The International Migration of Kinema Junpo: Page-by-Page, Issue-by-Issue, Year-by-Year

I am lucky to have studied and taught at American universities that carry regular subscriptions to Kinema Junpo. I always kept an eye on that shelf, anxiously awaiting the latest issue. However, in another sense I always felt unlucky, because I could not rely on Kinema Junpo for my historical research. When I was a graduate student at the USC film school, Makino Mamoru had yet to attempt a reprint of Kinema Junpo (or its wartime counterpart Eiga Junpo). And not a single university in North America had issues from before the 1960s. Thus, it was barely possible to study Japanese film using Kinema Junpo, by far the most important single periodical in Japanese film culture. One had to travel all the way to Japan. Happily, this has completely changed through the efforts of publishers like Bunsei Shoin.

No matter my research topic, no matter the period, I have always made Kinema Junpo my diving board for plunges into the archive. At first, I was frustrated at the lack of indexes and other search tools for Japanese cinema. For English-language publications we have enjoyed the books of Anthony Slide and the remarkable International Index to Film Periodicals, although they should put “international” in scare quotes, because it only included European languages. Until fairly recently, even the Diet Library’s Zasshi kijii soshun was unhelpful for researching film periodicals. Needless to say, this was frustrating, and made me feel very envious of my fellow students and scholars specializing in Hollywood and European cinema.

However, over the years I gradually changed my mind and lost my sense of jealousy. With no indexes, I was forced to move through the breadth of Kinema Junpo, page by page, issue by issue, year by year. Of course, I had a narrow topic in mind; however, my attention naturally stayed as I flipped through the pages. I found fascinating items in every single issue—articles, interviews, zadanki, photographs and manga, film reviews, books reviews...each seemed to demand my attention and suggest countless avenues for new research inquiries. There is no better evidence than Kinema Junpo for the incomparable richness of Japanese film culture.

So I came to love the lack of indexes. And likewise I have come to perversely mourn the age of databases. Soon, I suspect that my students may simply enter search terms in a computer and hunt down the text they need through Google Book or some other online collection. This is to say, thanks to all these technological advances in interfacing with the archive, I fear they will never discover the joys of browsing through Kinema Junpo. Some students even prefer to read their magazine articles on the computer screen, rather than venturing into the dark, dusty corners of the library stacks. No doubt it will speed their research up; however, how narrow will their view of Japanese cinema become. I learned so much from my long sessions with Kinema Junpo. By indulging in side-tracks and dead-ends, Kinema Junpo taught me countless new perspectives, and it pointed me to little-known regions that are as (seemingly) minor as they are (patently) revelatory. Kinema Junpo is my textbook for Japanese cinema study.

The digital research tools are one major change since I began studying Japanese cinema, but another has to do with paper publishing. This is, perhaps, even more important than the digital revolution. As a student, I had to travel to Japan to find just about any Japanese film publication. American libraries mostly collected Japanese works on literature, history and the social sciences. Film was dismissed as popular culture, so the books on Japanese film at major Asian libraries like Harvard, Michigan, Columbia and Yale amounted to only a few shelves’ worth of books.

Happily, when the libraries recognized this gap in their collections, reprints of old film books and magazines flourished. Unlike many national cinemas of the world, many of the core publications for prewar Japanese film are readily available in beautiful reprints (and supplemented by wonderful kasettsu). Upon becoming a professor, I worked hard with my librarians to build up the University of Michigan collection. A complete run of Kinema Junpo was naturally one of our goals. We started a subscription when I arrived. Then the reprint of the first few years came out. Then we pieced together the entire postwar with the help of furuhonya-san. However, the prewar section from the end of the preprint to the beginning of Eiga Junpo was our stumbling block. Apparently, it was a stumbling block for publishers, as well, because the shift to color and the addition of fliers was too expensive to reproduce.

Now we have digital technologies coming to our rescue again. Aside from increasingly inexpensive color printing, the phenomenon of print-to-order has offered a new economic model for publishers. Publishers do not have to print and store massive and costly paper sets. Likewise, individualists who only want certain issues or limited runs can order as many or as few issues as they wish. Thanks to the ingenuity of publishers like Bunsei Shoin, we now have easy access to the Kinema Junpo from one of the most fascinating and transformative eras in Japanese film. Libraries around the world will be able to complete full runs of Kinema Junpo, enabling the magazine to spread around the far reaches of the Earth. And I will have my students browse every issue, time travelling through the breadth of Japanese film history through its pages. Kinema Junpo, the paper of record for Japanese film, is more than our textbook. It is the heart of the archive for Japanese film studies.
国境をこえて移動するキネマ旬報：その1ページ1ページ、1号1号、そして1年1年が

私は運が良い。「キネマ旬報」を定期購読するアメリカの大学で研究し、教授をとった。最終号を持ってヤキモキしながら、「キネマ旬報」がある情報をいつも気にしていた。

しかし、別の角度からすれば、運にずれられてはいなかったことも
常に感じていた。そのため、歴史を読むという機会に、「キネマ旬報」を
読むことが出来なかったからだ。

私が南カリフォルニア大学
映画学科の大学院生だった頃には、映画を学ぶ機会はなかった。
なぜなら、「キネマ旬報」を読むのは、映画を学ぶ機会がなかったからだ。

それから、北アメリカの大学も、1960年代より前に発行されたキ
ネマ旬報を読まなかった。だから、「キネマ旬報」を使って日本
映画を研究することには、ほとんど不可能だった。「キネマ旬報」は、
日本の映画文化において役立つ重要な映画雑誌であるのに、そ
の分野には、ぼくはその日本映画を知り込んでいたことがなかった。
けれどもそんなあること、文芸書のようないくつかの努力で、日本の映
画を知り込んでいくことが出来ていた。

私は、どんな映画に興味が集まるか、どの時代を観るか、読者や
その知識を広げるための目録も他の研究者たちの調査ツ
ールを必要に感じていたから、最初に、日本の映画を読むための目録や他の調査ツ
ールも必要に感じていたから、1ページ1ページ、1号1号、そして1年1年が

私は、どんな映画に興味が集まるか、どの時代を観るか、読者や
その知識を広げるための目録も他の調査ツ
ールも必要に感じていたから、1ページ1ページ、1号1号、そして1年1年が

1ページ1ページ、1号1号、そして1年1年が

1ページ1ページ、1号1号、そして1年1年が