An Annotated Bibliography of Gozan-ban editions in the collection of the National Museum of Japanese History (Summary)

SUMIYOSHI Tomohiko

Since its foundation, the National Museum of Japanese History has attached importance to the Japanese print culture and collected a large number of block books such as pre-medieval Chinese texts brought to Japan, medieval Japanese texts, and Korean texts. Especially, the museum is richly stocked with block books embodying the medieval print culture. The possession of more than 20 kinds of Gozan-ban, or Five Mountains (Zen Buddhist monasteries) Editions, is unusual for a new institution.

The collection of these Gozan-ban texts has the same structure as the whole of Gozan-ban, including not only many Zen Buddhist texts but also several general Buddhist scriptures, Chinese secular books, and Japanese books. Moreover, the collection covers publications by leading Zen temples of the time such as the Nanzen-ji Temple, Rinsen-ji Temple, Tenryu-ji Temple as well as important books printed by foreign engravers who came to Japan and led the development of the publishing of Zen temples in the latter half of the Nanbokucho period such as the Rinsen-ji Temple edition of Zenrin Ruiju and Yu Ryoho (Yu Liang-fu) edition of Toryu Sensei Bunshu. Furthermore, some of the secular books indicate the regional dissemination of publications in the Muromachi period.

A meaningful side benefit of this collection is a glimpse of medieval printing technology. The collection includes some materials on rare Nanbokucho Gozan-ban printing blocks, which enables to infer that the form was composed of two or three boards on one face and four or six boards on both faces of block. Particularly with some block books printed by foreign engravers coming to Japan, the form can be confirmed as consisting of six boards for one block.

There are many books whose annotations and ex libris indicate how these Gozan-ban books facilitated the academic advancement of Zen temples. Another meaningful point is that the Gozan-ban editions prove their distribution disseminated education to rural Zen temples and non-Zen temples and formed the basis of the academic spread from the medieval to early modern period. It is also important that early-modern and modern scholars and book collectors read the Gozan-ban books. Moreover, many of extant books selected by first-class book collectors of the day are complete early editions, which enhance the value of Gozan-ban as a book.
This article bibliographically examines the above-mentioned points, records as an annotated bibliography, and indicates the features of the Gozan-ban collection in the possession of the National Museum of Japanese History.

Key words: Gozan-ban (Five Mountains Editions), foreign engravers visiting Japan, printing blocks, Zen Buddhism books, Chinese books