

The Colloquial Translation and its Relation to the Idea of the Community by Ogyu Sorai and Motoori Norinaga in Eighteenth-Century Japan

I will give a presentation about the translation of ancient Asian classics by Ogyu Sorai(荻生徂徠) and Motoori Norinaga(本居宣長), who played crucial roles in the Japanese intellectual history of the eighteenth century as philologists. One of their topics is the disparity between themselves and the ancient community, which is regarded as ideal by them. In order to challenge the difficulties, they try to understand the classical languages in the level of their daily conversation rather than through the traditional annotations and commentaries. They, therefore, stress the importance to translate the refined languages of the classics into their colloquial languages. The colloquial translation of classics was invented by Ogyu and Motoori in Japan.

While Both of Ogyu and Motoori attempt to identify themselves with the ancient people through the colloquial translation, its theoretical value is totally different from each other. In short, Ogyu regards it as a mere step to commit himself to the world the classics describe, on the other hand, for Motoori, it is an indispensable path to his ideal status. I believe that the difference leads to their different notions of communities. In the following, I will discuss the theoretical position of colloquial translation in both of them and their view of communities.

Ogyu is a Confucian scholar in Japan, therefore, the classics for him are the Chinese ancient texts. He blames preceding Confucians because of their method of reading the classical texts. Those who read Chinese classical texts in Japan transfer the structure of Chinese language into that of Japanese language and vocalize the text according to the rules of the Japanese classical grammar. The transformation looks like translation, but, according to Ogyu, it "prevents readers from directly facing the original Chinese writings", because there are two distance from the language of the age of Ogyu, that is, from Chinese to Japanese, and from classical Japanese to modern Japanese. Then, Ogyu eliminates the distances by adopting the method of colloquial translation, by which he translates the ancient Chinese texts into the expression of speech in his age.

At the same time, because of the theoretical premise of translation, he posits the unity of Chinese ancient language and Japanese modern language. He is aware of the absence of the unity of language in his contemporary age, but he postulates the unities by the introduction of translation. For translation is the strategy in interpretation that assumes two independent languages. Furthermore, Ogyu posits the deference of the interior and the exterior between the two language unities, and believes that the interior language is immediately comprehended among people who share the language, that is, he generates the notion of "native speakers".

Sakai in *Voices of the Past*(1992), suggests that Ogyu's method of the translation derives from phonocentrism. Ogyu has the notion that the writing is an obstacle to the transparent understanding of the speech. Thereby, he tries to translate the ancient Chinese language into the colloquial language, by which ordinary people communicate with each other in their daily life. The colloquial translation does not need another translation any more as the traditional reading method does, because they are assured of the complete understanding through the translated language, that is, it is regarded as a direct way to the understanding of the original speech, which is inscribed in the ancient Chinese texts.

The final goal of Ogyu, however, is not the vocalization of ancient Chinese texts through translation. His purpose of translation is to reach the original plenitude of the ancient China, therefore he thinks it is necessary to identify himself with the ancients of China in the sense of performance. He requires his students to speak and act in the same manner with the ancients of China. Finally, Ogyu conceives of the translation and language itself as unnecessary after mastering the manners of the ancients in every situation, that is, when becoming "native speakers". The most remarkable feature of Ogyu's argument is that whoever can become "the native speakers".

Therefore, the community Ogyu posits does not exclude anyone theoretically. According to him, everyone can master the ancient Chinese manner and norms through the training of translation and pronunciation of Chinese. In other words, everybody can commit himself or herself to the community. The theoretical position of the translation is ascribed to a kind of universalism of the community Ogyu postulates.

Motoori Norinaga is a representative scholar of national learning in Japan. Opposed to Ogyu, he regards the ancient Japanese texts as classics. His strategy of interpretation of the Japanese classics, however, coincides with that of Ogyu. Among his writings, we can find out a book named *Kokin-shu Tokagami*(『古今集遠鏡』). It is colloquial translation of *Kokin-wakashu*(『古今和歌集』) as a whole, which is the first imperial anthology of the waka collected in tenth century. This kind of translation of Japanese classics had not existed before his translation, if anything, there had been only partial translations or comments. In the introduction of the book, Motoori describes the purpose of the practice by using a metaphor of tasting foods as follows:

For beginners of reading classics, even if the annotation is very detail, the reading is as if they listen to others who say that the food tastes sweet, or spicy, therefore it is very difficult to understand the content of the classics. But through the colloquial translation of the classics, the translated expression is equal to what they think in their mind, as if they taste the food and appreciate it by themselves. Then, the refined language of the past goes into their stomach and they can appreciate the expression of the poem exactly.

(うひまなびなどのためには、ちうさくは、いかにくはしくときたるも、物のあぢはひを、

甘しからしと、人のかたるを聞たらむやうにて、…中略…さとりえがたき物なるを、さ  
とびごとに訳(ウツ)したるは、たゞにみづからさ思ふにひとしくて、物の味を、みづか  
らなめて、しれるがごとく、いにしへの雅言(ミヤビゴト)みな、おのがはらの内の物と  
しなれゝば、一うたのこまかなる心ばへの、こよなくたしかにえらるゝことおほきぞか  
し)

As well as Ogyu, Motoori denounces the method of reading classics relying on the preceding annotations and commentaries, and he insists to understand the meaning of the classics through colloquial translation.

From the view point of the present idea, it seems to be natural to use colloquial translation for interpreting classics. However, at least in the history of the interpretation of Japanese classics, Motoori is the first person who adopts the strategy of the colloquial translation. Motoori as the first translator of Japanese classics in Japan is closely related with himself as the scholar who perfects the national learning, which tries to exclude the influence from Chinese spirit upon the Japanese classics and to seek the "pure" Japanese spirit in the Japanese classics. As well as the theoretical premise of Ogyu's translation, the colloquial translation of Japanese classics also leads the unities of Japanese ancient language and Japanese modern language. Therefore, it is not accidental for Motoori and his contemporary to begin to study Japanese classical grammar enthusiastically.

Thus, Motoori objectifies the ancient Japan by introducing the method of the colloquial translation and posits the community which should had existed in the past. He seems to trace the theoretical way of Ogyu and apply it to the antiquity in Japan. Actually I also evaluate so. Motoori, however, parts company with Ogyu in the point whether or not to regard the colloquial translation as a mere instrument to reach the ancient age. Motoori does not leave the colloquial translation.

Firstly, he denounces indirectly the reading method of Ogyu party. He does not believe it is possible to understand directly the Chinese ancient texts without the mediation of their colloquial language. He says that even if they pretend to understand the Chinese classics immediately as "the native speaker" does, they translate the Chinese expression secretly in their mind. That is, Motoori rejects the project of Ogyu that everyone may identify himself or herself with ancient Chinese.

Secondly, Motoori also refer to the attitude of the interpretation of Japanese classics in terms of the importance of colloquial translation. According to him, in the age of his contemporary, there is no person who know the meaning of the ancient language, because everyone only depends on the preceding annotations and commentaries in order to interpret it. He says the annotations and commentaries are "rough", that is, they only express a part of the ancient expression. In spite of them, he insists to introduce the colloquial translation.

On the basis of the statement above, I can maintain that Motoori regards the colloquial translation as the crucial way to the ancient Japan. I confirmed the correspondence

of the theoretical position of translation between Ogyu and Motoori. If Motoori believe that Japanese Confucian reach the ancient china only through the colloquial translation, Japanese national learning scholars should reach the ancient Japan only through the colloquial translation as well. Moreover, he also rejects the approach of the annotations and commentaries. Therefore, he only have the method of the colloquial translation in order to appreciate the Japanese classics.

If the reasoning above is correct, we can lead another implication of his thought. Motoori believe to reach the ancient Japan only through the *Japanese* colloquial language. The notion leads that only person whose colloquial language is Japanese can commit himself or herself to the ancient Japanese community. I think that the reason why Motoori and national learning posits "Japan" as the exclusive community only for "Japanese" derives from his theory of the colloquial translation.