

BOOKING AROUND IN TOKYO: REPORT OF A RECENT TRIP TO JAPAN

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I was in Japan from 21 October to 4 November 1986 and spent half of my time browsing in bookshops, going to book exhibitions and hunting for rare items in various Tokyo book fairs. The weather of Tokyo is usually fine during this period of the year when the city has its mammoth book week. Tokyo has close to 800 bookstores, many of which also buy and sell second-hand books. There are about 145 stores in Kanda area and roughly 35 shops in the vicinity of Waseda University. I visited about one-third of these shops and paid two visits to each of the following three big bookstores which rank after Kanda's Sanseidō Bookstore in size (3041 sq.m.) and are situated outside Kanda district:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>AREA IN SQ. METERS</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
Kinokuniya Main Store	2664	3 min from Shinjuku Station
Yaesu Book Centre	2479	2 min from Tokyo Station
Seibu Book Centre	1884	2 min from Ikebukuro Station

I visited four of our Japanese book suppliers and had engaging talks with them during my stay in Japan. On 22 October, I called on Oriental Books Ltd in Osaka and was invited to lunch by its President, Mr Yoshihide Teishima. Judging by what I saw and heard, Oriental might have a glorious past but is now operating on a small scale with a prompt, efficient and personal service. On 30 October, I visited Japan Publications Trading Co Ltd (JPT) and Kobayashi Bookstore in Tokyo. Mr Akio Takeuchi, JPT's Manager of Book Export No. 2 Department, had extensive talks with me for an hour and a half in the company of his colleagues, Mr Ken'ichi Gotoh, Assistant Manager in charge of monographs and Mr Kobe Hirano, Assistant Manager in charge of serials, after which I was shown their on-line order control system. We continued our amiable conversation in a nearby restaurant during lunch. My afternoon visit to Kobayashi Bookstore, a shop specializing in Buddhist studies, was brief but fruitful. The man in charge had a remarkable memory which helped to sort out all our outstanding orders in a couple of minutes. In the afternoon of 31 October, I met Mr Suishirō Takahashi, Isseidō's General Manager of Export Department and exchanged ideas with him concerning our needs and their service.

During my two weeks' stay in Tokyo, there were two book exhibitions and five book fairs. I missed the book fair at Tokyo National Railway Station but visited all the other four fairs: the two second-hand book fairs at Kanda's Tokyo Old Book Hall from 10/24-10/26 and 10/31-11/1, the annual Blue Sky Book Fair in Kanda from 10/25-11/3 and the Takada no Baba Book Fair from 11/3-11/8. They varied in size ranging from 6,000 to 60,000 displayed volumes, the biggest being the Kanda Blue Sky Fair which was held at two venues with open stalls specially erected for this annual occasion. It attracted hundreds to thousands of eager customers who jostled and struggled in the "human sea" trying to pick up some cheap bargains. Some new items were for sale at a huge discount, e.g. Kojien, the best one-volume dictionary, was available at ¥4,400, ¥1,400 below its marked price, and the complete reprint set of Akai tori journal which is currently priced at ¥380,000 was reduced to a mere ¥95,000.

The 21st Book Production Contest Exhibition (1986) was held at Kanda's Sanseidō Bookstore from 21 to 31 October and I could not help admiring the beauty and quality of the prize-winning items which excelled in design and binding. To commemorate the occasion of the 40th annual Book Week, the Japanese Books Exhibition '86 was held at Tokyo Metropolitan Industry and Commerce Centre near Hamamatsu Station from 1 to 4 November. It was very professionally staged on three spacious floors with excellent facilities including toilets, public telephones, resting and smoking corners on each floor. Readers could browse at leisure among some eighty stalls, other shelving areas and the bargain fairs, and toy with on-line terminals. Sign-sales by several well-known authors were arranged and no less than two hundred and seventy publishers joined forces to make the Exhibition a success with a magnificent display of about 30,000 items some of which were rarely seen in ordinary bookstores.

In June 1986, we ordered from Rare Oriental Book Co of Aptos, California, Who's Who Hakushi in Great Japan edited by K R Iseki and was charged US\$250 for this rare item which the bookseller described as "6 volumes in 1". When the book arrived in October, it was clear that the antiquarian bookseller had made a mistake as the volume they sold us was only volume one of a six-volume set. As this title is an indispensable reference work, I tried to search for it in Tokyo despite the slim chance of success. For ten days my efforts ended in vain, but on 1 November, I was caught by surprise as I spotted volume four of this title on sale in the book fair at Tokyo Old Book Hall. It belonged to a bookstore named Shinsendō and the tattered volume was asking for ¥10,000. This prompted me to pay a special visit to Shinsendō Bookstore in the afternoon when I chanced upon the bargain of my trip. Among the unsorted stock piling up on the floor, I was delighted to "unearth" volumes two to four of Iseki's Who's Who... which I purchased for the Library without hesitation as they were all in pretty good condition and could be considered incredibly cheap at ¥30,000. From the Preface of volume four, I learned that, at the time of that volume's publication in 1928, the editor planned to extend the set from six to eight or more volumes. Other reference and bibliographic sources, however, led me to surmise that only five volumes had eventually been published.

In Tokyo, I was also able to acquire some missing issues to complete our holdings of three journals. They were not expensive to get, but a bit time-consuming to trace. I brought back to Canberra with me 7 kilograms of monographs and serials which I believe are valuable additions to our collection.

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