

Release of Online Database of Historical Documents on Japanese Earthquakes and Eruptions in the Ancient and Medieval Ages

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<http://historical.seismology.jp/erice/>

Almost all of Japan's known historical earthquake records since around the 6th century, which are clippings from various historical sources such as official/unofficial national histories, chronicles, diaries, biographies, essays, letters, geographical descriptions, and memoranda, have been published in type-printed books of 29 volumes. They are invaluable primary data for the Japanese historical seismology, although buried historical materials should further be searched for and added.

There are, however, two serious problems in these books. One is that they contain rather many unreliable materials because the compilers did not carry out any critical examination of historical sources nor selection, which tends to produce errors in historical earthquake catalogs. The other is that the books are just a huge amount of printed papers, which makes full-scale utilization of massive information including keyword searching impossible.

In order to improve these situations fundamentally, we have been carrying out since 2003 a research project of constructing a full-text digital database of all historical earthquake documents in the Ancient and Medieval ages (up to ca. A.D. 1600) under the Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research by MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology). We restricted the target within the Ancient and Medieval ages because historical sources in these times have somewhat different characteristics from those in the Early Modern age and historical records in the latter age are too huge amount to be treated by a small research group. The project is an interdisciplinary collaboration among earth scientists, historians and information scientists.

We have been critically examining all the historical documents in the existing collections, selecting them, carefully emending every text, and composing a re-edited collection in digital form. In May, 2008 we are releasing the fruit of our research project, Online Database of Historical Documents on Japanese Earthquakes and Eruptions in the Ancient and Medieval Ages.

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