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Selections from NDL collections

"Seiobo" painted by KANO Shunsho I
From Nogaku Zukan

Manuscript dating from the Genroku period (1688-1704),
2 scrolls, approx. 29 cm in height
Owned by the National Diet Library, Japan
*Available in the NDL Digital Collections.

Nogaku Zukan is the collective name of two picture scrolls created by KANO Shunsho I, an official painter for the Edo Shogunate. These two scrolls contain five scenes each from Noh plays set against various backdrops of either shoreline or mountain scenery. They are painted in vibrant colors on paper that has been decorated lavishly with gold powder. Although the Edo period was a time when numerous paintings of Noh performances were created, very few include outdoor scenery in their backdrops, so this work is quite unusual. It is also valuable in that it is one of only a few Noh paintings to include signatures and seals.

Seiobo is a Noh play based on ancient Chinese mythology. In the latter half of the play, a goddess named Seiobo descends from heaven to celebrate the reign of the emperor. Accompanying her is an attendant carrying peaches that ripen only once every three thousand years. Seiobo presents the emperor with the magical peaches, which convey perpetual youth and longevity, and then performs a magnificent dance. Having done this, she returns to heaven, her robe fluttering in the spring breeze. This painting depicts Seiobo as she first appears in front of the emperor upon descending from heaven. Shown on the far left wearing a crown is the figure of Seiobo. Leaning slightly forward with her robe fluttering in the wind, she conveys dynamic movement. The emperor is in the center of the picture, where both he and his vassals exhibit expressions of joy and surprise as they accept the peaches offered by Seiobo’s attendant. According to the script, Seiobo’s descent from heaven is also accompanied by peacocks, phoenixes, and other auspicious birds flying in the sky above and calling out to each. In this way, the painting is meant to celebrate a world of peace and tranquility.

(Translated by NOZAWA Asuka)
Selections from NDL collections

**ARTISTIC JAPAN—A magazine from western Europe on Japanese art**

TOGANO Yoko, Library Support Division, Kansai-kan of the National Diet Library

*This article is a part of translation of the article in Japanese in NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 723/724 (July/August 2021).*

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After the opening of Japan, Japanese art began to flow freely into Europe during the late 19th century, and *Japonisme* was born as a cultural phenomenon that reflected the popularity and influence of the Japanese aesthetic on Western artists. It was also during this brilliant era in western art history that the man who coined the expression *art nouveau*, art dealer Samuel Bing (1838–1905), contributed greatly to connecting Japanese and western arts.

Born in Germany to a family of tradesmen, Bing later moved to France, where he started a business as a dealer of Japanese art. Bing’s shop was adorned with numerous works of Japanese art that he himself had collected in Japan and exported to France with the aid of his brother-in-law, who was German consul in Yokohama. Many Japanese art enthusiasts frequented his shop, and it is even said that Vincent Van Gogh purchased ukiyo-e at Bing’s shop while he was in Paris.

The Expositions Universelles of 1867 and 1878 were particularly influential in promoting interest in Japanese culture. Thereafter, from the 1880s on, there are numerous examples of the systematic introduction of Japanese art to European audiences. It was during this time that Bing, who counted many first-rate enthusiasts of Japanese art among his acquaintances, published the glamorous magazine *Artistic Japan (Le Japon Artistique)*. Featuring articles contributed by his friends, *Artistic Japan* was published in French, English, and German editions from May 1888 to April 1891.

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*Artistic Japan: Illustrations and Essays*


Image 1: The front cover of the first issue, published in May 1888, featured *Mallard ducks and snow-covered reeds* by UTAGAWA Hiroshige. The price of the English version was 2 shillings per issue.
Edmond de Goncourt contributed an article to Artistic Japan No. 6 of October 1888 in which he wrote about yatate, a portable writing instrument that he believed to have been fabricated by a samurai from the Ako domain. Goncourt also wrote about the forty-seven rōnin of Ako—a story that he learned from the Japanese art dealer HAYASHI Tadamasa. On the left-hand page is an illustration of an Ako rōnin based on UTAGAWA Kuniyoshi’s Seichū Gishiden. Also shown is an explanation of the inscriptions found on the yatate. In the text, the name “OTAKA Nobukiyo” is given as one of the forty-seven rōnin, but this might be an erroneous conflation of two names: OTAKA Gengo and OISHI Nobukiyo.

The English version of the magazine was published concurrently with the French and German versions thanks to the efforts of Marcus B Huish (1845–1921), who oversaw the translation. Although there are no accurate circulation numbers known, Artistic Japan was distributed in France, the U. K., Germany, and the U. S., thus becoming an incomparable international magazine of Japanese art.

The front cover frequently featured vivid reproductions of ukiyo-e or other works of Japanese art, and every issue introduced a wide variety of information on Japan thanks to one article on Japanese art and history by a well-known writer. These writers included Louis Gonse (1846–1921), author of L’Art Japonais, one of the first comprehensive studies of Japanese art in French, and Edmond de Goncourt (1822–1896), whose literary works written with his brother are very well known, among others. Furthermore, each issue featured around 10 elaborate multicolor reproductions of Japanese art. Also each article contained sketches reproduced from edehon—books of sketches by well-known artists—that could be used by students to learn to sketch. Examples include Hokusai manga and Ippitsu gafu by KATSUSHIKA Hokusai. Altogether, these reproductions made for a visually appealing magazine. The National Diet Library holds all 36 issues, bound in 6 volumes. Each issue is large in size, roughly 33 by 25 cm and, being printed on sturdy paper, about 1 cm thick.
Bing wrote about his motivation for publishing the magazine in an article he wrote for the first issue, entitled “PROGRAMME.” He bemoaned the poor understanding that Europeans had in those days of Japanese art, which he claimed was so superficial that they could not distinguish authentic Japanese art works from low-quality, made-for-export trinkets. This magazine, he said, was intended to help people develop eagle eye for Japanese art, by introducing faithful reproductions of authentic Japanese masterworks that illustrated the true essence of Japanese art.

Additionally, Bing also declared that the magazine should be of interest to those who were involved in the design of...
handicraft goods, because it would contain numerous illustrations of decorative designs. So, instead of simply copying motifs from his magazine, he expected artists and designers to deduce universal principles from Japanese motifs and apply them to their own work. For a long time in Europe, the skills of the artisans who produced handicraft goods were considered inferior to those of the artists who produced painting and sculpture. In contrast to this, Japanese handicraft goods were accepted for their innovative design. The title Artistic Japan was chosen over Japanese Art in order to reflect Bing’s and his colleagues’ understanding that Japanese people regarded life itself as art.

Bing purposefully stopped publication of Artistic Japan after just three years, partly due to his concern that readers would become bored with the magazine if it continued for too long. Nevertheless, it is said that Vincent Van Gogh as well as the school of artists called Les Nabis, among others, read this magazine. Artistic Japan is said to have contributed to the increased publication in Europe of illustrated books on Japanese art as well as to greater recognition of the artisanship of those producing handicraft goods. All these facts prove that this magazine was widely read and influenced a people in a diverse range of fields.

Those who read Artistic Japan today might find themselves surprised at the breadth and depth of 19th-century Europe’s appreciation of Japanese art. For Japanese people, the juxtaposition of Western text with illustrations of Japanese art can be quite fascinating. Without a doubt, Artistic Japan will continue to attract people across time and space for generations to come.

Image 6: Reproductions of Japanese art found in the end pages of the very first issue (May 1888) include “Enkozō” by MORI Sosen (right) and a decorative illustration of twisted leaves (left). At the edge of the reproduction can be found the attribution “Grav. impr. par GILLOT,” which means that these illustrations were engraved by Charles Gillot (1853–1903) using a technique of multicolor copper engraving called “Gillotage.” This technique was also used to produce a special issue of the magazine Paris Illustré on Japan as well as Poèmes de la Libellule,* an anthology of Japanese poetry in translation with illustrations by YAMAMOTO Hosui. *See the article, “Poèmes de la Libellule—Seireishū Dragonflies flown to Paris,” in issue No. 232 (Oct. 2020) of the NDL Newsletter.
Reference (in Japanese):
Making practical use of cookbooks, Part 1: Staple foods

As mentioned in part one (Edo period cookbooks—Food that is fun to read about and good to eat (Part One)) of this article, many of the cookbooks from the Edo period were intended only to be read, not to be used in actually preparing meals. That doesn't mean, however, that more practical cookbooks were nonexistent. Among the more practical cookbooks were those that described how to make the most of staple foods. There were many famines during the Edo period, and numerous cookbooks on staple foods were published during that time.

The book Tohi an’itsuden¹ (urban and rural pleasures) published in 1833 specifically recommended reducing rice consumption as much as possible. “Doing so will naturally lower the price, so it is well worth the effort to prepare plain food and wait for the price of rice to drop” is the story that was told. And one way to do this was by preparing what was called katemeshi. Recipes for katemeshi in this book called for mixing rice with barley, millet, daikon, potato, seaweed, or other staple foods. There were also recipes for dumplings using flour or buckwheat to eat instead of rice as well as advice on how to keep cooked rice from spoiling in the summer.

¹ Published in 1833. NDL Call No. W373-N7.
³ Available in the NDL Digital Collections.
And although these recipes were originally intended merely as a way to stretch limited resources when food was scarce, many of them seem to be healthy and delicious to us today. Perhaps one reason it was reprinted so often and so widely read during the Edo period was because it offered practical advice on how to prepare appealing meals from staple foods.

Making practical use of cookbooks, Part 2: Entertaining guests

While not strictly a cookbook, many pages of *Rinji kyaku aishirai*[^4] (entertaining guests) are devoted to what kinds of cuisine are suitable for entertaining guests. It includes descriptions of precautions to be taken by domestic servants as well as detailed explanations on how to welcome guests or see them off, all of which seems that it could be useful even nowadays. Some of the more interesting content of the book is described below.

**Rinji kyaku aishirai**

- It is not necessary to serve sweets to adult guests, but if possible, guests that are accompanied by children should be served sweets.
- If you order soba noodles from a restaurant, be sure to transfer the meal to your own tableware before offering it to guests. In general, it is impolite to offer food on restaurant crockery without knowing who has used it. This all depends, however, on the type of crockery and who the guests are, so be flexible.
- When serving a meal to guests, check with the host* to see if the guest's attendants may be served chazuke (green tea poured over cooked rice, often served as a light snack). Avoid serving alcohol, which might cause problems later. *The wording in this description implies that it is addressing domestic servants.
- Remove the used tableware as you serve other dishes.
- If a guest has drunk too much and is about to vomit, rub his back gently to calm him. Then suggest that he gargle with water from a hand-held washbasin.
- Avoid gossiping loudly immediately after a guest leaves. They might suddenly return for something.

[^4]: Written by WADA, Nobusada and others, published in 1830. NDL Call No. 111-227.
Kyokutei Bakin’s *Kiryo Manroku* (a traveler's diary), in which he describes the events of a trip to the Osaka-Kyoto area in 1802, has some interesting observations about hospitality there. For example, it says that people in Kyoto will take their guests to a famous restaurant with a set budget for each person rather than invite them to their homes. The excuse they will give is that their houses are too small for entertaining, but this does not come from a spirit of hospitality. Bakin says “They simply want to avoid cost and inconvenience of cooking themselves at home, not to mention concern that a guest might break their tableware. People in Kyoto are a cunning lot.” The comment is very perceptive, although TSUTSUI Hirochi, an expert on the Japanese tea ceremony, says that the people of Kyoto are not as stingy as Bakin would have us believe, though that would help explain why there are so many restaurants and caterers in Kyoto.6

**In conclusion**

How did you enjoy our tour of Edo period cookbooks? I’m sure you can see how the people of Edo enjoyed cookbooks with both practical recipes and stories for reading.

In 2013, “Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, notably for the celebration of New Year” was added to the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and since that time interest in cuisine of the Edo period has only grown. Most cookbooks published during the Edo period have been translated into modern Japanese, so even those who cannot read cursive Japanese characters can enjoy these books.7 Reading recipes, however, and actually cooking them are two different things. Cooking these recipes requires knowledge of the language, methods, and foodstuffs of the Edo period, which might make it just a little difficult for amateur chefs.8

Although actually making some of these recipes by yourself would be difficult, it is fun to read these cookbooks and to think about Edo period cuisine and dietary habits. Many cookbooks are available in the NDL Digital Collection. And even if you can’t read Japanese, just looking at the illustrations and their physical appearance of the books themselves can be fascinating.

**Bento in the Edo period**

**Bento**—single-portion, home-made or store-bought meals, usually eaten for lunch—are very popular in Japan, and there are many cookbooks available these days with colorful recipes for delicious-looking bento. Not many Edo period cookbooks, however, have much to say about bento. As a practical matter, it is probably fair to say that there are two kinds of bento: normal, everyday bento that are eaten for lunch and special bento that are eaten while traveling for pleasure. Bento during the Edo period usually contained very simple things like rice balls with miso and umeboshi or other kind of Japanese pickles.9 In other words, Edo period bento were really too simple to be included in cookbooks.

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5 Available in the NDL Digital Collection. The author, Kyokutei Bakin was a Japan's first professional writer.


From Ryori hayashinan. It shows juzume ryori (food in tiered boxes).

Another book related to obento, Kaiseki ryori saiku bocho (The caterer’s kitchen) has an interesting advertisement for a book called Yoriai bocho (Catering meetings). Unfortunately, there are no known copies of Yoriai bocho that are extant, but based on this advertisement, we can surmise that this book gave advice on how to make sure that any surplus food left over from making obento did not go to waste by serving it at home in snacks.

A book ahead of its time—time saving techniques

Nowadays, it is quite common to use prepared or instant food due to budgetary or time constraints. And while people of the Edo period might not have felt quite as pressed for time as we do today, still there are some recipes and ideas from the Edo period that might seem innovative and useful even today.

Some of these ideas might not seem like they save much time to us, but during the Edo periods, these ideas were considered to be “cutting corners,” so it seems that preparing food back then took a lot more time and effort than it does today.

Here are some examples that you are welcome to try.
- Hayamochi: Mash cold rice, add an equal amount of kuzu, mix well and boil.11
- Imonoin: Grate raw sweet potatoes and soak them in water, change the water four or five times. Dry the starch in the bottom of the bowl and use it as a substitute for arrowroot powder.12
- To cut a boiled egg neatly, put vinegar in the water before boiling. Spreading vinegar on the knife when cutting is also effective.13

(Translated by NOZAWA Asuka)

Reference (in Japanese, except for those mentioned in the footnotes):

Related articles from the NDL Newsletter:
- Edo period cookbooks—Food that is fun to read about and good to eat (Part One) (No. 241, October 2021)

11 Description from Ryori sankairyo. Written by Hakuboshi, published in 1749. NDL Call No. 183-143.
12 Description from Imo hyakuchin. Edited by Chinkoro, Shujin. Hiranoya, Hanemon and 3 others, 1789. Available in the NDL Digital Collections.
13 Description from Ryori hayashinan.
CJ K IFLA/ PAC Centre meeting was held online

Yoshikazu Nagai, Director, IFLA/PAC Regional Centre for Asia National Diet Library

On November 11, 2021, a CJ K IFLA/PAC Centre meeting was held online with the directors of three regional centres—IFLA-PAC China Center, IFLA PAC Korea Center, and IFLA/PAC Regional Centre for Asia—in attendance.

The meeting was convened by the IFLA/PAC Regional Centre for Asia in order to give the directors of the regional centers an opportunity hold an online conference. The spread of COVID-19 has made it difficult to interact directly with overseas parties, but these three centers, which enjoy close relationships and only small differences in time zones, were able to exchange information and strengthen their cooperative relationships through this online meeting.

During the meeting, each center reported on its recent activities.

The IFLA-PAC China Center reported on the restoration of ancient books, construction of a database of Chinese ancient books, and development of human resources for restoration. The IFLA PAC Korea Center reported on its digitization and conservation for LP record albums and other analog media as well as floppy disks and other digital media. The IFLA/PAC Regional Centre for Asia reported on its facilities and equipment for disaster prevention, disaster prevention measures for the materials, and recent cooperation activities related to the preservation of materials.

Opinions were exchanged on deacidification of acid paper, cooperative activities related to the preservation of ancient books, and training in the preservation of materials.

Related Links

- The IFLA-PAC China Center at the National Library of China
  http://www.nlcn.cn/newen/fl/iflanlc/tipcc/

- The IFLA PAC Korea Center at the National Library of Korea
  https://www.nl.go.kr/EN/contents/EN41001010100.do

- The IFLA/PAC Regional Centre for Asia at the National Diet Library

(Translated by HIROSE junya)
Events

**2021 Online Exchange Program between the National Diet Library and the National Library of Korea**

The 2021 Online Exchange Program between the National Diet Library (NDL) and the National Library of Korea (NLK) was held on October 28, 2021.

| Opening Remarks | Mr. YOSHINAGA Motonobu, director general, NDL
|                 | Dr. Suh Hye Ran, chief executive, NLK
|                 | Ms. UWABO Yoshie, director of the Planning Division, NDL
|                 | Management strategies of the National Library of Korea in the post-COVID-19 situation
|                 | Mr. Choi Won sug, director of Planning & Coordination, NLK
| Theme Session   | Theme: Recent Developments on Digital Shift
|                 | Preparation for digital transformation: Strategies and implementation plan
|                 | Ms. Kwon Jung Im, deputy director of the Digital Initiatives Division, NLK
|                 | Recent developments on digital shift at the National Diet Library
|                 | Mr. FUJIMOTO Kazuhiko, deputy director general of the Digital Information Department
| Closing Remarks | Mr. Kim il Hwan, director general of the Planning & Training Department, NLK
|                 | Mr. TANAKA Hisanori, deputy director general, NDL

**Main program schedule**

In the keynote speech session, Ms. Uwabo introduced the background and overview of the NDL vision which was published in April 2021, and gave an outline of its seven initiatives for connecting information resources and intellectual activities. Mr. Choi reported on the NLK’s user services in the COVID-19 pandemic, and then explained the strategies for the post-COVID-19 situation.

In the theme session, experts from both libraries reported on their recent activities and progress on digital shift. Ms. Kwon introduced NLK initiatives in the digital services plan for 2021-2023, including the expansion of Ontact services and the development of data curation services. Mr. Fujimoto reported on NDL efforts in accelerating digitization of materials, collecting and preserving digital materials over the long term, and Japan Search.

The participants engaged in a lively exchange of opinions on future challenges and prospects.

**Reference:**
- Chronology of Mutual Visit Programs between the National Diet Library (NDL) and the National Library of Korea (NLK)

**Related articles from the NDL Newsletter:**
- Reports of past programs in the NDL Newsletter
Events

2021 Online Exchange Program between the National Diet Library and the National Library of China

The 2021 Online Exchange Program between the National Diet Library (NDL) and the National Library of China (NLC) was held online on November 30, 2021. The program is shown in the table below. Detailed presentations were made in each session, followed by active exchange during the Q&A session.

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<td>Mr. XIONG Yuanming, director of the NLC</td>
<td>Ms. TOKUHARA Naoko, director of the Research and Development for Next-Generation Systems Office, Digital Information Department, NDL</td>
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<td>NLC (upper-left) and NDL participants</td>
<td>• Current status of the “National Smart Library System” Project</td>
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<td>Session</td>
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Ms. Tokuhara reported on the research activities and results of the Next-Generation Systems Office, focusing on the experimental library service, Next Digital Library, developed using AI technology. Ms. Shen reported on the basic concept of the National Smart Library System Project and current key initiatives including construction of infrastructure and integration and management of knowledge content. Meaningful discussions were held on issues of common interest to both sides.

Reference:
- Chronology of Mutual Visit Programs between the National Diet Library and the National Library of China

Related articles from the NDL Newsletter:
- Reports of past programs in the NDL Newsletter
Selected list of articles from NDL periodicals

The NDL Monthly Bulletin
No. 728, December 2021/ No.729, January 2022

If you click the volume number of each issue, you can read the full-text of NDL Monthly Bulletin. The text is provided in PDF format* (in Japanese).

*To see the full-text (PDF), you will need Adobe Acrobat Reader (free download). Click here to download. (Adobe Website)

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