

HAMADA Keisuke

ON BOOKSELLERS, AUTHORS AND READERS IN THE WORKS OF BAKIN

INTRODUCTORY NOTES AND TRANSLATION BY PETER KORNICKI

This article appeared in 1953 in the journal *Kokugo kokubun* (vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 21-38), which is published by the Department of Japanese Literature at Kyoto University. The author, Professor Hamada Keisuke, who was born in 1930, taught at several other Japanese universities before in 1977 becoming professor of Japanese literature at Kyoto University, where he remained for the rest of his career. He has published widely on Japanese literature of the Edo period (1600-1868) and he was generous with his advice to foreign graduate students at Kyoto University, including the translator in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Professor Hamada wrote this article at the age of 23 while a graduate student at Kyoto University and it rapidly achieved the status of a classic article. Its significance lies in its insistence, startling at the time, on the fundamental importance of appreciating the market place in which commercial fiction was produced in Japan. In this article he demonstrated the value of such an approach to the works of Kyokutei Bakin (1767-1848; also known as Takizawa Bakin). Bakin was one of the leading novelists of the first half of the nineteenth century: he first established his name as a writer of light fiction but he later became famous for a number of long serialised novels that enjoyed huge popularity. It was their bulk and their costliness that alerted Professor Hamada to the market conditions in which such fiction became commercially viable. Bakin himself was particularly conscious of the economic circumstances in which he wrote, as is clear from his correspondence and from his diaries, which were transcribed and published some twenty years after this article was written. In particular, Hamada drew attention to the crucial intermediary role played by the commercial lending libraries known as *kashihon'ya*, which, unlike their Western counterparts, delivered books to their customers' homes: Hamada demonstrated for the first time that these lending libraries made the publication of substantial works of fiction possible.

This article has inspired many generations of Japanese academics, and not a few outside Japan as well, to explore these issues further. Making use of archives and other material that was not available to Professor Hamada in 1953, scholars have devoted much attention to the role of publishers in shaping the market, to the commercial booklending businesses which helped to make Bakin's long novels commercially successful and to the readership of fiction in the later part of the Edo period (1600-1868). More than sixty years later it is still cited and its conclusions have not been overturned.

NB Japanese personal names are throughout given in their normal Japanese order, with surname preceding given name.