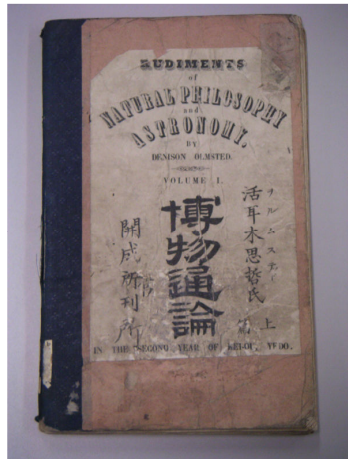




# Japan and Yale in the History of Science (1)

By Takuji OKAMOTO

In my field of specialization, the history of science, the connections between Yale University and Japan are not well known. To begin with, in the field of natural science, exchange between Japan and America became more active after the Second World War, but prior to that it was rather sporadic. Some of the best known examples are the foreign employees of the government from the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate through the Meiji period, and entering the twentieth century, the activities of the Rockefeller Foundation, information exchange regarding the construction of the cyclotrons, and so on. Speaking generally, from the latter half of the 1930s as the global center of scientific research shifted to America, Japanese-American relations and exchanges in science became more active.



*Photos Courtesy of the College of Arts and Sciences, The University of Tokyo*

Let alone Japan and America, looking at relations between Japan and Yale University and restricted just to examples of exchanges in science, might at first glance seem difficult. Even so, while researching in the library of Komaba Campus where I work, I came across a totally unexpected document. It was a strange little book, small enough to fit on the palm of your hand, the cover showing the title and country of publication in English and Japanese, while the content was in English only. The names of all those who read the book are written on the reverse of the item held in Komaba. The place of publishing is marked as “Yedo”, the publisher as “Kaiseijo”, a predecessor institution of the University of Tokyo, and the year of publication as Keio 2 (1866). The author and title are listed in Japanese as 活耳木思哲『博物通論 上篇』 but from the English title one can see that the original book is by Denison Olmsted and titled Rudiments of Natural Philosophy and Astronomy: Designed for the Younger Classes in Academies and for Common Schools. This book by Olmsted was published in 1844, reprinted in 1847, 1856, 1858 and 1859, but the version published by the Kaiseijo is a copy of the 1858 New York, Collins & Brother imprint. D. Olmsted (1791-1859) was an astronomer and natural historian who worked mainly in the first half of the nineteenth century, graduating from Yale in 1813, and a teacher at Yale from 1825 until his death. This 1866 impression is perhaps the oldest link between Japan and Yale in the field of science.