

Selections from NDL collections

## Materials newly available in the Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room (7)

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### Introduction

The Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room at the National Diet Library (NDL) holds approximately 400,000 documents comprising the personal papers of politicians, high-ranking officials, and military officers dating back as far as the closing days of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Following an article in the previous issue, this article introduces materials newly available in recent years in the Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room in the Tokyo Main Library.

We hope you will enjoy this look at some of the historic documents that are essential to researching political events as well as many other aspects of Japanese history.

### Obata Toshio Papers

(378 items, available since September 2017)



Image 1: Obata Toshio.  
NDL Call No. Obata Toshio  
Papers 186

Obata Toshio (1885-1947) is known as a central figure of the Kodoha (a faction aiming to reform the state by the direct administration of the emperor) in the Army. He served in the Russian military during World War I and later became a well-known expert on operations against the Soviet Union.



Image 2: An official passport  
used when leaving Japan as  
military attaché to the Embassy  
of the Russian Federation in July  
1920. NDL Call No. Obata  
Toshio Papers 186

During the final stages of hostilities in the Pacific theater of World War II, he was involved with Konoe Fumimaro and Yoshida Shigeru in negotiations to end the war. He also became a Minister of State in the Cabinet of Prince Higashikuni which was formed immediately after the war. At the time, this appointment was made in consideration of potential uprisings by military men who objected to the disarmament<sup>1</sup>. The Obata Toshio Papers contains material which conveys the charged atmosphere at the time.

Image 3 is a draft copy of the script to a speech that was broadcast repeatedly from 6 p.m. to 12 p.m. on August 20, 1945, by Prime Minister Prince Higashikuni to admonish the military for its rash actions. Although most ordinary citizens who heard this speech would not have understood its meaning, it effectively brought to an end a plan to occupy the Imperial Palace the next morning by a group of young army officers (Kyujo incident).

<sup>1</sup> *Ogata taketora* edited by Ogata Taketora denki kankoukai, 1963, Asahi Shinbunsha. NDL Call No. 289.1-0259, available in the [NDL Digital Collections \(Limited access on the premises at the NDL\)](#).

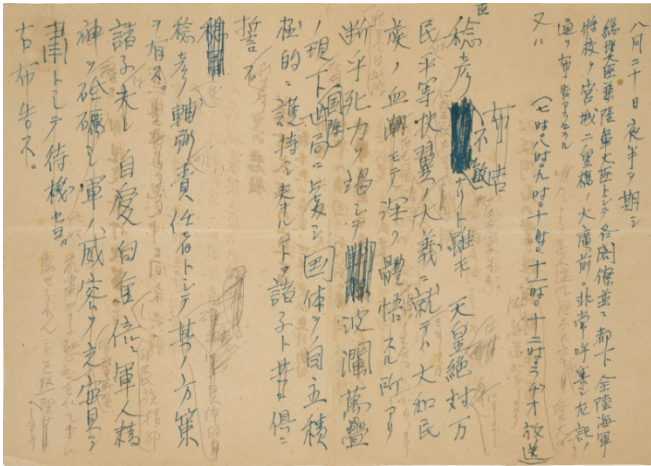


Image 3: Script to a speech by  
Prime Minister Prince  
Higashikuni on August 20, 1945.  
NDL Call No. Obata Toshiro  
Papers 224-3

That same day, Prime Minister Higashikuni Naruhiko wrote about the radio broadcast in his diary<sup>2</sup>. According to the diary entry, Higashikuni met with two of the coup's leaders and was required to broadcast a text they had drafted from 6 p.m. to midnight of that day, in exchange for canceling the plan. Being pressed for time, the text was broadcast with just minor editing to eliminate extreme rhetoric. The draft shown in Image 3 shows such corrections in pencil of the original speech, which is written in pen. This draft is likely to be exactly what the masterminds offered to Higashikuni on the day, and is almost word for word the same as the radio broadcast quoted in the diary. This historic material is a primary document illustrating the challenges faced by the Cabinet of Prince Higashikuni during its first week of existence.

## Kodama Gentaro Papers

(362 items, available since November 2017)



Image 4: Kodama Gentaro.  
Available at the online gallery  
["Portraits of Modern Japanese  
Historical Figures"](#)

Kodama Gentaro (1852-1906) was an army officer during the Meiji period, who took part in the Boshin War (1868-1869) and the Satsuma Rebellion (1877), and later played a key role in the establishment of the Imperial Japanese Army. This collection comprises letters from influential army officers, notes taken and opinion papers written by Kodama, and documents related to the historic incidents he was concerned in. About 70% of these materials were reprinted in *Kodama Gentaro kankei monjo* edited by Shoyu Kurabu, published by Doseisha in 2015. NDL Call No. GK182-L378.

Kodama is the officer who famously captured Hill 203, the site of one of the most intense battles during the Russo-Japanese War, as described in the well-known Japanese historical novel *Saka no ue no kumo* (*Clouds above the hill*) by Shiba Ryotaro. Image 5 shows materials related to the battle as well as a letter from Kodama Gentaro addressed to his oldest son, Kodama Hideo, on December 14, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> *Higashikuni nikki : Nihon gekidoki no hiroku*. by Higashikuni Naruhiko, Tokuma Shoten, 1968. NDL Call No. 210.75-H445h, available in the [NDL Digital Collections \(Limited access on the premises at the NDL\)](#).

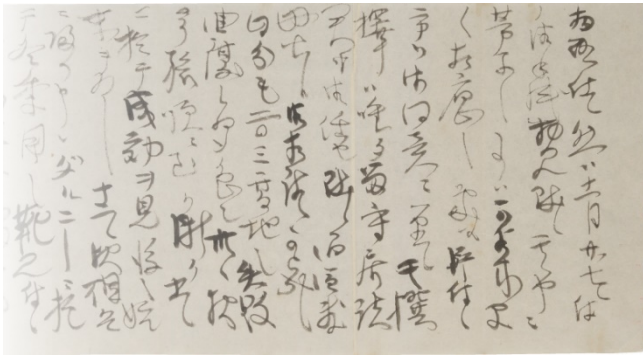


Image 5: A letter from Kodama Gentaro addressed to Kodama Hideo, on December 14, 1904. NDL Call No. Kodama Gentaro Papers 102

In addition to his struggles as a wartime military leader, he also overcame difficulties involved with the peace negotiations and conclusion of the treaty. Many Japanese people were so elated by Japan's victory in the war that they clamored for compensation from Russia, resulting in a series of riots in Tokyo that began on September 5, 1905, and are known as the Hibiya Incendiary Incident. Despite the exaggerated hopes of the public, Kodama considered it impossible to obtain compensation and went so far as to state that he was "more than happy to be considered weak-kneed." Thinking clearly about Japan's position in the world and the international situation, he constructing a vision for a future state based on "making an effort to take measures to avoid war" (Shown in Image 6). The next year, in 1906, he became army Chief of the General Staff, but met a sudden death.

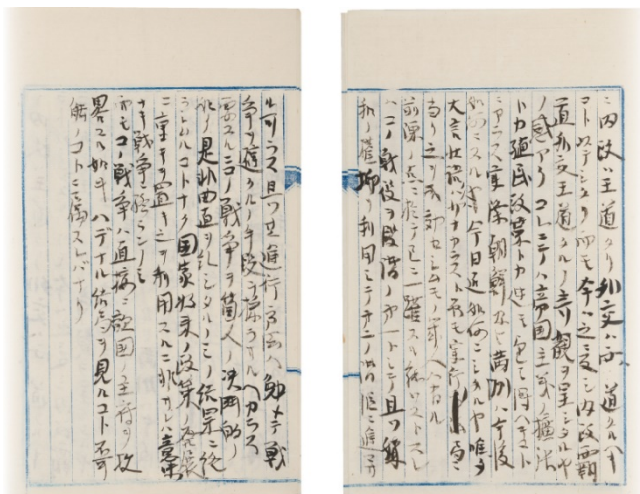


Image 6: A memorandum stating his satisfaction with the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese Peace Treaty by Kodama Gentaro, September 25, 1905. NDL Call No. Kodama Gentaro Papers 128

(Translated by Moyu Yabe)

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

- [Materials available in the Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room \(1\)](#) (No. 200, June 2015)
- [Materials available in the Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room \(2\)](#) (No. 201, August 2015)
- [Materials available in the Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room \(3\)](#) (No. 202, October 2015)
- [Materials available in the Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room \(4\)](#) (No. 203, December 2015)
- [Materials available in the Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room \(5\)](#) (No. 220, October 2018)
- [Materials available in the Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room \(6\)](#) (No. 221, December 2018)

### Related content from the National Diet Library Website

- [Research Navi](#) : Holdings of The Modern Japanese Political History Materials Room (Japanese)