

Project Goal

My original commitment was to publish a book of Japanese poetry translations, completing almost every step of the publication process myself, from selecting the works, translating them from – at times, quite archaic – Japanese, typesetting and then printing a limited run of hand-bound, hand-printed books using photopolymer plates. Kaye McApline offered to provide a Scots translation to build upon the original aim, and I further expanded the scope when I found that there are no suitable freely-available Japanese typefaces, making two original typefaces. One of these typefaces, Yue Mincho Kana, is a significant piece of work that I will publish separately.

At every step, my aim has been to use source material, tools and techniques freely available to everyone, including software and fonts.

Along the Way

I created a long list of source poems by reading many online texts at Aozora Bunko (the Japanese equivalent to Project Gutenberg), as well as paper copies provided to me to by Yazaki Haruka. Following her suggestions, I began to translate some of this list, with her help and later the help of Chiba Sakie. I created detailed grammatical notes on each Japanese poem I had translated in order to provide Kaye with context for the Scots translation.

I began work on a kana (Japanese Syllabary) typeface in which to set the Japanese text, as there are almost no free Japanese typefaces suitable for a multi-lingual literary layout. I scanned rough paper sketches of the glyphs and then edited them using The Gimp image editor, then refined each kana character in FontForge to create an OpenType font file useable on any computer.

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End Result, and Future

During this time, I learned more about the photopolymer printing process and discovered that, for technical reasons, no available kanji (Chinese characters as used in Japanese) typeface would suit the publication. Using the free font Hanazono Mincho as a base, I designed over 180 kanji glyphs to typeset the poems.

You are reading the end result – a digital version of the booklet.