



The Kurodahan Press Translation Prize

It gives us great pleasure to announce the Kurodahan Press Translation Prize, awarded for excellence in translation of a selected Japanese short story into English. We hope that it will be possible to continue this prize as an annual event.

Kurodahan Press was established to preserve and circulate contemporary and historical observations of Asia, and to produce informative and entertaining translations. The Japanese literary world needs no help from us in producing outstanding works, but they cannot be introduced to a broader, global audience without skilled translators capable of rendering delicate nuances and atmospheres into another language.

The Kurodahan Press Translation Prize is held to help locate and encourage these translators.

The short story to be translated is 忠告 by 恩田陸, and is extremely short: only about 1,700 characters in length. That's right, 1,700.

Submissions will be accepted through September 30, 2010, Japan time.

The winning entry will receive a cash prize, and an additional payment for first English publication rights in our upcoming SF&F anthology. Submissions will not be returned, but translators will retain all applicable rights to their work.

For additional information and the contest package download, please see our website:

<http://www.kurodahan.com/mt/e/khpprize/>

or write us at:

Kurodahan Press
3-9-10-403 Tenjin
Chuo-ku, Fukuoka
810-0001 JAPAN



The 2010 Kurodahan Press Translation Prize

Kurodahan Press is pleased to announce the 2010 Kurodahan Press Translation Prize, awarded for translation excellence of a selected Japanese short story into English. In the event that the prize is awarded, the winning translation will be published in an upcoming Kurodahan Press anthology.

1. Eligibility

There are no restrictions whatsoever on translator participation. All translators are encouraged to apply, regardless of whether or not you have worked with us before.

2. Submission

Send your translation to the below address, by regular postal mail or (preferably) E-mail.

Please be sure to read the submission instructions, which cover formatting requirements (for both printouts and electronic files) and provide information on Kurodahan Press standards and other points. Submission instructions are given in the style sheet included in the contest package at:

<http://www.kurodahan.com/mt/e/khp prize/2010prize.pdf>

Submitted translations will not be returned, but the translator will retain all rights to the translation. Kurodahan Press will receive first publication rights to the winning translation, to be arranged under a separate and specific agreement.

No information about any submissions, including the names or contact information for people submitting translations, will be made available to any third party, including the judges, with the exception of the name of the winner (or a pseudonym, if the winner prefers). Translators are of course welcome to tell anyone they wish that they have made a submission.

3. Source material

The story to be translated is

忠告 by 恩田陸 Roughly 1,700 字

The submission package, including provisional table of contents for the anthology, style sheet and instructions, is available as a downloadable PDF. Note that because the story is in print, translators are requested to purchase the book (虚構機関—年刊日本 SF 傑作選), which is available at most bookstores, including Amazon Japan:

<http://www.amazon.co.jp/dp/4488734014/kurodahanpres-22>

However, the author has graciously authorized us to attach a scan of the story to this PDF.

4. Application Deadline

Translations must be received no later than September 30, 2010. A notice confirming receipt will be issued. The results should be announced by the end of the year.



5. Submission address and contact

Grand Prize / one winner

30,000 yen prize money, and contract for publication in an upcoming Kurodahan Press anthology (Speculative Japan Volume 3) for an additional payment of 15,000 yen (first English publication rights; translator keeps all other rights to translation).

Note: Prize payments will be subject to source-tax deductions as required by Japanese law.

Submissions should be sent to:

Kurodahan Press

3-9-10-403 Tenjin

Chuo-ku, Fukuoka

810-0001 Japan

Electronic submissions preferred via our website.

6. Notification

All contest entrants will be informed of the contest results. The winner's name (or a pseudonym if desired) will be posted on the Kurodahan Press website.

7. Judging

All decisions will be final and except in extremely unusual circumstances the reasons for the decision and the specific votes of the judges will not be revealed. The goal of the contest, simply stated, is to produce an English translation faithful to the original, which can be read and enjoyed by someone with no specialized knowledge of Japan or Japanese.

The winner will be selected by the following three judges:

- Alfred Birnbaum
- Juliet Winters Carpenter
- Meredith McKinney



Style Guide for Kurodahan Translation Contest Submissions

v1.1 of May 31, 2008

This document is in two parts. The first part refers to the technical specifications we expect to see in documents submitted to us. The second part covers conventions of usage we prefer to see. As one might expect, the first part is less open to modification than the second part.

Part One: Technical Specifications

Word processing:

Please submit documents in Microsoft Word DOC format if possible. RTF or TXT files are also acceptable, but DOC files are preferred. If you would like to use a different file format please contact us in advance.

Document formatting:

Use a common font (such as Times) at 10 or 12 point size.

As much as possible, use only one font at one size throughout your document. See part two for a discussion of special accented characters.

Use italics for emphasis.

Do not start paragraphs with tabs, and do not insert an extra return between paragraphs.

If there is a blank line in the source text, use "***blank line" in the document.

You can use headers and footers if you wish, but do not put important information in headers or footers if it does not also appear somewhere else. If possible (depending on your software), put page numbers and your name in either the header or footer on every page.

Document layout:

On the first page of your document, include the following information in the following order.

Please put

(1) Your name. (This line can also include the translator's assertion of copyright.) You may of course specify a pseudonym for public release if you prefer, but please make it very clear which is which.

(2) Your contact information (current mailing address, telephone number and email). This information will be kept confidential from everyone except KHP administrative personnel and Japanese tax authorities. Specifically, it will not be released to other contestants, judges or the general public. It is required for Japanese tax purposes, however.

File name conventions:

Please give the file your own name, without spaces and using only letters and numerals. If your name is Fred Smith, for example, name your file something like FredSmith.doc. Please add the correct extension for the file type if you are using a Macintosh, UNIX or other non-Windows system.

In general:

Avoid fancy formatting of all types. The contest judges your translation and writing abilities, not your artistic skills.

Make your document plain and simple. It may not be as attractive as you might like, but it will keep problems and file sizes to a minimum.



Part Two: Style Conventions

For the sake of convenience and to aid in mutual understanding, Kurodahan Press turns to the Chicago Manual of Style to answer questions as they arise. We will not always follow the Chicago Manual's advice, but we will start there to explain what we prefer to see in print.

For information on handling uniquely Japanese situations, we refer to the style guide of Monumenta Nipponica, which is available as a downloadable PDF from

http://monumenta.cc.sophia.ac.jp/MN_Style.html

Kurodahan Press uses American English as the basis of its own documents and most of its publications. If a translator prefers to use a different set of spelling and usage conventions, we will not object, but we will insist on internal consistency. Punctuation will follow American usage as outlined in the Chicago Manual.

We also use the following general reference works as authorities: Encyclopaedia Britannica, and for U.S. spelling, and Webster's Third New International Dictionary (the big heavy one that was in your school library).

We view matters of style and usage as conventions, not laws, and so we are open to reasoned argument if a translator wishes to do something other than what we initially require. Please be aware that "this is right" and "this is wrong" are not in themselves convincing arguments.

Representing the source language in the translation:

While Kurodahan Press normally romanizes extended vowels with macrons, people submitting translations may have difficulty with these special characters. For that reason, while we welcome the use of macrons or circumflexes over extended vowels, they are not required and will not be considered when judging a submission.

Chinese, Japanese, and Korean names are given in Asian order (for example: Murakami Haruki). Western names are given in Western order (for example: Tom Hanks). The general principle we follow is this: we wish to represent names as they would be represented in the source language culture. We recognize that this gets tricky sometimes, so discussion is possible in special cases. The name of a character in a Japanese novel is not, in our view, a special case.

Recasting passages:

Recasting is often necessary to make an original text read smoothly in English. Our goal is to produce texts that will appeal to general readers: translations should read smoothly, and should not attract attention to themselves in places where their original authors did not intend to attract attention.

Allusions in the source text:

A source text will often refer to a work of art or literature, to a cultural practice, proverb, famous place, or other aspect of common culture that readers of the original can be expected to understand. In cases where English readers could be expected to follow the allusion, the translation should attempt to reproduce it as closely as possible. If the source text refers to something which would be unfamiliar to English readers, the translation should recast the passage to retain the flavor of the original as much as possible. This may involve brief, discreet definitions (something like: "Amaterasu, the sun goddess") or more substantial recasting.



Quoted titles of works in the source language:

If a work makes reference to a publication in the source language, the translator should (a) romanize the reference if the work is not available in English translation, or (b) replace it with a reference to the most recent published English translation. If the atmosphere conveyed by a title, rather than the specific text being referred to, is most important to the meaning of a passage, the translator might choose to translate the title. This applies to works of fiction intended for general readers – specialist texts, nonfiction, and bibliographies require different treatment.

Unusual dialects

This is a constant problem, and many attempts at dialect can be way off course. You should try to suggest regional accents or bumpkin-ness through a few well-chosen words and phrases, and leave most of the sentences as standard speech.

Many translators have suggested or used many different ways of doing this, but (in our considered opinion) none of them is really successful. For example, "Them people up there" as opposed to "those people" is preferable to "Them people uppa yonder." We want to suggest something of the flavor of the original, but we can't slow readers down, or make them laugh when the scene isn't funny, or (the worst) make them stop and think "that's odd." Using prohibition-era gangster slang for a yakuza speaking Osaka dialect just doesn't work.

Scoring scheme for Kurodahan Press Translation Prize submissions

The goals of the contest are given in the announcement as “to produce an English translation faithful to the original, which can be read and enjoyed by someone with no specialized knowledge of Japan or Japanese.”

Scoring is broken down into three sections, all of which are left up to your individual subjective judgments. You do not have to give any reason for your decisions; that’s why you’re jurors. This is merely a suggestion as to one possible way of judging the entries. Be sure to read the paragraph at the very bottom, too!

1. Translation accuracy

This part is fairly straightforward, and can be handled fairly simply by merely rating the translation as

Unsatisfactory: 0 points

Significant translation errors or Japanese-specific issues that are not explained sufficiently for the English-only reader.

Acceptable: 5 points

No major problems, but a lot of nuances and peripheral meanings that would add depth to the work in English have been lost in translation.

Good: 10 points

Pretty obvious.

2. Representation of the original

Probably the most subjective part of all, this is your judgment of how well the translator captured the style, atmosphere, thrust, etc of the author. Naturally no translation will provide the same reading experience as the original, but how close did the translator come? Do you feel that the translator has inserted too many of his own interpretations? Or failed to reasonably convey the intent of the author?

Just go ahead and assign a point total from 0 (terrible) to 10 (superb). Again, 5 would be “acceptable,” representing the average translator.

3. English flow

Regardless of how the translator has actually translated the work, how was the English itself? Vocabulary, structure, readability, flavor, etc. Does it still have that “醤油臭さ” with the source Japanese visible between the lines? Does it feel like it was written in English? Perhaps all traces of Japan have been obliterated and it could work equally well in Poughkeepsie?

Just go ahead and assign a point total from 0 (terrible) to 10 (superb). Again, 5 would be “acceptable,” representing the average translator.

If everything works properly, this should give each work a total point count of from zero to 90 (three jurors), which should be enough to eliminate ties.

Note on Romanization:

There are many ways to Romanize Japanese, and I don’t think we should penalize translators for using uncommon ones. Translating 太郎 as Tarō, Tarou, Taroh or Taro is acceptable (although I personally prefer the first one). If the translator chooses to write Tom instead, that’s just flat wrong.

Special note for judges who really don’t have time for all this nonsense:

The point is to try to make sure different submissions end up with different point totals. As long as that can be accomplished, you can forget about the scoring methods describes above and just assign a single total score of zero to ten, with ten being best. The goal is to figure out which translation is best, not eat up all your spare time!