

Jürgen STALPH, Christoph PETERMANN, Matthias WITTIG: *Moderne japanische Literatur in deutscher Übersetzung. Eine Bibliographie 1868–2008*. München: iudicium 2009. xxiii, 371 S. ISBN 978-3-89129-829-9.

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This Bibliography sets itself the task to register all translations of modern Japanese literature (books as well as publications in journals) into the German language and is largely successful in doing this (some minor reservations will be voiced further below). It is, in fact, the third edition of this bibliography, with previous editions having been published in 1988 and 1995. The bibliography has been enlarged and corrected over time, numbering 1535 items in the current edition. Although the editors changed between second and third editions one name is represented in all three versions: Jürgen Stalph, the indefatigable and scrupulous bibliographer to whom we owe several other bibliographies as well. These were published by the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tōkyō, an institution where Stalph worked, until recently. We may therefore assume with certainty, that Stalph, who is, by the way, one of the most accomplished German translators of Japanese as well, is the spiritus rector of the enterprise.

The bibliography is made accessible through seven (seven!) indices, to include: Years of publication of the original texts, Years of publication of the translations, Translations through third languages, Titles of anthologies, journals and newspapers, Japanese titles, German titles, and Translators.

Why do we read bibliographies? Well, we usually do not read bibliographies, we use them. But this bibliography may be used AND read as I will explain below.

First, we may want to look up a bit of information. Readers who have no knowledge of Japanese but are interested in Japanese literature will have a reliable guide to (nearly) all that is available for them in German translation. This will likely be the most frequent use of the bibliography in German-speaking countries. This book gives detailed information on translations of Japanese modern literature published in German originating all over the world i.e. de facto in Germany (East, West, old, new), Austria, Switzerland, and exotic places like Japan and the USSR. The editors have spared no effort to track down original titles (including dates of first publication) and have meticu-

lously traced the different editions of the translations, including journals and anthologies, leaving no stone unturned. There is nothing that one would not find here.

Second, we (readers active in translating from Japanese into German, but also readers outside the German language region) may want to know the “state of the field”: What has been translated into German during the last hundred or more years? Where can we discern “centres of gravitation”? Answers to these questions may provide a glimpse of the cultural history of German-speaking countries. We can see, for example, that modern Japanese literature was recognized relatively late with only one item published before 1900¹, 13 between 1900 and 1909, and only 6 between 1910 and 1919. The 1920s show a moderate increase (30 items), the 1930s a marked increase (59), which was helped without doubt by political affinities between Nazi Germany and wartime Japan (the peak lies in fact between 1935 and 1945). The 1940s and 1950s show a decrease (49 items each) owing to the economic disaster caused by war. It is only with the 1960s that we can see a surge: 148 items. There is no great change in the 1970s (144 items), but a second surge comes with the 1980s and 1990s (385 and 528 items, respectively): In 1990 Japan was the “guest of honour” at the International Frankfurt Book Fair, resulting in a moderate publishing boom of Japan-related books around 1990. Moreover, in 1983 the journal *Hefte für Ostasiatische Literatur* was founded, a semi-annual journal specializing exclusively in the publication of translations from Chinese, Korean, and Japanese. As the first decade of the 21st century is drawing to a close the number of translations has decreased to 383: The boom of the 1990s has worn off and Chinese literature is drawing far greater attention (China was “guest of honour” at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2009). Interest in contemporary literature of any country is always linked (to some degree) to interest in the country where the literature is produced and about which literature may give some insight. Interest in Japan has generally weakened, as it is being no longer the only non-Western major player in the world economy, these past years.

Looking at the list of translators three translators stand out: Oscar Benl, Siegfried Scharschmidt, and Jürgen Berndt. Oscar Benl (1914–1986), late Professor of Japanese Studies at Hamburg University, was the first prolific translator of Japanese Literature in German. He was not only the first (and

1 We have, however, to bear in mind, that this biography excludes poetry and is rather reserved towards some other genres (cf. further below) . In fact the first German translations of modern Japanese literature were translations of poetry and are consequently ignored in this bibliography.

only) German translator of *Genji monogatari* from the original, but the first translator of Kawabata, probably in any language (in 1942 he published a translation of *Izu no odoriko*). He produced a wealth of translations of modern literature, including Natsume Sōseki, Shiga Naoya, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Dazai Osamu, Ibuse Masuji, Abe Kōbō, and Inoue Yasushi². Siegfried Schaarschmidt (1925–1998) was a freelance translator who, after having learned Japanese late in life, produced a stunning amount of translations (Kawabata Yasunari, Mishima Yukio, Nakagami Kenji, Oda Makoto, Ōe Kenzaburō and many others.) and succeeded in drawing the attention of the general public to Japanese modern literature³. Jürgen Berndt (1933–1993), Professor of Japanese Studies at Humboldt University, then East Berlin, who nearly single-handedly represented Japanese Studies in East Germany, produced translations of works by Miyamoto Yuriko, Shimazaki Tōson, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Ibuse Masuji, Endō Shūsaku, Kaikō Takeshi, and many others⁴. Even after these three have died and a broader phalanx of younger translators are busy producing new translations, the former three, if we look at the quantity of translations each translator has produced, remain at the top.

Third, we may browse for “discoveries”: discovering titles we do not know, published at places we never dreamt of. And we are rewarded liberally. Moreover, the editors have – in a playful frame of mind – added some additional spice by including small bits and pieces of information between the listed bibliographical data: sometimes samples of translations, for example, the opening sentence of Akutagawa's *Hana* in four different translations, or prefaces that shed light on the fate of the book, or ephemera like “blurbs” etc., which get usually lost and are not to be found in libraries. The most curious of all is the declaration every buyer of the German translation of Tanizaki's *Fūten rōjin nikki* had to sign in 1966, stating that the buyer is 18 years of age or older and is acquiring the book only for his personal use.

This bibliography represents the highest state of the art and will provide reliable guidance and enjoyment to many users. Anybody who has done bib-

2 A complete list of publications by Benl is available in http://www.uni-hamburg.de/japanologie/worm/benl_lit.html .

3 There is a detailed list of Siegfried Schaarschmidt's work, compiled by Otto Putz, in the journal *Hefte für ostasiatische Literatur* No. 25 (1998), p. 12–38 .

4 Cf. “Jürgen Berndt – Leben und Werk” on the homepage of Zentrum für Sprache und Kultur Japans, Humboldt University, Berlin (<http://www2.rz.hu-berlin.de/japanologie/?jp=Berndt>)..

liographical work knows how trying a job it is: confirming page numbers, verifying original titles and publication dates, getting lost among different editions, wondering about transcriptions and so on. Upon finding the information sought for the user will likely not understand the pain-staking efforts that the editors have taken. Moreover, this kind of work is hardly valued in academia nowadays which makes us even more indebted to the compilers. But, as is often the case, there is shadow wherever there is light. This results from the problem of definition: what is Japanese literature?

If we maintain that Japanese literature is literature in Japanese, there is not much of a problem with the term “Japanese”, at least in modern times. Some 99% of literature produced in Japan is written in Japanese, today. The borders of the field seem clearly delineated. There are, however, some borderline cases, for example, Uchimura Kanzō’s “How I became a Christian?” which is considered a milestone in the development of modern Japanese autobiography but is not included in the bibliography, owing, presumably, to its having been written in the “wrong language”⁵. There is, more recently, the case of the author Tawada Yōko, who publishes in Japanese and German languages. Here are only those texts that were originally written in Japanese, quite reasonable but a pity nevertheless.

There is not much of a problem with the term “modern” either, because translating activities began only after the end of the difficult transition period, 1868–1890, where discussions could easily arise about the border-line between “pre-modern” and “modern”.

Most critical, however, is the question: What is literature? A bibliography is foremost a practical tool. Thus the definition of the object must be practical too. This bibliography registers all translations of novels, short stories (and anything in-between), plays, radio dramas, essays (essays of a more theoretical bent are excluded), and even a film scenario (by Kurosawa Akira). Some documentary literature is included (e.g., Hachiya Michihiko’s *Hiroshima nikki*, translated 1955, is listed, but Kanda Mikio’s *Genbaku ni otto o ubawarete*, translated 1985 is not). Here a quite conservative idea of “author” seems to be operational. An excerpt from Nagai Kafū’s diary (*Das Jahr 1937*, trans-

5 Wilhelm Gundert, later famous for his brilliant translation of the Zen text *Biyānlu*, published his translation as early as 1904 in Stuttgart: *Wie ich ein Christ wurde*. There is a good bibliography of Western language works on the life and work of Uchimura published by Mira Sonntag in *Japonica Humboldtiana* Bd. 4 (2000). I offer a further addition: “Wahre und falsche Propheten” (translator not given; author given as “Kanso Utschimura”). In: *Der Brenner* (ed. by Ludwig FICKER, Innsbruck, Austria), 4. series, No. 1 (Oct. 1919), p. 65–71.

lated by Barbara Yoshida-Krafft) is registered, but not the complete translation of diary fiction *Kichōsha no nikki* (usually quoted as *Shin-kichōsha nikki*; translated by Evelyn Schulz in her study *Tagebuch eines Heimgekehrten*, p. 285–337) by the same author. Generally essays constitute an unstable “gray area”: Tanizaki’s *In’ei-raisan* (193 /34) is included, but Ōsugi Sakae’s essays are partly excluded⁶. The avantgardist manifestoes of the 1920s, translated by Thomas Hackner in his study *Dada und Futurismus in Japan* (München 2001), are overlooked. The journal *hon’yaku* (Heidelberg, only six issues, 1999–2006), which tried – unsuccessfully – to address the “unlucky genres” of Japanese literature (i.e. literary criticism, manifestoes, letters, prefaces etc.) has been ignored altogether. Juvenile literature is generally excluded (allowances made, e.g., for Miyazawa Kenji). Certainly there had to be drawn a line, even if this line would look arbitrary at times.

A major genre of literature, even within the most conservative definition of literature, is explicitly excluded: poetry⁷. The only reason for this is given (in the preface to the 1995 edition) that translations of poetry are frequently published in isolated form and in out-of-the-way places. I know quite well the frustration of the bibliographer who not only has to read anthologies filled with “poetical” junk food but also has to use as much space for registering a spurious Haiku as the Haiku itself is taking in the original publication. Moreover, too many Haiku and Waka translations do not merit the name “translation” at all. But there should be ways of tackling this problem. There is by now a considerable body of high quality translations of modern Japanese poetry into German. Eduard Klopfenstein and other translators from Zurich University have been particularly assiduous, but others like Siegfried Schaarschmidt, Annelotte Pieper, Isolde Asai, and Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit have done quite remarkable jobs too, and should not be overlooked. And, anyway, it is not sensible to pick up scrupulously all fragments of prose from “out-of-the-way places” like the two German anthologies of *genbaku bungaku* (*Seit jenem Tag*

6 The essays published in *Wilde Blumen auf unfreiem Feld. Frauen in der Revolution* (translators Ilse Lenz und Akiko Terasaki, Berlin 1978) are included, essays published in *Linke Literatur in Japan* (München 1973) are not, though the latter ones have a more “literary” character.

7 Several poets have, however, slipped the penetrating eyes of the prosaic frontier police: Itō Hiromi (No. 477–483), Mori Ōgai (No. 897); Ochiai Naobumi (No. 1092; *Kōjo shiragiku no uta* translated by Karl Florenz – this being the only translation published before 1900, although Karl Florenz translated more and earlier examples of modern Japanese poetry), Shiraiishi Kazuko (No. 1284; there are more translations!), Takayanagi Makoto (No. 1328–1335).

and *An jenem Tag* published in 1984 and 1985 in West and East Germany, respectively) and leave all poetry published in the same anthologies to the dust-bin. Including poetry (even while excluding “insignificant” publications) would, however, have made the bibliography nearly twice as voluminous and the work twice as arduous. Accordingly, we must be satisfied with what we have got – recognizing the need that someone else should compile a companion bibliography of modern Japanese poetry in German translation.

Fetching a copy of *Modern Japanese Literature in Translation: A Bibliography* (published by International House of Japan Library in 1979) from my bookshelf I wonder what has changed: The old bibliography tried (and managed to a remarkable degree) to list translations into “all languages”: English stands far ahead, but Russian, French, Chinese, Korean, German and many other languages are present as well. Generally speaking, German was very poorly represented relative to English in 1979 as far as translations from Japanese are concerned, though it was at just the same time the foremost target language in the world⁸. By now German – and even more so French – has caught up to a remarkable degree, but no such all-languages-bibliography exists any more. The Bibliography published in 1990 by the Japanese PEN-Club was highly flawed (and excluded Asian languages!). When scrutinizing the *Index Translationum* (published by UNESCO in the Internet), which alas! lists only book-length translations, we find that the numbers of translations from Japanese have soared to numbers six or seven times higher than those in 1979⁹. A bibliography along the lines of 1979 would now look like the telephone directory of Greater London – if such a directory exists nowadays. So we rather hope that other linguistic communities will publish similar bibliographies: French and Russian, Chinese and Korean, Polish, Italian, Spanish etc. etc. A comprehensive bibliography of English translations seems not to be available at the moment. The present bibliography could be used as a model. However, we need to think about the borders of literature and the scope of a bibliography in a much more radical way:

8 According to the *Index Translationum*, published by UNESCO (by now to be consulted online), German was overtaken by French in 2002 as the world’s foremost target language in translations. (If we consider the figures for 1995 – 2004 English lingers at seventh rank between Polish and Czech).

9 This takes the numbers of the *Index Translationum* as a rough guide. The statistics on “source languages” gives 231 items under “Japanese” for 1979, but 1562 for 2005 (all target languages).

Even if poetry – and documentary literature and juvenile literature and the vast and variegated literary genre of essays – were included, I would still feel uneasy about the underlying definition of literature. All bibliographies (and in fact: nearly all histories of Japanese literature) are content dealing with “high brow literature” (adding a smattering of “medium brow literature” – so-called *taishū bungaku*) but completely ignore the “low brow” regions of literature. This results from the romantic idea of the “author” and his or her artistic “work” – a sad inheritance of what Heinrich Heine termed the “Kunst-epoche”. In German highly regarded authors are popularly termed “Dichter” (i.e., “poet”) even if he or she has not written a single line of poetry whereas people e.g. essayists who are suspected to write “non-autonomous” texts are degraded to “Schriftsteller” (i.e., “writer”). Here translations usually reproduce just the fictions of literary history writing. Bibliographies in turn reproduce the reproduction of those fictions by translators and cannot be blamed. However, if we were to register all texts that are part of the “literary life” of the inhabitants of that “Country of the Eight Islands” since 1868, we would have to cast our nets into far wider seas and we might then fetch some interesting fish, though strangely shaped sometimes. What about the “lyrics” of popular songs? What about (private) letters? Some important letters by, e. g., Kitamura Tōkoku and Natsume Sōseki have been translated into German. What about Manga¹⁰? What about – to go back just a few decades – *rakugo* and *kōdan* and *naniwabushi*¹¹, what about school songs (*shōka*)¹²? What about all those short- or medium-length stories that go by the name of *minwa*? They are reg-

10 The first version of the bibliography (1987) still included Manga. Since then the numbers of Manga translated into German have virtually exploded, so these texts were excluded from the second edition onwards. We can only hope that somebody in the growing crew of Manga fans will take on this important job. Manga tend to be available only for a short period of time. It is therefore essential that a bibliography of Manga translations is done while those texts are still on the market.

11 There are some German translations of *rakugo*, but, as far as I know, no translations of *kōdan* or *naniwabushi*. There is a full German translation of San’yūtei Enchō’s *Botan-dōrō*, which is registered in the bibliography. Enchō used to be the only *hanashika* who achieved the status of “author” (being honoured in 1965 by one volume in *Meiji bungaku zenshū*) – the recent *Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei Meiji-hen* (Iwanami shoten, vol. 6 and 7, 2006, 2008) generously allotted two volumes to urban professional oral literature: *rakugo*, *kōdan* and *ninjō-banashi*.

12 See, for example, Rudolf LANGE: “Lieder aus der japanischen Volksschule”. In: *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen zu Berlin, Abteilung I, Ostasiatische Studien* Bd. 3 (1900).

istered sometimes in bibliographies of “folklore” but not under “literature”¹³. All these are, or were until quite recently, vigorously living literary genres in Modern Japan. And if we do away with the dogma that Japanese literature is literature in Japanese, a dogma that is part and parcel of the poisonous legacy of 19th century nationalism – what about the magnificent Ainu texts that were written down from the mid-Meiji to the early Shōwa era¹⁴? When Chiri Yukie, Kannari Matsu, Kinda’ichi Kyōsuke and Kubodera Itsuhiko wrote down those texts from their own recollection or from oral recitation by other inhabitants of those islands, were they collecting foreign literature?¹⁵ What bibliographical form would cover all those ignored provinces of literature, i.e., “the entire field of word-made objects”¹⁶ in Modern Japan ?

Is this quest utopian? Yes, it is utopian. But without setting up utopian goals we easily lose the direction of our shorter everyday steps. What David Perkins suggested concerning the writing of literary history, i.e., “We must perceive a past age as relatively unified if we are to write literary history; we must perceive it as highly diverse if what we write is to represent it plausibly.”¹⁷, is true also about literary bibliography. We must perceive Japanese literature as a highly diverse field (or rather archipelago), if we want to approach a realistic understanding. However, we must reduce our scope considerably if we intend

13 Already the first *Iwanami kōza Nihon bungaku* of 1932 included an essay *Kōshō bungei taii* by Yanagita Kunio, by which at least oral literature of the agricultural communities was received into the fold of “literature”, though urban oral literature continued to be excluded, perhaps because these genres were – and are – branded “vulgar” and “traditional”. It must not be forgotten, however, that *naniwabushi* were a product of the Meiji era and were communicated not only through traditional channels like Yose etc., but foremost through gramophone and radio. In 1911 when the gramophone became popular, recordings of *naniwabushi* by Tōchūken Kumoemon were among the first records, and in 1932 when the first poll was carried out among listeners to the radio about their favourite programs, *naniwabushi* ranked first with 57% (*Nihon kindai sōgō nenpyō*, year 1932 c, 5.1) .

14 Orally transmitted Ainu texts can of course mostly not be dated exactly, most of them dating presumably from pre-modern times, some perhaps from late Edo or the Meiji era. But they were “produced” at the time when they were recorded in modern Japan. A fair selection of Ainu texts was included in 1938 in a volume of *Japanische Volksmärchen* by Fritz Rumpf. However, the first attempts at translating Ainu texts into German date from premodern times: August Pfizmaier published translations of *Aino Poesie* in Vienna, in 1850.

15 *Iwanami kōza Nihon bungaku* of 1932 included Kindaichi’s study of “Ainu bungaku”. Since that date Ainu texts are considered, by some scholars at least, as part of Japanese literature .

16 Stephen GREENBLATT: “The History of Literature”. In: *Critical Inquiry*, 23.3, Spring 1997, p. 476.

17 *Is Literary History Possible?*, Baltimore 1992, p. 27.

to produce a readable and useful book in the present situation. We should, nevertheless, not forget the fact that we are putting up fences in a landscape where there are no “natural” boundaries. And we must not give up the hope that others will be working just beyond our temporary fences so that we (or rather our children or grand-children) may some day recover a view of the complete landscape of human “word-made-objects”. If we keep this in mind and do not abandon this hope, then this book will be a highly useful resource.