

Chapter 3

Doi Published Prints

3.1 The Doi Hangaten Publishing House

The history of the Doi Hangaten publishing house has been widely discussed among woodblock print collectors and scholars over recent years, and several websites contain adequate summaries of this history, such as “Doi Hangaten: A Meeting with Mrs. Suzue Doi” by Dr. Andreas Grund [19]. In this chapter we will provide a more detailed history of Doi Hangaten, and discuss various obscurities and pending issues regarding this publisher that are yet to be resolved and which have created heated debate among scholars.

In order to help resolve these issues we visited Mrs Doi Suzue at her home in Ichikawa City, Chiba on February 17, 2005. Our interview lasted for more than three hours in an open-minded atmosphere, and Mrs Doi and her daughter Eiko were only too happy to provide us with the following data and key reference materials. We much appreciate receiving this new and conclusive information which has been key in solving many of the outstanding issues.

Later, they graciously let us have Doi Sadaichi’s photos and permitted us to make them public for the first time. They also gave us additional insights into the lives of Sadaichi and Eiichi and the Doi Hangaten business, enabling us to summarize Doi Hangaten’s business history as follows:

3.1.1 Doi Sadaichi’s arriving in the USA to open his print shop in San Francisco

Doi Sadaichi’s younger days remain a mystery but his courageous arrival in San Francisco via steamship must be one of the biggest milestones in his career. His voyage probably took place around 1900 just after the new steamship service of “Nippon Maru” had started between Yokohama and San Francisco via Honolulu. We wonder if Sadaichi had any supporters or relatives in the USA at that time. Mrs Doi said Sadaichi had to work for his living by washing dishes at restaurants, and he made every effort to save money little by little. Eventually he managed to open his very own print shop at 608 Macalister, San Francisco, in May 1903. We don’t know why or how he decided to become a print shop owner. In the end he operated his shop for around 13 years, returning to Japan in 1916 for unknown reasons. We speculate that his decision to return to Japan may have been related to his late marriage to his Japanese bride. You can refer to Figure 3.1 (left) which shows a photo of the successful businessman Sadaichi taken at Jackson Studio in San Francisco sometime in the mid 1910s.

3.1.2 S. Doi Hangaten opened in Kanda, Tokyo

After Sadaichi returned to Japan he must have continued his trading business as an export and import dealer of woodblock prints. During the next eight years he made more business trips to the USA in order to sell ukiyo-e prints and expand his experiences and professional knowledge. Then in 1924 Sadaichi opened S. Doi Hangaten along the so-called Ueno Onarimichi Street located at 10 Suehiro-chō, Kanda in Tokyo. By 1930, many ukiyo-e dealers and publishers such as Shōbisha, Edoya, Sakai-Kōkodō,



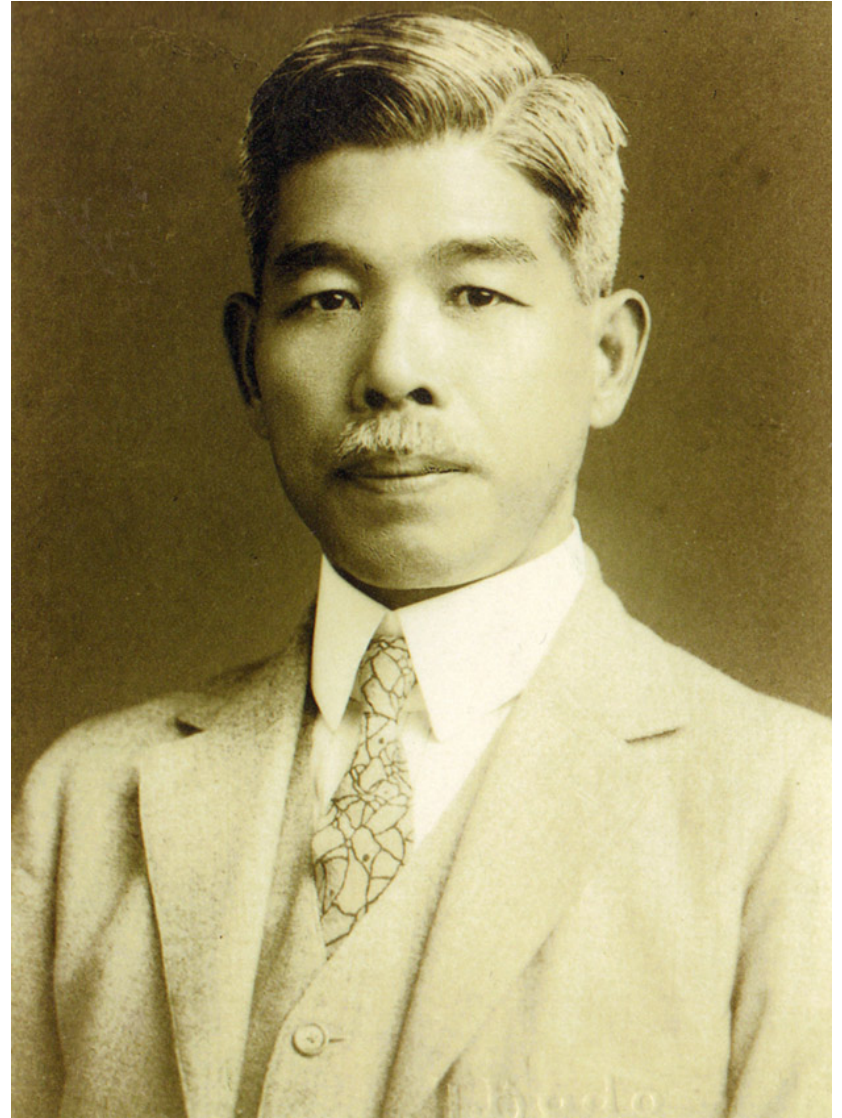


Figure 3.1: Doi Hangaten founder, Doi Sadaichi (1876- April 14, 1945). Left: Doi Sadaichi's photo taken while in San Francisco in the mid 1910s. Right: Sadaichi in Tokyo in the 1930s after starting Doi Hangaten.