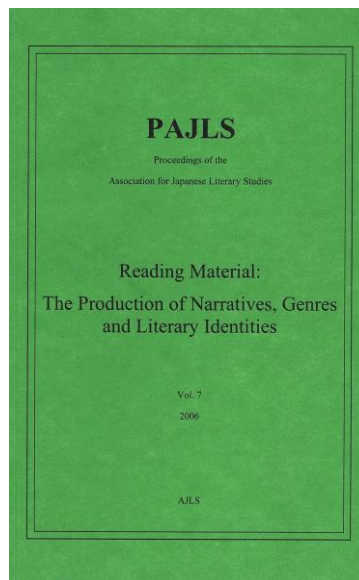


“Surviving the Red Purge: Activist Literature and Publishers in the Cold War”

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# Surviving the Red Purge: Activist Literature and Publishers in the Cold War

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In November 1945, two young Doshisha University graduates met on the second floor of a used bookstore in Kyoto and founded what would be one of the longest-lived publishers in postwar Japan. In the flux of the trying, yet heady days after the war ended, countless publishers appeared, producing a wide variety of books and magazines, at first on cheap paper. All sorts of entertainment, light fare, the sorts of texts and images not allowed a few short months earlier, under the empire. But many of those publishers folded almost as quickly as they appeared. Yet San'ichi Shobo, the publishing house that Takemura Hajime and Tabata Hiroshi founded in November, 1945, survived and is now in its sixtieth year. San'ichi Shobo is a small press with a radical or progressive political stance founded far from the center of the publishing industry. In the post-Cold War world, San'ichi is a shadow of its former self, plagued by labor disputes. In its most vigorous days, however, San'ichi contributed to Japan's print culture in significant ways. Although most historians and intellectual historians are familiar with San'ichi, literary scholars have taken little notice of this publisher. As Robert Darnton points out, the history of the book "complements literary study by showing that reception involves such factors as the availability of printed matter, the economics of book buying, literacy rates . . . the treatment of books as physical objects, and the mechanisms (including institutional structures) through which printed matter has been censored, banned, and canonized."<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I will consider the reasons that San'ichi Shobo survived the Red Purge and dominant anti-Leftism, and make a few preliminary remarks about San'ichi Shobo's role in postwar literary discourse and print culture.

Why might we who read and write about literature pay attention to such a seemingly minor regional publisher with a distinct political bent? Over the past 60 years, San'ichi has made available to readers literary texts by progressive and leftist writers that mainstream publishers shunned. San'ichi Shobo was an important venue for such authors, and one appreciated by many readers as well. Sales demonstrate that San'ichi's list had an audience.

On one level, San'ichi Shobo's list of titles looks rather orthodox, with books on education, the Japanese literary classics, and diplomacy. Yet readers associate San'ichi more with novels and poetry on politically and ethically controversial subjects. Before it was popular or acceptable to do so, San'ichi made available literary works that portray the Imperial Japanese

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<sup>1</sup> James L. Machor and Phillip Goldstein, eds., *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 156.

military's use of "comfort women," war responsibility in World War II, the ethical dimensions of Hiroshima/Nagasaki, the brutalization of soldiers, and the injustices done to Korean forced laborers brought to Japan during the colonial period. I will mention some of its best-known literary titles later. Despite the Allied Occupation's Red Purge and the hegemonic LDP's anti-communist agenda, San'ichi continued to offer a venue for progressive writers. Connected to the Communist Party in its early years particularly, San'ichi eventually presented a critique of the political and cultural left. For example, critics of the Left frequently blamed progressives for complicity in the construction of the Japan-as-victim myth. San'ichi rode the early wave of doctrinaire party line ideology, but later offered readers books that challenged this message of victimization.

San'ichi Shobo was founded in November 1945 by Takemura Hajime and Tabata Hiroshi, then both editors at a Kyoto publisher called Taigando. At a time when Japan's empire was literally being dismantled, the editors named their new company San'ichi (literally, three one, or March 1) after an important date in the 1919 Korean Anti-Imperialist, Anti-Japanese Independence movement (*samil undong* independence movement, *san'ichi undo* in Japanese). It was in a Kyoto bookstore of that same name—San'ichi Shoten--where Takemura and Tabata held their initial meeting. Their host that November day was the bookstore owner, Park Won-Jun (Japanese pronunciation, Boku Genshû), who was born in Korea.

Park's used bookstore, located near Hyakumanben and Kyoto University, offered the two a meeting place. The bookstore also became a site where Takemura and Tabata could learn about ideas and political movements long officially banned in imperial Japan. In San'ichi Shoten, they had found, for example, a copy of Maurice Thorez's *Fils de Peuple* (1937 ; Japanese title, *Jinmin no ko*, English title: *Son of the People*, International Publishers, 1938). This book was the autobiography of one of the best-known communist leaders in Western Europe. Thorez (1900-1964) long served as the secretary general of French Communist Party (CFP), and advocated the People's Front. *Jinmin no ko*, the Japanese translation of this volume (translated by Nagasaki Kôji) would become San'ichi Shobo's very first publication in 1946. During the first decade of its existence, San'ichi Shobo created a list that focused on intellectual history, Marxist thought, international Communism, Japanese history, and women's history. Interestingly, the publisher featured canonical literary works as well.

From the mid-1950s, after a decade of publishing, San'ichi established its shinsho series. This paperback book format offered a more affordable product aimed at a broader audience. In launching this new series of titles, not only did the publisher choose this new format in order to enhance sales potential, it also added a new range of subjects to its list. Rather than just hard-core Marxist theory and Communist Party-related monographs, the Shinsho series between 1955 and 1965 featured titles on topics such as youth--teenagers/adolescence, contemporary Japanese cinema, film history, domestic architecture (*danchi*), television, and popular music. In our present age of Cultural Studies, such subjects strike us as natural objects of study, but at the time it was a big step for a serious publisher such as San'ichi to choose these subjects, given the taint and suspicion of popular culture. As the work of Adorno reminds us, many people at the time associated mass culture with the dangers of fascism.

In 1965, on the tenth anniversary of San'ichi's shinsho series, editor Yamada Munechika articulated with impressive clarity the publisher's motivation in expanding in these directions.

Yamada frames the publisher's activities in 1955 as "symbolic" of basic shifts in Japan's politics in the mid-1950s. Specifically, he mentions "the formation of the LDP, the Socialist coalition, and the crisis within the JCP" and the social change that these events accompanied or sparked. Specifically Yamada evokes 50s and 60s social change with these iconic terms: mass culture, high economic growth, mass consumerism, the age of television, a revolution in transportation, the growth of civil society (*shimin shakai*). He also views this decade, the "second round of the postwar" as influenced by the development of "new desires" (*yôkyû, yokubô*).<sup>2</sup> With the advantage of 20-20 hindsight, we can all agree with Yamada's assessment of new social currents that influenced publishers' business and editorial decisions in the fifties and sixties. Yet it is impressive that San'ichi Shobo at the time perceived so clearly the link between politics, social change, and savvy business choice, and that it made the intellectual choices that it did. We can imagine that politics and intellectual integrity could easily have encouraged San'ichi to adhere to what then would have been considered lofty intellectual, Marxist subjects, and discourage it from making books about popular culture-- even if said books were critiques of popular culture and not the real thing. Whether San'ichi's interest in such social phenomena derived from a wariness of mass culture akin to that Adorno's, or was an opportunistic celebration of the economic prosperity becoming evident then, that is a topic for another occasion. In any case, it probably didn't hurt that San'ichi editors such as Teramura Yoshio had previous experience in precisely the type of mass and popular publishing companies that the shinsho titles critiqued. Before joining San'ichi Shobo, Teramura had worked briefly at a Kyoto company called Kokusai Joseisha (International Women's Company), which specialized in women's magazines. The bottom line is, the inclusion of popular culture subjects in the shinsho series kept San'ichi Shobo afloat, despite its minority political views. In addition, the massmarket paperback was the wave of the future then.

Even after adding the *Shinso* list, the publisher maintained the core of its serious list, with titles on economics, Marxist thought, women's history, Communist parties. Notably, some books, such as *An Analysis of Occupied Japan* (*senryoka nihon no bunseki*) lists the Japan Communist Party (JCP) as co-editor. San'ichi's list in the 1950s and 1960s, furthermore, included the collected work of Mao Tse-tung, essays by Kim Il-Song, an analysis of international communism. Yet even with such items on its serious list, San'ichi increasingly veered from straight Communist Party orthodoxy. Further evidence of the publisher's growing distance from mainstream Communist party outlooks can be found in San'ichi's choice to feature books by such independent progressive and leftist thinkers as Nakai Masakazu. This was *before* the AMPO demonstrations, the rise of the New Left, and the mainstreaming of activism. From the time of AMPO, the massive demonstrations in 1959-1960 and the AMPO movement itself became a subject in San'ichi's line. But the publisher also consistently included works on education (by the respected author Nagai Michio), children's literature, Korean history, the emperor system, Japanese diplomacy, classical literature, intellectual history, and ethnographer Yanagita Kunio.

As part of San'ichi's longevity, we might also cite geographical factors. Founded in Kyoto, San'ichi was in a sense a regional publisher, at one remove from the center of Japan's

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<sup>2</sup> Yamada Munechika in Sanichi Shobo, *Enshutsusha no me, Raitaa no me: San'ichi shinsho jûnen no ayumi 1955-1965* (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobo, 1965), p. 3.

publishing industry based in Tokyo. One imagines that in never-bombed (or more accurately barely bombed) Kyoto, bookstores in the center of the city might offer a comfortable place to plan for a new business. Thus, there were initially both political and economic implications for operating from a regional location.

In Kyoto, far from the center of power and surveillance, it might be easier to continue editing and publishing Marxist and Communist books during the Allied Occupation's Red Purge, and, as the anti-Communist basis of the LDP became clear, later in the 1950s and 1960s. Mr. Teramura, who joined the San'ichi staff in 1948, claimed that he did not recall harassment from the authorities, either during the Occupation or after. What was more troublesome politically, according to him, was the tense international situation at the height of the Cold War.

However, the pull of the Tokyo publishing industry was hard to resist, and by the mid-fifties, with increased sales and even a best seller (a novel!), the publisher had to use printers in Tokyo. In addition, the distributors (*torisugiten* in the book world; *ton'ya* for other industries) Toohan and Nippan were in Tokyo, so it became logistically advantageous to work out of Tokyo. So in the late 1950s (1958), San'ichi established an office in Tokyo, with some of the Kyoto staff in place. The Kyoto office was maintained for decades after.

But what significance does San'ichi Shobo have to postwar literary discourse? From the types of publications that we have mentioned thus far, this publisher would seem to devote its energies to the world of ideas, and to the public exchange of those ideas. Its titles on intellectual history, Marxism, and history contribute to the discourse of public opinion. Roger Chartier identifies public opinion with "a community of readers who make double use of the printed word: in the close-knit conviviality of common readings, which consolidates new forms of sociability, and in solitary but shared reflection, which the circulation of the book authorizes."<sup>3</sup> If, as Chartier claims, a history of reading "traces a mobile and stable frontier between public and private," how do we account for San'ichi's inclusion of modern literature, which in its canonical articulation up to that point in time, had emphasized the private realm? An obvious answer would be that San'ichi would gravitate toward the dogmatic poem, the didactic socialist realist novel, which on one level was true.

Yet the process of reception of literary works that the publisher selected is a bit more complex than that. Rather than surveying the entire six decades of San'ichi's history, let's look at several notable literary texts that San'ichi produced. First, Gomikawa Junpei's *Ningen no jôken* (The Human Condition) became one of the publisher's first bestsellers. Readers are likely familiar with the acclaimed cinematic adaptation of Gomikawa's six volume novel about a pacifist named Kaji who is conscripted into the Imperial Army. The film was made between 1959 and 1961 by well-known director Kobayashi Masaki and starred Nakadai Tatsuya. San'ichi did an initial run of 3,000-5,000 copies of Volume One of the novel in 1956, and then 10,000 copies more after the first run quickly sold out. When a feature article about the novel appeared in the weekly magazine *Shûkan Asahi*, sales of *Ningen no jôken* skyrocketed. Not long after, in 1959, the first of a three-part film version of Gomikawa's novel came out by a mainstream

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<sup>3</sup> Roger Chartier, *Frenchness in the History of the Book : From the History of Publishing to the History of Reading : the 1987 James Russell Wiggins Lecture in the History of the Book in American culture at the American Antiquarian Society* (Worcester, Mass: American Antiquarian Society, 1988), p. 34.

director. Thus, San'ichi Shobo rode the crest of the wave of mass culture. With paperback books and mass circulation weekly magazines (*shûkanshi*), a novelist and her publisher could aim for sales of “ten million” (*sen man satsu*).

Takemura, one of the founders, had advocated for Gomikawa's novel when other publishers had rejected it. It's not surprising for a leftist publisher to favor a novel with this type of antimilitarist, antimperialist message. Yet Takemura's fondness for *Ningen no jôken* originated not only in didactic intent. He also expressed his preference for a novel that was decidedly not *junbungaku* (pure, or canonical serious literature). In contrast to *junbungaku*'s scorn of the “common” or the popular (*tsûzoku*), the newcomer novelist had written a good, entertaining story that would satisfy the “healthy desires” (*kenkô na yokubô*) of readers.”<sup>4</sup> Takemura identified the novel as *chûkan shôsetsu* or middle-brow fiction. In fact, Takemura goes so far as to claim that San'ichi was a pioneer in producing middle-brow fiction, novels of ideas with entertainment value. In contrast to effete intellectuals, Gomikawa (and by extension his publisher) recognized his readers as thinking men and women, even if it were a mass audience (as it turned out to be). San'ichi's view of its readers also differed from that of the mass media, he asserted, because the mass culture industry targeted audiences with mindless, idea-less entertainment.

Another subject area to which San'ichi made important contributions was nuclear weapons, and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Kurihara's poetry was introduced to the English-speaking world by Richard Minear's translations and biographical introduction. Later, John Treat devoted many pages to Kurihara's poems and essays in his book on Japanese literature and the atomic bomb. The first editions of Kurihara's *Kuroi Tamago* were published locally, as it were, in Hiroshima by Chugoku Bunka Hakusho. Yet from the 1970s through the 1990s San'ichi stepped forward as a Tokyo-based publisher (by then it had office in Tokyo) with national distribution and published some of her work, such as *Hiroshima to iu toki* (1976), *Kaku Jidai ni ikiru*, 1982, and *Towareru Hiroshima* in 1992. Indeed, both Minear and Treat used San'ichi's editions of Kurihara's work.

In addition to Kurihara's poetry and essays, San'ichi produced important studies of the antinuclear movement such as the well-known books by Imahori Seiichi. (When I asked Mr. Teramura about Kurihara's work, he suggested that those were the work of another generation of editors).

The final literary monograph that I will mention is the cluster of titles on proletarian literature. Early in its history, San'ichi attempted a revival of Japanese proletarian literature. In the 1950s, we find on San'ichi's list numerous volumes (single and multi-volume sets) on proletarian literature, such as the *Nihon proletaria bungaku taikei* edited in 1954 and 1955 by Noma Hiroshi and Hirano Ken. In addition the company printed literary histories and critical works on Japan's proletarian literature dating back to the early twentieth century, and the selected works of Noma Hiroshi. Later San'ichi would publish the *fukkôkuban* reproductions of *Akahata*, the official organ of the JCP.

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<sup>4</sup> *Enshutsusha no me*, p. 8.

As Roger Chartier has written, the history of the book and reception studies can “teach us a great deal about the way in which . . . the conditions of the exercise of power changed, how cleavages between groups and classes developed, how cultural practices and ways of being in society have evolved.” This paper is a brief introduction to the publisher San’ichi Shobo, which enjoyed remarkable stability and longevity, despite immense political and financial pressures on Leftist activities. In future research, I plan to address the complex ways that the declining influence of the Japan Communist Party and the Japan Socialist Party, the crisis in international Communism, the predominance of academic Marxism, and rabid anti-Communism in Japan’s ally the United States all functioned as important factors in the existence or demise of progressive publishing houses. In turn, the production of books by such publishers or the lack thereof influenced the literary field, literary discourse, and our reading and writing.

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## Interview

Author's interview with Teramura Yoshio, Kyoto, 19 June 2005.

## Glossary

San'ichi Shobo 三一書房

San'ichi Undo 三一運動

Samil Anti-Imperialist Anti-Japanese Independence Movement

Park Won-Jun /Boku Genshû 朴元俊

Takemura Hajime 竹村一

Tabata Hiroshi 田畑弘

Teramura Yoshio 寺村義男

Maurice Thorez, CPF Secretary General

Fils de Peuple 「人民の子」



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San'ichi shinsho 三一新書

Gomikawa Junpei 五味川順平

Ningen no jôken 「人間の条件」

Kurihara Sadako 栗原定子「黒い卵」