

〈書評〉

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Kanken, The Petition of Yamamoto Kakuma:
An Annotated Translation

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Yamamoto Kakuma is remembered today as the brother-in-law and close friend of Nijijima Jo, with whom he founded Doshisha, but both his role in early Meiji Kyoto government and his role in the modernization of Japan are also important.

A gifted child from Aizu, Kakuma's interest in artillery easily expanded to an interest in Western learning, beginning with the study of Dutch and extending to English and on into many areas of Western culture. As a young man he was sent to Edo to study, and there made friends with people who would become leaders in the future. Kakuma's travels eventually took him to Kyoto, with the forces of Aizu in support of the

shogunate, and as far as Nagasaki, where he met several Westerners and further expanded his understanding of the West. His natural curiosity and keen intelligence enabled him to absorb vast amounts of information.

The year 1868 was crucial for Yamamoto Kakuma. In the midst of a brilliant career as an artillery officer and teacher of Dutch and Western learning in Aizu, he found himself blind and in prison in Kyoto, having been captured that January in the battle of Toba-Fushimi, when the forces of Aizu and others supporting the shogunate were defeated. His brother died as the result of wounds in that battle, and his father was to die that autumn in the Battle of Aizu. Kakuma was forty years old. Many people would have given up hope, but Kakuma chose instead to focus on what was ahead and how he could be of service.

In the summer of that year he completed and submitted a document titled *The Petition of Yamamoto Kakuma*, usually referred to as *Kanken*. In this document he explained his thinking about the paths that Japan should take on its way to modernization. *Kanken* shows not only his keen understanding of the central Western ideas but also his insight into how these ideas may be applied to Japanese culture in creating a more modern state. It is an important document in understanding the transformation of Japan that took place in the early Meiji period.

The translations of *Kanken* contained in the volume under consideration here may well become the definitive translation of *Kanken* into both English and modern Japanese. The book reads both from the right and from the left. From the right, after an excellent introductory essay by Takeuchi Rikio, there is a printed version of the handwritten *shakubun* text as it is found in the Doshisha archives, then a *yomikudashi* version of the text, and thirdly a modern Japanese translation. From the left,

following an English translation of Takeuchi's essay there is an English translation of the text. The supplementary material (preface, chronology, notes, etc.) are also provided in both English and Japanese.

As for content, *Kanken* would today be called an “opinion paper” that sets out recommendations for modernization in over twenty different areas of Japanese society, such as monetary reform, food and clothing, marine defense treaties, public health, and women's education, and was submitted to authorities for consideration. It appears to have been well received, and may have influenced Kakuma's appointment as an advisor to the Kyoto government.

The breadth and depth of his view of the whole and the integration of the parts is impressive. As Takeuchi aptly notes, “Two principles permeate *Kanken*: human equality and respect for the individual” (p. ix). These were indeed his own guiding principles, and ones he was to apply in helping Nijima Jo set up and oversee Doshisha a few years later. For example, in the section on women's education, he stresses that women should receive the same education as men, and that they should be free to study the disciplines which suit them, including “academic, artistic, and political disciplines” (p. 18). The notes for this section give examples which illustrate how Kakuma was to put his ideas into practice, and refer readers to the pictures of the schools mentioned in the examples, which are included in the book.

Inasmuch as the translators are all friends and former colleagues of mine, I cannot make any pretense of objectivity regarding the quality of their work, but my opinion is that it is a masterful accomplishment and important milestone in the study of Yamamoto Kakuma, Doshisha, and the creation of the modern Japanese state.

Perhaps the enormity of Kakuma's accomplishment may become clear if we ask ourselves what specific recommendations we would make for improving a broad range of aspects of Japanese society today. To be able to see so broadly and so deeply at the same time, and to put ideas and suggestions into words and then submit them to a higher authority for consideration is a huge challenge beyond the reach of most people; yet this is exactly what Yamamoto Kakuma did.

If we take this one step further and think about the challenges faced by this group of dedicated translators as they undertook to faithfully present Kakuma's thinking about difficult and complex subjects, to identify the many references to works in several languages and to include their findings and other significant information in the notes, we can begin to understand the enormity of the challenges, and appreciate and be grateful for, the efforts that they made.