency, identity, allegiance, and trust in the interpreter-mediated discourse in war and conflict contexts, and (3) asymmetrical power relations in colonial empires, dissemination of culture, ideologies, and religions during military operations and missionary activities.

Overall, the book makes an invaluable contribution to enriching our understanding of the evolving roles and identities of interpreters in a new horizon marked by a series of significant changes in our time. These social changes inevitably impact how languages are used in society over time and how language interpreters are perceived by different social actors in peace and conflict scenarios. Thus, the interdisciplinary book is recommended as a useful reference to both academic and professional readers in linguistic anthropology and beyond.

## References

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