

# Detecting Meaning with Sherlock Holmes\*

## Translating Sherlock Holmes

based on slides by Uganda Kwan

Francis Bond

**Division of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies**

<http://www3.ntu.edu.sg/home/fcbond/>  
bond@ieee.org

Location: LHS-LT

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# Holmes and translation

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- What did Sir Arthur Conan Doyle think about translation ?
- How can/do we know?
- He has a story, where the translator is a very heroic character:  
*The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter* **GREE**

## Mr Melas

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- This story introduces Mycroft, Sherlock's brother
- He says of the interpreter

*Mr. Melas is a Greek by extraction, as I understand, and he is a remarkable linguist. He earns his living partly as interpreter in the law courts and partly by acting as guide to any wealthy Orientals who may visit the Northumberland Avenue hotels. I think I will leave him to tell his very remarkable experience in his own fashion.*

## The story

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- *“It seemed to me to be obvious that this Greek girl had been carried off by the young Englishman named Harold Latimer.”*
- *The Daily News, ‘ Anybody supplying any information to the whereabouts of a Greek gentleman named Paul Kratides, from Athens, who is unable to speak English, will be rewarded. A similar reward paid to any one giving information about a Greek lady whose first name is Sophy. X 2473.’*
- Sophy has a large fortune
- Kratides visited her,
- Kratides disappeared
  - kidnapped by 2 villains

# The interpretation

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- 2 villains who speak only English
- Kratides who speaks only Greek
- Melas who speaks both



"I WAS THRILLED WITH HORROR."

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M ‘ “You can do no good by this obstinacy. Who are you?”

K ‘ “I care not. I am a stranger in London.”

M ‘ “Your fate will be upon your own head. How long have you been here?”

K ‘ “Let it be so. Three weeks.”

M ‘ “The property can never be yours. What ails you?”

K ‘ “It shall not go to villains. They are starving me.”

M ‘ “You shall go free if you sign. What house is this?”

K ‘ “I will never sign. I do not know.”

M ‘ “You are not doing her any service. What is your name?”

K ‘ “Let me hear her say so. Kratides.”

M ‘ “You shall see her if you sign. Where are you from?”

K ‘ “Then I shall never see her. Athens.”

- Shows the presence of the translator/ interpreter
- Highlights the importance of translating
- Clearly Conan Doyle thought highly of translators!

# Translating into Chinese

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- This story was translated into Chinese
- 希腊舌人 *xīlà shérén* “Greek tongue-man”
- What does it mean?
  - Early Western Han Period, after 206 BCE
  - shérén (舌人, tongue-men) was the common name for the government officials in charge of communicating with the neighbouring tribes of the Zhou Dynasty. Ref: “Martha P.Y. Cheung, “Early Discourse on Yi”
- Now normally translated as “希腊译员” *xīlà yìyuán* “Greek Interpreter”

# SH in China

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- SH introduced into China in 1896 (光緒二十二年)
  - Shiwu Bao 《時務報》 Chinese Progress
  - Serialized (non-fiction) magazine
- Chinese modernization was not uniform
  - “Why Should We Learn from the Barbarians?”
  - China resisting foreign knowledge 1840-1860
  - Partial absorption 1860-1890 (self strengthening movement)
  - Conscious learning 1895-
  - Wholesale westernization 1911-1917



# True Crime

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- The first stories were:
  1. 《英包探勘盜密約案》 1896.9.27–10.27 (Vol 6-9) [NAVA](#)
  2. 《記伧者復仇事》 1896.11.5-25 (Vol 10-12) [CROO](#)
  3. 《繼父誑女破案》 1897.4.22—5.12 (Vol 24-26) [IDEN](#)
  4. 《呵爾唔斯緝案被戕》 1897.5.22-6.20 (Vol 27-30) [FINA](#)
  
- Rewritten from first person to third person
  - Matches the Chinese court case/ kung-an 公案
  - common in late Imperial China
  - this matches the readers' taste and social convention
  
- Subsequent translations treated the stories as fiction

# 英包探勘盜密約案

(1) 英 包探 勘盜 密 約案

yīng bāotàn kāndào mìyuē àn

English detective steal secret agreement

The Adventure of the Naval Treaty

- Re-written in the style of the Gong'an or crime-case fiction (公案小说) a sub-genre of Chinese crime fiction where government magistrates solve criminal cases
- Famous examples are Justice Bao (包青天) and Judge Dee (狄公案)



# 公案小说

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- Chinese Magistrate serves multiple capacities:
  - investigator
  - interrogator
  - prosecutor
  - judge
  - overseer of execution
  
- Western detective
  - solves the mystery independently of the state
  - justice may be outside the state's command
  - but in cooperation

# 夏洛克·福爾摩斯

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- Xiàluòkè Fú'ěrmósī
- Translations came in through Hokkien
  - Sherlock Holmes
  - “歇洛克·阿尔唔斯” 1895-6
    - Translated by Lin Shu (1852-1924) from Fu Jian province who spoke Hokkien
    - this would be pronounced “ho-ee-mo-see” or “hock-ee-buah-see”
  - 休洛克福而摩司 1902
  - 福尔摩斯 1904 — 5
- Watson 滑震 “slippery shaken!”

## Cheng, Xiaoqing (程小青)

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- Cheng Xiaoqing (1893-1976) was the most popular author of Chinese detective fiction in the first half of the twentieth century
- He translated Holmes stories into both classical Chinese and then vernacular
- He then went on to write his own crime series set in Shanghai
  - Huo Sang ( $\approx$  Sherlock)
  - Bao Lang ( $\approx$  Watson)
  - The duo lived in a spacious apartment on Aiwun Road, where Huo Sang played the violin (badly) and smoked Golden Dragon cigarettes as he mulled over his cases.
- a 1940s edition of his Huo Sang stories ran to 30 volumes!

# Sherlock Holmes in Japan

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- Sherlock Holmes reached Japan for the first time in 1894:<sup>1</sup> an abridged Japanese version of "The Man with the Twisted Lip" was published in the January issue of a magazine "Nippon-jin", translated from a French translation by Maurice LeBlanc.
- In April 1899, the newspaper "Mainichi Shinbun" began a three-month series featuring an adaptation (by unknown translator) of "A Study in Scarlet"
- Between 12 July and 4 November of the same year, the "Chuo Shinbun" newspaper published the first complete Japanese translation of a Holmes story, "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes", in a translation by Gaishi Nan-yo.
- The first book-length translation appeared in 1907.

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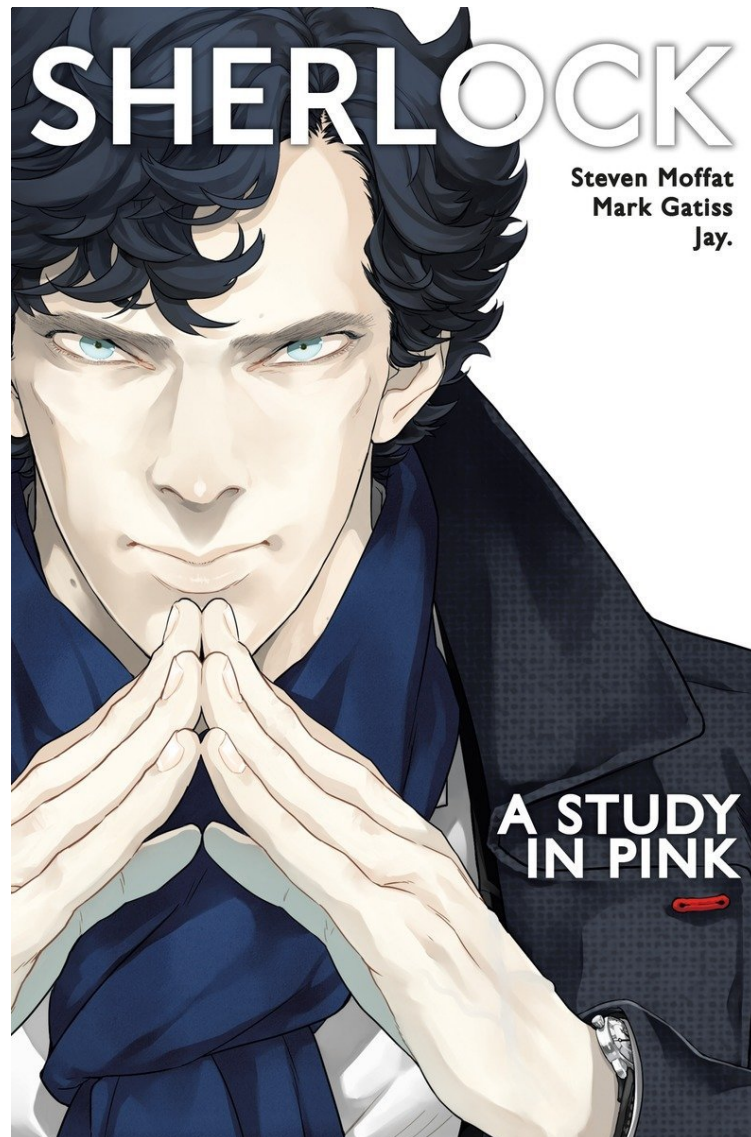
<sup>1</sup>3 years after it appeared

# Sherlock Holmes in Japan

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- After that, Sherlock Holmes was always popular in Japan, but it was not until 1955, twenty-nine years after Conan Doyle finished his last Holmes stories, that the translation of all 60 stories by Ken Nobuhara appeared in Japan.
- The Japan Sherlock Holmes Club was founded in 1977.
- Between 1907 and September 1997, there were 95 separate translations of Sherlock Holmes stories in Japanese, 34 adaptations for children, 249 parodies and pastiches, and nearly 400 other pieces of Sherlockiana.
- According to the survey of libraries in Junior High Schools in Japan, translated Sherlock Holmes stories are in the top five titles which are most often read or requested.
- Sherlock Holmes is the most famous English person in Japan, and better known than either the Beatles or the late Princess Diana (who follow in the second and the third place).

# Sherlock (manga)





# Miss Sherlock



- Sara "Sherlock" Shelly Futaba solving various mysteries in modern-day Tokyo.
- Her assistant is Dr. Wato Tachibana (Wato-san!)
- The main antagonist is Moriwaki, ...
- The first major series to cast a woman as Holmes-like detective
- Inspired by the BBC's Sherlock

# Bibliography

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- Christian Metz (1974) *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* [Essais sur la signification au cinéma], Oxford University Press, 1974