

# THE CIAP BULLETIN INTERPRETASIA

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## EDITORIAL

Dear Reader,

**I**nternational conferences and meetings in the Asia-Pacific Region have become routine as the region forges ahead with its economic and political development. Regional groupings like APEC, ASEAN and others are making their presence felt and attracting increasing interest and input from the rest of the world.

After issues on how to recruit interpreters, their special training, the technical requirements for successful interpretation, and the meaning of professionalism, this INTERPRETASIA looks at interpreting in history and some of the special challenges of our profession, past and present.

We hope you will find this issue interesting!

*The Editors*

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## INTERPRETERS IN HISTORY

**T**oday, the world's three or four thousand professional conference interpreters, whether attached to the UN or European Union or organized in freelance networks like CIAP, work within a strict code of professional ethics and impartiality. This has not always been so. In less stable times polyglots were enlisted in the service of territorial, ideological, or economic aggression.

The great Empires all had recourse to interpreters, whose status ranged from the lowly to the exalted. Stone carvings in the Nile Valley picture an interpreter in Ancient Egypt, a small figure with two faces interceding between a towering Egyptian overlord and a medium-sized Nubian group. But from the time of Ramses (13th c. BC) 'young Asians' (probably Persians) were taught the Egyptian language and formed into an elite corps, and according to Herodotus, in the 7th century BC, under the Pharaoh Psammetich, young Egyptians were placed with Greek settlers in the Nile Delta to learn their language. By the 4th century, their descendants had formed a caste ranking between traders and seafarers. To the west, the traders and armies of Carthage, which dominated the Western Mediterranean before the rise of Rome, were accompanied by members of a cadre of interpreters with parrots tattooed on their breasts.

The Roman Empire needed interpreters for military, administrative or commercial relations with 'barbarians' - Punic, Iberian, Egyp-



### The Roman Empire needed interpreters for military, administrative or commercial relations with 'barbarians'

tian, Scythian, German or Celtic - inside and outside the Empire. These were usually recruited locally, but at major events, senior civil servants sometimes officiated: a Senator, for example, for a visit by Greek philosophers to Rome in 154 BC. Greek enjoyed a special status as a civilized language which many Romans learned as children from household slaves, then alongside Latin at school. Interpreters were often recruited when not strictly necessary, for prestige and distancing purposes; but records show an awareness of the interpreter's responsibility at critical diplomatic encounters, such as the peace negotiations with the Mauritians after the Jugurthine wars (106 BC) where the impartiality and integrity - *fides* - of the interpreter Dabar made him acceptable to both sides. Both the writer Horace and the orator Cicero understood

(contd. on page 2)

the nature of good interpretation: the need to 'interpret, not convert word for word'.

Little is known about interpreters in the first millenium, East or West, but the great voyages of discovery inevitably brought linguistic challenges and surprises.

tial. The novel 'Shogun' features a Portuguese Jesuit who uses his position with the Tokugawa rulers of Japan to discredit the rival Protestants. In nearby China, General Koxinga, fleeing the Manchu occupation, used an interpreter's inside knowl-

tempt to establish an embassy at the Qing court, in 1789, two Chinese priests were picked up in Rome to act as interpreters in Peking, but got cold feet at the prospect of representing foreigners at the court of Qianlong, and jumped ship at Canton, leaving a young British midshipman to assist Lord MacCartney using what Chinese he had picked up from them during the voyage. Although Qianlong was impressed by the boy, the embassy failed when the King's envoy declined to kowtow nine times to the Qing monarch.



Saint Vincent speaking to the people (Spain, 14th c. AD). He was reputed to be understood in many languages, even though he only spoke Valencian dialect. Could he be the Patron Saint for interpreters?

Columbus expected to find the Orient, where Levantine traders were known to have settled, and enlisted Luis de Torres, a speaker of Arabic, Hebrew and Chaldean.

But the Europeans found an entirely new continent and people with whom they could not communicate. They

took some of them back to Spain to train as interpreters for future voyages, though many - less keen than today's trainees - preferred death to exile and jumped into the sea.

Historically, interpreters have often had other functions, as scholars or chroniclers, diplomats or missionaries, or professional flatterers. The Muslim interpreter Ma Huan, who accompanied the Chinese explorer Zhenghe in the early 15th century, left a rich chronicle of the nations and customs of the Indian Ocean as far as the African coast. Zhenghe's mission included 'shopping for the imperial harem': one gift which found its way to the court was a giraffe, which was presented to the Emperor as the fabled unicorn ...

Interpreters were not always impar-

edge of the Dutch fortifications to take Taiwan. In Peru, the Spanish-trained Inca Felipeillo, interpreting at the trial of his former king Atahualpa, facilitated his execu-

tion by the Spaniards to settle old scores. At other times, interpreters have shown a spirit of sacrifice beyond the call

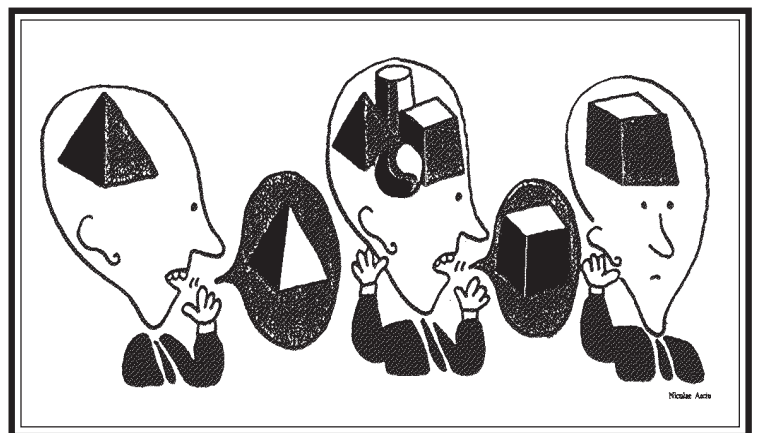
of duty. Columbus' interpreter stood ready to protect him when his exhausted crew threatened mutiny, while Koxinga's interpreter, a Christian, was killed trying to convert the cannibals who still roamed the Taiwanese interior.

The stress of conflicting loyalties has deterred qualified linguists from our profession. In the first British at-

covering all the languages has never been easy. Columbus noted in his logbook that 'communicating is difficult because on each of the islands a different language is spoken'. Of the world's four thousand-odd languages (not counting dialects), twenty or thirty are offered by AICC interpreters. Coverage is expanding, but even the languages of some great cultures are giving way to English. In the long run, though, perhaps nature will resist uniformity. When the Romans finally withdrew, Latin broke up into distinct Romance languages, with sounds and words from older, local tongues. A wide range of accents, pidgins, and vernaculars have already developed from standard English - members of CIAP have been asked to interpret from one form of English into another! - not to mention the jargons of fashion, computer science and finance. Today, our competence has to range well beyond the standard speech of London, Madrid or Peking.

**Robin Setton**

(We are indebted to Ingrid Kurz (AICC, Vienna) for much of the material in this article.) □



# CONFERENCE VENUES



CIAP associates Catherine Pouget and Socorro Browning discussing business with PCVC's Rosvi Gaetos and PICC's Araceli Villanueva in Manila.

## MANILA "CONVENTION CITY" AGAIN

*Socorro Browning reports on recent developments in the Philippine capital.*

In a region that boasts unparalleled world-class hotels, resorts, convention facilities and true Asian hospitality that are the envy of countries around the world, it might appear daring to call Manila "Convention City".

With the major efforts now being made by the Philippine convention industry, Manila, Asia's pioneer in conventions in the region, well deserves the title again. The long way to becoming a preferred convention destination started in September 1976 when Asia's first international convention venue, the Philippines International Convention Centre (PICC), was officially opened. During the rest of the seventies all major international organisations, including several members of the United Nations family, the IMF and the World Bank, Jaycees International, the Interparliamentary Union, the International Red Cross and UNCTAD, held their annual and General Assemblies at the PICC in Manila.

Unfortunately, due to financial and political problems in the early eighties the world ceased to meet in Manila. However, after the efforts of the past couple of years Manila is ready once again to take on fresh and more demanding challenges commensurate with the rising status of the Philippine economy.

In March 1995 the Department of Tourism launched the "Convention City Manila" campaign, intended to revive Manila's image as a convention and exhibition city and to make Manila competitive in the world meetings market. At present the PCVC is working on 25 bids and there are up to 54 leads for conventions and incentives in the pipeline from now until the end of the century.

### *The PICC: flagship of the convention market*

The PICC has been dedicated to bringing peoples and nations together for the past twenty years and is now leading the national effort to put forward an image of the Philippines as an efficient, dynamic and confident country. On May 14, 1997 the PICC presented its newly acquired modern conference facilities to the press: seventeen meeting rooms which can host a caucus of six, a meeting of 100 or a plenary session of 4,000 delegates. Most of them have built-in infrared interpretation systems, including booths in accordance with ISO standards.

**The PICC is now leading the national effort to put forward an image of the Philippines as an efficient, dynamic and confident coun-**

### *Other venues*

The PICC is not the only venue in Manila. Opened last November, the World Trade Centre Metro Manila with a total floor area of 10,810 square metres is the new fairground for conventions and exhibits. The Asian Institute of Management, Centre for Continuing Executive Education, a management and business resource centre with conference facilities, is located in the heart of the business district.

Manila offers a wide range of accommodation for all pockets and tastes. Deluxe and first class hotels provide excellent rooms and service as well as convention and meeting facilities. The Shangri-la Hotel, in Makati, and the Manila Hotel, not far from Intramuros in the old part of town, have well established and efficient convention departments.

### *The last four years of the millenium*

The highlight of the 1996 convention season was the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Summit in November, which enhanced the Philippines' image as a leading destination for meetings, conventions and exhibitions. Ms Araceli E. Villanueva, Officer-in-Charge of the PICC confided: "The APEC summit fast-tracked the rehabilitation of the PICC. Hosting APEC became a concrete and tangible proof that we have the facilities and services for events on this scale."

Manila has the experience and creativity it takes to host any international event. The Philippine capital thrives on a warmth and hospitality that genuinely come from the heart of every Filipino. This is an asset

that makes any convention or incentive to this land of islands unforgettable and it is clear that

congress and event organisers are once again focussing their interest on Manila.

CIAP associates have had a close working relationship with the Manila convention industry during the past twenty years. CIAP provided simultaneous interpretation services for the 1996 APEC Summit there. □

## QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ASK

When selecting conference interpreters you may wish to ask yourself these questions:

### *Are they properly trained?*

Conference interpreters deal with a vast range of subjects and cultural references. They need very broad general knowledge and the ability to grasp complex issues. Conference interpretation needs to be learned properly. Education to university honours standard with a post-graduate diploma in conference interpretation is desirable.

### *Are they prepared for my conference?*

Professional interpreters research the subject of the conference and prepare glossaries of relevant specialist terms. They need the conference documents as well as background documents about your organisation and its activities to do this. They also invest in specialist dictionaries or textbooks where appropriate.

### *Do they have references?*

You may wish to ask for a list of references, such as organisers of conferences for which your consultant interpreter has provided a team of interpreters. INTERPRETASIA regularly carries a list of conferences for which CIAP has organised

teams. We will gladly provide references on request.

### *Are they members of a professional body?*

Membership of a professional body is indicative of the professional attitude adopted by the interpreter to his or her profession. All CIAP associates are members of the *International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC)*. AIIC exists because its members recognise the importance of providing a label of quality in a profession where there is no opportunity to rehearse or to do a second take.

**Jean-Pierre Allain**

*(Based on material supplied by AIIC British Isles.)* □

Once you have selected a consultant interpreter it is important to explain your requirements clearly: type of conference, subject, languages spoken, provisional programme and schedule. This will help him/her prepare the most cost effective budget on the basis of available interpreters closest to your venue. [See also "Practical Information your Consultant Interpreter Needs", in *INTERPRETASIA* No 4, November 1996.]



AIIC interpreters J-P. Allain and Jolyn Jeelof at work at the ITTO Council Session, Yokohama, November 1996.

## VIDEOCONFERENCING, MIXED RECEPTION

During the AIIC Assembly in Montreal, last January, an experiment in videoconferencing was carried out. Interpreters sitting in booths in another room interpreted the Assembly proceedings broadcast to them on TV monitors.

Eliane Bros-Brann, Chairperson of the Technical Committee said "It was clear from the experimental session that only end-to-end satellite communication links can be relied on at present to provide the very high sound quality required for conference interpretation as stipulated by the International Standards Organisation. Accurate interpretation cannot yet be guaranteed when the ISDN system is used, although using two double lines rather than one during the session would greatly improve the sound and images received by the interpreters. However, this higher quality ISDN system would be more expensive. AIIC will continue to monitor developments."

The European Union has recently produced a draft *Code of New Technologies for Conference Interpreting* which provides that the applicable ISO standards 2603 and 4043 must be observed for teleconferencing. They stipulate, among other things, that interpreters must have a direct view on the meeting room and on any TV projection. As to sound quality, the standards provide for a frequency band between 125 and 12,500 Hz. For comparison, an ordinary telephone line has a range of 0 to 3,400 Hz, while a CD player's is about 0 to 20,000 Hz. □

**Jean-Pierre Allain**



Delegates following proceedings through simultaneous interpretation.



CIAP associates and colleague interpreters at the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) Council Session, Yokohama, November 1996.

### **INTERPRETATION TEAMS ORGANISED BY CIAP RECENTLY**

Bangkok	IUHF International Congress of Housing Finance
Hongkong	11th International Investments Funds Conference
New Delhi	ISA International Fiscal Association Congress
Hongkong	UITP Rolling Stock Subcommittee Meeting
Hongkong	5th Europe/East Asia Economic Summit - WEF
Beijing	23rd General Population Conference
Seoul	International Theatre Institute Conference
Hongkong	Seminar on Human Resources Management in China
Vancouver	Teamsters Canada Meeting
Bangkok	Asia/Africa Forum on Economic Empowerment of Women
Hongkong	Pacific Rim Forum
Singapore	ILAR World Congress on Rheumatology
Macau	Herbalife Corporate School
Hongkong	MIDEM Annual Meeting
Kuala Lumpur	IPPA International Public Procurement Association Conference
Vancouver	Aboriginal Justice Learning Network Meeting
Seoul	International Counsels of Securities Associations
Singapore	Ford Motor Sales Managers Seminar
Manila	APEC Leaders Summit
Hongkong	Conference on Drug Education at Schools
Vancouver	Eurologna Conference
Hongkong	International Federation of Female Lawyers Conference
Kuala Lumpur	Asian Development Fund Donors' Conference
Sapporo	International Holstein Friesian Association Conference
Hongkong	International Congress for Infectious Diseases
Beijing	International Federation of Library Associations Congress
Hongkong	International Council on Social Welfare Congress
Kuala Lumpur	FAO International Tropical Fruits Consultation
Hongkong	World Congress on Personnel Management
Bangkok	International Sugar Organisation Council Session
Tokyo	FIABCI International Federation of Real Estate Agents Assembly



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## WHAT IS AIIC?

**F**ounded in 1953, AIIC (Association Internationale des Interprètes de Conférence - International Association of Conference Interpreters) is the only worldwide association of professional conference interpreters. AIIC has over 2,500 members in 70 countries and is recognised by the United Nations, the World Bank, Nato, the European Community and many business organisations as the only representative of professional interpreters and the authoritative voice on matters of conference interpreting.

AIIC sets professional standards and working conditions accepted worldwide. Together with the International Organisation for Standardisation, AIIC's Technical Committee has drawn up standards ISO 2603 for built-in booths and equipment for simultaneous interpreting and ISO 4043 for mobile booths for use in conference rooms without built-in facilities.

ASSOCIATION  
INTERNATIONALE DES  
INTERPRETES DE CONFERENCE

**aiic**

INTERNATIONAL  
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CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS

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## WHAT IS CIAP?

**C**onference Interpreters Asia Pacific (CIAP) is a network of consultant interpreters, all members of AIIC, who live and work in the Asia-Pacific region. CIAP was established in 1990 to provide conference interpretation services to the growing conference industry in the region.

Its members advise conference organisers on language requirements, choice of conference venues, technical equipment, seating arrangements and so on, and recruit teams of interpreters suited to the needs of a conference.

CIAP associates can provide simultaneous interpretation teams for English, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, French, Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and other languages.

**CIAP**

**CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS ASIA PACIFIC**

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*There are CIAP Associates in several cities in Asia-Pacific.  
For the consultant interpreter nearest to you, please see the  
list of names and contact numbers provided in this issue.*