

The Story of Foreign Language Timetables in Japan

Yoshiki Soga

Introduction

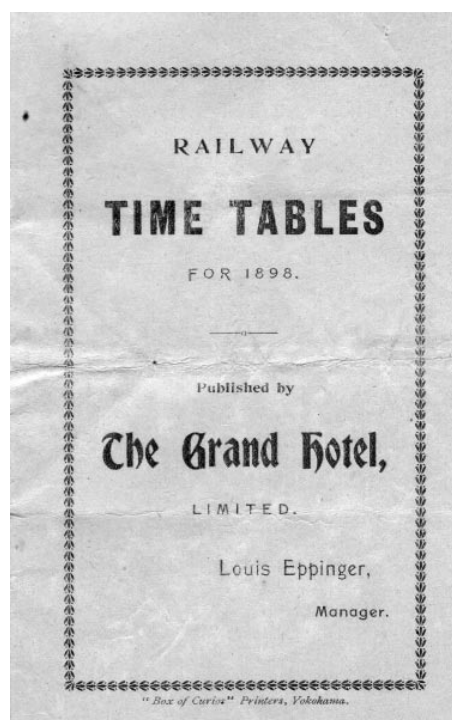
How would you handover a ransom from an express train to a kidnapper waiting alongside the tracks? After all, the passenger cars are all air-conditioned, and the windows don't open.... This was the climactic dilemma of the 1963 suspense film *High and Low* by world-famous director Akira Kurosawa. The venue was the *Kodama* (Echo) limited express, the pre-shinkansen crowning achievement of Japanese railways making the run between Tokyo and Osaka in 6.5 hours. Kurosawa was inspired to make the film after reading Ed McBain's novel *King's Ransom*. However, the film's adaptation of handing over the ransom was achieved thanks to the complex schedules and on-time operation that are the pride of Japanese railways.

In such a railway powerhouse, Japanese railway timetables have long been a treasured necessity for travel. At one time, millions were published monthly, making them hidden best-sellers. However, as an island nation, there are no cross-border services, so Japanese timetables have a definite Japanese flavour targeted at an almost exclusively Japanese audience. Few timetables have ever been mainly in English or other foreign languages, with notable exceptions being simplified versions distributed during the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and other expositions when many foreign visitors were in Japan.

Most of these rare timetables were taken abroad when the visitors left, so people in Japan rarely glimpsed such items. Because timetables are a practical item that become useless as soon as the timetable changes, most were thrown away, significantly reducing the chance of finding remaining versions today. However, you might be lucky enough to discover a rare copy at a local flea market or in a used-book store, and if you do, this article could help you decipher it.

The Early Days

The world's first steam-hauled passenger railway started in England with the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830. Soon after, the first edition of *Bradshaw's Railway Time Tables* was published, becoming synonymous with rail travel. At that time, Japan was still ruled by a *shogun*,

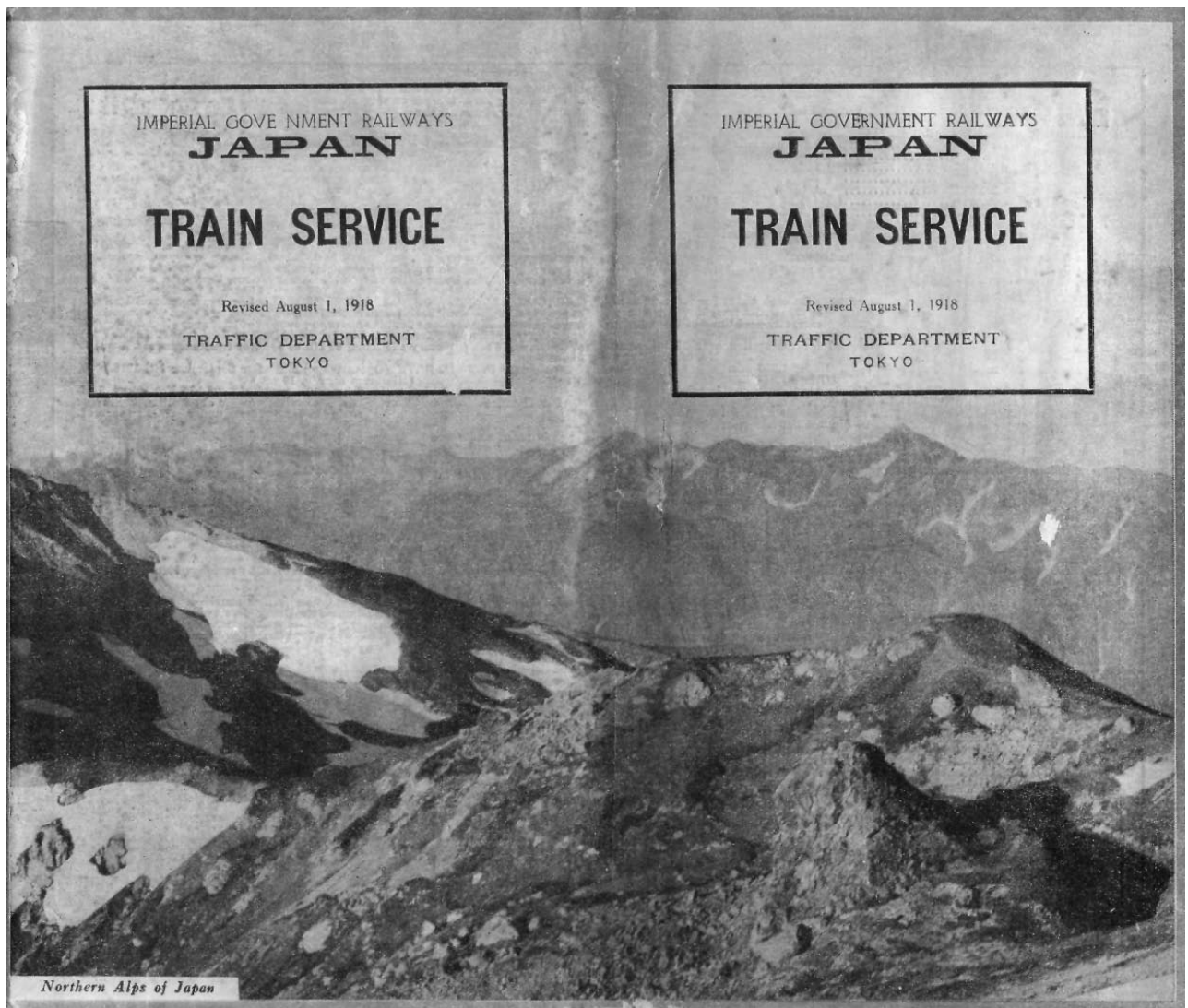


Timetable issued by The Grand Hotel in Yokohama (1898) (Author)

his *daimyo* (lord), and *samurai* (warrior), and any contact with the outside world was very restricted. It was to be another 37 years before Japan opened up to the world with the restoration of the Meiji Emperor. Japan's first railway started 5 years later in 1872 with a short 18-mile single track between Shimbashi in Tokyo and Yokohama. A year later in 1873, Thomas Cook published his first timetable, and Cook's timetables are still used worldwide today (see pp. 18 to 23).

In the early days, Japanese railways were operated by foreigners working for the Japanese government. We can guess that these people worked in English, but whether or not English timetables were released to the public is unclear. However, Japan was now being visited by businessmen, traders and tourists from abroad, especially from North America and Europe, so we can easily imagine demand for foreign-language timetables as railway lines spread through the nation.

The first monthly timetable in Japan was the *Train & Steamer Travel Guide* (*Kisha Kisen Ryokou Annai*), which



Government railways' English timetable (August 1918)

(Author)

was first published in 1894 for Japanese users, making it practically unintelligible to people who could not read Japanese. In addition to station names, even the numbers in the tables were in Japanese *kanji* characters instead of the Arabic numerals in general use today. The situation was the same for all timetables issued in Japan. For this reason, hotels with foreign guests would create and distribute booklets with schedules written in English. For example, the timetable issued in 1898 by The Grand Hotel had just six pages centred on schedules for lines between Tokyo and Kobe along with services to Hakone (Kodzu), Nikko, and Yokosuka. The Grand Hotel was a leading Western-style hotel in Yokohama but it burned down in the aftermath of the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake and was never rebuilt. The Hotel New Grand opened later bears its name today.

Incidentally, the Welcome Society was formed at this time by some businessmen and others to provide assistance to foreign visitors to Japan. As a part of their service, they produced and distributed English railway timetables.

However, as the name suggests, it was a society characterized by the activities of interested progressive private citizens. There was no government movement to promote tourism to Japan at that time.

To catch up quickly with the already highly industrialized Western nations, latecomer Japan put great effort into advancing its national power. It established government-run factories in various locations, working to develop an export industry. At the same time, Japan attempted to secure interests in mainland Asia and gain a greater say in international society through the 1894 Sino-Japanese War and 1904 Russo-Japanese War. In such an age where railways were considered essential for industrial advancement and to a powerful war machine, new tracks were built in quick succession. Moreover, most private lines were nationalized in 1906; private lines considered important in forming a nationwide network were bought out and operated by the government. As a result, Japan's 1500 km of government-operated railways in 1900 grew quickly to 7800 km by 1910.

Once the foundations were laid for government administration of nationwide railways, it was natural for official passenger timetables covering the nationwide network to be published by the railway authorities. The government railways' timetable issued in June 1910 differed greatly from the private timetables written in *kanji* characters, because it used Arabic numerals and included English notes to allow use by foreigners. From hereon, the government railways continued issuing new official timetables at every train diagram change. Around this time, momentum gathered at government level to actively promote foreign tourism to create international goodwill and stimulate the economy by securing foreign capital. In 1912, railway authorities, shipping companies, prominent hotels, and others sponsored the establishment of the Japan Tourist Bureau, the forerunner of today's JTB, Japan's largest travel agency. Due to these developments, the government railways started issuing English and Japanese timetables, marking the appearance of full-fledged English timetables in Japan.

Let's look at the details of an English language timetable for August 1918. The covers advertise places of scenic beauty in Japan, and this issue has a photograph of the peaks of the Northern Alps of Japan. The mountain areas of Karuizawa and the northern Chubu region were talked about and developed from the late 19th century by missionaries and other foreign visitors to Japan as a place to escape the sultry summer heat of the coastal Kanto Plain and the cover evokes this background. The book is 7.5 by 9 inches, and its format is Western style where it can be folded in half. It has 82 pages, and is bound with a fold-out index map in the middle. An interesting feature is the western Table-Number format. By referring to the chart for the station name and Table-Number at the beginning, one could easily find the relevant table for departures and arrivals. Times are in the 12-hour style with a.m. in light type and p.m. in bold, demonstrating the Western standard for timetable formats of the period.

Of course, services in Japan were covered, but the timetable also includes the Korean peninsula and Taiwan—Japanese colonies at the time. Inclusion of continental China and the note 'Connecting service between Japan and Russia' demonstrate the immense scale covered. Connections to Russia were just one of the routes linking Asia and Europe, and after the Russo-Japanese War, this route was popularized as being much faster than ship. Due to international conflicts, such as World War I and the Russian Revolution, schedules within Russia were not noted, because routes were disrupted.

The inclusion of colonial railways in the timetable of a colonial power was quite unusual. Colonies of western nations were generally far from their ruling country, so there was no merit in including them and timetables for western colonies covered just those regions. In India, for example, *Indian*

Bradshaw noted schedules for South Asia and surrounding British territories. In Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, local railway authorities and information bureaus issued timetables. In pre-World War II Japanese colonies, the local railway authorities—Government Railways of Chosen (Korea) and Taiwan Government Railways—issued their own timetables, but schedules for those railways were always also included in timetables for mainland Japan. The timetable for the South Manchuria Railway (SMR), which was established in 1906 to annexe the Russian-established Chinese-Eastern Railway and reigned in NE China for the next 40 years, is also in the Japanese timetable. However, railways in SE Asia that were under Japanese control during World War II were not noted in the timetables at all.

Hand-in-hand with Rapid Growth of Railways

At the same time, there was a revolutionary development in Japan's timetables—the start of sales of the official government railways' timetable, which had previously been only for internal use. It was in an 8 by 9-inch, 226-page format, and much larger than the B6 timetables issued by the private sector. In effect, it was the inaugural issue of the *JTB Timetable*, which is still issued today and reached the 1000th issue 84 years later in May 2009 with much media fanfare. With Japanese timetables becoming more substantial, English timetables also changed from thin pamphlets to thicker book formats.

Next, comes the English timetable issued in December 1931 by the Japan Tourist Bureau. At 7.5 by 5 inches, this *Condensed Time Tables on Principal Lines* was slightly smaller than previous timetables, but boasted a full 236 pages. The change to include many advertisements for gift shops and other businesses of interest to foreign visitors came about with the switch from an internal timetable to a timetable sold to the public.

It is filled with notes evoking images of the prewar golden age of railways. Images of trains gracing the covers include the *Fuji* and *Sakura* (Cherry Blossom) limited expresses running from Tokyo to Shimonoseki in September 1929, which were named by public contest, and the *Tsubame* (Swallow), making its debut in October 1930 to connect Tokyo and Kobe in a record time of 7 hours.

A major change in the 1931 timetables compared to 1918 was the disappearance of the Table-Number format. To find arrival and departure times for a station, first you search for the line for that station on the line map; then you look for the page number for that line noted in red next to the line; and finally you open the timetable to that page. If you know the line in advance, you look in the index for the page with that line. The chart for station names and Table-Number that once

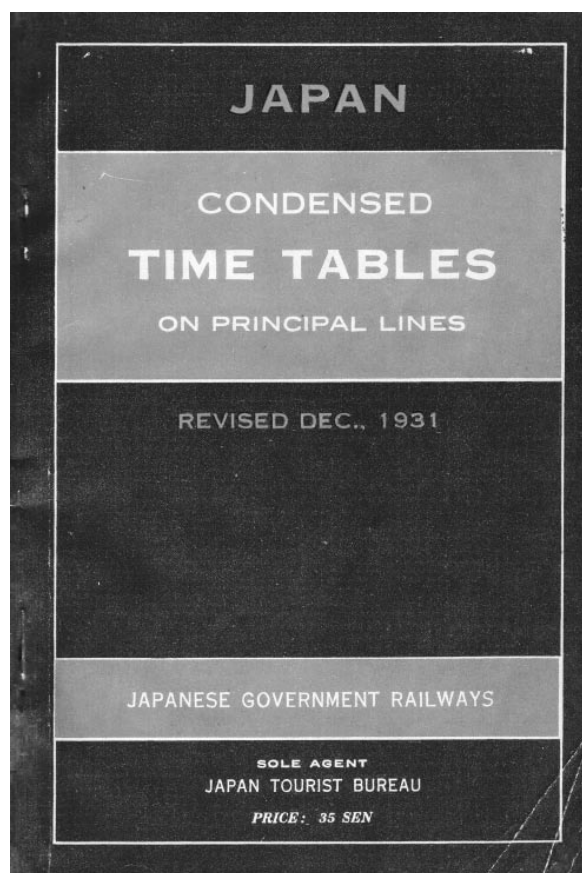
graced the beginning of timetables was transformed to a chart for station names and pages that station names are on, but it was pushed to the back of the timetable.

The method of referring to schedules based on the page showing lines was the same as that for Japanese timetables at the time. The timing and reason why government railways' timetables eliminated the Table-Number format and changed to page-number reference chart are unclear. Perhaps reassigning the Table-Number was considered a cumbersome task when new lines were opening and private railways were being nationalized. One point was that finding schedules using the page-number reference method imposed little burden on users because the rail network was physically isolated from other countries and operated on a uniformly administered nationwide system. Each line had its own name, and geographical locations of places such as cities on lines were relatively easy to absorb by the general Japanese populace. For example, the Tokaido main line was well known as the line along the Pacific coast from Tokyo to Kobe, and the Ou main line was the line from Fukushima north to Yamagata and Akita. In addition, train operation was almost all line-based and very few trains ran on complex routes over multiple lines.

On the other hand, Continental European railways were characterized by complex networks crisscrossing the land; international trains carrying travellers from many countries ran across the entire continent. Consequently, the timetables could not be closed for a single country, and the concepts of direction and operation system were emphasized instead of a line in a single country. Stations themselves became the natural starting point for finding a schedule. The UK, an island nation like Japan, used the page-number reference method in *Bradshaw's Timetable*, which was issued for many years in that country.

The 1931 timetables included international steamship routes and schedules that were not in the 1918 timetables, and note the schedule for the Tokyo–Dalian air route that started in 1929. The international steamship route schedules included the Japanese companies Nippon Yusen Kaisha and Osaka Shosen Kaisha as well as the round-the-world service of Robert Dollar Co. This ambitious feature of the English version was not included in Japanese versions.

The route via Siberia, connecting Asia and Europe, came into the spotlight again when WWI and the Russian Revolution settled down. International connections between Japan via Siberia to Europe restarted in August 1927. The 'connecting service between Japan and Europe' in this timetable noted the schedule and operation days. It was a long trip of about 14 days from Tokyo to Paris. The Asia–Europe route via Siberia was also noted in European timetables issued by Thomas Cook and Germany's Mitropa (a company running sleeper and dining cars). These timetables still evoke an image of the



Condensed Time Tables (December 1931)

(Author)

romantic age of rail travel before international air routes.

The *Condensed Time Tables* were issued irregularly afterwards. The March 1933 edition is interspaced with pictures of places of Japanese scenic beauty, and includes bus schedules—especially services to various hot springs—which had finally become a viable mode of transport. The government railways set up the Board of Tourist Industry in April 1930 as an organization to promote overseas travel to Japan. In an age when the country was actively starting to attract foreign visitors, the content of timetables evolved to meet the needs of tourists interested in Japanese culture and traditions. According to statistics for 1936, the year before war broke out between Japan and China, 42,000 tourists visited Japan; 17,000 were Chinese and Manchurians.

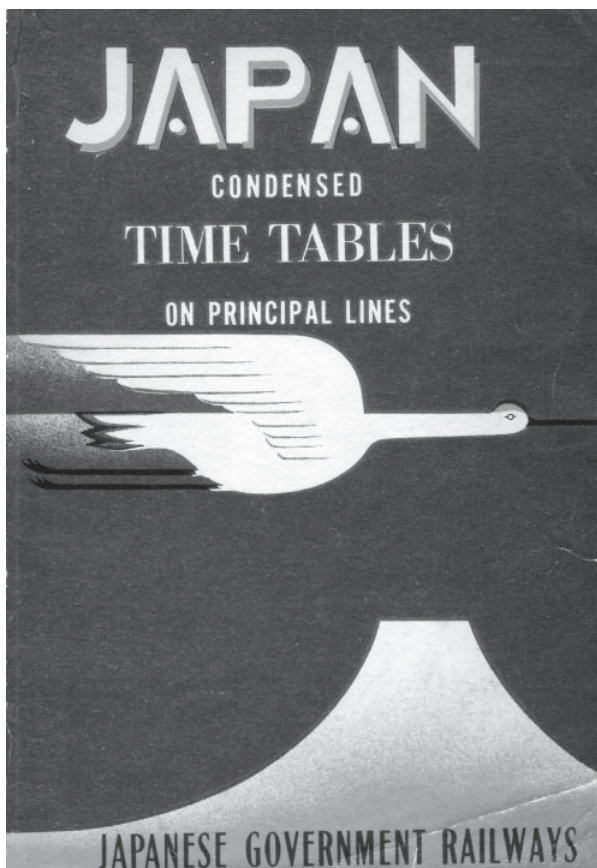
Behind the emphasis on the uniqueness of Japan was a vigorous defence of the country, which was under intense international criticism for military moves in China since the early 1930s. Timetables give a glimpse at the propaganda campaign to present Japan with a clean image using tourism. Railways in prewar Japan were not classified as strategic facilities, but areas near important ports and straits were designated strategic zones where photography and sketching were prohibited. These areas are clearly noted in the index map as early as 1931, signalling the approaching dark times of war.

THROUGH SERVICE WEST OF TŌKYŌ

Rev. Oct. 1, 1938.		THROUGH SERVICE WEST														
		For Kyōto, Ōsaka, Simonoseki,														
Km.	Stations	Tubame							Kamome		Sakura		Huzi			
		27	29	113	31	123 LEX 11	105	111	33	101	EX 9	21	123 LEX 1031	LEX 3	123 LEX 1	23
0.0	Tōkyō .....d.	5 30	6 40	...	7 45	9 00	...	...	9 15	...	10 30	10 45	1 00	1 30	3 00	3 30
1.9	Sinbasi .....d.	5 34	6 44	...	7 49	↓	...	...	9 19	23	10 34	10 49	↓	↓	123	3 35
6.8	Sinagawa .....d.	5 42	6 53	...	7 58	↓	...	...	9 28	23	10 42	10 57	↓	↓	23	3 44
28.8	Yokohama .....d.	6 04	7 16	...	8 21	9 27	...	...	9 51	23	11 05	11 20	1 28	1 58	3 27	4 07
46.5	Ohana .....d.	6 22	7 34	...	8 40	↓	...	...	10 09	23	11 23	11 39	↓	↓	23	4 25
83.9	Odawara .....d.	7 17	8 27	...	9 41	✂	...	...	11 02	...	11 57	0 33	↓	2 47	4 16	5 18
104.6	Atami .....d.	7 50	8 59	...	10 13	↓	...	...	11 34	...	0 21	1 05	↓	3 09	4 38	5 50
126.2	Numazu .....d.	8 24	9 33	...	11 03	11 00	...	...	0 08	...	0 48	1 41	3 04	3 35	5 02	6 22
180.2	Sizuoka .....d.	9 42	10 53	...	0 22	11 48	...	...	1 51	...	1 48	3 10	3 53	4 22	5 49	7 40
257.1	Hamamatu .....d.	11 29	0 55	...	2 11	↓	...	...	3 39	...	3 09	5 01	↓	5 31	6 58	9 26
293.6	Toyohasi .....d.	0 25	1 51	...	3 07	↓	...	...	4 35	...	3 47	5 53	↓	6 03	7 30	10 20
366.0	Nağoya .....a.	2 02	3 28	...	4 44	2 17	...	...	6 10	...	5 01	7 35	6 28	7 00	8 27	11 52

Part of Tokaido main line page from *Condensed Time Tables* (January 1939)

(Author)



Condensed Time Tables (January 1939)

(Author)

The cover of *Condensed Time Tables* for January 1939—the year that WWII broke out—has a fantastic image of a crane flying over Mt Fuji draped in red sunlight (*Aka-Fuji*) like an *ukiyo-e* colour print by Hokusai. That was a delicate design

evoking images of the Japanese folk tale of *The Crane Lady*, which was the basis for the theatrical performance of *Yuzuru* (Twilight Crane) made famous in opera. The cover, presenting no hint of the shadows of war, gives a feel for the final glow of Japan that attracted people through tourism. This is sobering when you consider the path of history thereafter, when Japan and this aesthetic beauty would be destroyed by war.

While trivial, the timetable text shows changes that tell of the sombre situation. The notes on train nicknames and station names show that the *Fuji* limited express between Tokyo and Shimonoseki is changed to *Huzi*. Likewise, Tokyo's *Shinjuku* entertainment district is written as *Sinzyuku*. This is because the spelling used when writing Japanese place names and other words in alphabetic letters was officially changed to one based on the Japanese language in 1937 to eliminate elements originating from English pronunciation. The background for that change was the increasing anti-foreign and nationalistic thinking of Japan at the time with its worsening foreign relations.

The Chinese continental railway noted in the back of the timetable was no longer under the authority of Chinese Government Railways, and was being operated by the North China Office of SMR because railways in areas occupied by Japan in the war with China were operated temporarily by SMR. A new company, North China Railway, which was effectively an extension of Japanese national policy, was established in 1939 to take over operation of these lines.

Japan eventually went to war with the USA and Great Britain on 7 December 1941, closing the country to peaceful interaction with the outside world for about 5 years. War timetables were filled with slogans inciting the will to fight,



Tokyo Station with RTO sign (from picture postcard)

(Author)

but by 1944—the year before WWII ended—new timetables were rarely issued due to the lack of resources as Japan's position worsened.

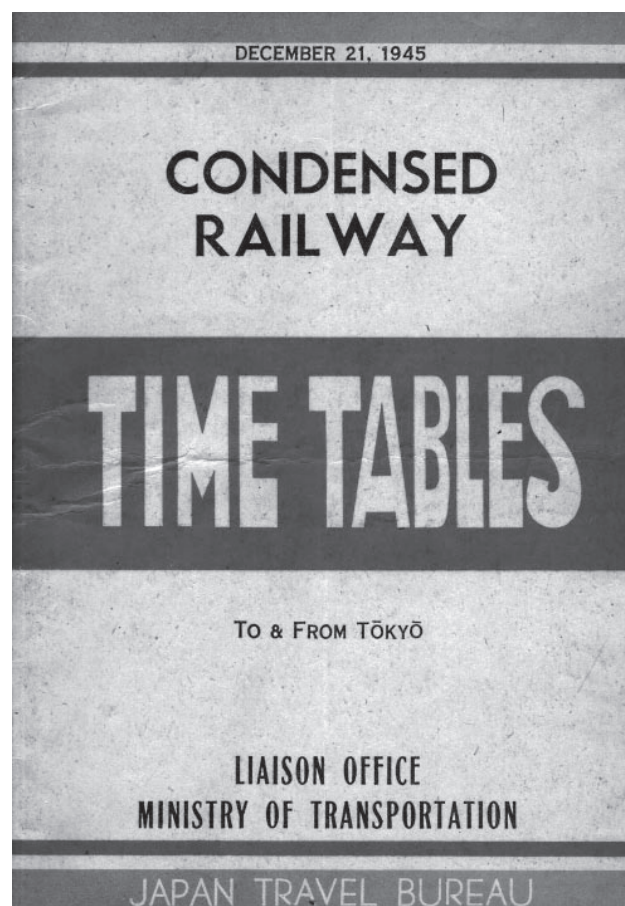
Allied Occupation

Japan's surrender on 15 August 1945 marked the start of the Allied occupation. Rail transport was put under General Headquarters (GHQ) supervision with the 3rd Transportation Military Railway Service responsible for administration. Rail Transportation Offices (RTOs) were established at major stations across Japan to provide guidance and issue tickets for Allied passengers. Many military personnel and journalists visited Japan during the occupation, and rail was the main mode of transport due to lack of air routes and highway networks. Naturally, there was a need for railway timetables foreigners could read.

The Japan Travel Bureau successor to the prewar Japan Tourist Bureau, issued a 200-page Japanese-language timetable in September 1945. However, after that they were only able to issue a booklet of just 16 pages due to difficulty in obtaining paper. It struggled to maintain a monthly format for Tokyo and nearby areas. Although issued for Japanese, it did have station names in alphabetic letters, so it could be used by foreigners too.

Content covering just the Tokyo area was insufficient for use by GHQ who ordered the Japanese railway authorities to create a full-scale English timetable. While government railways was under the administration of GHQ, it was in fact operated by the Japanese Ministry of Transportation, so the Ministry of Transportation Liaison Office edited the *Condensed Railway Time Tables*, marking the first, full-scale, postwar English timetable.

Although the 34-page, A5 timetable was subtitled 'To & From Tokyo', it actually covered the area east of Osaka to the Tohoku and Hokkaido regions. It applied to a larger area and more lines than in the JTB version for Japanese. Furthermore,

*Condensed Railway Time Tables* (December 1945)

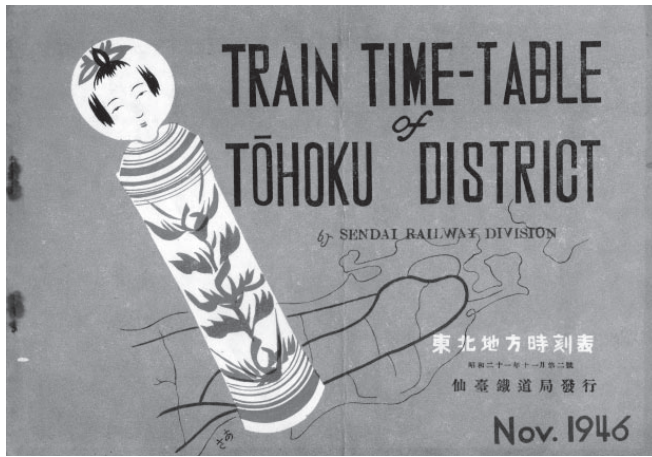
(Author)

this timetable used 24-hour notation adopted by Japanese railways from 1942 and returned to the Table-Number format.

The suffering at the time is seen from the content. Opening the front cover, there is a note saying, 'Owing to the shortage of coal supply, some of the trains may be cancelled for the time being.' Many train times had an X next to them, meaning operations on those sections were suspended for this reason. The railway authorities revised the schedule on 20 November, increasing the number of scheduled passenger trains by 26% compared to the war's end. However, coal shortages forced three reductions in passenger trains the following month, dropping the number to half the number running at the war's end.

Although times were hard, GHQ-related transport had top priority. Special trains for GHQ personnel appeared one after another in 1946. The main trains were the *Allied Limited* and *Dixie Limited* connecting Tokyo and Kyushu, and the *Yankee Limited* between Tokyo and Hokkaido. Trains for Japanese were also run with GHQ cars connected to them. Those cars were reserved for Allied personnel, and hungry Japanese crammed into overflowing cars could not use them.

With the expansion of GHQ transport, English timetables became more substantial. The Sendai Railway Division and others even issued their own English timetables for their



English timetable issued by Sendai Railway Division (November 1946) (Author)

CONDENSED ALLIED MILITARY TRAIN SCHEDULES									
Tōkyō-Kyōto-Kure-Sasebo-Hakata					Yokohama-Sendai-Sapporo				
[AT] ALLIED LIMITED No. 1005	[AT] DIXIE LIMITED No. 1001	Kms.	Table A For complete schedules, see table 1, 3 and 82	[AT] DIXIE LIMITED No. 1002	[AT] ALLIED LIMITED No. 1006	[AT] YANKEE LIMITED No. 1201	Kms.	Table B For complete schedules, see table 44, 45, 58, 61, 93, 94, and 97	[AT] YANKEE LIMITED No. 1202
2015	0930	0.0	Lv Tōkyō	1910	0640	2200	0.0	Lv Yokohama	0645
2100	1010	26.1	Ar Yokohama	1826	0555	2245	26.1	Ar Tōkyō	0600
2119	1027	43.8	Ar Ōfuna	1808	0536	2304	28.2	Ar Ueno	0552
↓	↓	81.2	Ar Odawara	1734	1	0018	93.4	Ar Tsuchiura	0408
2249	1150	123.5	Lv Numazu	1652	0413	0122	144.9	Ar Mito	0305
2340	1237	177.5	Ar Shizuoka	1600	0309	0310	239.0	Ar Taira	0105
0102	1350	254.4	Ar Hamamatsu	1453	0150	0444	316.5	Ar Haranomachi	2316
0158	1446	307.9	Ar Gamagori	1359	0044	0605	390.3	Ar Sendai	2145
0256	1537	363.3	Ar Nagoya	1310	2344	0635	390.3	Lv Sendai	2125
0305	1547	363.3	Lv Nagoya	1300	2334	0723	433.1	Ar Kogota	2036
0344	1620	393.6	Ar Gifu	1232	2300	0826	483.2	Ar Ichinoseki	1937
0500	1731	443.2	Ar Maibara	1136	2156	↓	525.6	Ar Kurosawajiri	1
0600	1833	500.9	Ar Otsu	1040	2050	0927	538.1	Ar Hanamaki	1833
0612	1846	510.9	Ar Kyōto	1021	2028	1007	573.5	Ar Morioka	1736
0622	1856	510.9	Lv Kyōto	1011	2018	1015	573.5	Lv Morioka	1749
0727	2005	553.7	Ar Osaka	0933	1930	1135	637.6	Ar Ichinohe	1630
0801	2039	584.3	Ar Sannomiya	0835	1833	1229	682.5	Ar Shirouchi	1535
0914	2147	641.6	Ar Himeji	0728	1726	1239	689.3	Ar Mutsu-ichikawa	1519
1042	2316	730.2	Ar Okayama	0549	1547	1249	689.3	Lv Mutsu-ichikawa	1509
1055	2331	730.2	Lv Okayama	0540	1532	1306	703.5	Ar Furumaki	1450
1229	0106	817.7	Ar Itozaki	0410	1359	1320	703.5	Lv Furumaki	1434
1356	0223	880.3	Ar Hiro	0238	1227	1408	735.0	Ar Noheji	1344
1407	0237	887.1	Ar Kure	0222	1214	1505	778.2	Ar Aomori	1255
1422	0252	887.1	Lv Kure	0207	1158	1600	0.0	Lv Aomori	1120
1509	0336	913.5	Ar Hiroshima	0131	1120	||		Ferry Service	||
1558	0423	954.9	Ar Iwakuni	0039	1029	2030	113.0	Ar Hakodate	0620
1717	0545	1,023.7	Ar Tokuyama	2318	0907	2235	0.0	Lv Hakodate	0502
1748	0616	1,050.2	Ar Mitajiri	2243	0832	↓	27.0	Ar Ikusagawa	1
1812	0639	1,068.0	Ar Ōgōri	2222	0811	↓	27.0	Ar Mori	0349
1944	0813	1,136.9	Ar Shimonooseki	2105	0650	2950	49.5	Ar Oshamambe	0227
2005	0833	1,143.2	Ar Moji	2040	0627	0121	112.3	Ar Abuta	0125
2015	0843	1,149.4	Ar Kokura	2021	0606	0237	153.8	Ar Higashi-muroran	0037
2026	0851	1,149.4	Lv Kokura	2012	0554	0321	189.5	Lv Higashi-muroran	0027
2059	0921	1,173.0	Ar Ongagawa	1943	0525	0338	189.5	Ar Noboribetsu	0008
2139	↓	1,208.5	Ar Kashii	1	0447	0403	207.0	Ar Tomakomai	2322
2151	1010	1,216.7	Ar Hakata	1855	0435	0458	247.5	Ar Numanohata	2302
2215	1034	1,216.7	Lv Hakata	1816	0418	0509	256.3	Ar Chitose	2235
2255	1113	1,246.0	Ar Tosu	1733	0347	0555	277.7	Ar Higashi-sapporo	1
2341	1218	1,285.7	Ar Hizenyamaguchi	1632	0250	0650	315.8	Ar Sapporo	2130
0045	1334	1,325.6	Ar Haiki	1520	0152	0700	321.1		
0059	1352	1,334.5	Ar Sasebo	1455	0129				

EQUIPMENT		EQUIPMENT	
No. 1001-1002 DIXIE LIMITED	TŌKYŌ-SASEBO	No. 1005-1006 ALLIED LIMITED	TŌKYŌ-SASEBO
Compartment Sleeper	Ōsaka-Hakata	Compartment Sleepers	Tōkyō-Hakata
Standard Sleepers	Ōsaka-Hakata	Standard Sleepers	Tōkyō-Ōsaka
Coach	Tōkyō-Sasebo		Tōkyō-Sasebo
	Tōkyō-Ōsaka		Tōkyō-Ōsaka
	Hakata-Sasebo		Tōkyō-Nagoya
Dining Car	Tōkyō-Haiki	Coach	Ogōri-Sasebo
Baggage Car	Tōkyō-Sasebo	Dining Car	Tōkyō-Sasebo
		Baggage Car	Tōkyō-Hakata
			Tōkyō-Sasebo

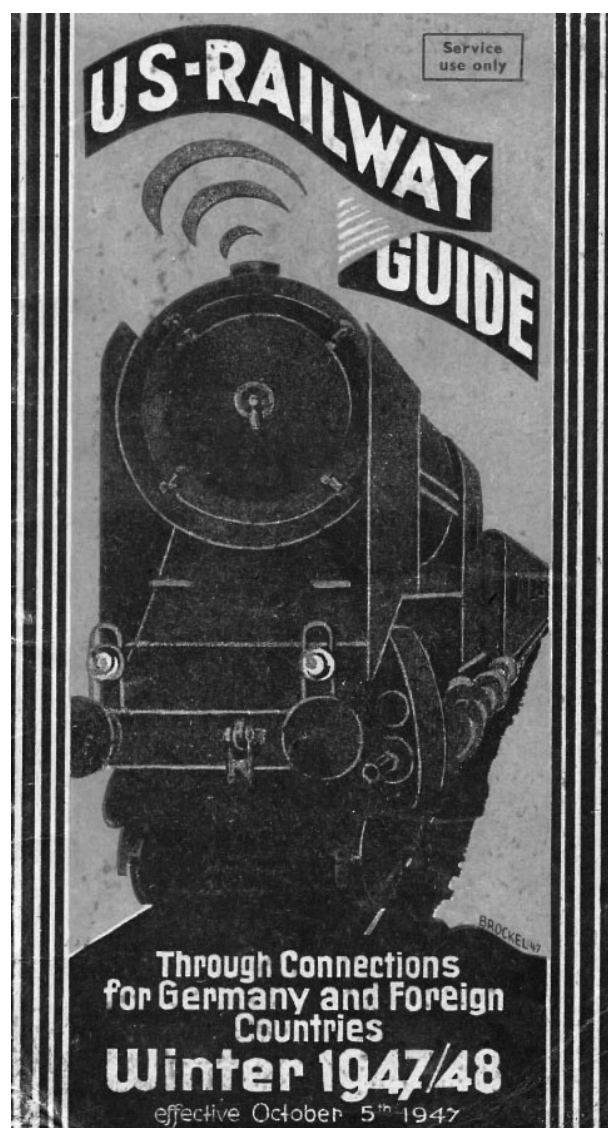
EQUIPMENT	
No. 1201-1202 YANKEE LIMITED	YOKOHAMA-SAPPORO
Compartment Sleeper	Yokohama-Sapporo
Standard Sleepers	Yokohama-Sendai
	Yokohama-Furumaki
	Yokohama-Furumaki
	Hakodate-Sapporo
Comb. Coach and Sleeper	Yokohama-Sapporo
Coach	Sendai-Aomori
Dining Car	Sendai-Aomori
Baggage Car	Yokohama-Sapporo

Allied military train timetable (July 1951)

(Author)

administrative areas. The nationwide English timetable issued in December 1946 was a massive volume measuring 9 1/4 by 7 1/4 inches and 216 pages; it even included all regional lines. The back end has a list of nicknames given to passenger cars requisitioned by GHQ. It also includes the schedule for a military ferry operating between Hakata in Kyushu and Busan on the Korean peninsula. This might seem strange because Korea was supposed to have been liberated from Japanese control at the end of the war. However, South Korea, was still under US military control and not yet independent.

After the December 1946 issue, English timetables once again became simplified. For example, the July 1951 timetable was 56 pages and only included major lines. It was a folding type once common on American railways. The end page tells how Japan was once again open to general foreign tourism from December 1947 with notations on how official travel for military passengers was handled, guidelines for non-official travel, and information for civilian passengers.



Military train timetable issued in Germany (October 1947) (Author)

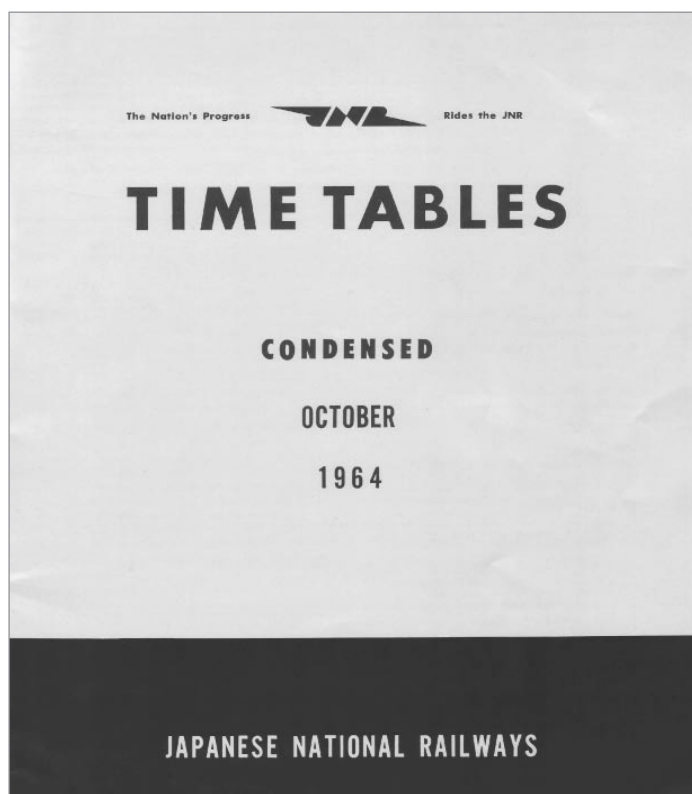
Famous hotels in various scenic locations such as Hakone and Nara had been requisitioned as R&R facilities for GHQ personnel, and timetables for travel to such places were listed in a booklet issued by Japan Logistical Command in the 1950s. (The government railways were restructured as a public corporation in June 1949, and Japanese National Railways (JNR) was established. English timetables were issued under the JNR name).

However, Japan was not the only place where timetables were issued for occupation forces. The US Military Railway Service created and distributed timetables for Europe after the German surrender and for the Philippines under US military administration. The *US-Railway Guide* was issued as a timetable for military trains by the OMG (Office of Military Government) and later the 8th Transportation Traffic Regulation Group in Germany. It mainly covered the western part of Germany under the administration of the USA, UK, and France, but military trains to and from West Berlin are listed, giving evidence of the special tension in the German division and occupation.

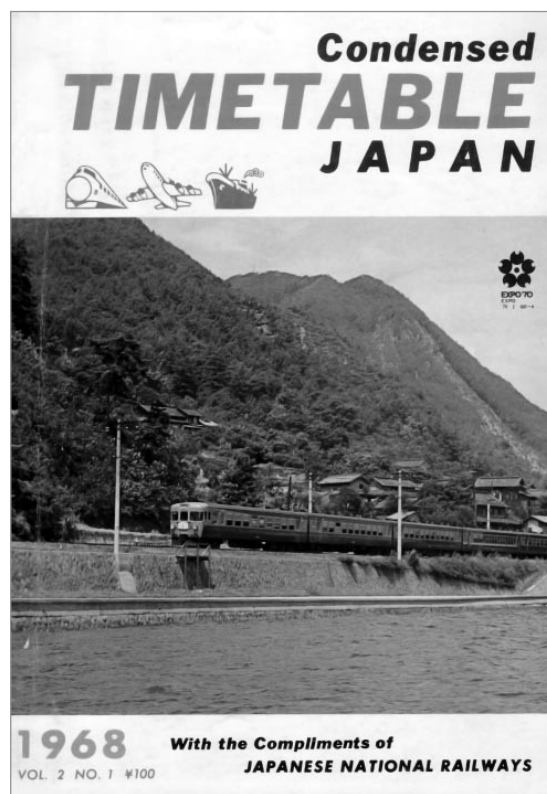
Japan regained its independence in April 1952 when the San Francisco Peace Treaty came into force. The RTOs were abolished and Japanese were permitted on Allied-forces trains on a limited basis. A leaflet distributed by JNR to Japanese about such trains noted that the trains could be called the 'first international trains in Japan' and urged Japanese passengers to cooperate with on-train etiquette and keeping cars clean. For military passengers, it gave a disturbing caution to 'Please take care of your belongings when leaving your seats.'

Rapid Economic Growth: Japan as Major Political and Economic Power

The depressing occupation era eventually passed and English timetables from the late 1950s again became purely guides for tourists. In terms of the social situation, a 1956 Japanese Economic White Paper declared that the postwar period was over. From then on, Japan saw unparalleled rapid economic growth and was again working to attract tourists from abroad to stimulate the economy by securing foreign capital. The Japan Tourism Association was established to achieve this goal and efforts to promote inbound tourism to Japan and build an environment for accepting foreign tourists accelerated. English railway timetables were an unsung hero supporting this policy. Incidentally, JNR's English timetable was completely compiled by the JNR Foreign Department and printed and bound by a Tokyo company. By contrast, French National Railways (SNCF) issued its English timetables far away in North America, listing international trains and major domestic trains, thus demonstrating its commitment to attracting foreign tourists.



English timetable for first shinkansen operations (October 1964) (Author)



English timetable issued by JTB (1968) (Author)

construction expenses rising far beyond expectations was one cause. However, Japan's era of high economic growth was showing no signs of slowing, and society as a whole was optimistic. The number of foreign visitors to Japan in 1964 was 350,000, a paltry number compared to the more than 8 million today, but still a large increase from the prewar levels. 1964 was also the year that JTB started tours for foreign visitors to Japan.

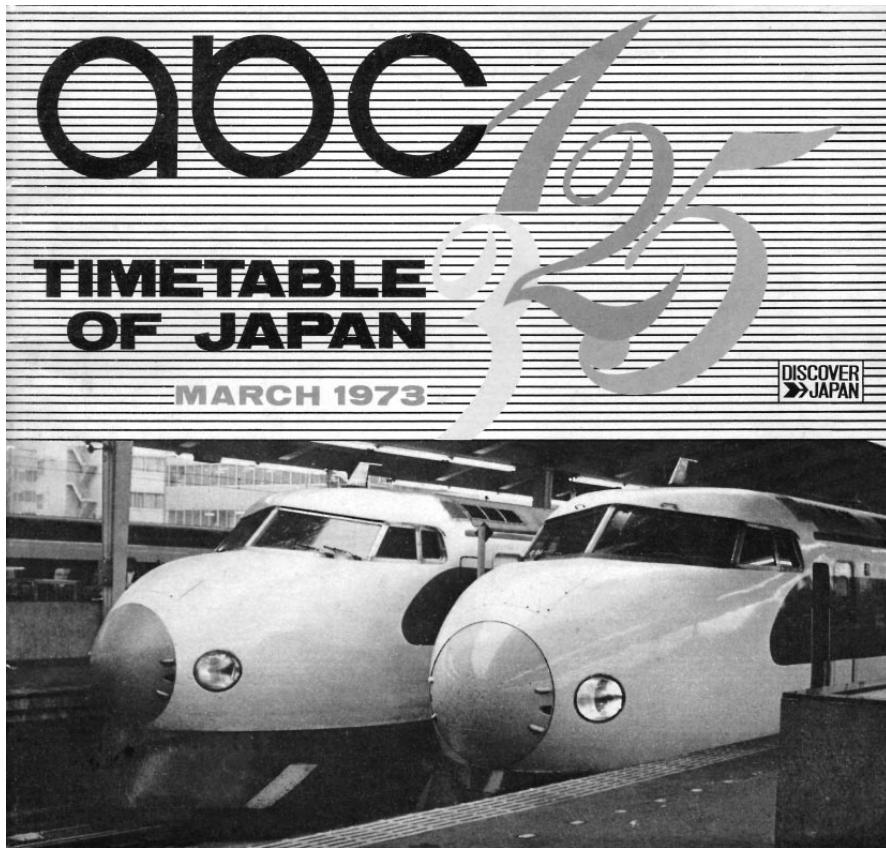
JNR had issued timetables for foreign visitors up to this point, but JTB took over that job from autumn 1965, starting sales to tourists abroad. This was no coincidence if one takes into account the close relationship between JNR and JTB at the time. Up to the 1987 JNR privatization, JNR oversaw JTB's timetables for Japanese and purchased a large volume every month for its internal use. Operation of JNR Station Travel Centres was also outsourced to JTB.

English timetables issued by JTB were titled *Condensed Timetable Japan* and the size was reduced to B6 after 1967 for easier carrying. The guidance on how to ride JNR trains was actually in English and French. The timetables covered nearly all local express and faster trains in Japan along with schedules for trains on private lines to tourist destinations such as Hakone and Ise and the ferry schedule for the Kansai Steamship Company connecting Osaka with the hot springs area of Beppu. In that way, it had more substantial tourism content than the timetable issued by JNR. Guidance to famous sites across the country and addition of advertising

was reminiscent of prewar timetables, but the addition of departure times of international airlines in the back was a major difference. Airline times had been included in the Japanese version up to the early 1960s but were omitted due to lack of space with increased train runs. 1964 saw the return of overseas travel by ordinary Japanese but there were still some restrictions when travelling abroad. The numbers of Japanese travellers abroad did not increase immediately, so the absence of international air routes was no major hindrance. International air routes in timetables for Japanese did not reappear for another 20 years until 1987.

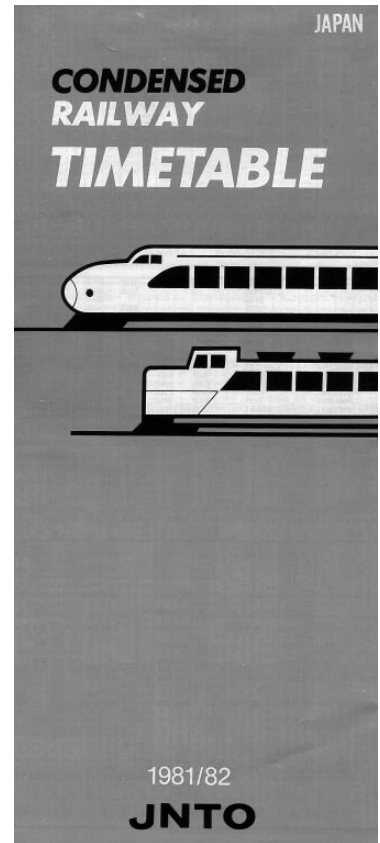
JTB's timetables for foreign visitors disappeared at some point, but a mini-timetable was published later in October 1984. It was targeted mainly at business travellers, and was limited to shinkansen, limited expresses, and expresses. It had line and station names in alphabetic notation next to the Japanese to assist foreign travellers.

Japan's GNP became the world's second largest in 1968, and the World's Fair was held in Osaka in 1970. In light of the robust economy, new English timetables were issued again in the 1970s. The first issue of *ABC Timetable of Japan* bearing the same name as the famous UK publisher appeared in March 1973. However, the content was not in the UK style with station names listed in alphabetic order, and it used the traditional Western Table-Number format. In fact, the only connection to ABC of the UK was that it simply borrowed the ABC name. The timetable was ambitiously



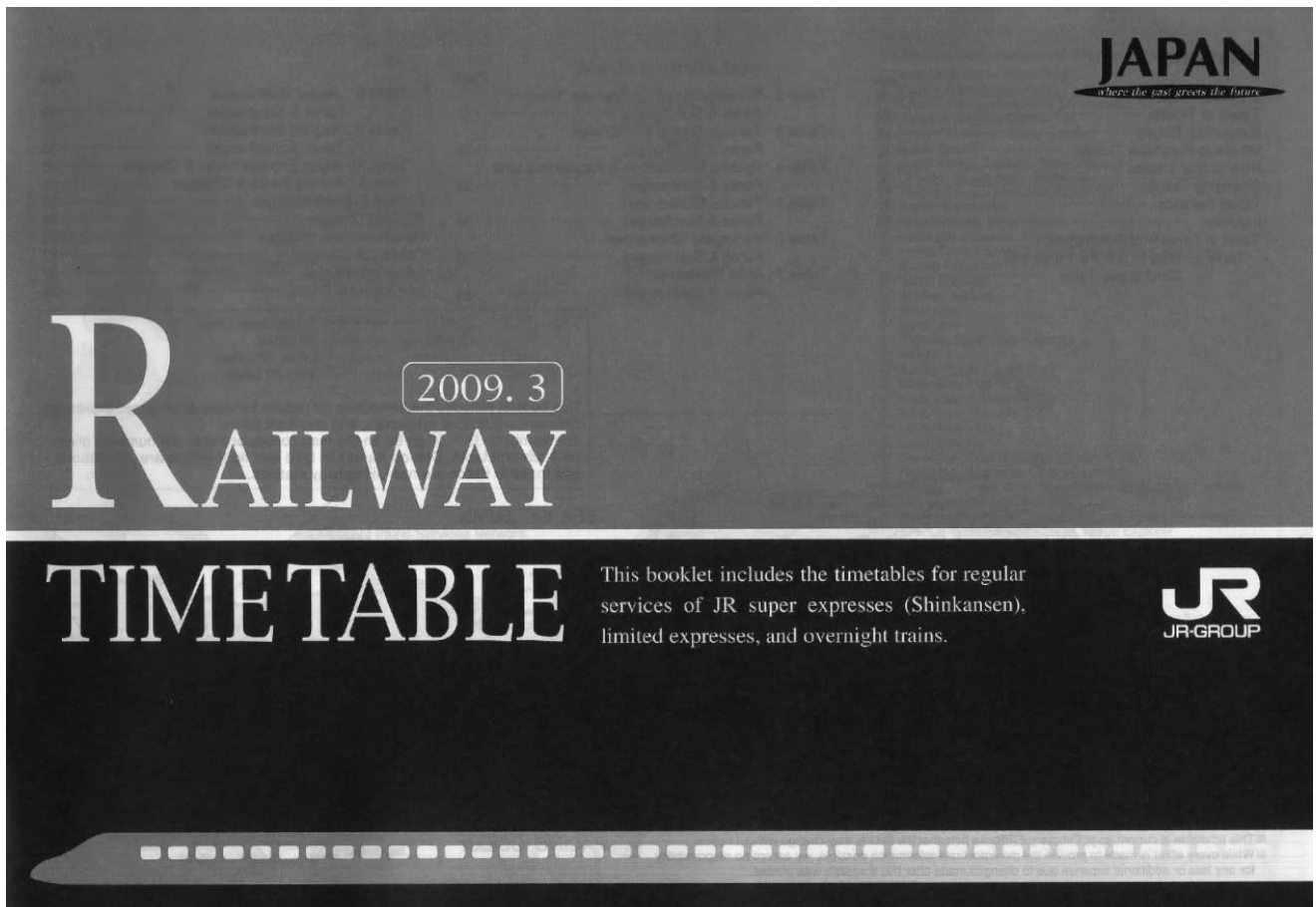
ABC Timetable of Japan (March 1973)

(Author)



English timetable issued by Japan National Tourist Organization (1981)

(Author)



English timetable issued by JR Group (March 2009)

(Author)

edited, as demonstrated by the relatively large number of bus lines to tourist destinations, but whether it was continuously published monthly is unfortunately not clear.

Looking at timetables of the era, we can see a major change from the 1950s to the mid-1960s. The variety of nicknames given to trains dropped dramatically. Trains running on the same section were increasingly named in a *Train Name + Number* format. The 350 or so train nicknames in 1967 dropped to about 260 with the October 1968 schedule change. This may have been in preparation for computerized reservations. JNR started the world's first MARS online seat reservation system in 1960 and set up Green Window reserved seat sales offices in major stations in an attempt to further increase seating capacity using the opportunities presented by the opening of the shinkansen. Computers of the time were quite limited in functionality compared to now, and attempts were made to reduce the volume of data that needed to be stored. Making guidance for passengers concise of course also drove this change.

This deviates a bit from the topic of foreign language timetables issued in Japan, but I would like to introduce a topic of interest from 1977. Japanese railway schedules became a famous media overseas and were widely distributed. The timetable published by venerable British company Thomas Cook had originally covered Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa under the name *Continental Timetable*, and it started listing railway schedules for North America in the 1970s. It went even further in the January 1977 issue by changing the title to *International Timetable* and carrying railway schedules for the entire world, including Japan's shinkansen and major conventional lines. It covered railways of developing countries too, so Japan was not particularly singled out for special coverage. But with that publication, one could find an outline of Japanese railways overseas. There were anecdotes, however, of various mistakes because JNR's content check was insufficient. The section of Thomas Cook's *International Timetable* excluding Europe was officially spun off in 1981, and is known today as the *Overseas Timetable*.

While it is unclear whether Thomas Cook's coverage of schedules prompted JNR, it did start issuing the Japan Rail Pass in May 1981. Until that time, special fares for foreign visitors were available only for overseas tourist parties of 15 or more people (with a certificate from the Japanese embassy) and packages that included transportation fares and lodging on specific sightseeing routes. Japanese railways could not be said to have been very considerate to individual foreign travellers who wanted to travel freely at a reasonable price, but the appearance of the Japan Rail Pass like the Eurail Pass at last met that need.

Epilogue

JNR underwent a major transformation in April 1987 when it was privatized and split into several regional companies. This upheaval coincided with the end of the Cold War, and the flow of people and goods was stimulated further by the appearance of a global society. Japan had been in a period of low growth but was blessed again with robust growth in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The country's place as a centre of global economy and culture along with Europe and the USA was made even more distinct. Today, the Japanese government is promoting its Visit Japan Campaign with the lofty goal of attracting 10 million foreign visitors in 2010.

Both the JR group as a whole and each individual JR company in the group have been working to develop an environment to better accommodate foreign tourists. With the growth of the Internet and other information technologies, anyone can now find schedules and how to use Japanese railways from the comfort of their home. However, the JR companies still distribute the *Railway Timetable* in English with notes on shinkansen, limited express, and overnight train schedules to major travel agencies. It is issued when major changes are made to train schedules. JR Central also has an English timetable for the Tokaido and San'yo shinkansen, and JR East has leaflets noting schedules for the Narita Express (airport access) services.

I am sure that the almost century-long history of foreign-language railway timetables in Japan, sometimes at the mercy of difficult international circumstances, will continue and will still provide a glimpse of the times when they were issued. ■



Yoshiki Soga

Mr Soga graduated in 1995 in transport economics from Waseda University's School of Commerce. He currently works for Railway Information Systems Co., Ltd. in the JR group of companies where he is involved with operation of JR's highway bus seat reservation system. His interest in railways and transport in general goes back to his schoolboy years, and he has been collecting domestic and foreign historical timetables as a hobby for more than 20 years. He is the author of several books, including *Reading World History from Transportation Timetables* (Shakai Hyoron Sha, 2008).