

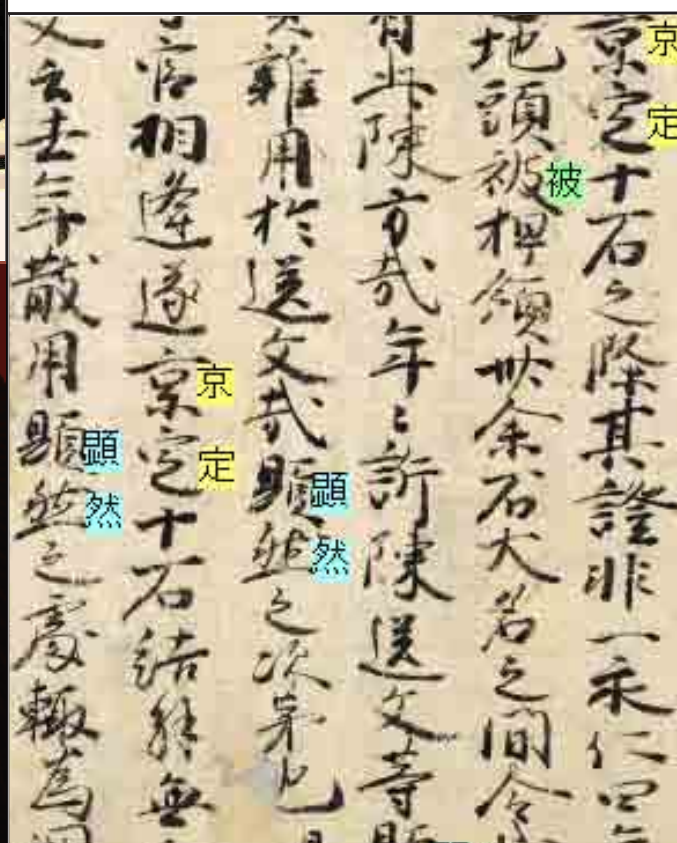
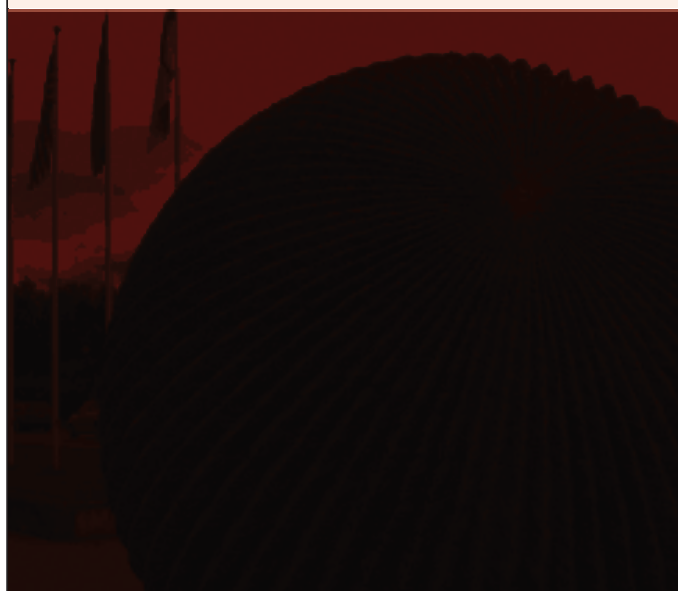


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From June 25 to 29 this year, I had an opportunity to participate in 'Digital Humanities 2008 (DH2008),' an international conference held in Finland.

What I aimed for with my participation this year included investigation of new research directions in digital humanities as well as building rapport and promotion of public relations for our Digital Humanities Center. As for the PR activities, upon my request to distribute handouts about our Center, a booth was set up next to the reception area, which allowed me to do PR activities directly from there. Initially, I was slightly anxious about how much many of the participants would get interested in the relatively specialized field of digital humanities for Japanese arts and cultures. Yet, soon I became fascinated by the fact that, when introducing our Center's research to people from completely different countries and research areas in front of the booth and vice versa, we could find something in common to talk about, based on the shared foundation of digital humanities. As for participating Japanese researchers, even whom I had never met before, regardless of their universities and research fields, they encouraged me with their strong message, saying that "Let's work together for digital humanities' further prosperity in Japan." Thanks to such enthusiastic support from these Japanese researchers, I could have an opportunity to introduce our Center directly to core members of the conference.

Presentations and panels of the conference exposed me to a large number of very interesting topics. Since the space is limited, however, here I would like to introduce (some of) what impressed me most.

First of all, I was impressed by 'CultureSampo,' a comprehensive web database about Finnish cultural heritage, introduced by the opening keynote speaker Professor Hyvönen. Integrated largely through semantic web and ontology technology, this database provides a semantics-based search environment for information about the contents of the Finnish epic *Kalevala*. I found this system extremely interesting as an example in high-quality finished form, resulting from research in a country's unique cultural property, which also serves as a useful reference for researchers in digital humanities all over the world.

Besides this keynote speech, some panel sessions addressed sustainability in digital archiving as well as the TEI standard, all of which were highly informative. Among the panels, however, what impressed me most was 'Defining an International Humanities Portal.' The panel introduced the

'CenterNet' activities to exchange information among digital humanities research institutions. The panel also provided participants with an opportunity to exchange opinions about international collaboration/cooperation in the research field of digital humanities. At the end of the conference, the conference chair Prof. Fraistat in his closing speech called attention to the fact that the majority of participants were from Western countries, and that research in digital humanities is largely text-oriented. He rounded off by concluding that we need to involve researchers from many more countries and research areas, and that we must transcend originality in research, moving towards making unified efforts possible to pursue the common purpose of progress in the humanities.

Throughout this conference, I feel that I have learned about the essential meaning of research in digital humanities. That is, through digital technologies as a medium, research activities striving for originality lead people to mutual understanding and creation of shared knowledge, going beyond the borders of nations and research areas. The conference, therefore, made me realize how important it is for us at the Center to explore what we can contribute to digital humanities as a whole and/or to the humanities as a whole, while striving for our research originality in digital humanities for Japanese arts and cultures.



The Entrance of the Conference Hall



PR Booth for JDH



The Conference Hall (a distant view)



Majoring in Japanese History, I have been conducting research with its focus on brushstrokes in historical documents. Through searching for documents with the same brushstrokes from a great number of historical documents, I collate documents written by the same person, analyzing them with questions of not only what is written, but also why this specific person wrote this specific document, and why this particular text is included in this specific textual body.

In order to identify somebody's brushstrokes, first I have to search letters and characters that appear both in a 'standard' document written by that person and a document to be compared with. Since this is a fairly exhaustive research to look for all comparable letters and characters, I use computers to sort out and organize information about what kind of letters are located in what place in which document, and based on this, I have been doing research on methods to search and display characters or strings of characters.

There are two kinds of information about where a character is located in a document. One is its location in the logical structure of the text—what number in terms of the page, the line, and the column; and the other is the physical location as expressed in the coordinates on the digital image.

Assigning these two kinds of locus information to a single character makes it possible not only to reconstruct text by assembling such characters, but also to specify the location of a character in a digital image of the document. When character data and image data are linked through coordinates, we can create a character catalogue by cutting characters out of document images. We can also search for a character or combination of those and highlight them in the digital image, as Figure 1 shows.

The Japanese Culture Research Group I belong to puts focus more on ukiyo-e and other visual material than on textual one such as archival documents. For this reason, I am now working on to systematize information on 'what image is where in what material' in the Art Center's ever accumulating digitalized images. This system works like putting tags with some notes on pictures, but by using computerized tags rather than paper ones. So, what is the point of using the computer here?

First of all, among the many merits of this procedure, we can create other contents, based on every piece of information about what is where. For instance, if we place a mark on the publisher's seal in a ukiyo-e print and input its data, we can not only search for and display it in the database, but also

make a program that creates a list of the publisher's seals by cutting out the image parts with the publisher's seals and generate it in PDF or other formats upon creating a layout that links the data inputs.

Secondly, using the computerized tags means that we can show data on what is where in what material by using URL. Imagine the situation, in which one researcher may want to inform another researcher of a part of a picture in the collection of the Art Research Center archives. He might attach the whole image or only a part of it to his mail with detailed explanation. Instead of such toils, when utilizing the data on the web, he would only need to create the data on 'what is where in what material' and send the URL. The receiver would then access the URL from his browser and inspect the picture with a tag attached to it and read the notes.

Until now computers have mainly been used in the humanities as a means to create databases. Starting with catalogues, now we can examine both full texts and images of textual materials. While the catalogues and full texts, and the catalogues and images are respectively linked, we have seen little progress in the linkage between the full texts (or, in the case of pictorial materials, data on various elements of the picture) and the images. I believe that by systematizing data on 'what is where in what material,' we can suggest further possibilities of applying computers for the humanities, and that by this attempt, our Japanese Culture Research Group can make significant contribution to the development in the field of digital humanities.

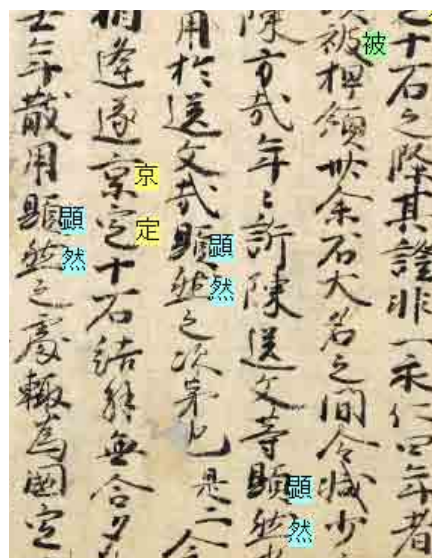


Figure 1: Tōji chōja bunin (Appointments of the Abbots of Tōji), reverse side, in the Fujii Eikan Bunko Collection, Ritsumeikan University

Events

■ Symposium and Workshop: "GIS Day in Kansai 2008" on August 29, 2008, on Kinugasa Campus, Ritsumeikan University

*This event was jointly sponsored by Research Center for Disaster Mitigation of Urban Cultural Heritage, Ritsumeikan University; and Department of Geography, College of Letters, Ritsumeikan University.

GCOE Seminars

Place: [Kinugasa Campus] Art Research Center, Ritsumeikan University

[Biwako Kusatsu Campus] Information Studies Meeting Room, Faculty of Information Science and Engineering, Ritsumeikan University

※Presenters listed without titles are all members of faculty at the ARC GCOE Digital Humanities Center

■ Session 25: July 1

Uemura Masayuki and Obana Takashi: Research of Video Game as Play

■ Session 26: July 8

Kondo Akio: Land Rent and Land Use in Early Modern Kyoto: Re-examining of Thünen Rent Theory, Using GIS

Tadokoto Yasuko: Streetscape Restoration of One of the Main Communities in the Old Town of Kyoto Surrounding the Gion Festival

■ Session 27: July 15

Honda Kenichi: The Historical-geographical Research for the Folk Event/Performing Art: In Case of "Rokusai-nenbutsu" of Kyoto in Early Modern

Kirimura Takashi: Building a Website of the Catalog about Web-based Maps: The Functions of This Website

■ Session 28: July 22

Tsukamoto Akihiro: Attributes and Spatial Characteristics of Men Visiting Nightlife Districts during the Taisho Era: An Analysis of the List of Customers, "

Yukaku-jinmei-cho," in Miyagawa-cho Area, Kyoto

Ishigami Aki: Research and Publication to SHUNGA in the Lane Collection

■ Lunch-time Seminar: July 24

Prof. Ruslan Rainis (Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia): The Development of GIS Applications for Social Sciences and Humanities in Malaysia: Current Status, Issues and Prospects

■ Session 29: July 29

Dr. Lucia Dolce (University of London SOAS, UK): How do we study Japanese religion?

Takahashi Sachie: Effectiveness and Issues of Using the Method of Secondary Orality on Noh Dancing Lesson

Yoshida Masumi: Heiankyo Seen from the Movements of the Heian Nobles

Nakao Fukiko: Attempts of Ancient History Studies Using GIS

Please see the following websites for the latest information about events and GCOE seminars:

Digital Humanities Center for Japanese Arts and Cultures, Ritsumeikan University

HP: http://www.ritsumeij.jp/humanities/index_j.html

<http://www.arc.ritsumeij.ac.jp/lib/GCOE/>

Art Research Center, Ritsumeikan University

HP: <http://www.arc.ritsumeij.ac.jp/>

GCOE seminars and information

Blog: <http://www.arc.ritsumeij.ac.jp/lib/GCOE/seminar>

Colophon:

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT]

Global COE [Center of Excellence] Program

Digital Humanities Center for Japanese Arts and Cultures, Ritsumeikan University

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