

Mass Literacy in Modern Japan: Transformed Practices of Reading and Writing

Organizer: Yusuke Tanaka, National Institute of Japanese Literature

Chair: Yusuke Tanaka, National Institute of Japanese Literature

1) Mayo Kakimoto, Kyoto University

The Lives of Children and Their Reading Habits in the Meiji Period: A School Boy's Diary

2) Kyoko Ōoka, University of Tokyo

The Act of Writing by Women in the Boundary between Private and Public: An Analysis of Contributions to "Shufu-no-Tomo"

3) Yusuke Tanaka, National Institute of Japanese Literature

Polyphonic Space for Self-expression: Christian Dormitory Diaries at the Second Higher School during World War Two

4) Ayako Nakano, Waseda University

The Expansion of Reading Environment: An Analysis of the Practice of Reading and Writing by Soldiers

Discussant: M. William Steele, International Christian University

Mass Literacy in Modern Japan: Transformed Practices of Reading and Writing

Organizer and Chair: Yusuke Tanaka, National Institute of Japanese Literature

Japan's rapid modernization after the Meiji Restoration transformed the way people read and wrote. The new education system installed shortly after the restoration played a major role in this transformation, but equally important was the growth of printed materials and their circulation system nationwide. Newspapers, magazines and books were essential for developing reading literacy in the everyday life; moreover, readers nourished their writing literacy by keeping diaries, exchanging letters and sharing their thoughts in the discursive space of their favorite media. In order to understand the meaning and function of this developing mass literacy, noting both how literacy was obtained as well as how it was practiced, it is crucial to examine social change and individual behavior in modernizing Japan.

This panel examines the phenomena of mass literacy in modern Japan with particular focus on daily practices of reading and writing. Kakimoto will investigate the reading life of children in early and mid-Meiji period through an analysis of a diary written by a higher elementary school boy. Ōoka will reveal the reading and writing practice of housewives in Taisho and early Showa periods, focusing on their contributions to *Shufu No Tomo*. Tanaka will discuss the significance of wartime diaries kept by Christian dormitory students in the Second Higher School. Nakano will illuminate the reading and writing environment of Japanese soldiers on the fields of battle. Based on these four studies, the panel aims to provide new perspectives to the social history of literacy in modern Japan.

1) Mayo Kakimoto, Kyoto University

The Lives of Children and Their Reading Habits in the Meiji Period: A School Boy's Diary

During Meiji period, the establishment of the educational system brought about many changes in literacy education of children and reading materials for children. Not only enlightening books translated from American textbooks, but also magazines only for children appeared. In the 1870s, many of these were contribution magazines, as typified by *Eisai Shinsi*, first published in 1877. These magazines aimed to improve the writing ability of children. However, in the middle of the 1880s, particularly after *Shonen En* was first published in 1888, the magazines began to print mainly the articles for children's reading written by educators or thinkers rather than contributions by children. What kind of influence did these new media for children have on the lives of children? To understand the reading habits of children in the Meiji period, this paper will examine a 10 year-old boy's diary included in the Fukuda Hideichi Diary Collection stored in the library of the Institute of Asian Cultural Studies, International Christian University. This diary was kept by a student of the higher elementary school in Minami-Kuwata-Gun, present-day Kameoka City, Kyoto Prefecture, during the period from 1895 to 1896. In his diary, the boy wrote about various events, such as the contents of his classes, running errands and seeing a magic lantern show. It provides valuable clues as to what children's lives were really like at that time. In addition, I hope to illuminate the context of the boy's life by referring to local histories, such as *The History of Kameoka City*.

2) Kyoko Ōoka, University of Tokyo

The Act of Writing by Women in the Boundary between Private and Public: An Analysis of Contributions to "Shufu-no-Tomo"

The history of women's magazines in Japan goes back to the beginning of the 20th century. Previous researches on reading habits of women have been mainly classified into two categories: 1) one type was reading actively, 2) the other was reading passively. Women who had been classified as active readers were regarded as "new women" (*atarashii onna*). They chose liberal political magazines, for instance *Fujin Koron*, and kept their distance from the thought of *ryosai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother). On the other hand, the latter type of women read popular magazines, including *Shufu no Tomo* which sought to provide practical information in order to deal with various problems faced by women in managing their family, as well as everyday household duties. Popular women's magazines such as *Shufu no Tomo* were generally regarded as an apparatus to facilitate women in accepting their gender role. Household works that reinforced gender roles have been discussed mainly from the point of view of the sociology of the family and Marxist feminism. However, any discussion on unpaid domestic work based on love relations is one-sided. Drawing on a textual analysis of contributions to *Shufu no Tomo*, this study reveals that women gathered information on housework, especially cooking, from the magazine and expressed themselves through the act of writing. I will discuss the agency of women who composed and renewed themselves dynamically with regard to the roles that they played in their family and in society, thereby emphasizing the act of writing about housework as a social practice.

3) Yusuke Tanaka, National Institute of Japanese Literature

Polyphonic Space for Self-expression: Christian Dormitory Diaries at the Second Higher School during World War Two

This presentation focuses on the discourse of highly educated Christian students in World War Two. *Chūai Ryō Nisshi* 忠愛寮日誌 is a series of diaries kept by the Christian dormitory students at the Second Higher School in Sendai city. Under the cruel religious oppression in wartime, Chūai dormitory managed to sustain its operation and students continued their common practice: praying in the morning, singing hymns, group Bible study, and, most notably, keeping dormitory diaries. The diaries are vivid documents of how young elite students, with high level of reading and writing literacy, sought to understand their lives and dreamt about the future in the ever-worsening situation of Japan's holy war. Moreover, the diaries show how they, as believers or at least as having sympathy for Christianity, suffered from jingoistic aggression by professors and other dormitory's students. In contrast to general diaries that provide users private space for reflection and self-expression, the Chūai dormitory diaries were shared among the dormitory students. Students left comments on what other student wrote; the diaries were not purely private, but rather a sort of polyphonic social space for self-expressions and intense discussion, sometimes erupting with criticism and anger against an inflammatory note. By listening to the various voices of the diaries, this presentation aims to elucidate not only what Japanese elite youth in World War Two thought and believed in fear of impending death, but also how they communicated and interacted with each other in a school culture characterized by high literacy.

4) Ayako Nakano, Waseda University

The Expansion of Reading Environment: An Analysis of the Practice of Reading and Writing by Soldiers

During the Pacific War, it was thought that reading on the battlefield had been nearly banned. And if reading were permitted, only textbooks for soldiers would be allowed. However, in reality, comfort magazines (*imon zasshi*) were printed by major publishers or by the Japanese Army and Navy, and were sent to the battlefield. In addition to magazines, newspapers and books were sent. It is therefore important to examine the culture of reading on the battlefield. Through an expansion of the reading environment, a new type of reader, "the soldier reader" emerged. People belonging to different classes came to perform the same reading acts as "a soldier" while maintaining their differences. For example, people who had never read a book began to read books, and those more educated began to read even simple books that they would not have read before. It can also be said that this change in reading influenced writing as well. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the expansion of the reading environment to the battlefield, how it originated and what effect it had on the practice of reading and writing by soldiers. First, I will discuss the types of comfort magazines by investigating the distribution status on the battlefield. Next, through an examination of diaries, letters, and poems and other texts by soldiers, I hope to reveal the practice of reading and writing by soldiers that developed in the unique reading space of the battlefield.

Discussant: M. William Steele, International Christian University