
National Diet Library Newsletter

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Material recently designated as a national important cultural property: *Kōan reiseisu*

This article is a translation of the article in Japanese of the same title in NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 642 (September 2014).



Kōan reiseisu 弘安禮節
[NDL call no.: WA1-9]
Copied in the late Kamakura era
One scroll
32.4cm in height
(The text part is 29.0cm in height)

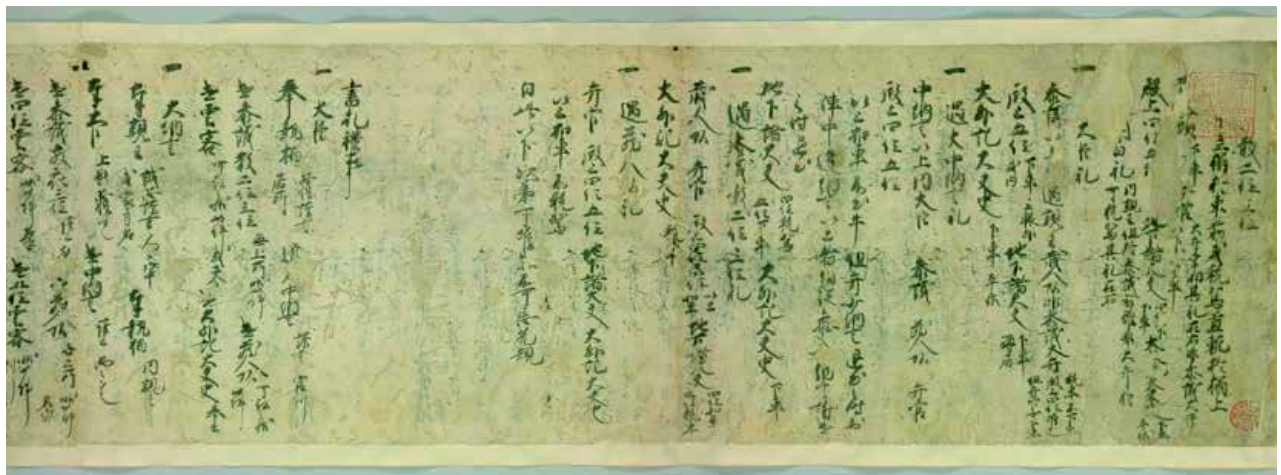
The *Kōan reiseisu* (弘安禮節) held by the National Diet Library (NDL) was recently designated as an important cultural property of Japan, based on a recommendation in the Council for Cultural Affairs' report of August 21, 2014. Its call number has been changed from WA15-2 to WA1-9 (Rare Books/National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties). The following is a brief description of this material.

The *Kōan reiseisu* is thought to have been established in the eighth year of the Kōan period, ca. 1285 AD during the Kamakura period. The term "*reiseisu*" refers to proper etiquette for formal occasions; therefore, with the two terms combined together, the title "*Kōan reiseisu*" means that it stipulates the courtesies that were fixed during the Kōan period.

However, it is not an ordinary etiquette book for the general public. Compiled by order of Kameyama *Jōkō* (special term for a retired emperor, who in those days could still exert power even after he had retired), the *Kōan reiseisu* particularly stipulates the etiquette of the Imperial Court.

The *Kōan reishetsu* describes the proper manner for greeting someone you meet on the street (*Rotōrei*, 路頭礼) or how to write a letter to someone (*Shosatsurei*, 書札礼). For example, when a minister sends a letter to the Prince Regent (*Sesshō*, 摂政) or the Senior Regent (*Kampaku*, 関白), the letter must be addressed to the recipient's home address, and the concluding remark (like "Sincerely yours" and "Best regards" in English) should be "*Kyōkō-kingen* (恐惶謹言)." Similarly, when the chief councilor of state (*Dainagon*, 大納言) sends a letter to the Prince Regent or the Senior Regent, it must be addressed to either "*Hitobito-onchu* (人々御中)" or the name of the steward, and the concluding remark should be "*Seikyō-kingen* (誠恐謹言)." Apparently, it was considered disrespectful to address the letter directly to an individual of superior status.

Given the examples above, we can see that these proprieties were determined strictly in accordance with people's official ranks and social positions. Conventionally, such proprieties were negotiated between each house. However, the *Kōan reishetsu* is special in that it officially prescribed these forms, and thus had great influence over the years afterward.



<<The beginning of the copy (existing part)>>



<<The back of the sheet; a calendar of the fourth year of the Kōan period (1281)>>

The copy owned by the NDL is handwritten on the back of a calendar of the period between intercalary July 27 and December 26 of the fourth year of the Kōan period (1281). It includes the two articles "*Rotōrei*" and "*Shosatsurei*," but unfortunately, the introduction of the "*Rotōrei*" is missing. It is presumed to have been made during the late Kamakura period, not so long after its compilation.

Some ten copies of the *Kōan reishetsu* exist, but the articles included and their order vary considerably. The copy owned by the NDL is the oldest existing copy, and valuable in that it indicates the content and format of the *Kōan reishetsu* at the time of its establishment.

Note:

- All the nine materials held by the NDL designated as national important cultural properties, including the *Kōan reishetsu*, can be viewed in digital form in the [NDL Digital Collections](#).
- [List of the nine materials](#)

Related articles of the NDL Newsletter on the other materials designated as national important cultural properties in the NDL collection:

- [Shinshū jōdo ōjōden \(新修浄土往生傳\)](#) (No. 192, December 2013)
- [Shakushi ōrai \(釋氏往來\)](#) (No. 186, December 2012)
- [Sōke monjo \(宗家文書\)](#) (No. 159, February 2008)
- [Five others](#) (No. 137, June 2004)

Reference (only in Japanese):

- Sadafumi Fujii "Kōan reishetsu shōkō – Ueno toshokan bon no kaisetsu –," Ueno Tosyokan Kiyō, (3) 1957.10. [NDL call no.: Z21-159]
- "Shinshitei no bunkazai –Bijutsu kōgeihin," Gekkan Bunkazai, (609) 2014.6. [NDL call no.: Z11-57]