

Obituary: Keiji Yamamoto (1953–2018)

It is a very sad role for me to write an obituary of my friend and younger colleague Prof. Keiji Yamamoto, who passed away on the 17th of July, 2018, after suffering from cancer for a long time. Yamamoto was born on November 3, 1953, in Nagano Prefecture in Japan. After graduating from Waseda University in Tokyo, he moved to the Graduate School of Kyoto Sangyo University in 1979. He intended to study Arabic in the Department of Linguistics under the guidance of Prof. Fumio Yajima. This was the first time I met Yamamoto. I was working at the International Institute of Linguistic Sciences of the same university and just beginning to learn Arabic.

In 1981–1982, I had a sabbatical leave and visited Brown University for the second time—this time in order to learn to read Arabic texts on astronomy and astrology with Prof. David Pingree. When I came back to Kyoto, I convinced Yamamoto of the importance of dealing with Arabic manuscripts, especially in the field of astronomy and astrology. As an example, I took up the unique manuscript of ‘Umar ibn Farrukhān’s Arabic translation of Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos*. After that we began reading al-Bīrūnī’s book on astrology, *Kitāb al-tafhīm li-awā’ il šinā’ al-tanjīm*.¹ Yamamoto has been preparing a critical edition of the Arabic text using more than ten manuscripts.

In the early 1990s, we found an excellent co-worker on the topic of the history of astrology: Prof. Charles Burnett of the Warburg Institute, London. I invited Prof. Burnett to Kyoto frequently and the first result of our collaborative work appeared as *Abū Ma’shar: The Abbreviation of the Introduction to Astrology, together with the Medieval Latin Translation of Adelard of Bath*, E. J. Brill, 1994. Other results were “Al-Kindī on Finding Buried Treasure,” *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 7 (1997), 57–90, and *Al-Qabīšī (Alcabitius): The Introduction to Astrology*, The Warburg Institute Studies and Texts 2, London-Turin, 2004. Before the publication of this book, Yamamoto and Burnett had published another huge book titled *Abū Ma’shar: On Historical Astrology, The Book of Religions and Dynasties (On the Great Conjunctions)*, 2 vols., Brill, 2000. In this book, the Latin text was prepared by Burnett while the Arabic text was by Yamamoto. Yamamoto was an expert at using L^AT_EX and ArabT_EX and he prepared the Arabic text with incredible meticulousness.

Meanwhile Yamamoto received a permanent position at Kyoto Sangyo University as an associate professor of Arabic language and Islamic culture in the Faculty of Cultural Studies in 2001. With this secure job, he could devote more time to the philological study of Arabic/Islamic astrology. He stayed in Barcelona from April

¹ Our Japanese translation was published in three installments of the *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies*, 3–2 (March 2010), 303–371; 5.1–2 (February 2011), 299–356; and 6 (2013), 467–539.

2005 to March 2006 with the help of Prof. Julio Samso. My work with Yamamoto continued and we travelled together to India (August 2006) and Iran (August 2007) in order to collect Arabic manuscripts. On both occasions, Dr. Taro Mimura joined us. In India, we were helped by Prof. S.M. Razaullah Ansari and in Iran we could spend a very good time thanks to the friendship of Dr. Mohammad Bagheri.

Yamamoto's collaboration with Charles Burnett reached its culmination in their work: *Abū Ma'shar: The Great Introduction to Astrology*, 2 vols. Volume one: The Arabic original and English Translation, Volume two: The Greek version and glossaries. Pingree had finished a handwritten draft of the Greek text just before his demise in 2005. I remember that Yamamoto was struggling to decipher Pingree's autograph. It is a pity that Yamamoto could not see the final form of this book, which will be published in February, 2019.

Yamamoto was invited to join the Project Ptolemaeus Arabus et Latinus by the Research Leader, Dr. Benno van Dalen. As one of the most advanced scholars of Arabic materials, Yamamoto was expected to make a contribution with a critical edition of the Arabic translation of the *Tetrabiblos*.

A few days before his death Yamamoto made a final request to me: to open his laptop computer and enter the folder where the updated files of his works are contained. He wanted someone to continue his work. According to the timestamp the last date of modification is 2018-05-03: he wanted to improve our Japanese translation of al-Bīrūnī's *Tafhīm* in order to publish it as a book. I also found on his computer another large collaborative project with Burnett: *Abū Ma'shar: The Book of the Revolutions of the Years of the Nativities*, 2 vols. This is almost complete. I do hope that someone will continue Yamamoto's work using the computer files he left as well as the microfilms we collected.

Yamamoto contributed not only to scholarship but also to the popularization of the history of Arabic/Islamic science in Japan. Out of several books he translated from English into Japanese, I want to mention that by Dimitri Gutas, *Greek thought, Arabic culture; the Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsīd Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th Centuries)*, 1998, London and New York.

Michio Yano
yanom@kyoto-su.ac.jp
Kyoto
November 4, 2018