

# Status quo of the Wundt Collection in Japan

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## Abstract

The history of how German psychologist Wilhelm Wundt's personal collection of about 3,100 books and 10,000 reprints, including pamphlets and journals, ended up in Japan is revealed. The Wundt Collection is located at Tohoku University's Main Library in Sendai. Tanenari Chiba, an associate professor of Kyoto Imperial University in Japan, discovered and then purchased the Collection from a bookstore in Leipzig while furthering his psychology studies at Leipzig University from 1921 to 1922. Chiba's reasons for wanting to acquire the Collection for Japan, as well as his relationship with the Institute of Psychology at Leipzig University, are discussed.

*Keywords:* Wilhelm Wundt, the Wundt Collection, Tanenari Chiba, Japan.

## THE STORY OF THE WUNDT COLLECTION

Most of the world is unaware that many of the books, journals, and reprints originally belonging to German psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) are retained in Japan. The so-called Wundt Collection (Wundt *bunko*) can be found in the Main Library at Tohoku University in Sendai, which lies ca. 350 kilometers north of Tokyo. From happenstance to perseverance to ownership, there is a story behind how a Japanese university came to acquire a German collection.

Beginning in 1921, Tanenari Chiba (1884-1972), an associate professor of Kyoto Imperial University, traveled abroad for 2 years to further his psychology education in Germany and France. As Wundt had passed away by this time, Chiba studied under Professor Felix Krueger (1874-1948), who took over as director when Wundt retired from Leipzig University's Institute of Psychology. For the first half of Chiba's stay abroad, he remained mainly in Leipzig where he

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chanced upon the Wundt Collection, which was offered for sale at a bookstore named Lorenz or Lorentz (exact spelling unclear from Chiba's writing in Japanese). Prompted by Mr. Wiegand, the bookstore owner, Chiba decided to buy the extensive Collection and then worked to find funds for the purchase.

As to his reasons for wanting such a Collection, it is important to understand that, at that time in Japan, the status of Japanese schools of higher education was changing. By the end of nineteenth century, only two universities existed in Japan but that changed when a new law was enacted in 1918, which allowed private schools to be officially accredited a university or a college. Thus began a period of expansion for recognized institutions of higher learning in Japan. Just after Chiba's arrival in Germany, he was nominated as full professor of psychology in the Faculty of Law and Literature at Tohoku Imperial University (renamed Tohoku University in 1947), a position he would fulfill upon his return. Though other departments at Tohoku Imperial University were founded in 1907, psychology department was not founded until 1922 by Chiba. The university was the third national university established after Tokyo (founded in 1877) and Kyoto (founded in 1897) Imperial universities.

It should be noted that a Japanese professor at a college in Kyoto had previously asked Chiba to procure the Collection for his department (Chiba, 1932) but once Chiba knew he would be founding his own department, he recognized that bringing the Wundt Collection to his university would afford it a special feature that the more established institutions lacked (Chiba, 1972). As such, he set to negotiating both a budget with his university and a promise from the bookstore owner to make certain the Collection would not be sold to any other institution. The negotiations played out over a few years, which included shipping the Collection to Japan. Chiba described the negotiation process with handmade illustrations in a notebook made of Japanese paper called *daifukucho* (Chiba, 1932; for a part of the illustration, see also Takasuna, 2001, p. 253). Chiba was further challenged in this exchange because his time in Leipzig was limited by his commitments to visit other institutes in Germany as well as in France. In May 1922, he moved from Leipzig to Königsberg (now Kaliningrad), to Berlin and, finally, in November he traveled to Paris after which he returned to Japan. Whether he wanted to or not, Chiba was obliged to follow through with his original itinerary because, during that time, Japanese professors abroad were paid with public money and so were expected to visit many institutes to gain as much information as possible.

When the negotiation finally ended, it was the Saito Foundation, a local Japanese foundation that mainly provided funds to researchers living in the northeast (*Tohoku*) area of Japan, which solely contributed the funds. Chiba (1932) wrote that the price of the Collection was «about 20,000 yen» but recent research (Mizoguchi, 2006) points to the Saito Foundation paying 25,000 yen. That translates to more than 250,000 U.S. dollars in today's currency. If not for the generosity of this private donor, Chiba's university could not have afforded to buy the Collection.

As a consequence of Chiba's peripatetic studies, he returned to Japan without knowing if the Collection had successfully arrived at Sendai, as demonstrated by a letter he wrote once he returned home. In it he refused Mr. Wiegand's excessive demands for payment, which was not promised at the original contract (Chiba, 1932).

## CONTENTS OF THE COLLECTION

Presently, there is no electronic catalogue of the Collection. According to the library catalogue of the 1920s, the original Collection consisted of 6,762 books (including already-bound journals) and 9,098 reprints (including private leaflets). However, the actual number of books comprised around 3,100 (Takahashi, 1983), about half the nominal number, since Japanese librarians at that time apparently counted a bound volume or leaflet as one book. Among the 3,100 books, Takahashi (1983) classified around 1,700 books into the «philosophy» section, including 527 books on psychology (Takahashi, 1983). Of the psychology books, a relatively large number were classified under «developmental psychology», including books written by Adolph Bastian (1826-1905) and Théodule Ribot (1839-1916).

Today, most of the books and reprints remain well preserved but some books seem to be missing. This may be partly blamed on the Collection having been spread over several campuses. For example, the entire series of *Graefe's Archiv für Ophthalmologie* (65 volumes), presently in the Collection at the Main Library, was previously housed at the Medical School on a different campus. It may also be that some of the books located in the psychology department were loosely maintained before being grouped with the rest of the Collection in the Main Library (long-time psychology professors of Tohoku University, personal communication). As of 1 December 1999, the Collection extended about 216 linear meters; however, since the previous research has been conducted (Takasuna, 2001), the Collection's current location has shifted within the Main Library.

As told in his autobiography (Chiba, 1972), Chiba donated many books related to the field of *Völkerpsychologie* (cultural psychology), along with miscellaneous other books from the Collection, to the Institute of Psychology at Leipzig University at the request of Professor Felix Krueger. Purchased at the expense of the Japanese fund, these books were apparently destroyed during World War II (Bringmann & Ungerer, 1980). That the Collection in Japan has almost no first edition books written by Wundt himself has led to an assumption that these special books were also left behind in Leipzig and eventually burned (Takahashi, personal communication). The Wundt Collection in Japan was more fortunate in escaping destruction from bomber raids during WWII, particularly in 1945, part of Tohoku Imperial University was destroyed.

In a TV program of «History of Psychology» of the University of the Air (*Hosodaigaku*), a Japanese university that corresponds to the Open University in Britain, one can see the recent condition of the Collection (broadcast from 2005 to 2009).

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JAPAN AND GERMANY

The story of the negotiation and purchase of the Wundt Collection would not be complete without mentioning the tragic history behind its sale. The Wundt family was forced to sell the Collection due to Germany's enormous inflation after World War I. Chiba visited Ms. Eleonore Wundt, the only daughter of Wilhelm Wundt, in Grossbothen on 2 May 1922, after

he decided to purchase the Collection (Chiba, 1932), ostensibly to inform her of the purchase and thank her. Expressing his respect of German psychology, Chiba (1972) wrote that when he was nominated to be a research student abroad in September 1920, «it was just after WWI, and the prevailing atmosphere was such that there seemed to be nothing to learn in a country like Germany, which had lost the war» and «most of the students at that time went to the United States.» But he «assumed that such a situation would not discourage the German folks» so he «decided to study in Germany.» (p. 190)

Unlike the U.S. and other European countries, Wundt was less directly influential in the psychology field in Japan. Although the name Wilhelm Wundt was known to all, most of the modern or «new» psychology was virtually imported from the students studying abroad in the U.S. or through books written in English. The Japanese word for psychology was also coined in the process of translating «mental philosophy» into Japanese (for the general history of Japanese psychology, see Takasuna, 2006). Despite that there were a number of Japanese philosophers and psychologists who visited Leipzig to sit in on Wundt's lectures, apparently only one, Umaji Kaneko (1870-1937), obtained a degree there. In 1903, Kaneko was awarded a Ph.D. in moral philosophy. However, as his main interest lay in literature and philosophy, his role in developing Japanese psychology was limited. After returning from Germany, he lectured on psychology only because a substitute was needed to replace a deceased professor, Taizo Nakajima (1866-1919). Nakajima had earned a Ph.D. in psychology at Cornell University in 1909 and likely would have been more influential to modern psychology in Japan had he lived longer.

Only a few of Wundt's works were translated into Japanese. Nakajima translated *Grundriss der Psychologie* (Outlines of Psychology, a first edition, appeared in 1896) into Japanese in 1898, seemingly from its German original. *Lectures on mind of man and animal* (second edition appeared in 1892) was double-translated into Japanese in 1902 from the English translation made in 1894. Thus, anyone assuming Chiba purchased the Wundt Collection simply because he admired Wundt would be missing the point. It seems clear that Chiba wanted for himself and his students to have an access to a broader scope of European literature on psychology and philosophy, including Wundt's own works.

For donating some of the Collection's books to the Institute of Psychology in Leipzig, Krueger expressed his gratitude to Chiba by according a warm welcome to all Japanese visitors thereafter. Katsuji Iwai (1886-1937) and Ichiro Fukutomi (1891-1946) were among those welcomed psychologists. Both stayed in Leipzig and published their research in a German journal edited by Krueger (Fukutomi, 1938; Iwai & Rüssel, 1938). Although Krueger had an impact on Japanese psychologists for a period of time, it is surprising that with the number of Japanese psychologists who interacted with Krueger, the name Krueger and his term, *Ganzheitspsychologie*, have been lost in Japan's current history of psychology these 60-plus years later (Takasuna & Sato, 2008). Instead, Gestalt psychology enormously impacted Japanese psychology prior to and during the war and, subsequently, transitioned from being purely scientific research to being applied to the Japanese educational system (Takasuna & Sato, 2008).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

More than 80 years have passed since the Wundt Collection made its permanent home in Japan, and there are still questions yet to be answered. For example, despite that the Collection lacks any correspondence or personal letters, the relationship between Wundt and the authors who sent their reprints to him can still be analyzed. While many of the books in which the handwriting of Wundt remains, there are also some books that Wundt apparently never read. Now that access to the Collection has improved with the introduction of an electronic catalogue, I invite other researchers to take advantage of this treasure trove in near future.

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