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The 2023 Japanese Rare Book Workshop on Edo Printed Books: A Report

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Setsuko Noguchi, Princeton University

Introduction

The *Japanese Rare Book Workshop on Edo Printed Books* was held at the Library of Congress (LC) in Washington DC from August 9 to 11, 2023, accompanied by a half-day tour of the National Museum of Asian Art (NMAA), Smithsonian Institution on August 11. This three-day workshop was organized by the Subcommittee on Japanese Rare Books, Committee on Japanese Materials (CJM) within the Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL) in collaboration with LC's Asian Division and NMAA and its Library, with invaluable support from Professor Takahiro Sasaki of Shido Bunko, Keio University 慶應大学斯道文庫, serving as the instructor. The workshop was made possible through generous funding provided by the Toshiba International Foundation (TIFO), coupled with administrative assistance from the Association for Asian Studies.

This workshop serves as a continuation of the *Japanese Rare Book Workshop on Edo Hanpon: Methods of Understanding the Edo Printed Books*, which was also organized by the Subcommittee on Japanese Rare Books with support from instructor Professor Sasaki and was held at what was then referred to as the Library of the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (now recognized as the NMAA Library) from April 30 to May 2, 2018. This workshop, which was funded by AAS's Northeast Asia Council (NEAC) and the hosting library, drew the participation of more than 20 attendees from diverse North American institutions, including librarians, curators, and scholars.

Prior to this, the Subcommittee had previously organized a one-day general workshop on Japanese rare books at the Art Institute of Chicago, which was held in conjunction with the 2015 AAS Annual Conference. Witnessing the strong interest in the subject in the field of Japanese Studies and receiving encouraging feedback from participants in these workshops, the Subcommittee recognized the demand for yet another workshop. Indeed, by 2020, NMAA Librarian Reiko Yoshimura (who retired from the position in 2023) had initiated preparations for a sequel workshop scheduled for 2021. However, the intricate circumstances brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic prevented it from proceeding, and the plan has evolved to hold the workshop at LC during the current year.

Objectives of the workshop

The rapid technological advancements in recent years have heightened our awareness of the pressing need to acquire better knowledge of Japanese rare materials to make them more visible and accessible for research and teaching. The focus of the 2023 workshop remained centered on printed books from the Edo period (1603–1869), as most Japanese rare materials held by North American institutions are printed books published in this period. The objective of the workshop was set for participants to gain advanced bibliographic knowledge including definitions of specialized terms, sources of printing information, determination of the imprint date, and other aspects of printing culture in the Edo period.

Such knowledge is crucial to the success of collaborative projects for the digitization and preservation of Japanese rare materials held by North American institutions and beyond.

Instructor and participants

Following the 2015 and 2018 workshops described above, the Subcommittee once again invited Professor Takahiro Sasaki as the instructor for the 2023 *Japanese Rare Book Workshop on Edo Printed Books*. He is an established scholar specializing in Japanese literature and bibliography and is especially known for his unique approach to comprehensive bibliographic research for Japanese rare materials. His *Nihon Koten Shoshigakuron* 日本古典書誌学論, which is a compilation of his research on the relationship between bibliography and text, is one of the most acknowledged works on the subject by both scholars and librarians.¹ His more recent accomplishments include a new monograph publication entitled *Haga Yaichi "Kokubungaku" no Tanjō* 芳賀八一「国文学」の誕生 (2021) and contribution to the MOOCs FutureLearn online courses as the lead educator in the “Japanese Culture Through Rare Books” and “The Art of Washi Paper in Japanese Rare Books” among others.

The 2023 workshop was attended by 22 participants, comprising 19 librarians/specialists and curators, along with 3 PhD students, from 13 different institutions from the United States and Canada (see Appendix for a list of workshop participants). The workshop has provided the participants with a unique and valuable opportunity to engage with seven colleagues from the Library of Congress, which has the largest number of staff dedicated to Japanese materials outside of Japan.

Program

The workshop took place daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. over the course of three days. During the initial two days, Professor Sasaki delivered lectures on such topics as the following, showing actual old and rare Japanese materials that he had brought over from Japan:

1. History of printing in Japan: e.g., *jiinban* 寺院版, *Gozan-ban* 五山版, *kokatsujiban* 古活字版, *machihan* 町版, and *mokkatsujiban* 木活字版
2. On binding styles and sizes of printed books: e.g., the relationship between binding styles and sizes specifically of printed books and their contents
3. On paper and covers of printed books: e.g., digital observation of paper, covers and contents, historical changes of covers, and alterations of binding
4. On *kokatsujiban*, or early movable type printing: e.g., Korean and Jesuit mission editions, types and period classification, and identification methods
5. Laws and regulations related to publishing and booksellers: e.g., booksellers for serious books and those for lower-status literary genres, guilds of booksellers, and *kashihon'ya* or commercial lending libraries

¹ Takahiro Sasaki, *Nihon Koten Shoshigakuron* (Kasama Shoin, 2016). This publication was awarded the 39th Kadokawa Gen'yoshi Prize in Literature by Kadokawa Culture Promotion Foundation in 2017.

6. Historical changes of printed books in the Edo period: e.g., literary history genres, illustrations, *Tanrokubon* 丹緑本, and *Nishikie* prints
7. Points of examination for printed books 1: e.g., statements on publication details, edition types, and reprint publications
8. Points of examination for printed books 2: e.g., substitutions of missing volumes, rebinding of books into a single volume, and other later alterations

On the third day of the workshop, visits to a) Asian Division, b) Main Reading Room, c) Geography and Map Division, and d) Northeast Asia Section, Asian and Middle Eastern Division (AMED) at LC, as well as a visit to the NMAA Library were arranged, so that the participants could look at more materials from the respective libraries. While book viewing visits a) through c) at LC were coordinated by Eiichi Ito of the Asian Division, a meeting at d) was suggested by Jessalyn Zoom, Chief of AMED, where most of LC's cataloging librarians of Japanese materials belong. In this additional meeting, the need for developing Japanese rare book cataloging expertise was confirmed among some meeting participants. Viewing of the NMAA's Pulverer Collection and library collections of Edo-period books was organized by Kit Brooks, Japan Foundation Assistant Curator of Japanese Art, and Reiko Yoshimura. Prior to the workshop, Professor Sasaki made a selection of the materials to be displayed at both LC and NMAA and commented on each of those materials during respective visits. Additionally, Setsuko Means introduced selected Edo period maps from LC's Geography and Map Division.

During the workshop, breakfast, lunch, and break times served as valuable networking points for the participants. The Subcommittee appreciated very much the refreshments provided by LC's Asian Division for all break time during the workshop. In addition, a reception/dinner was offered to all the participants and the hosts on the evening of the second day, which was fully supported by the TIFO grant.

The handouts for the lectures and the lists of materials shown at respective tours are available at the CJM website at:

<https://www.eastasianlib.org/newsite/cjm/workshops/#japanese-rare-book-workshop-on-edo-printed-books-2023>

Post-workshop survey

The survey was conducted on 23 participants from August 16 to 23. The total number of respondents was 15 out of 23. The survey questions and responses are as follows:

A-1. Please tell us which session(s) you liked in the workshop. (Multiple answers possible)

1. History of printing in Japan: e.g., *jiinban* 寺院版, *Gozan-ban* 五山版, *kokatsujiban* 古活字版, *machihan* 町版, and *mokkatsujiban* 木活字版 (Selected by 13)
2. On binding styles and sizes of printed books: e.g., the relationship between binding styles and sizes specifically of printed books and their contents (Selected by 11)
3. On paper and covers of printed books: e.g., digital observation of paper, covers and contents, historical changes of covers, and alterations of binding (Selected by 11)
4. On *kokatsujiban*, or early movable type printing: e.g., Korean and Jesuit mission editions, types and period classification, and identification methods (Selected by 11)

5. Laws and regulations related publishing and booksellers: e.g., booksellers for serious books and those for lower-status literary genres, guilds of booksellers, and *kashihon'ya* or commercial lending libraries (Selected by 14)
6. Historical changes of printed books in the Edo period: e.g., literary history genres, illustrations, *Tanrokubon* 丹緑本, and *Nishikie* prints (Selected by 14)
7. Points of examination for printed books 1: e.g., statements on publication details, edition types, and reprint publications (Selected by 15)
8. Points of examination for printed books 2: e.g., substitutions of missing volumes, rebinding of books into a single volume, and other later alterations (Selected by 15)

A-2. Please tell us if you have any thoughts or comments on the sessions.

Nine participants expressed their appreciation to Professor Sasaki for the finest and well-provided sessions. Four participants who work with cataloging said that the lecture would be useful for their job. There are no negative comments on the sessions.

A-3. Did you use paper handouts, digital files, or both for the lecture materials?

Paper handout	7
Digital files only	0
Both	8

B. Please tell us your thoughts on each tour and conference on the third day of the workshop.

B-1. Display and explanation of Japanese rare materials at the Asian Division of the Library of Congress.

1. Very dissatisfied	0
2. Somewhat dissatisfied	0
3. Ordinary	0
4. Somewhat satisfied	3
5. Very satisfied	12

B-2. LC Main Reading Room tour.

1. Very dissatisfied	0
2. Somewhat dissatisfied	1
3. Ordinary	3
4. Somewhat satisfied	3
5. Very satisfied	8

B-3. Display and explanation of Japan old maps at the Geography and Map Division of LC

1. Very dissatisfied	0
2. Somewhat dissatisfied	1
3. Ordinary	3
4. Somewhat satisfied	3
5. Very satisfied	8

B-4. Meeting with the staff of the Northeast Asia Section, Asian and Middle Eastern Division of the LC.

1. Very dissatisfied	2
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- 2. Somewhat dissatisfied 7
- 3. Ordinary 2
- 4. Somewhat satisfied 2
- 5. Very satisfied 2

B-5. Display and explanation of Japanese rare materials at the National Museum of Asian Art

- 1. Very dissatisfied 0
- 2. Somewhat dissatisfied 0
- 3. Ordinary 1
- 4. Somewhat satisfied 1
- 5. Very satisfied 13

B-6. Please tell us your thoughts and comments on Day 3 (Displays at LC and NMAA, meeting at the LC, etc.)

Seven participants answered that the schedule of the third day was tight and four participants regretted that they did not have enough time to see Japanese old maps at the Map and Geographic Division. Six participants felt that the meeting with the staff of the Northeast Asia Section, Asian and Middle Eastern Division was unnecessary, or should have been planned well.

C-1. Please tell us your thoughts on the timing of the workshop.

- 1. Very dissatisfied 0
- 2. Somewhat dissatisfied 0
- 3. Ordinary 1
- 4. Somewhat satisfied 2
- 5. Very satisfied 12

C-2. What did you think about the length of the workshop (including tours)?

- 1. Very short 0
- 2. Somewhat short 1
- 3. Just right 13
- 4. Somewhat long 0
- 5. Very long 1

C-3. Would you like to participate in a future Japanese rare book workshop held in North America?

- 1. I'd love to participate 11
- 2. I'd love to participate if I could 2
- 3. I'm not sure 0
- 4. Maybe not 0
- 5. I will not participate 2

C-4. If you answered that you would like to participate in C-3, what kind of workshops would you like to attend?

Three participants suggested using actual university library collections, and/or hands-on cataloging sessions. Other answers vary; history of the books, bibliography, rare book

acquisition, lecture on the publications in the Edo and Meiji period, manuscripts, differences between manuscripts and printing, maps in the Edo period prints such as *sugoroku* (双六), ranking list (番付), and *kawara-ban* (瓦版). One participant suggested forming a discussion group on rare book acquisition.

C-5. Were you able to build connections with other participants during the workshop?

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Very dissatisfied | 0 |
| 2. Somewhat dissatisfied | 0 |
| 3. Ordinary | 1 |
| 4. Somewhat satisfied | 5 |
| 5. Very satisfied | 9 |

D. Please tell us if you have any thoughts or opinions on the whole workshop.

11 participants conveyed their appreciation through the survey to Professor Sasaki for the wonderful lecture and tireless work, the staff of the Library of Congress and the National Museum of Asian Art for their extensive hospitality, and the CJM Subcommittee on Japanese Rare Books for the preparation. Two participants liked the opportunities of building networks among the participants, three participants mentioned accessing digital files on the web, including the previous lecture materials.

Concluding remarks

The Subcommittee on Japanese Rare Books would like to extend its deepest appreciation to Professor Takahiro Sasaki, as well as the Library of Congress and the National Museum of Asian Art, particularly Eiichi Ito, Reiko Yoshimura, and Kit Brooks. Their invaluable support and thoughtful coordination at their respective institutions ensured the seamless execution of the workshop, which was filled with exceptionally rich content. Participants not only gained insights from the lectures but also had the opportunity to examine tangible examples of materials that showcase significant changes in the history of Japanese printing. The participants were profoundly impressed by the exceptionally rare materials held by both LC and NMAA. In conclusion, we express our gratitude to the Toshiba International Foundation, as this workshop would not have been possible without their support.

Appendix: Workshop participants

Tokiko Y. Bazzell (Librarian Emeritus, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa)

Kit Brooks (Japan Foundation Assistant Curator of Japanese Art, National Museum of Asian Art)

Brian Cheung (Librarian, China Section, Asian and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress)

Eric Esteban (PhD candidate, Yale University)

Keiko Hill (Japanese Cataloging Librarian/East Asian Serials and E-Resources Cataloging Librarian, University of Washington Libraries)

Chelsea Hudson (Librarian, Northeast Asia Section, Asian and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress)

Eiichi Ito (Reference Specialist, Asian Division, Library of Congress)

Yueying Li (PhD student, University of California, Los Angeles)

Toshie Marra (Librarian for Japanese Collection, University of California, Berkeley)

Setsuko Means (Librarian (Cataloging Team), Geography and Map Division, Library of Congress)

Eri Mizukane (Japanese/Korean Language Specialist (cataloger), University of Pennsylvania)

Haruko Nakamura (Librarian for Japanese Studies, Yale University)

Mitsutaka Nakamura (Japan Studies Librarian, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa)

Setsuko Noguchi (Japanese Studies Librarian, Princeton University)

Kumiko Reichert (East Asian Cataloging Librarian, Indiana University)

Chiaki Sakai (Japanese Studies Librarian, Columbia University Library)

Yoko Shimojo (Librarian, Northeast Asia Section, Asian and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress)

Saeko Suzuki (PhD student, University of British Columbia)

Fuki Tsujikawa (Library Technician, Northeast Asia Section, Asian and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress)

Chiharu Watsky (Japanese Cataloging Specialist, Princeton University)

Kristin Williams (Head of Scholarly Service Section, Asian Division, Library of Congress)

Ayako Yoshimura (Japanese Studies Librarian, University of Chicago)



Pictured above are the workshop organizers and participants, including Dr Dongfang Shao, Chief of Asian Division (front row, first from the left) and Professor Takahiro Sasaki, Shido Bunko, Keio Institute of Oriental Classics (front row, third from the left), (Photo: Tien Doan).