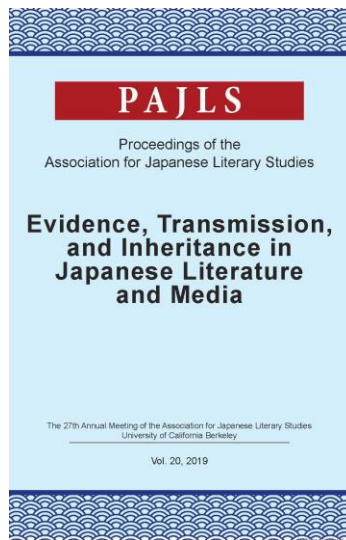


“Inheriting Books: Overseas Bookstores,
Distributors, and Their Networks”

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INHERITING BOOKS: OVERSEAS BOOKSTORES, DISTRIBUTORS, AND THEIR NETWORKS

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This paper aims to analyze the book distribution networks that existed before the Asia-Pacific War and what I believe their significance is to our research. Also, according to the proposal of the panel organizer, I will briefly discuss recent university reforms in Japan as well as the current crisis in the humanities and its connection to this research project.

HAMAI MATSUNOSUKE



Figure 1: Hamai
Matsunosuke (*Zenkoku
Shosekishō sōran* 1935).

Figure 1 is an image of Hamai Matsunosuke 濱井松之助, who was a distributor of books. There were many such distributors in pre-war Japan, but the one thing that made Hamai special was that he circulated an enormous number of books throughout the Empire of Japan and all of its overseas territories through his company, Ōsaka Yagō Shoten 大阪屋号書店. Hamai was born in Matsue City in 1874. He first apprenticed to a kimono shop in Osaka, and then he went to Taiwan and worked as an engineer with the Taiwan Government-General. In November 1904, in the middle of the Russo-Japanese War, he opened Ōsaka Yagō Shoten in Yingkou, a port town in China on the shore of Liaodong Bay.

Ōsaka Yagō Shoten went on to become one of the biggest book distributors prior to the Asia-Pacific War (Figure 2). As shown below, in 1932, Ōsaka Yagō Shoten had branches all over East Asia (Hibi 2016b).

Head office = 2-5 Gofukubashi, Nihonbashi-ku, Tokyo
Dairen Branch (*shiten*) = 3-chōme, Naniwa-chō, Dalian
Dairen Branch (*bunten*) = Rensa shōtengai, Dalian

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Ryojun Branch = Aoba-chō, Lüshun
 Hōten Branch = Kasuga-chō, Fengtian
 Keijō Branch = 1-chōme, Honmachi, Seoul
 Ōsaka Yagō Shoten, Keijō wholesale branch, Seoul
 Ōsaka Yagō Shoten, Manshū wholesale branch, Fengtian
 Ōsaka Yagō Shoten, Beijing branch



Figure 2 “Contact Shops” of Ōsaka Yagō Shoten in Manchuria, 1936.

Business did not go very well for them in Taiwan, but they did establish an affiliate, Taiwan Shoseki Kabushiki Gaisha 台湾書籍株式会社, there in the 1930s.

Profitable merchants were advancing toward the new territory acquired in the war, and it was the same in the bookstore industry. It was immediately after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–5 that Murasaki Nagaaki 村崎長昶, who later developed Niitakadō 新高堂 into Taiwan’s top bookstore, moved to Taiwan (Hibi 2020). After the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5), many bookstores saw the prospect of advancing into the Chinese mainland as a business opportunity. Ōhashi Shintarō 大橋新太郎, the owner of Hakubunkan 博文館, a major publishing company in Tokyo, and Kamei Chūichi 亀井忠一 of Sanseidō 三省堂, which mainly dealt with educational books, established Tōa Kōshi 東亜公司 and attempted to export books, medicines, and miscellaneous goods to China. After that, as the Japanese population in the overseas territories increased, and in conjunction with the strengthening of Japanese language education in the colonies, the number of overseas bookstores selling Japanese books and magazines increased. It was not only standard bookstores but also major bookstores such as Ōsaka Yagō Shoten, Tōkyōdō 東京堂, and Hokuryūkan 北隆館; medium-sized wholesalers such as Sanseidō; Kansai-based bookstores like Yanagihara Shoten 柳原書店; and Kyushu-based bookstores, including Kikutake Kinbundō 菊竹金文堂 and Ōtsubo Junshindō 大坪惇信堂 that expanded their network of wholesalers by taking advantage of their locations (Hibi 2016b).

Why study someone like Hamai and his business? I have been researching Japanese American literature in North America and part of this research has led me to examine the literary environment that sustained it—an environment constituted by newspapers, magazines, and bookstores in several “Japantowns” (Hibi 2014). I have focused on Goshadō 五車堂, a bookstore in San Francisco’s Japantown that was established in October, 1906; notably, it was one of the biggest Japanese bookstores in San Francisco, rivaling the size of Aoki-Taiseidō 青木大成堂. Sometimes I explain my research as an extension of my former research projects—but today, I am going to explain it in a different way.

THE CRISIS OF THE HUMANITIES

The crisis of the humanities has forced us to ask many questions with newfound urgency (Hibi 2015). How can we produce interesting and important research outcomes that extend beyond a single academic domain like literary studies or Japan studies? How can we conduct research that can claim any academic, cultural, social, educational, political, or economic importance in an environment of declining interest in the humanities and literary studies? I suppose many researchers in the humanities may be asking themselves these questions not only in Japan

but also in other countries as all of them are facing similar social and political forms of willful ignorance toward academia.

As for social and political misunderstandings, let me talk more specifically about the current case of Japan. In Japan, the crisis regarding the humanities began with recent political and administrative attempts to reform the university system. In June 2015, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 文部科学省 (MEXT) proposed a plan that would abolish humanities departments in Japan's national universities.² MEXT urged the national universities to restructure their humanities departments and colleges for the training of teachers. This would be accomplished by both eliminating some departments and colleges and shifting the emphasis to the fields that MEXT believes to have a greater social demand.

The outcry against this proposal from university professors and their organizations was even joined by the Keidanren, which is formally known as the Japan Business Federation. This very influential association of Japanese economic leaders issued an opposing statement regarding the proposal from MEXT (Hibi 2016a). As a result of this action, MEXT had to scale back its reformation plan. However, MEXT and the Japanese Ministry of Finance, which administers the national budget, have not completely given up on the plan.

For example, the Japanese government is currently considering making higher education “free.”³ Actually, it would not really be free as the government would initially cover the tuition fees for students, but then they would be expected to repay these fees after graduation in accordance with their income. Needless to say, this is not the same as “free.” Moreover, the minister who was in charge remarked that the institutions are to be financially supported by the government utilizing this method. In this regard, he said, “it should be limited to universities that are being evaluated by the real world, such as accepting outside personnel from industry.”⁴

As you know all too well, working in literary studies does not provide for an adequate income. It is not an academic discipline that trains students in direct ways that they can immediately apply at a company after

² Hirofumi Shimomura, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology “Kokuritsu daigaku hōjin tō no soshiki oyobi gyōmu zenpan no minaoshi ni tsuite (tsūchi)” MEXT, Jun. 8, 2015. https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/koutou/houjin/1418121.htm

³ “Abe’s HR development initiative,” *The Japan Times*, Aug. 19, 2017.

⁴ “Motegi Tantōshō mushōka ‘Daigaku o gentei,’” *Mainichi Shinbun*, Oct. 28, 2017.

graduation. Some of us might believe that researchers in the humanities do not have to respond in a straightforward way to these demands from business. Nevertheless, if we merely ignore these political and industrial pressures, and keep to our own interests, the situation will only get worse. Researchers in the humanities—including literature scholars—need to demonstrate the value of their research to the world outside of their academic communities.

SIGNIFICANCE OF BOOK DISTRIBUTION RESEARCH

Now, let us return to book distribution and overseas bookstores. What is the value of being involved in this type of work? The advantage of this research is that it may successfully reach a broader audience, thereby addressing other areas in the humanities including history, publishing culture, journalism, readership studies, and so on—and it may attract the attention of ordinary readers who are interested in history. At the same time, it illuminates the infrastructure of literary activities, revealing such information as to what kinds of books and magazines were imported from Tokyo to Shanghai in the 1930s; how many copies of them there were; how they were brought, and by whom; and where they were sold. Lastly, because the study of books is the study of material things, such an approach may be able to produce tangible evidence that would be useful when we are called upon to demonstrate our research values or outcomes.

It is especially important that we are considering books. The importance of books for human intellectual activities throughout history is easily understood by almost everyone. Historical research which illuminates how books brought information to readers and how they inspired human activities would contribute to a defense of the humanities.

Before World War II, along with the expansion of the Empire of Japan, enormous amounts of people, materials, and information moved back and forth from Japan to East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Americas. The circulation of Japanese language books, magazines and newspapers was a part of this large migration. Most of the past scholarship on the Japanese-language publications outside of Japan tended to pay attention to the publications printed within the Japanese overseas territories, their creators, and perhaps their readers. My approach examines the very network in which Japanese language books were circulated, thus connecting Japan and its overseas territories or settlements. I focus especially on the history of book distributors and bookstores.

NETWORK

Research into book distribution and overseas bookstores is essentially research that examines networks. It investigates the flow of printed materials from publishers to booksellers, from one area to another area, and from writers to readers. Studying book distribution can provide perspectives that transcend boundaries separating countries, regions, languages, and ethnic groups because the books themselves cross over such borders—in legal and sometimes illegal ways.

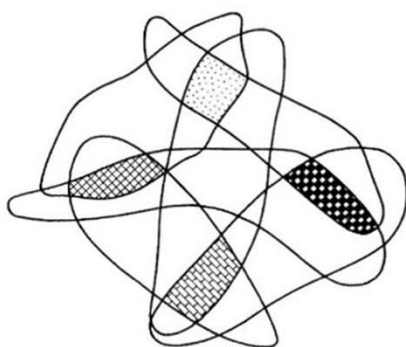


Figure 3-2
(Imai and Kaneko 1998)

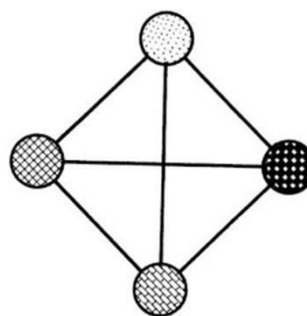


Figure 3-1

The process of examining networks can offer a variety of new ideas. For example, Figure 3-1 shows nodes that connect the web of the network. Each node is a single dot. In contrast, Figure 3-2 shows nodes as areas of overlap between various networks. We might think of bookstores as akin to these nodes in Figure 3-2.

In his book, *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre describes networks in the following way:

[t]he initial basis or foundation of social space is nature—natural or physical space. Upon this basis are superimposed—in ways that transform, supplant or even threaten to destroy it—successive stratified and tangled networks which, though always material in form, nevertheless have an existence beyond their materiality: paths, roads, railways, telephone links, and so on.... Each network or sequence of links—and thus each space—serves exchanges and use in specific ways.⁵

⁵ Lefebvre 1991, pp. 402–3.

Lefebvre uses the examples of roads, railways, and telephone networks; accordingly, he points out that these networks link more than just materials. Shipping a book is not merely the conveyance of printed paper, as books contain such intangible things as knowledge, imagination, and emotions.

People produce various relationships with books; subsequently, a variety of social regulations attempt to intervene in such relationships such as school education, library law, censorship, and import regulations. Studying the networks of book distribution could offer material evidence of people's cognitive activities, their experiences with books, and the social regulations concerning printed materials and readership.

Yagashiro Hideyoshi has pointed out four factors that determine the structural characteristics of distribution. He describes them in the following manner:

...first, the various properties of each product, such as shape, the manner of its production and consumption, price, weight, and durability; second, the state of trading centers and market reach; third, changes in the systems of distribution, transportation, and information dissemination; fourth, the behavior and choices of the distributing agent acting in correspondence to these externalities.⁶

As for the properties of books, we should consider their forms of production and consumption, such as their shape and weight, as well as their publication, sales, reading, bulk pricing, the special pricing in the colonies, the duration and location for storage, the distribution quantities, or the size of print runs. Besides these properties, we can find book trading markets, systems of distribution, the behavior of multiple agents and others within the book distribution networks. Furthermore, all of these components comprise multiple network layers of materials, human activity, and information.

TRANSMISSION

This brings us to transmission, one of the keywords of this Association for Japanese Literary Studies (AJLS) meeting. The relationship of book distribution and transmission is clear. As for the history and amount of distributed books and magazines, let us briefly review the following

⁶ Yagashiro 2012, p. 15. Translation is by Kevin Singleton.

roundtable discussion involving book distributors before the Asia-Pacific War, which looked back on the distribution of books to Manchuria:

Ōno: [...] At one time, nearly 20% of all Japanese publications were sent to this area [Korea, Manchuria, Taiwan, and China].

[...]

Kokuryō: Books sold well in Mudanjiang, Manchuria. Everything sold well.

Suzuki: From Harbin to Mudanjiang, no matter how many books I sent, they sold out.

Horie: As was the case with civilians who came from Japan, soldiers bought a lot. Then all the staff of the South Manchuria Railway Company bought them.

Ōno: Many people read books and magazines there. They did want to read books and magazines when they were far from *naichi* (mainland Japan).⁷

Ōno Magohei used to be the president of Tōkyōdō, one of the biggest book distributors in pre-war Japan. In this discussion he is saying that nearly 20% of all the publications printed in Japan was sent to Korea, Manchuria, Taiwan, and China. Furthermore, their main customers were not only civilians but also soldiers and employees of *Mantetsu*, the South Manchuria Railway Company.

Transmission does not simply mean that particular information is transmitted from point A to point B. It also means that the mode of information transmission and the mechanism that supports the transmission of information itself are transmitted and inherited. In fact, a good example of this is in the 1930s some booksellers in Osaka invented a book distribution system called “joint sales,” or *kyōdō hanbai* 共同販売. This was a system that improved the distribution and inventories of new books through the joint establishment of warehouses and collaborative management of their inventories.

Once the booksellers in Osaka started using this system, it gradually became more prevalent across the Empire of Japan. Ōsaka Yagō Shoten set up wholesale departments in Fengtian, Manchuria, and Seoul. Taiwan’s biggest retail bookseller, Niitakadō, in conjunction with Ōsaka Yagō Shoten, established the Taiwan Shoseki Kabushiki Gaisha 台湾書籍株式会社, which performed a similar function.

⁷ Hashimoto 1964, p. 510.

These operations were either brokerage departments or bookselling companies, all of which attempted to improve the efficiency of distribution by establishing a large, stocked repository which then doubled the display spaces. These departments or companies were called *kyōhan* 共販, joint sales, or *oroshibu* 御部, or wholesale departments. They were founded in Osaka, Kyushu, Manchuria, Korea, and Taiwan and were built up from the influence of the preceding business models in other areas. By studying the history of book distribution networks, we can learn not only from the actual flow of books but also from the transmission of the delivery systems of books.

INHERITING EXPERIENCE AND MATERIALS

This last topic is about inheritance. The richest description ever written about the surviving overseas books after the collapse of the Empire of Japan would be Keiji Okamura's *Nokosareta zōsho: Mantetsu toshokan, kaigai Nihon toshokan no rekishi* (History of Remaining Libraries: Mantetsu Libraries and Overseas Japanese Libraries; Okamura 1994). Okamura depicted in detail the history of Japanese overseas libraries by presenting the South Manchuria Railroad's Mantetsu Library, the Manchuria National Library, and the Beijing Modern Science Library as his primary examples. Okamura discovered that the owners of the library collections frequently changed between Japan and China throughout the course of the war along with the territory and culture that was being fought over.

Rather than libraries, my research focuses on the distribution system for new books and magazines; yet, my goals and conclusions are very similar to Okamura's. Accordingly, I am interested in empirically and historically revealing the material aspects of the book distribution networks by tracing the history of book distribution and overseas booksellers. It should be noted that the history of these networks should be written not only along with the history of Japanese imperial expansion and colonization, but also alongside the drastic transformation of post-war East Asia that followed the collapse of the Empire of Japan. This collapse led to the large-scale repatriation (*hikiage* 引揚げ) of the Japanese from the colonies, as well as Korean and Chinese people from Japan. While many were able to return, some were not; this is also true of their belongings. A few books returned with the repatriated, while others were left behind. We can ask here how people's lives, books, and their relationships with books changed amid the rapid transition from the collapse of the empire to the new order of the post-war era.

The history of the overseas distribution of books should not be forgotten, for its own sake, but it can also speak to matters of the present. For example, let us think of the surviving collections in the many libraries located in North East China, Korea, Taiwan, Hawaii, South America and the Pacific coast of North America. How do we consider these books? Can we remember the histories of these books? How can we now build new relationships with these relics of the past decades? The question of inheritance is inevitably tied to questions of materiality.

When we look at materials, we realize that the way people migrate and the way materials move are different. A person with a passport, for example, crosses the border according to immigration regulations, while books are packed in a box and go through customs according to import and export regulations. Humans and materials are controlled by different laws. Furthermore, people can live only 80 or 90 years at most, while books survive much longer. In this way, people and materials differ in their tracks of motion, the way they are accumulated and stored, the laws and regulations they control, and the composition of their networks.

Books are carried by people. Naturally, the tracks from the movement of people and books overlap, which is similar to the overseas bookstores that were established in the newly acquired colonies. However, by focusing on the materiality of books, we can shed light on the fact that people and materials have different movements and different histories. We can reveal the multilayered networks within human movements, book distribution systems, and knowledge circulation. Within the layers of human networks, the layers of object networks, and the layers of knowledge networks, there will be some sublayers. By classifying each layer, explaining its dynamics, and describing its connections, it becomes possible to draw a global map of the correlations between spaces, human beings, materials, and knowledge.

In carrying out this research, books that contain both material and knowledge serve as a gateway. A book is a bundle of paper and stains of ink, and when a person reads it, information is drawn out and their knowledge is enriched. When we examine books, we can simultaneously consider their material and knowledge. Studying books allows us to consider both of these aspects.

It may be reasonable to call my approach an example of New Materialism.⁸ This is the idea of moving beyond dichotomies such as society-nature and culture-nature, and trying to rethink human problems and environmental problems as one and inseparable from the other. The

⁸ For example, see Bennett 2010.

idea that we should not separate materials from humans, and humans from the environment, but consider them as integrated in one ecosystem may allow us to find agency even in the materials themselves. These new discoveries are possible once we rethink the relationship between space, books, knowledge, and humans from a broader perspective. Such an approach will take us beyond the limits defined by academic disciplines such as publishing and literature, and into a broader realm that affords new lines of inquiry.

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