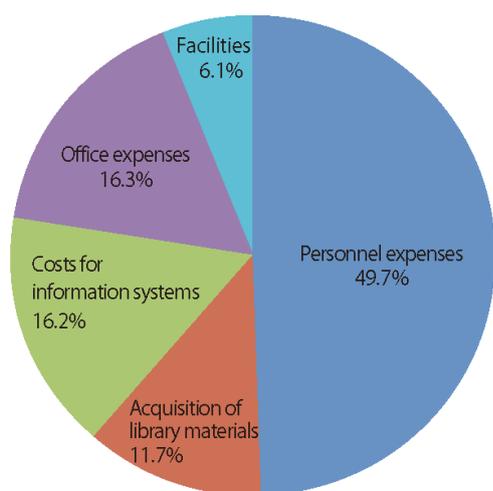
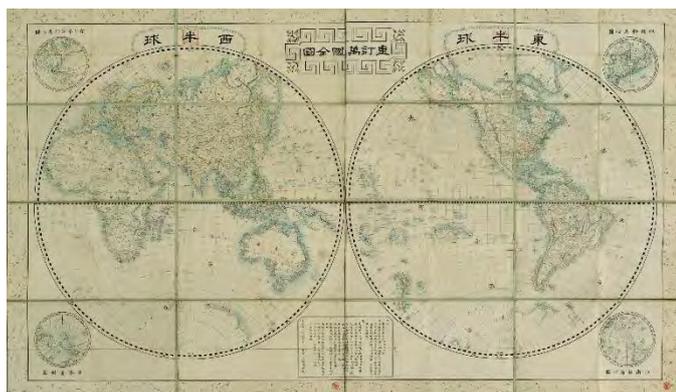


National Diet Library Newsletter

No. 246, August 2022



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Selections from NDL collections

Browsing *Joruri* books with YOSHINAGA Motonobu, NDL Director General (Part Two)

This article is a translation of an article in Japanese from [NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 729 \(January 2022\)](#).

Part one of this article is available at [Browsing *Joruri* books with YOSHINAGA Motonobu, NDL Director General \(Part One\)](#) (No. 245, June 2022)



YOSHINAGA Motonobu, director general of the National Diet Library (NDL)

- You are originally from the Kansai area. So, did you first encounter *Joruri* during your childhood?

Actually, it wasn't until I started working at the National Diet Library (NDL) that I first saw a live performance at the National Theatre. It is not far from the NDL and easy to get to from here.

But while I was growing up in Kansai, I often saw these plays on television. I can remember vividly when the Bunrakuza Theater changed its name to the Asahiza Theater. That was 1963, so I would have been 15 or 16 years old at the time. At one time, there were many theaters along the Dotonbori area in Osaka, but after the war, *kabuki* in the Kyoto and Osaka areas as well as *bunraku* became quite stagnant. One of the reasons the government established the National Theatre in Tokyo and the National Bunraku Theatre in Osaka was to shore up classical theater. Not long after I first saw a live performance of *Joruri*, I saw an ad for a *Gidayu* class. It seemed interesting so I joined.

- You must have been very enthused to join a class right away.

No, it was just a casual interest at first. I learned both *katari* (narration) and *shamisen* (a three-stringed traditional Japanese musical instrument). I think the purpose of this class was to get people interested in *Joruri*. So, for the final class, TSURUZAWA Juzo, a *shamisen* player, came to teach us. His explanations were easy to understand, and he taught us a lot about how to narrate different characters.

- What do you mean by "narrating different characters?"

In *Joruri*, the narrative text and character dialogue are all mixed together. This is something that all Japanese *katari* (narrative drama) have in common. In a stage play, each actor speaks his or her own lines, but in *Joruri*, the *Gidayu-bushi* narrator (*tayu*) narrates all parts. Puppets just perform. That is how such an interesting and distinctive art form was created.

Tayu must perform the dialog for a variety of characters—men and women of all ages—which makes it quite difficult to perform. One of the first things we were taught was to move your head to the right and to the left when performing different characters. For example, there is a famous lyrics known as *After Leaving My Father and Mother*, and when performing this scene, you look to right to imply that you are speaking to the father, then look to the left to imply you are speaking to the mother. I was so enthralled at the depth of expression required by such a performance that I continued to take lessons even after the class ended.

- What do you mean by "depth of expression?" Does that mean expressing emotions?

It is difficult to describe in **today's** words, but maybe the best way to explain is that it has to do with the hearts and minds of the characters. It really is the essence of *Gidayu-bushi*.

- So, something essential! By the way, when you first hear them, the scales used in traditional Japanese music sound rather different from those of Western music, don't they?

Yes, the scales used in traditional Japanese music are different from those in Western music. And in Western

music, a C is a C and is always the same. However, in traditional Japanese music, there is some variation in pitch. **It doesn't really matter if it sounds beautiful or not.**

- It doesn't matter if it sounds beautiful or not?

No, **it doesn't**. Which might seem a little weird for those who have absolute pitch. There are different kinds of *katari*. *Katari* can sound intellectual, it can sound exciting, or it can sound elegant. These differences are very profound. The most **important thing is "depth of expression,"** which means that it is not enough just to sound beautiful all the time. Many students have had the experience of being told by their teacher "Your *katari* **simply doesn't move me.**" **It's the same with the *shamisen*.** It sounds insipid when the narration is performed exactly in step with the accompaniment. So we are taught to be out of step with the *shamisen*.

- That sounds really difficult! Apart from enjoying the music, what about the stories? In the play *Sugawara denju tenarai kagami*, there is a heartbreaking scene in which one of the characters sacrifices the life of his own son to save the life of a child of a man to whom he owes a debt of gratitude.

Sometimes the program for a contemporary performance will have a disclaimer stating "This may seem strange from a modern perspective." Of course, in those days, Confucian ethics taught that loyalty to one's lord was paramount. After that came filial piety to one's parents. Love between a man and a woman and affection for children were third. There was a clear hierarchy, and this is why lovers would feel driven to double suicide. There was constant conflict between one's duty and one's personal feelings. Very often, loyalty came first whenever personal feelings such as love of another or grief at the loss of a child came into conflict with loyalty to one's lord or filial piety. This is why *Joruri* is loved so much by ordinary people.

- It's painful to think that such a conflict was a reality for many people back then. Although even now, it's not entirely out-of-date.

Many things today are better than they were in the past. High child mortality rates, for example, are a thing of the past. But even today, real life is filled with unreason and absurdity. I once thought that a new *Bunraku* might be born from today's contradictions and conflicts.

Today, *Bunraku* is considered a classical art form, but I think back then, people thought of it the same way that we think of *karaoke* today. Back then, there were many amateurs who trained and everyone hummed along, and there is even a *kyōka* poem that goes, "The green amateur *Gidayu* sings as if he were a "blackbelt" master

but for his red face and yellow (shrill) voice. " There is even a well-known *rakugo* routine called *Nedoko* (A Place to Sleep), in which a landlord who loves *Gidayu-bushi* forces his tenants to watch his performance, but everyone falls asleep instead of listening to his hapless performance.

- And in SHIBA Ryotaro's novel *Nanohana no oki*, which is the story of an adventurous and prosperous merchant in the early 19th century, there is a scene in which the main character enjoys exchanging *Joruri* phrases with people from faraway places.

Such things were more realistic than you might think. For back in the day, *Joruri* was the common language of ordinary people. The beautifully crafted and dramatic plots of *jidaimono* or the humanity of the conflict between duty and personal feelings found in *sewamono* each have their charms as dramatic works. But the greatest charm of *Joruri* is the beauty of the lyrics. They are so absolutely wonderful that you can become utterly absorbed in the lyrics. They are full of unfamiliar expressions quoted from various classics, but looking them up will give you quite an education in Japanese culture and literary tradition.

- Is it something like *honkadori*, which incorporates quotes from or allusions to ancient poetry into the creation of new *waka* or *renga*?

Yes, it is. *Joruri* incorporates all kinds of culture including *shomyō*,¹ *waka* poems from the Heian period, Chinese classics, the Tale of the Heike, and Noh. It is amazing how knowledgeable people were during the Edo period. Of course, I doubt that all amateurs actually understood everything, since they were doing it as a hobby. Even today, there are no manuals or handbooks, so I have to look things up myself. I am grateful that my *Joruri* teacher liked that kind of thing, too.

I've heard that back then there was something called an "author's room" in *kabuki*, where many literary materials were stored. I guess the authors of the day must have been highly educated.

- So much knowledge has been incorporated into and passed down to the present day through *Joruri*. It would be very fulfilling to understand the meaning and background of the beautiful lyrics, and even more so to tell the story ourselves.

Indeed. There is no limit to what you can learn.

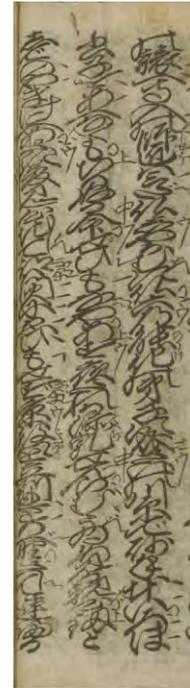
¹ The art of reciting sutras in Buddhist ceremonies. In a broad sense, it is the origin of Japanese traditional music.



Yukahon purchased at Tengyu bookstore in front of Kadoza Theater in Dotonbori, Osaka. (Identical to the one shown on page 1). Yukahon is the handwritten libretto used onstage by tayu during performances. Before each performance, the tayu raises the yukahon and bows to it.

Sugawara denju tenarai kagami

Sugawara denju tenarai kagami was written jointly by TAKEDA Izumo, MIYOSHI Shoraku, NAMIKI Senryu, and TAKEDA Koizumo. It was first performed in 1746 and has since become one of the three most famous and popular plays in the repertoire.² The story is based on the life of Heian period politician SUGAWARA Michizane.³ It is also including a number of subplots, such as a love story involving Michizane's adopted daughter and the emperor's younger brother or the exploits of a set the triplets—Umeomaru, Matsuomaru, and Sakuramaru—whose elderly father is a loyal servant of Michizane. Each of the triplets serve different masters, and so they are beset by troubles due to their loyalty to their masters, gratitude towards benefactors, love for their children, and other conflicts. Throughout the play, they and the other characters are depicted facing situations like these. The line "*Semajiki mono wa miyazukae (To serve one's lord is an unenviable lot)*" is particularly well known.



TAKEDA Izumo et al. *Sugawara denju tenarai kagami*, NDL Call No. 238-279.

Shown here is one of the best-known scenes from the play called *Terakoya* (the village school).

Genzo was the top disciple of Michizane and runs a village school, where he keeps Michizane's son in hiding. FUJIWARA Shihei is a powerful courtier⁴ and arch enemy of Michizane. It was Shihei who exiled Michizane, and **when he learns the whereabouts of Michizane's son, he orders Genzo to kill the boy.** In desperation, Genzo kills a different boy instead—a boy with a noble face named Kotaro, who had come to the village school for the first time that day. Matsuomaru, a vassal of Shihei, comes to **the school with another of Shihei's vassals, to inspect the body.** After careful inspection, Matsuomaru states that this boy was the son of Michizane. Later the mother of the dead boy comes to take the body away, at which time Matsuomaru reappears and reveals to Genzo that Kotaro was in fact his own son. Matsuomaru owed a debt of gratitude to Michizane, and thus sent Kotaro to the school **to take the place of Michizane's son.**

The historical background to this story is the Heian period (794-1185), but the setting on the stage is a typical village school from the mid-18th century, which is when the play was first performed. In later years, Michizane was revered in Japan as a god of learning, and his portraits were often hung at terakoyas.

² The other two plays are *Kanadehon Chushingura*, written by TAKEDA Izumo, et al. and *Yoshitsune senbonzakura*, written by TAKEDA Izumo, et al.

³ SUGAWARA Michizane (845-903) was a well-known politician and man of letters. He was banished from the capital and appointed to a minor post at Dazaifu (Kyushu) after being suspected of plotting against the Emperor.

⁴ Modeled on FUJIWARA Tokihira, a Japanese statesman and courtier.



Scene of Kotaro's burial, also known as *Iroha-okuri*. Matsuomaru, Kotaro's father and his wife Chiyo are at center stage. TAKEMOTO Sumitayu. *Bunraku Joruri monogatari*. Shobunkan Shoten, 1943. *Available at the [NDL Digital Collections](#).

(Translated by NOZAWA Asuka and OGAWA Kanako)

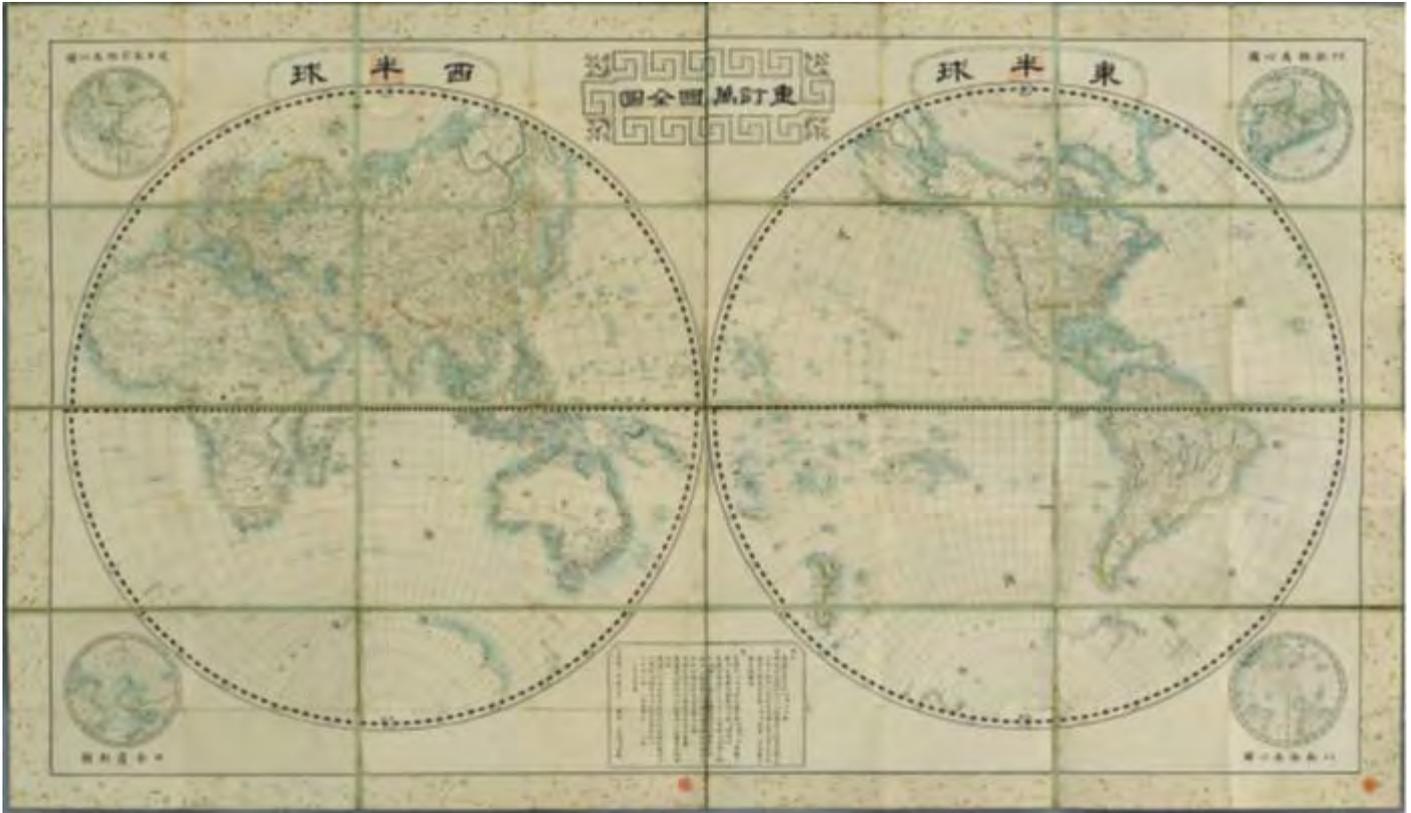
Related articles from the NDL Newsletter:

- [Browsing *Joruri* books with YOSHINAGA Motonobu, NDL Director General \(Part One\)](#) (No. 245, June 2022)

Selections from NDL collections

Map Collections in the National Diet Library (3)

Jutei bankoku zenzu



Published in the late Edo period / NDL Call No. 寄別 5-8-1-9 / *Available at the [NDL Digital Collections](#).

A world map comprised of two parts, the east and west hemispheres, created by the Rekikyoku, a division of the Edo shogunate which made a calendar based on astronomical observations.

It places Japan at the center of the western part and has a Kyoto-centered hemispherical map. Supervised by Yamaji Yukitaka, his heir Akitsune and Shibata Shuzo, a geographer from Sado Island, produced the map to reflect changes across the ages, referring to *Shintei bankoku zenzu* (“newly revised map of the world”) created by Japanese astronomer [TAKAHASHI Kageyasu](#) in Bunka 13 (1816).

There is a signature saying “July, Autumn, Ansei 2 (1856)” and a note saying it was originally based on a map created by two Germans, Sohr and Handtke, and published in 1846.

While *Shintei bankoku zenzu* is a copperplate print, this is a woodblock print. Border lines are shown in color.

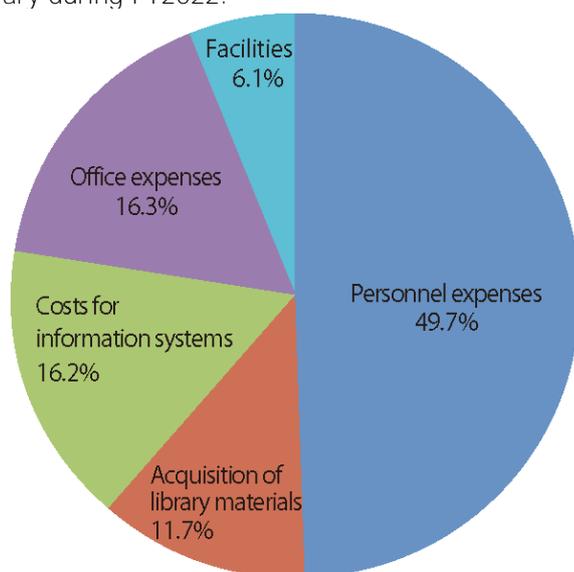
Compared to *Shintei bankoku zenzu*, you can see big changes in the north coast of North America and Australia.

Budget

NDL Budget for Fiscal Year 2022

This article is a translation of the article in Japanese of the same title in NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 734 (June 2022).

The budget for FY2022 (April 2022–March 2023) was approved by the National Diet on March 22, 2022, with 20,243,361,000 yen appropriated for the National Diet Library during FY2022.



The overall composition of the expenditure budget includes:

- Personnel expenses: 49.7%
- Acquisition of library materials: 11.7%
- Costs for information systems: 16.2%
- Office expenses: 16.3%
- Facilities: 6.1%

Outline of the expenditure budget for FY2022 is as follows:

National Diet Library FY2022 Budgets (1,000 yen)

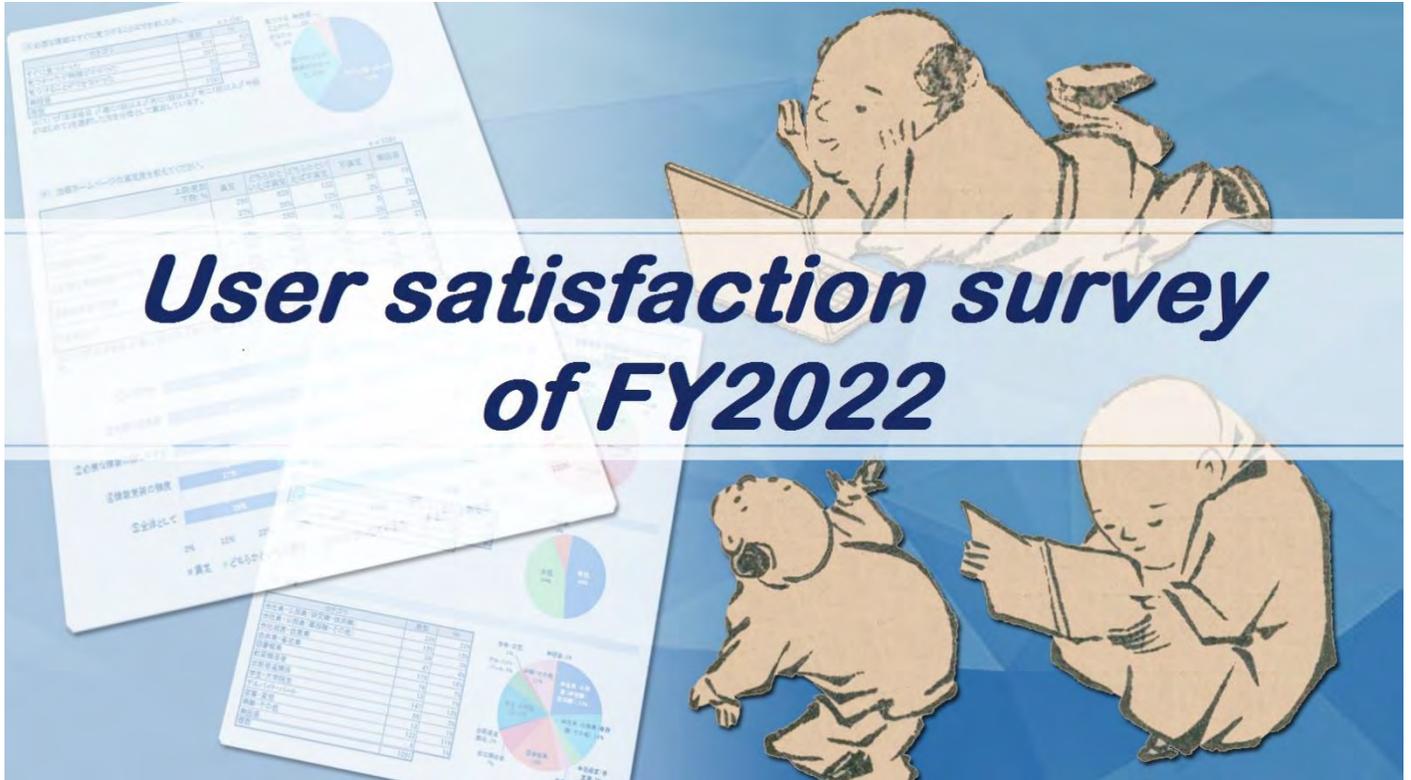
(Item) National Diet Library	19,003,302
Personnel expenses	10,051,666
Regular office expenses	178,703
Legislative research	286,749
Acquisition of library materials	2,375,633
of which was compensation for deposit of publications	397,476
Costs for information systems	3,280,642
Tokyo Main Library operation	1,590,690
International Library of Children's Literature operation	262,374
Kansai-kan operation	976,845
(Item) Expenses for facilities	1,240,059
Maintenance of the Tokyo Main Library	689,156
Maintenance of the Kansai-kan	490,221
Maintenance of the International Library of Children's Literature	60,682
Total	20,243,361

(Translated by HATTORI Mao)

News from NDL

NDL User Satisfaction Survey of FY2022

Planning Division, Administrative Department



Since FY2003 the National Diet Library (NDL) has conducted annual user surveys in order to figure out the trends of use, user satisfaction and requests.

The NDL is now conducting a user satisfaction survey of FY2022. Your ideas and opinions are important to our library and will help us provide you with the best library services possible.

URL: <https://enquete.ndl.go.jp/632797/p/NL?lang=en>

Survey period: From May 6 to October 31, 2022

*This is an anonymous survey. It will take about 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

*Answers are processed statistically and individual answers are not linked to the respondent. Also, the data will not be used for any purpose other than this survey.

*The results of this survey will be posted on the NDL website.

For further information about NDL user surveys, please visit [the NDL website](#).

Selected list of articles from NDL periodicals

The NDL Monthly Bulletin

No. 734, June 2022/ No.735/736, July/August 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).

No. 734, June 2022 (PDF: 5.77 MB)

- <Book of the month — from NDL collections>
Lienhard und Gertrud
The ideal model in the novel: Family, nation, and education
- The initial stages of the NDL, located at the Akasaka Palace
- The Personal Libraries of Well-Known People (6)
Who was the former owner of these books? The (presumed) MATSUDAIRA Yoshitami Collection
- Working at the NDL, Season 2 Episode 9
- Kaleidoscope of books (31)
Coming-of-age rituals: From ancient times to early modern times
- <Tidbits of information on NDL>
The challenge of our first webinar
- <Books not commercially available>
➤ *Traditional wooden buildings in Myanmar*
- <NDL Topics>

No.735/736, July/August 2022 (PDF: 5.77MB)

- <Book of the month — from NDL collections>
From *Gendai honpo chikujoshi* (part 2, vol.1):
Offshore fortresses built in Tokyo Bay
- 57th Committee on Designation of Rare Books
Materials recently designated as rare books
- NDL Image Bank
- Travel writing on world libraries
Libraries in London
- <Tidbits of information on NDL>
Maps, eternal trajectories of **humankind's activities**
- <Books not commercially available>
➤ *Nihon shurui hanbai 70nenshi: 1949-2019*
- <NDL Topics>