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The Background, 1822–1918

THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PRESS IN JAPAN, CHINA AND KOREA, 1822–1918

In Somerset Maugham’s short story, *The Outstation* (1926), Warburton, a British administrator in an outlying district of Malaysia, receives his copies of *The Times* by sea mail, three or four month’s worth at a time:

> It gave him the illusion of living at home. Every Monday morning he read the Monday *Times* of six weeks back, and so went through the week. On Sunday he read the *Observer*. Like his habit of dressing for dinner it was a tie to civilization.¹

Fiction dwelling on the blinkered isolation of the British in East Asia has occupied a distinct niche since the 1900s, but Maugham may have been stretching a point in *The Outstation*.² By the 1920s, when Maugham was preoccupied with writing on the British in Asia, even the most isolated of Malaya’s settlers subscribed to one or more local English-language newspapers, such as the *Malay Mail*, and usually only caught up with *The Times* when they visited their club in town.

English-language newspapers have been published in Asia since the eighteenth century. In East Asia, with the exception of enclaves such as Macao, the roots of the English-language press lie in the treaty ports, beginning in Canton in 1827 and in Nagasaki in 1861.³ Following the end of extraterritoriality in Japan in 1899, some English-language newspapers moved to the capital, but most English-language newspapers in China continued to enjoy the protection of extraterritoriality and this certainly contributed to their comparative outspokenness. Korea’s independent, commercial English-language press put up a brief struggle in Seoul from the 1890s until 1911, when a portfolio of semi-official English- Japanese- and Korean-language newspapers was established.⁴

Japan

The first newspaper in Japan, the foreign-owned *Nagasaki Shipping List and Advertiser*, was founded by a British printer and auctioneer, A.W. Hansard, in June 1861 and was, like most early treaty port newspapers, a shipping list with news items and advertising. During the next forty

* As a supplement to what follows, see the chronological tables of the English-language press in Japan, China and Korea in Appendices 7, 8 and 9.
years, over forty foreign-language newspapers and over thirty foreign-language periodicals and magazines appeared in Japan. Of these, among the best managed and most professionally written were the Japan Mail, owned and edited by Captain Francis Brinkley (1841–1912), the Tokio Times, owned and run by E.H. House from 1877 to 1880, and the Japan Times, founded in March 1897 and still going strong, all of them subsidized by the Japanese government. There were also two independent foreign-owned newspapers, the Japan Advertiser, established by a Scots-born American, Robert Meiklejohn, in 1891 and owned and run from 1908 to 1940 by an American, B.W. Fleisher, and his son Wilfrid, and the Japan Chronicle of Kōbe, founded in 1891 by a Briton, Robert Young, and run by his descendants and their successors until its sale to the Japan Times in December 1940, although it continued to publish a Kōbe edition under its own name until the end of January 1942.

There were six English-language newspapers in business in Yokohama, Nagasaki, Kōbe and Tokyo in 1918. These included the Japan Gazette (edited by J.R. Black from October 1867 to 1880 and by Douglas Adams from 1906 to 1923), the Rising Sun and Nagasaki Express, edited by W.L. Lewis, and the Japan Times & Mail, an amalgamation of the Japan Times and Brinkley’s old newspaper. Besides these three, the Japan Advertiser had moved to Tokyo by 1918, and both the Japan Chronicle and the Kobe Herald, founded and run by Alfred W. Curtis from 1888 until 1926, were established in Kōbe. In 1926, the Kobe Herald was acquired by Douglas M. Young, manager of the Far Eastern Advertising Agency (Toyo Kokoku) of Kōbe and a distant cousin of Robert Young of the Japan Chronicle. Either Douglas M. Young or Morgan Young, since November 1922 editor of the Chronicle, ran the Kobe Herald until 1934. In June 1936, Douglas M. Young was listed as the owner of the Kobe Herald and Osaka Gazette, presumably having amalgamated it with the Osaka Gazette. By 1939, only a single issue of the Kobe Herald was being printed, annually, ‘retaining for its owners the right to keep its name’.

The Japan Times, Japan Advertiser and Japan Chronicle all published daily and weekly editions. The Japan Advertiser Weekly changed its title to the Trans-Pacific in September 1919. The Trans-Pacific continued to be published until October 1940 when it was acquired by the Japan Times Weekly edition, whose masthead then changed to the Japan Times Weekly & Trans-Pacific until June 1942, then the Japan Times Weekly until January 1943, when it became the Nippon Times Weekly.

Besides these six newspapers, three English-language periodicals are worth noting for their connections to the English-language press. The Far East, a fortnightly established by John N. Penlington in March 1912, was published in Tokyo until the 1923 earthquake. Zumoto Motosada, founder of the Japan Times and a noted journalist and English-language publicist, founded the weekly Herald of Asia in March 1916 and edited it until the earthquake also put it out of business, but revived it from September 1937 until December 1938. Finally, in November 1938, an American, W.R. Wills, founded Japan News-Week in Tokyo and ran it