

TOKYO'S ANTIQUARIAN BOOK FAIRS

Tokyo has at least eighty antiquarian book fairs a year, averaging more than 1.5 fairs per week. Apart from the two big outdoor fairs held annually at Waseda in early October and at Kanda in late October, there are regular small book fairs at Kanda's Tokyo Antiquarian Book Hall where 23 such fairs are scheduled to be held in the first six months of 1990. There were about another dozen book fairs held at other suburban antiquarian book halls in the same period. On top of that, a number of medium sized book fairs are also periodically held at several well-known department stores such as Ginza's Matsuya and Shinjuku's Isetan. This active book trade comes as no surprise, because Tokyo has more than 800 antiquarian and secondhand booksellers, many of which are scattered around Kanda's Jimbocho intersection (130), lined up along Waseda Avenue leading up to Waseda University (48), and along one side of Hongo Avenue opposite Tokyo University (25). In the field of the secondhand book trade, Tokyo is clearly the world's number one.

During my two trips to Tokyo in the last eight months, I spend many interesting hours frequenting Tokyo's book stores and book fairs. The following is an account of my visits to a variety of book fairs.

1. Miscellaneous Antiquarian Book Fair

Place: Tokyo Antiquarian Book Hall (TABH) at Kanda
Dates: 29 September - 30 September, 1989
Time: 10 am - 6 pm
Catalogue available free. 51 p. 21 cm.

This was one of the regular fairs at TABH held on Fridays and Saturdays; it attracted the usual crowd and the small hall was flooded with people when I went there on Friday morning. Fourteen booksellers participated in this fair. A quick browse among their stalls took me nearly two hours and I met several book hunters diligently checking their notebooks with lists of desiderata. Business was good and the sales-clerks were busy wrappy up books for delighted customers all morning.

2. Western District's Antiquarian Book Fair

Place: Western District's Antiquarian Book Hall at Koenji
Dates: 30 September - 1 October, 1989
Time: 10 am - 6 pm
Catalogue available free, 54 p. 21 cm.

This fair, jointly organised by 18 booksellers, was also held for two days. The coverage was miscellaneous and the prices were about average. The quality of the books was unimpressive and there were few big sets. As shoes were not allowed into the hall, slippers were provided for all visitors. I spend slightly over an hour and left with obvious disappointment.

3. The Fourth Waseda Blue Sky Antiquarian Book Fair

Place: Anahachiman Jinja adjacent to the Faculty of Arts

Dates: 1 October - 10 October 1989

Time: 10 am - 7 pm

Catalogue available at 300 yen. 92 p. 26 cm.

This fair pooled together the stock of 25 booksellers of the Waseda area. It was held outdoors in tents accommodating a total of 300,000 volumes. Prices were very competitive and the quality of the books, which included many multi-volume sets, was excellent. For example, the two-volume set *Nihon emaki shuko* (1989) at the marked price of 33,000 yen could be bought here at 25,000 yen. This amounts to a discount of about 25%. At the entrance to the fair, there was a stall with a lot of good paperbacks at the give-away price of 10 yen each (9 cents Australian). I spent two and a half hours on my first visit on a warm sunny day. Attendance was then low, but the fair was not disrupted by bad weather, as most of the stalls were housed in coloured tents sheltering the books from the rain.

4. The 10th Grand Tobu Antiquarian Book Fair

Place: 8th Floor, Tobu Department Store at Ikebukoro

Dates: 5 October - 10 October, 1989

Time: 10 am - 6 pm

Illustrated catalogue available at 300 yen. 288 p. 26 cm.

This annual book fair is my favourite book fair in Tokyo because of its spacious venue, its excellent stock and the great number of surprising bargains. Its well-designed catalogue is also a collector's item. The 1989 catalogue has 124 pages of photographic illustrations. Although only 12 booksellers took part in this year's fair, they exhibited a great variety of books, quite a few rare items and many folio volumes. The rich quality of this fair could only be appreciated by repeated browsing. It was worth noting that some good items had either been reserved for or immediately

purchased by eager buyers on the first day of the fair. According to regulation, reservations for all catalogued items would be accepted until three days prior to the fair. If there was more than one reservation for an item, a lucky draw would decide to whom the volume should be sold.

5. **Thanksgiving Antiquarian Book Fair**

Place: 6th Floor, Big Box Seibu Sports Plaza in front
of Takadanobaba Railway Station

Dates: 2 April - 7 April, 1990

Time: 10 am - 8 pm (last day 6 pm only)

No catalogue issued.

This was a monthly event jointly held by 23 Shinjuku booksellers. The venue was quite spacious and the books were all displayed in an orderly manner. Although the fair appealed to popular rather than academic taste in general, I was happy to discover some very useful antiquarian book auction catalogues at reduced prices. Among the English titles on sale, my attention was drawn to a fine copy of Arnold Haskell's *Waltzing Matilda, a background to Australia* (London: A.&C. Black, 1940), which was selling at only 1,200 yen, that is, slightly over 10 Australian dollars.

6. **Secondhand Paperback Fair**

E. Gallery, My City Department Store at Shinjuku Railway
Station

Dates: 6 April - 26 April, 1990

Time: 10 am - 7 pm (?)

No catalogue issued.

There were about 30,000 volumes of various *bunko* series of fiction and non-fiction at bargain prices in this popular fair. All volumes were fixed at either 20 yen (16 cents Australian) or 50 yen (45 cents Australian) each. The books were kept in cartons on tables lined up along a well-lit corridor. A quick glance revealed that many volumes were in fairly good condition. Some, apparently never used before, actually looked like new. They were all 'up for grabs' at a fraction of their original price, although a purchase limit of one bag per customer applied. One was tempted to choose from this incredibly cheap collection of paperbacks ranging from modern classics to last year's best-selling mysteries, as well as from business management techniques to how to play *go*, or golf guides.

H.C. Li
Australian National University Library