

Selections from NDL collections

## Report of the exhibition “Autograph manuscripts and original artwork of well-known people 2” and the launch of the English version of digital exhibition “Autograph manuscripts and original artwork of well-known people”

*This article is a translation of the article in Japanese in [NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 670 \(February 2017\)](#).*



### 1. Introduction

An exhibition entitled “Autograph manuscripts and original artwork of well-known people 2” was held at the Tokyo Main Library of the National Diet Library (NDL) from October 15 to November 12, 2016, and at the Kansai-kan from November 18 to December 3, 2016. In this article, we will present some of the exhibited materials and highlights of the exhibition, including the hands-on activities that attracted so many visitors.

A list of exhibited materials is available in Japanese on the NDL website.

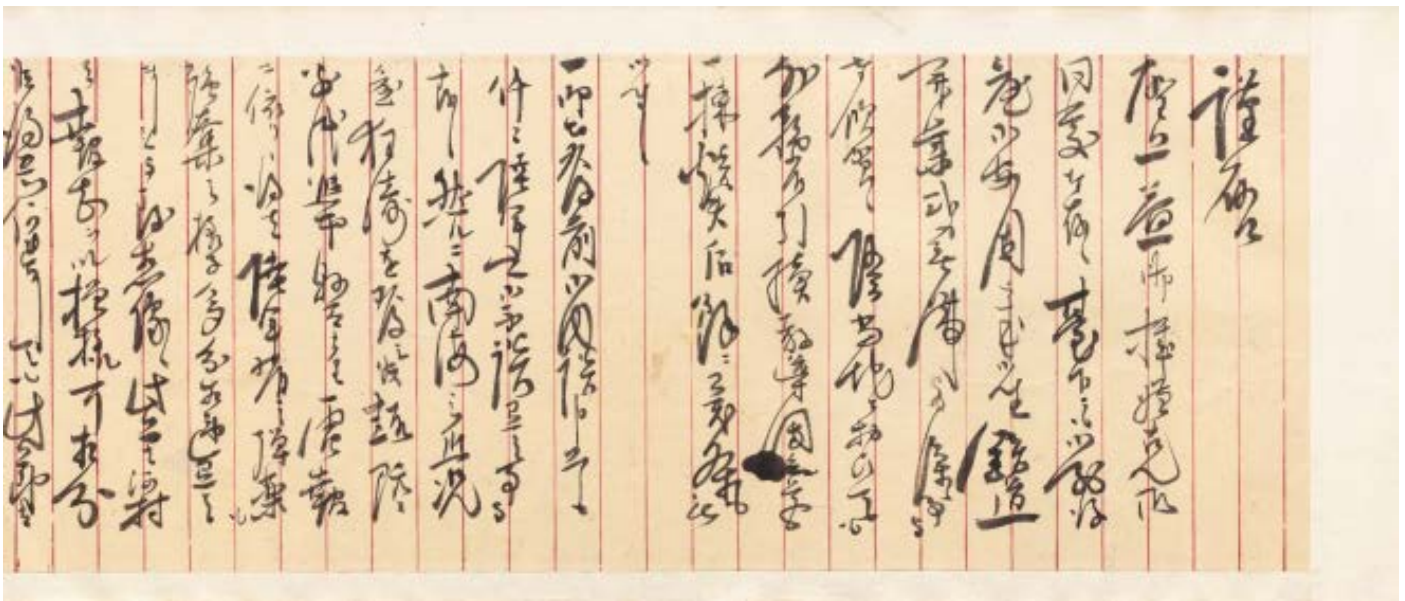
<http://www.ndl.go.jp/jp/event/exhibitions/exhibition2016.html>



Exhibition space at the Tokyo Main Library

## 2. Exhibited materials

### (1) Letter written by OKUBO Toshimichi



A letter written by Okubo Toshimichi, NDL Call No. 牧野伸顯関係文書（書類の部）A4

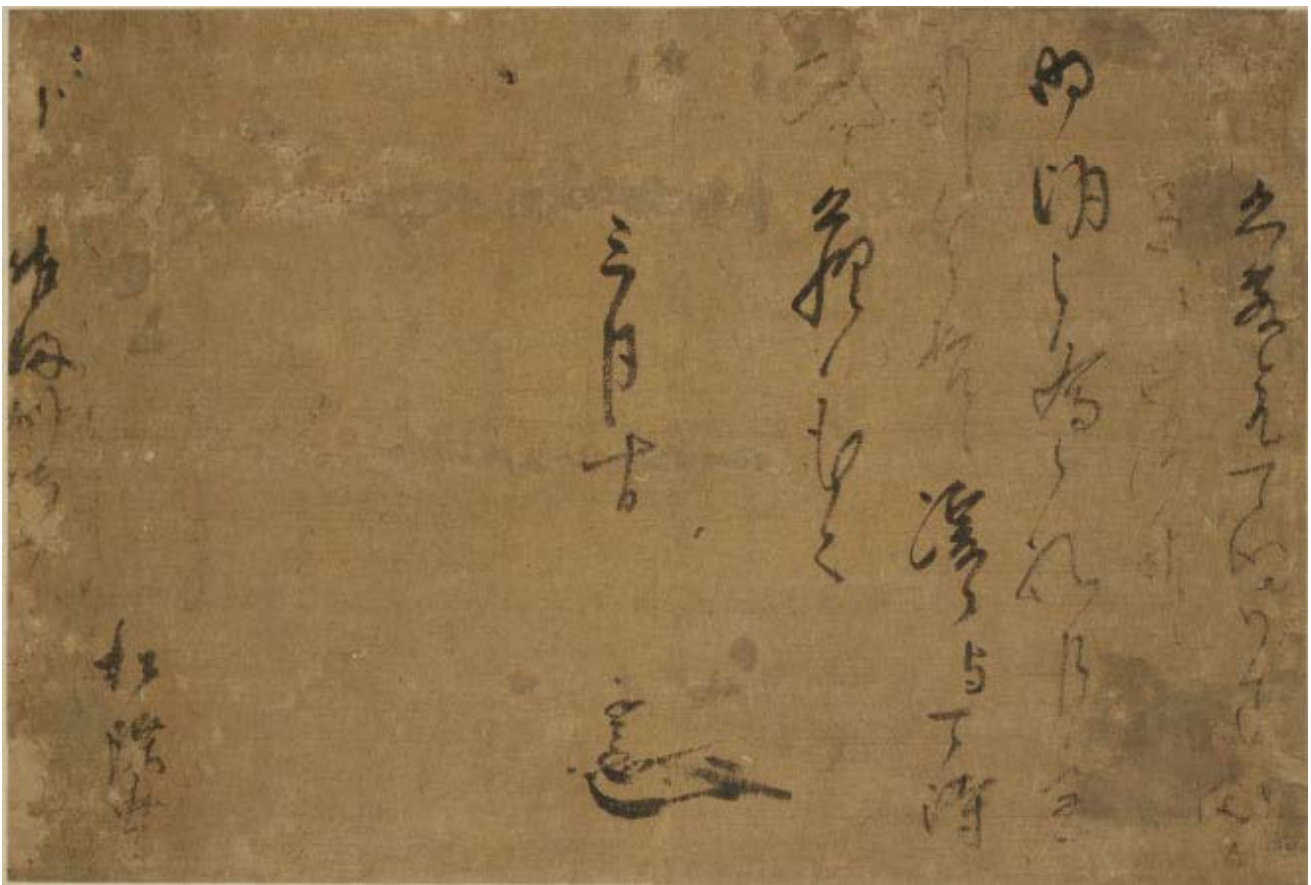
Okubo Toshimichi served as commander-in-chief of the Meiji government forces sent to quell SAIGO Takamori's rebel army during the Satsuma Rebellion in 1877. This letter from Okubo to ITO Hirobumi, who became Japan's first Prime Minister in 1885, is written on a scroll that is nearly five meters in length when fully extended. Okubo describes in the letter his plans for dealing with the

incidents, which triggered the Satsuma Rebellion. He also described Saigo's personality and situation at the time in great detail, offering the opinion that Saigo himself was unlikely to have been involved in the incidents.



The letter exhibited in actual length.  
The calligraphy is superb throughout the entire five-meter length of this letter.

## (2) Letter written by DATE Masamune

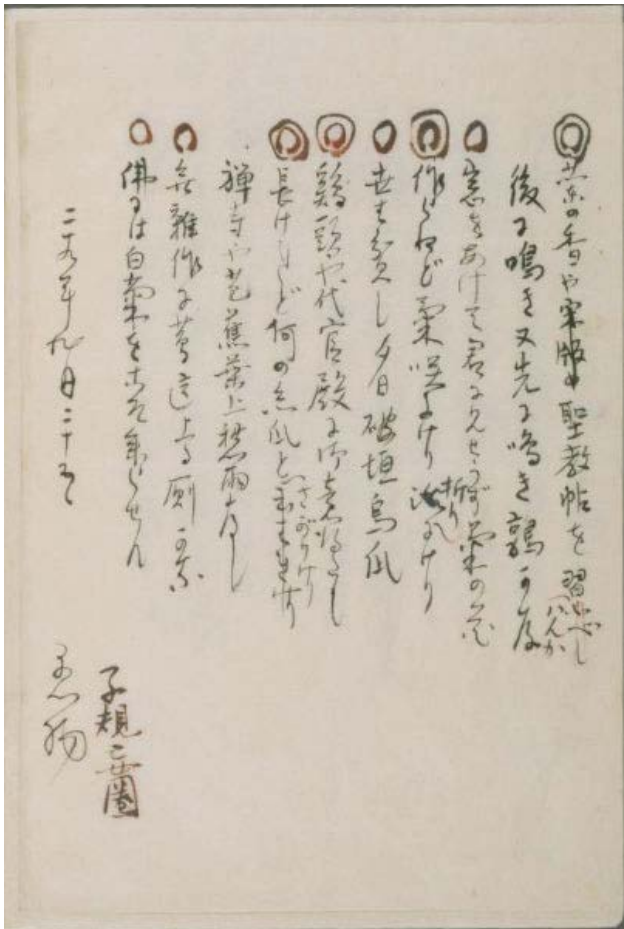


A letter written by Date Masamune, NDL Call No. WA25-37  
\*Available in the NDL Digital Collections

This is a letter that was most likely written sometime between 1610 and 1613 by Date Masamune, daimyo of the Sendai Domain<sup>1</sup> during the Azuchi-Momoyama and early Edo periods. His handwritten monogram or *kao* (花押), seen in the lower center of the image, is called *sekirei*

*no kao* (the wagtail monogram) due to its resemblance to the Japanese wagtail.

<sup>1</sup> The Sendai Domain comprised present-day Miyagi as well as parts of Iwate and Fukushima.

(3) Draft of *haiku* by NATSUME Soseki

A draft of haiku by Natsume Soseki, NDL Call No. 本別 3-61  
\*Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#).

This draft of haiku by Natsume Soseki was sent to MASAOKA Shiki and includes haiku composed while Soseki and his bride were visiting the Northern Kyushu. Shiki's assessment is indicated at the top of the draft in red ink, with a circle to indicate haiku he felt were satisfactory and a double circle to indicate superior ones.

## (4) Travel diary by IIJIMA Koga



A travel diary by Iijima Koga, NDL Call No. 本別 7-546  
\*Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#).

This travel diary by Iijima Koga is a collection of colored sketches without text. Iijima was a student of OKI Ichiga of the Kano school of painting and is known for his superb paintings of birds and flowers.

## 3. Tidbits from the exhibition

In addition to the autograph manuscripts and original artwork exhibited here, we also prepared some hands-on activities for visitors to enjoy themselves.



The "Whose handwriting is this?" quiz!

One activity was a quiz section in which visitors match handwritten manuscripts with portrait photographs of the people who wrote them. The manuscript displayed on the pink panel is beautifully written. There is a hint that says: One of the three greatest contributors to the Meiji Restoration. Press the button beneath the manuscript and the portrait of Okubo Toshimichi glows in pink!



Trace the characters written by well-known people!

This activity, in which visitors could trace the calligraphy of well-known people, was very popular. The laminated images of autograph manuscripts were overlaid with a piece of semitransparent Japanese paper, so that visitors could trace the characters using a calligraphy pen. Among the most popular were the *sekirei no kao* of Date Masamune and the *ryo* (dragon, 龍) of Ryoma by Sakamoto Ryoma.

#### 4. English version of the digital exhibition "Autograph manuscripts and original artwork of well-known people" now available on the NDL website



Autograph manuscripts and original artwork of well-known people: English version top page

The English version of the digital exhibition "[Autograph manuscripts and original artwork of well-known people](#)" was released on the NDL website on April 18, 2017. This digital exhibition is based on the exhibition of the same title held at the NDL in autumn 2014. The exhibition includes autograph manuscripts of letters and postcards by 120 well-known Japanese who played an active role in a variety of areas from early modern times until the Showa era.

We hope that visitors will enjoy seeing these autograph manuscripts and original artwork of well-known people.

(Translated by Mika Oshima)

#### Related article from the National Diet Library Newsletter:

- [Exhibition "Autograph manuscripts and original artwork of well-known people"](#) (No. 197, December 2014)