

JAPANESE LIBRARY RESOURCES GROUP OF AUSTRALIA

STATISTICS ON IMPERIAL JAPAN

E. Okuizumi

Bibliographic history of the English edition of Imperial Japan materials including statistics

There are different interpretations about the information of when the English statistics of Japan first came out in English and the reason for this. Actually, the first series of the *Japan Year Book* (including statistics) was published in 1905/Meiji 38-nen 9 gatsu) [not 1920] and it ran up to 1931 (volume 27 in 12 gatsu of Showa 5 under the name of Mr Takenobu's wife, Mume, as the editor/publisher (Eibun Nihon Nenkan-sha). This last 1931 edition covered the topics up to the end of 1930 in terms of the contents. Mr Takenobu passed away during the middle of the editorial work of volume 27 and as a result this title was discontinued.

After a several year interval, the so-called *Entirely Revised Edition* finally came out as the 1933 edition (Showa 8-nenban). It was published by a different publisher under the name of the Foreign Affairs Association of Japan (Nihon Gaiji Kyokai) [founded: October 1931], Hibiya Park, Tokyo. As you may know, this newly established body was the Japan version of the Foreign Affairs Association in the US, the Royal Institute of International Affairs in Great Britain, and of whatever institutions may have existed of a similar nature in other Western advanced countries. Mr Inahara was the Editor-in-Chief (at large) of this organisation.

Which is the first *Japan Year Book* to include official Japanese statistics?

According to my brief survey in the US and Japan, NOSHOMUSHO (Department of Agriculture and Commerce of the Imperial Japanese Government) published a book entitled *Japan in the Beginning of the 20th Century*. It was printed by the Japan Times for the Imperial Japanese Commission for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904 (Meiji 37-nen). The Secretary of the Department and Japanese Commissioner for that was Mr. Haruki Yamawaki. Although this is apparently a comprehensive book, many data are blank owing to the censorship system and other reasons. Even so, statistics and data for the Imperial Army and Navy, in particular, are illustrated. For some subjects, precise tables are provided from 1868 or earlier. I believe that this is the first (government) publication in this category.

The English edition of the Japanese statistics: Why?

In the later period of the Meiji era, Imperial Nippon had already become one of the world-class powers, restoring the political mandate to the Meiji Emperor and putting the emphasis on the slogan "Enrich the Nation, Strengthen the Military" (FUKOKU KYOHEI). By that time, the territories of Japan were expanded from the north-western corner of the Pacific Ocean to the eastern coast of the continent of Asia, and from the vicinity of the Philippines to southern Kamchatka, in Russian Siberia.

As a matter of the fact, it was a matter of importance to Japan to secure the acknowledgement of the world. Yes, Japan was, comparatively speaking, a new member in the family of nations and the knowledge which this same world possessed about things Japanese was at best superficial. Of course around that time, reliable publications especially compiled for foreign readers did not exist. It is absolutely true that to give comprehensive and sufficient accounts of the economic and other affairs of Japan by way of statistics was not done. There were, however, a few English translations from the Japanese originals in the fields of literature, customs, drama, and travel reports.

When Japan made an arrangement to participate in the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904, the decision was made to compile and publish a new comprehensive English edition to solve the above long-felt desideratum. To some extent it was successful.

Reliability

Large and small, the statistics from the Empire of Japan came from the government side, even in cases in which they came from private sectors as publications. You know that before 1945 there were very strict press/publication codes imposed by the government. It was almost impossible for publishers to secure print ink, print paper, and circulation without an agreement with the various authorities. To be more precise, we may need to pick up statistics from private reports, writings, or other specific materials rather than such comprehensive ones.

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