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# A. E. Nordenskiöld and His Japanese Book Collection

J. S. EDGREN

**T**he name of Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld (1832–1901) is hardly a “household word” these days, and yet in the last decades of the nineteenth century his name was known throughout the world. His arrival in Japan on 2 September 1879 was worldwide news. Many European newspapers displayed banner headlines announcing that he was alive. After having noted on 4 August that [as of 23 July] “there was no knowledge of the safety or movements of Prof. Nordenskjold’s party,” on 5 September the *New York Times* reported on page one the text of his first cable from Yokohama. Nordenskiöld stated: “All are well. We left Winter quarters on the 18th, and doubled East Cape on the 20th of July. Proceeded thence to Lawrence Bay, Port Clarence, and Behring’s Island. Have had no sickness and no scurvy. The *Vega* [his ship] is in excellent condition.”<sup>1</sup> Before describing Nordenskiöld’s Japanese book collection in detail, it will be useful to explain the events that led up to his dramatic landing in Japan.

Nordenskiöld, a fourth-generation Swedish-Finn, was born and raised in Finland but spent most of his adult professional life in Stockholm, Sweden. Both countries claim him as a native son. In the footsteps of his father, Nordenskiöld pursued an academic career in mineralogy. By 1855 he enjoyed a junior appointment in the University of Helsingfors (i.e. Helsinki) while he worked to complete his doctorate, but

he (together with several politically minded fellow students) ran afoul of the Tsarist authorities in Finland and was obliged to go abroad. Although previously under Swedish authority, Finland had been a part of the Russian Empire since 1809, and by midcentury tensions in society were growing. After a brief stay in Berlin, Nordenskiöld returned via Stockholm to the university and received his doctorate in May of 1857. At the graduation banquet he made a speech that apparently aroused the wrath of the authorities once more, and this time it was deemed necessary for him to move abroad, which he accomplished in June by crossing to Sweden, his second homeland.

In Stockholm Nordenskiöld immediately found a research position in his chosen field of geological sciences, and the following year he took part in his first Arctic expedition to the island of Spitzbergen. One year later he began what was to become a very distinguished career with the National Museum of Natural History in Stockholm, and by 1860 his hopes of returning to Finland were so dim that he became a Swedish citizen. His first two decades in Sweden were full of scholarly achievement and success, which included teaching, research, and further arctic explorations (including an unsuccessful attempt to reach the North Pole), all of which culminated in plans to explore the fabled Northeast Passage.

Ultimately it was interest in the so-called Northeast Passage (i.e., the sea route eastward from the Barents Sea north of Norway, via the uncharted Arctic Ocean, the Bering Strait, and finally to the Pacific Ocean and the Asian countries that border it) that provided Nordenskiöld's historic and memorable contact with Japan. The successful navigation of the route had long been considered commercially and scientifically attractive by the nations of Europe, and Nordenskiöld himself was especially interested in Siberian exploration and had collected books, maps, and scientific data on the entire region. His multistage plan began with analyses of the experiences at Spitsbergen and the first circumnavigation of the Russian island of Novaya Zemlya, and it continued with his own exploratory expedition along Siberia's arctic shores in 1875, which triumphed with his inland exploration of the Yenisei River and his overland return through Russia to Sweden. Early in 1876 Nordenskiöld was honored by election to the French Academy of Sciences as a corresponding

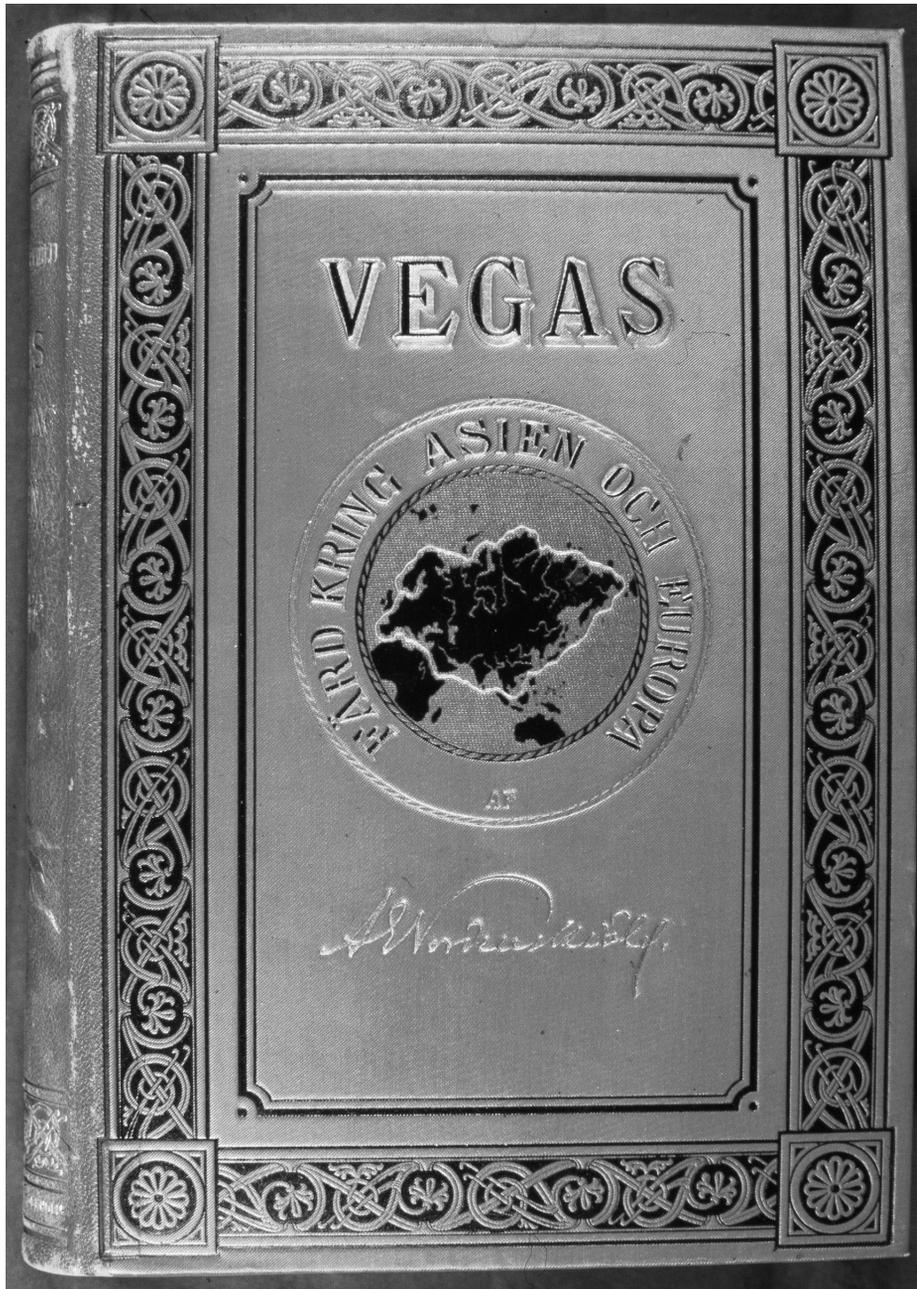
member, occupying the chair vacated by the death of the distinguished Africa explorer David Livingstone (1813–1873). Because of the unexpected success of the 1875 voyage, Nordenskiöld was immediately prevailed upon to undertake another, with even broader goals, in the summer of 1876. One reason for the repetition of the journey was to underscore its feasibility and reliability as a trade route and, indeed, one of its sponsors was Alexander Siberiakoff, a young, wealthy Siberian businessman. The second voyage was so successful that the way was now clear for serious plans to undertake the more formidable crossing of the Northeast Passage.

Piecemeal attempts to traverse the Northeast Passage had been made for over two hundred years, but because of brief and unpredictable periods of ice-free water flows along the Siberian coast, no single voyage in either direction had ever succeeded. Nordenskiöld meticulously prepared, and, because of his recent successes, he received generous support for the project. For the voyage he selected and purchased a German-built whaling ship named *Vega*. She had been constructed in 1873 of oak with an additional exterior hardwood surface, and, in addition to her three-masted sailing rigging, she boasted a small steam engine on board. With a clear understanding that they might not succeed as planned, provisions for two years were required in the event that they would have to spend the winter in the Arctic. The officers and crew, who were carefully selected and of whom several had served with Nordenskiöld previously, represented Sweden, Finland, and Denmark, and as well included an Italian officer personally recommended to Nordenskiöld. Of the total cost of 710,000 Swedish crowns budgeted for the *Vega* expedition, 60 percent came from Nordenskiöld's wealthy Swedish patron Oscar Dickson (actually a Scottish merchant long resident in Göteborg (i.e. Gothenburg)), while Alexander Siberiakoff (described in contemporary press reports as a Siberian millionaire) contributed 15 percent, King Oscar II of Sweden personally contributed 10 percent, and the Swedish government allocated approximately 15 percent, as well as providing Swedish Naval support, which included equipping the vessel before departure. The *Vega* sailed out of Göteborg from the west coast of Sweden on 4 July 1878.

The story of what happened on the expedition is wonderfully told by Nordenskiöld in the two-volume popular history of the expe-

dition, translated from the Swedish and entitled in English *The Voyage of the Vega Round Asia and Europe*, published by MacMillan in London in 1881 and in New York in 1882.<sup>2</sup> (See figure 1 for the red cover of the original publisher's binding of the Swedish first edition of 1880 and figure 2 for the title page of the first English edition.) The fact that the book was translated into ten European languages at the time gives some indication of its popularity. As feared, the *Vega* became frozen fast in the ice, as it turned out, less than one hundred miles west of the Bering Strait, and the men spent the winter of 1878–1879 in the Siberian Arctic. In retrospect, Nordenskiöld suggested that the scientific nature of the expedition was both the source and the beneficiary of the forced wintering in the far north. He reasoned that the demands of the scientific staff on board (besides Nordenskiöld's own expertise, included were botany, zoology, lichenology, hydrography, and meteorology) for opportunities for observation, measurement, and collecting en route led to delays which, combined with unreliable information about early icing of the waters of the easternmost Arctic Ocean, resulted in their entrapment. On the other hand, he acknowledged that without having been forced to spend nearly ten consecutive months there they never could have achieved their thorough scientific results, which are so thrillingly recorded in *The Voyage of the Vega*. In fact, the ice did not break up until 18 July the following summer, and a few days later the *Vega* entered the Bering Strait. The dream of crossing the Northeast Passage in a single season had not been realized; in fact, it would not happen until it was accomplished by a Soviet icebreaker in 1932. On 2 September 1879 the *Vega* reached Yokohama and news of the safety of Nordenskiöld and his shipmates was telegraphed around the world.

Arrival in Japan was an exciting event, and two months were to be spent there before the onward voyage of the *Vega*. Nordenskiöld's grand reception in Tokyo included an imperial audience with the Meiji emperor on 17 September, as well as numerous banquets and excursions to scenic places. He preserved all manner of ephemera throughout the voyage, including schedules and menus from these events. Perhaps the most significant event of all during Nordenskiöld's stay in Tokyo was the reception and ceremony organized by the Tokyo Geographical Society in conjunction with the British Asiatic Society and the Deutsche



1. *Voyage of the Vega*, red cover of the original publisher's binding of the Swedish first edition, Stockholm, 1880–1881.

THE  
VOYAGE OF THE VEGA  
ROUND  
ASIA AND EUROPE

WITH A HISTORICAL REVIEW  
OF PREVIOUS JOURNEYS ALONG THE NORTH COAST OF THE  
OLD WORLD

BY  
A. E. NORDENSKIÖLD

TRANSLATED BY ALEXANDER LESLIE

*WITH FIVE STEEL PORTRAITS, NUMEROUS MAPS, AND ILLUSTRATIONS*

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. I

London  
MACMILLAN AND CO.  
1881

2. *Voyage of the Vega*, title page of the English first edition, London, 1881.

Asiatische Gesellschaft on 15 September. The newly established Tokyo Geographical Society was one of the first scientific and scholarly societies to be founded in the Meiji period, and its German-speaking chairman, Prince Kitashirakawa, credited Nordenskiöld's presence with promoting an international image for the organization. The *Vega's* two-month visit and the publicity for attendant scientific fieldwork also stimulated Japan's burgeoning study of science and natural history.<sup>3</sup> A handsome silver commemorative medal was struck by the society in honor of the *Vega* and its accomplishment and presented to Nordenskiöld.

News of Japan after the Meiji Restoration and her opening to the outside world had attracted much attention and curiosity in Europe, and even before it became apparent that the *Vega* expedition might take him there, Nordenskiöld possessed a keen interest in the country. It appears that he had solicited provisional funds from Dickson for the purchase of books in Japan, should the opportunity present itself. That he conceived of a Japanese book collection at all and, indeed, attached great importance to it probably was due to the fact that he himself was an eminent book collector. By the end of the century his own geographical and cartographic library was one of the finest private collections in existence, and it had served him well in preparing the two publications for which he is best known: the *Facsimile-atlas*, devoted to the history of printed maps, and *Periplus*, which deals with manuscript maps and sailing charts.<sup>4</sup> Due to an interesting twist of fate his library now rests in the Helsinki University Library (i.e., the National Library) in Finland, and it and the Japanese collection in the Royal Library in Stockholm are known as the "two Nordenskiöld book collections." Nordenskiöld began to make plans to sell his personal rare book and map collection before his death in 1901; afterwards his widow, Anna Mannerheim Nordenskiöld, offered to sell the library *en bloc*, but finding a single buyer proved to be difficult. In a magnanimous gesture, and in recognition of Nordenskiöld's native land and of his contributions to Russia, Tsar Nicholas II (1868–1918) ordered the Russian treasury to purchase the collection on behalf of the National Library of Finland.

An essay about Nordenskiöld posted on the website of the Finnish Embassy in Tokyo curiously fails to mention these interesting circumstances concerning the Tsarist provenance of the Nordenskiöld Library

in Helsinki. It merely says that his collection of books and maps was “purchased from his family to the Library of the University of Helsinki.”<sup>5</sup> The collection is truly magnificent, including cartographic and geographic literature covering the period of antiquity through the eighteenth century, as well as maps and atlases. It contains about five thousand volumes (including atlases), with no less than one hundred twenty-nine incunables and forty-nine different printed Ptolemy editions. There are more than twenty-four thousand maps, including those in atlases. In fact, the collection is so remarkable that it was added to UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register in 1997.

As for the Japanese collection, Nordenskiöld reveals some of his motives in bringing it together and describes conditions prevailing in Japan during the twelfth year of Meiji in a passage translated from his five-volume “scientific observations of the Vega expedition” published in Swedish.

An even more valuable contribution to the knowledge of Japan’s older history and its people’s ancient culture is provided by the rather extensive Japanese book collection that I succeeded to bring together during my brief stay there. I was assisted by a young, knowledgeable, French-speaking native, Mr. Ōkuchi. On my account, he searched through the stocks of countless antiquarian book dealers in Yokohama and Tokyo. When finally no further additions to the collection could be made in these towns, I sent him to Kyoto, which for centuries served as Japan’s capital and seat of learning. When I decided to accept the considerable expenses that these book purchases involved, I was guided by the desire to bring home a more valuable and more enduring memento than could be conveyed by the natural history collections, . . . A large number of private collections of old books, as well as arms and armour, have thus come into the antique shops. With the eagerness with which the natives now set themselves to imitating Western writings, these old, domestic books are being completely disregarded, and the majority of them probably will—as often happens in similar cases with us—come to be used as wrapping paper by shopkeepers or be consumed as pulp for

the making of new paper. In addition, there are frequent fires which often ravage the cities, and during which only the most valuable household objects get saved in the fire-proof buildings erected in most districts of the cities against the event of such calamities. Moreover, these scarcely read books from earlier times are not counted as valuables. Therefore, I am fully convinced that a book collection of the sort that I am now bringing home, in even a few years will be possible to assemble only with extreme expenditures of time and money, and that the time will come when this collection will become of exceptional value for anyone who wants to study this remarkable people's history and its "inner-life" prior to the time when the ports were opened for the Westerners. Most of the books purchased by me are, in fact, printed before 1859.<sup>6</sup>

We can see from the above that Nordenskiöld's collecting effort was systematic and premeditated, and the collection comprising nearly eleven hundred titles became one of the largest early collections of Japanese books to enter Europe, preceded only by the two von Siebold collections, the one in the National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden, and the other in the British Library, London. (See below for further discussion of Heinrich von Seibold's book collections.) Nevertheless, the collection never would have been realized had not Nordenskiöld been introduced to Ōkuchi Masayuki shortly after his arrival. (See figure 3 for a photograph of Ōkuchi Masayuki.) Thanks to a diligent librarian in Helsinki, we now have a photograph of the young man, which was discovered between the pages of one of the books in Nordenskiöld's own library. The note in Nordenskiöld's hand at the bottom of the photograph says, "The one who helped me to collect the library in Japan." Ōkuchi's identity is indicated by his own signature on the back of the photograph.

At the time Ōkuchi was said to have been a junior-level civil servant in the Meiji government working in the laboratory of Dr. A. J. C. Geerts in Yokohama. In fact, I have not been able to find Ōkuchi's name in the usual lists of Meiji civil servants, and it has been suggested that he may have been a Meiji government agent sent to spy on the for-

eigners in Japan, who had generated considerable suspicion and mistrust. It will take additional research to learn more about the true identity of Ōkuchi Masayuki. Geerts, a Dutch physician, had been appointed as a public health official by the new Meiji government.<sup>7</sup> Not only did Ōkuchi diligently select all the books and make arrangements for their delivery to the *Vega*, he also compiled an acquisitions list to accompany the books. His acquisitions list with field numbers became Nordenskiöld's catalogue and chief source of knowledge of what he had acquired.

After completion of maintenance and repairs to the *Vega* in Yokohama, the initial book purchases were taken on board, and early in October she proceeded to Kobe to fetch the remaining book purchases made by Ōkuchi in Kyoto. The stop in Kobe also afforded Nordenskiöld the opportunity to spend several days visiting Kyoto. On 18 October the *Vega* weighed anchor and traveled through the Inland Sea to her final Japanese destination, Nagasaki. Permission had been granted to land at two places on the way to Nagasaki, which allowed the ship's zoologists and botanists to enrich their collections. Nordenskiöld's description of Japan at this point ended on a rather prophetic note:

It is difficult to foresee what new undreamed of blossoms and fruit this soil will yield. But the Europeans are perhaps much mistaken who believe that the question here is only that of clothing an Asiatic feudal state in a modern European dress. Rather the day appears to me to dawn of a time in which the countries round the Mediterranean of eastern Asia will come to play a great part in the further development of the human race.<sup>8</sup>

After leaving Japan, the *Vega* completed her circumnavigation of Asia and Europe through the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean Sea, returning to Stockholm on 24 April 1880, nearly two years after setting off. One of Nordenskiöld's first acts after returning was to present the Japanese books to the Royal Library, the National Library of Sweden. Indeed, Ōkuchi's list served as the basis for the first catalogue of the collection compiled by the French scholar Léon de Rosny (1837–1914) and published in Paris in 1883. (See figure 4 for the title page of the catalogue.)<sup>9</sup> Although de Rosny never came to Stockholm to view the books in person, a substantial correspondence



3. Rare photograph of Ōkuchi Masayuki, which he gave to A. E. Nordenskiöld in 1879.

322  
BIBLIOTHÈQUE ROYALE DE STOCKHOLM.

CATALOGUE  
DE LA  
BIBLIOTHÈQUE JAPONAISE

DE NORDENSKIÖLD,

COORDONNÉ, REVU, ANNOTÉ ET PUBLIÉ

PAR LÉON DE ROSNY,

PROFESSEUR À L'ÉCOLE SPÉCIALE DES LANGUES ORIENTALES,

ET PRÉCÉDÉ D'UNE INTRODUCTION

PAR LE MARQUIS D'HERVEY DE SAINT-DENYS,

MEMBRE DE L'INSTITUT, PROFESSEUR AU COLLÈGE DE FRANCE.



PARIS.

IMPRIMÉ PAR AUTORISATION DE M. LE GARDE DES SCEAUX

À L'IMPRIMERIE NATIONALE.

M DCCC LXXXIII.



4. *Catalogue de la bibliothèque japonaise de Nordenskiöld,*  
title page, Paris, 1883.

preserved in the Swedish Royal Library testifies to the efforts made to assist him, even to the extent of sending some volumes by diplomatic courier to Paris. The library also sent tracings (referred to as “calques”) of colophons from some of the books, but all these efforts could not completely eliminate the difficulties inherent in cataloguing rare books and manuscripts from a great distance, and there were many errors and omissions in the published catalogue. One thousand copies were printed and it initially stimulated interest in the collection, but after a few decades both the catalogue and the collection were largely forgotten.

Nordenskiöld was an inveterate collector and the archivist’s natural ally for he carefully preserved all manner of documentation from his travels, as well as a rich correspondence. Collections in the Library of the Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm, as well as in the Royal Library, abound with envelopes and portfolios containing everything from the most mundane ephemera to obviously valuable research documents. In fact, nothing from the Vega expedition and its aftermath is without interest: for example, calling cards of the personalities Nordenskiöld encountered; the permit or “visa” issued on 13 October 1879 by the Hyōgo prefectural authorities allowing him to visit the Kyoto area within a period of twenty days (figure 5); a copper-plate-printed railway timetable for the Kyoto–Osaka–Kobe line (figure 6); a guidebook to the Kusatsu *onsen* spa in the mountains near the Asamayama volcano, which Nordenskiöld visited at the beginning of October 1879 and described in *The Voyage of the Vega* (see figure 7 for a Japanese illustration of bathing at Kusatsu), and so on. Receipts for most of the book purchases are preserved with the collection, and they provide exceptionally valuable economic information about the antiquarian book trade in the early Meiji period. (See figure 8 for the final section of a receipt in scroll form from the Tokyo bookseller Asakuraya.) Book wrappers, sometimes called *fukuro*, which were popular throughout the nineteenth century, are preserved for many of the books. (See figure 9 for a colorful example of a wrapper from the mid-nineteenth century.)

The three chapters devoted to Japan in *The Voyage of the Vega* contain keen observations and sensitive descriptions of the life and customs of the Japanese people, especially considering the obvious limitations of Nordenskiöld’s circumstances.<sup>10</sup> His admiration for “this splendid and

第三八號

外國人入京免狀

國籍

瑞典

姓名

ノルテニスチヨルド氏

身分

博士

居留番號

神戶

旅行旨意

養生

入京道筋

大坂ヨリ順路京都府下及琵琶湖奈

真京都府下ハ山城國内ヲ限ル琵琶

湖ハ東彦根南ハ草津北ハ壺津竹生

島ヲ限リ往復

入京期限

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右道筋日限ノ通入京差許候條無故障相通可申事

明治二年十月十三日

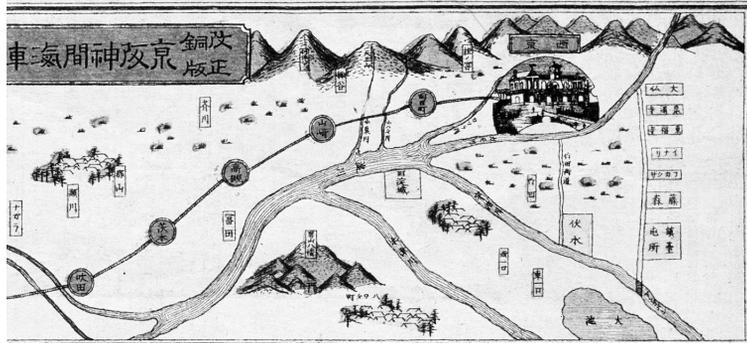
兵庫縣令森岡昌純

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此免狀ハ兵庫へ歸着ノ日ヨリ二日ノ内ニ縣廳へ返納スヘシ

5. Backside of Nordenskiöld's travel document for the Kyoto area, issued 13 October 1879.





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京阪

十二年八月廿五

map above, published 29 April 1879.

shed. Without this arrangement it would perhaps be difficult to get the patients to go into the bath, for agreeable it could not be, to judge from the grave faces of the bathers and the fire-red colour of their bodies when they come out.

The baths are under open sheds. Men and women all bathe in common, and in presence of both male and female spectators. They make their remarks without reserve on the diseases of the patients, even if they are of that sort about which one would

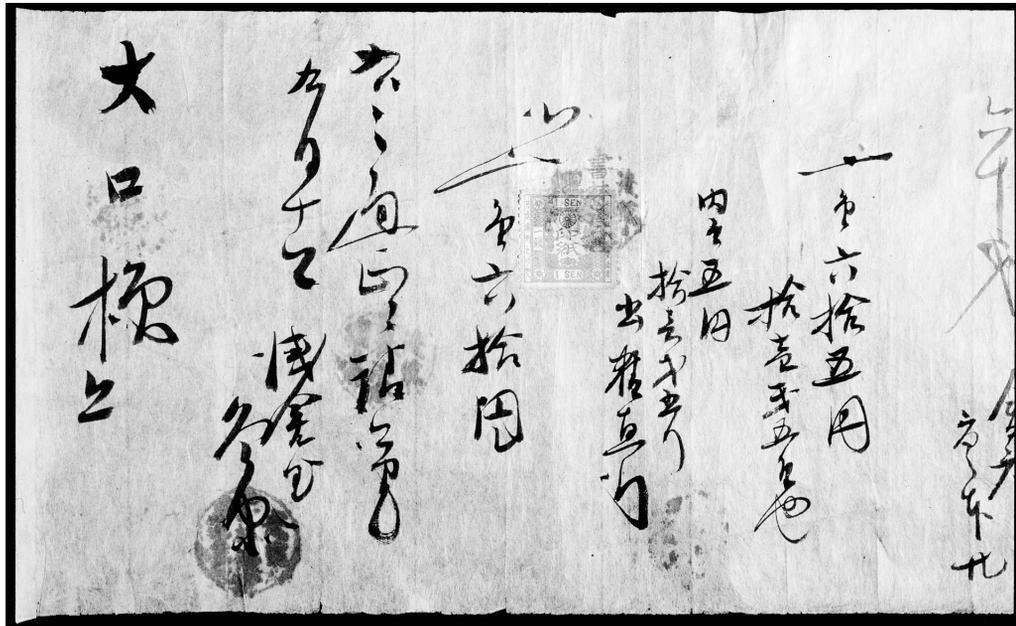


BATH AT KUSATSU.

not speak willingly even to his physician. Often the bath-basin is not fenced off in any way, except that it is protected from rain and sunshine by a roof resting on four posts. In such cases the bathers dress and undress in the street.

In consequence of the situation of Kusatsu at a height of 1050 metres above the sea, the winter there is very cold and windy. The town is then abandoned not only by the visitors to

7. Japanese illustration of bathing at Kusatsu, reproduced from a Japanese travel guide and published in the *Voyage of the Vega*, p. 347.



8. Final section of a receipt in scroll form from the Tokyo bookseller Asakuraya, 10 September 1879.



9. Decorative book wrapper printed in color for *Kachō sansui zushiki* of 1866.

remarkable country” is apparent throughout his narrative.<sup>11</sup> He also shows a surprising awareness of political and social undercurrents, especially regarding certain attitudes of the Western powers such as to extraterritorial arrangements in the treaties with Japan. He cites with some satisfaction the remark made by ex-president Ulysses S. Grant (1822–1885) concerning a recent incident in which a German ship committed a breach of international law by breaking a Japanese cholera quarantine by coming from Nagasaki and discharging her cargo at Yokohama, to the effect that “the Japanese government had the right without more ado to sink the vessel.”<sup>12</sup> Coincidentally, General Grant had ended a visit to Japan and sailed for San Francisco on the very day the *Vega* arrived in September 1879. In an aside Nordenskiöld makes this observation:

The first impression of the Japanese, both men and women, is exceedingly pleasant, but many Europeans who have lived a considerable time in the country say this impression is not maintained, a circumstance which in my belief depends more on the Europeans themselves than on the Japanese.<sup>13</sup>

The book collection that Nordenskiöld made in Japan contains a curious and comprehensive collection of current newspapers and journals, a true cross-section of the periodical literature of the day. In all there are 159 issues of twenty-nine different Japanese-language newspapers, all published in September 1879; fifty-seven issues of forty-two different Japanese language periodicals, dated from April to September 1879; and additionally 140 issues of five different Western language newspapers published in Yokohama and Tokyo during the stay, plus the September 1879 issue of the *Japan Punch*.<sup>14</sup> (See figure 10 for the woodcut cover of this issue.) Most of this contemporary serial literature was acquired from Maruzen (founded a decade earlier) at Nihonbashi in Tokyo, and it functions as no less than a “time capsule” for Nordenskiöld’s visit to Japan.

Nordenskiöld had occasion to meet many prominent Japanese and resident foreigners while in the Tokyo area, and he describes several of these meetings in *The Voyage of the Vega*. Of particular bibliographic interest is his meeting with the son of the Phillip Franz von Siebold (1796–1866). Heinrich von Seibold (1852–1908), then serving as attaché



10. Woodcut cover of the *Japan Punch*, Yokohama, 1879.

with the Austrian Legation, presented Nordenskiöld with a manuscript catalogue of his father's book collection. The elder von Siebold was known for two Japanese book collections. The first, made during his initial residence between 1823 and 1829, is in the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden. The second, made in Japan between 1859 and 1862, was purchased by the British Museum in 1868 and is now kept in the Oriental Collections of the British Library.<sup>15</sup> As often happened in the nineteenth century, the individual works in the latter collection were rebound in Western style and dispersed throughout the library. The catalogue received from Phillip Franz von Seibold, *Zōsho mokuroku*, now in the Nordenskiöld collection in the Royal Library in Stockholm, is not explicitly titled as that of the von Siebold collection; so in 1973 I contacted a colleague at the British Library to inquire whether they could confirm my speculation. It turned out that the original catalogue that accompanied the British Library's purchase of the von Siebold collection had gone missing, and the library had been trying to reconstitute the collection by the tedious method of locating volumes with the same stamped date of acquisition. I was able to provide the British Library with a photocopy of the catalogue in the Royal Library in Stockholm, which greatly relieved its task.<sup>16</sup>

Nordenskiöld's collection of nearly one thousand one hundred titles in approximately five thousand five hundred volumes is very diverse for his aim was to acquire a universal collection that reflected the broad interests of Japanese scholars, as well as those at all levels of the reading public. First, it must be acknowledged that Ōkuchi served him very well in this pursuit. While the aims and conditions under which the collection was made militated against the acquisition of a concentration of great rarities, it does contain many valuable books and manuscripts, especially printed books. Ōkuchi's catalogue consists of three notebooks in which he wrote the sequential acquisition numbers, followed by the Japanese titles together with Romanized transcriptions, brief descriptions in French, the number of volumes and, when possible, a date from the book. In general, the entries show that Ōkuchi was a well-educated young man. Later pencil annotations and corrections by different hands are found throughout the volumes. A group of eight pornographic *enpon* and *shunga* books, excluded from the de Rosny catalogue, have the word

*mauvais* written across each title in Ōkuchi's list, obviously censored by the anonymous hand of a nineteenth-century librarian. The most interesting notes, often merely correcting Ōkuchi's French, are by August Strindberg (1849–1912), the great Swedish author and playwright, who worked as an amanuensis in the Royal Library from 1874 to 1881. (See figure 11 for a page from Ōkuchi's notebook with Strindberg's annotations to *Hokusai manga*.) Strindberg began to study the Chinese language as early as 1875, and he considered himself something of an “orientalist,” but his attempt to learn Japanese after the arrival of the Nordenskiöld collection was not successful.<sup>17</sup> In the last years of his life Strindberg published some bizarre etymological theories concerning Asian languages.

The Nordenskiöld collection is a rich resource that can be appreciated from many angles, and some serious attention was paid to a limited number of titles after my own catalogue was published in 1980.<sup>18</sup> Some obviously unique items were microfilmed by a team from the National Institute of Japanese Literature (Kokubungaku kenkyū shiryōkan) in the early 1980s. Sorimachi Shigeo and others have described some rare book titles in the collection.<sup>19</sup> Kawase Kazuma has cited new discoveries of *gozanban* and *kokatsujiban* editions in articles supplementing his two definitive bibliographies.<sup>20</sup>

For literary and textual studies the uniqueness of individual texts is paramount, but for the growing field of book historical studies, the uniqueness of individual copies of books is critical. For example, the two *gozanban* editions in this collection, *Keitoku dentōroku* (*Jingde chuan-denglū*), Kyoto, 1348, and *Gotō egen* (*Wudeng huiyuan*), Kyoto, ca. 1370, both biographical compilations of eminent Chinese Chan (Zen) monks, are interesting beyond their significance as fourteenth-century editions of important Zen Buddhist publications. The former work contains extensive manuscript annotations, possibly by the Japanese monk Sūshō, whose *ex libris* seal impression is found in the book, and the latter preserves its original wrapped-back binding (Ch. *baobeizhuang*, Jpn. *tsutsumi-hyōshi* or *hōhaisō*) for all twenty volumes. (See figure 12 for the first page of the text of *Gotō egen* and figure 13 for the original binding, showing restoration to the first and last volumes.) The badly damaged, but original, wrapped-back binding of the Daitōkyū Kinen Bunko library copy of the same edition of *Gotō egen* is considered so significant that Kawase Kazuma

N<sup>o</sup> 47. 北齋漫画  
 Beauv-arts. Hoku-sei-man-gwa.  
 " arbitraire des fins  
~~Le modèle des dessins arbitraires~~  
 Collection de caricatures par ~~par~~ Hokusai  
 Japonais (Artiste célèbre) 15 volumes.  
 Comma jusqu'à 1828.  
 Paris on l'en peut acheter. On en voit aussi des <sup>échantillons</sup> ~~en~~ imprimés dans  
 Mikado's Empire par Griffis

N<sup>o</sup> 48. 山王真形  
 Beauv-arts. San-wo-sin-kei.  
 Dessins sur <sup>le mont Fuji</sup> véritable forme  
~~La forme véritable du temple~~  
 de San-no.  
 1822.

11. Catalogue entry from Ōkuchi's notebook with annotations by August Strindberg.



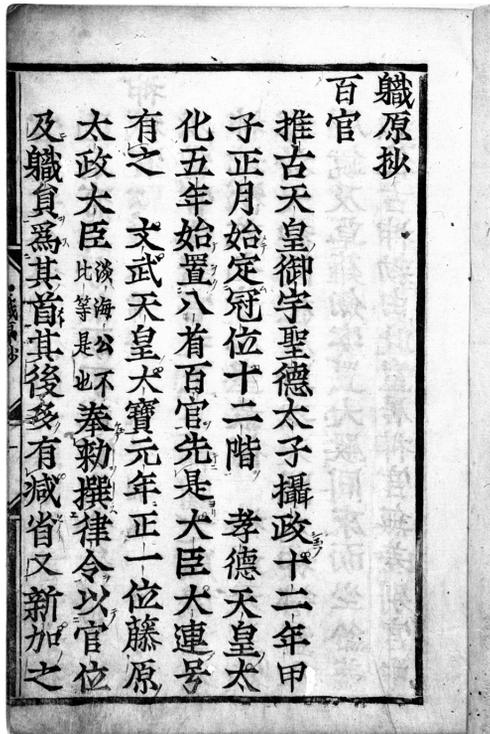
12. *Godō egen*, ca. 1370, first page of text with ex libris seal marks of Asano Baidō (1816–1880).



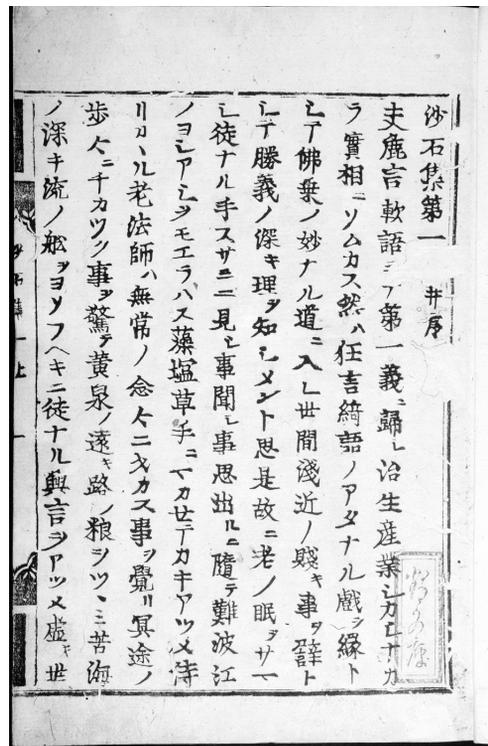
13. Original wrapped-back binding, *tsutsumi-hyōshi*, of *Gotō egen*, with restoration to first and last volumes.

photographed the binding as one of only two color illustrations in the revised 1970 edition of his *Gozanban no kenkyū* (*Bibliographical Study of the Gozanban Editions of Medieval Japan, 1200–1500*).<sup>21</sup> Incidentally, the two *gozanban* editions in Nordenskiöld's collection were purchased in 1879 from the famous Asakuraya Bun'enkaku bookshop in Tokyo for 1.5 *yen* and 1.6 *yen* respectively. The oldest printed book among Nordenskiöld's acquisitions is a Kōya edition from 1296 of the Buddhist work *Hannya haramitta rishushaku*, an explanation of an esoteric text of Shingon Buddhism. The only other known copy of this edition is in the Tōyō Bunko in Tokyo.

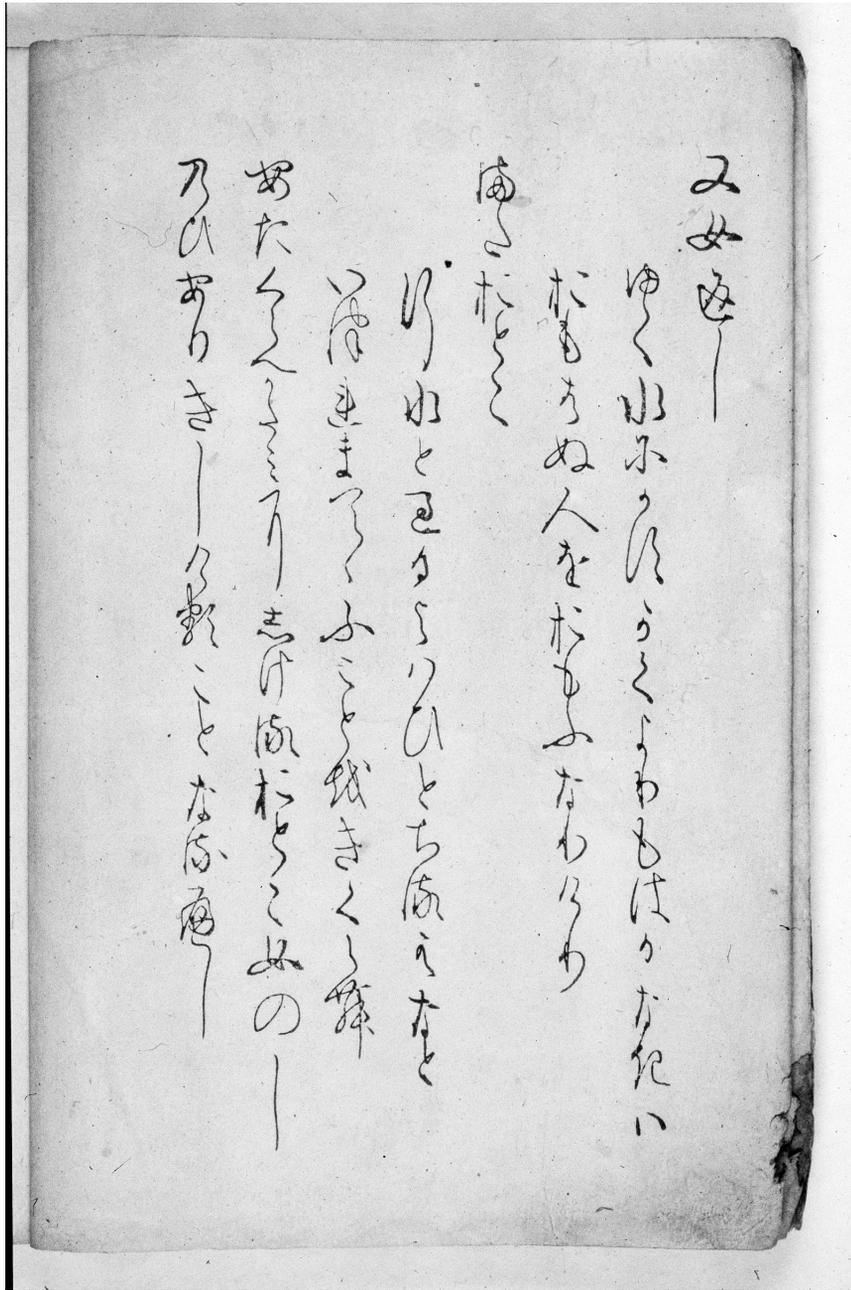
The six *kokatsujiban* editions in the collection serendipitously represent all major genres of early movable-type printing. *Shokugenshō* (On Sino-Japanese Government Offices) of 1599, by Kitabatake Chikafusa (1293–1354), is a *chokuhan*, or imperial edition, from the earliest phase of this publishing vogue. (See figure 14, for the first page of *Shokugenshō*.) It is bound together with a manuscript supplement by Kiyohara Hidekata (1575–1614). The neatly written commentary in red ink is by a certain Tanimura Mitsuyoshi, who also may have transcribed the supplement. *Shasekishū*, a Buddhist prose anthology by Mujū Ichien (1227–1312), was published by the Yōhōji temple in 1605 and represents the first use of *kanji* and *kana* movable types in the same book. (See figure 15 for the first page of text of *Shasekishū*.) *Ise monogatari* (Tales of Ise), 1608, is the Saga edition with types (including ligatures for the first time) designed by Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558–1637), and it contains the first native Japanese book illustrations in Yamato-e style. (See figure 16 for a specimen page of text from *Ise monogatari* and figure 17 for a woodcut illustration from this work.) *Ihō taiseiron* (*Yifang dacheng lun*), a treatise on medical prescriptions, is a 1610 movable-type reprint of a Chinese Yuan-dynasty medical work by the specialist publisher Baijuken. *Daizō ichiranshū* (*Dazang yilan ji*), an anthology of Buddhist texts, 1615, is printed from Suruga bronze movable types, one of only two such editions commissioned by Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616). (See figure 18 for the first page of text from *Daizō ichiranshū*.) *Honchō monzui*, 1629, a large Heian anthology by Fujiwara Akihira (fl. eleventh century), in its original *fukurotoji* (thread-binding) form, was published from wooden movable types during the Kan'ei period (1624–1642), and represents the final phase of the *kokatsujiban* era.



14. *Shokugenshō*, 1559, first page of text of this *chokuhan*, imperial edition, printed with movable type.



15. *Shasekishū*, 1605, first page of text with preface of this edition printed with movable type for *kanji*, Chinese characters, and *kana* printed together.



又女也一

ゆゑ水不之流うゑらもはりなれたい  
たもろぬ人をたもよなわらわ

海にたも

りり水とをたさりひとちぬえなと

の海にまてふも我まて舞

あたええり志げぬたも女の

乃ひありき一々敷ことな家ぬ

16. Ise monogatari, 1608, specimen page of text of this Saga edition showing movable type with ligatures.



17. Yamato-e-style woodcut illustration from *Ise monogatari*, 1608.

大藏一覽集卷第一



寧德優婆塞陳 實謹編

第一門○首標大覺先容俯為衆生作則凡

品十  
三刻

先王品第一 因地品第二

示生品第三 出家品第四

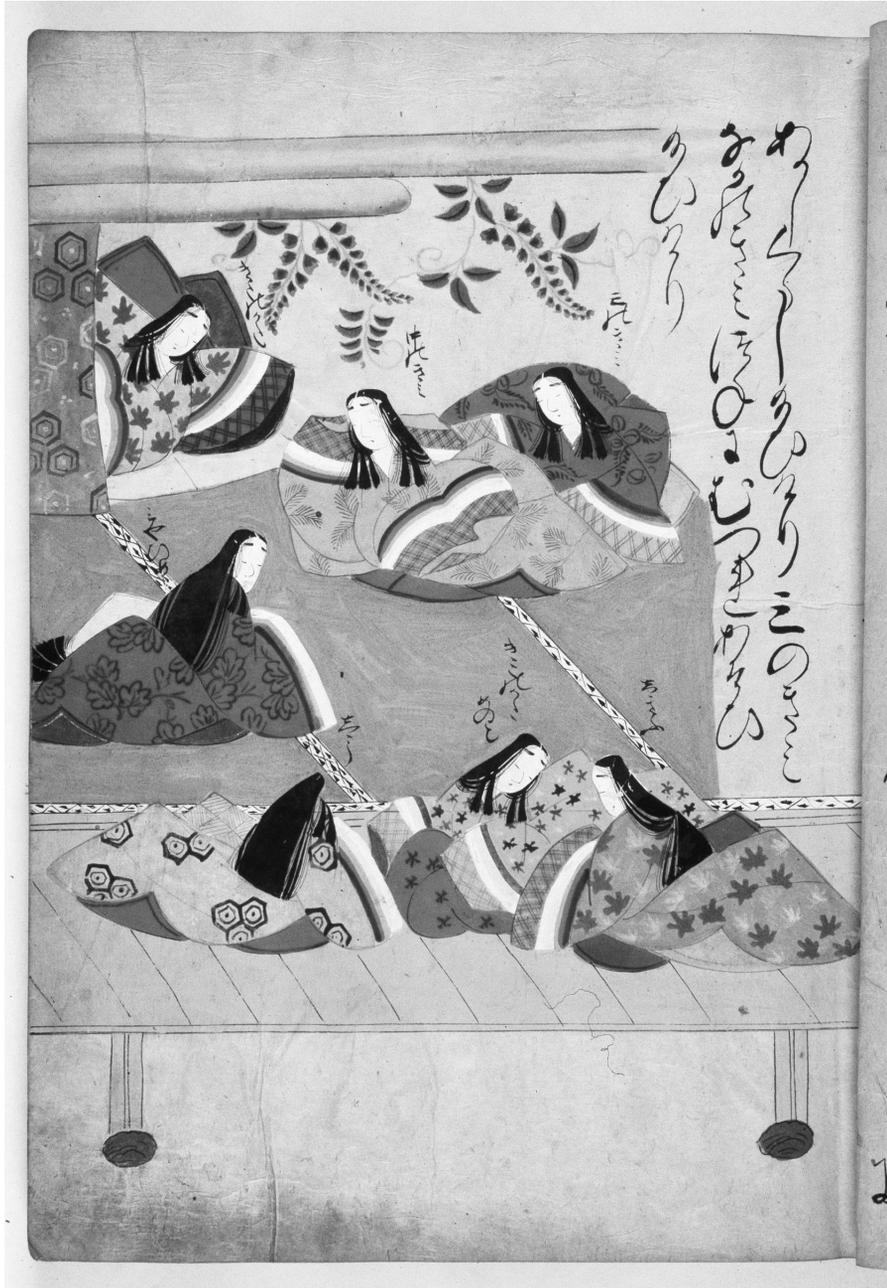
成道品第五 度生品第六

入滅品第七 常住品第八

18. First page of text of *Daizō ichiranshū*, 1615, showing printing with bronze Suruga movable type.

Illustrated popular fiction in most of its forms and genres is found in the Nordenskiöld collection.<sup>22</sup> In my catalogue 125 titles of fiction are distributed over eleven subheadings under the Literature classification. A prototypical large-format *naraehon* edition of *Sumiyoshi monogatari* (Tale of Sumiyoshi Temple) is paired with a typical oblong-format *naraehon* edition of *Ominaeshi monogatari* (Tales of Virtuous Women).<sup>23</sup> (See figure 19 for an illustration from *Sumiyoshi monogatari* and figure 20 for an illustration from *Ominaeshi monogatari*.) An early Edo edition of *Kara'ito zōshi* (Story of Lady Kara'ito) is a rare example of *tanroku* hand coloring.<sup>24</sup> The collection possesses two Saikaku-bon, or rare editions of the works of Ihara Saikaku (1642–1693): *Budō denraiki* (Tales of the Warrior Class) of 1687 and *Saikaku zoku tsurezure* (Saikaku's Sequel to *Tsurezuregusa*) of 1695. The collection also contains other original editions of *ukiyo-zōshi* (stories of the Floating World) by Ejima Kiseki (1667–1736) and Andō Jishō (1666–1736) and published by the famous Hachimonjiya press. Some fiction writers wrote illustrated guidebooks and travelogues, which were very popular at the time; others contributed to theatrical writing. *Honchō jisha monogatari* of 1667 is an example of the former. (See figure 21 for an illustration from *Honchō jisha monogatari*.) Many of these early editions of fiction and literature were purchased in Kyoto from Sasaki Chikuhōrō, whose mid-eighteenth century bookshop had been at the same location on Teramachi Street since the 1780s.

Books on natural history and medicine, especially works of *Materia medica*, are quite well represented in the collection. For example, there is a manuscript in 10 *juan* of the Song-dynasty work by Wang Jixian (1098–1181) titled *Shaoxing jiaoding jingshi zhenglei beiji bencao huatu* [Jpn.: *Shōkō kōtei keishi shōruī bikyū honzō gazu*; Illustrations to the Shaoxing (1131–1162) Recension of *Jingshi zhenglei beiji bencao*]. Since the end of the Ming dynasty this is one of the early Chinese medical books that is recognized as circulating only in Japanese manuscript copies. To turn to Itō Keisuke (1803–1901) is to travel seven centuries in time. In 1829 Itō published *Taisei honzō meiso* (Western Botany with a Commentary on Nomenclature), his influential work on Western botany, based on *Flora Japonica* by the Swede Carl Peter Thunberg's (1743–1828).<sup>25</sup> Naturally, Nordenskiöld was interested in Itō and his relationship with Thunberg



19. Illustration from *Sumiyoshi monogatari*, ca. 1590, a large format *naraehon*.

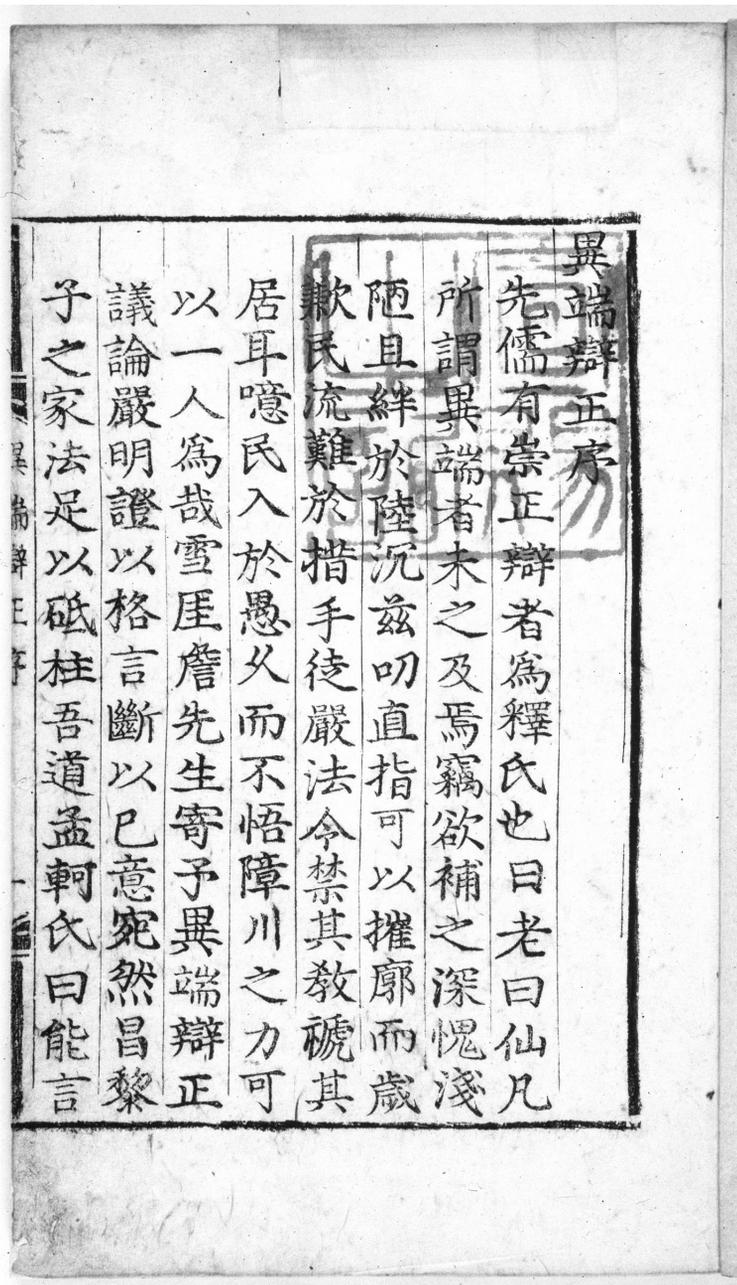


20. Illustration from *Ominaeshi monogatari*, late seventeenth-century, oblong-format *naraehon*.

竹生流



21. Woodcut illustration from *Honchō jisha monogatari*, a guidebook published in 1667.



22. Korean edition of a Chinese work on Confucianism *Yiduan bianzheng*, printed in *ŭrhaeja* font, bronze movable type of 1455, first page of preface.

and mentions this in his book. Ōkuchi managed to acquire a copy of the scarce *Taisei honzō meiso* (complete with supplement, engraved frontispiece, and polychrome woodcuts) for Nordenskiöld.<sup>26</sup>

I have only described some highlights of the collection, which consists almost exclusively of Japanese printed editions and manuscripts. Although about 10 percent of the collection comprises Kanseki (i.e., books by Chinese authors or books in Chinese by Japanese authors), less than ten titles are Chinese editions and only one is Korean. The lone Korean edition is an exceptional one, being a rare work printed from the bronze *ŭrhaeja* font of 1455, probably printed in 1525 and presented as a *naesabon* (imperial presentation copy).<sup>27</sup> It is a neo-Confucian work entitled *Yiduan bianzheng* (Kor.: *Idan pyŏnjŏng*; Rectification of Heresies) by a Ming Chinese named Zhan Ling. The existence of a Chinese edition of this work is uncertain. (See figure 22 for the first page of *Idan pyŏnjŏng*.)

*The Voyage of the Vega* by A. E. Nordenskiöld is an example of a work that Asian historians interested in early travel books and memoirs written by non-Asian specialists might easily overlook. Certainly of interest to anthropologists, the three chapters on Japan, containing observations by a scientist and humanitarian like Nordenskiöld, are valuable additions to the body of conventional documentation available for the early Meiji period. And the remarkable Nordenskiöld collection of Japanese books, which has not been fully studied or utilized, is reason enough, I think, for having made this introductory presentation.

## NOTES

1. The *New York Times*, 4 August 1879, p. 2, and 5 September 1879, p. 1, respectively.
2. The original edition, *Vegas färd kring Asien och Europa*, was published in 2 volumes in Stockholm in 1880–1881 by F. & G. Beijers. The Princeton University Library holds the American edition, A. E. Nordenskiöld, *The Voyage of the Vega round Asia and Europe*, trans. Alexander Leslie (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1882) and the French edition, A. E. Nordenskiöld, *Voyage de la Vega autour de l'Asie et de l'Europe*, trans. Charles Rabot and Charles Lallemand, 2 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1883–1884).
3. Ueno Masuzō, *Nihon hakubutsugaku-shi* (History of the Study of Natural History in Japan) (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1973), p. 144.
4. The original English editions of both, Stockholm, 1889 and 1897 respectively,

- are in the Rare Books Department of the Princeton University Library: A. E. Nordenskiöld, *Facsimile-Atlas to the Early History of Cartography with Reproductions of the Most Important Maps Printed in the xv and xvi centuries*, trans. Johan Adolf Ekelöf and Clements R. Markham (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt, 1889); and idem, *Periplus: An Essay on the Early History of Charts and Sailing-Directions*, trans. Francis A. Bather (Stockholm: P. A. Norstedt & Söner, 1897). The Swedish and English first editions of these two works appeared in the same years.
5. For this website, see [www.finland.or.jp](http://www.finland.or.jp). The essay on Nordenskiöld may be found under “History” in the section “Embassy.”
  6. For the translation, see J. S. Edgren, *Catalogue of the Nordenskiöld Collection of Japanese Books in the Royal Library*, Acta Bibliothecae Regiae Stockholmeinsis, no. 33 (Stockholm: Kungliga Biblioteket, 1980), pp. vii–viii. For the Swedish original, see A. E. Nordenskiöld, *Vega-Expeditionens vetenskapliga iakttagelser*, 5 vols. (Stockholm: F. & G. Beijers Förlag, 1882–1887), I, pp. 129–130. This extensive report is held by the Fine Hall Library at Princeton.
  7. Ann Jannetta, *The Vaccinators: Smallpox, Medical Knowledge, and the “Opening” of Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 177, fn. 36.
  8. Nordenskiöld, *Voyage of the Vega*, vol. 2, p. 395.
  9. Léon de Rosny, *Catalogue de la bibliothèque japonaise de Nordenskiöld* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1883). This edition also is in the Princeton University Library.
  10. A. E. Nordenskiöld, *Voyage of the Vega*, vol. 2, pp. 296–395.
  11. *Ibid.*, p. 298.
  12. *Ibid.*, p. 333.
  13. *Ibid.*
  14. For a detailed list of titles and issues, see Edgren, *Catalogue of the Nordenskiöld Collection*, pp. 4–9.
  15. Yu-Ying Brown, “The von Siebold Collection from Tokugawa Japan,” pt. 1, *British Library Journal* 1.2 (Autumn 1975), pp. 163–170.
  16. Yu-Ying Brown, “The von Siebold Collection from Tokugawa Japan,” pt. 2, *British Library Journal* 2.1 (Spring 1976), pp. 38–55.
  17. See Walter A. Berendsohn, *The Oriental Studies of August Strindberg (1849–1912)*, trans. Rudolf Loewenthal, Central Asian Collectanea (Washington, DC: Central Asian Collectanea, 1960).
  18. For this catalogue, see note 6 above.
  19. Sorimachi Shigeo, *Nihon no kotenseki* (Old Printed Books in Japan) (Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1984), pp. 272–278.
  20. *Gozanban*, literally five-temples editions, refers to fine woodblock editions, mostly facsimilies of Chinese Song and Yuan editions, produced principally by the five great Zen Buddhist temple complexes of Kamakura and Kyoto from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. *Kokatsujiban*, literally early movable-type editions, refers to the large number of typographic editions that dominated Japanese publishing from the 1590s until the middle of the seventeenth century.  
Kawase Kazuma, *Kokatsujiban no kenkyū* (Old Printed Books in Japan, a Brief History

- of *Early Japanese Typography*, 3 vols. [Tokyo: Nihon koshosekishō kyōkai (Antiquarian Booksellers of Japan), 1967], and idem, *Gozanban no kenkyū* (*Bibliographical Study of the Gozanban Editions of Medieval Japan, 1200–1500*), 2 vols. (Tokyo: Nihon koshosekishō kyōkai, 1970).
21. Kawase Kazuma, *Gozanban no kenkyū* (*Bibliographical Study of the Gozanban Editions of Medieval Japan, 1200–1500*); cited in the preceding note.
  22. See J. S. Edgren, “Illustrated Early Japanese Fiction in the Nordenskiöld Collection,” *Biblis*, 1977–1978, pp. 9–62.
  23. *Naraehon*, Nara-style picture books (without a clear relationship to Nara), refers to highly decorative, illuminated manuscripts of popular fiction that flourished from the late sixteenth century to early seventeenth century.
  24. *Tanrokubon*, literally “orange-green books,” refers to simple woodblock-printed books of popular fiction produced during the first half of the seventeenth century and enhanced by primitive hand coloring, using chiefly lead-based orange, mineral green, and yellow.
  25. Carl Peter Thunberg’s (1743–1828), *Flora Japonica* (Lipsiac: I. G. Mülleriano, 1784).
  26. Nordenskiöld, *Voyage*, vol. 2, pp. 325–326. See also Richard Rudolph, “Thunberg in Japan and His *Flora Japonica* in Japanese,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 29.2 (Summer 1974), pp. 163–179.
  27. Three other copies of this edition exist. The copy formerly belonging to Tokutomi Iichirō is in the Ochanomizu Library, and another copy is in the Naikaku Bunko library, both in Tokyo. The third copy is in the Korea University Library in Seoul.

## GLOSSARY

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Andō Jishō 安藤自笑                 | <i>Dazang yilan ji</i> 大藏一覽集                    |
| Asakuraya 淺倉屋                   | Edo 江戸  |
| Asakuraya Bun'enkaku 淺倉屋文淵閣     | Ejima Kiseki 江島其磧                               |
| Asamayama 淺間山                   | enpon 艶本  |
| Asano Baidō 淺野梅堂                | Fujiwara Akihira 藤原明衡                           |
| Baijuken 梅壽軒                    | fukuro 袋  |
| baobeizhuang 包背裝                | fukurotoji 袋綴じ                                  |
| Budō denraiki 武道傳來記             | <i>Gotō egen</i> 五燈會元                           |
| Chan 禪                          | gozanban 五山版                                    |
| chokuhan 勅版                     | <i>Gozanban no kenkyū</i> 五山版の研究                |
| Daitōkyū Kinen Bunko<br>大東急記念文庫 | Hachimōjiya 八文字屋                                |
| <i>Daizō ichiranshū</i> 大藏一覽集   | <i>Hannya haramitta rishushaku</i><br>般若波羅密多理趣釋 |

- Heian 平安  
 hōhaisō 包背裝  
*Hokusai manga* 北齋漫画  
 Hon'ami Kōetsu 本阿彌光悦  
*Honchō jisha monogatari* 本朝寺社物語  
*Honchō monzui* 本朝文粹  
 Hyōgo 兵庫  
*Idan pyōnjōng* 異端辯正  
 Ihara Saikaku 井原西鶴  
*Ihō taiseiron* 醫方大成論  
*Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語  
 Itō Keisuke 伊藤圭介  
*Jingde chuandenglu* 景德傳燈錄  
*Jingshi zhenglei beiji bencao*  
     經史證類備急本草  
 juan 卷  
*Kachō sansui zushiki* 花鳥山水圖式  
 kana 仮名  
 Kan'ei 寛永  
 kanji 漢字  
 Kanseki 漢籍  
*Kara'ito zōshi* 唐系草子  
 Katsushika Isai 葛飾為齋  
 Kawase Kazuma 川瀬一馬  
*Keitoku dentōroku* 景德傳燈錄  
 Kitabatake Chikafusa 北畠親房  
 Kitashirakawa 北白川  
 Kiyohara Hidekata 清原秀賢  
 kokatsujiban 古活字版  
 Kokubungaku kenkyū shiryōkan  
     国文学研究資料館  
 Kōya 高野  
 Kusatsu 草津  
 Kusatsu onsen 草津温泉
- Maruzen 丸善  
 Meiji 明治  
 Mujū Ichien 無住一圓  
 naesabon 内賜本  
 Nagasaki 長崎  
 Naikaku Bunko 内閣文庫  
 Nara 奈良  
 naraehon 奈良絵本  
 Nihonbashi 日本橋  
 Ochanomizu お茶ノ水  
 Ōkuchi Masayuki 大口正之  
*Ominaeshi monogatari* 女郎花物語  
 onsen 温泉  
 Saga 嵯峨  
*Saikaku zoku tsurezure* 西鶴俗つれづれ  
 Saikaku-bon 西鶴本  
 Sasaki Chikuhōrō 佐々木竹苞樓  
 Shaoxing 紹興  
*Shaoxing jiaoding jingshi zhenglei beiji bencao*  
     *huatu* 紹興校定經史證類備急本草  
     畫圖  
*Shasekishū* 沙石集  
 Shingon 真言  
*Shokugenshō* 職原抄  
*Shōkō kōtei keishi shōrui bikyū honzō gazu*  
     紹興校定經史證類備急本草畫圖  
 shunga 春画  
 Sorimachi Shigeo 反町茂雄  
*Sumiyoshi monogatari* 住吉物語  
 Suruga 駿河  
 Sūshō 崇聞  
*Taisei honzō meiso* 泰西本草名疏  
 Tanimura Mitsuyoshi 谷村光義  
 tanroku 丹緑

tanrokubon 丹緑本

Teramachi 寺町

Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康

Tokutomi Iichirō 徳富猪一郎

Tōyō Bunko 東洋文庫

*Tsurezuregusa* 徒然草

tsutsumi-hyōshi 包み表紙

ukiyo-zōshi 浮世草子

ūrhaeja 乙亥字

Wang Jixian 王繼先

*Wudeng huiyuan* 五燈會元

Yamato-e 大和絵

yen 円

*Yiduan bianzheng* 異端辯正

*Yifang dacheng lun* 醫方大成論

Yōhōji 要法寺

Yokohoma 横浜

Zen 禪

Zhan Ling 詹陵

*Zōsho mokuroku* 藏書目錄