An Overview of Pre-Meiji Works in the Japanese Section, Asian Division, Library of Congress

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Printing in Japan began in the 8th century, but what we call commercial publishing dates from the Edo period (1603-1867). Yōzō Konda has written, "The publishing business which was established in the Edo period took the outstanding products of Japanese intellectual activity since earliest times and turned them all into published works. Due to this publishing business, the classics, which had been limited to the nobility became, for the first time, the property of all the Japanese people. We can say that this was the liberation of the classics."

Many works produced as a result of that intellectual activity and published in the Edo period are in the Asian Division of the Library of Congress, in the collection we refer to as "Pre-Meiji Works." This collection comprises woodblock printings which were published in Japan mainly from the 17th century to 1867 (Keiō 3) and manuscripts of books, copied during the same period. In addition to these works, the Japanese Section of the Asian Division also has several old prints and classics which were printed before the Edo period. In this paper, as a matter of convenience, I will discuss these special items together with the pre-Meiji collection as I comment on the manner of acquisition, the scope, and the contents of the pre-Meiji works. This is followed by a summary of the present state of the processing of this collection and a note about the hours and location of the Asian Division's Japanese Section and the Division's reading room.

The pre-Meiji Works in the Library of Congress were acquired from six sources:

A. A collection on Japanese art works consisting of 300 books donated to the Library of Congress in 1905 by Crosby Stuart Noyes, including illustrated books, some eight percent of which are original manuscripts. Single prints from the Noyes donation have all been transferred to the Library's Prints and Photographs Division.

B. The collection purchased for the Library of Congress between 1907 and 1908 by Professor Kan'ichi Asakawa (1873-1948) of Yale University consists of approximately 740 titles, about half of which are manuscript codices. The main subjects are Tokugawa government laws, local administration, history, regional geography, and Buddhism.

C. Works purchased for the Library of Congress between 1915 and 1926 by Dr. Walter Tennyson Swingle, a botanist with a special interest in Asian botany, who worked for the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Plant Industry.

D. Selected works which were collected between 1937 to 1940 by Dr. Shio Sakasnishi (1896-1976), formerly the Chief Assistant in Japanese at the Library of Congress. This group consists of about 900 titles, one-third of which are literary works.

E. A collection of works on Japanese mathematics consisting of 403 titles purchased from a private collector in 1949.

F. Miscellaneous works acquired from a variety of sources over a period of years. Among these are numerous titles which were transferred from the Washington Document Center. These are books and manuscripts relating mainly to military science and Buddhist texts.

The collection of Pre-Meiji Works is thus composed of these six groups of materials. Altogether, the works in this collection number some 4,200 titles in 14,000 fascicles.
In order to discuss more clearly the conditions surrounding the publication of these works, I divide the 264 years of the Edo period into three subperiods:

1. The early period, from 1603 (Keichō) to 1643 (Kan'ei), that is, from the time Tokugawa Ieyasu became shōgun and founded the Tokugawa government until the basic system was firmly established.

2. The middle period, from 1644 (Shōhō) to 1763 (Horeki), which was a period of stability under the Bakuhanshu system.

3. The late Edo period, from 1764 (Meiwa) to 1867 (Kaiō), the period of unrest and decline, ending with the fall of the Tokugawa regime and the beginning of the Meiji Restoration.

Within this scheme of periodization, we find that a mere one percent of the works in the pre-Meiji collection was published during the early Edo period, some eighteen percent during the middle period, and seventy-one percent during the later Edo period. The forty years from 1804 to 1844, covering the Bunka, Bunsei, and Tenpō reign eras, was a period during which what has been called “the publishing boom of the Edo period” took place. Thirty-one percent of all works printed during the late Edo period were published during these forty years.

The subject matter of the pre-Meiji works in the Library of Congress covers a very wide range from general works to such specialized topics as library science. Viewed by subject category, 17% of the works are on literature, 11% on Japanese mathematics, 9% on art, 8% on military science, 7% on religion, 5% on history, 5% on local geography, 4% on law and local administration, 3% on medicine and pharmacology, 3% on botany, and 28% on other topics.

A description of some of the unique printed materials and manuscripts dating from pre-Meiji times will provide an idea of the various subjects and book formats of the works contained in the collection.

1. **Muku Jōkō-kyō: Jishin'in Darani** 純鳴浄心大明願

   [Immaculate and Pure Light Sutra: section on purification of the heart from sins]

   **Muku Jōkō-kyō** is the second oldest extant example of printing in the world, dating from 770 A.D., and consists of four dharani passages from Buddhist sutras used as charms. Empress Shōtoku (718-710), grateful for the end of an eight-year civil war, ordered that the dharani be printed for the dead. One million pagodas in which the dharani were inserted, were distributed to ten temples throughout the country. The Library of Congress has one of these pagodas and three of the original charms: two **Jishin'in Darani** 純鳴浄心大明願 and one **Konpon Dharani** 根本大願尼

2. **Kan'yaku Butten Jōdo Sanbukyō: Bussetsu Muryōjukyō, Kan'muryōjukyō, Amidakyō** 漢訳淨土三部経: 本願無量寿経, 觀無量壽経, 阿弥陀経

   [The three basic sutras of the Pure Land School]

   These were probably printed at Honseiji Temple in Kaga Province (modern Ishikawa Prefecture) during the 15th century. Since neither the social nor cultural environment for the establishment of a commercial publishing business were present during the Muromachi period (1392-1573), the printing of Buddhist texts was done by the large temples. The temples preserved the woodblock plates for a long time and printed the books in small numbers of copies at a time whenever they were needed. The work of printing Buddhist books and texts during that period was one part of Buddhist cultural activities.

This copy was printed in the early 17th century, mostly with movable type at a press in Saga, Kyoto. Books printed at Saga are known as Saga-bon [saga books]. The Saga-bon in the Library of Congress is not believed to be an authentic one, but, because it appears to have been heavily influenced by the Saga-bon printing tradition, it is categorized as a Saga book. Its printing and calligraphic style, in hiragana mixed with Chinese characters, closely resembles authentic Saga-bon printings. According to Kawase Kazuma (1906-), as Saga-bon began to appear, movable type printing in hiragana with characters developed and the publication of books of Japanese literature flourished greatly. This, in turn, was clearly the main cause of the development of Japanese literature during the Edo period.3

4. *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 [The Tale of Genji], in 60 volumes.

*Genji monogatari*, block print volumes with illustrations, published in 1654 (Joo 宗城 3). As an illustrated *Genji monogatari*, this set is thought to be the second such edition published in Japan. It is remarkably rare to have a set of this edition complete with all sixty volumes. That the *Genji monogatari* was published at this early date may be regarded as evidence that the classics of Japanese literature had already passed from the hands of the nobility and upper classes to those of the general population.

5. *Hiroshige gacho* 広重画帖 [The Sketchbooks of Ando Hiroshige], in 2 volumes.

The original hand-drawn sketchbooks of the famous ukiyoe artist, Ando Hiroshige (1797-1858). One volume is primarily of sketches of scenery and the other contains drawings of human figures. Both volumes are sketched in water color and retain the spirit of Japanese traditional beauty; moreover, they are drawn with a rich lyrical flavor. These books are thought to have been produced when he was about fifty years old and at the height of his artistic powers. The sketchbooks were published in facsimile by George Braziller of New York in 1984.

6. *Meriken kokai niki ryakuzun* 米利堅航海日記 [Illustrated Records of a Voyage to America], in 1 fascicle.

This work is believed to have been produced by one of the members of the First Japanese Embassy to the United States in 1860; the illustrator, however, is unknown. It consists of forty-six hand drawn sketches in black ink filled in with a light blue color. The Kanrin-maru, the ship used to sail to America, appears at the beginning of the illustrated record; the rest of the sketches are the scenes, figures, and artifacts of the various countries and cities to which the Embassy members travelled on their voyage around the world.

7. *Shinshiroku* 慎思録 [Record of Prudent Reflections] by Kaibara Ekiken 貝原益軒

The largest number of pre-Meiji works by a single author are those written by Kaibara Ekiken (1630-1714), fifty-three titles in all. Notable among these is one of his major contributions to Confucian studies, entitled *Shinshiroku* in six volumes, published in 1714. In this work his anti-Chu Hsi predilections have intensified since his earlier work, *Jigoshu* 自娛集 [Essays for My Amusement], published in 1712, and were to be stressed even more strongly in his *Daigiroku* 大疑録 [Grave Doubts] which was written before his death in 1714.

With mention made of this significant work by Kaibara as representative of other Confucian studies in our pre-Meiji collection, we turn now to the processing involved in maintaining these works. At present, work on the collection of pre-Meiji books is proceeding from two directions. First, we are taking steps for the necessary physical protection of these works for their preservation; and second, we are compiling and publishing a bibliography of the collection. However, we are not planning to catalog these works at present under the
Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, Second Edition. Instead, we are preparing them for bibliographical listing so as to make them accessible for research. As to physical protection, we are constructing traditional-style wrapping cases for the books. This prevents destruction of the form of the books and also serves to protect them from damage from light and dust.

What we believe to be the oldest block print book in the collection of the Japanese Section is Shubun in'ryaku 聚分譯略, a phonemic dictionary of Chinese characters printed in 1539. It is said that such books will last for a thousand years if made with kozo, a good quality paper made from the paper mulberry, and if kept in a favorable environment with adequate protection.

Progressing little by little, the compilation of the bibliography of the entire collection moves along. A bibliography of the 400 titles on Japanese mathematics was completed in 1982 and was published by the Library of Congress. Up to the present time, a checklist has been made covering a broad range of the subjects found in the collection. With the results so far achieved, access is now provided for about sixty percent of the pre-Meiji holdings of the Library.

Another project is the editing of a bibliography of the titles on language and literature. In approaching the production of such a volume, we have devised a new descriptive format. See the sample for bibliographic notation appended to this article. This is a simplified version of the format used by the Kokubungaku Kenkyu Shiryokan 国文学研究資料館 (National Institute of Japanese Literature in Japan) which we consulted when devising our own notation.

In this bibliography, we use title main entry. The reason for this was that there are numerous cases in Japanese classical literature where there is no generally accepted opinion as to authorship or where the author's name is difficult to read correctly even where a reading is given. Whenever possible, we take the caption title (kanto shomei 卷頭書名) which appears on the first page of text. Older works often have three or four titles. That is to say, the title of a work may appear on the cover (hyodai 表題), on the endpaper (mikaeishi 見返し), on a title page (tobira 扉), on the first page of text, or as a heading (hanshin or hashira 広株). Even in a single book these titles may not necessarily match. In such cases, the Japanese practice is to choose the caption title; and the Library of Congress follows that practice.

In general, kusazoshi 草雙紙 (popular works, illustrated and written in kana), do not have a caption title; the cover title or a title on the endpaper then becomes the authority for title choice.

There are also complicated problems concerning imprint information. For example, in cases where a number of persons are listed as publishers in the colophon, it is difficult to know which one was the main publisher or to decide which one was the owner of the woodblock plates. Such decisions must be made for each book on a case-by-case basis. As for the precise date of publication, probably only a specialist in Japanese bibliography would be able to make an accurate determination. Rules for recording imprint and other information are explained in Wa-Kansho mokurokuho 和漢書目録法 by Kei Tanaka 田中敬, in Zukai kosho mokurokuho 図解古書目録法 and other works by Kikuya Nagasawa 長澤規也.

In compiling the checklist of old books and in editing the bibliography, there are numerous cases where the application of the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules is inappropriate and, as one would expect, it is more convenient to follow the time-honored rules traditionally used in the Orient.

Today numerous classical literary works are published in modern editions and it is therefore unnecessary for one to consult an older edition in order to understand the intellectual content of a classical work. However, old books are artifacts of the culture learned and practiced by the people of previous centuries and, as such, these old books are indispensable sources for the broad study of culture. In this sense, I believe the existence of these pre-Meiji works in the Library of Congress has a unique significance.

The sections of the Asian Division and the Division reading room are open to readers from 8:30 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. from Monday through Friday and from 8:30 A.M. to 12:30 P.M. on Saturday. The sections, reading room,
and office are closed on Sundays and national holidays. The Asian Division is located on the First Floor of the John Adams Building. Room and telephone numbers for the service units are listed below:

Asian Division (LA Room 1024)                    (202) 287-5420/5426
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20540
(Dr. J. Thomas Rimer, Chief)

Japanese Section                                        287-5430/5431
Room 1014

The pre-Meiji works are housed in the Japanese Section rare book collection. They are not on the open shelf but are available for review from Monday through Friday from 8:30 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. to those who wish access to them under certain conditions and regulations defined by the Library.

1 Konda, Yozo. Edo no honyasen: kinsei bunkashi no sokumen 江戸の本屋さん - 近世日本史の側面

2 The oldest, printed in 751 A.D., was discovered in Korea in 1968.

3 Kazuma Kawase. Kokatsuiban no kenkyu 古活字版の研究

   Congress, 1982.


--- Wa-Kan koshu mokurokuho 和漢古書目録法. N.p., 195?