

# A Study of a Letter from Fujiwara no Moronaga: Focusing on Imperial Decrees and Drafts of Imperial Decrees at the End of the Heian Period

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Research on Fujiwara no Moronaga, a son of Fujiwara no Yorinaga, has often centered on his talent for playing the *biwa* (four-stringed Japanese lute) within the context of Japan's music history. Scholarly investigation of Moronaga has been necessarily limited by constraints on the availability of both historical records and ancient documents. In particular, the scarcity of extant original manuscripts has resulted in a lack of accumulated studies. This paper examines one such document, a letter handwritten by Moronaga and preserved in this museum, analyzing it as a cultural property and evaluating its significance as an authentic ancient document.

Section 1 analyzes the writing paper, confirming that it is exceptionally high-quality, large-format *danshi* (fine crepe paper) from the late Heian period. Furthermore, traces of paper beating indicates that the reverse side of the paper was repurposed as writing material for records such as diaries. Section 2 examines the letter's content, its adherence to the rules of writing, and its transmission, in order to infer its recipient. Based on these analyses, the recipient was identified as Taira no Nobunori, who served as *keishi* (household superintendent) of a *sekkan-ke* (line of regents and advisers) and also as *kurodo no to* (head chamberlain). It was also presumed that the reverse side of the paper contained an entry from his handwritten diary, the *Hyohanki*. Section 3 examines the term *kuzen'an* (draft of an imperial decree) contained in the postscript, considering the realities of official procedures surrounding *senji* (imperial decrees) or *kuzen* (oral decrees) at the Grand Council of State in the late Heian period. Section 4 focuses on the phrase *sekiutsu* (pent-up frustration) found in the text, analyzing Moronaga's political circumstances within the Imperial Court using contemporary historical records and discussing the letter's time period and background.

Based on these considerations, this letter can be evaluated as historically and paleographically significant, as it succinctly conveys Moronaga's execution of official duties within the Imperial Court and illustrates part of the administrative processes under the system of the Grand Council of State at the end of the Heian period. In particular, the letter highlights the positioning of drafts of imperial decrees in relation to imperial decrees, suggesting that phenomena characteristic of the Kamakura period and later may trace back to the end of the Heian period.

# Emperor Kokaku, Prince Shinnin of Myohoin Temple, and the Monk-Painter Gessen: On Two Newly Discovered Works

JOSHIMA Satoshi

This museum houses two scrolls of paintings by Gessen (1742–1809), a Buddhist monk of the Jodo sect from Nagoya who served as the chief priest of Jakushoji Temple in Ise. The scrolls are *Fan Kuai* and *A Literary Assembly of Eighteen Bachelors*. These two works were found to be deeply connected to Emperor Kokaku (the 119th emperor (1771–1840), reigned 1780–1819) and his elder brother, Prince Shinnin of Myohoin Temple (1768–1805) through letters handwritten by Emperor Kokaku preserved at Myohoin Temple.

Specifically, *Fan Kuai*—depicting Fan Kuai, a military general who served Liu Bang, the founder of the Former Han dynasty—was presented to Emperor Kokaku by Prince Shinnin in 1789. *A Literary Assembly of Eighteen Bachelors*—portraying bachelors who supported Li Shimin (Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty)—was commissioned by Emperor Kokaku to Gessen through Prince Shinnin in 1799. Both works depict subjects familiar to the emperor, who was deeply devoted to the study of the Chinese classics, and portray loyal retainers supporting their rulers. These scrolls were therefore likely presented as offerings or were commissioned as Confucian-inspired admonitory paintings. Furthermore, Gessen emphasized the benefits of reviving old figure paintings in the preface to *Ressen Zusan*, a collection of illustrations of venerable sages that he published. This idea potentially influenced Emperor Kokaku, who sought to incorporate revivalist styles in the reconstruction of the Imperial Palace during the Kansei era, in his choice of painters when he commissioned paintings of Chinese historical and legendary figures.

Regarding artistic expression, both works represent a typical style of Gessen's figure painting during the period inferred from letters handwritten by Emperor Kokaku. A comparison with similar works reveals that Gessen made special efforts to meet the expectations of such patrons of the highest ranks. These two paintings, which were commissioned by members of the Imperial Family with the intention that they serve as admonitory paintings, are of significant importance in art history and can also serve as benchmarks for studying Gessen's oeuvre.

## *Pair of Folding Screens with Various Poems*

YAMADA Yukiho

*The Pair of Folding Screens with Various Poems* housed in this museum consist of a pair of six-fold screens. Affixed to the screens are 48 sheets of *kaishi* paper bearing poems by 48 individuals. Ten of these sheets were first introduced in 1992 along with illustrations, and in 2024, all 48 sheets on the pair of six-fold screens were unveiled for the first time. Like several other calligraphic works, including the National Treasures *Collection of Japanese and Chinese Poems to Sing (Kumogami Version)* (attributed to Fujiwara no Yukinari) and *Sarashina Diary (Memoirs of Sugawara no Takasue's Daughter)* (Fujiwara no Sadaie), this folding screen is believed to have been transmitted within the Imperial Court. It is known to have been part of the Imperial Court's collection at least in the early modern period. In 1989, it was gifted to the nation of Japan from His Majesty the Emperor Emeritus and Empress Kojun and has since been housed in this museum.

This paper examines the creation of these folding screens by identifying the author of the poem on each sheet of *kaishi* paper affixed to the screen and by interpreting the writing on each sheet, by narrowing down the timeframes based on historical records, by estimating the dates when the poems were submitted, by organizing information about the gatherings where these poems were recited, and by analyzing the arrangement and calligraphic styles of the *kaishi* paper. Also investigated is what is believed to be a copy of the *kaishi* paper of Prince Sadakiyo that was affixed to the screen, whose copy is held in the Imperial Household Archives. More than 70% (35 sheets) of the *kaishi* paper affixed to the screen were identified through records as submissions for poetry gatherings hosted by the Emperor and those held at the Imperial Court. These sheets of *kaishi* paper span the period from January 7, 1484, to the mid-17th century and were confirmed to have been carefully selected and arranged to achieve a balance in terms of time periods, content, and the social ranks of the authors. The study also considers the possibility that this folding screen was produced by Prince Sadakiyo, for three reasons: the sequence of the *kaishi* papers begins with the Fushimi-no-miya family, two of the three *kaishi* sheets authored by Imperial princes are attributed to this family, and the latest *kaishi* sheet falls within Prince Sadakiyo's lifetime. Ultimately, these folding screens can be understood as works that reflect the tradition of submitting poems for annual poetry gatherings and Imperial Court poetry gatherings centered on the Imperial Court.

## Portrait as a Diplomatic Gift in Meiji-Era British–Japanese Court Exchanges: A Case Study of James Sant's Portrait of Queen Victoria

TANAKA Jun'ichiro and MATSUI Kuniko

This paper examines the state portrait of Queen Victoria, sent by the Queen to Emperor Meiji in 1882, and explores the meanings and purposes of the portrait as a diplomatic gift in the context of British and Japanese courtly exchanges of the time. Historical records related to this portrait are scarce in Japan, and the identity of the painter was previously unknown. During the course of this study, however, it was revealed that the portrait was created by James Sant (1820–1916), Principal Painter in Ordinary to Queen Victoria, and Sant had produced several copies of her state portrait, all with an almost identical composition. By examining these works, along with archival materials uncovered at the Royal Archives and the National Archives in the UK, this study sheds light on the creative process behind the portrait and the relationship between Queen Victoria and Sant as her portraitist.

According to some official records, Queen Victoria sent the portrait to Emperor Meiji “in token of friendship.” A retrospective account by Nagasaki Shogo (1850–1937), a former imperial court official, suggests an additional purpose for the gift. According to Nagasaki, a covert request had been made to the British side in 1881 to bestow the Order of the Garter on Emperor Meiji, and this portrait was presented as an alternative to the Order. By examining British records, this paper verifies Nagasaki's account. Additionally, by analyzing how royal portraits historically played a key role in strengthening personal and political ties between monarchs, the paper argues that the state portrait was not merely a work of art but also a significant diplomatic object designed to serve multiple functions in forging closer ties between the two courts.

## A Study on the *Jar of Djoser*

MISHIMA Taiki

The collection of the Museum of the Imperial Collections, Sannomaru Shozokan, includes art works presented as expressions of goodwill in course of the Imperial Family's international exchanges, including many gifts from royal families and heads of state worldwide. Among these is the *Jar of Djoser*, an invaluable ancient Egyptian artifact gifted to Emperor Showa (1901–1989) in 1960 from Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970), then President of the United Arab Republic.

This stone vessel measures 17 cm in rim diameter, 35 cm in maximum body diameter, 16 cm in base diameter, 42 cm in height, and 28 kg in weight. It has an overall jar style, with a flat base that gently bulges toward the shoulders. The vessel's shape narrows sharply from its pronounced shoulders to the rim. The jar is made of travertine with striped and marbled patterns on its surface. Stone vessels from the Step Pyramid of Djoser can be found in overseas museum collections, including in the Louvre Museum in France and the Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities in Sweden.

This jar was found in one of the lower galleries beneath the Step Pyramid of Djoser. Based on the discovery of 1935, the gallery where the jar was found was most likely the gallery VI or VII. Among the 30,000 to 40,000 stone vessels and fragments discovered there, this intact jar, free of cracks and other noticeable damage, is of significant archaeological and aesthetic value. Surface abrasion marks, internal ridges, and other features suggest that this jar was likely produced in the same manner as assumed in previous studies.

The background on the gift of this jar was not only for the purpose of symbolizing a form of goodwill between Japan and Egypt, but may also be connected to Japan's support for the UNESCO International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia since President Nasser gifted Egyptian artifacts including similar vessels found in the Step Pyramid to countries supporting the campaign.

## Implementation of an Appreciation Program for Kindergarteners: A Case Study of Collaboration with Igusa Kindergarten on Children's Copying and 3D Creation Activities

INOUE Marina

This paper reports on an appreciation program that our museum conducted in collaboration with Shoho Gakuen Igusa Kindergarten in fiscal year 2023. With the kindergarten's ongoing activities for children to copy paintings at the heart of the program, the kindergarteners spent approximately three months engaging in painting copying and 3D creation activities based on four hanging scrolls selected from this museum's 30-scroll *Doshoku Sai-e (Colorful Realm of Living Beings)*. Following this, the children viewed the original scrolls at this museum. Through this activity, we discovered new research possibilities on how long-term copying and 3D creation activities affect the appreciation of artworks. To support the children's appreciation of the artworks, we implemented several initiatives prior to their museum visit, including dialogue-focused visit lessons and the production of appreciation worksheets. These efforts were evaluated as having achieved a certain level of success in enhancing the museum experience for both the children and their parents.

## IT Infrastructure Development at the Museum of the Imperial Collections, Sannomaru Shozokan: Preparing for Digital Transformation in Museums

MISHIMA Taiki and SHIBUYA Kanji

In museums, information devices and communication technologies are indispensable for daily administrative and curatorial tasks. Supporting these activities is IT infrastructure. In Japan, the 2022 amendments to the Museum Law legally added the creation and public sharing of electromagnetic records of museum collections (this may be called “digital archiving” in Japan) as one of the museum initiatives. At the same time, various discussions on digital transformation (DX) in museums have underscored the growing importance of IT infrastructure in supporting digital initiatives at museums.

The IT infrastructure development at this museum, which reopened in November 2023 in a new building, involved the establishment of a server room, network systems, work terminals, and more to accommodate the future expansion of digital initiatives. These are critical considerations, particularly when setting up IT infrastructure in a new facility. Additionally, in the context of the much-discussed museum DX, IT infrastructure and ICT environments serve as the essential foundation for advancing DX. Based on the authors’ experience, however, IT infrastructure and ICT environments in museum settings generally face challenges. Specifically, the efficiency of IT infrastructure management and the information security policy of each higher-level institution of museum may result in IT infrastructure or ICT environments that limit museums’ activities in fulfilling their roles. This can include low-spec work terminals and a limited availability of software and web services. To achieve the expanded expectations assigned to museums under the amended Museum Law, it is essential to develop IT infrastructure and ICT environments suited to the practical needs of museum tasks.

## Bronze Arrowhead and Cylindrical Bronze Object Found among *Excavated Artifacts Contained in a Nest of Maki-e Gold-lacquered Boxes*

HOSOKAWA Shintaro

This museum houses *Excavated Artifacts Contained in a Nest of Maki-e Gold-lacquered Boxes*, a collection of excavated artifacts stored in a tiered set of boxes. Among them, this paper describes a bronze arrowhead and a cylindrical bronze object, each known as a burial accessory from a *kofun* (tumulus).

The bronze arrowhead is classified as willow-leaf shaped. Through observations of the artifact, this study examines its crafting techniques and identifies the example housed in this museum as belonging to an early form of willow-leaf-shaped bronze arrowheads. Such arrowheads are the most abundant among bronze arrowheads used as burial accessories in *kofun* and serve as one of the key artifacts for estimating the dates of *kofun*. Although the excavation site of this particular piece is unknown, it is presumed to have been unearthed from an early *kofun* dating to the first half of the Early Kofun period (ca. late 3rd to early 4th century CE).

As for the cylindrical bronze object, nearly equal numbers of such artifacts have been excavated from the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese archipelago over the past 30 years. These objects have been the subject of debate in Japan and Korea as important indicators of diplomatic interactions during the Kofun period. The clarification of this object’s classification through this study has enabled it to be added as a new example to the existing body of artifacts.

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