

Japanese Antiquarian Materials Workshop at Tenri University Library, June 2013

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In the previous issue, Michelle Hall and Ayako Hatta introduced the Tenri Workshop held in June 2013. In this article, some of the lectures given at the workshop will be described.

The Tenri workshop's aim was to deliver expertise to manage Japanese archival materials dispersed outside Japan and to provide researchers in the world with better accessibility. The curriculum was well constructed with theoretical concepts followed by practical issues. It was also a great opportunity to build networks with Japanese Studies librarians around the world.

History of printing

"Hyakumantō Darani" is regarded as one of the oldest existing printed documents with the proven printed date, 770 (Tenri Daigaku Toshokan 2013). Woodblocks were used for printing until the end of the Muromachi period. In the late 1500s, printing equipment of movable type was introduced from Western countries and Korea, however, it was used for approximately 50 years. Then, the woodblock printing resumed because it better suited for a large number of Japanese characters and its running script style. Woodblocks were prevalent until the late 19th century when the modern printing methods were incorporated.

Publication (刊) , impression/printing (印/刷) and impression with changes (修)

Woodblocks are durable and they can last for hundreds of years. When the publications from the long lasting woodblocks are examined, there are three key concepts to be aware of. They are publication (刊) , impression/printing (印/刷) and impression with changes (修).

Publication refers to the time when woodblocks were carved and printed from the woodblocks. Impression is a sole printing process. In many cases, publication and impression occurred at the same time. However, printing was often repeated in later years using the same woodblocks. In this case, it is difficult to identify the date of reprinting. The books are also republished by changing a part or parts of the original woodblocks. It may be also difficult to identify the date of printing from revised woodblocks because it is not always clearly indicated on the woodblocks. It is useful to check publication dates with "Kokusho sōmoku (国書総目録)" to grasp various impression dates of the same title held by other libraries. Ideally, the book under investigation is compared to other impressions to check clarity of letters and borders called *kyōkaku* (匡郭). When there is no other book to compare, digitised books available on the Internet could be useful. To identify publishers and publications between 1600s and 1800s, the resources, for example, "Kaitei zōho Kinsei shorin hanmoto sōran (改訂増補近世書林板元総覧)", "Kyōho igo Edo shuppan shomoku (享保以後江戸出版書目)" and "Kyōho igo Ōsaka suppan shoseki mokuroku (享保以後大阪出版書籍目録)" are useful.

Sexagenary cycle

When the year of publication with traditional sexagenary cycle is identified, it may be necessary to note the solar calendar year. The system originally came from China and consists of two groups of ordered symbols (*Kodansha encyclopedia of Japan* 1983). One contained 10 units called *jikkan*, and the other 12 units of animals called *jūnishi*. Two symbols from each set are combined in turn to count days, months and years which creates a 60 cycle. There are a number of resources which convert them to the solar calendar, for

example, “Wareki seireki henkan (和暦西暦変換<http://www.benricho.org/nenrei/sei-wa-conv.html>)”, “Gengōnen seirekinen henkan (元号年西暦年変換<http://koyomi8.com/sub/tool/gengoucalc.htm>)”.

Inki (印記) seals

Seals indicate the history of the item’s ownership, distribution and circulation among consumers and commercial lending libraries (Tenri Daigaku Toshokan 2013). To find details of seals, “Zōshoin database (蔵書印データベース http://base1.nijl.ac.jp/infolib/meta_pub/G0038791ZSI)” is useful.

Cursive writing

Woodblocks were carved after a text or image was manually drawn on papers and pasted on the wood. Books with manually written texts were not easy to read for current readers because of the cursive writings of three different types of Japanese characters. Examples of useful tools to decode these characters are “Kuzushiji yōrei jiten (くずし字用例辞典)” and “Denshi kuzushiji jiten (電子くずし字字典<http://wwwap.hi.u-tokyo.ac.jp/ships/shipscontroller>)” The above is just a few examples that the participants were taught. The knowledge, expertise and support that we were given by lecturers and library staff at the Tenri University are invaluable. It will help us assist researchers and students of Japanese Studies. Also, the networks strengthened among information professionals around the world will further enhance the collaboration and information exchange.

Reference

Kodansha encyclopedia of Japan. 1983. Tokyo ; New York: Kodansha.
Tenri Daigaku Toshokan. 2013. Tenri kotenseki workshop phase 2. Nara.