The Development of Western Business History Research in Japan: With Reference to the Simultaneity with Research in Western Countries

Ayumu Banzawa, Makiko Hino, and Hiroko Sadatō

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to investigate the development of Japanese research on Western business history [Seiyō-keiei-shigaku] over the past 50 years.

Over the past few decades, a considerable number of surveys have examined the development of business history research around the world. While the literature is relatively scant, several articles have been devoted to the survey of Japanese business history research, as well.¹

However, in particular, Japanese observations of Western business history studies appear to be lacking. Kudō Akira discussed the development of Japanese business history research and referred to Western business history research conducted in Japan.² It is especially noteworthy that Japanese research on Western business history has been highly regarded by Kudō, one of the leading economic and business historians

---


². Ibid.
in Japan. He opines that Japanese research on foreign business history has been “flourishing” and “vigorous”: “One of the characteristic features of the study of business history in Japan is vigorous research on foreign business history.”

He further identifies the principal subjects as Western countries, namely the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. The Japanese monographs that Kudō mentions certainly address the unique achievement of those countries’ business histories. In addition, some faculties of economics or business administration at Japanese universities have created chairs of foreign business history.

Our question, however, is whether research on Western business history is still “flourishing” and “vigorous” in Japan. In response, we must refute the statement that Western business history research in Japan is in full vigor—a conclusion supported by a great deal of evidence.

Since the turn of the century, many historiography scholars in Japan have argued over the question of the decline of Japanese interest in Western economic history. Odanaka Naoki, for example, pointed out that the significance of Western economic history research in Japan began to fade after the 1980s as the concept that modernization equals Westernization lost traction in Japanese society. This decline led to a concomitant decline in the research on Western history, as the Western experience was no longer seen as a good example for Japanese society.

Odanaka has called this decline in the Western model’s intellectual influence on Japanese society as “the dusk” of historical thought. This historical Western model-focused view is represented by the so-called “Ōtsuka Historical School” [Ōtsuka-shigaku] in reference to Ōtsuka Hisao and his colleagues and pupils, who developed Comparative Economic History [Hikaku-keizai-shi-gaku]. Ōtsuka and his school have been criticized on several grounds. First, they had advantages in appealing to Japanese postwar intellectuals due not only to their modernism (and a kind of “orientalism”) but also to a dichotomy in Western modern history. Second, they also benefitted from

3. Ibid.
a lack of the historical positivism that was characteristic of most Japanese historians focusing on the West until the third quarter of the 20th century. The question we must now consider is whether Japanese historians of Western economics have dwindled and lost their relevance. These critics of Ōtsuka and his followers and the new generation of the Ōtsuka Historical School, who are trying to revive Ōtsuka’s ideas, have been conducting new research based on updated research trends and the original historical records of Western countries; however, they are not always satisfied with their fame. The intellectual influence of the Ōtsuka Historical School on the public has faded. This decline partly reflects a waning interest in economic history on a global scale, which has roots in the fall of Marxism, the estrangement of the economic perspective from historical studies, and the historical perspective’s exclusion from modern economics. In addition, we must also consider the possibility of a Japanese-specific reason for this situation. In addition to Odanaka’s paper(s), many other articles have also argued for a link among some turning points of Japanese contemporary history: the end of “catching up” to the West, the end of the high-growth period, the decline of the postwar democracy cliché, and so forth.

Needless to say, business history studies have been closely related to economic history studies from the beginning. Kudō also pointed out the economic–historical background behind the changes in focus of Western business history studies in Japan: the late-developer perspective in the 1960s, the perspective of comparison after the 1970s, and the more explicit and rigorous comparisons conducted in the present. Especially in Japan, generally speaking, the boundary between economic history studies and


9. One of the authors of this article has reflected on the transition of styles seen in Western history research in postwar Japan from a kind of elitism to a popular and mass activity—a change attributed to economic growth or, in other words, a change from a “historical research by Japanese delegates and/or snobs who were affected by the Western society” to “historical research by the users of marked-down air tickets.” See Ayumu Banzawa, “Atogaki” [Afterword], in Doitsu-kogyōka ni okeru tetsudōgyō [Railroads in German industrialization; A re-examination of the economic development in the nineteenth-century Germany], (Tokyo: Yuhikaku Publishing, 2006), 353–357.

business history studies is not as rigid as in some Western countries, and the scholars of Western business history often overlap with those of Western economic history. In fact, all the authors of Western business history books that Kudō mentions are members of the Japan Socio-Economic History Society; a number of them also belonged to the Ōtsuka School.

Western business history research in Japan may share a common problem with those in Western economic history studies. The considerable membership of the Business History Society of Japan [Keiei-shi-gakkai] overlaps with that of the Socio-Economic History Society of Japan [Shakai-keizai-shi-gakkai]. The differences between economic history and business history as academic disciplines in Japan are not as large as those in the United States. However, only a few studies have examined the recent situation of Western business history studies in Japan, and no study has so far attempted to examine the similarities and/or differences in the decline of Western economic history.

This paper investigates the development of Western business history in Japan. First, we examine studies on Western business history published in a representative journal in Japan. An analysis of 179 papers published from 1966 to 2010 offers a key to understanding the real situation and trends in the research field, providing a glimpse into the background of the decline in Japanese studies on Western history: globalization. Therefore, we focus on the international simultaneity of studies: Japanese awareness of business history researchers’ works in Western journals, similarities and time lag of their research interests, correlation of research objects, and so forth. Statistical observations on the simultaneity of business history make it evident that the correlation of research interests between studies in individual Western countries and Japanese studies on Western business history also declined after the 1980s despite advances in international communications. This suggests that globalization can lead to waning academic interest in foreign history.


There is no convenient database covering all literature on Western

---

11. For example, about 98% of all members of the board of trustees and committees in the Business History Society of Japan [Keiei-shi-gakkai] (11.2015–12.31.2015) are also members of the Socio-Economic History Society of Japan [Shakai-keizaishi-gakkai].
business history in Japan. Listing published writings in Japan by compiling several bibliographies would make it easy to conduct a statistical comparison between works in Japan and works in the West. However, to analyze growth patterns, we use the writings published in a representative journal in the discipline, The *Japanese Business History Review* [Keiei-shi-gaku], between 1966 and 2010. The journal is published by the Business History Society of Japan, the discipline’s representative academic organization in Japan, and was first issued in 1966, with quarterly publication commencing in 1981. Each issue contains articles, including around two or three refereed papers, research notes, reviews of research trends, and so forth. We have identified the works on Western history from this set of articles.

A count of the journal’s publications on Western business shows that a total of 179 relevant articles were published in the examined period. These papers comprise the main sample set that we used to draw our observations and conclusions.

1. Trends of growth and decline

First, we observe trends in the number of articles published, which are summarized in Graph 1.

As the graph indicates, the journal published an increasing number of articles on Western business history from the latter half of the 1960s (the first issue) through the end of the 1970s, with the figure peaking in the mid-1970s. In the first half of the 1980s, the number of articles gradually decreased: compared with 71 papers published between 1966 and 1979, the number fell to 54 in the 1980s. This decline continued through the 1990s, dropping to 35 papers, and the 2000s, when only 19 papers were published. These numbers included special reviews on Western business history research in Japan. From 1988 to 1998, the editorial board ran annual reviews of research trends in both Japanese and Western business history studies. After the journal stopped running these yearly reviews, the number

---

of articles on Western history tumbled to its lowest point in the 2000s.

The proportion of papers on Western business history relative to all papers published exhibited a more rapid dip in the first half of the 1980s, when the journal changed to a quarterly publication. According to a count by Kitabayashi Masashi, the proportion of the articles on foreign history was about 55% from 1966 to 1980, when the journal was published three times a year. The ratio changed between 1981 and 2005, measured in five-year intervals: it was 41% in 1981 and rose to 44% in 1986, before falling to 32%, 30%, and 28% in the ensuing intervals, respectively.

It should also be noted here that the frequency of publication in the journal among authors was steady during the whole period. The number of articles published by each author held constant as follows: 1.22 (1966–74), 1.26 (1975–84), 1.40 (1985–94), and 1.22 (1995–2010). These near-constant figures mean that, on average, no author(s) had a monopoly on publication in the journal, which indicates the presence of a relatively strict referee system.

Thus, there has been obvious growth and decline in the number of

articles on Western business history. The journal’s number of articles in the discipline returned to its initial level numbers and then fell to the lowest level—about 1 to 2 articles per year—where it has remained through the end of the 2000s. We thus start our discussion based on the observation of the recent decline in Western business history research, as evident in publication trends in the discipline’s representative journal.

2. Editors’ comments about the trend

The abovementioned results prompt an inquiry into the reason behind this decline in the research field in Japan after the end of the 1970s. The turns of the 1970s and 1980s can be seen as marking epochs. What do these transitions mean in the development of Western business history studies in Japan?

Some contemporary mentions of this trend merit discussion in an attempt to answer this question. An “Editorial afterword” (Henshū-kōki) from the editorial board of the Japanese Business History Review was published at the end of every journal issue from vol. 13-3 in 1979, a practice started by the then newly appointed chief editor, Morikawa Hidemasa. Some of these editorial notes offer insight as to how Japanese scholars explained the trend as it unfolded.

In general, the editors sought a “balance” of research fields (articles on Japan and Western countries) but did not always accomplish that goal in every issue—especially after the middle of the 1980s. The editors claimed that it was regrettable that no papers on foreign history were published in a particular issue. It did not, however, simply mean a decrease in contributions about Western countries, as can be seen in the following quotation from Sugiyama Kazuo’s 1984 editorial afterword: “This bias [the inclination toward Japanese studies in the copy] can be corrected in the long run, so I do not find it worth worrying about. However, it is true that the shortage of the stock of contributions is restricting the range of our editorial policy.”

In fact, an anonymous editor in 1983 felt even “a little

---


sorry to say that there [was] no paper on Japanese business history in this copy.”\(^{17}\) As contributions on Western business history fell, in 1995, Nagae Masao called readers’ special attention to the point that the bias of the copy’s contents “did not mean that there had been no contribution about Western business history.”\(^{18}\) This contrasts with the situation from 1966–1986 (Vol. 1–20 of the *Japanese Business History Review*), when there were 56 papers on Japanese business history and 64 papers on foreign business history (plus six other papers) among the total of 126 articles.\(^{19}\)

When serving as editors of the *Japanese Business History Review*, two distinguished Japanese economic and business historians of Western countries mentioned the decline of their own research field and reflected on the background of the journal’s trends in the 1980s.

In 1989, after pointing out the publication trends in the journal, Kaku Sachio said, “It is perhaps natural, in a sense, that many papers are written on the history of the writer’s own country. However, increased frequency of traffic with foreign countries, the noticeable increase of research on foreign countries aiming particularly at their relations with Japan and, even in those types of cases, the waning trends in the number of young Japanese researchers of foreign countries may illustrate that the state of research on foreign countries in our organization has reached a turning point.”\(^{20}\) Kaku pointed to the growing use of primary historical materials (original historical data) in studies on foreign countries. While an increase in research is naturally desirable, a narrowing research range as the result of “high standardization” of research is a problem if it becomes more difficult for researchers to exchange views and opinions internationally.\(^{21}\)

Abe Etsuo discussed the “ironic” situation: the more active the international interchange among scholars becomes, the less significant Western history research is for Japanese scholars. This leads to an increase in the relative importance of research on Japanese history. As Abe said in a 1991 article, “It is actually burdensome for us to read a paper on a foreign country at a conference in that same country” because of “the linguistic


\(^{18}\) Ibid., 115

\(^{19}\) Shiomi, “Henshū-kōki” [Editorial afterword], 72.


\(^{21}\) Ibid.
and/or geographical handicaps that Japanese researchers have.” Abe’s aforementioned survey of Japanese works on foreign countries criticized the situation faced by Japanese researchers of European (and Western) history, who have been granted access to the original historical data and offered many opportunities for interaction with foreign scholars following the rapid economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s. This was similar to the situation faced by their American counterparts, who were in danger of losing their own perspectives and jeopardizing the possibility of making significant contributions in their own way. The “Japanese vision and approach to foreign history should therefore prove valuable.” Repeating these concerns about the research field, in 1991, Abe worried that Japanese research on Western business history was destined to “perish.”

While the number of contributions increased in general, the proportion of Western business history relative to all contributions continued to decrease in the 2000s. The “Editorial Afterwords” published in 2004 by Hori Ichirō first pointed out this tendency. In 2008, Kitabayashi Masashi pointed out the very small share of foreign history studies (18%) and observed the development of the numbers of the articles on foreign business history. By his count, the proportion of articles on foreign history decreased annually from 1981, when the journal became a quarterly publication, to 2005, at rates of 41%, 44%, 32%, 30%, and 28% for the respective five-year intervals. From 1966 to 1980, when the journal was published three times a year, the ratio was 55%. Still, Kitabayashi disagrees that foreign business history studies in Japan were faltering, pointing out that the number of articles on foreign history maintained “a level”: 16, 15, 10, 13, and 15 papers. The “decline of the relative importance of

foreign business history studies in Japan was due to the rapid growth of the articles on Japanese business history.” However, that is not a satisfactory conclusion, as Kitabayashi hoped to increase the number of contributions on Western history at the same time. Miyazaki Shinji pointed out that there were only a few contributions on “foreign and Western business history,” despite the effects of globalization and the worldwide business problems that started with American enterprises. Two Asian business historians serving as editors of the journal in 2010 have expressed regret about the decline of contributions on foreign history.

Both the number and the significance of papers on Western business history in Japan seemed to be under fire. Sunaga Kinsaburō’s opinions on the papers by Japanese researchers from the editorial board explain the reasons for the abolition of the Annual Report of the Works of Japanese Business Historians [Nenkan-kaiko] in the journal. According to the introduction to the editorial board’s discussion about the journal’s repeal of fixed review articles, an editor had argued that reviews of works on foreign business history by foreign historians in their own countries were more useful than those conducted by Japanese historians. In 2013, Iida Takashi stressed the need for a Japanese researcher on Western history to publish research in an international language in order to avoid making works in Japanese “monologues” that could not be considered by colleagues in the Western home of historical research.

As the above discussion indicates, commentators who analyzed the causes of the downward trend and those who lacked optimism about the future of Western business history studies in Japan have shared many points in common. For example, they point out the changes in the field’s circumstances after the era of Japan’s rapid economic growth.

30. Ibid.
data in foreign countries as a danger to their own research. They are also conscious of their geographical and linguistic handicaps as well as international isolation—an awareness that is highly suggestive to us.

However, such a bird’s-eye view does not provide a direct answer to the above questions about the decline of contributions. It is necessary to examine the content of the papers themselves more closely.

3. **Classifying paper content**

As classifying the subjects of Western business history papers in the journal may be an informative endeavor, we have attempted to classify paper research subjects according to the 1977 classification of economic history research by N. B. Harte.\(^\text{35}\) This classification was developed in order to examine publication trends in economic and social history research in Great Britain and Ireland. Harte divided the list of publications into 14 categories: (1) original documents; (2) agriculture and agrarian society; (3) industry and internal trade; (4) overseas trade and overseas relations; (5) transport and communications; (6) money, banking, and finance; (7) urban studies and local history; (8) social structure and demography; (9) labor conditions; (10) social conditions and policy; (11) economic thought and policy; (12) sources and archives; (13) methodology and historiography; and (14) general economic and social history.\(^\text{36}\) Although it is necessary to note that Harte’s classification has been carried out to divide works on economic and social history in addition to those on business history, the strong similarities between the two disciplines permit our use of the classification with only minor adjustments. Take category (14), for example. In Harte’s paper, this category comprises “general works covering a number of aspects of a period, textbooks, and miscellaneous works that do not readily fit into one of the other categories.”\(^\text{37}\) However, our category (14) consists of works of socio-economic history, focusing on some macroeconomic aspects.

This study used categories from both JEL and Harte’s classifications because we cannot avoid ambiguity by classifying a paper’s subject and conducting a kind of comparison with the results. The articles in the

---


Japanese Business History Review have not been sorted according to any classification. We will only accept results that are mutually consistent, despite some flaws in our classification method.

Here, we mainly show the results according to the Harte classification numbers not only because of limited space but also because of the similarity between the results across classification types. The results of our exercise are presented in Graph 2.


The biggest single category is “industry”—industrial enterprises and industrial branches. Of all papers published between 1966 and 2010, 23% by JEL classification number and 29% by Harte number fall into this area. The second biggest is discipline, or “methodology and historiography” [JEL classification number (0)], which comprises 19% of the papers, whereas categories (1), (12), and (13) by Harte number total 21% together. The next category is “traffic and transport” at 12% by JEL number and 9% by Harte number, followed by “labor,” broadly defined, with ratios of 10% and 8% by respective number, and “overseas relations,” also in a broad sense, with 10% and 9%, respectively.
By observing changes in subject proportions (Graph 3), the most remarkable point is the changes that occurred in the 1990s.

Graph 3: Trends in papers subjects on Western business history [Seiyō-Keiei-Shi] in the Japanese Business History Review from 1966 to 2010 (%)

Source: See above.

The broad area of “industry” has been the single biggest category as a whole from the 1960s to the 1980s, but the far-ranging area of “methodology” (discipline, methodology, historiography, sources) exceeds the size of industry. However, this only points to the journal’s regular publication of survey reports on works dating from the mid-1980s to the end of the century. We should bear in mind the point that the broad area of “methodology” saw its proportion fall rapidly in the 2000s. This suggests that discussions about the methodology of Western business history studies have been relatively inactive and intermittent in Japanese academic circles. From the 1980s to 1990s, the proportions of some areas declined. According to the JEL classification, the percentage of the broad area of macroeconomics, currency, conjuncture, and so forth [JEL-classification (1)] fell in the 1980s. By Harte classification, the area of “currency and finance” (6) declined from the 1980s to 1990s, while the area of “financial market and organization” under the JEL classification scheme [category (2)] remained steady. Interest in currency in Western business history studies also declined. The area of “social conditions and policy” [Harte category (10)], which accounted for about 8% of papers in the 1960s and
1970s and 11% in the 1980s, declined rapidly to 0%, whereas that of “economic thought and policy” [Harte category (11)] also experienced a relative decline. The area of “labor” saw its percentage decline clearly under the Harte classification scheme [category (9)] in the 1990s, whereas the broad area of “labor” under the JEL classification framework, which includes consumption, population, and so forth, did not decline in the 1990s. It is difficult to determine whether interest in some labor relations fell or if this can be attributed to confusion with classifications.

In the 2000s, variations in areas shrank with the decrease in contributions themselves. The dominant position held by the broad area of “industry” (manufacturing and building) is clear in both classifications.

Interest in “industry” has been higher in Western business history studies in Japan. Although the tertiary sectors [(4) “overseas trade and overseas relations” and (5) “transport and communications” in the Harte number system, for example] on the whole rose during the 1970s and the 1980s, and this increase persisted thereafter. It is at least certain that the transition to the so-called postindustrial society at the end of the twentieth century seems to have triggered a remarkable transition in research interests. It is difficult to claim for certain if this reflects the influence of A. D. Chandler, Jr., whose major works focused on the development of manufacturing and whose influence was very strong and consistent, especially in Japan.\(^{38}\)

4. **Countries as research subjects**

The countries serving as research subjects also deserve mention.

The proportion of papers on US enterprises and/or the US economy out of all the articles that appeared in the journal from 1966 to 2010 is 31%, and that of the United Kingdom and its ex-colonies (except Canada) is 30%. These countries are followed by Germany (14%) and multinational enterprises (13%). In fifth place, at 8%, are papers on French business enterprises, whereas studies on Belgium, Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, Belgium, Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary, and Austria appeared in 6%.

---

Canada, and Europe in total come to about 1%.

The results of the study are presented in (Graph 4). The percentage of papers on the United States underwent a change as follows: 39% from 1979 to 1996, 22% in the 1980s, 14% in the 1990s, and 21% in the 2000s. The percentages of papers on the United Kingdom changed as follows: 28%, 30%, 17%, and 37%. These English-speaking countries have lacked a majority since the 1990s. On the other hand, the percentage of papers on Germany remained at around 13–15% in the 1980s before declining to 9% in the 1990s, whereas the ratios for France and multinational enterprises increased relatively. Many international and multinational enterprises closely match trends for not only the United States and the United Kingdom but also those for the Netherlands, Switzerland, and so forth. In the 2000s, research subjects diversified.

These results show that (1) research activity on Western business history in Japan has focused on business and the economy in the United States and the United Kingdom, but their weights have tended to decline; (2) interest in European continental countries’ enterprises and economies was relatively low and declined further before the turn of century; and (3) the ratio of research activity subjects changed in the 1990s: the growth of interest in multinational enterprises and the diversification of the subject.
countries have mirrored the globalization of business activities at the end of the twentieth century.

5. Hypothesis for international comparison

Several observations in Section 1 have propounded the hypotheses that (1) in the 1970s, a change occurred in terms of the social interests that had supported Western (business) history research activity in Japan; and that (2) the decrease of contributions focusing on Western business history took place against the background of globalization of the research activity, the use of original historical data, and more opportunities for interaction with foreign scholars.39

However, these statements are not supported by independent evidence. For this section of our study, we confine our attention to hypothesis (2) about the influence of globalization on research activity in Japan and examine this point in more detail.

II. An International Comparison of Business History Research with Reference to Simultaneity

In this section, we attempt to conduct an international comparison in order to estimate the effect of the globalization of research activities on the study of Western business history in Japan. We operate from the above hypothesis that the progress of globalization in research activities broke, so to speak, the cost-benefit ratio for Japanese scholars to publish these works in Japanese. Here, we can first identify if a process of global convergence in fact existed and then examine how the convergence (or divergence) developed in the research of Western business history in Japan.

1. The comparison

We undertake a comparison between articles published in the discipline-representative journals of business history in Japan, the United

---

States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and, additionally, Italy. The aim of these comparisons of research topics is to deepen the understanding of globalization’s influence on research activity in the field of business history. We will examine if research interests in business history did, in fact, undergo an international convergence, especially as it pertains to Western business history studies in Japan.

The business history journals selected as our research objects are as follows: the *Japanese Business History Review* [Keiei-shi-gaku] in Japan, *Business History Review* (BHR) in the United States, *Business History* (BH) in the United Kingdom, and *Zeitschrift für Unternehmensgeschichte* (ZUG; from 1956 to 76, *Tradition: Zeitschrift für Firmen-Geschichte und Unternehmer-Biographie*) in Germany. For the purpose of further examination and subsequent development of the discussion, we further examine articles of the Italian journal *Annali di storia dell'impresa* and the French journal *Entreprise et Historie*.

According to our research, from 1966 to 2010, BHR published 762 papers, BH published 852 papers, and ZUG published 461 papers. (*Archiv e impresa* in Italy published 171 papers from 1990 to 2010, and *Entreprise et Historie* in France published about 200 papers from 1975 to 2010. These journals, however, do not specialize in business history.) We have selected papers on Western business history conducted in Japan from the *Japanese Business History Review*. From the journals in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, we have used all the papers published in the study time frame given above.

2. Statistical overview

First of all, <Table 1> presents a very simple statistical overview of our examination of papers’ research subjects in Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. This illustrates our calculation of Spearman's rank correlation coefficients of research subjects in the journals on business history from 1966 to 2010. Here, we examine the possibility of a correlation of research subjects between Japanese papers on Western history and the studies published in Western journals.

<Table 1> shows the result of a calculation of Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient using Harte’s classification, as explained above. The asterisks in the table indicate the figures’ statistical significance at 1% (*) and 5% (**) levels.
Table 1: Spearman's rank correlation coefficient of the research subjects in the journals on business history, 1966–2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification by Harte (1977)</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>0.701*</td>
<td>0.556*</td>
<td>0.660*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.521**</td>
<td>0.836*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.456</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: See the text.

These calculations clearly indicate that the subjects of Japanese articles on Western business history and the subjects of those published in Western journals have been inter-related from 1966 to 2010. It therefore seems natural to relate Japanese research on Western business history to Western research on the same topic.

Moreover, we can safely say that a strong inter-relation exists between the research interests of scholars in the United States and the United Kingdom; the rank correlation coefficient is very strong (greater than 0.8) between them.

On the other hand, it appears unlikely that research interests in Germany and the United Kingdom have been inter-related throughout the same period. The coefficient for this comparison is small and not significant at the 5% level.

Do these results, on the whole, make it safe to say that an international similarity and simultaneity of business history research exists—at least between some countries? Certainly, comparing the ranks of research subjects in each country’s business history research seems to indicate the similarity of research interests in the examined journals.

While the differences between them and the various unique national characteristics that emerge—for example, the higher proportion of research on the subject of “methodology” in the German journal and relatively higher interest in “money, banking, and finance” in the United Kingdom than in Germany—are remarkable, we can nonetheless find a common pattern of research topics in Japan and the examined Western countries. First, the topic of “industry and internal trade” is prominent among the researched subjects. Over a quarter of the papers in each journal are concerned with “industry” (manufacturing and construction). The papers
about “overseas trade” and “transport and communications” are also a common point, considering that these subjects represent about 5–10% of the papers in all three Western countries and Japan. On the other hand, interest in “agriculture” is almost negligible in journals on business history. In sum, the focus of business history studies has mainly been on industrial society—a feature that can be observed across a range of countries.

One can say that this trend in subjects is only proper for a discipline that was born in the twentieth-century United States and spread to other industrialized countries after World War II.

We must therefore look more carefully into the development of the correlations in the period we have examined.

The following <Table 2> demonstrates that we should not overlook the marked change in the inter-relations between research interests in each country.

Table 2: Development of Spearman's rank correlation coefficient of the research subjects in the journals on business history, 1966–2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification by Harte(1977)</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966-70s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>0.63*</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.69*</td>
<td>0.64*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.69*</td>
<td>0.63*</td>
<td>0.49**</td>
<td>0.74*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.54*</td>
<td>0.91*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: See the text.

We have divided the research period into four phases: (1) 1966 (the year of the first publication of the Japanese journal *Japanese Business History Review*) to the end of the 1970s; (2) the 1980s; (3) the 1990s; and (4) the 2000s.

The table reporting the development of the rank correlation coefficient numbers shows striking trends and indicates a different feature of the interrelation of business history research in Japan and Western countries.

Regarding the changes in Spearman's rank correlation coefficient
of the research subjects of Japanese Western business history, we can point out that (1) the field of Western business history research is clearly related to the research in Western countries at the emergence of business history research in Japan; (2) the (inter-)relation of interests in Western business history with those of the United States and Germany disappeared in the 1980s; (3) the relationship between Japanese and German articles is not close, whereas that between Japan and the UK has been stagnant at the same level of similarity for many years; and (4) Western business history in Japan alone has no inter-relation with the high-level correlation coefficient, and a degree of convergence of research interests existed among the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom in the 2000s.

Result (4) is partly attributable to the decline in the number of contributions about Western business history and the lack of subject variety, but the change from the beginning is remarkable. We can safely state that the progress of research activity globalization that Japanese historians certainly experienced in the form of using original data from abroad, more frequent interactions with foreign researchers, and a convergence of research interests has not occurred at a one-to-one ratio in Japan.

The pattern of changes in the Spearman's rank correlation coefficients of research subjects affords some interpretations about the other countries: a stable high-level correlation of research subjects existed between the United States and the United Kingdom over the period in question; the German interest was close to the level of that of the United States again in the 2000s; and it seems that correlations among Western countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany) rose in the 2000s. It is therefore likely that research interests between the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom converged in the 2000s.

Furthermore, Italian research in the 2000s seems to show a higher correlation according to the rank correlation coefficient calculated above. In the 1990s, the correlation coefficient for research subjects of Italian papers to those of British papers was about 0.4 and not statistically significant. That number has risen to about 0.7, which is an identical correlation to that shown by German papers from the 1990s.

3. Development of subject rankings
   We direct our focus to the development of subject rankings.
In the development of subject rankings for business history research carried out in Western countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany), we can project the characteristic future rankings of research interests and their transitions in each country.

Furthermore, there is a strong possibility of some common future traits, including increased research interest in the tertiary industry—trade, transport, and communications and banking or finance. While the share of research interests in these tertiary branches could never compete with that of interests in industry (i.e., manufacturing and construction) in Japan in the overall period, the ratio in the United States, United Kingdom, and even Germany were comparable and clearly higher in the 2000s. US and UK researchers were ahead of their German counterparts in making this progression. In the 1960s and 1970s, the proportion of the research topics concerning tertiary industry matched that of “industry.” We can safely say that this development was similar to the post-industrialization of society.

Adding to the link with changes in economic structure, one can point out the secure establishment of business history as an academic discipline in Germany (and the United Kingdom) as one cause of the increased similarity in subject ranks in the 2000s. We may also say that the rapid decrease in the ratio of “methodology and historiography” in Germany reflected the establishment of the “business history” discipline.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can state the following points about the Japanese study of Western business history.

A convergence (or catch-up) of research interests occurred early in the existence of the Japanese Business History Review—an adoption of the “new” discipline from the West, as Kobayashi Kesaji accurately observed.


The 1980s period, occurring as it did just after the catch-up and convergence, was decisive. A divergence in Japanese research interests from those of Western researchers appeared. In the so-called post-industrialization age, one can discern the background of this divergence. The Western business history research in Japan has trailed that in Western countries in terms of the correspondence to socio-economic changes (e.g., post-industrialization) since the 1980s.

Toward the end of the 1980s, Western business history studies seem to have become established as Japanese-specific Western business history [Seiyō-keiei-shi]. One of the remarkable features of these studies has been their clustering around the manufacturing industry under the strong influence of A.D. Chandler Jr., whereas in the United States and the United Kingdom, countries that took the lead in post-industrialization global economy, research focused more on business and the economy.

In the meantime, however, the traditional approach of Western history studies [Seiyō-shi] in Japan seems to have forfeited its social role of enlightenment as Japanese society lost the catch-up perspective.

On the whole, the process of globalization of research activity and a convergence of research interests did not occur at a one-to-one ratio, and mismatches continue even to the present day.

Viewed in this light, the situation of Western business history in Japan concurs with the view of the Western business historians in Japan: that Japanese researchers operated as an isolated division of labor with Western colleagues during globalization.

We should clarify what we mean by the term isolated division of labor. Mainly due to the linguistic barrier, most Japanese works on Western business history are unknown among Western academic circles. One may say that there is a danger of Japanese research becoming a “monologue.”\textsuperscript{12} In addition, Japanese estrangement from the Western convergence of research interests and disciplines is growing—a process that one could call the “isolation” of Seiyō-keiei-shi.

On the other hand, some Japanese (business) historians have begun to participate in Western academic circles. Most of the articles of Seiyō-keiei-shi after the 1980s were highly focused investigations of specified objects using original historical data in the subject countries and regions in order

\textsuperscript{12} Iida, “Shohyō,”145.
to create an overarching picture of Western historical research. Western business historians have been making good footnotes of Western historical research, whereas the articles that came out of their research based on historical positivism do not get across to international academic circles. This may thus be called a (latent and potential) division of labor.

So far, we may conclude that continuous efforts are needed to integrate Japan-based studies into the wider field of business history studies. This comment on Russian history study in Japan upholds Iida’s abovementioned warning against the Western (economic) history [Seiyō-(keizai)-shi] in Japan. It has attracted the attention of Western (economic) historians in Japan to both the need for the publication of works in an international language in order to avoid the “monologue” trap—a peril that Western colleagues based in the home of historical research are largely unaware—and the need for a careful survey of Western research in order to understand research trends in the home countries.

Along this line of thought, Italian business history studies offer a thought-provoking case. Italy is a relative follower in the field of business history. Business history studies in Italy began to systematize (through the establishment of an institution, academic society, academic journal in Italian, and so forth) late in the 1980s. As of 2014, the two journals on business history ceased regular publication (Imprese e storia after 2011 and Annali di storia dell’impresa after 2010). A group of business historians in Italy has, however, participated in English-speaking academic circles, especially those based in the United Kingdom, and the group has published research on Italian business history in English. Examining the contributors in BHR and BH, a trend of increasing appearances by Italian researchers from Bocconi University could be seen in the 2000s and especially after 2010. This rapid integration, which occurred earlier than that experienced by German and Japanese researchers, is the foundation of

the Italian convergence with the international study of business history in the 2000s. This result shows us that "globalization," in terms of publishing articles in English, serves as a survival strategy for business historians.

Despite having identified the impact of globalization upon Western business history studies in Japan, much ground still needs to be covered in discussing the social role and self-identity of Western (business) historians in Japan. Western historians in Japan have traditionally enjoyed the social role of Enlightenment thinkers. By the end of the “catch-up perspective” era, Western business historians in Japan needed to perform double duties: (1) serving as a provider of positivistic footnotes to Western research; and (2) operating as an independent international historian—an expert of Western business history who is a match for historians from the “homelands” in the era of globalization. Each duty is and will continue to be a hardship. But in meeting these challenges, might a researcher on “Seiyō-keiei-shi” expect, again, to be a social thinker for the Japanese public in the future?

Bibliography


Kobayashi, Kesaji. “Keieishi kenkyū no kokusai-tekī dōkō” [The international development of
*Acknowledgements*

This paper is based on our presentations that were held as the “Seiyō-keieishi no mirai e: Kenkūshi to atarashii dōkō no haaku” [Toward the future of Western business history research in Japan: Research history and understanding of the new trend] (organized by Fujii Kazuo and Banzawa Ayumu) panel discussion at the 49th Annual Congress of Business History Society of Japan on October 27, 2013, at Ryūkoku University and as the “Convergence or divergence?: Recent currents and methods in business history studies” (organized by Banzawa Ayumu, Kurosawa Takafumi, Shimamoto Minoru, and Julia Yongue) panel discussion at the 50th Annual Congress of Business History Society of Japan on September 12, 2014, at Bunkyō University. We are deeply grateful to all concerned with these congresses for their help and many useful comments. This research is partially supported by JSPS KAKENHI, Grant Numbers A23243055a and T245303990.