

## Assessing the Iwanami Shoten Cases of 1940 and 2005: Intellectuals, Publishers and Responsibility in Modern Japan

*Freitag, 27. September 2024 09:45 (45 Minuten)*

From the late nineteenth century, Japanese publishers played a major role in making a wide variety of literature and scholarship available to a growing readership against the backdrop of modernization. As vehicles of ideas and mediators in debates, publishers struggled to gain respect amidst traditional suspicion of the book trade as a (literally and figuratively) dirty enterprise; simultaneously, they were expected to uphold proper social values, and were held responsible for the writers and concepts they put into circulation. This led to intense scrutiny as social critics and activists sought to punish publishers and halt the publication of works with which they disagreed.

This paper considers two legal cases, the first a criminal case in 1940 against the leading historian Tsuda Sōkichi, and the second a civil suit in 2005 against the Nobel Prize-winning author Ōe Kenzaburō. Despite a gap of over sixty years, the two cases have much in common: they involved not extreme material by cranks, but works by prominent intellectuals that proved controversial outside of the intellectual community proper, and both involved the same publisher, Iwanami Shoten, which was dragged into court alongside the writers. Because Iwanami was (and remains) Japan's premier high-brow publisher, and long represented the Japanese intellectual establishment, it had long been targeted by reactionary forces, which seized any chance to invoke legal sanction against the publisher as a means of discrediting progressives. An analysis of these two cases sheds light on changes and continuities in thinking regarding the responsibility of publishers in Japan.

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