Letter of recommendation for Dr. Takahiro Nishiyama

I have known Dr. Takahiro Nishiyama since 2004, when he began work as a researcher on my project "From Craftsman to Engineer" (2004–2006), which was funded by the German Research Council. The aim of the project was to investigate how Japan quickly became a highly developed technical country with the help of Western knowledge.

While working on this project, Dr. Nishiyama received his doctorate from the University of Marburg; I supervised his thesis and was the chair of his committee. His thesis, "Technical human capital formation in the Yokosuka shipyard at the beginning of Japan's modernization" (2009), proved that many French nationals, in addition to the better-known case of the English and Dutch, were involved in knowledge-sharing from the West to Japan, thereby enabling its transformation from a premodern to a modern society. His research showed that already at the end of the eighteenth century, nonpolitical relations — such as medical and technical knowledge from the Netherlands — as well as the relatively high educational level of the Samurai were deciding factors for the successful sharing of accumulated knowledge from the West during Japan's transition period. His thesis provided insightful new findings about the Japanese modernization process. Especially noteworthy is his use of historical sources from Japan. Analyzing this material can serve as an important building block for further industrial and sociological research on the country.

In the years 2002–2006, Dr. Nishiyama was employed as a research associate at the Institute of Corporate Management of the business administration faculty of Gottingen University, and since 2006 at the Japan Center of Marburg University. In 2008 he was hired as a research associate at the Institute of Oriental and Asian Studies of Bonn University, and subsequently held temporary positions as academic advisor and Assistant Professor.

Dr. Nishiyama organized a panel discussion in August 2012 in Zurich on Japanologist day on the topic "A Comparison with Japanese Capitalism," where he also demonstrated impressive expertise in comparative research on capitalism. His latest project, "The Changing Work World in the Digital Transformation Age in Japan" is very valuable for the further development of Asian Studies and of Social and Economic Studies.

Over the course of his scientific career, Dr. Nishiyama has proved himself to be a highly motivated and innovative transnational researcher who also demonstrates excellent specialist knowledge. He is well-integrated in the research community, and has shown beyond a doubt that he takes great interest in the scientific discourse about society and culture in East Asia. I strongly recommend that you select Dr. Nishiyama for the position in your institute.