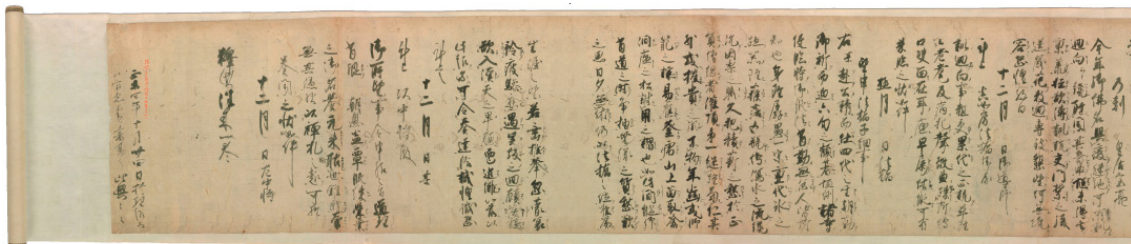


Newly designated Important Cultural Property

—*Shakushi ōrai* (owned by the National Diet Library)

This article is a translation of the article in Japanese of the same title
in NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 617 (August 2012).



<<*Shakushi ōrai*>>

Important Cultural Property



Shakushi ōrai

<NDL call number: [WA1-7](#)>

[Reportedly edited by Cloistered Prince Shukaku]

Copied in the fourth year of the Shōan period (1302)

One scroll 30.2cm in height
(The text part is 27.7cm in height)

The *Shakushi ōrai* owned by the National Diet Library (NDL) was newly designated as an Important Cultural Property of Japan, based on the Council for Cultural Affairs' report of April 20, 2012. Its call number has been changed from WA15-19 to WA1-7 (Rare Books/National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties). The following is a brief description of this material.

The “*shakushi*” means a Buddhist monk and the “*ōrai*” refers to a correspondence. As its title suggests, it is a collection of monks' letters. Collections of letters like this were called “*ōrai-mono*” and were used

as letter-writing guides, calligraphy copybooks or textbooks for basic knowledge and education. From the Heian period (794-1192) to the Edo period (1600-1867), a multitude of such anthologies were compiled.

The *Shakushi ōrai* is estimated to have been compiled in the late Heian period or the early Kamakura period (late 12th century to early 13th century). It includes 27 pairs/54 letters arranged by the posted month from January to December. The contents take the form of questions and answers between high-ranking priests or priests and court nobles concerning such matters as sermons and prayers in the abbeys or the Imperial Court, and promotion of priests. The Cloistered Prince Shukaku (1150-1202, a son of the Emperor Goshirakawa), the head priest of Ninna-ji Temple, is believed to have selected the anthology,ⁱ which is thought to have been used to educate monks of upper grade abbeys like the Ninna-ji Temple.

This scroll in the NDL collection has a colophon that indicates it was copied in the fourth year of the Shōan period (1302), lacking the first seven letters (three pairs/six letters of January and the first letter of February). This material is very valuable as the oldest manuscript of the *Shakushi ōrai* in existence, the only one that dates back to the Kamakura period.

Among the NDL collection, the following materials were all designated as Important Cultural Properties:

- *Mansai jugō nikki* (From the 18th year to 29th year of the Ōei period [1411-1422], the autograph of Mansai) <NDL call number: [WA1-1](#)>
- *Tendaisan ki (Tian tai shan ji)* (Copied in the late Heian period) <NDL call number: [WA1-2](#)>
- *Seikai (Xing jie)* (Published in the Jing you era of the Baisong Dynasty, China [1034-1038]) <NDL call number: [WA1-3](#)>
- *Meizukushi* (Copied in the 30th year of the Ōei period [1423]) <NDL call number: [WA1-4](#)>
- *Moromori ki* (From the second year of the Ryakuō period to the seventh year of the Ōan period [1339-1374], the autograph of Nakahara Moromori) <NDL call number: [WA1-5](#)>
- *Sōke monjo* (registered name *Tsushima Sōke Wakan kankei shiryō*) (Copied from the early Edo period to the early Meiji period) <NDL call number: [WA1-6-1](#) ~ [WA1-6-40](#)>

*These materials can be viewed at the NDL website: <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/#classic>

ⁱ But the attribution to Shukaku may be fictitious.