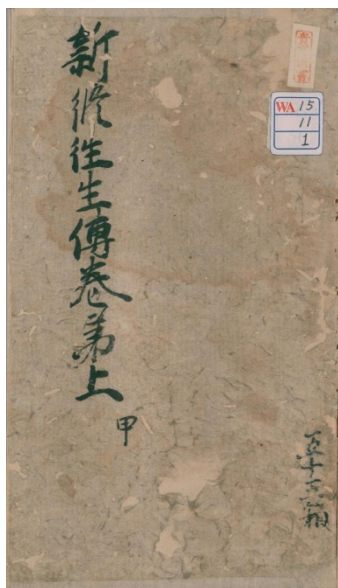


Material recently designated as a national important cultural property

*Shinshū jōdo ōjōden*

This is a translation of the article in Japanese of the same title  
in NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 630 (September 2013).



Shinshū jōdo ōjōden 新修浄土往生傳  
Jō ge kan 上・下巻  
<NDL call number: WA1-8>  
Edited by Ōko (Sung dynasty)  
Copied between 1128 and 1130  
Two volumes  
26.0 x 14.8cm

The *Shinshū jōdo ōjōden* (新修浄土往生傳) held by the National Diet Library (NDL) was newly designated as an important cultural property of Japan, based on the Council for Cultural Affairs' report of February 27, 2013. Its call number has been changed from WA15-11 to WA1-8 (Rare Books/National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties). The following is a brief description of this material.

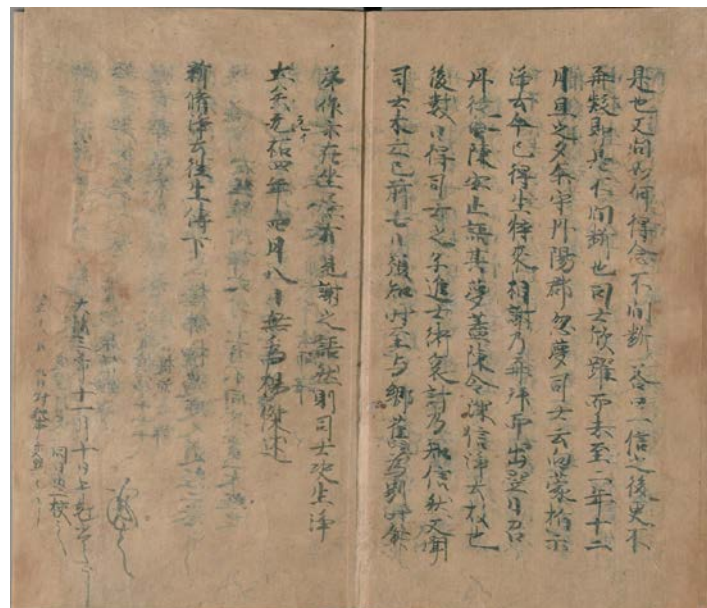
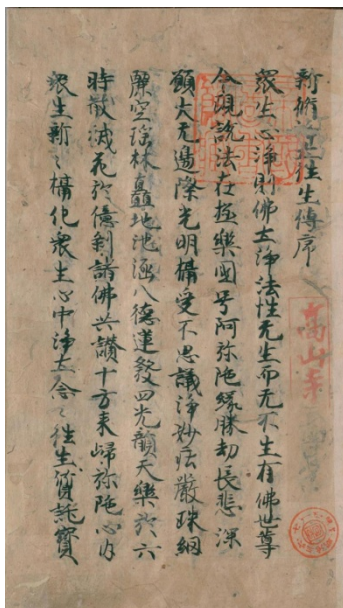
*Ōjōden* means collected biographies of people who had succeeded in being born again in the Pure Land after their death. Starting to be edited during the Tang dynasty (AD618-907) in China, this genre of work was edited in large numbers in and after the Sung dynasty (AD960-1279). These biographies brought into Japan contributed to the spread of the belief in the Pure Land among Japanese people, and the first *ōjōden* in Japan, *Nihon ōjō gokurakuki* (日本往生極樂記), was edited at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

The *Shinshū jōdo ōjōden* was edited by Ōko (Wang Gu) of the Sung dynasty. His own introduction to

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this work said that he had enlarged *Jōdo ōjōden* (浄土往生傳) edited by Kaiju (Jie Zhu) to make it a collection of biographies of 115 monks and lay people having faith in the Pure Land and who were believed to have gone there.

The work held by the NDL is a handwritten copy created between 1128 and 1130, in the late Heian Period. Judging from the fact that the two volumes, one having the indication “first volume” and the other “last volume,” include biographies of only 79 persons, it is presumed that another volume, the “middle volume,” is missing. At the end of the last volume, there is a colophon copied from the original, indicating that the work was published in June 1102. Thus the Chinese original work might have been published in the Sung dynasty, which is, however, not extant even in China. The work held by the NDL, handwritten copy made in Japan just a couple of decades after the publication of the original in China, merits attention for being the oldest remaining copy of this work as well as a document telling us how the Chinese culture had been accepted in Japan.



<<(left) preface of the first volume; (right) information at the end of the last volume on the date when the copy was created >>

Each of the two volumes has a red seal “Kōzanji” at the beginning, which proves that they had been handed down at the Kōzanji Temple, in Toganoo, Kyoto. The volumes are bound in a traditional way called “detchō-sō,” with papers folded in half glued on to each other on the outside folds, and the texts are hand-written on the both sides of the paper, blind-embossed between lines. Direction signs on how to read down Chinese texts had been inserted in red and black ink, which tells us that the text was being studied.

The front pages having the following inscriptions in the same hand with the main texts: “*Shinshū jōdo ōjōden kan jō (ge)*(first volume/ last volume) (新脩浄土往生傳卷上(下))” and “*Zensenbō no hon* (禪仙房之本) (the first three characters are erased in black ink)” might possibly be original covers. Outside covers in orange-tan color wrapping the volume were attached during the time they were held by the Imperial Library, predecessor of the NDL. In the case of numbers and symbols “kō (甲)” and “gojūgo hako (五十五箱)” written on the inside covers below the outside cover, identical with the box numbers described in a catalog of Kōzanji Temple edited in 1250, it seems that they were written in the Kōzanji Temple.

There are very few remaining copies of the *Shinshū jōdo ōjōden*: besides the copy introduced by this article, only the last volume copied in 1158 and held by the Tōdaiji Library is known as the sole old handwritten version confirmed to be extant. Accordingly, the one held by the NDL is a precious material as the existing oldest handwritten version.

All the 8 materials held by the NDL designated as national important cultural properties, including the *Shinshū jōdo ōjōden*, can be viewed in digital form in the NDL Digitized Contents ([http://dl.ndl.go.jp/?\\_lang=en](http://dl.ndl.go.jp/?_lang=en)).

List of the 8 materials:

[http://dl.ndl.go.jp/search/searchResult?categoryTypeNo=1&categoryGroupCode=C&viewRestricted=1&categoryCode=22&\\_lang=en](http://dl.ndl.go.jp/search/searchResult?categoryTypeNo=1&categoryGroupCode=C&viewRestricted=1&categoryCode=22&_lang=en)

Related articles of the NDL Newsletter on the other materials designated as national important cultural properties among NDL collection:

Shakushi ōrai (釋氏往來)

[http://www.ndl.go.jp/en/publication/ndl\\_newsletter/186/863.html](http://www.ndl.go.jp/en/publication/ndl_newsletter/186/863.html)

Sōke monjo (宗家文書)

[http://www.ndl.go.jp/en/publication/ndl\\_newsletter/159/596.html](http://www.ndl.go.jp/en/publication/ndl_newsletter/159/596.html)

5 others

[http://www.ndl.go.jp/en/publication/ndl\\_newsletter/137/375.html](http://www.ndl.go.jp/en/publication/ndl_newsletter/137/375.html)