

Introductory Remarks

This anthology of visual representations is a collection of the various images of Japan perceived through the eyes of non-Japanese.

Before the establishment of the Preparatory Office for the Establishment of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in 1986, the task to collect travelogues, personal and official accounts, and academic literature written by non-Japanese was initiated. This endeavor still continues for the purpose of gathering the necessary research material to learn how other nations “saw,” and how they “thought” about Japan. Collection of this material written in languages other than Japanese, referred to as *gaisho* for convenience, has been the focus of the Nichibunken library, and document acquisitions. This corpus of *gaisho* is extremely important for knowing the perceptions and ways of understanding Japan found abroad.

Within these written sources are included numerous illustrations that catch one’s notice. The illustrations show “Japan” in the form of etchings, photographs, wood block prints and drawings, and represent the images of Japan held by non-Japanese that are often not expressed in the written texts. Even if the illustrations are pieces of Japanese artwork or visual expression, they were chosen consciously by the individual authors and bookmakers that make apparent the images of Japan they held. We decided to recapture these illustrations, or *gaizô*, contained in *gaisho*, with the media of photographs and digital data, and create a separate database for research purposes. As our initial historical starting point, we have collected in order, the illustrations found in the literature on Japan published after the opening of Japan in 1854, when it became known abroad, until 1900. Using this method, the number of cataloged *gaizô* now exceeds fifty thousand entries (55060 as of March, 2007).

The database with its fifty thousand digitized images is understandably a heavy volume of data. Even when accessing it within Japan the data volume is large enough to require some time to download the desired illustration. The problem becomes

serious when users try to download from abroad and the process takes much time and downloading often fails. In some cases, conducting a search of the large volume is impossible. I myself have tried searches from European countries, such as Germany and Britain, and found the process sluggish and inconvenient, and my experiences in China, Thailand and Vietnam have proven to be the same.

Where computer connections are not optimum, or even if they are, one finds it difficult to access the large volume of data and although this database is of value to scholars, the painful truth is that not many are able to make full use of the information contained in it. Digitized data is not always the perfect solution, and full dependence on it is not advisable. For this reason, we have here published in printed form a collection of *gaizô* for scholars located in areas where access is difficult, or cumbersome to gain an overview of the database content. We edited this volume to contain all of the *gaizô* collected to date, because we felt it was of value in our efforts to support Japanese studies. Although the pictures in this collection are small, it will act as a reference and facilitate the access to the actual material scholars wish to use in our *Gaizô* Database.

In addition, a quick perusal of this collection will give the reader an insight as to the various images of Japan found in the documentary sources produced outside of the country. For this reason, we have entitled this volume *Images of Japan in Non-Japanese Sources: A Collection*.

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Editorial Representative