

Book Refurbishment Practices of the Daisō Lending Library

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This study presents preliminary findings about the book refurbishment practices of the Daisō lending library of Nagoya (1767-1899), based on evidence gathered during archival surveys of over five hundred *gōkan* 合巻 from the former collection. In particular, it focuses on decorative covers that the firm produced between 1810 and 1866 to protect *books* against wear and tear. It is perhaps no coincidence that the Daisō instituted this practice around the same time that the genre of *gōkan* become popular on the fiction market; in many ways, the *gōkan* presented a unique challenge to the lending library, for they were at once prone to high circulation and inherently fragile. While relatively inexpensive genres like *kibyōshi* 黄表紙 were rarely fitted with protective covers (or even inventory labels, for that matter), and expensive but infrequently circulated books like Chinese medical texts were usually left in their original condition, the *gōkan* were subject to a uniquely rigorous set of refurbishment practices. Unlike the many rare books that the Daisō acquired in dilapidated condition and later repaired for circulation, most *gōkan* appear to have been acquired new, in their year of publication, when their marketability was at their highest, and fitted with protective covers pre-emptively, before they ever reached the hands of readers.

On one hand, the salient evidence of this practice tells us something about the perceived popularity and material value of the *gōkan*, for refurbishment only appears to have been undertaken only when the expectation of wide circulation warranted it. At the same time, it leaves us with a previously unexplored body of data for dating the acquisition of many other books in the collection. Since the Daisō produced and fitted their books with a different variety of cover from year to year, grouping re-covered *gōkan* according to cover design and publication date enables us to estimate, with reasonable accuracy, the precise year in which each variety of cover was used. This, in turn, enables us to establish a more precise set of indicators for estimating the acquisition of many other re-covered books in the collection. In sum,

close examination of the paratextual effects of refurbished *gōkan* in the former Daisō collection warrant close examination, not only for what they can tell us about the afterlife of popular literature on the rental market, but also for the keys they hold to dating many previously undatable books in the lending library's collection.

Commercial Lenders and Book Refurbishment

In assessing the role that commercial book lenders, or *kashihon'ya* 貸本屋, played in the literary marketplace of Bunka—Bunsei era (1804-1829) Japan, Kyokutei Bakin 曲亭馬琴 (1767-1848) once famously wrote that lenders were like matchmakers—intermediaries, who brought the offerings of the publishing house to the bridegroom reader. While this analogy has become something of a commonplace when discussing commercial lenders in the nineteenth century, it is more accurate for describing the itinerant lenders whose basic role was to bring books to readers (albeit sometimes with other merchandise like cosmetics, medicine, and lamp oil). As Bakin himself was keenly aware, the remit of many large-scale lending libraries had come to extend well beyond the mere circulation of books; increasingly, large-scale lenders also played active roles in financing and producing the titles that would later circulate among their readers. Lenders also intervened in the formatting of books after their point of print, refurbishing their wares to protect against the rigors of circulation—and sometimes dramatically altering their material effects in the process.

To date, there have been few detailed studies that examine the refurbishment practices of commercial book lenders. One of the challenges has been that often the only material evidence of these practices can be found in the books themselves, as extant records kept by early modern lenders are few and far between. Another challenge is identifying the provenance of alterations. Many lenders followed the industry-wide practice of selling off books when demand for them waned—sometimes to individuals, sometimes to other lenders. Consequently, there are many examples of refurbished books where it is impossible to discern when, in the sequence of transferred ownership, certain repairs were made.

In many ways, the Daisō 大惣 lending library (1767-1899) of Nagoya, the largest purveyor of rental books in early modern Japan, represents an ideal case study for studying the problem of book refurbishment. Over a third of the titles in the Daisō's

inventory of 16,734 titles (26,768 individual volumes, including duplicates) are still extant today, representing what is arguably the greatest single resource for studying an early modern commercial lending library. The sheer number of refurbished books provides us with a sample size large enough to identify sustained practices with regard to conservation and repair. Moreover, since the Daisō abided by the unusual policy of retaining all the books they acquired—resulting in an ever-expanding library that ultimately breached the holdings of three devoted storehouses and additional storage areas in the main building—most refurbishments can be attributed to the Daisō with relative certainty.

During its heyday, the Daisō acquired hundreds of new titles per year, striving to meet the demands of Nagoya’s readership for the latest installments of popular works as well as every manner of classical or antiquarian work available on the used market. Expanding the collection through purchases would have required extensive time and effort, to be sure; but an equally daunting task awaited the staff of craftsmen charged with protecting particularly delicate books from future wear and tear or refurbishing books that had already been damaged in the course of circulation. Traces of their handiwork can still be seen today. The most commonly seen forms of refurbishment in the extant Daisō books include: 1) replacement of missing *daisen* 題簽 title labels with new, handwritten ones; 2) replacement of worn threads in *watoji* 和綴 binding; 3) replacement of torn or lost pages with hand produced ones; and lastly, 4) the wrapping or replacing of original covers with new ones. Even if these workarounds rarely matched the craftsmanship of the originals, they appear to have served their purpose and protected the Daisō books against excessive wear and tear. Their value for us today lies in what they can tell us about the operation of the lending library and how it appraised the marketability of certain genres of books versus others.

Daisō Branded Paper Stock

Before moving on to a discussion of the Daisō covers, the main subject of this study, a few words about the materials the firm used to replace of lost or torn pages. Around the same time that it introduced protective covers, around the middle of the Bunka period (1804-1818), the Daisō experimented with specially branded paper stock for manuscript books—both copies of existing books and original productions.

Essentially, this was blank, unruled stock that had been printed with margins and the name of the lender in the *hashira* 柱 (*leaf fold margin*). Its dimensions were identical to those of the unbranded stock used for most other manuscript books in the library, with leaves measuring 38 cm by 25.2 cm, folded into bifolia and sewn into the spine at four points. The most common variety of this printed stock can be seen in a copy of *Zatsuwa mugiwara bue* 雑話麦藁笛 (*Miscellaneous Notes, Played on a Wheaten Flute*), which includes the Daisō lozenge trademark near the top of the margin and the name of the firm, Ōnoya, near the bottom.¹ Another variety can be seen in a manuscript copy of the kabuki playscript *Sumidagawa hana no goshozome* 隅田川花御所染 (*Dyed in the Pattern of Flowers on the Sumidagawa*, 1814), which includes the words “rental book” (*kashihon*) at the top of the margin, atop a *hanaguchi gyobi* 花口魚尾 (“floral fishtail”) decoration, and the name Ōnoya near the bottom.² A third variety, seen more commonly in original manuscript productions dating from the late Bunka to the Tempō (1830-1844) periods, is simpler in design, including only a rectangular cartouche with the name Ōnoya Sōhachi, located along the bottom right inner margin of the recto leaf. Several books by Nagoya gazetteer Takariki Tanenobu 高力種信 (1765-1831)—better known by the handle Enkōan 猿猴庵—feature this design, demonstrating how the Daisō sponsored the production and circulation of his works. An interesting example is Enkōan’s *Meiyō kyūran zushi* 名陽旧覧図誌 (*An Old Look at Nagoya*, 1820), which is a copy that Enkōan himself helped produce for the Daisō, based on an earlier manuscript completed in Bunka 3 (1806).³

These varieties of branded paper stock were commonly used in refurbishment, mostly for older books like the first editions of Ihara Saikaku’s 井原西鶴 (1642-1693) works and heavily trafficked reprints of *Tsurezuregusa* 徒然草 (*Essays in Idleness*), incidentally one of the Daisō’s most in-demand titles. The Daisō employed an informal corps of copyists and illustrators for both the production of manuscript copies and the refurbishment of damaged books. Filiations in calligraphic and pictorial styles enable us to identify a few of the Daisō copyists, including Kōdera Gyokuchō 小寺玉晁 (1800-1878), a low-ranking samurai who gained some renown in Nagoya circles as a writer, and Odagiri Shunkō 小田切春江 (1810-1888), a prominent samurai intellectual and sometime collaborator with Enkōan. In many cases, their work entailed creating copies of individual volumes of books that had been lost or damaged, or piecemeal repairs on torn or missing pages.

Daisō Protective Covers

In general, the Daisō produced covers to protect books that were at once inherently fragile and subject to potentially wide circulation. In this respect, the *gōkan* required pre-emptive refurbishment more urgently than books in other genres. One of the most popular genres of popular fiction in the early nineteenth century, the *gōkan* were designed to appeal to readers with their thrilling, kabuki-inspired plots, illustrated tableaus on every page, and colorful, *nishiki-e*-style covers. In total, more than one-tenth of the entire Daisō collection was comprised of *gōkan*. Moreover, the lender went to great expense acquiring multiple copies of the most popular works. For example, it stocked three copies each of Bakin's *Keisei suikoden* 傾城水滸伝 (*Outlaw Courtesans of the March*, 1825-35) and *Shinpen Kinpeibai* 新編金瓶梅 (*New Edition of Jinpingmei*, 1831-34), and four copies of Ryūtei Tanehiko's 柳亭種彦 (1783-1842) *Nise Murasaki Inaka Genji* 修紫田舎源氏 (*Fraudulent Murasaki, Bumpkin Genji*, 1829-42).

Wear and tear on extant *gōkan* suggests that they circulated widely among the Daisō's readers. The lending period for most Daisō books around the early nineteenth century is estimated to have been five days, but as records in the diary of frequent customer Hirade Jun'eki 平出順益 (1809-1861) indicate, sometimes readers returned their books as soon as the next day.⁴ By this measure, we might speculate that especially popular works of *gōkan* may have circulated over forty or fifty times within their first year after publication, and perhaps several hundred times over the course of their lives as rental books. Even half that rate of circulation would have exerted enormous stress. Since most *gōkan* were fitted with relatively thin covers on its each of its individual fascicles, great care had to be taken to protect them against the rigors of circulation. The most common approach seen in the extant *gōkan* from the Daisō collection was to bundle three to five fascicles into a single volume, and bind them to a thick, protective cover.

These protective covers were generally made from stiff paper, reinforced with a cushiony interlayer of paper scraps—often a roughly pressed sheet of recycled paper fibers, or *susuki-gami* 漉返紙. It is also common to see inner covers reinforced with scraps of ephemeral records, mostly lists of supplies, which offer tantalizing glimpses into the operation of the lending library. Regrettably, no records exist to give us an indication of whether the Daisō produced these covers in house or contracted the work out to a third party; but it is reasonable to speculate that the Eguchi family,

who operated the Daisō, may have relied on relatives who ran a paper business in Mino for supplies and/or production.

Aesthetically speaking, the covers are simple affairs. The simplest (and presumably earliest) varieties are monochromatic black covers, treated with ink, and light brown covers brushed with red persimmon juice. Around the first years of the Bunka period, we begin to see more variation in the cover designs, with various styles of striping and crosshatching. For example, the protective cover to the *gōkan Senba garasu yamaji no akebono* 千羽烏蹊曙 (1810) features a distinctive cross-hatch pattern, produced manually by brushing ink in intersecting horizontal and vertical strokes.⁵ Of slightly later vintage are designs produced through brushwork and woodblock printing—experimental combinations of manual and mechanical techniques. An interesting example can be seen in the cover to *Motelesobu Fushimi ningyō* 伏見木偶 (1815), where two vertical, swastika-patterned columns have been printed over horizontal brushstrokes.⁶

By the Bunsei period, the Daisō appears to have switched to printed, rather than hand brushed, covers. Moreover, it appears to have used different covers from year to year, perhaps as a way to distinguish between its annual acquisitions of new wares. Sometimes, the variations in design from year to year were subtle. We find, for example, on the cover to *Date moyō kuruwa no kankatsu* 伊達模様廓寛潤 (1827), a simple design produced by printing eight horizontal bands of three black stripes onto a russet brown ground (see figure 1). The following year, we find a slight variation on the cover to *Chiba moyō konomi no shingata* 千葉模様好の新形 (1828), where six vertical columns of three black stripes intersect the horizontal stripes of the previous design (see figure 2). In general, covers datable to the Bunsei period tend to include abstract and geometric designs—stripes, crosshatches, swastikas, stylized bands of drifting clouds. In contrast, floral and figural designs dominate in the Tempō (1830-1844) and later periods, extending into the Keiō period (1865-1868). We even find covers printed with designs that commemorate the zodiac year. On the cover to *Kaidan Narumi shibori* 怪談鳴見絞 (1831), for example, we find an scene of two rabbits nibbling on grass. The year in which this work was published, Tempō 2 (1831), was the year of the hare (see figure 3).

On the cover to *Edo kanoko murasaki zōshi* 江戸鹿子紫草紙 (1851-52), we find the figure of a dragon in the top horizontal band. Since the publication years and zodiac signs do not match up, we can conclude that the work was either: 1) fitted with a cover after previously circulating in its original form; or 2) acquired by the



Figure 1. Daisō cover fitted to a copy of *Date moyō kuruwa no kankatsu* (1827)



Figure 2. Daisō cover fitted to a copy of *Chiba moyō konomi no shingata* (1828)



Figure 3. Daisō cover fitted to a copy of *Kaidan Narumi shibori* (1831)



Figure 4. Daisō cover fitted to a copy of *Edo kanoko murasaki zōshi* (1851-52)

Daisō years after its publication—likely in Ansei 3 (1856), the year of the dragon. Given the propensity of the Daisō to cover gōkan works upon acquisition, the latter seems more likely.

Once the new covers were complete, the recovering process was a relatively simple operation. After the *watoji* binding of the book was untied and the original front and back covers removed, they were then wrapped within the newly made Daisō covers, resulting in a thicker and stiffer protective wrap. In some cases, the original covers were first reinforced with scraps of old shop records or recycled paper, usually glued onto the inside, before being refitted with the new covers. In other cases, when the aesthetic effects of the original cover were deemed worth preserving, the new covers were simply bound into the book over the old covers, without being wrapped and glued around them.

Conclusion

Many books that formerly circulated through the Daisō lending library bear evidence of material alterations aimed at preservation and refurbishment. This can be seen most saliently in the library's collection of *gōkan*, where we find many examples of books that were re-covered and re-bound for circulation. Through a systematic cataloguing of the various types of covers that were used, and cross-referencing with the publication dates of re-covered books, we can begin to reconstruct a timeline of which covers were used when. While a more comprehensive cataloguing of the Daisō covers is still needed, the early results of this study indicate that covers can indeed be valuable material for estimating dates of acquisition. Furthermore, they reveal certain details about the the operation of the lending library and how it appraised the marketability of certain genres of books, such as the perennially popular *gōkan*, versus others.

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¹ Kyoto University Library, 4-47 サ 2.

² Kyoto University Library, 4-31 ス 2.

³ Archived at Tōyō Bunko Library. Enkōan produced the copy of the fifth volume; the other four volumes were produced by another hand.

⁴ Manuscript copy of Hirade Jun'eki's *Kisshi nishō*, 5 オ.

⁵ National Diet Library.

⁶ National Diet Library.