

Special Exhibition

# Proletarian Art Matters Now

The Showa Era's Little-Known Mass Culture Movements

July 6<sup>th</sup> (Sat.) to August 18<sup>th</sup> (Sun.), 2019

Municipal Otaru Literature Museum

in Otaru, Hokkaido,

Japan

Sponsors:

Showa Prewar Proletarian Culture Movement Materials Research Group

&

Municipal Otaru Literature Museum

Support:

Hosei University Ohara Institute for Social Research

## Introductory Notes

The period from the late Taisho era through pre-war Showa was the era of the “masses.” In particular, the mass movement known as the “proletarian culture movement” thrived from the early 1920s through the early 1930s, centered on urban areas such as Tokyo and Osaka but not excluding the participation of nameless laborers and farmers around the country.

Influenced by socialist and communist ideologies, this movement worked through artistic activity for improved treatment of the proletariat (the working class), and to protest against war, etc., while working towards art and culture rooted in individual lives.

While Kobayashi Takiji (1903-1933), who grew up here in Otaru, is known as a writer of “proletarian literature,” the comprehensive arts movement of the time covered theater, visual art, music, film and more in addition to literature.

In particular, the proletarian theater movement was high-powered, with audiences crowding into theaters large and small. As well as plays, there were art exhibits, film showings and concerts held around the country, not to mention book groups. Tens of thousands of people, perhaps even more, were touched by these “proletarian arts,” and some came to participate actively in the work of spreading them further.

Within this wide-ranging mass culture movement, many handbills, flyers, newsletters and pamphlets were created. This exhibit has been planned in conjunction with the publication of *Documents of the Early Showa Proletarian Culture Movement* (Maruzen Yushodo, 2017), which contains many of these valuable materials. It offers a unique opportunity to see materials belonging to the Ikeda Hisao Collection based here as well as the collection of the late Uranishi Kazuhiko (now at the Museum of Modern Japanese Literature), that of the Ohara Institute for Social Research, and the Sapporo University Library collection of cultural movement documents.

These materials supply a sense of the passion and energy of the many nameless people who took part in the mass culture movement.

We would like to express gratitude to the organizations which have lent materials as well as the people who have helped make this exhibition happen.

(Organizer)

## About the Exhibition

Exhibit captions appear in the following order.

- Exhibit number
- Document title
- Year issued or created
- Collection\* [DPRO number\*\*]
- Description

\*Collections are abbreviated as follows:

Otaru: Municipal Otaru Literature Museum (formerly held by Ikeda Hisao)

Uranishi: Museum of Modern Japanese Literature (formerly held by Uranishi Kazuhiko)

Ohara: Hosei University Ohara Institute for Social Research

Sapporo: Sapporo University Library (formerly held by Matsumoto Kappei)

\*\*DPRO number

Materials included in the *Documents of the Early Showa Proletarian Culture Movement [DVD]* (Maruzen Yushodo, 2017) indicate their numbering scheme in brackets. Of the photographs exhibited here, those with a DPRO number have been reproduced from the DVD.

## Proletarian Art Matters Now (Introduction)

Many people may be daunted by the idea of “proletarian art” or the “proletarian culture movement.” “Proletariat” just means “the working class,” but in this exhibition it is used more widely to refer to “working people and their families,” to “the people who support them,” and to those who “cannot work” even though they must work to survive.

The art and culture created by these “working people (in the broad sense)” is, therefore, “proletarian art” and the “proletarian culture movement.”

In this movement, the existence of well-known people like Kobayashi Takiji was significant. However, Takiji too must once have been a simple “audience member” for plays and art exhibitions. Likewise, the nameless “working people” also contributed reports and poems to magazines, worked behind the scenes in the theaters, or helped mimeograph documents. Anyone can be a “creator,” as anyone is a “receiver,” and may also be a “supporter” in between the two. This is what the proletarian culture movement means.

These movements were heavily influenced by the ideologies of Marxism and Communism, which remain controversial. However, we hope to draw your attention first and foremost to the interest of the “expressions” themselves, sensing the ingenuity, the conflicts, and the passion of the people involved with “expressing” themselves.

First, let us introduce the materials left by three participants in the culture movement (Ikeda Hisao, Yamada Seizaburo, and Matsumoto Kappai).

(Murata Hirokazu/Ito Jun)

0-1

Ikeda Hisao holdings: bound volumes

1929-1933

Otaru

Ikeda Hisao (1906-1944; born in Niigata as Yokoyama Toshio), a major activist within the proletarian culture movement, left a large collection of valuable organizational documents as well as related books and magazines. His family kept the materials safe and donated them to the Municipal Otaru Literature Museum in 2009. The “bound volumes” such as the ones here run to 19 volumes.

\*Note that this exhibit uses the modern form of the characters in his name.

0-2a

Ikeda Hisao, *Reappraising the Japanese Proletarian Literature Movement* (San'ichi Shobo)

1971

Individual holdings

Having graduated from the old-style Niigata High School, Ikeda entered Tokyo University, and joined the Japan Proletarian Writers' League while still a student in 1929. In 1932, at 26, he became the editor-in-chief of the journal of the Japan Proletarian Culture League (KOPF). However, he was almost immediately arrested and imprisoned. In 1936 he recanted (announced that he was abandoning any Communist ideologies, a process also known as *tenko*) and was released. This book is based on a “diary” he submitted to the Tokyo Regional Prosecutor's Office at the time. (See column 1 in the catalog.)

0-2b

Ikeda Hisao (in Hailar, North Manchuria)

1940 autumn

From Ikeda Hisao, *Reappraising the Japanese Proletarian Literature Movement*  
After his release from prison in 1936, Ikeda traveled to Manchuria (northeastern China) and Inner Mongolia to research and support rice production in cold regions. In 1944, he died of tuberculosis in Shinkyo (now Changchun).



0-3a

Yamada Seizaburo questionnaire (response from Miyajima Sukeo)

1929

Uranishi [0046]

The proletarian writer and critic Yamada Seizaburo (1896-1987) was a major force in shaping postwar culture movement research, through his *History of Proletarian Literature* (Rironsha, 1954) and more. This material comes from a questionnaire he sent to various writers considered proletarian in 1929, inquiring about their backgrounds, reasons for taking up proletarian literature, and major works. 42 responses remain. (See column XX in the catalog)

The handwritten resume of Miyajima Sukeo (1886-1951) includes “Left Yotsuya Upper Elementary School in fourth year. Sugar wholesaler’s, baize merchant, clerk at Mitsukoshi, dentist’s secretary, muslin worker, electrician, apprentice machinist, magazine, medical student’s research assistant, exchange, moneylender’s bookkeeper, mine clerk, construction worker, stoker, other.”

0-3b

Yamada Seizaburo questionnaire (response from Miyachi Karoku)

1929

Uranishi [0046]

Miyachi Karoku (1884-1958), like Miyajima a writer of workers’ literature, writes in his resume “Left elementary school partway, worked as a tailor’s boy and a sandal maker’s boy, then from age 13 at the Sasebo Navy Arsenal. First as a shipbuilder’s apprentice, then as a lathe apprentice, remained at the lathe for twenty-odd years, moving around shipyards and steelworks in Nagasaki, Kure, Kobe, Tokyo, and elsewhere.”

The “Yamada Seizaburo questionnaire” was among the holdings of the literature scholar Uranishi Kazuhiko (1941-2017). Uranishi was a documents researcher with a specialty in proletarian literature and the literature of West Japan, who traveled around the country collecting primary sources and amassed a vast quantity of documents. The indication “Uranishi” in this exhibit refers to his former holdings (now owned by the Museum of Modern Japanese Literature).

0-4

Matsumoto Kappei scrapbook

1920’s-30’s

Sapporo

Matsumoto Kappei (1905-1995) was a New Theater actor and theater critic. Born in what is now Azumino City, Nagano, he joined the Tokyo Left-wing Theater in 1929 and subsequently the Shinkyō Theater led by Murayama Tomoyoshi (1901-1977). After the war he appeared on television and in movies as well. He made a point of regathering materials every time they were seized by the Special Police, thus leaving valuable records such as *A History of Socialist Theater in Japan: Meiji and Taisho Edition* (1975).

0-5

Matsumoto Kappei, *Here’s to August: My Life in the New Theater* (Koryusha)

1986

Individual holdings

Beginning with an appearance as an extra in *Roar, China* (Tretyakov), Matsumoto performed in most of the major left-wing plays, including *Mother* (Gorky), *All Lines* (Murayama Tomoyoshi) and so on. This book mentions some 700 or more theatrical personages.

## Chapter 1: “New Worlds” Visible in a Single Flyer

The proletarian culture movement made use of handbills and flyers to inform the masses of upcoming events and argue a variety of positions: they constituted an essential form of “media” for the movement. As well, newsletters and reports were frequently issued within organizations. Many of them were mimeographed. The mimeograph, ideal for small-run printing, left something of the original handwriting on the page, bringing to life the creators’ personalities and situations from the paper itself.

The first section introduces the major twists and turns of the culture movement through these flyers and newsletters, as well as its gradual decline and halt.

The second section introduces flyers for the “Evening of the Proletariat” events frequently organized for the interest of the common people. Even for this kind of event it was required to inform the police in advance, and events were not infrequently banned at the last minute.

The third section explores the devices and compromises which took place in the space created by handbills, which themselves approached an art form and a form of culture.

There is no formal division between “handbills” and “flyers,” but we have categorized all single-sheet advertisements and notices here as “flyers,” while material pasted on walls on the street or at factories, including political content, is considered “posters” and documents directly distributed have been called “handbills.”

(Ito Jun/Murata Hirokazu)

### Section 1: A wild ride: The rise and fall of the culture movement

1-1a

Invitation to the Japan Proletarian Writers’ League Founding Event

1929

Ohara [0025]

In February, the All-Japan Workers’ Art Federation (NAPF) made its literature, theater, visual art, music, and publishing sections respectively independent and became a federation thereof as the All-Japan Workers’ Art Organization Conference (still NAPF). The independent literature section became the Japan Proletarian Writers’ League.

1-1b

Japan Proletarian Writers’ League Founding Event (photo: Kishi Yamaji)

1929

Individual holdings

Over two hundred people crowded the venue. Attending policemen can also be seen monitoring the scene. Kishi Yamaji (1899-1973), the photographer, had learned photography before becoming a proletarian writer, and left many valuable photographs introduced in this exhibit as well.



1-2a Kobayashi Takiji, *The Factory Ship* (Senki Press)

1929

Individual holdings (reissue)

In 1929, when the Writers’ League was established, two novels—Kobayashi Takiji’s *The Factory Ship* and Tokunaga Sunao’s *The street without sun*—garnered great acclaim and came to stand as representative works of proletarian literature, which began to appear in general magazines and literary journals as well.

1-2b Tokunaga Sunao, *The street without sun* (Senki Press)

1929

Individual holdings (reissue)

Modeled on the Kyodo Printing Struggle, a major strike at Kyodo Printing in Koishikawa Ward. Tokunaga Sunao (1899-1958), who had worked as a printer, describes his experience thrillingly in his debut as a proletarian writer.

1-3

Left-wing Theater 14<sup>th</sup> Production, *The street without sun* (flyer)

1930

Sapporo University [0704]

Tokunaga Sunao's novel *The street without sun* was dramatized by the Left-wing Theater (Murayama Tomoyoshi, producer) and made a hit, packing the theater again the following March when it was revived.

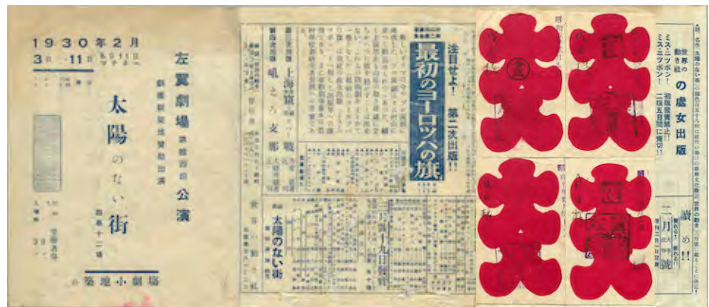
1-4

Left-wing Theater 14<sup>th</sup> Production "The street without sun" (program) and bonus envelope

1930

Sapporo University [0703]

A program with a bonus envelope attached, addressed to the actor Narita Umekichi. Other materials have confirmed these envelopes for all but the final day, showing the excitement of the movement at its height.



1-5-a

Left-wing Theater Kyushu Wakamatsu performance *The street without sun* (flyer)

1931

Sapporo [0931]

The Left-wing Theater's next major regional performance after its West Japan performance the previous year. Some 3000 people were mobilized in Hakata on June 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>. However, the Wakamatsu performance (June 19<sup>th</sup>) was prevented by violence from local gangs.

1-5b

Left-wing Theater Kyushu Wakamatsu performance *The street without sun* Memo #4 on outbreak of violence

1931

Sapporo [0931]

The actors injured in the attack are seen on the streets in a handwritten memo on the reverse of the flyer. With gaps between the sheets, it reads "...Under the guard of some 20 men from the stevedores' union and several Special Police from the Wakamatsu station, actors with bandaged foreheads, faces, arms, legs and so on went out into the city toward the ferry to Yahata, to be met with a rain of curses from some strangely dressed thugs wandering the city. ...The Wakamatsu performance on the 19<sup>th</sup> was forced to be cancelled...". The description of the bandaged actors on their way home, cursed out by "thugs," is vivid.

1-6a

Report on the Central Committee at the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Writers' League

1933

6

Otaru [0168]

In the 1930s, more voices called for the proletarian culture movement, which had drawn considerable attention, to subordinate itself to the revolutionary movement aiming for socialism, and its documents came to overflow with crudely political terms.

1-6b

Excerpt from the Report on the Central Committee at the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Writers' League  
1933

Otaru [0168]

The severe oppression was taken as another sign of the “general crisis of capitalism,” with the need for revolution felt more and more strongly. This is a remarkable report for a “literary” organization to have produced. What was the proletarian literature movement, in the end?

1-7

NARP dissolution announcement  
1934

Uranishi [0193]

In February, the Writers' League (NARP) finally announced its dissolution. A loose translation of this announcement, thought to have been written by Kaji Wataru (1903-1982), suggests a heartfelt complaint along the lines of “Nobody pays their dues, nobody sends in their reports.” The organization stood abandoned by its writers.

## Section 2: An Evening of the Proletariat

1-8-a

An Evening of Proletarian Literature (flyer)  
1931

Sapporo [0075]

Held on November 28<sup>th</sup>, at the Tennoji Public Hall in Osaka. A lecture by Hosoda Genkichi (1891-1974) was banned and eight people, including Kishi Yamaji, Hosoda Tamiki (1892-1972), and Ino Shozo (1905-1985), were arrested.

1-8-b

An Evening of Proletarian Literature (flyer) (partial enlargement)  
1931

Sapporo [0075]

The names “Agita” and “Prokichi” come from “agitation” and “propaganda” with typical masculine endings. They were familiar characters used as guides on the road to revolution.

1-9

Performance of the Literary Front Theater hosted by the Comrades' Theater “An Evening of the Proletariat” at Airindan (flyer)

1931

Ohara [0949]

Held on August 17<sup>th</sup> at the Nippori Airindan in Tokyo. This flyer has a handmade feel typical of the minority Literary Front (Bunsen) group. At left, written in pen, is a note reading “Also supporting the East Japan Joint Nippori Ishizuka Struggle.”

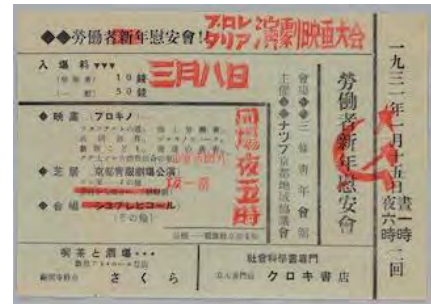
1-10

New Year's Party for Workers Proletarian Theater and Film Event (flyer)

1931

Ohara [1938]

Reuse of a flyer for January 15<sup>th</sup>, with notifications for a March 8<sup>th</sup> event made in red. "YamaSen" or Yamamoto Senji (1889-1929), who was assassinated on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1929, had been a Diet member elected in the first regular election. "The Funeral of YamaSen," on display in the video exhibit here, records his funeral.



1-11

Workers and Farmers Together for an Evening of Support: Citizens! Kosei Theater Performance *O-Aki Covered in Bruises* etc. (flyer)

1932

Sapporo [2796]

Calling for solidarity for the Hokkaido and Tohoku regions. However, it was prohibited. The mimeographed text "Banned by the authorities due to logistical inconsistencies" has been added, with visible frustration. See 3-3.

### Section 3: The culture of handbills

1-12

Request for mailing of General Election posters and handbills

1928

Ohara [2001]

The Proletarian Art League, Fukuoka Branch, collaborated with the Worker-Farmer Party's Fukuoka Branch to hold a "General Election Poster/Handbill Exhibit." Posters and handbills were beginning to draw attention as weapons in the culture wars, not just disposable paper.

1-13

On the "General Election Poster/Handbill Exhibit"

1928

Ohara [2002]

The voting for the first ordinary election took place on February 20<sup>th</sup>. 466 Diet seats were up for election, with workers' parties such as the Worker-Farmer Party taking 8 of them. This material, dated the 19<sup>th</sup>, reflects on the election struggle with handbills and posters.

1-14-a

Woodcuts and Comics for the Worker-Farmer Struggle No. 1 City Council Struggle Edition

1929

Ohara [2014]

This woodcut collection, permitting free use and modification, urged workers to "put these to good use" in mimeographed newsletters and handbills, and to "use them for your struggle."

1-14-b

Woodcuts and Comics for the Worker-Farmer Struggle No. 1 City Council Struggle Edition (pp. 6-7)



1929

Ohara [2014]

The woodcuts were to be used for “aid newsletters” supporting imprisoned comrades, protesting the Peace Preservation Law, anti-war activism and so on. The “Self-Defense Squad” at right center refers to the workers and farmers’ self-defense, and has nothing to do with the present-day Self-Defense Forces.



1-15

Proletarian Theater/Film Material Exhibit (flyer)

1931

Sapporo [1984]

This “exhibit of materials” was run by the Senki Theater, the flagbearer of the West Japan culture movement. “*Dentan*” is another word for “flyer.” Some 500 materials were exhibited, far more than we in 2019 have managed to put on display.

1-16

Precautions for putting up posters and distributing handbills

1932

Ohara [2214]

How to put up posters. Ideally you want three people, for gluing, adhering, and keeping watch. Put the softened glue in a canvas bag, slap it onto the wall, and rapidly roll the poster, rolled up with the front inside, onto the glue!

1-17

Patriotic hardworking masses! Crush the life out of the Communist Theater League! Japan is in crisis!

1933

Ohara [2530]

On February 28<sup>th</sup>, the Left-wing Theater/Shin-Tsukiji Theater joint production of *The Engine Shed* at the Osaka Central Hall was invaded by right-wingers; they were ordered to stop the production and disband. This is a handbill from the right-wing group. The violent intruders had their own handbills.

1-18-a

Front Line: the magazine dedicated to taking down the Second Literary Front Group. Vol. 1 No. 2, July/August issue

1931

Ohara [2411]

The Literary Front group, in opposition to Takiji and the other NAPF-ers, was plagued by internal disputes. Many of its members dropped out, creating the journal *Front Line* and eventually turning to NAPF. This journal contains the texts in 1-18-b, 2-6 and so on.

1-18-b

Kojima Tsutomu “The Handbill” (*Front Line* Vol. 1 No.2) See 1-18-a

1931

Ohara [2411]

The handbill flung in through the factory window reveals the dissipation of the union leaders and calls for worker solidarity... This wall-posted story is a quick and easy explanation of the role of handbills. Wall-posted stories themselves were intended to have handbill-like mobility and advertising effects.

## Chapter 2: Kobayashi Takiji in the Media

The name of Kobayashi Takiji (1903-1933) holds a special significance even today as a symbol of the proletarian culture movement. His works depicting illegal Communist activities, such as “Factory Cell,” “Organizer,” and “The Party Member,” are read through the image of Takiji himself and his underground activism. Along with his gruesome death, which was widely reported in the mass media, Takiji’s name was transformed, coming to embody not just a popular author but the principle of the proletarian culture movement itself.

The first section demonstrates how the existence of Takiji was received during his lifetime in novels, plays, flyers, magazine advertisements and other media. Here we see the author Takiji coming to function as a medium linking the cultural formats of different genres.

The second section considers the process through which the name “Kobayashi Takiji” came after his death to become distinct from his physical self and function as a kind of symbol or code within the movement. During this process, while Takiji’s name served as a symbol to inspire the people connected with the movement, it also came to influence other writers as a kind of model or goal to reach.

In our time, as the symbol of “Takiji” is consumed in popular media, we need to consider once again the meaning of our contacts with proletarian literature, through the figure of Takiji in the media and as a medium.

(Toriki Keita/Naitou Yositada/Kimura Masaki)

### Section 1: Takiji in the media

2-1

Shin-Tsukiji Theater 3<sup>rd</sup> Teigeki Performance *The Factory Ship* renamed *North of the 50<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (pamphlet)

1929

Uranishi [0618]

A pamphlet for “North of the 50<sup>th</sup> Parallel,” the renamed “Factory Ship.” Takada Tamotsu and Kitamura Komatsu had expanded and enlarged on the text. As well as the harsh conditions of physical labor, the play also focused on the problems of the fishing companies.

2-2

Left-wing Theater 17<sup>th</sup> Performance *Absentee Landlord* (flyer)

1930

Sapporo [0812]

“Look! See our worker and farmer comrades fighting in Hokkaido!” This flyer for a performance of “Absentee Landlord,” based on the story by Kobayashi Takiji, emphasizes the bold figures of the people of Hokkaido. The performance was at the Ichimura Theater, one of Edo’s three famous small theaters.



2-3

Left-wing Theater 17<sup>th</sup> Performance *Absentee Landlord* Worker’s ticket

1930

Sapporo [0811]

Worker’s tickets made plays available at ultra-low prices. These tickets, intended to draw in the workers and increase audiences, were distributed through company labor unions and so on. A ticket for the Kabuki Theater from the same era (for the 1929 New Year performance) was 5 yen 30 sen.

2-4

Kobayashi Takiji *Organizer / Japan Proletarian Poetry of 1931* (advertisement)

1931

Ohara [0067]

Takiji's work appears in advertising media. The powerful image of proletarian literature is vividly portrayed. The three characters of the title are filled in with smaller letters: "Kobayashi Takiji" "50 sen". The Japanese title abbreviates "organizer" to "org," referring to the role of the advertiser and guide for the masses, and to their work.

2-5-a

General Proletarian Art Lectures (Sample contents)

1931

Individual holdings

A book of samples for the lectures organized with cooperation from NAPF writers and critics. They are described as "the best and only art textbook of the modern day, a traveling university." 12 volumes were planned, but only 5 published.

2-5-b

Kobayashi Takiji "The Good Teacher"

1931

Individual holdings

Proletarian art is described as "appearing like a bear from the north country." Takiji's blurb points out that a "good teacher" like this book is needed to bring out worker artists "like clouds."

2-6

Kobayashi Takiji "On Taking Down the Literary Front" (*Front Line* Vol. 1 No.2 pp. 29-31)

1931

Ohara [2411]

The last section quotes the Special Police: join the Literary Front and you won't be sent to Ichigaya Prison. While warning against one-sided criticism of the Literary Front group, Takiji reinforced the image of conflict between the Literary Front and NAPF sides. (See 1-15-a)

## Section 2: As a symbol of the movement

2-7

Takiji asleep (photo by Kishi Yamaji)

1933

Individual holdings

On February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1933, Takiji was arrested and murdered by the Special Police. Newly discovered photographic plates have shown him to us once again, for the first time in 86 years. These are thought to be the originals of the photos published in the extra edition of *Taishu no Tomo* (2-13) and the Communist paper *Akahata* Vol. 122. His facial injuries can be seen, though he appears asleep.



2-8

Flag of Osaka Vol. 2 No. 2 (March/April edition) Edition in memory of our comrade Kobayashi Takiji

1933

Uranishi [0163]

This memorial edition was published, in anger at the authorities, after Takiji's death. It includes "Protesting the murder of our comrade Kobayashi Takiji," written in the name of the Japan Proletarian Writers' League, Osaka Branch.

2-9

*Collected Works of Kobayashi Takiji* publication notes

1933

Ohara [0171]

The notes on publication of the *Collected Works of Kobayashi Takiji* make a strong point of its significance. Ten volumes sold for 50 sen apiece are referred to as "a complete cheap edition for the masses, produced with integrity," and readers are urged to "pay in advance and subscribe now!"

2-10

Marx 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary festival: Kobayashi Takiji memorial performance of *Sawajiri Village* (program)

1933

Sapporo [1307]

The performance was scheduled for March 15<sup>th</sup> through March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1933, at the Tsukiji Little Theater, but was banned. The "Song for Comrade Kobayashi Takiji" in the pamphlet (lyrics by Sano Takeo, music by Yoshida Takako) was to have been sung in chorus at the Worker-Farmer Funeral on March 15<sup>th</sup>.

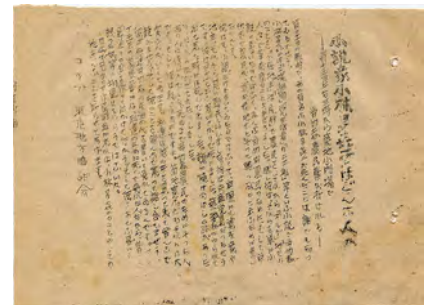
2-11

What was the novelist Kobayashi Takiji like? Worker-Farmer Funeral to be held at 3 pm on March 15<sup>th</sup> at the Tsukiji Little Theater

1933

Otaru [2539]

Published by the KOPF Tokyo Regional Council, this handbill gives a simple explanation for the workers of Takiji's work. It makes sure to draw in the readers with "Come to the Japan Proletarian Writers' League to find out more about Kobayashi Takiji and more."



2-12

Protest the murder of Comrade Kobayashi! (flyer)

1933

Ohara [2528]

With a vivid record of the marks of violence left on Takiji's body, this flyer lays charges of his murder. This manifesto expresses the anger of the KOPF members with "True mourning for the death of Comrade Kobayashi is not to be found in grieving and weeping alone."

2-13

Protest against the murder of Comrade Kobayashi Takiji

1933

Ohara [2529]

A protest against Takiji's murder by the KOPF Osaka Regional Council. The line "Kobayashi! We won't let you have died like a dog" draws the eye. Through investing the death of Takiji with significance, they focus on the future while turning to the reform of the present.

2-14

*Friend of the People* Kobayashi Takiji Memorial Edition

1933

Individual holdings (reissue)

An extra article announcing the Worker-Farmer Funeral on March 15<sup>th</sup>. Page three includes a report by Kubokawa Ineko (1904-1998) on the people who had greeted Takiji's body at his home, "Over the Corpse," while page four noted Takiji's relations with PLOT, "PLOT and our Comrade."

2-15

Burn with resentment on March 15<sup>th</sup>! Join the Worker-Farmer Funeral for Comrade Kobayashi Takiji! Gather at 7 pm at the Tennoji Public Hall!

1933

Ohara [2538]

This document argues that Takiji's death was clearly due to torture. Grasping his murder as "the vilest appearance of oppression" of the Japan Communist Party and other organizations, it calls for participation in Takiji's Worker-Farmer Funeral.

2-16

How we fought for the Worker-Farmer Funeral of Comrade Kobayashi Takiji!

1933

Ohara [2540]

A report by the Proletarian Theater League on the activity from Takiji's murder through his Worker-Farmer Funeral on March 15<sup>th</sup>. It includes self-directed criticism on the laxness of the activity as well an explanation of how the New Tsukiji Theater's play "Sawajiri Village," scheduled to be performed on the day of the funeral, was banned.

2-17

KOPF extra: Prepare the struggle policy for November 7<sup>th</sup> and the Kobayashi Collected Works on a foundation of popular activism! Determination of policy for October 7<sup>th</sup> Wata-Masa Mayday, calling on the KOPF leagues to continue the revolutionary struggle

1933

Uranishi [2556]

A policy text for the enlargement of the KOPF organization. The left-wing movement of the time was carrying out a "campania" (involvement of the masses) struggle which established goals to be reached and periods in which to reach them; we note with interest that one goal was the collection of donations toward the publication of Takiji's Collected Works.

2-18

Diary of Kishi Yamaji

1934

Collected in *The Complete Diaries of Kishi Yamaji* (DVD) (Fuji Press, 2011)

March 26<sup>th</sup>. Kishi Yamaji had met with Kobayashi Takiji some 10 days before the latter was murdered. The diary records being summoned by Takiji and asked to oppose Kaji Wataru's group, then powerful within the organization.

2-19

Kishi Yamaji manuscript "The Child"

1933

Tokushima Prefectural Hall of Literature and Calligraphy

Published in the journal *Kaizo*, August edition. One of the earlier works to approach Takiji's murder in fiction. Takiji appears as "Narita." The phrase "On the afternoon of February 22<sup>nd</sup>, Narita was arrested and murdered on the spot at Tsukiji Police Station" appeared in the magazine as "22 characters deleted."

2-20

Sata Ineko *Gears* (Chikuma Shobo)

1959

Individual holdings

A novel by Sata Ineko (Kubokawa Ineko) on the years of illegal activism. Takiji appears as Koizumi Takashi. Through the perspective of the protagonist, Akiko (Sata), we see Koizumi in contact with her and the scene in which his body returns to his house.



## Chapter 3: Arise, ye Masses! The Proletarian Theater Movement

The troupe at the core of the Japan Proletarian Theater League (later “Japan Proletarian Theatrical League” or PLOT), established in 1929, was the Tokyo Left-Wing Theater. In addition to plays by Murayama Tomoyoshi (*Gang Diary (All Lines)*), they also performed versions of novels such as Tokunaga Sunao’s *The street without sun* and Kobayashi Takiji’s *Absentee Landlord*, and translations such as Gorky’s *Mother*. A common thread in these works is their intent to drive workers to struggle, existing for the workers. They were therefore harshly oppressed by police organizations, with the troupe members working around frequent arrests and performance bans.

The first section addresses the “provincial” theater troupes as well as the Tokyo Left-Wing Theater, introducing the spread of the proletarian theater movement. Note that proletarian theater was not limited to *shingeki* or New Theater; documents also reveal its connections to adjacent fields like kabuki and revues. They also show us how audience organizations and traveling theaters developed.

The second section touches on “what happened afterward” to the proletarian theater movement. PLOT, frequently suppressed by the state, was forced to disband in 1934. Murayama Tomoyoshi, concerned for the weakening troupes, called for “a great banding together among New Theater troupes” and formed the New Cooperative (Shinkyō) Theater. Competing with the New Tsukiji (Shin-Tsukiji) Theater, which had been around since the days of PLOT, they created the “Shinkyō/Shin-Tsukiji era.” The two troupes’ posters, programs, and newsletters tell us about their activities.

(Kamogawa Satomi/Masaki Yoshikatsu)

### Section 1: The spread of proletarian theater

3-1

Left-wing Theater 12<sup>th</sup> Performance *All Lines* (flyer)

1929

Sapporo [0605]

The script for *All Lines* was by Murayama Tomoyoshi, and the play was directed by Sano Seki (1905-1966). Based on the armed oppression of the Jinghan Railway strike in China (the February 7<sup>th</sup> Incident), it was lauded as a major work of proletarian theater. The original title was *Gang Story*, but censorship forced a change.



3-2

Left-wing Theater 15<sup>th</sup> Performance *The street without sun* (program)

1930

Sapporo [0723]

Revived in March after a popular initial performance in February 1930, this program comes from the revival while the photographs are thought to be from the first performance. It was unusual for stage photos to appear in programs, making this a very valuable piece of evidence of performance practice.

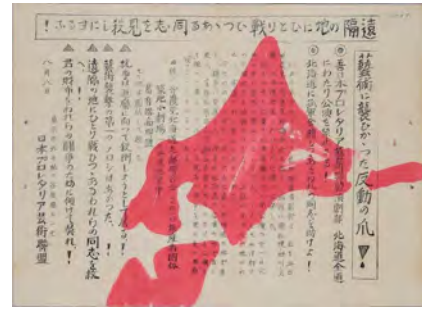
3-3

Don't abandon our comrades who struggle alone in the hinterlands! (handbill)

1927

Ohara [2267]

The Tokyo-based “Proletarian Theater,” planning a tour of Hakodate, Otaru, Sapporo, Asahikawa, and Nayoro, was forbidden to perform by Hokkaido Prefecture upon their arrival. The Japan Proletarian Art League, to which the theater belonged, lodged a protest and called on their comrades for donations.



3-4  
Japan Proletarian Theater League Tokyo Left-wing Theater First West Japan Performance *Mother* (program)  
1929  
Sapporo [0643]

The Tokyo-based Left-wing Theater had chosen *All Lines* for its first West Japan performance, but were unable to get permission from Osaka Prefecture; instead they chose *Mother*, based on the novel by Gorky. Troupes from Kyoto and Osaka joined in the performance, enhancing the connection between the “heartland” and the “hinterland.”

3-5  
PLOT News Vol. 4  
1931  
Uranishi [1018]

PLOT was the abbreviation of the Japan Proletarian Theater League, and this newsletter reported on the activities of member troupes. The upper right shows a map of Japan with stars indicating member troupes, giving a sense of the organizational development of the Proletarian Theater League.

3-6  
Zenshin Theater First Performance Notice *Kabuki Kingdom, Tobitchiyo, Judge Ooka and the Makeup* (flyer)  
1931  
Uranishi [0923]

The proletarian theater wave spread to kabuki as well, creating the Zenshin Theater, which still exists. *Kabuki Kingdom*, which revealed the internal strife of the kabuki theater such as the issue of bit part actors’ salary reductions, was written by Murayama Tomoyoshi under the name of Toyama Shunpei.

3-7  
An Evening of Proletarian Music and Revues (flyer)  
1931  
Ohara [2414]

The proletarian theater was not constrained within the concept of “theater,” but encompassed a wide variety of artistic genres including music, puppet theater, revues and so on. The Tenroku venue refers to Tenjinbashi 6-chome in Osaka; its North Civic Hall was a public settlement house.

3-8  
Left-wing Theater Join the Drama League! (flyer)  
1932-33 environs  
Sapporo [1860]

For the proletarian theater, organizing the audience of workers was a major task. The “Drama League” can be considered a forerunner of the Workers’ Theaters organized around Japan after the war (Workers’ Theatrical Councils, audience organizations which supported the performance of modern theater).



3-9a

Alarm Bell Troupe Pamphlet No. 1

1932

Uranishi [1111]

The Alarm Bell Troupe was a traveling proletarian theater which went to workplaces and so on as requested by the workers, giving various performances. As the placard shows, they also instructed workers in giving their own performances.



3-9b

Alarm Bell Troupe Performance *The Red Vise* (program)

1932

Sapporo [1141]

The play *The Red Vise* encouraged viewers to protect workers' newspapers from oppression. The "vise" referred to the work of the newspapers in bringing out corporate corruption. The German text reads "Agitprop groups are attack brigades."

## Section 2: The Shinkyō Theater and the Shin-Tsukiji Theater

3-10

Shinkyō Theater Founding Performance *Before Dawn* (poster)

1934

Sapporo [1482]

As a result of the "call for a new collaboration among New Theater groups," intending to create a single troupe out of several weakening ones, the Shinkyō Theater was founded in September, 1934. Their curtain-raiser was Shimazaki Toson's "Before Dawn," then being serialized in *Chuo Koron*.

3-11

Shinkyō Theater First Performance *Before Dawn* (program)

1934

Sapporo [1483]

*Before Dawn: Part 1*, enlarged by Murayama Tomoyoshi, directed by Kubo Sakae (1900-1958), with sets by Ito Kisaku (1899-1967), was popular enough that Part 2 was staged in March of 1936. Shimazaki Toson, who saw the production, said "They got it right, they didn't overdo it."

3-12

Shinkyō Theater 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Performance *Ishikari River* (pamphlet)

1934

Sapporo [1486]

*Ishikari River*, based on the novel by Honjo Mutsuo (1905-1939), describes a one-time domain lord, driven from his homeland, struggling as a pioneer on the Ishikari Plain, expressing the human effort to survive in the rapidly changing world of the Meiji era. The play suggests Murayama's continuing belief in the coming of a new era.

3-13

Shinkyō Theater *Volcano Ashland* (program)

1938

Sapporo [1791]

*Volcano Ashland* was the Shinkyo Theater's standard piece, first performed in June 1938 and needing a long preparation time. The "Monthly Shinkyo Theater" of October 1936 reports that Sapporo-born Kubo Sakae had gone to "observe farming villages in Hokkaido's Ishikari and Togachi for writing purposes."

3-14

Shin-Tsukiji Graph No. 6

1936

Sapporo [1677]

At this time, Shin-Tsukiji Theater was the main rival to Shinkyo Theater. *Lamentations of the Women* was the comeback vehicle for their star Yamamoto Yasue (1902 [1906?]-1993), who had lost her husband and been ill herself. She was praised as "adding even greater depth to her performance" (Tokyo Asahi), erasing her two years of absence.

3-15

Monthly Shin-Tsukiji Theater No. 18 Toyoda Masako "Writing Class" Special Edition

1938

Uranishi [1775]

The play *Writing Class* became Shin-Tsukiji Theater's long-awaited hit. *Monthly Shin-Tsukiji Theater* No. 18 contains comments from Shiga Naoya (1883-1971) and Ohki Ken'ichiro, the elementary school teacher who had instructed Toyoda Masako (1922-2010).

3-16

Shin-Tsukiji Theater *Writing Class* / Film *The Road to Peace in East Asia* (pamphlet)

1938

Uranishi [1776]

*Writing Class*, produced as a play by the Shin-Tsukiji Theater, was a hit, with Yamamoto Yasue, already over 30, playing the role of 12-year-old Toyoda Masako (photo below left). The result of effective newspaper plugging was audience numbers of over 12,000, with a revival in a different theater the following month.

3-17

Real Face Yamamoto Yasue Fanzine Vol. 1 No. 1

1938

Uranishi [1773]

There were Tokyo and regional fan clubs for the Shinkyo and Shin-Tsukiji theaters alike, as well as thriving ones for individual actors. Yamamoto Yasue's fanzine included notes on her "real face" from Fujimori Seikichi (1892-1977) and Akita Ujaku (1883-1962).



3-18

Monthly Shinkyo Theater No. 21

1937

Ohara [1697]

In the "Travel Photographs" section, actor Takizawa Osamu introduces troupe members at regional performances with photos. The photos used for the "Lower Depths West Japan Performance" on page 1 were taken at the Ohara Museum in Kurashiki, which opened in 1930.

3-19

Monthly Shinkyo Theater No. 44

1938

18

Uranishi [1797]

The state of the war is introduced through a column on troupe members who had gone to fight, following the drafting of actor Uno Jukichi. After his return, performances for the troops suggest that the theater was forced to take a stance in accordance with national policies.

3-20

Monthly Shinkyō Theater No. 66 Extra

1940

Sapporo [1868]

For *Daibutsu Kaigan*, the theater's entry in the 2600<sup>th</sup> Imperial Celebrations, the director Ito Michio was summoned from America and the play was performed with great furor. Amendments made by Murayama and others, however, proved fatal, and the troupe was forced to disband in August that year.

## Chapter 4: The Red Brush: The Proletarian Art Movement

The proletarian art movement set young artists around 1930 afire as well as significantly influencing the following generations, and yet it is rarely touched on in Japanese art history. This is not only due to ideological reasons, but also because major paintings such as those exhibited in museums are almost nonexistent at this point.

The movement also included manga/comics and graphic design designed from the start for reproduction, which were published in magazines and newspapers and have come down to us today. Paintings, while featuring large-scale group images, were almost all destroyed by the oppression, leaving only small works, some remaining only as magazine color prints or as postcards.

As confirmed in recent years, the Hermitage Museum in Russia possesses some Japanese proletarian artworks. Sent to the Soviet Union in 1929, they include some major paintings which may be considered masterpieces. If they are ever able to return to Japan and be put on display, they are likely to become big news regardless of ideology. However, without waiting that long, we can still imagine visually the scenes of this movement based on the remaining materials and monochrome drawings.

In this chapter, as the prehistory of proletarian art, we will first consider materials from the Taisho era anarchist art movement and new art movement, then move on to materials from Showa era proletarian art, which sought to go beyond the conventional borders of art and reach into society itself.

(Adachi Gen)

### Section 1: Prehistory: The anarchist art movement

4-1

Kokkikai Second Art Exhibition (flyer)

1920

Ohara [1994]

The Kokkikai (Black Light Group) was founded at the end of 1919 by the anarchist artist Mochizuki Katsura (1887-1975), aiming for equal, social-oriented expression beyond the boundaries of artistic genres or skill. Its manifesto, calling for us to live better, is also appealing. The record includes the names of Soeda Azembo (1872-1944), Osugi Sakae (1885-1923), and Sakai Toshihiko (1871-1933).

4-2

MAVO Manifesto

1923

Sapporo [1995]

MAVO was founded in 1923 by Murayama Tomoyoshi, Yanase Masamu (1900-1945) and others. Drawing attention with their activities across the borders of art, literature, theater, and architecture, they eventually fell apart due to their extreme and undifferentiated ideology, both anarchism and Communism. Note the youthful energy of “We stand at the cutting edge” in this material.

4-3

MAVO Theater Exhibition (flyer)

1926

Sapporo [1998]

MAVO separated into three parts in 1925 and effectively ceased functioning, but Okada Tatsuo (1904-?) and others tried to keep it going. According to the *Taisho New Art Materials Collection* (Kokusho Kankokai), this exhibition presented theater set models by Okada and Yoshida Kenkichi (1897-1982) as well as costumes by Takamizawa Michinao (1899-1989) (later Tagawa Suiho).

## Section 2: Russia-struck

4-4

New Russian Art Exhibit Catalog  
1927

Ohara [1999]

This exhibit was held at the brand new Asahi Shimbun building in the Ginza, introducing some 400 contemporary artworks from the Soviet Union. Mainly realism, they are said to have influenced the appearance of proletarian art in Japan. The catalog includes illustrations with frames slashed and other stylish concepts.



4-5

10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Revolution Festival Worker-Farmer Russia  
Exhibition  
1927

Sapporo [2000]

This exhibition celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Works include diagrams of the political structure of the Soviet Union, statistics, posters, and newspaper articles, with art seeming to be an extra bonus at best. Yanase Masamu's manga were probably included as the contribution of the Workers' News.

## Section 3: The movement begins

4-6

Notice  
1928

Ohara [2003]

This notice announces the First Proletarian Art Exhibition (Pro-Art Exhibit), to be held at the Tokyo Art Museum. Based on opposition to bourgeois art, the All-Japan Proletarian Art League (NAPF) and Plastic Artists' Cooperative among others came together to fight.

4-7

Grand Proletarian Art Exhibition Catalog  
1928

Uranishi [2004]

Some 3000 people visited this exhibition over 10 days, and of its 181 works 19 are said to have been ordered to be removed. The leading theorist of the proletarian culture movement, Kurahara Korehito (1902-1999), praised its "bright health," "realism," and "themes."

4-8

Yanase Masamu Exhibition (notice)  
1929

Ohara [2018]

Yanase Masamu was a leader in proletarian manga, but did not take part at all in the Pro-Art Exhibit at Ueno. He may have felt that art exhibitions did not go well with the struggle against reproduced art. Supporters of this exhibit included leading intellectuals such as Hasegawa Nyozeikan (1875-1969) and

Kawakami Hajime (1879-1946).

4-9

First Proletarian Art Traveling Exhibition Member's Ticket

1929

Ohara [2020]

The proletarian art movement included not only the major yearly exhibition at Ueno but also traveling exhibitions in various cities and farming villages. Individually they were small, but together they may have drawn more viewers than the Ueno exhibitions.



4-10

PP News (Japan Proletarian Art League Headquarters News) No. 2

1929

Otaru [2023]

The proletarian art movement included many internal journals. These covered not only slogans on education and the struggle but also frequently self-criticism, revealing the artists' concerns. This material shows us that branches had been established in Sapporo, Otaru, and Kushiro within Hokkaido.

4-11

Grand Proletarian Art Exhibition Creation Policy

1929

Otaru [2028]

Internal materials intended for the second Pro-Art Exhibit. At this time, the Proletarian Artists' League (PP) had been organized, and this material indicates its unified policy as an organization. Does it really reveal a revolution in essential expression?

## Section 4: The potentials and bottlenecks of the movement

4-12

Pro-Exhibit Worker's Ticket

1930

Ohara [2035]

The Pro-Art Exhibit prepared workers' tickets distinct from the ordinary ones, and compiled statistics of how many workers visited. They also assembled the amateur and straightforward opinions of workers through questionnaires, etc., which the artists received as important artistic criticism.



4-13

3<sup>rd</sup> Grand Proletarian Art Exhibition (flyer)

1930

Sapporo [2036]

This handwritten and mimeographed flyer indicates just how financially strapped the organization was. From the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pro-Art Exhibit on, the venue was changed to the Ueno Japan Art Council; the novelist Chujo (Miyamoto) Yuriko (1899-1951) praised "the liveliness and genuine reality of the themes of the art which fill the venue."

4-14

4<sup>th</sup> Grand Proletarian Art Exhibit (flyer)

1932

Sapporo [2070]

The 4<sup>th</sup> Pro-Art Exhibit was held in Tokyo in November 1931 and traveled to Osaka in 1932. Oppression was a blow in Tokyo, but the exhibit was well received in West Japan, praised in typical Osaka tones as “even them as says they don’t like pictures should go for the Pro-Art Exhibit.”

4-15

(Appendix to HQ News No. 26) Determination of dates for the 4<sup>th</sup> Exhibit and urgent duties for each branch and office

1932

Otaru [2072]

This text was intended to notify the regional PP branches that the 4<sup>th</sup> national exhibit would be held after May Day. It includes a number of brusque commands, and adds on the last page that a new goal is the support of revolution in Korea, Taiwan, and China, and the redivision of the colonies.

4-16

Tokyo Proletarian Art School Commemorative 6<sup>th</sup> Proletarian Art Institute Artwork Exhibit (flyer)

1932

Sapporo [2073]

The Proletarian Art School was a PP art school aimed at workers, where Kurosawa Akira (1910-1998), among others, studied. They held a graduation exhibit over two days at the Shinjuku Kinokuniya. The notice is strongly worded but also suggests the weak and melancholy reality of the exhibit, which we may find interesting now.

4-17

Red Fist (newsletter)

1932

Ohara [2074]

The top line reads “★Workers of the world, unite!★” in Korean. The text includes not only manga but also “We’re always ready to come to your events or picnics. Make use of the Sam’il Traveling Troupe,” showing how cross-regional the Korean cultural movement was.

4-18

PP Conference Preparation Edition Japan Proletarian Artists’ League Tokyo Branch News

1932

Otaru [2075]

Materials for the 4<sup>th</sup> National Conference. According to the report from the educational section from page 10 on, various research groups had been organized, not only typical ones on oil painting, printing, etc., but also those on architecture, Korea, farmers, youth and so on, suggesting unique activities.



4-19

YAP Tokyo Branch News Bring revolutionary struggle to Youth Day, make it the Revolutionary Anniversary

1932

Otaru [2079]

The afterword on the final page suggests the situation at the time, with fellow artists being arrested one after another by the police. The Proletarian Art School was “extremely low.” The revolutionary struggle the leaders argued for was being put off; anyone could see that the organization was on its last legs.

4-20

Fight to organize the Korean (colonial) Council for the Day of National Shame (August 29<sup>th</sup>) and Day of the Great Mxxxcre (September 1<sup>st</sup>)!

1932

Otaru [2080]

The commemorative days mentioned are August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1910, when Korea was made a colony of Japan, and September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1923, when Koreans were massacred after the Great Kanto Earthquake. PP is calling on the Korean Council to fight. Much has not yet been made clear about the Korean artists of PP.

4-21

Tokyo Proletarian Art School opinion sheet

1932

Sapporo [2085]

This document may have been used to contribute questions or complaints to an opinion box. The Proletarian Art School taught life drawing and factory scenes as well as offering lectures on Western art history, Soviet art history, materialism, and manga, constituting an avant-garde curriculum.

4-22

Current artistic trends and the duties of the League

1932

Otaru [2096]

According to this document, the 4<sup>th</sup> National Conference was disbanded at the time it was held. While lauding the progress of the proletarian art movement, there is also concern for the lagging anti-war movement regarding fascism since the Manchurian Incident, calling for greater organizational activism.

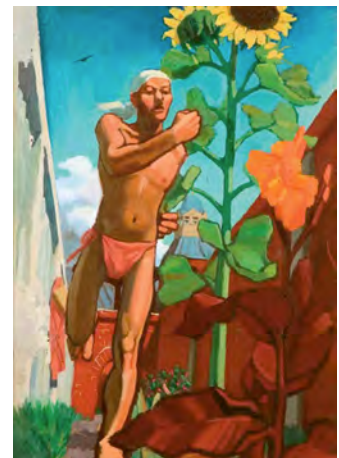
4-23

The new situation and the new duties of the art movement

1933

Otaru [2086]

Already, the focus had moved from changing the world of expression with new art to changing society through organizing left-wing art circles among the workers in factories and farming villages. Exhibitions were frequently banned and artists arrested, limiting the scope of action.



4-24

Ohtsuki Genji “Running Man” (oil painting)

1936

Otaru Municipal Art Museum

Ohtsuki Genji (1904-1971) was born in Hakodate and raised in Otaru. He graduated from the Tokyo School of Art in 1927 and took part in the proletarian art movement, becoming known for his “Wake” depicting the funeral cortege of Yamamoto Senji. Arrested and charged in 1932, he threw in his lot with the authorities in 1935 and was released, after which this picture was painted.



## Chapter 5: The Front Lines of the Movement: Fighting in the Provinces

While the theoretical basis of the proletarian culture movement was propounded by the intelligentsia of the central organizations, it was put into practice by the people in regional branches. The movement spread throughout the country, with branches established in every prefecture.

After the Japan Proletarian Culture League (KOPF) was established at the end of 1931, based on targets of organizing culture circles at corporations and in farming villages in order to increase subscribers to the organizational newsletters and union members, greater importance was placed on the existence of regional branches. The English-derived word “circle,” which originates in the proletarian culture movement, is now well established as a way to refer to a club or group of like-minded people. However, for the people of the regional branches at the time, carrying out organizational activities under the eye of the state, circle activities could mean literally risking their lives.

The first section introduces the activities of the regional branches developed after KOPF was founded, through the newsletters issued by the Writers’ League Regional Branches.

The second section introduces flyers from regional productions of the play *The street without sun*, a hit around the country. Audiences were moved and influenced by the scenes of workers arising, based on the Kyodo Printing struggle.

The third section introduces flyers from literary lectures at which writers from central organizations appeared. Lectures were major events for the regional branches, and also excellent opportunities to garner more comrades from among the audience.

The fourth section introduces mimeographed handbills from regional branches of the Senki Press. From these documents, which recreate the handwriting of the writers, we get a real sense of the presence of the people involved in the movement.

The fifth section and video exhibit introduce the proletarian films created and shown around the country. Small cameras were used for filming, with filmmakers shooting on the streets and using their footage as a weapon in the struggle.

(Wada Takashi/Ikeda Keigo/Takeda Yuki/Amemiya Komei)

### Section 1: The movement spreads around the country

5-1

Writers’ League Yamanashi Branch News No. 3

1932

Otaru [0100]

The editor’s notes indicate a shift to the “National Farmers’ Association Yamanashi Prefecture Office.” The cultural movement in Yamanashi was focused on agricultural art. Furuya Yoshizaburo, the publisher, worked to prepare funds for the formation of a KOPF Yamanashi Region Council, but was ultimately unsuccessful.

5-2

Japan Proletarian Writers’ League Nagano Branch News No. 1

1932

Otaru [0095]

The Nagano Branch, which included writer Takakura Teru (1891-1986), was among the most active of the regional branches, second only to West Japan. However, as the article on pages 4 and 5 notes, the two publishers were now whereabouts unknown; membership in regional circle activities was highly unstable.

5-3

Kyoto Branch News No. 1

1932

Otaru [0092]

The Kyoto Branch, which had dropped out of sight for a year or so, was revived at the end of 1931 via the visits of Ikeda Hisao and Kishi Yamaji. However, the multiple branch names shown at the same office address at lower left of page 1 suggest that regional organizations were managed by just a few members and did not live up to their appearance.

5-4

Okayama Branch News No. 1

1932

Otaru [0085]

“Branch membership, League membership to be doubled!” sounds energetic, but the middle right of page 2 reports that they took in just 20 sen (about 500 yen in today’s money) for the month, and were obviously struggling for funding.

5-5

Writers’ League Osaka Branch News No. 3

1933

Ohara [0155]

Even the Osaka branch, largest of the regional branches, found its work bogged down as the authorities’ oppression grew harsher. Kodama Yoshio’s article beginning on page 11 scolds the membership for “failing to pay the dues due” for subscription feeds, but also recognizes that “competition for payment” from headquarters, demanding collection, was present, with conflict visible.

## Section 2: *The street without sun* is in town!

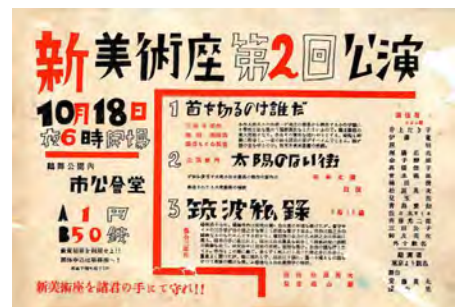
5-6

New Art Theater 2<sup>nd</sup> Performance *Who is to be the Executioner?*, *The street without sun*, *Tsukuba Secrets* notice (flyer)

1930

Sapporo [0815]

The New Art Theater, founded in March 1930, later became the Avant-Garde Theater and joined PLOT. Their *The street without sun* was not the play but the *shinnai* (storytelling with shamisen accompaniment) performance made famous by Okamoto Bunya (1895-1996), originator of left-wing *shinnai*.



5-7

Tokyo Left-wing Theater Fukuoka Performance *The street without sun*, *Proletarian Trial* (flyer)

1931

Sapporo [0929]

Based on Tokunaga Sunao’s novel about the Kyodo Printing struggle (1926). At the time, Tokunaga was one of the strikers, demanding along with Sasaki Takamaru (1898-1986) et al. that the strikers be motivated with plays. The result became a foundational work of the Left-wing Theater. This performance ended as shown in 1-5.

5-8

Extra! Senki Theater/Kosei Theater Joint Performance *The street without sun* (flyer)

1931

Ohara [0980]

Osaka's left-wing troupes collaborated on a performance of *The street without sun*. Was the performance on the 7<sup>th</sup> banned by police? The facts of the matter are suggested by "Protect it with our power, the people's power!"

5-9

Shin-Tsukiji Theater Special Appearance *The street without sun*, *The Boys of Sorrow Academy* (program)

1932

Sapporo [1116]

The Shin-Tsukiji Theater, which split from the Tsukiji Little Theater led by Osanai Kaoru (1881-1928) and joined PLOT in 1931, finally brought *The street without sun* to the masses of Asakusa. The inked-out part of the program probably described the Kyodo Printing struggle.

5-10

Kobe Zensen Theater *The street without sun* (poster)

1932

Ohara [1159]

*The street without sun* was the one play every regional theater longed to put on. The Kyoto Bluecoat Theater performed it on July 1<sup>st</sup>, followed immediately by the Kobe Zensen Theater. However, the authorities came down hard on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, making this play the first and last major performance for the Kobe Zensen Theater.



### Section 3: Literary lectures in the provinces

5-11

Lecture to celebrate the founding of the New Literature Research Group

1927

Ohara [0018]

The New Literature Research Group was organized in Nagano, under the influence of the proletarian culture movement, by Hanyu Sanshichi (1904-1985), who later became a Socialist Party Diet member. Among the lecturers, Fujimori Seikichi was also a Nagano native; his play *What Made Her Do It?* was filmed in 1930 and became a great hit.

5-12-a

Proletarian Literature Lecture (half-price ticket)

1928

Ohara [0023]

The "Tosabori Youth Hall" listed as the venue was in fact called the Osaka Christian Educational Youth Association, now the Osaka YMCA. Half-price entrance was 10 sen. At the time, coffee or udon would be 10 sen or so a serving, while a man's haircut cost about 50 sen.

5-12-b

Proletarian Literature Lecture (flyer)

1928

Ohara [0024]

The All-Japan Proletarian Art League was known by its acronym NAPF. The lecturer was Fujimori Seikichi (see 5-11), who had also been the first NAPF chairman. Others noted include the playwright and avant-garde artist Murayama Tomoyoshi and the writer Hayashi Fusao (1903-1975), who later turned to the right.

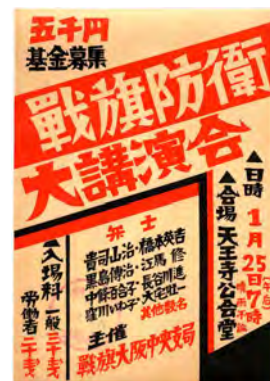
5-13-a

Senki Defense Lecture (flyer)

1931

Sapporo [2383]

*Senki* (Battle Flag) was NAPF's journal, with its own secretariat. As a legal magazine it could be purchased in ordinary bookstores, but its publication was regularly banned. Even so, several hundred people assembled for this lecture.



5-13-b

Senki Defense Lecture (flyer)

1931

Sapporo [2385]

The text at the top reads “5000 yen funds to be raised.” At the time, when an elementary school teacher’s beginning salary was 50 yen or so a month, this was no paltry sum. The lecturers Chujo Yuriko and Kubokawa Ineko are better known as the writers Miyamoto Yuriko and Sata Ineko.

5-14

Senki NAPF Defense Lecture (flyer)

1931

Sapporo [2397]

The *NAPF* journal existed separately from *Senki*, and this Defense Lecture was intended to protect both magazines. These lectures were held frequently. The film exhibit *Okayama and Kochi: Writers’ League Lectures on the Road* includes a record of these lectures.

## Section 4: Mimeographing at *Senki*

5-15

Secretariat News

1931

Uranishi [0060]

Readers are asked to donate for the purchase of a mimeograph. The Senkisha, which published the magazine *Senki*, had branches around the country which were to acquire readers and collect subscription fees. From this document, issued by the Kobe branch, we see how essential the mimeograph was to the proletarian culture movement.

5-16

Senki Tokyo Branch News No. 1

1930

Ohara [2377]

The Branch News was an important way of connecting readers and the movement. Mimeographed documents, which reproduce handwriting just as it was, express the various personalities of the creators. Comic strips were also included, as we see in this Tokyo Branch News.

5-17

Senki Osaka Central Branch News Prefectural Council Election Edition  
1931

Ohara [2420]

Woodcuts could also be weapons. The short story by Taki Shigeru (1907-1995) “Three Yen a Vote,” describing workers anguishing over being bought by the factory owner, is inked in black for the text, with a red-ink woodcut showing the moment of accepting the three yen. The dead-eyed family’s depiction is notable.



5-18

Everyone at Kanebo! (Try reading Senki)

1931

Ohara [2440]

A flyer advertising *Senki*, printed in 2 colors by the Senki Osaka Central Branch. This magazine, central to the cultural movement, became unsellable in bookstores due to oppression and was then directly distributed to readers through the regional branches. Their essential mission was to increase the number of readers.

5-19

Horii Printers HORII MYRIAGRAPH (mimeographing set)

1926-1933 environs

Individual holdings

Before copying machines became standard, this kind of mimeograph, invented in 1894 by Horii Shinjiro and his son in Shiga Prefecture, was convenient for printing. As it was used up through the 1980s, many visitors to the exhibition will remember seeing one in schools or workplaces. It was also used by the prewar proletarian culture movement to run off newsletters, handbills, and posters. The base plate had a wax stencil (thin paper with a layer of wax applied) on an iron plate called the “file,” and a “stylus” (a brush with an iron tip) was used to gouge letters in the wax. The “holes” made with the stylus were the lines of pictures or text. The stencil and the printing paper were layered and an ink roller run over the stencil to make ink run out of the holes and onto the paper, similar to the principles of silkscreening or potato prints. The “gari-gari” grinding noise made when gouging the stencil with the stylus gave the machine its Japanese nickname, *gariban* or grind-printer. Mimeographed documents have a distinctive handmade feel.

## Section 5: Film travels the provinces

5-20

An Evening of Proletarian Film (flyer)

1931

Sapporo [1949]

“Evenings of Proletarian Film,” run by the Japan Proletarian Film League (Pro-Kino), were held throughout the country, showing various films, mainly documentaries. The films shown also included the cutting-edge shadow animation *Chimneysweep Perro*.

5-21a

“Pro-Kino Traveling Troupe” Worker’s ticket

1932

Ohara [1970]

“Failure is not an option” suggests that films, like theater, were also subject to strict censorship and

monitoring. Among the creators, Kunikida Torao (1902-1970) was the son of Kunikida Doppo (1871-1908) and his second wife Haruko (1879-1962), another Pro-Kino participant.

5-21b

Pro-Kino News, Nagano Film Show (program)

1932

Ohara [1971]

Film show programs are valuable documents with regard to the many Pro-Kino films which no longer exist. The overview discusses various issues addressed by their films, such as class and regional gaps, war, and colonialism.

5-22

Report on the 1931 activities of the Kochi Pro-Kino Branch

1932

Otaru [1974]

The traveling film show in Kochi from late November through early December 1931 brought in up to 500 viewers. Ikeda Hisao, Eguchi Kan, and Kishi Yamaji also visited Kochi at the same time and talked with the local League members (see video exhibit (4)).

5-23

Raise 300 yen for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pro-Kino production!

1931

Uranishi [1941]

As this flyer shows, movies were “a powerful weapon of art,” but also cost a lot of money for film, developing, and so on. Workers and farmers were frequently requested to donate money to cover these costs.



5-24

*Our Films* October Founding Edition

1932

Ohara [1969]

The Pro-Kino regional branches not only held showings but also tried to create their own original films. This magazine, put out by the Osaka Regional Branch, contains a 20-page script for *Wheels* (based on the story by Taki Shigeru), describing a strike by Osaka Municipal Bus employees.

5-25

Pathé Baby

1920s

Individual holdings

This 9.5mm film camera, made by France's Pathé, was a major element in small-scale movies along with the 16mm American Kodak. Pro-Kino used it as a weapon in the fight against bourgeois movies, creating many films.

## Video Exhibit

The proletarian culture movement included the practice of taking a small camera out into the streets to shoot strikes and May Day celebrations. As cameras grew smaller and more functional, they offered a new way of “distributing” information.

However, simply for calling for freedom of speech, demanding improved labor conditions, and protesting against war, the workers were forced to make great sacrifices, and their supporters were literally put in danger of their lives.

Through unjust oppression, much valuable film recording the state of prewar Japan was lost, but the remaining images, in their incompleteness itself as well, provide new ways of thinking about the freedom of expression and of belief.

The role of film production in the cultural movement was filled by Pro-Kino, the Japan Proletarian Film League, established in February 1929 as one of the organizations under NAPF’s auspices. Its roots were in the film section founded at the Trunk Theater in March 1927 or so by Sasa Genju (1900-1959), then a Tokyo University student with a passion for the cinema. Sasa and his colleagues made the most of the mobility of their small-scale films for political purposes in the left-wing culture movement, while Kishi Yamaji filmed his comrades as if making home movies of family trips. Their tranquil dailiness in the midst of a tense time, some smiling and some waving hands, is visible here.

(1) *Funeral of Yamamoto Senji* (2 min 12 sec)

Okada Sozo, cameraman/Pro-Kino Tokyo Branch production  
1929

In *DVD Pro-Kino Collection*

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, the Worker-Farmer Party Diet member Yamamoto Senji (a biologist and birth control activist), who had spoken out against the Peace Preservation Law, was assassinated. This Pro-Kino memorial film, shot in the face of police monitoring of his coffin as it was carried to the Tokyo Imperial University Buddhist Hall, was shown around the country.

(2) *12<sup>th</sup> Tokyo May Day* (7 min 04 sec)

Iwasaki Akira, director/Okada Sozo, cameraman  
1931

In *DVD Pro-Kino Collection*

This film records the 12<sup>th</sup> Tokyo May Day, held in Shiba Park. It brings out the security theater of the time, such as frisking before the gathering. The final parade, shot at a distance, is a powerful expression of empathy with workers.

(3) *The Land* (6 min 00 sec)

Koh Shukichi, director/Oka Hideo, cameraman  
1931

In *DVD Pro-Kino Collection*

Recreated images from reportage on tenant farmers’ struggles in Toyama Prefecture depict the tenant farmers’ solidarity, the land companies’ greed, and the workers attempting to find common ground with the farmers. Half or more is lost, but the remaining film is a valuable source of information on prewar farmers’ struggles.

(4) *Okayama and Kochi: Writers’ League Lectures* (6 min 34 sec)

Kishi Yamaji, cameraman

1931

Individual holdings

Farming villages were called on to start literary circles, and regional lecture tours were planned by the Writers' League. The first half shows a discussion at the Café Paulista in Okayama on November 24<sup>th</sup>, with Ikeda Hisao, Ino Shozo, and Eguchi Kan visible from right front. The middle part covers the boat trip to Kochi and a walk around Kochi Castle (November 30<sup>th</sup>? Ikeda and Eguchi are visible). The last section seems to be the Kochi Theater and in front of the Kochi Branch office. These images were not for propaganda, but rather very valuable home movies shot by culture movement insiders.

(1), (2), (3) Courtesy of Rikka Press (*DVD Pro-Kino Collection*)

Reference pamphlet: <http://rikka-press.jp/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/prokino.pdf>

(4) Courtesy of Ito Jun

Reference: Manda Keita, "*Okayama and Kochi: Writers' League Lectures 1931 November-December*, shot by Kishi Yamaji" (*Fenceless* No. 3, May 2015)



## Chapter 6: Children, the Fighters of the Future

The proletarian culture movement also included the praxis of education for children. It was originally in the Taisho era that Japan came to take up the attitude that “children are pure.” The children’s writers who adhered to the “children first” ideology notably expressed in the children’s magazine *Akai Tori* propounded values emphasizing the purity and innocence of children.

However, the proletarian culture movement attacked violently the image of the pure and innocent child, based on its deliberate indifference to class issues in society. Makimoto Kusuro (1898-1956), leader of the proletarian child culture movement, declared “The lives of ‘kings’ or ‘princesses’ and their stories mean nothing to our proletarian children!” (*Problems in Proletarian Children’s Literature*).

The first section follows the process by which “grownups” create the difficult theory of what kind of culture should be bestowed on “children.”

The second section introduces materials used to invite children to become Pioneers (activity groups for boys and girls).

The third section displays examples of child-directed expressions found in the cultural movement directed at adults. This kind of activity record may be said to have respected “children” as an equal existence in a sense. The final exhibit of this chapter is a Snakes and Ladders game (*sugoroku*), designed to provide enjoyable gameplay while learning how to follow the path to fighter-workers, both leisure and a weapon; intended for adults and children alike, it enables us to picture the players crowding around the board.

(Izutani Shun/Nakaya Izumi)

### Section 1: In search of the “correct” proletarian child

6-1

Report on activities of the New Educational Research Institute

1932

Otaru [2703]

The New Educational Research Institute, which aimed to construct proletarian education, joined KOPF in 1931 and made efforts to serve as an organization with a broad base in the masses, as well as one for educational workers. This is a report on its activities at the time.

6-2-a

*Soviet Friends* April Edition (Vol. 2 No. 4)

1932

Ohara [2697]

The *Soviet Friends* “Education Special Edition” introduced the Soviet educational system with photographs.



6-2b

*Soviet Friends* March Edition (Vol. 2 No. 4) pp. 4-5

1932

Ohara [2697]

The article notes that while more than half the children in Imperial Russia had been unable to attend school, now all children were being educated.

6-3-a

107<sup>th</sup> Asahi Children's Group (program)

1935

Ohara [1503]

A program from the performance of "Three Little Bears" at the Asahi Children's Group (Asahi Shimbun Social Enterprises). Directed by PLOT Osaka Branch's Watanabe Saburo (1986-1954), formerly of the Kosei Theater. Based on a text by Murayama Kazuko (1903-1946), with drawings by her husband Murayama Tomoyoshi. An anime version by Pro-Kino's Iwasaki Akira was also made in 1931.

6-3-b

Kosei Theater News No. 1

1931

Ohara [0957]

The "Troupe Journal" in the Kosei Theater News records the performance of a proletarian children's play, "Theater for Children," at the Asahi Children's Group by the Kosei Theater, before joining PLOT. Hermynia zur Mühlen was an Austrian woman writer. The West Japan Children's Theater League was formed in December of this year under the auspices of the Asahi Children's Group.

6-3-c

Children's Theater Discussion (notice)

1935

Ohara [1502]

Hosted by the Children's Art Educational Research Institute (CAL), established by Watanabe Saburo around the disbanding of PLOT, and the Asahi Children's Group. This flyer suggests eager discussion of the status quo, theory, and actuality of children's theater for child audiences.

## Section 2: Calling to the Pioneers

6-4

You Pioneers!

1933

Ohara [2748]

The PLOT Osaka Branch calls for the establishment of a Pioneer Theater to create original plays and songs distinct from the children's stories and songs occupied by the bourgeois. They also introduce International Children's Week, fought for by proletarian children around the world, and the Pioneer World Conference.

6-5

Request from the Youth Theater: 2<sup>nd</sup> Children's Gathering

1933

Uranishi [1273]

Note the discomfort shown with "forcing the world of adults into the world of children." "Everyone" is also used in typical children's phrasing. Asking for possible theater names also makes the point that "everyone" creates the theater together.

6-6

Youth Theater 2<sup>nd</sup> Performance "2<sup>nd</sup> Children's Evening" (flyer)

1933

Ohara [1274]

Proletarian children's culture also aimed at child-centered creative practice, including instructions on how to make paper plays and draw simple pictures between the acts of plays.

6-7-a

*The Left* Vol. 2 No. 3

1933

Ohara [0158]

The journal of the Worker-Farmer Artists' League. Founded in July 1932 as the journal of the Left-Wing Artists' League, it was produced by the main movers of the Literary Front group from the time of *The Sower* on, such as Kaneko Yobun (1893-1985) and Imano Kenzo (1893-1969).



6-7b

*The Left* Vol. 2 No. 3 pp. 14-15

1933

Ohara [0158]

Sheet music for a proletarian children's song. The lyrics depict how two friends who grow up to be an artisan and a farmer join forces to fight back against swindling, and how "we" should do the same. The act of singing together on this topic draws out budding class consciousness and fighting spirit.

### Section 3: Beyond the adult/child boundary

6-8

2<sup>nd</sup> Evening of Proletarian Film (flyer)

1930

Ohara [1925]

The torn marks at the bottom right might have been from a worker's discount ticket. *Children*, directed by Sasa Genju, was a documentary depicting the way workers' children imitate their parents' struggles in their play, looking to the next generation of fighters (the film is no longer extant). It was shown with the shadow-picture animation "Chimneysweep Perro."

6-9-a

Tokyo Left-wing Theater Traveling Short Performance Program

1931

Sapporo [0855]

Shima Kimiyasu (1909-1992) revised Stuart Walker's children's play "Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil" with a proletarian child as its hero, making it a proletarian play for adults as well. The theater journal *New Plays* (February 1931) suggests that it "borrows heavily from Takiji's story 'Support News'." The hero of this performance, while the magazine was in draft, is a boy (the play's heroine is a girl), and the spy and lazy boss who appear in the play are not in evidence.

6-9-b

Tsukiji Little Theater 18<sup>th</sup> Performance Children's Day (program)

1924

Sapporo [0925]

At the Tsukiji Little Theater's opening year "Children's Day," Stuart Walker's "Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil" was performed. This play, a representative children's play of the Taisho era, describes a boy who hides a princess who is to be beheaded. Shima later revised it to have him hide a striker who is writing handbills.

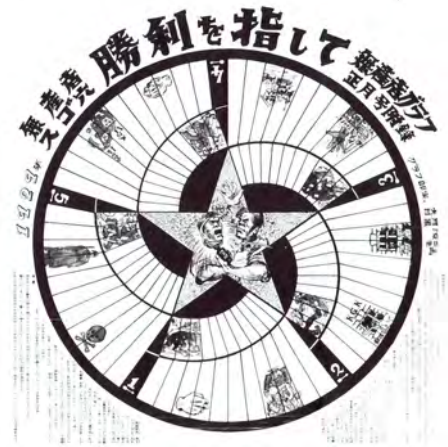
6-10

Workers' Snakes and Ladders: Get the Win (*Appendix: Workers' Graph New Year's Edition*)

1929

Uranishi [2006]

Each player starts from a different place and competes to move around the board and see who can reach the center first. Miss a turn to put up posters, move forward twice the die roll for general strikes and cooperative farming: everything is proletarian style. The spiral board pattern includes dense illustrations which are fun in themselves. The magazine *Workers' Graph* was founded in November 1928 by Yanase Masamu.



## Chapter 7: Documents Left to Us

In the Japan of the late Taisho and early Showa eras, many people boldly flung themselves into the proletarian culture movement out of a desire to contribute to social reform through arts, even as the law oppressed speech and thought.

Their creative works—not only artworks but also published material and handwritten documents—are, even as we see them today, “living” material full of a powerful life force rooted in activists’ awareness and desires.

We hope that, as these materials are revealed to a wider audience, they will offer opportunities to understand once again that within the left-wing movement, often shown in the inhuman terms of isms and ologies, the people committed to the movement put their heart and soul into it, fully alive.

This chapter displays various special materials not categorized elsewhere.

The first section introduces notable materials from the “Ikeda Hisao Holdings” now held by the Municipal Otaru Literature Museum. Mostly focused on the major oppression of the cultural movement in spring of 1932, the exhibition also includes particular focal points such as the Korean movement, proletarian science, the anti-religious movement and more.

The second section introduces notable material concerning the cultural movement from the holdings of the Hosei University Ohara Institute for Social Research. In keeping with the character of the Institute, the exhibit includes many materials on the cultural movement related to the central faction of the Workers’ Party. They include materials on little-known cultural organizations such as the National Art League and the Worker-Farmer Cultural League, demonstrating once again the breadth and depth of the cultural movement.

(Tatemoto Hiroyuki)

### Section 1: Municipal Otaru Literature Museum

7-1

Resist violent oppression with the people’s resistance! (On violent oppression of the Cultural League and member organizations)

1932

Otaru [0098]

A resistance text against the major oppression of the cultural movement in March and April 1932. The awareness of the time is clear: oppression does not mean failure but is the flip side of the ruling classes in crisis. Based on this awareness, this document calls for further struggle against capitalism and anti-movement culture.

7-2

Establishment of the Central Korean Council: Calling on All Branch Comrades

1932

Otaru [1966]

Material related to KOPF’s “2<sup>nd</sup> Revolutionary Struggle,” it establishes memorial days unique to the “Korean Council” such as August 29<sup>th</sup> (colonization of Korea) and September 1<sup>st</sup> (massacre after the Great Kanto Earthquake), developing its own form of “memorial day struggle.”

7-3

*Proletarian Science Institute Support Division News* No. 1

1932

Otaru [2210]

Material on the oppression of spring 1932. The Institute was one of the first organizations under KOPF's auspices to create a "support division," helping out those arrested and so on. This material goes a step further and discusses the struggle activities of the Institute as a whole.

7-4

*General Report on the Activities of the Japan Fighting Atheists' League: November 1931 to Present*  
1932

Otaru [2228]

A report on activities from KOPF's founding through the first half of 1932, the following year. While including League-specific activities such as struggles against "New Year's devotions" and "Festival of the Country's Founding," it also includes self-criticism on the grounds that the members involved did not last long (could not "build an organization after donations").



7-5

*KOPF Press Newsletter No. 1*  
1932

Otaru [2492]

This document describes KOPF's publishing activities immediately after the oppression of spring 1932. It complains about the KOPF press financial crisis, asks for "full subscription payment" for the journal at "agencies" where collection was relatively easy, and includes a questionnaire on agencies.

## Section 2: Ohara Institute for Social Research

7-6-a

*Art Movement: Korean Proletarian Art League Journal Founding Edition (Vol. 1 No. 1)*  
1927

Ohara [0019]

The Korean Proletarian Art League (KAPF) Tokyo Branch published this first edition of the movement magazine. Nakano Shigeharu (1902-1979) contributes a history of "Pro-Art" from its founding and a defense of its righteousness, in Chinese characters mixed with Hangul.



7-6-b

Nakano Shigeharu "On the Japan Proletarian Art League" (originally in Korean)

1927

Ohara [0019]

Nakano Shigeharu's contribution, mentioned in the description of 7-6-a. Notable for its emphasis on the diverse activities of Pro-Art, such as the Proletarian Theater and RA (visual art section).

Translated by Yoon Hakjun (1933-2003) into Japanese, this text was published in the Monthly No. 19 of the old edition (Chikuma Shobo, 1963) of the *Collected Works of Nakano Shigeharu*; later edited by Mizuno Naoki (1950- ) and Nakano himself, this complete Japanese version appeared in the latter *Collected Works of Nakano Shigeharu*, Monthly No. 28 (1980).

7-7

*New Literary Front News No. 2*  
1934

Ohara [0192]

Material related to the Worker-Farmer Artists' League, created when the Left-wing Artists' League and

Proletarian Writers' Club remerged in September 1934. This material is from the holdings of the economist Sakisaka Itsuro (1897-1985), who was close to the League, and is characteristic of the Ohara holdings.

7-8

Postcard addressed to Goto Teiji of the Ohara Institute for Social Research

1930

Ohara [0755]

A notice for a "mutual criticism conference" at the Kosei Theater. Goto Teiji (1896-1945), the addressee, was employed collecting material at the Ohara Institute; this kind of interchange with cultural organizations was instrumental in the assembly of the many culture movement-related materials held by the Ohara Institute.

7-9

*Worker-Farmer Literature* Founding Edition No. 1

1933

Ohara [0153]

After the old Workers' Art League was disbanded, Hayama Yoshiki (1894-1945) and others founded this Proletarian Writers' Club journal. Its frequent criticism of "critics" displays a different standpoint from the NAPF-KOPF group and the main thinkers of the old League (those in line with the theories of Aono Suekichi [1890-1961]).



7-10

Rough draft for regulations of the National Art League

1927

Ohara [2587]

A draft for regulations of the literary organization "National Art League," founded in November 1927 in order to support the Japan Worker-Farmer Party (a centrist workers' party). Materials so plainly discussing "artistic activities" in support of a political party are rare, making this valuable even within the cultural movement as a whole.

7-11

On a new cultural organization

1932

Ohara [2454]

Materials relating to the organization of the workers' party-affiliated cultural organization "Worker-Farmer Culture League," to be established before the formation of the joint workers' party the Socialist People's Party. Indicates the will of the "people's party" side to stand up against the "ultra" (Communist-affiliated) Cultural League (KOPF).

7-12

Letter to Kubota Masao, Avant-Garde Artists' League (explanation of the joint Pro-Art and Avant-Garde)

1927

Ohara [2621]

A letter describing the joint collaboration between Pro-Art and Avant-Garde and the regional movement policies of the time. While the Pro-Art side was enthusiastic about joining the organizations, the Avant-Garde side preferred to focus on "the common struggle" (linked to the following year's "Left-wing Literateurs' Federation").

Special Exhibition

Proletarian Art Matters Now:  
The Showa Era's Little-Known Mass Culture Movements,  
The pictorial record, English edition

Dates: July 6<sup>th</sup> (Sat.) to August 18<sup>th</sup> (Sun.), 2019  
Venue: Municipal Otaru Literature Museum  
Sponsors: Showa Prewar Proletarian Culture Movement Materials Research Group/  
Municipal Otaru Literature Museum  
Support: Hosei University Ohara Institute for Social Research  
Cooperation: Museum of Modern Japanese Literature/Sapporo University/  
Maruzen Yushodo, Ltd./Rikka Press, Ltd.  
Additional Support: Otaru Literature Hall

Events during the exhibition:

July 15<sup>th</sup> (Mon.) 13:30 to 14:30 Lecture (1)  
The Forerunner: Following after Takiji  
Ito Jun (proletarian literature scholar)  
July 20<sup>th</sup> (Sat.) 17:30 to 19:00 Film and lecture  
Proletarian Film: *The Funeral of Yamamoto Senji* and Five Others  
Adachi Gen (Lecturer, Futamatsu Gakusha University)  
August 10<sup>th</sup> (Sat.) 13:30 to 14:30 Lecture (2)  
Rediscovering the Showa Mass Culture Movement  
Murata Hirokazu (Associate Professor, Hokkaido University of Education)

Text of the exhibition:

Introduction

Murata Hirokazu/Ito Jun

Chapter 1 "New Worlds" Visible in a Single Flyer

Ito/Murata

Chapter 2 Kobayashi Takiji in the Media

Toriki Keita/Naitou Yositada/Kimura Masaki

Chapter 3 Arise, ye Masses! The Proletarian Theater Movement

Kamogawa Satomi/Masaki Yoshikatsu

Chapter 4 The Red Brush: The Proletarian Art Movement

Adachi Gen

Chapter 5 The Front Lines of the Movement: Fighting in the Provinces

Wada Takashi/Takeda Yuki/Ikeda Keigo/Amemiya Komei

Chapter 6 Children, the Fighters of the Future

Izutani Shun/Nakaya Izumi

Chapter 7 Documents Left to Us

Tatemoto Hiroyuki

Planning and Organization: Murata Hirokazu

Translation: Nadya Murray Kato

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