Retrieving the ‘Lost’ in Translation

INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES

Masterclass with Gaynor Sekimori, Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, School of Oriental and African Studies London

Event Details
Date: 11 July 2014
Time: 10am to 4pm
Venue: Old Senate Room, Institute of Advanced Studies, UWA
Cost: Free, but RSVP essential.
Book online through ias.uwa.edu.au/masterclass/sekimori
Registration close: 4 July or until full.

Translation is not simply a matter of transposing words from one language to another but mediating between different cultural systems. Mary Pratt has spoken of “contact zones”, spaces where “peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations”. Translation plays an integral role in establishing such relations but all too often fails in its task. Why does translation fail? Or more precisely, why is it allowed to fail? Failure may be purely technical – a lack of language skills by the translator in either or both the source and target languages, or a lack of knowledge of publishing conventions in the target language. Adequate training can on the whole overcome this kind of failure. There is however another more insidious kind, one that does not take into account different systems of thought and hermeneutic processes in the source culture and language. Related to this is the tendency to consider terms in both source and target languages as kind of monoliths, rather than as entities that have been variously interpreted over time. This interdisciplinary class will offer a range of perspectives about the role of translation, particularly in an academic context, but it will also pose a broader question: how can we avoid imposing our own (western) intellectual categories when mediating between cultural systems (either within a particular monolingual society or between two different societies)?

About Gaynor Sekimori
Gaynor Sekimori is a professional translator and a member of the management committee of the Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions at the School of Oriental and African Studies London. A graduate of the Faculty of Oriental (Asian) Studies at ANU, she earned her PhD at the University of Cambridge in 2000. Her research interests include Japanese religious and intellectual history and her recent work has focused in material and visual culture in the context of Japanese popular religion. She has worked as an academic translator and editor in the humanities and social sciences since 1980, specialising particularly in the field of history.

About Masterclasses
» The IAS Masterclass provides an opportunity for postgraduate students and early career researchers to meet and discuss their research with a distinguished visiting scholar.
» Participants will present short papers on their current research, which will then be opened for discussion by the group. Places are available for those who wish to participate in the discussion, but do not wish to give a paper.
» Interested postgraduate students and early career researchers from all relevant disciplines at all Perth universities are invited to attend.

Gaynor Sekimori is participating in the 2014 AASA conference ‘AsiaScapes – Contesting Borders’ 8-10 July at UWA.

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