

Paper Abstracts

**Panel 1: Discourses and Traditions of Translation**

Panel Chair: Wolfgang Behr (University of Zurich)

Bruno Rochette (Université de Liège)

*Terminologies of Translation in Greek and Latin*

Since Greece is a linguistically closed domain, translations of literary texts exist only for utilitarian aims and appear mainly in the peripheral areas, such as Egypt, where the contacts between languages and civilizations are close. As a result the Greek meta-language for translating is relatively poor and appears late in the history of the Greek language (especially during the Hellenistic and Roman periods). First, the family of ἑρμηνεύς (ἑρμηνεία, ἑρμηνεύω) designates the most genuine process of translation and involves a technical and scientific precision. We find mentions of interpreters (ἑρμηνεῖς) in Herodotus and Xenophon. Translation is also considered from another point of view: ἑρμηνεύς is also the prophet. Indeed, the verb ἑρμηνεύω involves not only a translation but also an explication of the text. On the other hand, in classical Greek, the most generic and most widespread verb for translating is μεταφέρω. There are a lot of other compound verbs with the prefix μετα- (“change”) with different uses and senses: μεταβάλλω, μεταγράφω, μεταφράζω.

The situation in Rome is quite different. It is not exaggerated to say that Rome is a civilization of translation. The first literary works in Latin are translations of Greek models. Throughout the history of Latin literature, from Livius Andronicus until Boethius, there have been translators. On the other hand, there is no theory of translation among the classical Latin authors. The only classical Latin author who presents such a theory is Cicero in a passage of the short treatise *De optimo genere oratorum* (14-15) written in 46 BCE. In this text, which can be considered one of the first theoretical writings on translation, Cicero uses some verbs and expressions meaning “to translate”. Cicero conceives translation according to two different points of view expressed by two Latin words: *interpres/orator*. The term *interpres* (in the etymological sense of “broker”) is to be understood in a neutral sense: it points out the translator as a simple intermediary who gives exact correspondence between the words from one language to another without taking into account the sense of the whole sentence or text. On the other hand, *orator* has a positive connotation. Cicero increases the importance of the activity of the orator because he tries not to replace one word with another, but instead to conserve two characteristics of the words, *genus* and *uis*. This theory will be developed by Christian authors, like Hieronymus, who translates the Bible. As a result, the Latin verbs to say “translate” are generally based on metaphors: a linear movement from one point to another (*interpretari* from *interpres*) to designate the literality of the translation, and a circular one (*vertere*), as in Sanskrit वृत् “to turn” for the liberty of the translator *orator* who translates, but also creates a new literary work.

Marion Eggert (Ruhr-University Bochum)

*Literary Translation in a Diglossic Environment: Sino-Korean Case Studies  
from the Late Chosŏn Period (ca. 1600-1850)*

What does „translation“ mean if it occurs between two languages that share the same cultural – if not social – space, and that are to some extent differentiated in their literary functions? What do such linguistic code switchings teach us about translation, in how far do they force us to adapt our concept of translation? What does the occurrence of translations tell us, on the other hand, about the relationship between the languages involved, and probably about change within this relationship? My presentation will attempt to tackle these

questions on the basis of linguistic transpositions between Korean language and Chinese language literary works from the late Chosŏn period. I will look primarily at mutual translations between *sijo* (a three-line Korean language short poem, or rather song-text) and Chinese-language *jueju* (k. *Chŏlgu*), but also have a look at Korean translations of Chinese novels.

Judy Wakabayashi (Kent State University)

*The Japanese Engagement with European Discourses of Translation*

The Japanese reception of and participation in European discourses of linguistic and cultural translation is to a substantial extent a reflection of the overall Japanese scholarly encounter with European (and, more broadly, Western) academic discourses, which are now a constituent part of Japanese thinking (although the reverse does not apply). Against this backdrop and the ensuing obstacles to a closer intellectual engagement, the paper examines the subset of Japanese writing on translation that specifically addresses the ideas of European translation theorists. This has taken a range of forms—from direct debates to wholesale borrowing (sometimes unacknowledged), from adaptation to occasional criticism—and embodies various attitudes, such as emulation and ambivalence. In conclusion, the paper suggests some steps toward a more discerning, reciprocal and productive relationship.

Tomáš Glanc (Humboldt University Berlin)

*Ambivalent Translatological Strategies in the Work of Roman Jakobson*

Roman Jakobson's (1896-1982) concept of translation is characterized by a tension between the notion of radical translatability and strategies of avoiding transcultural translation. The former is primarily based on the concept of association, as explicated in the work of Nikolaj Kruszewski, and asserts translatability on the level of grammar and poetics. In order to examine this aspect of translation in Jakobson's work, I analyze predominantly his late contribution to an inter-disciplinary, theoretical framework that claims the universality of linguistics and semiotics. Language is here understood as synonymous to all sign-systems, and so-called meta-languages, including even physics or mathematics, offer a structure into which any language may be translated and thus present a general linguistic capacity. Jakobson's skepticism with regard to translatability, on the other hand, is articulated in his *The Kernel of Comparative Slavic Literature* (1953), and has its roots in Jakobson's text written in late 1920s. In *The Kernel...* he establishes the idea of an autochthonous and organic unity of Slavic culture (and even of a "Slavic people"). Within this context of the history of literature and its typology, translation is rendered as a medium of import and export, yet without taking into account a broader European framework of cultural exchange and transnational communication.

My paper explores this tension in Jakobson's work: On the one hand the universality of natural languages as sign-systems; on the other hand a relatively self-contained complex of national literature that allows the ideological construct of Slavic unity in opposition to a "Western European" literature.

Ralf Müller (University of Zurich)

*On Linguistic and Cultural Translation – Towards a Semiotic Theory*

The concept of translation has gained momentum in academic discourse over the past 20 years. This is particularly visible in the cultural sciences where a paradigm shift known as the "translational turn" has been brought about, encompassing not only linguistic, but also cultural processes.

The propagation of the concept of this "turn" and the delimitation of its usage, however, has evolved without a proper theory about the concept itself. If translation is meant to name a more comprehensive concept than it is commonly applied to, i.e. the transfer of meaning from one natural language to another, then this shift demands criteria for differentiating cultural from linguistic translation, and defining exactly how encompassing

cultural translation really is. This presentation proposes a reconsideration of Roman Jakobson's theory of translation as a stepping stone to elaborate the concept of cultural translation.

Jakobson provides a threefold concept of translation based on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics: the interpretation of linguistic signs within the same language, i.e. the paraphrase; the interpretation of one system of linguistic signs through another, i.e. translation proper; and the inter-semiotic process of interpretation, i.e. the transmutation of one sign system through another. It is this third kind of interpretation that opens up the horizon of the linguistic world to the cultural world, i.e. from a limited set of dyadically organized sign systems to the entirety of linguistic and non-linguistic sign systems and their interrelated semiosis.

If cultural translation is to become more than a metaphor, then Jakobson's concept of transmutation can serve as a useful concept for elaborating it in consistence with translation proper.

## Panel 2: Knowledge Transfers

Panel Chairs: Ulrich Rudolph (University of Zurich)  
Sven Trakulhun (University of Zurich)

Hyunhee Park (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York)

### *Translations and Transliterations as Important Tools for the Transfer of Geographical Information between Medieval Chinese and Islamic Worlds*

The Chinese and the Islamic worlds, which enjoyed similar levels of cultural and economic development during the medieval period, maintained continuous contact and exchanged information with each other for centuries. Different types of travelers, including diplomats and traders, traveled to each other's places following trade routes, and returned with information about another country, which became a source for the compilation of geographical accounts about the wider world in their homeland. When the two societies enjoyed their closest diplomatic relations during the Mongol period, envoys and scholars brought books into each other's societies, which then provided direct and reliable sources for new information. However, as these societies had completely different linguistic traditions, people there had to translate books into their own languages. Translations, therefore, worked as an important tool for transferring reliably accurate geographical knowledge across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The transliteration of place names functions as an important apparatus for the transmission of geographical information. Because the two societies used considerably different writing systems, it was probably not easy for their writers to transliterate different places correctly. Many good (though not perfect) examples of transliteration found in both societies, however, show that they indeed learned exotic information about other societies, and that the information spread widely through the translations and transliterations. Both Chinese and Islamic societies could boast rich writing traditions, so that much information about each other's society moved through translations and transliterations into each other's languages. This paper will explore some of the distinctive characteristics of the translation and transliteration traditions that can be found in both China and the Islamic world in the course of transfers and exchanges of geographical knowledge when their contacts peaked during medieval times.

Eva Orthmann (Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-University Bonn)

### *The Indo-Persian Translation Movement: A Multi-faceted Phenomenon of Cultural Transmission and Adaptation*

The Indo-Persian translation movement was one of the major translation movements in Asia. From the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a huge corpus of texts has been translated from Indian languages – mainly Sanskrit, but also others – into Persian. These translations testify to the contacts and the exchange between Muslim culture and non-Muslim scholarly traditions in India. The project of translation was not limited to «practical» knowledge like mathematics, astronomy or medicine, but included also texts on epic traditions, Hinduism, Vedanta, Purana etc. In this regard, the Indo-Persian translation movement differed from the earlier Graeco-Arabic one. The translation process furthermore initiated the production of texts on non-Muslim Indian traditions directly written in Persian, both by Muslim and non-Muslim authors. Translating Indian texts into Persian did not only mean to use another language, but went along with a process of adaptation and persianisation of knowledge. The first step of persianisation consisted in the choice of an appropriate terminology. How was one to translate e.g. «atmān» (~soul) into Persian? Did the scholars rather choose «jān» or «rawān»? Or didn't they translate the term at all and only transliterated it with Arabic letters? The importance of terminology becomes all the more apparent in translations from Vedantic traditions where the scholars often resorted to Sufic technical vocabulary, thus rendering them in a very specific Islamic context. The intents and aims of such choices are still poorly understood.

The talk will begin with an overview of the translation process and its different implications. It will then shed light on the issues of terminology and glossaries and finally present some texts

belonging to the astronomical and astrological tradition which were translated in an early stage of the process.

Dagmar Schäfer (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin)

*Translated into Things: Concepts of Capability in Ming and Qing  
Scholarly and Bureaucratic Literature*

This contribution analyses how changes within bureaucratic structures relate to changing notions of work, skill and tasks during the 17th century, while the Ming collapsed and the Qing took shape, and society commercialized. The focus is on textile production. I illustrate how systematic choices impacted this eras approaches to knowing and doing and the connection scholars drew between accounting and accountability.

Mareile Flitsch (University of Zurich) & Nathalie Marseglia (University of Zurich)

*Artefacts and Tools – Knowledge – Texts: About the Translation of Material Culture  
Related Knowledge from Oral Transmission and Apprenticeship to the Written Text*

In recent years, anthropological debates on apprenticeship have substantially extended our insight into sociocultural mechanisms and techniques of practicing crafts, of learning and transmitting "making" and concepts of "doing". Respective findings have not yet been sufficiently translated into heritage research, where a practical/theoretical knowledge dichotomy seems still prevalent and shaping hegemonic discourses, research agendas and academic attentiveness. A look at most craft knowlegde heritagisation as well as at concepts of saving dying out crafts reveal problematic sides of the textual representation of practical knowlegde. This contribution will shortly sketch the problem area with particular attention to the issue of skilled practice.

### **Panel 3: Buddhist Texts and Concepts Across Asia**

Panel Chair: Raji C. Steineck (University of Zurich)

Ingo Strauch (Université de Lausanne)

#### *Traces of Translation Strategies in the Transmission of Buddhist Canonical Texts to Greater Gandhāra*

The manuscripts of Buddhist texts from the Northwest of the Indian subcontinent belong to the oldest scriptures of Buddhism. Their discovery in the middle of the 1990ies opened a new chapter in Buddhist Studies. A considerable number of these manuscripts contain canonical texts of different parts of the Buddhist canon. According to their paleographical and radiocarbon dating they were written between the first century BCE and the third century CE. Consequently, they represent a phase in Buddhist literature when formerly orally transmitted texts were for the first time committed to writing.

At the same time these texts are composed in a Middle Indian language that is distinctively different from the assumed "original" state of early Buddhist literature. In translating these texts from the so-called "Middle Gangetic" language of early Buddhism, the Gandhāran translators applied a specific language, which Richard Salomon appropriately characterized as "translationese".

Thus, the manuscripts from Gandhāra allow us to have a closer look at two "translation" processes which accompanied and strongly influenced the formation of authoritative canonical collections of Buddhist texts: the shift of transmission techniques (from orality to script), and the language shift due to the geographical spread of Buddhism on the Indian subcontinent.

It is the aim of my paper to highlight the features of this codified "translationese" on the basis of some selected canonical texts from the corpus of Gāndhārī literature.

Stefano Zacchetti (University of Oxford)

#### *Making Sense of Han Translations: Exegetical Strategies in Early Chinese Buddhist Commentaries*

Although a large part of the once substantial Buddhist exegetical literature produced in China from the 2<sup>nd</sup> through the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE is lost, a small number of early commentaries have survived, either in the canon or in (mostly fragmentary) manuscripts. These texts still constitute an invaluable source of information on how translated Indian scriptures were understood during the initial phase of Buddhist presence in China. This paper discusses the earliest Chinese Buddhist interlinear commentaries (*zhu* 注), focusing on those composed during the Three Kingdoms period (3<sup>rd</sup> century CE), and paying particular attention to the various exegetical strategies adopted by their authors.

Steven Heine (Florida International University)

#### *Transmission of the Blue Cliff Record from China to Japan: In One Night or a Thousand and One Nights?*

The *Blue Cliff Record*, often referred to as "Zen's premier work" consisting of inventive prose and capping phrase commentary by Yuanwu on one hundred kōan cases selected with verses by Xuedou in 1038, was first published in 1128 and was apparently destroyed in 1140 by Yuanwu's main disciple Dahui, according to traditional accounts, for putting too much emphasis on refined rhetoric. The text remained out of circulation until it was reconstituted from various older manuscripts through meticulous efforts that took place between 1300 and 1317. It then entered Japan in 1326 or 1329, according to Wilhelm Gundert (German translation vol. 1: 25), and was quickly appropriated and used in commentarial texts by Daitō or for landscape gardening by Musō

This paper carefully examines and deflates two persistent and oft-celebrated stories suggesting an earlier, thirteenth-century transmission of the *Blue Cliff Record* from China to Japan. One is the now famous account of Dōgen's 'One Night Copy' produced in 1227 with supernatural assistance on the eve of his return to his native country after four years of study

on the mainland. This legend could be easily dismissed except for the find in the 1930s of a manuscript long held at a Japanese Soto Zen temple of a slightly different version than the standard edition of the *Blue Cliff Record*. The other story is that Daiō, who returned from China in 1267 from studying with a poet-monk in the Yuanwu lineage to found a Japanese Rinzai school, brought a secret copy that influenced his student Daitō. However much appeal these widely mentioned accounts may still hold, there seems to be only ambiguous circumstantial and very limited textual historical evidence to indicate that the renowned Japanese masters somehow would have been able to gain access to literary materials that were otherwise unavailable in Chinese Zen circles at the time.

Jörg Plassen (Ruhr University Bochum)

*Translation and Conceptual Blending: A Case from Colonial Korea*

Since medieval times, the use of “philosophically biased” translation equivalents has not only influenced the understanding of texts translated from Sanskrit or Prakrit in the Chinese reception of Buddhism, but also allowed for a commentary literature which negotiated and further developed the newly imported knowledge against the backdrop of autochthonous hermeneutics. This “blending” (Fauconnier/Turner) of various discourses, brought about by intertextual interferences due to the use of certain translation equivalents, in most cases occurred rather inadvertently.

The Korean Buddhist reformer Manhae Han Yongun (1879-1944), however, charged political terms translated by his East Asian contemporaries from Western literature such as /p'yôngdûng/ (equality) or /chayu/ (freedom) with Buddhist meanings in a very conscious manner. Thus, in the first case Manhae refers the reader directly to the traditional meaning of the translation term, while in the second case he contrasts its modern usage with what a Buddhist notion of “freedom” would look like. Both approaches result in a reading that takes up modern terms from the political domain and infuses them with a traditional religious frame of reference.

#### Panel 4: Media Translations

Panel Chair: Andrea Riemenschneider (University of Zurich)

Brett de Bary (Cornell University)

*Translation Theory, Film, The Post-Colonial*

My paper will examine exchanges, transpositions, and citations between the video work of the young *zainichi* artist Soni Kum and Nagisa Oshima's celebrated 1968 film, *Death by Hanging* from the perspective of translation theory and post-colonial theory. As explicated by Japanese critic Ikeuchi Yasuko, a verse of poetry written by the poet Yu Chihwan when Korea was under Japanese colonial rule circulates with different inflections between Kum's and Oshima's work, alluding both to the struggle of Korean poets who were forbidden to write in their own language during the colonial era, as well as the processes of translation and retranslation of these works undertaken by *zainichi* poets in the postwar period. At the intersection of Kum's and Oshima's work loom enormous and still vital questions about redress for crimes committed under Japanese imperialism. Kum's work, via Ikeuchi, suggests some new interpretations of Oshima that stress translation as a fundamental structure through which to acknowledge and address indebtedness to the past.

Pheng Cheah (University of California, Berkeley)

*Rilke in the Sundarbans: World Heritage Preservation and the Unworlding of the Subaltern World in Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide*

This paper argues that Amitav Ghosh's novel, *The Hungry Tide*, is an example of world literature in the robust normative sense. It focuses on the novel's transformative use of Rilke's *Duino Elegies* to re-world the subaltern world of the Sundarban islands, which is threatened with destruction by global flows of funds for world heritage preservation and Northern environmental movements as they become aligned with global capitalist interests and state policies of economic development.

Helena Wu (University of Zurich)

*The Travelling of Jianghu and its Cinematic Translation*

Literally meaning "rivers and lakes," *jianghu* (江湖) is mostly taken as an unsettling concept in Chinese literature, cinema and culture throughout the course of history. *Jianghu* inscribes a myriad of different worlds such as the fantastical world of Chinese martial arts, the criminal realm of the triad societies, an anarchic condition beyond the reach of government, a mythical world "out there" and so on. With an eye to this, my paper sets to explore the cinematic translation of *jianghu*. By unfolding different stagings of *jianghu* in several selected films for analysis, the paper explores how *jianghu* is represented, interpreted and hence translated through different subjects and objects. Without any fixated meaning and usage, every translation of *jianghu* indeed leads to a subsequent transformation of the term, thus opening up further possibilities of multiple interpretations as well as democratizing the term in both its meanings and usages.

Jing Tsu (Yale University)

*Alphabetism in Chinese*

In the late nineteenth century, the Chinese writing system embarked on a path of unprecedented change. In the spirit of scientific thinking, language reformers, inventors, and pedagogues seized on the Chinese character script as a possible medium of technological infrastructure. Swayed by the idea that a universal language in the modern world depended on quick access instead of cultural prestige, they aimed to reorganize the Chinese script from the inside out to match the alphabetic writing system in logic and efficiency. At the center of this movement in the twentieth century was the growing field of "Chinese character index method" (Hanzi jianzifa) that gained wide momentum in the 1920s and 1930s. It studied and proposed the different ways in which the Chinese characters can be accurately and logically

arranged, disassembled, and recomposed. This paved the way for indigenous typewriting technology, classification systems, library cataloguing systems, and--most recently--Chinese input methods in computing software. A revolution has been underway, and it has aimed, for more than 130 years, to supersede alphabetism. This paper analyzes and assesses that prospect.

Sarah Fraser (Heidelberg University)

*Unintended Consequences: Late Qing and Early Republican Photography*

The entangled history of photographs in China is complicated by the circulation of engravings, export paintings, and prints used as early photographic source material; the impact of violent Opium War-Boxer-period imagery on an early nationalist self-image; and the unintended consequences of knowledge transfer in the fields of anthropology and ethnography when European-trained Republican scholars emulated modalities of bodily representation with the camera. This paper will also explore, in part, the limitation of the archive in shaping our understanding and perception of this very same photographic history.

## Panel 5: Visual Translations

Panel Chair: Hans B. Thomsen (University of Zurich)

Jeanne Egloff (University of Zurich)

*Rodin in Tokyo? Encounters with European Art and Sculpture in Meiji Japan*

In Japan, the term for 'art' – *bijutsu* – has only been in existence since the mid 1870s as a direct translation of the world's-fair category of the German word 'Schöne Kunst' (fine arts/beaux arts). It was not imposed, instead, „Japanese art“ came into being by interaction of diverse actors, both Japanese and foreign. The encounter with foreign art and objects played a key role during this period of time. The main focus of this presentation will be on the reception of European sculpture in Meiji Japan (1868-1912). The question that will be pursued is how Western art introduced new ways of looking at art – *bijutsu* – and interpreting it.

Vera Wolff (ETH Zurich / IFK Wien)

*“The Glamour of Perspective” or The Western History of East Asian Ink Painting  
c. 1900–2000*

This talk will consider how “East Asian ink painting” became the model for a diverse, material aesthetics that also came to serve as a prehistory of abstract art. In order to do so, I will investigate the various forms of translation which were necessary to write such an art history, and discuss both the scholarly and the artistic discourse on Chinese and Japanese ink painting as it arose since 1900, by analyzing the writings and the works of specific figures, including Okakura Kakuzô, Yves Klein, or François Jullien, who famously argues that in China “the great image has no form”.

Dinah Zank (University of Zurich)

*Japanese Visions of Pan-Buddhist Imagery? – Kôsetsu Nôsu’s Re-Narration of the  
Life of Buddha in his 1930s Frescoes of the New Mulagandhakuti Vihara in Sarnath*

Speaking of ‘translation’ in the context of art history challenges the widespread idea of artists ‘receiving’ foreign influences on their work. While the term ‘reception’ supposes a rather passive role of the artist in the process of taking over themes, techniques etc., ‘translation’ points to a more active process they are involved in. First, there has to be an intention when artists start to translate something. Second, artists have to consider for which audience they translate and then use a fitting imagery that the audience is supposed to understand. Consequently, an artwork can be both a subject of translation indicated by an artist, mediator, connoisseur or whosoever and at the same time function as a translation itself.

As one prominent example for visual translations of cultural and philosophical concepts in modern Japanese painting, the artworks created in the sphere of the *Nihon Bijutsuin* constitute incontestable proof of how Japanese artists engaged themselves with Indian religion and philosophy throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Many painters even travelled to India to get involved in Buddhist heritage preservation projects, while back in Japan, their paintings established new pictorial subjects and representations of the ritual female body that moved into the focus of rising imperialistic ideology.

In this sense, I want to draw the attention towards the case study of the Japanese painter Kôsetsu Nôsu (野生司香雪, 1885-1973), who was commissioned by the Mahabodhi Society to paint the murals of the rebuilt Mulagandhakuti Vihara in Sarnath from 1932 to 1937. At the first glimpse, his frescoes visualize selected scenes from the life of Buddha Gautama in a composition similar to the fifth century Indian Buddhist murals of the Ajanta cave temples. However, a closer look at the selection and composition of scenes reveals a modern Japanese imagery, traversed by innuendos of Kôsetsu Nôsus devotion to the teachings of Okakura Kakuzô (岡倉覚三, 1862-1913) and his lifelong vivid exchange with the Government School of Art in Kolkata. Including the aspects of surrounding networks, agendas and patronage of the Mulagandhakuti Vihara restoration project, it should be discussed whether or not we could regard Kôsetsu Nôsus most famous work and its multi-layered imagery

under the terms of 'translation' and 'vocabulary', therefore implying an educational purpose towards a selected audience that the artist considered during the creation process. Additionally, I want to raise the question, what new approaches could be achieved if we change the viewpoint from 'reception' towards 'translation' during the study of transcultural entanglements in art history.

Paola von Wyss- Giacosa (University of Zurich)

*Devil, Idol, Putto, or Buddha: Western Interpretations of Indonesian Kris Handles*

The historical collections of the ethnological museums in Vienna, Dresden, Copenhagen, or Rotterdam contain a significant number of Kris, the characteristic Javanese dagger with a flame-like blade and often figurative handles. In the early twentieth century these objects were primarily perceived in terms of a formalist aesthetics; they served as decorative elements in colonial interiors and came to the West as souvenirs. However, already three centuries earlier European travelers in South East Asia had noticed these refined objects, which had found their way into aristocratic and scholarly curio cabinets. The elaborate technique and costly materials fascinated the European owners, while at the same time the Kris handles' iconography seemed to provide to the Christian eye a vivid example of idolatry and cult of the devil. When examining the changing reception and categorization of Indonesian daggers in the West, we need to take into consideration that often only the handles, and not the entire Kris, came into the possession of Westerners and were included in the context of travel reports and scholarly texts. This paper aims to situate early modern representations of Indonesian daggers within the history of ideas by closely examining both the visual translations of these objects into woodcuts or engravings and the accompanying textual explanations and interpretations.