

SESSION 2

CURRENT INITIATIVES: ACADEMIC TRANSLATION IN JAPAN

和英学術翻訳プロジェクトの現在

...

Nichibunken Monograph Series

Patricia Fister

日文研モノグラフシリーズ

パトリシア・フィスター

The Nichibunken Monograph Series was inaugurated in 1998 with the purpose of making scholarly books authored by Nichibunken faculty available to readers who have no or limited Japanese language ability. This program is part of the mission of Nichibunken as an inter-university research institute funded by the Japanese government, which is to encourage and support the study of Japanese culture and history around the world. Since English is still considered to be the lingua-franca, it was decided in principle to have the monographs be published in English. The budget that was established provides funding for the translation and printing of 950 copies, which are then distributed free of charge to universities and research institutions around the world on Nichibunken's mailing list. Nichibunken is not permitted to sell the monographs, but if interested scholars write to us and request copies, we can usually oblige if stock is available.

Selection Process 日文研の選択プロセス

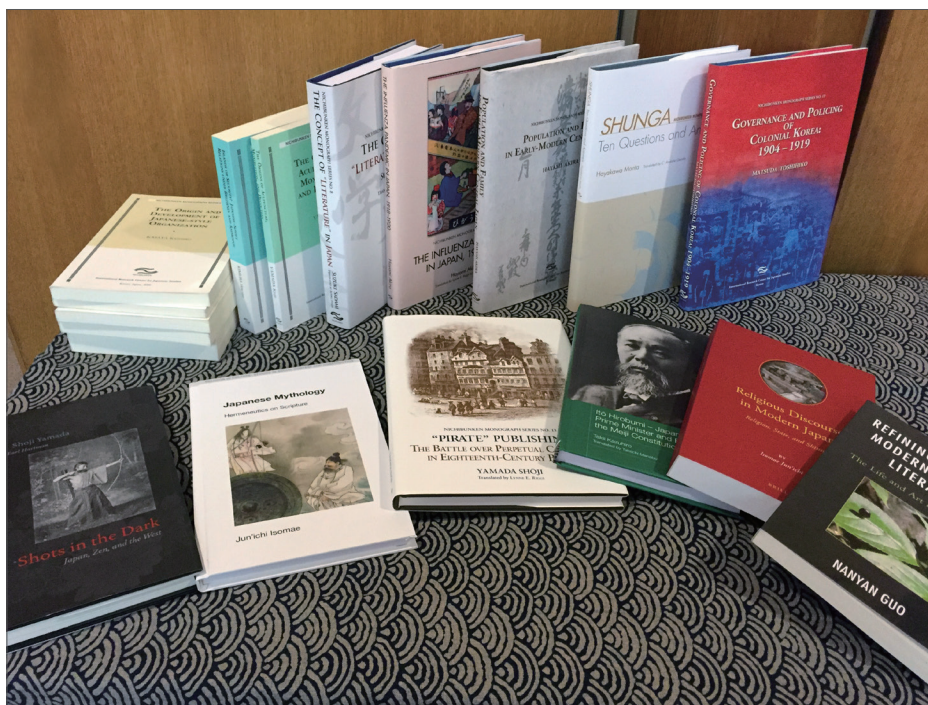
The selection process begins with the Nichibunken Monograph Series Committee, composed of members from the center's Publications Committee. Those eligible to submit an application to the monograph series are tenured Nichibunken faculty members, emeritus professors, and visiting faculty, with preference given to the current tenured faculty. The submitted books or book manuscripts are then reviewed by the committee. There have been

Part 1: Translation in Scholarship: Experience and Aspirations

occasions when the area of specialization was so different that committee members did not feel confident judging the scholarly merit, and therefore the manuscript was sent to outside referees. In cases where a book received a prize in Japan, committee members have generally felt that the screening for such an award served as a kind of referee process. One monograph is selected to be translated per year.

Changes in Format フォーマットの変化

The first five volumes in the series were published in softcover, modeled on a format that was prevalent among universities in the 1980s and 1990s. I was appointed as editor of the monograph series in 2001, and when I tried to encourage faculty to apply, I was told by more than one professor that if they wanted their books published in English, they would go directly to commercial publishers in the West, as the books were more attractively designed and would reach a broader audience. In particular, I was told very bluntly that the cover of the Nichibunken Monograph Series was too bland, with no visual impact—*miriyokuteki de wa nai*. So, working through



the Publications Committee, I sought support to produce a higher quality, more attractive monograph. Our first hardcover volume was Suzuki Sadamu's *The Concept of "Literature" in Japan*, published in 2006. We experimented with having the books printed outside of Japan, for example in Singapore, but even though it was cheaper, it was difficult and time-consuming for our office staff to generate the required paperwork and deal with foreign currency. In the end, the administration preferred to have the monograph printed in Japan, unless of course we were co-publishing.

Co-publishing 海外出版社との共同出版

The first monograph to be published in the Nichibunken series was *The Origins of Acupuncture, Moxibustion, and Decoction* by Yamada Keiji. In order to counter criticism that the series was an in-house vanity publication as well as to secure wider distribution, since 2009 we have been trying to arrange to co-publish some of the volumes. The terms vary, but in general Nichibunken's contribution is funding the translation and occasionally the index, and then purchasing 950 copies from the co-publisher, which handles the layout, printing, and marketing. Nichibunken authors are expected to make initial inquiries to publishers and when needed, I assist with negotiations. Even if an editor is interested and the book is provisionally accepted, once the translation is completed the manuscript is then sent to the co-publishers' selection of two to three referees for final vetting. The author is then expected to consider their suggestions/corrections and rework the manuscript one last time.

To date we have co-published five volumes with American and European publishers:

Yamada Shōji, *Shots in the Dark* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

Isomae Jun'ichi, *Japanese Mythology* (Sheffield, UK: Equinox, 2009).

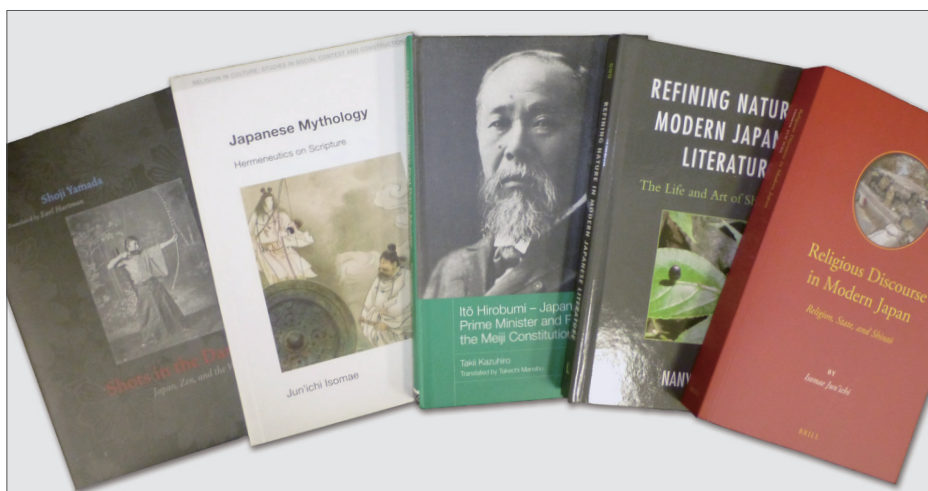
Nanyan Guo, *Refining Nature in Modern Japanese Literature: The Life and Art of Shiga Naoya* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2014).

Takii Kazuhiro, *Itō Hirobumi—Japan's First Prime Minister and Father of the Meiji Constitution* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014).

Isomae Jun'ichi, *Religious Discourse in Modern Japan: Religion, State, and Shintō* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

Part 1: Translation in Scholarship: Experience and Aspirations

Not only does co-publishing foster wider distribution of the author's scholarship, but the resulting monographs are more likely to be reviewed in journals and some of them are even used as textbooks in university courses. Journals such as *Monumenta Nipponica* and *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* have not been willing to review books that are in-house publications and not commercially available. However, working together with another publishing house presents its own set of complexities in terms of negotiating contracts, payment in foreign currency, shipping arrangements, customs, and of course coordinating schedules. Fortunately, things have gone more or less smoothly with our co-publishing ventures to date; we view this as a desirable trend and encourage Nichibunken faculty to consult with colleagues about suitable co-publishers at the time they submit their application to the Monograph Series Committee.



Selecting Translators 翻訳者の選択

One of the biggest problems I encountered as editor of this series was finding qualified translators. In the early years, authors were asked to seek out potential translators from among their colleagues, with the idea that instead of going to a translation agency, it would be better to have the books translated by a scholar in the same field. In some cases this worked fine; for example Royall Tyler translated the monograph I mentioned earlier by Professor Suzuki Sadamu, *The Concept of "Literature" in Japan*. As many of you

know, Tyler is both a highly regarded scholar of Japanese literature and a veteran translator. But other cases did not go so smoothly. The initial translations of two of our monographs, done by scholars in the same field as the authors, were a bit of a disaster. Not only were there mistakes in the translation, but the translators were not good writers, which made my job as editor more difficult. In the following session we will examine further the problems that emerge in the process of translation. In cases where Nichibunken authors could not find an appropriate scholar to translate their book, the administration, early on, took over the task of putting the project out on bid and then selecting the lowest bidder from among the competing translation agencies. During this process sample translated pages were shown to me and I would veto the poor-quality ones. However, there was one case around the time I started as editor where the administration selected the translator and oversaw the translation without consulting me. When the translated manuscript arrived on my desk it was clear that two different people had translated it; in order to complete the translation in the allotted time, the agency had given the first half to one person and the second half to another. The use of language was dramatically different. To make a long story short, we ended up contacting the translator of the first half privately to retranslate the second half to make the language more uniform. This is just one of two instances where Nichibunken had to get a monograph retranslated because the initial translation was not acceptable. Thus we have learned through hard experience the importance of selecting a good translator. In sum, we no longer seek out translators from among the authors' scholar-colleagues, or use graduate students for example, nor put the monograph translations out for public bidding. We commission them directly from professional translation firms with experience and expertise in translating the kind of scholarly publications that Nichibunken generates.

Merits of the Series シリーズのメリット

I would like to sum up by making a few comments on the merits of the Nichibunken Monograph Series. By having their publications reach a broader audience, Nichibunken faculty can connect with hitherto unknown scholars and students around the world. Without leaving the country, they are furthering the understanding of Japan globally and contributing to the development of Japanese studies overseas. One of the Nichibunken mono-

graphs has been also published as an e-book and we have another one in progress that is intended to be an e-book as well. We are one of the few institutions in Japan taking the lead in funding and producing high quality translations of important scholarship related to Japan, and I sincerely believe that as the series has matured and we have been able to hire qualified translators, it has reached a level of excellence. The Nichibunken Monograph Series, along with our English-language journal *Japan Review*, can be regarded as jewels in Nichibunken's crown. Next we will hear about similar translation projects undertaken by the International House of Japan and Tōdai Shuppankai.