

Use Arrow Keys to Navigate

Sakubun: Composing Japanese Official Documents

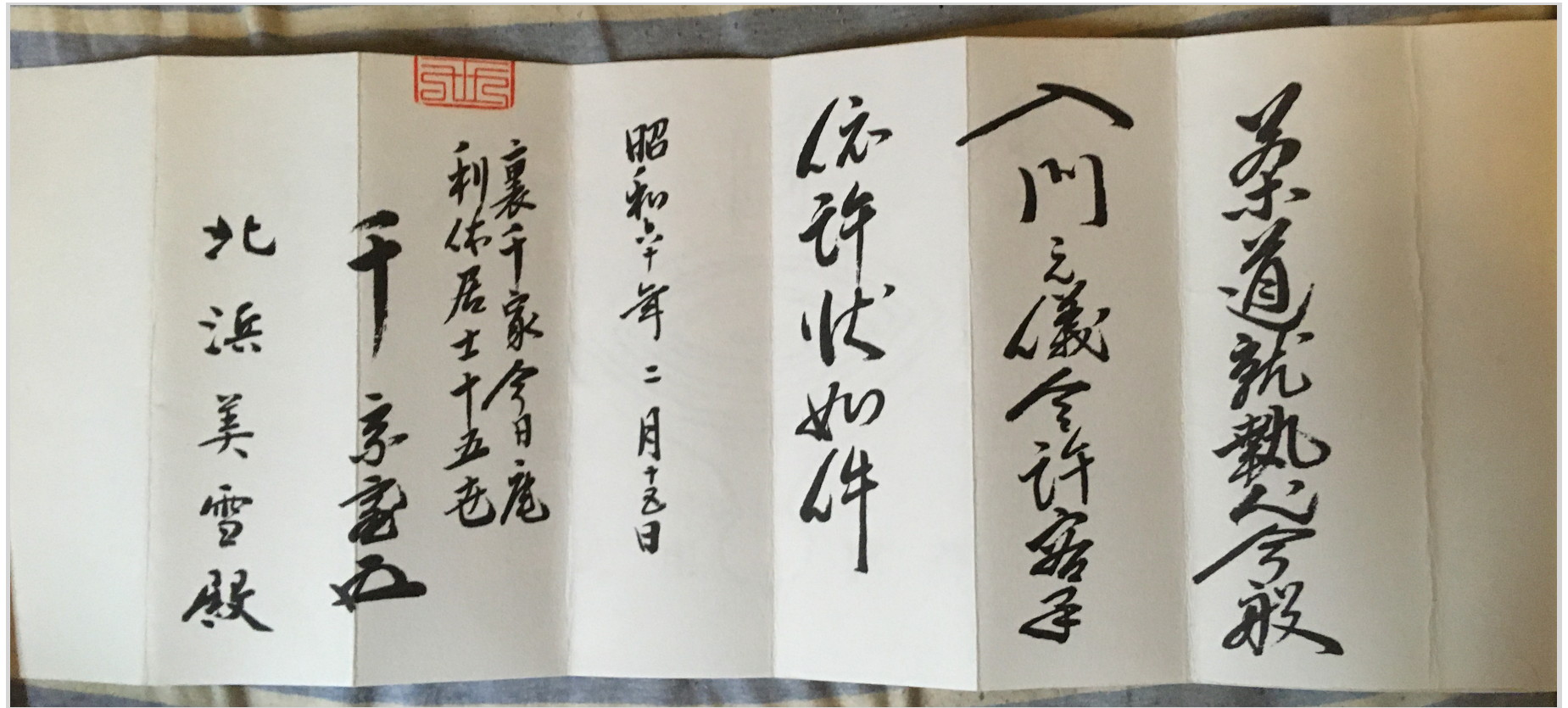
Sólveig Þróndardóttir

菅原美雪

You too can compose Japanese scroll texts. An introduction to the structure, style, and attestation of official Japanese laws, edicts, correspondence, and official documents in English or Japanese. Based on a 16c Jesuit guide to Japanese documents and the texts of Heian Period imperial documents, and illustrated by medieval exemplars.

Formal Document in Traditional Style

Sample Document



Urasenke Menkyojō Issued by Fifteenth Generation Iemoto

Sample Document

Formal Document in Traditional Style

- The first column declares the document type and authority.
- The second column specifies the particular permit.
- The third line continues the second about further study.
- The fourth line is the date in [era name][year number][month number][day number] format.
- The fifth line declares the place where the document was issued.
- The sixth line declares that the issuer is the 15th *iemonto* (grand master) in his particular tradition.
- The seventh line is the name of the *iemonto* followed by his *kaō* (lit. flower impression) which is a sigil and not a signature.
- The eighth line is the name of the recipient.

Formal Document in Traditional Style

Key Points

- Japanese documents read top to bottom right to left.
- Japanese documents are NEVER illuminated.
- Japanese documents are typically accordion folded by successively folding in half right over left.
- Japanese documents are typically wrapped in paper which is three folded across the document with the opening in front and opening to the right.
- The top and bottom of the wrapper are folded behind the document.
- The wrapper frequently has the type of document written on it.
- Japanese documents are typically stored in Lacquered boxes rather than being displayed.

Primacy of the Written Word

- Japanese phonetic orthography is easily learned in less than a month. Consequently, Japanese children can keep diaries such as the famous *Toto Chan* diary by Kuroyanagi Tetsuko.
- Beginning in the Heian Period (794–1185), Japan has enjoyed a rich literary culture of diaries and novels such as *Genji Monogatari*.
- Books published during the Edo period frequently had phonetic *furigana* characters to the side of the *kanji* (Chinese character) text.
- While *kana* texts are very easy to read aloud, due to its limited phonology, Japanese has many homonyms. Thus, *kanji* clarify the meaning of any text with accompanying *furigana*.
- *Katakana* カタカナ characters are based on upright formal *hanzi* orthography. *Katakana* are considered masculine.
- *Hiragana* ひらがな characters are based upon cursive and even connected orthography. *Hiragana* are considered feminine. *Hiragana* probably developed later than *katakana*
- Beginning in the Heian Period (794–1185), Japan has enjoyed a rich literary culture of novels such as *Genji Monogatari*.

Primacy of the Written Word

- Books published during the Edo period frequently had phonetic *furigana* characters to the side of the kanji text.
- The Japanese writing system is based upon Chinese *hanzi*.
- However, unlike Chinese, Japanese is an inflected language
- This required the development of additional symbols to mark these components of Japanese sentences.
- At first, Japanese used a collection of relatively simple *hanzi* to write these auxiliaries. An imperial poetry collection called the *Man'yōshū* 『万葉種』 employed a collection of *hanzi* called *man'yōgana* 万葉仮名 for this purpose.
- *Katakana* is a phonetic script based up a formal version of these *hanzi* and was developed before 1000 CE.
- *Hiragana* is a more cursive parallel phonetic script.
- Originally, *katakana* did not have syllabic **N** needed for words and semantic elements introduced from Chinese. The origin for the *katakana* characters for syllabic **N** and **TSU** are unclear.

Primacy of the Written Word

- Japanese aristocrats, government officials, and military officials were all highly literate.
- Following the Taika Reform in 645, Japan attempted emulate the civil examination system of T'ang China.
- While entrance into the various faculties of the imperial university became hereditary, literacy in both Japanese and Kanbun (Chinese text read as Japanese text) along with composition of both Japanese and Chinese poetry remained essential skills for those in government including military leaders.
- Literature was a premier discipline in the *Daigakuryō* 大學寮 (imperial university).
 - The curriculum included Chinese and Chinese Classics along with poetics in both Chinese and Japanese.
 - Other faculties included such things as calendric science and astronomy.

Primacy of the Written Word

- Traditionally, documents in the Society for Creative Anachronism are rather discursive. This stems in part from the syntax requirements of Indo-European languages, but also derives in part from a deeper aesthetic.
- In contrast, Japanese official documents are rather telegraphic. This telegraphic approach to official writing may reflect not only the warrior mentality, but also the lingering effects of *kan'bun'kun'doku* 漢文訓読 (reading classical Chinese texts as classical Japanese texts).
- As Chinese lacks grammatical inflections and auxiliaries which Japanese demands as well as a somewhat different word order, *kan'bun'kun'doku* was developed to read Chinese texts and Japanese attempts at writing Chinese as if it were Japanese by rearranging words as necessary while adding auxiliaries and inflections.
- Due to the high status of Chinese studies, native Japanese official texts tend toward emulating the austerity of *kanbun* texts.

Primacy of the Written Word

Due to high literacy levels and the primacy of literary style, **Japanese official documents were never illuminated** or otherwise decorated. This is in stark contrast to sixteenth century European official documents which often had preprinted illuminated borders.

- Much of medieval Japanese diplomata is very focused upon facts and actions.
- Bullet points are a distinctive feature of Japanese. These are marks identical to the kanji for the number one and read as “*hitotsu*” which is the native Japanese word for the number one. “Item” is an appropriate English equivalent.
- Sometimes, “*hitotsu*” is accompanied by a comma.
- These bullet points are always at the top of lines.



hitotsu without comma



hitotsu with comma

Primacy of the Written Word



- This petition has a title.
- This petition has “bullet points”.
- This petition has at least three signatories.
- This petition has been folded.

Primacy of Calligraphy

“Among the liberal arts of the Chinese and Japanese, the first and principal place is taken by the art of their letters. Their invention and origin belong to China, whence they spread to the other nations that now use them, such as the Koreans, Japanese, Luchu, Cauchi, and a certain part of northern Tartary bordering on China. These letters are indeed one of the wonderful things to be found in the kingdom of China and in the other nations that use them, and you cannot form any adequate idea of them unless you see them or have experienced them at close hand.” João Rodrigues 1603

“What is even more astonishing and seems almost impossible to human reason is that it is very seldom indeed to find somebody among the Chinese who does not know enough of them for ordinary use. This is true of both the high and the lowly, peasants, artisans, country people and city dwellers, and even the fishermen who live with their families on the seas and rivers in their boats that serve them as ordinary houses.” João Rodrigues 1603

On Materials

- Originally, the Chinese carved pictograms on turtle shells and also onto stone pillars.
- Later the Chinese took up writing with brushes and their letter forms evolved to match being written with brush and ink.
- Invention of paper is traditionally ascribed to Cai Lun ca 105 CE during the Later Han dynasty.
- Paper and Ink were introduced into Japan in 610 by a monk dispatched from Korea.
- However, the Japanese primarily wrote on wooden tablets called 木管 *mokkan* until somewhat later.
- Premium ink sticks are composed of lamp black produced by burning sesame oil bound with fish glue. The scribe grinds these ink sticks in water to produce *bokuju* 墨汁 liquid ink.
- Premium *kōzo* 楮 paper is produced from the inner bark of the mulberry bush. Hand laid paper has a smooth front side.
- Premium brushes are made of goat hair with bamboo shafts.

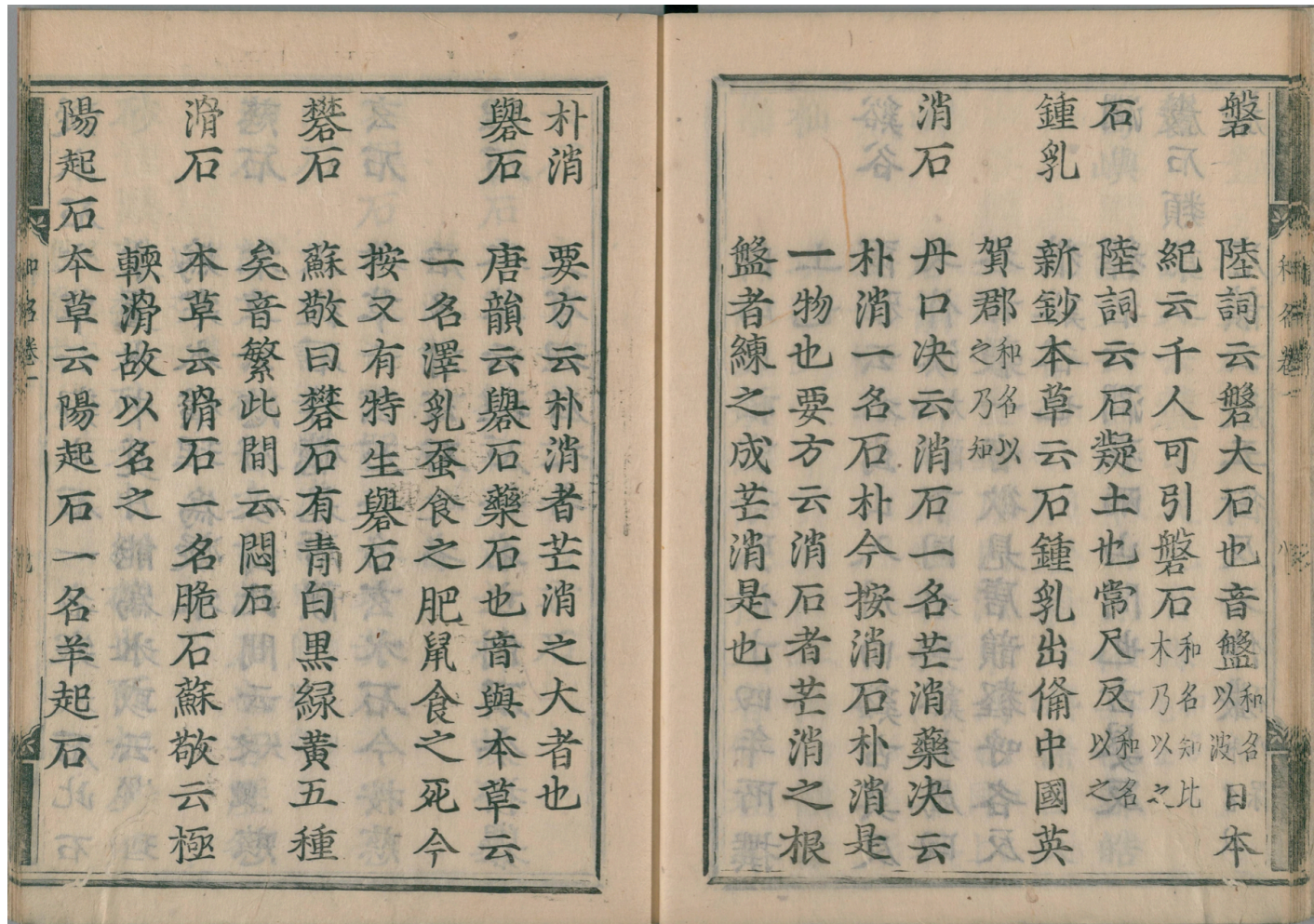
Orthography

ア 阿	イ 伊	ウ 宇	エ 江	オ 於
カ 加	キ 機	ク 久	ケ 介	コ 己
サ 散	シ 之	ス 須	セ 世	ソ 曾
タ 多	チ 千	ツ 川	テ 天	ト 止
ナ 奈	ニ 仁	ヌ 奴	ネ 祢	ノ 乃
ハ 八	ヒ 比	フ 不	ヘ 部	ホ 保
マ 末	ミ 三	ム 牟	メ 女	モ 毛
ヤ 也		ユ 由		ヨ 與
ラ 良	リ 利	ル 流	レ 礼	ロ 呂
ワ 和	ヰ 井		ヱ 惠	ヲ 乎
ン 尔				

Man'yōgana (ca 759 CE) as the origin for *Katakana*

Orthography

Text Using Man'yōgana



Wamyō Ruijushō 『和名類聚書』 938CE

Orthography

Evolution of Syllabic Japanese Phonetic Script

流	伊	末	乃	天	須	阿	和	良	也	末	波	奈	太	左	加	安
ル	イ	マ	ノ	テ	ヌ	ア	ワ	ラ	ヤ	マ	ハ	ナ	タ	サ	カ	ア
礼	由	三	ハ	止	又	伊	為	利	以	美	比	仁	知	之	幾	以
レ	ユ	ミ	ハ	ト	世	イ	為	わ	以	美	比	仁	知	之	幾	以
呂	江	牟	比	奈	曾	字	乃	り	い	み	ひ	に	ち	し	き	い
口	工	ム	ヒ	十	ソ	ウ	字	る	由	武	不	奴	川	寸	久	字
和	興	女	不	二	多	江	字	る	由	武	不	奴	川	寸	久	字
ワ	日	メ	フ	二	夕	工	字	る	由	武	不	奴	川	寸	久	字
井	良	毛	反	奴	千	於	字	る	由	武	不	奴	川	寸	久	字
牛	ヲ	毛	へ	又	千	才	字	る	由	武	不	奴	川	寸	久	字
宇	利	也	保	祢	川	加	字	る	由	武	不	奴	川	寸	久	字
ウ	リ	ヤ	ホ	不	ツ	力	字	る	由	武	不	奴	川	寸	久	字

Katakana

Hiragana

Orthography

Evolution of Kanji



(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

(e)

(a) *kobun*

(b) *daiten*

(c) *shoten*

(d) *korei*

(e) *hachibun*



(f)

(g)

(h)

(i)

(j)

(f) *shōshō*

(g) *konrei*

(h) *gyōsho*

(i) *sōsho*

(j) *hatai*

Japanese Names

Japanese Language and Transliteration

- Japanese phonology has a few features which are not found in English. Further, Japanese is nominally written with *kanji* (Chinese characters) and either of two syllabic scripts. Thus, a lot of Japanese names, titles, honorifics, and styles of address will be transliterated using one or another “romanization” system. Ideally, “romanization” should be consistent for the entire document.
- This presentation romanizes names using a system in *Name Construction in Medieval Japan* which was written when the College of Arms was unable to register names with diacritical marks. In this system, consonants are written using consonant clusters whose sounds are similar to English while vowels with two time units are represented by vowel clusters. Thus, 北条 is written as Houjou and read as Hoh-Joh.
- The Hepurn system is commonly used in English language books. It represents double length vowels other than I by a macron over the letter. Thus 法名 is written a hōmyō and read as Hoh-Myoh.
- Both make use of apostrophes and dashes to indicate segmentation of words into syllables. These marks and doubled vowels are important for correctly representing Japanese and should be faithfully replicated.

Japanese Names

Caveat

- Japanese avoid using names by using styles of address, job titles, other titles, kinship terms, &c.
- Similarly, direct pronouns are rarely used.
- For example, modern Japanese may address a stranger as older or younger brother or sister.
- Aunt and uncle serve when addressing older people.
- Japanese may address a policeman by one of the words for policeman.
- For purposes of official documents, titles, ranks, offices, and similar indirect references should be used except where names are explicitly required.
- For example, during the Kamakura period, documents issued by the shōgun

Japanese Names

The Emperor

- Historically, the emperor could be either male or female.
- One woman even reigned twice.
- Emperors have regnal names which currently correspond to their posthumous names. These are used in Japan rather than the nanori of the emperor. For example: Hirohito 裕仁 was known in Japan as Shōsa-tennō 昭和天皇 : The Shōwa Emperor.
- The emperor should not in general be referred to by name, only by honorific or office.
- In live official events the emperor can be referred to as 天皇陛下 Tennō-heika.
- Heika 陛下 is currently applied to: the emperor, the imperial consort, princes, consorts of former emperors, & al

Japanese Names

The Shōgun

- The official name for this office is 征夷大將軍 Sei'i'tai'shōgun or Barbarian Suppressing Generalissimo .
- Formally, the office of shōgun enjoyed fifth court rank which was the lowest rank which could have an audience with the emperor.
- Originally, the shōgun was in charge of suppressing northern barbarians. There were completely different departments for the army and for several imperial guard units.
- Within the context of the *bakufu* 幕府 (military government), the *shōgun* enjoyed formal status similar to that of the emperor in the imperial government.
- In Japan, as in China, the right to rule can be viewed as *tenmei* 天命 or decreed by heaven. Thus, military supremacy was not alone sufficient proof of legitimacy. Rather, the potentate had to personally and institutionally cultivate the arts as well.

Japanese Names

Honorifics

- Japanese frequently attach an honorific the end of people's names.
- These same honorifics can be attached to job titles and occupations. Some can be easily used in isolation.
- “san” is a modern form of “sama” 様 which itself is rarely used.
- “dono” 殿 should in general be attached as a suffix to names and offices.
- “dono” is derived from “tono” which refers either to a palace or somebody of high rank.
- Orders issued by the Kamakura *bakufu* were made in the name of the *shōgun* and frequently opened with the set phrase 「鎌倉殿の司に依て」 “Kamakura-dono no tsukasa ni yote” or “by order of the executive of the Kamakura palace”.

Japanese Names

Honorifics

- *Kinji* 君 is archaic for you.
- *Kimi* 君 or 公 originally referred to the monarch and appears in the Japanese national anthem 「君が代」 or 「君が世」 “Kimi ga yo”.
- *Gimi* 君 is a suffix applied to the names of family members of the person being spoken to.
- *Kō* (or *Kou*) 公 appears after the name of a high noble.
- *Kō* (or *Kou*) 侯 appears after the names of shugo 守護 (military governors).
- Honorifics can mark the ruler of a particular political division.
 - Kamakura no tsukasa 鎌倉司
 - Echizen-kō 越前侯
- *Dana* 旦那 or 檀那 (originally alms giver) any benefactor.

Japanese Names

Honorifics

- Sensei 先生 originally referred to any elder. Currently, it also applies to teachers and professionals. Can be used as either an honorific or a pronoun.
- Hakushi 博士 were instructors at imperial universities and is currently used to form names for doctoral degrees.
- Senjō (Senjou) is an archaic word for teacher.
- Senpai 先輩 refers to senior colleagues. Used as a pronoun.
- Kōhai (Kouhai) 後輩 refers to junior colleagues. Used as a pronoun.
- “dono” 殿 remains the safest choice for honorific suffix.

Japanese Names

Short Glossary

字	Azana	Chinese Courtesy Name
武家	Buke	Military Class
雅号	Gagou	Artistic Name
法名	Houmyou	Name in Religion
諱	Imina	Posthumous Name
院号	Ingou	Palace Name
実名	Jitsumei	True Name
名	Kaimyou	Posthumous Name
仮名	Kemyou	Substitute Name
公家	Kuge	Imperial Aristocracy
名乗	Nanori	Official Given Name
諡	Okurina	Posthumous Name
靈名	Reimei	Baptismal Name
洗礼名	Senreimei	Baptismal Name
諡号	Shigou	Imperial Posthumous Name
尊号	Songou	Honourific Name
通称	Tsuushou	Common Name
呼名	Yobina	Common Name
幼名	Youmyou	Childhood Name

Japanese Names

Titles and Offices

Kuge 公家 (Imperial Aristocracy)

- Imperial court ranks, titles, and offices appear before the *uji* name.

従三位 藤原 藤原 基宗

Jusanmi Fujiwara no Motomune

<imperial rank/title/office> <Uji name> no <nanori>

Buke 武家 (Military Class)

- Titles and offices appear after the family name and are commonly attached to the medial common name. In the example, *hyou'e* is a leader of a type of guard unit.

藤原 悪七兵衛 景清

Fujiwara Akushichi-byou'e Kagekiyo

<family name> <common name - assignment> <nanori>

Japan and the Alternate Title List

- The Japanese titles in the alternative titles list generally correspond to a title system adopted by the Japanese government in the second half of the 19th century. They are not at all premodern.
- Prior to the Meiji Restoration in the 19th century, there were parallel title and office systems for several types of political authorities.
- Official Imperial Titles - Many of these titles correspond to titles in T'ang Dynasty China.
- Premodern official Japanese titles were typically gender-neutral in principle.
- Unofficial Imperial Titles - These include such worthies as the imperial regent for which there were two titles corresponding to whether or not the emperor was considered an adult.
- Ancient *uji* (clan) titles were called *kabane*. These ancient clans are distinct from the “clans” commonly appearing in relation to the Sengoku Period. (Roughly 1450-1550)
- The imperial government gained control of *kabane* following the Taika Reform.

Japan and the Alternate Title List

- *Kabane* such as “ason” and “muraji” frequently appear in the formal names of high ranking nobles, and use of *kabane* on official documents continued till the Meiji Restoration in the nineteenth century.
- *Kabane* are typically attached to the end of an *uji* (clan) name.

源朝臣頼朝

Minamoto no Ason Yoritomo

- In ancient Japan, all offices (including the emperor who could be female) were appointed. These offices frequently appear in the names of high ranking nobles.
- Unlike post-nomial styles of address, Imperial titles of members of the *kuge* typically precede their name.
- Military titles held by members of the *buke* class typically appear after their family name and before their *nanori* (formal given names). They are often attached to the end of their common name (which was often their juvenile name prior to their coming of age ceremony).

Japan and the Alternate Title List

- Members of the imperial family were themselves assigned ranks to which they could be promoted.

Shinnō 内親王 (lit. inner close king) [highest title for males]

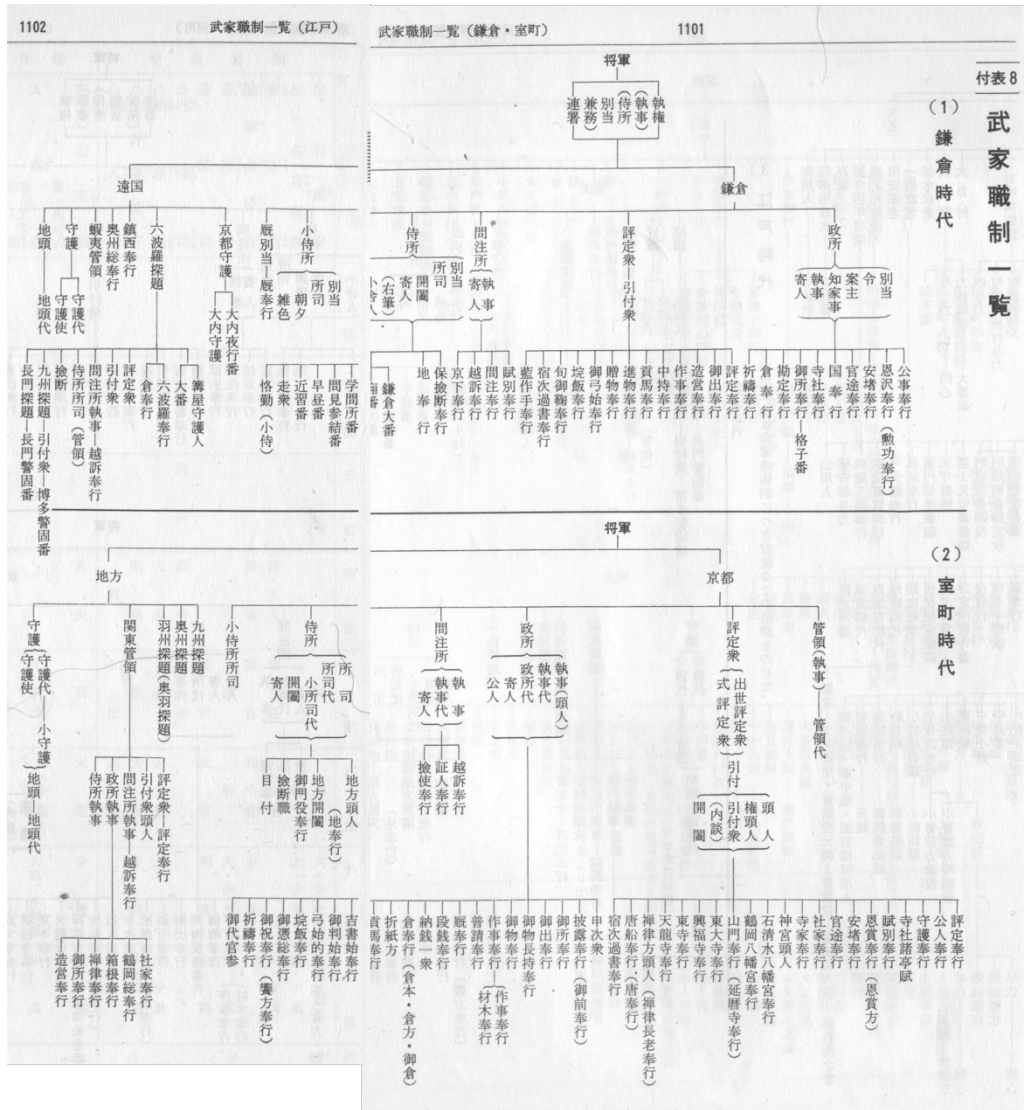
Naishinnō 内親王 (lit. inner close king) [highest title for females]

- While the imperial family may have at one time had a family name, it has been lost.
- This is complicated by matrilocality and kinship patterns among the the Heian aristocracy. In Japan, a family corresponded to a group of cohabitating people, and husbands and wives frequently lived separately. Further, early Japan was fairly matriarchal.
- Children of male emperors could therefore reside in an estate belonging to one or another *uji*. Therefore, in a sense, the emperor belonged to the *uji* of their mother.
- During the Heian Period, the emperor gradually lost power to an imperial regent who typically belonged to the Fujiwara.
- Simultaneously, the great *kuge* families were acquiring private estates outside of land held by the government and regulated by the equal fields system.

Japan and the Alternate Title List

- The imperial family responded in two ways.
 1. Established the *insei* 院生 a cloistered court of retired emperors.
 2. Created the Minamoto and Taira as imperial *uji*.
- There were a number of titles associated with retired emperors including one for the most senior in their hierarchy.
- Some retired emperors were instead assigned to temples.
- The Minamoto 源 and the Taira 平 were seeded with “rusticated” former junior members of the imperial family. The Minamoto 源 and the Taira 平 go on to become political forces in their own right.
- The *insei* itself had a class of officials.
- The imperial government was a rich source of titles associated with various offices and ministries.
- Each office was associated with a rank and often a sub-rank within the root numerical rank.
- Ministries would typically have a director, an assistant director, a scribe, and some other fixed functionaries in addition to people who did the work of the ministry itself, servants of ministerial officials, or were employed in dedicated agricultural zones supporting the ministry. Only those of rank five or above could have imperial audiences.

Japan and the Alternate Title List



The Kamakura Bakufu (1185–1333) was commanded by the Sei-i-tai-shōgun 征夷大將軍 nominally appointed by the emperor. Jitō 地頭 (estate stewards) were independent of shugo 守護 (military governors) and imperial governors.

The Muromachi Bakufu (1336–1573) placed the *jitō* under the *shugo* and the imperial government lost power. Wealth and power dramatically shifted to provincial military houses during this period. The Onin-Ran (1467-1477) shōgun succession dispute ended effective national government.

Japan and the Alternate Title List

Provinces and Estates

	Provincial Governors			Shoen	Jitō Report To	
Late Heian	Nokami	守	Imperial	Jitō	地頭	Proprietor
Kamakura	Shugo	守護	Military	Jitō	地頭	Shōgun
Muromachi	Shugo	守護	Military	Jitō	地頭	Shugo

- Originally regional territories were owned by large kinship groups called *uji*.
- These their territories were ceded by the *uji* leaders to the imperial government in exchange for hereditary base court rank, court titles, and income. This allowed the aristocracy to live together in the capital with secure incomes where they could pursue high culture and court intrigue. Thus, the empire claimed ownership to all lands.
- Provinces were created by the Imperial Government.
- An Imperial Governor was appointed for each province.
- Governors and Proprietors Typically Lived in Heiankyō.
- Deputy governors typically lived in the provinces.
- Private Estates called Shōen 荘園 were created by imperial gifts made to individuals, artisan associations, and religious institutions or by private land developers who created new fields and villages. Their output was owed to the proprietor and not the imperial government.
- Nokami and Shugo Shared Jurisdiction During the Kamakura Period.

Japan and the Alternate Title List

The Emperor

- Emperors have *nanori*, but lack both *uji* names and family names.
- One possible explanation for this is that from the Yamato Period through the Heian Period, wives and husbands of the *kuge* class lived separately.
- Due to kinship being based upon co-residence, the children of the emperor living with their mother would effectively belong to the *uji* of the mother.
- Emperors have *nanori* written in *kanji* with native Japanese readings. The *nanori* of emperors and imperial princes have for centuries contained the kanji 仁 *hito* which is typically the second *kanji* in the *nanori* of the emperor.
- Emperors also have posthumous names which may be assigned during life. For example, Mutsuhito 睦仁 was the Meiji Emperor 明治天皇 Meiji-tennō.

Consorts

- While often politically important, consorts did not have formal power.
- However, regents were often the effective ruler.
- Generally speaking, the Japanese imperial government views the arts superior to both the military and general administration. These are the worthies who typically controlled government affairs. Thus, the non-combatant should in general take the role of regent.

Emperor	Kanpaku	関白	Adult Emperors
Emperor	Sesshō	摂政	Minor Emperors
Emperor	Taikō	太閤	Especially Toyotomi Hideyoshi
Shōgun	Shikken	執権	

Overview of Differences

As noted, Japanese documents typically consist of a list of items. These items are distinguished by beginning a new column and each item begins with the word “ITEM”. This corresponds to the word “*hitotsu*” (literally “one”) found in the original Japanese manuscripts. Subsections are sometimes found within a single section. In historic documents, these subsections are consecutively numbered beginning with “one” and progressing upward. However, subsections do not begin their own column, but are embedded in the main text of the item to which they belong. A document concludes with attestations of authenticity.

Overview of Differences

Although a Japanese document consists entirely of text, it is not a solid mass of characters. As with other Japanese graphic art forms, there is an extensive use of blank space to organize the document and to lend understanding and beauty to it. The title sits by itself on the far right of the page and is typically written both larger and darker than the rest of the text. While the title sits at the far right it is not written at the top of the page, but somewhat below the top and never higher than the text of the individual items.

Overview of Differences

- Despite any preconception that Japanese official documents lacked artistry, artistry was normative and often required for effectiveness in communications to peers and superiors.
- Calligraphy itself was and still is a major art form in Japan.
- Different calligraphic styles may be appropriate for different documents.
- Poetry was a regular part of social, political, and even administrative life. A field report in the form of a poem depicting troops trudging through snow could easily be far more effective than a mere list of supplies expended and needed.

On Brevity

“In addition, to learn these letters and figures is not merely, as among us, to know how to read and use them as signs, but also to learn at the same time science and rhetoric with their composition and elegant style. For this reason, this nation has come to form with this kind of letters a beautiful, elegant, and compendious style, for they can say with a few words or even a few syllables just as much as we in our languages can express in many long speeches for in their language each syllable is a word, noun, verb, adverb, interjection, conjunction, preposition, or any other part of speech. All their eloquence is found in this elegant, brief, and clear manner of composition, and in placing and arranging the letters with each other, and it is adorned with various figures and metaphors. Hence they have also many compendious maxims of two, three, or four syllables that in our language form only one word.” João Rodrigues 1603

Artistry in Japanese Documents

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On Poetry

- Poetry most frequently appears in reports and petitions to formal superiors, not in edicts issued to inferiors.
- All Japanese ranks, titles, and offices were appointive including the emperor who could be female.
- In the early imperial period, a deceased emperor was temporarily interred in a garden compound surrounded by curtain walls.
- Aspirants to the imperial dignity on the outside of the compound would write Japanese poems and toss them across the wall.
- Shrine maidens on the inside read and judged the poems and among themselves appointed a successor based upon artistic merit.
- Aspirants composed both Chinese poems and Japanese poems.
- *Tanka* are poems composed in Japanese with 5-7-5-7-7 prosody.
 - *Tanaka* are about expressing human feeling. As Ki no Tsurayuki wrote, poetry has its “seeds in the heart”.
- One approach to composing tanka is to treat the initial 5-7-5 section as a poetic sketch of a time and a place while treating the terminal 7-7 section as a human response.

Feelings should be alluded to. For example damp sleeves express sorrow.

On Modern Letters

Zenbun	前文	Preamble
Tōgo	頭語	Opening greeting.
Jikō	時候	Seasonal note.
Aitakata Anbi	相手方案否	Well wishes for the recipient.
Jibungawa Anbi	自分側案否	Note asserting the well being of the sender.
Shubun	主文	Main Text
Kiji	起辭	Opening phrase
Honbun	本文	Main text
Matsubun	末文	Closing
Musubi	結	Closing phrase
Ketsugo	結語	Closing Greeting
Atozuke	後付	Postscript
Hizuke	日付	Date
Sashidashinin	差出人	Sender (Low on Page)
Keishō	敬称	Receiver (High on Page)
Wakizuki	脇付	Respectful Phrase
Fukubun	副文	Addendum
Kiji	起辭	Closing Phrase
Yōken	要件	Important Matter

Many of the features found in premodern edicts and official correspondence are found in modern formal correspondence. As with premodern edicts, some elements are set phrases and even single words.

Select Document Terms

Document Type		Name	Content	Issuer	
布告	Fukoku	Edict		Shōgunal	Public
発令	Hatsurei	Proclamation	Laws & Orders		
公表	Kōhyō	Announcements			Public
公布	Kōfu	Proclamation	Laws & Orders		Public
布令	Furei	Proclamation		Superiors	
宣言	Sengen	Declaration		Inferiors	
宣布	Senpu	Declaration	e.g. War	Government	
宣下	Senge	Proclamation		Imperial	
宣旨	Senji	Proclamation		Imperial	
口宣案	Kuzen'an	Notification	Promotions	Imperial	
布令	Furei	Official Notice	Orders	Superiors	
発布	Happu	Proclamation	Laws		
声明文	Seimeibun	Statement		Buddhist Abbot	
奉書	Hōsho	Proclamation		Government Head	

- *Senji* 宣旨 were written imperial proclamations during the late Heian Period.
- *Seishi* 聖旨 are imperial commands.
- *Kuzen'an* 口宣案 were written transmissions of oral imperial directives.

Types of Correspondence

Partial Classification of Letters by João Rodrigues

<i>Fumi</i>	文	Ordinary Letters	
<i>Shojō</i>	書状		
<i>Shosatsu</i>	書札		
<i>Rinshi</i>	綸旨	Imperial Letters	Taken down by a <i>kurōdo</i> 藏人 secretary
<i>Migyōsho</i>	御教書	Shōgunal Letters	For testament purposes. Attested by <i>kaō</i> (sigil) and including era name.
<i>Gonaisho</i>	御内書		Ordinary communications. Attested by <i>kaō</i> (sigil) without an era name.
<i>Goshuin</i>	御朱印		Letter form the shōgun or <i>shikken</i> (regent) bearing the vermillion seal.
<i>Gogoji</i>	御下知		Letter issued by al <i>bugyō</i> 奉行 official on the orders of the shōgun.
<i>Hōsho</i>	奉書	Military Governor	Written and signed by an provincial official. <i>Uketamawaru</i> (transmitted) appears at the end.
<i>Chūshinjo</i>	注進状	Field Report	Typically begins with <i>Kitto mōshi-age-soro</i> 屹度申し上げ候 (I expressly state).
<i>Sojō</i>	訴状	Petition	
<i>Meyasatsu</i>	目安冊		
<i>Seisatsu</i>	制札	Posted Proclamations	
<i>Chakutō</i>	着到	Register or Muster Roll	
<i>Jōshugaki</i>	上首書	Memorandum	
<i>Kishōmon</i>	起請文	Oath	
<i>Seishi</i>	誓紙		

Mongon	文言	Text or Style of Writing
Bunshō	文章	Text or Style of Writing
Bunja	文者	Author of Fine Prose
Anmon	案文	Draft

Three Kinds of Official Letter

Vassals Initiating Correspondence via Hirōjō

- Hirōjō are addressed to a vassal of the intended recipient.
- Superiors could direct letters directly to a subordinate.
- Equals might choose not to do this.
- Subordinates directed letters to a staff member of their superior who they trusted to transmit either the letter or its intent to the superior.

Replies

- Depending upon the nature of the letter from a superior, a reply might be transmitted directly to the superior.

Three Kinds of Official Letter

Hirōjō (Indirect Initial Letter)

As a New Year's greeting, I present the shōgun with one sword that I myself used and one horse. I shall depend upon you to convey this [message] in an appropriate manner.

Yours most respectfully,

First Month, 11th Day, <Formal Name><kaō>

Lord Ise no Kame

Note the Sequence at the End

Date

Sender (name and sigil)

Recipient (a vassal of the intended recipient)

Gift Giving

In China, international trade was conducted by merchants offering tribute to the emperor and the emperor giving gifts. In Japan, gift giving was a major part of business and politics. Gifts were typically wrapped and often conveyed indirectly. In Japan, superiors presented bolts of cloth to their vassals to be made into their uniforms each new year. Today, gift giving continues with Mid-Summer and New Year being primary occasions.

Three Kinds of Official Letter

A Direct Letter from the Shōgun

In the battle that you fought at the residence of Yūki Nakazukasa no Jō, some among your kinsmen and retainers were killed and others wounded in action; truly admirable. Strive for ever greater exploits on the battlefield. The foregoing as stated above.

Eiko 11, Eighth Month, 28 Day. (Kaō)

A Reply Indirectly to the Shōgun

On the 3rd of this month I was fortunate enough to receive His Lordship's letter dated the 28th of the previous month. I wish to thank him wholeheartedly for it. Now, His Lordship has ordered a punitive expedition against so-and-so. We shall join the campaign as soon as possible, and we shall strive to distinguish ourselves on the battle field. I shall depend upon you to please convey this message.

Yours most respectfully,

Eiko 11, Ninth Month, 18 Day. (Kaō)

Lord Ise no Kame

Direct Document Structure

Basic Structure	
1. Document Type (e.g. <i>Fukoku</i>)	4. Closing
2. Opening	5. Attestation (Date – Issuing Authority – Recipient)
3. Main Body	6. Office and name of secretary followed by <i>uketamawaru</i>

Types of Direct Letter
Hensatsu 返冊 or Henji 返事 [Replies]
Wazato no Jō 態書 or Henji 返事 [Express Letter]
Bingi 便宜 or Tayori 便 [Tidings]

Openings For Replies	
<i>Gojō ni azukari</i>	Your letter has been received
<i>Gojō hiken</i>	Your letter has been read
<i>Gojō tōrai</i>	Your letter has reached me

Openings For Initiatives	
<i>Wazato</i>	I expressly inform you
<i>Kitto gonjō okanaisōrō</i>	I expressly inform you
<i>Kitto mōshiagesōrō</i>	I expressly state
<i>Kōbin o e, gusatsu o sasagesōrō</i>	Given this fortunate opportunity
<i>Tayori o e, gusatsu o sasagesōrō</i>	Given this opportunity

Direct Document Structure

Main Body Three Part Structure

Introduction – Opening Phase	
<i>Yotte</i>	Which means
<i>Nao</i>	Further
<i>Somosomo</i>	Well now
<i>Shikareba</i>	Therefore

Middle – Opening Phase	
<i>Shitagatte</i>	Consequently
<i>Nakanzuku</i>	Especially
<i>Hatamata</i>	Moreover
<i>Kanete wa mata</i>	At the same time
<i>Shikareba</i>	Therefore
<i>Shikaru ni</i>	However
<i>Tsugi ni wa</i>	Next
<i>Sore ni tsuki</i>	With regard to that

Conclusion – Opening Phase	
<i>Hatamata</i>	Moreover
<i>Tsugi ni wa</i>	Next

Direct Document Structure

The Closing

First Half	Second Half
<i>Seikō seikyū uyamatte mōsu.</i>	<i>Mairu hitobito onnaka.</i>
Your most humble and obedient servant.	Sent to His Entourage.
<i>Seikō tsusshinde mōsu.</i>	<i>Mairu hitobito onnaka.</i>
Your humble an obedient servant.	Sent to His Entourage.
<i>Seikyū tsusshinde mōsu.</i>	<i>Mairu hitobito onnaka.</i>
Your most humble servant.	Sent to His Entourage.
<i>Kyūkō tsusshinde mōsu.</i>	<i>Mairu hitobito onnaka.</i>
Your humble servant.	Sent to His Entourage.
<i>Kyūkyū tsusshinde mōsu.</i>	<i>Mairu goshukusho.</i>
Yours most respectfully.	Sent to His Lodgings.
<i>Tsusshinde mōsu.</i>	<i>Shinjisoro.</i>
Yours respectfully.	Presented.
<i>Jōkudan no gotoshi.</i>	<i>Shinjisoro.</i>
The foregoing as stated above.	Presented.
<i>Tsukawashi sōrō nari.</i>	<i>Shinjisoro.</i>
This I send to you.	Presented.

The conclusion depends upon the rank and status of the recipient and their relationship to the author. Rodriguez notes that formal *shin* calligraphic style was the most complimentary while flowing *sho* calligraphic style was the least. *Gyō* calligraphic style being midway in formality and honor bestowed.

Date System

- Japanese dates are specified in the order Year - Month - Day
- Japanese years are typically stated in terms of an era name.
- Era names are typically auspicious two kanji (Chinese letter) combinations with first modifying the second. I have used Bunsei 文政 (lit. creating a culture) to correspond to Anno Societatus.
- After using it several times, I discovered that it corresponds to a real post period era (1818–1830). I doubt that this causes a problem.
- Prior to the Meiji Restoration in the 19th century, a new era could be declared at any time by imperial decree.
- Thereupon, the year number immediately became 元年 gan-nen (original year).
- New year was on the day of the new moon midway between the Winter Solstice and the Vernal Equinox.

Months were and are numbered in relation to new year and were not affected by declaring a new era.

Date System

Additional months inserted by the calendar department to correct the calendar shared a month number and were noted as being extra months.

The extra month was inserted at a time considered auspicious and which would align the calendar to the seasons.

Days were and are also numbered with the new moon marking the first day of each month.

The calendar department of the imperial government was responsible for calculating the calendar for each year.

As the Society creates its own culture and date events within its own history. Bunsei 文政 (creating culture) is a good era name.

- While the cycle of months can begin either with January or May, Society new year is in May so May should be the first month.

Example

2020	Anno Societatus 55	文政五十五年	Bunsei Go-jū-go-nen	Bunsei 55
July	July	三月	Sangatsu	Third Month
11	11	十一日	Jūichi-nichi	Fifteenth Day

Attesting Documents

Authentication by Full Handprints



Attesting Documents

Authentication by 華押 kaō

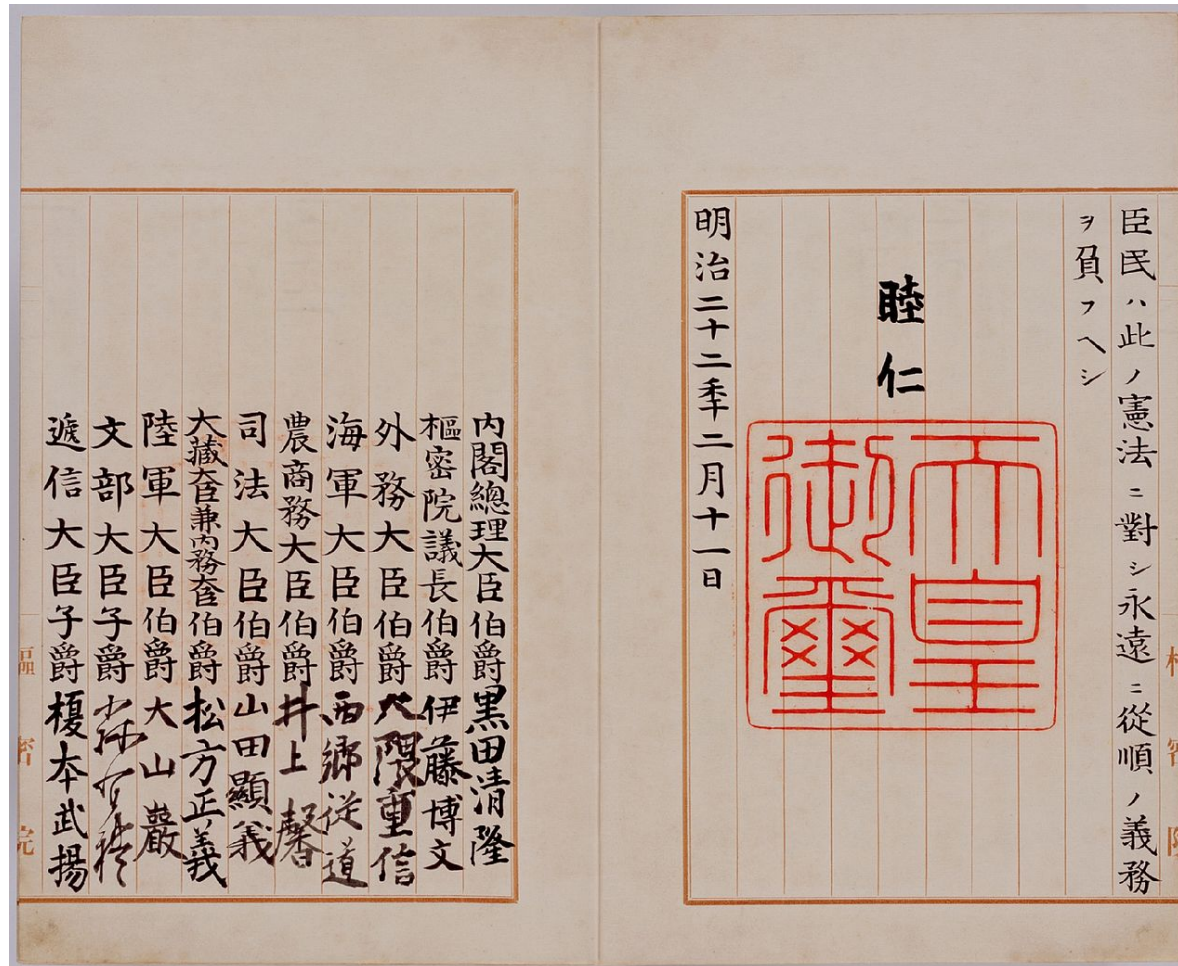


Kaō of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1590) Japanese Prime Ministers

Originally, Japanese aristocrats wrote their two *kanji nanori* using *kaisho* style *kanji*. Later practice was to use *sōsho* (grass) script. By tenth or eleventh century sigils were in use.

Attesting Documents

Authentication by Ex-Officio Inkan



Meiji Constitution (1890) with imperial *nanori* in *kaisho* style followed by ex-officio *inkan*

Attesting Documents

Territorial Seals



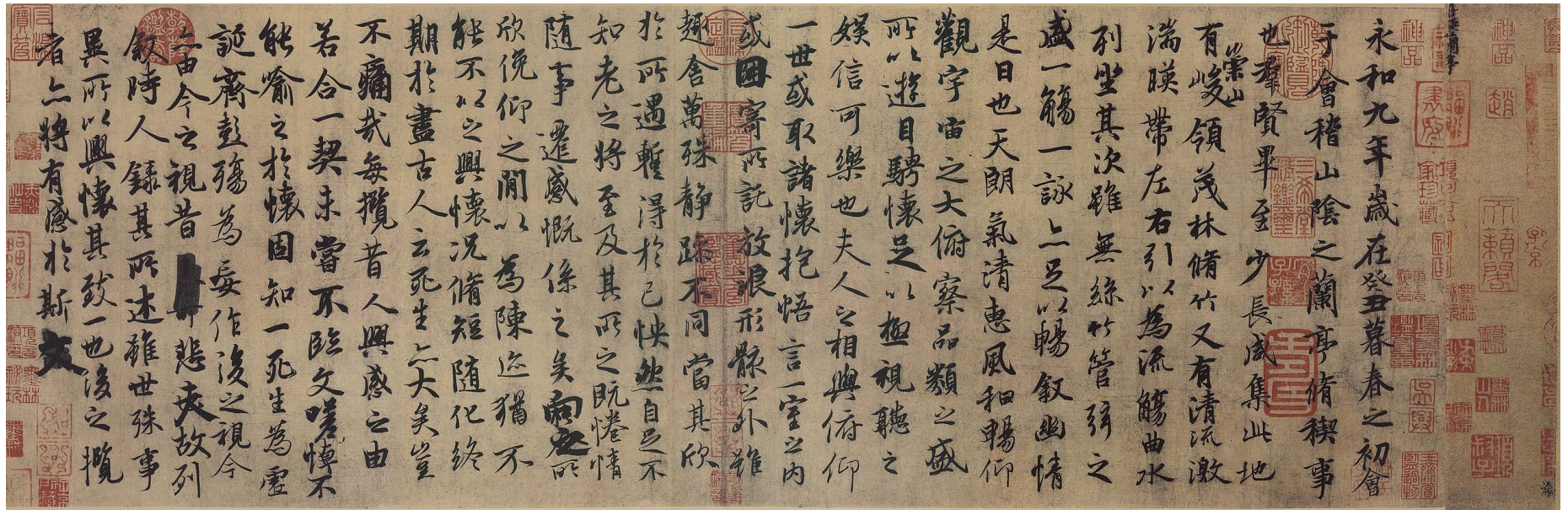
Vermilion Seal for the 鎮守府 Chinshūfu (Northern Command)

A governmental vermilion *inkan* upon which is inscribed the name of the territorial region followed by either 印 *in* or 大印 *dai-in* in depending upon available space can be added to the document as well. *Inkan* are carved in seal script. The character in the lower right is the seal script version of 印 seal. As this is not a signature, It can be added either to the center top or to the upper left of the document. A fine line version can even be placed on top of the text itself.

Attesting Documents

Chinese Exemplar of Calligraphy and Inkan

Feng Chengsu 馮承素 by Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303–361)

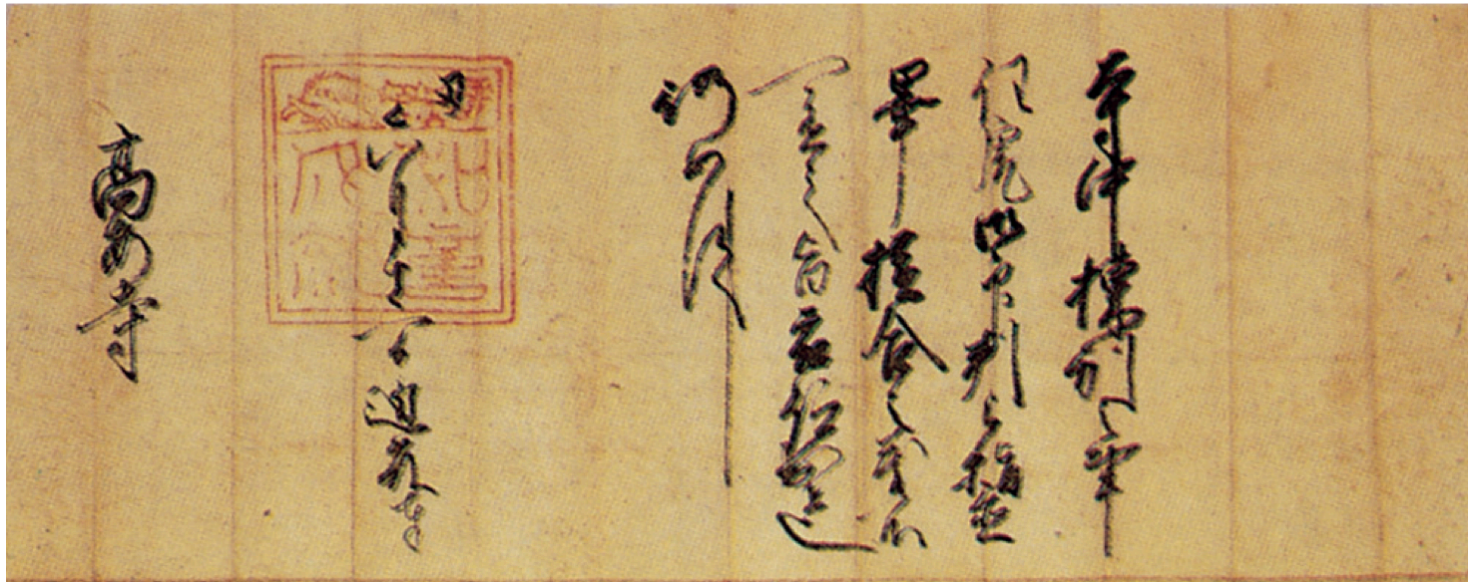


Tang Period copy ca 627–650 of the Feng Chengsu at Beijing Palace Museum

Attesting Documents

Substituting an Inkan Impression for a Kaō

Japanese Red Seal Trade Permit



寺中棟列之事、
任虎御印判、被指置
畢、横合之儀、不
可有之旨被仰出者也、
仍如件
丑
六月十二日
高安寺
近藤奉

The document was
recorded by somebody
called 近藤 Kondo.

Houjou Genzou Ujiteru (1542–1590) 朱印状 Shuinjō (1565)

Attesting Documents

On Signing and Sealing

“The place where one signs one’s name is called *hi no shita* 日の下 because one signs on the lower part of the letter below or before [to the left] the day and the month. And the closer one signs to the edge of the paper, the more one humbles oneself and shows respect; and the higher one signs one’s name the less polite it is, and the more a show of arrogance.” João Rodriguez.

“It has to be noted that with Japanese letters the names of the addressees are written in two places: the first is at the end of the letter, which is called *oku*, and this is the address. The second place is the superscription of the letter, called *uwagaki* in Japanese, and this on the cover of the letter.” João Rodriguez.

“First the family name and the person’s title are written, and at the end of the name unfailingly the honorific address *dono* is added.” João Rodriguez.

Names of the Kuge and of the Buke

Kuge (imperial nobility) place their rank and titles before their names.

中宮亮藤原原季行

Chūgūshiki Fujiwara no Sueyuki (1114–1162)

Buke (military aristocrats) place their rank and titles after their family names and frequently attach them to their 通称 *tsūshō* or middle names. In the late medieval period, members of the buke were appropriating *kuge* offices. Their *tsūshō* 通称 middle name does not appear in this example. The nanori of members of the buke are typically written below and to the left of their family name and title.

里見刑部大輔義頼

Satomi Gyōbu no seu Yoshiyori (1543–1587)

Attesting Documents

Multiple Signatories

The documents were issued by a group of people instead of by a single individual. This issue does not apply to the names of those responsible for recording and delivery of the edict and proclamations, but only to those who affix personal *kaō* (sigils) and *inkan* (seals) to the document. The names of the recorder and the conveyor remain in their accustomed place.

The lord of Ise once told João Rodriguez that in antiquity the custom had been for the most junior to sign first and the most senior signing last. In this way each successive signature approved the judgement of the previous signatories. Thus, the first and most junior signature column would be rightmost and last and most senior leftmost. Each would affix their *kaō* and place their *inkan* impression beneath that. Typically, the record would have already written the name office of the worthy with upright letters being most formal and grass script being least formal. As show below, one is of highest rank and signs last while five is of the lowest and signs first.

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

In the late fifteenth century, the custom was for the worthies altering sides. The signature of the worthy of highest dignity remained in the same place, but the others relocated. This required more planning on the part of the recorder.

① ③ ⑤ ④ ②

If the document is to be signed by many, then only the the names of two or three principal authors appeared at the lower part of the superscription with the most senior signing first.

③ ② ①

Attesting Documents

Imperial Example

2020	Anno Societatus 55	文政五十五年	Bunsei Go-jū-go-nen	Bunsei 55
July	July	三月	Sangatsu	Third Month
11	11	十一日	Jūichi-nichi	Fifteenth Day
	[Emperor]			
	[Name or <i>Kaō</i>]	義政	Yoshimasa	
	[Personal <i>Inkan</i>]	㊦		
	[Regent]	関白	Kanpaku	
	[Name or <i>Kaō</i>]	幸子	Sachiko	
	[Personal <i>Inkan</i>]	㊦		
	[Recipient]	伊達健二郎定正殿	Date Kenjiro Sadamasa dono	
	[Secretariate]	藏人	Kurōdo	
	[Scribe]	藤原文左衛門頭光	Chūnagon Fujiwara no Ason Akimitsu	
	[Recorded By]	奉	Uketemawaru	

Military Example – Kamakura Period (1192–1333)

2020	Anno Societatus 55	文政五十五年	Bunsei Go-jū-go-nen	Bunsei 55
July	July	三月	Sangatsu	Third Month
11	11	十一日	Jūichi-nichi	Fifteenth Day
	[Shōgun]	征夷大將軍	Sei-i-tai-shōgun	
	[Name or <i>Kaō</i>]	義政	Yoshimasa	
	[Personal <i>Inkan</i>]	㊦		
	[Regent]	執權	Shikken	
	[Name or <i>Kaō</i>]	幸子	Sachiko	
	[Personal <i>Inkan</i>]	㊦		
	[Recipient]	伊達健二郎定正殿	Date Kenjiro Sadamasa dono	
	[Secretariate]	藏人	Shitsuji	
	[Scribe]	中納言藤原朝臣頭光	Fujiwara Fumizaemon Akimitsu	
	[Recorded By]	奉	Uketemawaru	

Attesting Documents

Military Example – Muromachi Period (1336–1573)

2020	Anno Societatus 55	文政五十五年	Bunsei Go-jū-go-nen	Bunsei 55
July	July	三月	Sangatsu	Third Month
11	11	十一日	Jūichi-nichi	Fifteenth Day
	[Shōgun]	征夷大將軍	Sei-i-tai-shōgun	
	[Name or <i>Kaō</i>]	義政	Yoshimasa	
	[Personal <i>Inkan</i>]	㊦		
	[Regent]	執權	Shikken	
	[Name or <i>Kaō</i>]	幸子	Sachiko	
	[Personal <i>Inkan</i>]	㊦		
	[Recipient]	伊達健二郎定正殿	Date Kenjiro Sadamasa dono	
	[Secretariate]	管領	Kanrei	
	[Scribe]	中納言藤原朝臣顯光	Fujiwara Fumizaemon Akimitsu	
	[Recorded By]	奉	Uketemawaru	

Ashikaga Takauji 足利尊氏 (1305–1358) reorganized the Bakufu placing the estate stewards called 地頭 *jitō* under the military governors called 守護 *shūgo*. The Shitsuji was renamed 管領 Kanrei and placed in charge of the military governors. The *Shitsuji* had previously administered the Samurai-dokoro 侍所 responsible for promotions and demotions of retainers and retained informal influence over that agency. As imperial administration of justice and inheritance in the provinces ended with the failure of the Kenmu Restoration (1333–6), the *bakufu* now had to administer land claim disputes and similar matters which had previously been the responsibility of imperial deputy governors under the shared government system of the Kamakura Bakufu. The Kanrei primarily administered justice through correspondence.

Gift Giving in Japan

“The Japanese as well as the Chinese pay much attention to the exterior decoration of their gifts and the way of presenting them, and they observe several considerations concerning this, the most important of which are three in number. These are the way the gift is wrapped; the or tray on which it is offered; and finally the place in the room where it is received and put. This is in order to show greater honour to the donor in keeping with the quality of the gift. They exercise a great deal of care and exterior hypocrisy in this matter, as we noted about their customs and courtesies, and on no account are gifts usually offered without this display.”

João Rodrigues

Gift Giving in Japan

1. Gifts must always be wrapped. Further, decorations called *noshi* were typically added to the exterior wrapping. The wrapping was tied on with string which was frequently bi-colored. Red and white for auspicious occasions. Today, pictures of traditional *noshi* may be printed on wrapping paper.
2. In China and Japan directly handing a present to somebody is considered rude. Rather, gifts are placed upon a tray and the tray either handed to the recipient or possibly slid upon the floor. When carried, the tray is carried at chest height or higher with both hands at the sides of the tray out of respect.
3. João Rodrigues notes that gifts of precious durable items were presented on long headed trays at the top of the reception room. Other gifts such as comestibles were placed on the veranda.

Presenting Edicts

1. The vassal is summoned.
2. The herald unwraps the edict. First folding out the top and bottom flaps and then opening like a book first left to right and then right to left.
3. The herald unfolds the edict.
4. The herald reads the edict with their hands holding the sides of the edict.
5. The herald reverses the edict so that the writing faces the vassal and holds it there long enough for it to be read and the attestation noted.
6. The herald reverse the edict so that the writing faces the herald.
7. The herald refolds the edict.
8. The herald rewraps the edict.
9. The edict is presented to the vassal.
10. The vassal receives the edict with both hands, raises it to eye level, and bows.
11. The recipient is dismissed.
12. The recipient departs holding the edict at chest level with both hands.

Receiving and Reading a Petition

Koshigoe-jō 腰越状 [Koshigoe Petition] (1185)



Minamoto no Yoritomo 源頼朝 reading the Koshigoe-jō 腰越状 [Koshigoe Petition] (1185)

Although the two parties are brothers, the petition is in the form of a hirōjō.

Suzuki Saburou Shige'ie 鈴木三郎重家 (1156–1189) is shown kneeling after presenting the petition.

Illustration by 歌川 国芳 Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798–1861) Kanegawa Prefectural Library

Some Exemplar Texts

Senmyō 47 (770 CE)

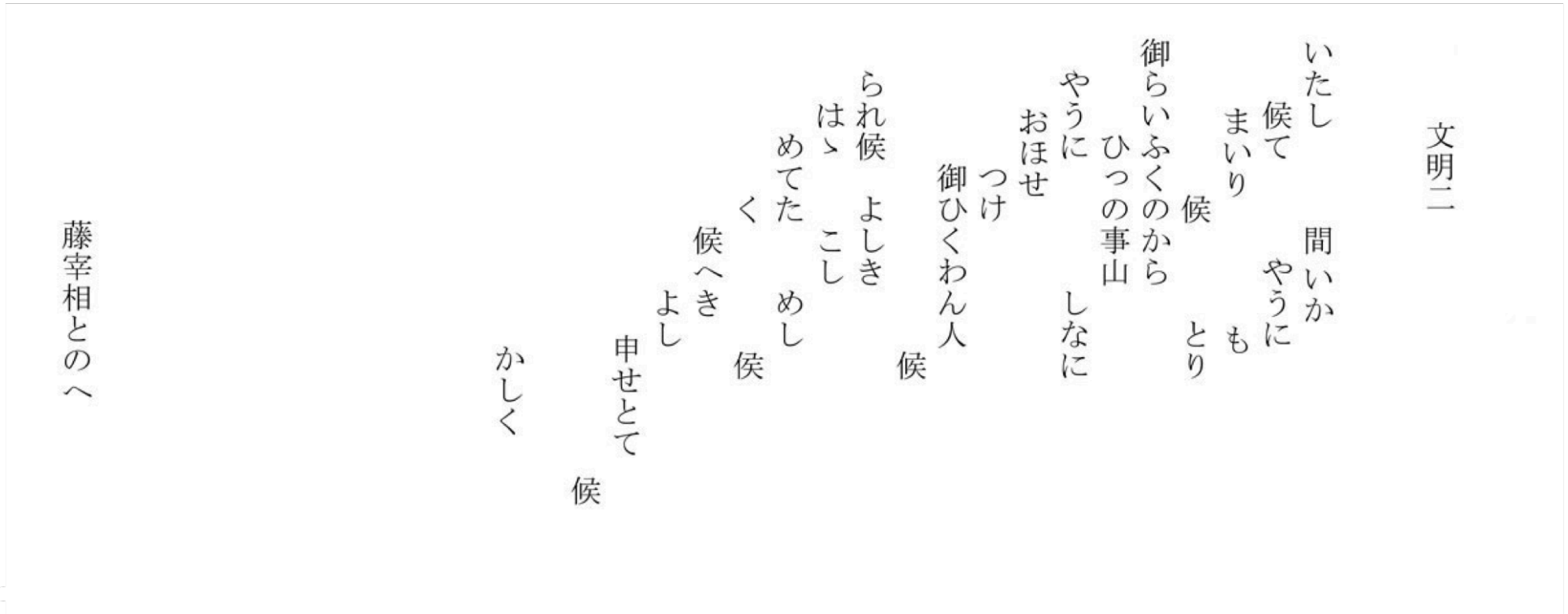
「今詔〈久〉。事卒爾〈爾〉有依〈天〉、諸臣等議〈天〉。白壁王〈波〉諸王〈乃〉中〈爾〉年齒〈毛〉長
〈奈利〉。又先帝〈乃〉功〈毛〉在故〈爾〉、太子〈止〉定〈天〉、奏〈波〉奏〈流麻爾麻〉定給〈布止〉勅
〈久止〉宣。」【S47】

Ima noritamahaku koto nihaka ni aru ni yorite omitachi hakarite shirakabe no
ohokimi ha ohokimitachi no naka ni yohahi mo kono kami nari mata saki no mikado
no mi isawo mo aru yuwe ni hitsugi no miko to sadamete mawoseba mawoseru
manima sadame tamafu to noritamahaku to noritamafu.

At the present time what the emperor decrees: We now proclaim, due to the
urgency of the mater, since all the ministers deliberating together have determined
that, as among all the princes Prince Shirakabe is the oldest (62) and also that he
has the merit of the earlier Emperor (Tenji-tennō) , he should be designated the
heir. The ministers have reported this to Us, and so We accordingly proclaim
Shirakabe the Crown Prince.

Some Exemplar Texts

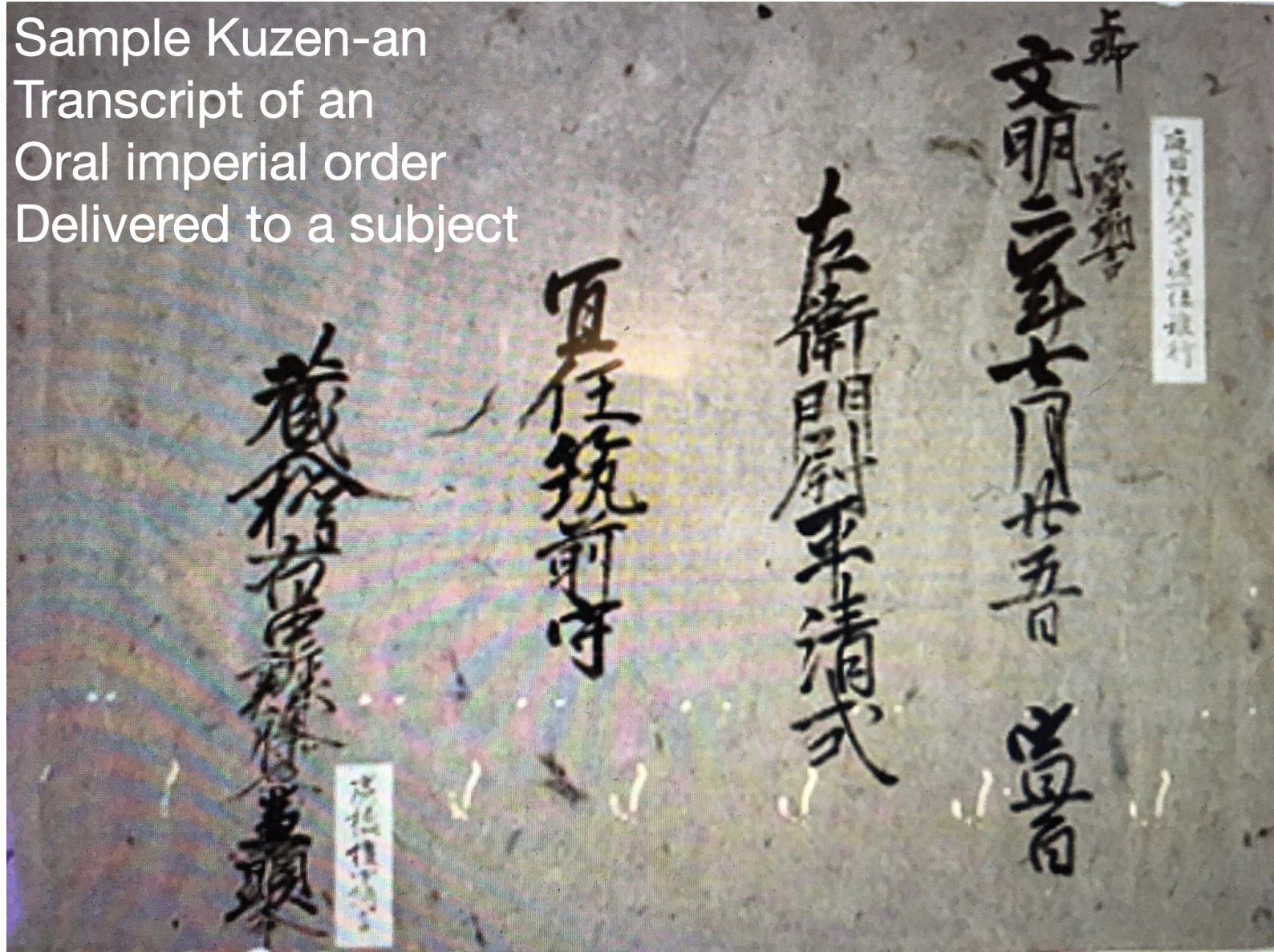
A Bequest from the Insei



Hōsho written on behalf of Go-Hanazono
By a Court Lady
Ōnin War (1467-77)

Some Exemplar Texts

- Sample Kuzen-an
- Transcript of an
- Oral imperial order
- Delivered to a subject



Some Exemplar Texts

藏人権右中辯藤原兼顯奉

上卿
源中納言
文明二年七月廿五日
左衛門尉平清式
宣旨
宣任筑前守

- Shokei
- Gen Chūnagon
- Bunei Ni-nin Shichi-gatsu Ni-jū-go-nichi
- Senji
- Saemon-no-jo Taira Kiyonori
- Yoroshiku Chikuzen-no-kami
- Kurōdo Gon Uchūben Fujiwara no Kaneaki
- Uketameraru
- The Minamoto Middle Counselor is entrusted
- with this order of the seventh month, twenty-fifth day of Bunmei 2 [1470].
- Taira Kiyonori, the Lieutenant of the Left Palace Guard,
- is hereby appointed as the Governor of Chikuzen Province.
- Recorded by the Chamberlain and Acting Controller of the Right, Fujiwara Kaneaki
- Note that the Sino-Japanese reading GEN is used for 源 Minamoto.

Sample *Kuzen-an* Shown on Previous Page

Some Exemplar Texts

Koshigoe-jō 腰越状 [Koshigoe Petition] (1185)

左衛門少尉源義經乍恐申上候。意趣者被撰御代官其一為。勅宣之御使傾。朝敵。顯累代弓箭之芸。雪会稽恥辱。可被抽賞之處。思外依虎口讒言。被默止莫大之勲功。義經無犯而蒙咎。有功雖無誤。蒙御勘氣之間。空沈紅淚。倩案事意。・良藥苦口。忠言逆耳。先言也。因茲。不被糺讒者実否。不被入鎌倉中之間。不能述素意。徒送数日。当于此時。永不奉拜恩顔。骨肉同胞之儀既似空。宿運之極処歟。將又感先世之業因歟。悲哉。此条。故亡父尊靈不再誕給者。誰人申披愚意之悲歎。何輩垂哀憐哉。事新申状雖似述懷。義經受身体髮膚於父母。不經幾時節。故頭殿御他界之間。成無実之子。被抱母之懷中。赴大和国宇多郡竜門牧之以来。一日片時不住安堵之思。雖存無甲斐之命許。京都之經廻難治之間。令流行諸国。隱身於在在所所。為栖辺土遠国。被服仕土民百姓等。然而幸慶忽純熟而為平家一族追討令上洛之。手合誅戮木曾義仲之後。為責傾平氏。或時峨峨巖石策駿馬。不顧為敵亡命。或時漫漫大海凌風波之難。不痛沈身於海底。懸骸於鯨鯢之鰓。加之為甲冑於枕。為弓箭於業。本意併奉休亡魂憤。欲遂年来宿望之外無他事。剩義經補任五位尉之条。当家之面目。希代之重職。何事加之哉。雖然。今愁深歎切。自非仏神御助之外者。争達愁訴。因茲。以諸神諸社牛王宝印之裏。全不挿野心之旨。奉請驚日本国中大少神祇冥道。雖書進数通起請文。猶以無御宥免。其我国神国也。神不可稟非礼。所憑非于他。偏仰貴殿廣大之御慈悲。伺便宜令達高聞。被廻秘計。被優無誤之旨。預芳免者。及積善之余慶於家門。永伝榮花於子孫。仍開年来之愁眉。得一期之安寧。不書尽詞。併令省略候畢。

This is an example of a formal petition indirectly transmitted as a hirōjō written in *kanbun*. *Kanbun* is a Japanese adaptation of Classical Chinese where the text while largely following Chinese syntax and grammar is actually intended to be read as Japanese.

Some Exemplar Texts

Koshigoe-jō 腰越状 [Koshigoe Petition] (1185)

欲被垂賢察。義經恐惶謹言。 元曆二年五月日 左衛門少尉源義經 進上 因幡前司殿

To His Excellency the Governor of Inaba: (*Oe no Hiromoto*)

I, Minamoto Yoshitsune, venture to address you.

Having overthrown the enemies of the court and erased the infamy of military defeat as His Lordship's deputy and the bearer of an imperial commission, I had supposed that my deeds would be commended; yet, to my distress, pernicious slanders have caused accomplishments of uncommon merit to be ignored. Though innocent, I am blamed; though deserving, and guilty of no error, I have incurred His Lordship's displeasure. What can I do but weep bitter tears! Since I have not been permitted to refute false accusations, or even to enter Kamakura, I have been obliged to remain idle for days, with no means of expressing my feelings. I have been denied the privilege of seeing His Lordship for so long that the blood bond between us seems to have vanished. Is this the karma of a previous existence? Am I being punished for evil acts committed in my last life? Alas! Unless the august spirit of my late father chances to be reborn, who will plead my cause or pity my condition?

At the risk of appearing querulous, I must say to you that never since birth have I enjoyed a moment's peace of mind - never, from the time of my journey in my mother's arms to Uda District in Yamato, an infant orphaned by my father's death. Though able to preserve my useless life, I could not safely frequent the capital but was obliged to skulk in out-of-the-way places, dwell in distant lands, and serve commoners.

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Some Exemplar Texts

Koshigoe-jō 腰越状 [Koshigoe Petition] (1185)

When at last, through sudden good fortune, I was sent to the capital to crush the Taira clan, I first punished Kiso Yoshinaka and then set about the destruction of the Heike. I whipped my mount over precipitous cliffs, heedless of life in the face of the enemy; I braved the perils of wind and wave on the boundless sea, ready to sink to the bottom as food for monsters of the deep. Battle dress was my pillow; arms were my profession - yet, as in the past, my sole desire was to comfort the unhappy spirits of the dead. As regards my appointment as a lieutenant of fifth rank, was that not a remarkable honor for a member of our family? Yet how deep is my present misery; how acute my suffering! Despairing of obtaining a hearing through any means short of divine assistance, I have repeatedly submitted oaths of loyalty inscribed on the backs of talismans from temples and shrines in Japan, and by the spirits of the underworld, but no pardon has been granted.

This is the land of the gods. Since the gods consider my petitions unworthy, my sole remaining recourse is to implore you to do me the kindness of bringing this message to His Lordship's attention at a suitable time in order to persuade him of my innocence. Once his forgiveness is secured, my heirs and I will rejoice in the "superabundant happiness of accumulated goodness" and I will end my life in peace.

Finding it impossible to write as I feel, I have confined myself to bare essentials.

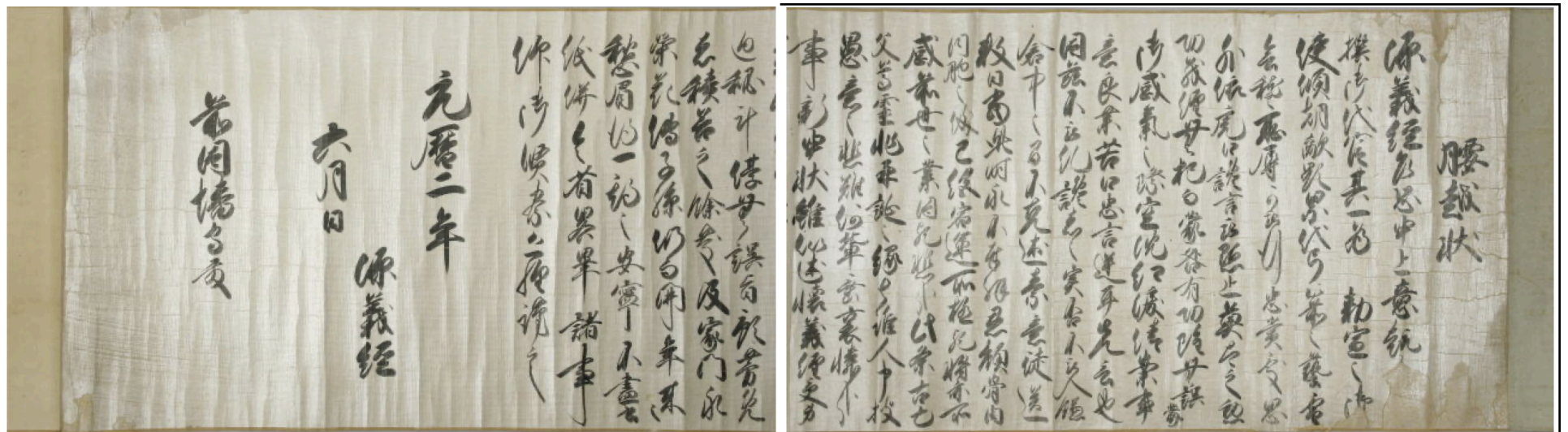
Humbly and respectfully submitted,

Minamoto Yoshitsune.

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Some Exemplar Texts

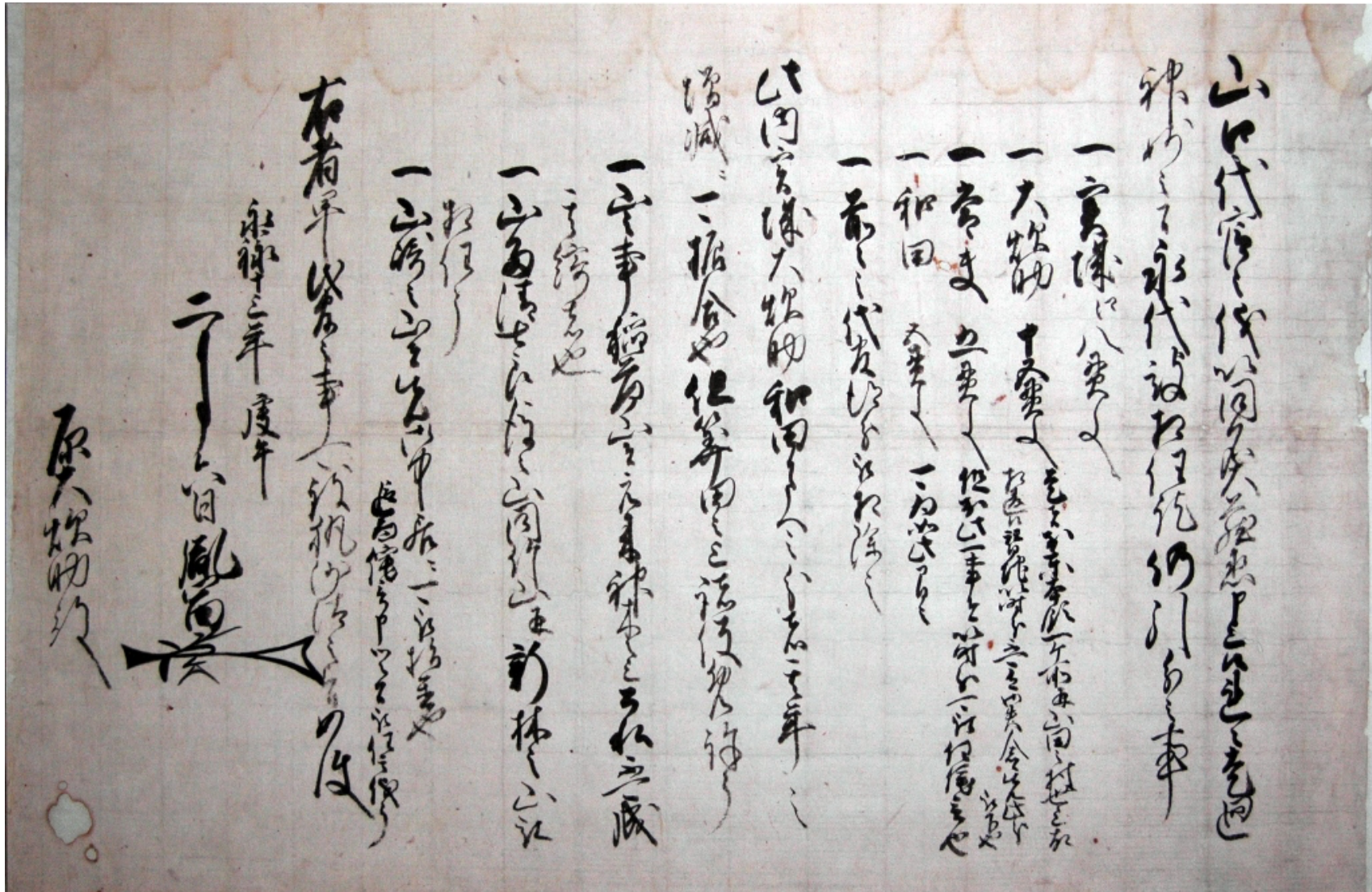
Koshigoe-jō 腰越状 [Koshigoe Petition] (1185)



Beginning and end of a copy of the Koshigoe-jō

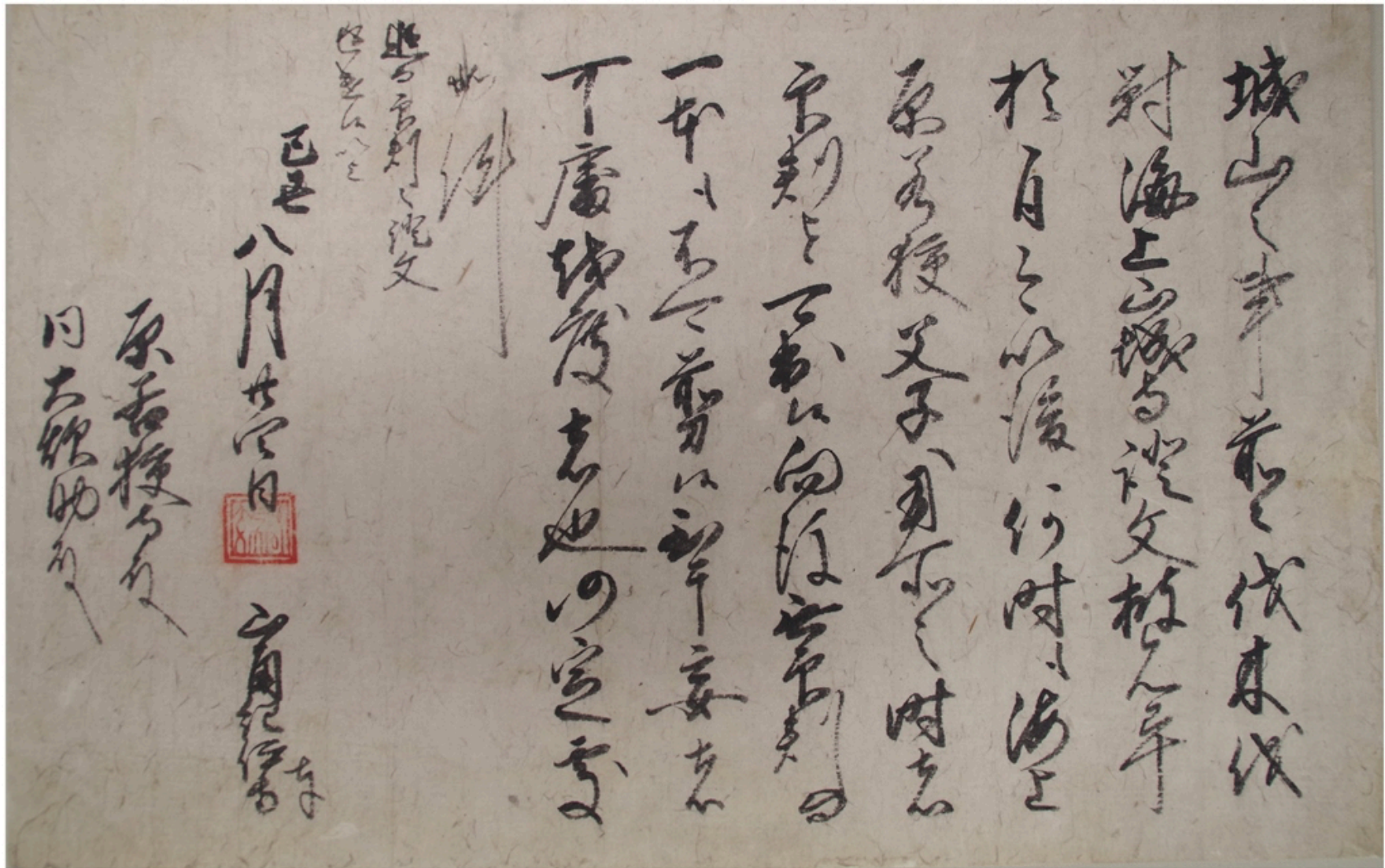
This is an example of a formal petition indirectly transmitted as a hirōjō written in *kanbun*. *Kanbun* is a Japanese adaptation of Classical Chinese where the text while largely following Chinese syntax and grammar is actually intended to be read as Japanese.

Military Government Documents



From Chiba Tanetomu 千葉胤富 to Hara Ōi-no-suke 原大炊助 (1570) Chiba City Folk Museum

Military Government Documents



From 北条氏政 Hōjō Ujimasa to 原若狭守 Hara Wakasa-no-kami (1589) Chiba City Folk Museum

Military Government Documents

吉利支丹伴天連追放令

Kirishitan Bateren Tsuihō Rei (1587)

- Note the annotation of document type on the far right.
- This annotation precedes the document itself.
- This expulsion order was publicly read as well as posted on sign boards. There are several surviving copies including one at the Vatican Museum.
- Note the itemization of components of the edict.
- The initial character 一 (one) for each section would be read as *hitotsu* and should be translated as “item”.
- Note the combination of kanji (Chinese letters) and kana (phonetic letters) which maximizes readability and comprehension.

Afterword

While my custom has been to to compose award scrolls in “forsooth” Japanese attempting to write in medieval Japanese and then translating the Japanese text into English, you need not go to such lengths to produce texts which are more evocative of Japan than of Western Europe.

- Emulate the overall structure of Japanese official writing.
- Use turns of phrase suggested translations of premodern exemplars.
- Use Japanese attestation style ideally with vermilion seals.
- Break down reasons for an award into an itemized list.
- Break down the components of an award or order into itemized components.
 - If the award is precedence bearing, then list the elevation in rank.
 - If the award corresponds to an order, then list entry into that order possibly separate from the name of the order.
 - If the award has a token, then mention the token.
 - If the award confers rights such as a seat at curia, then list the rights.
- After handing out benefices, order the recipient to do something such as teach, defend the borders, or something else appropriate for the individual and the award.

While much of the introduction and conclusion can and should be formulaic, there are many opportunities for special treatment in the main part of the text while still maintaining pro forma expression such as the itemized list with each line (column) being introduced either by “hitotsu” or “item”. Please go forth and write beautiful scroll texts.

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